The Development of a Valid and Reliable Instrument to Assess Young People's Political (dis)Engagement in Britain and Portugal:

A Psychometric Approach

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Statement of Contribution to Others

In those cases in which the work presented in this thesis was the product of collaborative efforts, I declare that my contribution was substantial and prominent, involving the development of original ideas, as well as the definition and implementation of subsequent work. Detailed information about my contribution to collaborative work in this thesis is outlined in Appendix 1.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my family Orlando, Lisete, Inês, Dina, Emília, Rui, and to Joaquim. Although their names are written in a certain sequence, there is no possible way to order how much I love each and every one of them equally. Being apart has always been difficult, in a way I will never be able to express. Thank you for always standing by my side and making 1.618 miles seem so much shorter.

"Love is an act of courage."

Paulo Freire

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To a new beginning…

List of Publications

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Abstract

Over the past few decades, there has been an increasing interest in understanding youth political engagement. However, it has been argued that the instruments used to assess the concept often lack adequate validation, and this is important as this practice may result in biased statistical conclusions. Consequently, the main aim of this thesis is to advance the field of political participation by developing a new robust psychometric instrument to assess young people's political engagement. This PhD also sets out to critically evaluate how the construct of political engagement is currently represented in research and to propose a conceptualisation of youth political engagement, and critically examine how adequately existing research instruments measure the phenomena of young people's political engagement. To achieve the main aim and objectives of this thesis, a mixed methods approach was implemented. By using qualitative methods – focus groups – it was possible to better understand young people's perceptions of the concept of political engagement, and therefore propose a new conceptualisation of young people's political engagement. Additionally, in order to develop and validate the scale to assess the construct of political engagement among young people, a quantitative approach – using confirmatory factor analysis – was adopted. Ultimately, this thesis will help clarify current conceptual and measurement debates around young people's political engagement within the field of Political Science.

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1: Young People and Politics

Introduction

In recent years, political engagement has received increasing attention and significance in the established democracies (Albacete, 2014; Barrett & Brunton-Smith, 2014; Bechtel, Hangartner, & Schmid, 2015; Filetti, 2016; Henn & Oldfield, 2016; Kruikemeier & Shehata, 2016; O'Toole, 2015; Sloam, 2014). Moreover, over the past two decades, levels of turnout at UK elections and the percentage of people that are registered to vote have declined substantially (Henn & Oldfield, 2016). For instance, the British General Election in 2001 was overshadowed by the lowest voter turnout rate since 1918. While in 2001 the overall turnout was 59%, with only 39% of the votes from 18 to 24 year olds (MORI, 2001), in 2005 the overall turnout increased marginally to 61%, whereas the percentage of the 18 to 24 year olds group fell further to 37% (MORI, 2005). In the 2010 British General Election, the turnout percentages for the overall population of 18 to 24 year olds rose to 65% and 44% respectively (MORI, 2010). Recently, in the 2015 General Election, overall turnout slightly increased to 66% and among 18 to 24 year olds, turnout decreased only 1% (MORI, 2015). More recently, in the 2017 General Election, Ipsos MORI estimated from a poll of around 8,000 adults that 54% of all 18 to 24 year olds voted compared with 63% of the whole population. Furthermore, its figures suggest turnout among 18 to 24 year olds increased to 16% (MORI, 2017).

The 2017 General Election was a different election when it comes to youth political participation, and the term 'Youthquake' was named after the increase of the turnout numbers young people accomplished in the election. Authors like Henn and

Sloam looked carefully at the movement in their last book "Youthquake 2017 – The Rise of Young Cosmopolitans in Britain"[1] and showed that, despite the controversy in recognising the Youthquake as a phenomenon that actually happened, the 2017 UK General Election did in fact reframe the idea about youth as disengaged from politics (Sloam & Henn, 2019). Furthermore, when pointing some factors that explain why this election was singular, Sloam and Henn state that this was a moment where "youth turnout returned to levels not seen since the early 1990s; one in which age replaced class as the most important predictor of voting intention; one in which we witnessed a resurgence in youth activism in (some) political parties; and, one in which the cultural values and economic priorities of Young Millennials dramatically altered the British political landscape" (Sloam & Henn, 2019, p. 1).

At present, a range of explanations have been proposed to explain young people's lack of involvement in politics (Phelps, 2012). Some authors support the idea that young people are withdrawing from the formal political process (Henn & Foard, 2012; O'Toole, 2015), distrustful and unsupportive of democratic institutions (Dalton, 2007; Henn & Foard, 2012), and uninterested in public affairs (Blais, 2006). On the other hand, young people have been praised for their stronger commitment to society (Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins, & Carpini, 2006), their stronger support for engaged norms of citizenship (Dalton, 2013) and for transforming political activism (Rainsford, 2017).

The European Commission has recently suggested, in Flash Eurobarometer 375 (TNS Political & Social, 2013), that young people across Europe are more active in non-governmental and local associations than in political parties. Furthermore,

[1] For further information about the movement see "Youthquake 2017: The Rise of Young Cosmopolitans in Britain" (Sloam & Henn, 2019).

empirical studies (e.g., Copeland, 2014; Henn & Oldfield, 2016; Phelps, 2012; Sloam & Henn, 2019) suggest that young people are not politically apathetic, but simply prefer to get involved via alternative and extra parliamentary activities, like buying or boycotting products, using new technologies for political reasons or carrying out demonstrations in the streets conveying political messages (e.g., Occupy movement or the Indignados movement) rather than participating in traditional institutions such as the parliament and political parties (Li & Marsh, 2008).

In fact, different studies that emphasise the idea of an age gap in political participation (Quintelier, 2007; Smets, 2012) highlight that in comparison with older age cohorts, young people are less likely to vote in elections, less likely to be members of political organisations, express less interest in politics, and are much less likely to offer a party political identification (O'Toole, 2015). Thus, some studies (e.g., Bowler & Donovan, 2013; Dermody, Hanmer-Lloyd, & Scullion, 2010) tend to characterise young people as set apart from the rest of the population. Overall, there is no consensus regarding young people's apparent disengagement from politics. Notwithstanding, this perceived gap is commonly explained by (i) a life cycle effect in which youth will eventually connect with democratic politics as they get older, as with previous youth generations (Verba, Kim, & Nie, 1974) or (ii) by a generational effect, which emphasises the idea that generations of people are socialized predominantly through shared historical experiences, leading to a permanent culture shift (Inglehart, 1977; Norris & Inglehart, 2018). Regarding the lack of conclusive evidence to support for either of the two theoretical conceptualisations, some authors have presented evidence that points to the difficulty of disentangling the complex mixture of life cycle and generation effects (Henn, Weinstein, & Wring, 2002; Phelps, 2012).

Issues in measuring Political Participation and Political Engagement

Linked to the extant debates regarding youth's political engagement, there has been some discussion about the methodological issues in assessing youth political participation and political engagement. For instance, validity and reliability of the instruments used in political participation research. There is, for instance, a group of academic researchers who argue that specific, comprehensive and up-to-date measures need to be refined to capture the full range and methods of young people's political participation and political engagement in contemporary contexts (Albacete, 2014; Henn & Foard, 2012; O'Toole, 2015).

Taking into account the observed changes in Western democracies (e.g., the new forms of participation often characterized by the use of non-political behaviour to express political opinions, such as boycotting products or using new technologies for political ends), Albacete (2014) suggests the need for a systematic revision of the instruments used to measure political engagement by youth. According to Albacete , there is currently a lack of properly validated measures of youth's political engagement and, consequently, some researchers may end up adopting inconsistent criteria without statistical and/or psychometric validity to assess the construct[2] of young people's political engagement or measuring it via other specific forms of political participation, such as electoral participation, protest activities, political consumerism, most frequently with single items that ultimately do not completely map onto the construct of youth's political engagement (Albacete, 2014). This practice, therefore, may result in biased statistical conclusions because the main outcome is being measured

[2] In this context, a construct is the abstract idea, underlying theme, or subject matter that one wishes to measure using survey questions. Some constructs are relatively simple (like political party affiliation) and can be measured using only one or a few questions, while other constructs are more complex (such as civic engagement levels) and may require a whole battery of questions to fully operationalise the construct (Lavrakas, 2008).

improperly. In other words, because the conceptual meaning of political engagement is not clear, a concise operationalisation of the concept cannot be developed. According to MacKenzie (2003) this poses a series of problems, namely, because the construct of political engagement is not being adequately defined, it is difficult to develop measures that faithfully represent its domain. A second issue is that the failure to clearly define the construct makes it difficult to correctly specify how the construct should relate to its measures. The implications of this are that it may lead to statistical biases when creating a measure to assess the construct and can also lead to measurement model misspecification (and the structural relationships between different constructs included in the analysis). For example, considering that I would like to test a model (the relationship between different latent constructs, which means that they are not directly observable) to understand how young people's political engagement relates with political self-efficacy and sense of community, if the concept of political engagement is not properly conceptualised the results will be biased. Finally, another problem caused by inadequate construct definitions is that they undermine the credibility of a study's hypothesis. Without well-developed construct definitions, and therefore measures, it is impossible to make accurate conclusions about the attitudes, feelings or behaviours being assessed (MacKenzie, 2003). Consequently, Albacete argues that answering questions regarding young citizens' political involvement requires coherence between the concept of political participation – which implies a broader repertoire (than the existing standardized measures) of actions citizens can get involved in – and its measurement.

For an instrument to measure political participation adequately, it should comply with several requirements. Albacete (2014) states that it should allow measurement of the latent concept of political participation, the broad number of forms

it can take, the different levels of difficulty those activities entail, and its dimensionality. It should also take into account recent developments in the citizens' repertoire of political actions. Finally, it should allow the equivalent measurement of political participation in several countries and over time (Albacete, 2014, p.20).

Alongside Albacete's view, Phelps argues that there is strong evidence to suggest that political participation is changing, but the changes witnessed are not always adequately explained (Phelps, 2012). For example, back in 1986, Van Deth operationalised political participation using items like "boycotts" or "member of a political party" (Van Deth, 1986, p. 267); however, if we want to consider political participation nowadays other actions like sign petitions online would have to be taken into account (Theocharis, 2015). Moreover, without the existence of psychometric measures for the different politically-related constructs (like political engagement or political interest for example), it is not possible to conduct statistical tests (like Factor Analysis for example) where those changes can be accurately assessed and understood (Poole, 2005). Consequently, the purpose of this project will be to advance the field of assessment of young people's political engagement by taking a robust psychometric approach (which will include the development of a reliable, valid and sensitive measure).

Research aims and objectives

Given the need to develop a valid and reliable instrument to assess young people's political engagement, the main aim of this PhD is to advance the field of political participation by developing a new robust psychometric instrument to assess young people's political engagement that ultimately will help clarify current conceptual debates in the field. This PhD also sets out to critically evaluate how the construct of

political engagement is currently represented in research and propose a conceptualisation of youth political engagement, and critically examine how adequately existing research instruments measure the phenomena of young people's political engagement.

The development of a psychometric instrument has been chosen because: (a) it takes into account the accuracy needed in evaluating and validating specific measurement instruments (Howitt & Cramer, 2011); (b) helps predicting future performance of youth political participation; and (c) represents a novel methodological approach in the Political Science field.

Furthermore, this study will be conducted in two different countries, Britain and Portugal, and it is therefore important to highlight the relevance of this choice. Apart from the fact that youth political disengagement is a phenomenon occurring around the world, Britain and Portugal were chosen for four reasons: (i) because selecting these cases will permit establishing a comparison between the two countries, and understand if there are significant differences in terms of the levels of engagement and regarding the factors related to political engagement; (ii) for validation purposes (cross-cultural validity), because once the scale can be validated both in Britain and in Portugal it also means that it is possible to transfer the findings to different settings; (iii) because Britain and Portugal are both old established democracies; and, (vi) patterns of young people's political (dis)engagement and lack of trust in politicians and political institutions are very similar among both countries (Norris, 2011).

Therefore, another objective and another aim will be established for this thesis, the objective will be to understand if there are differences across young people of both countries (Britain and Portugal) in terms of their levels of engagement and the factors

that are related with political engagement (e.g., trust in politics, political self-efficacy, education); and the aim will be to validate the scale in Britain and Portugal.

To sum up, here it follows the final list of aims and objectives of this research project are:

Primary aim

To advance the field of political participation by developing a new robust psychometric instrument to assess young people's political engagement and validating it both in Britain and in Portugal.

Objectives

i) To critically evaluate how the construct of political engagement is currently represented in research and propose a conceptualisation of youth political engagement;

ii) To critically examine how adequately existing research instruments assess the phenomena of young people's political engagement;

iii) Explore the dimensionality of the construct of political engagement and ascertain if the concept of political engagement is statistically different from political participation.

Research questions

Following the aforementioned aims, this PhD seeks to answer the following five research questions:

i) How is political engagement conceptualised and operationalised in the literature?

ii) How is the construct of political engagement being assessed? Is there any valid and reliable instrument that assesses young people's political engagement?

iii) What are the dimensions of political engagement?

iv) Are young people really disengaged from politics per se, or are they abstaining from participating in "formal" institutionalised methods of politics but nonetheless still engaged?

The structure of this thesis

In order to address the primary aim, the objectives and the research questions, the thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 2 begins with a review of the literature, comprising three main sections. The first section encompasses a critical review of the literature that explores the existing definitions and dilemmas concerning the concept of political engagement. This is a conceptual discussion and distinction encompassing the concepts of civic participation, civic engagement, political participation, and political engagement. Secondly, a proposed operationalisation of political engagement is introduced, based on the particular requirements needed for a concept to be recognised as a 'good' concept (Gerring, 1999). Finally, there is a general discussion and consideration of the possible limitations of the suggested conceptualisation and operationalisation of the concept of political engagement.

Following this traditional literature review, Chapter 3 includes a systematic revision of the instruments that have been used in the literature to assess young people's political engagement. This systematic literature review was carried out using PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis), and its main aim was to systematically review, summarise, and critique the extant research evidence concerning the development of psychometric instruments that assess youth

political engagement. This is important because it will shed light on the characteristics of the existing instruments assessing youth political engagement in a systematic, scientific, reproducible way. This is possible given that a systematic review starts with a clearly formulated question and uses systematic and explicit methods to identify, select, and critically appraise relevant research and to collect and analyse data from the studies that are included in the review (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, & Altman, 2009).

Chapter 4, the methodology section, outlines the philosophical assumptions used in this thesis, along with a rationale for the choice of adopting a mixed-methods approach for the research. The choice of selecting two countries for this study is also explained along with other important topics, including: the advantages and disadvantages of conducting research online, the definition of young people adopted, the study outlines (for both the qualitative and the quantitative studies) and how the data analysis for the two existing studies was conducted. Finally, important consideration is given to the ethical issues associated with the research.

Chapter 5 corresponds to the qualitative study, and it is based on the set of four focus groups conducted to explore young people's perceptions on what it means to be politically engaged as well as their definitions of political engagement. The purpose of this chapter is to propose a scientific definition of young people's political engagement, because before developing measures to evaluate the concept of political engagement, there is a need to clarify its definition. Furthermore, it also aims to provide qualitative insights into how young people perceive political engagement, because youth is the population being surveyed and who the scale will be developed for. It is therefore important to offer a definition of political engagement that is accepted by the surveyed population and based on their understandings of what being politically engaged means. This will also contribute to the reduction of potential biases

regarding how older people and researchers have been perceiving political engagement and the way young people do politics (Best, 2007; Coles, 2000). Moreover, it has been already addressed in the literature that researchers should be careful when trying to conceptualise and/or assess politically-related constructs (like political engagement, for example) in a younger population (for example, Quintelier, 2007), because some authors have identified a great discrepancy between definitions of politically-related constructs by older and younger generations (Henn, Weinstein, & Forrest, 2005; Parry, Moyser, & Day, 1992).

The quantitative study, namely the development and validation of the '*Youth Political Engagement Scale'* (YPES), is to be found in Chapter 6. The steps taken towards the validation of the instrument, along with the results are presented and carefully explained. Additionally, a discussion of the results and a debate about the impact they have on the assessment of political engagement will also be offered. This is of relevance because it will allow researchers and politicians to be able to use a standardized measure that will be valid and reliable and that will be ultimately assessing the construct of political engagement considering youth's perspectives of what being engaged in politics actually means. Given that that the measures being used to assess young people's political engagement are currently lacking statistical/psychometric validity (Albacete, 2009), it may lead to biased conclusions if the main outcome is being measured improperly. For example, regarding political engagement, it will help understand if young people are actually engaged in politics as some authors argue (O'Toole, 2015) and will also contribute to the clarification between the difference within the concepts of political engagement and political participation.

Finally, Chapter 7 returns to and reiterates the central arguments of the thesis and relates its findings to the ongoing discussions in the literature about the conceptualisation and measurement of young people's political engagement. It also considers the broader implications of the findings, along with some limitations and some suggestions for future research directions. In particular, it concludes that the newly developed scale to assess young people's political engagement (the *Youth Political Engagement Scale* – YPES) is a valid and reliable instrument that can be used to assess the construct among youth. Furthermore, it also suggests that (based on the results from Chapter 6) the concepts of political engagement and political participation are psychometrically different, which contributes to the discussion around how the concepts of political engagement and political participation have been conceptualised, operationalised and assessed when it comes to young people. Furthermore, based on the findings from this PhD thesis future research is suggested in order to explore and investigate these results in more depth.

CHAPTER 2: Conceptualising young people's political engagement

Introduction

This chapter reviews relevant literature on the topic of political engagement and participation with two different purposes, therefore it comprises two different sections. The first section will present and examine the patterns of contemporary youth political engagement and participation. It addresses the following issues: (i) the current perspectives and/or modes of youth political participation and political engagement, (ii) what politics means in general to young people; (iii) the distinction between conventional and unconventional forms of political participation, and (vi) patterns of youth political alienation and/or apathy.

The second part of the present chapter includes a review of the significant literature on the conceptualisations of political engagement and other politically-related constructs (like political participation, civic engagement, and civic participation). This second section also examines the aforementioned concepts by highlighting changes in the conceptualisations and in their differences as concepts. Moreover, the sources included in this review were selected to give an overview of the gaps in previous studies (and more generally in the literature), to provide a critical and updated perspective about the discourse on youth political engagement and how the concept of political engagement has been defined in the literature. This chapter will therefore address and inform the following research questions and research objectives of this thesis:

- Research question (i), which asks 'How is political engagement conceptualised and operationalised in the literature';
- Research question (iv) that will be given later in Chapter 6, which asks 'Are young people really disengaged from politics per se, or are they abstaining

from participating in “formal” institutionalised methods of politics but nonetheless still engaged’.

- Additionally, it will contribute to meeting of the first part of Objective (i) (see Chapter 1, section *Research aims and objectives*), that is to critically evaluate how the construct of political engagement is currently represented in research.

Perspectives on youth political engagement and participation

Recent studies of several Western countries and democracies, suggest that young people have become increasingly disengaged from formal politics as well as community activity, and know and care little about traditional political processes (e.g., Bennett, Cordner, Klein, Savell, & Baiocchi, 2013; Furlong & Cartmel, 2008; Whiteley, 2011). However, despite the claims that young people have become especially disaffected and disengaged from politics (Amnå et al., 2018), recent research on the political participation of young generation shows a more nuanced and complex picture (Grasso, 2018). Young people are found to hold firm beliefs in the idea of democracy (Nieuwelink, Dekker, Geijsel, & ten Dam, 2016), but they are critical of the real functioning of representative democracy (Monticelli & Bassoli, 2018), which therefore also tends to cause lower participation in traditional forms (Henn et al., 2005). At the same time, a rise in alternative forms of democratic participation can be seen (Ekman & Amnå, 2012; Harris, Wyn, & Younes, 2010), which lead a group of academics to consider that young people are not apathetic or disengaged from politics, but channelling their political activities to alternative and more meaningful ways to participate in politics (e.g., Henn & Oldfield, 2016; O'Toole, 2015; Penney, 2018; Raby, Caron, Théwissen-LeBlanc, Prioletta, & Mitchell, 2018; Sloam & Henn, 2019; Wong, Khiatani, & Chui, 2018). Additionally, an alternative

trend in research on citizenship and participation focuses on new kinds of engagement by young people outside of formal politics. As the old modes of affiliation break down, this research identifies new activities and spaces in which young people create communities and networks (Harris, Wyn, & Younes, 2007). This change was explained by Russell Dalton (2008) as a shift from 'duty citizenship' to 'engaged citizenship', raising the question of whether the traditional indicators used for studying political engagement, political participation, and attitudes towards politics are still able to capture the wider picture (see also Albacete, 2014; Pontes, Henn, & Griffiths, 2016).

In this thesis, the theoretical framework adopted is that young people are engaged in politics and in civic life more broadly (Henn & Oldfield, 2017). However, the contemporary changes in our society that young people face during their youth and early adolescence like the breakdown in structured pathways to adulthood (Heath, Brooks, Cleaver, & Ireland, 2009), the diminishing relevance of formal institutions, the disintegration of traditional civic affiliations (Manganelli, Lucidi, & Alivernini, 2014), affect how they relate to politics (for example, Henn et al., 2002). For instance, research reveals another trend in young people's participatory practices, namely that young people may be connecting with civic life in new ways that are directly related to their more fragmented and individualised biographies (Erik Amnå & Ekman, 2014). These practices are said to be occurring through less collective affiliations, the use of emergent information technologies (Theocharis, 2015) and engagement with recreation and consumer choice as politics (Gundelach, 2019; Kyroglou & Henn, 2017). Looking at young people's concerns and activities in terms of community, family and social cooperation reveals their everyday engagements and ordinary politics (Vromen & Collin, 2010). This shift of focus provides evidence that young people are socially and politically engaged, but their strategies for citizenship and

relationships with formal politics may be quite different from those that are visible through a conventional lens (Martínez, Cumsille, Loyola, & Castillo, 2019). Instead, if we tap into young people's experiences of politics and civic life and explore the meanings they bring to these, along with the way they perceive politically-related concepts (like politics, democracy, or political engagement) we may come closer to understand how young people are connected to politics and act on their worlds (Quintelier, 2007). Therefore, if that is the case that young people might perceive politics and concepts like political engagement in a different way when compared to adults, as researchers we should (or even must) take into consideration activities and behaviours that young people would consider to be indicative of different politically-related concepts (for example, engagement in politics). Furthermore, the nature of this activity is frequently not acknowledged in the conventional literature and it tends not to feature in analyses of patterns of political engagement (for example, considering voting as political engagement but not considering searching for information about politics) (Van Deth, 2014). Therefore, I am referring to what might be described as an everyday reflection on and involvement with political issues[3], which does not take the traditional form that many older people would recognise as political engagement. For instance, young people are usually interested in social and political issues such as the environment, equality, human rights and globalisation (e.g., Inglehart, 2000; Vromen, Loader, & Xenos, 2015), and these issues are usually not taken into account when it comes to assessing youth's political engagement.

This approach asks for a closer look at the link between traditional political activity and political engagement and participation. For example, Russell and

[3] Although involved in different daily activities that for all intents and purposes might be considered 'political' by youth, they tend to associate politics with formal and traditional notions of the concepts (for example, Ekström, 2016).

colleagues found that out of all the cohorts they researched, young people were the least likely to vote, but they were also the most likely to have had discussions about political issues with friends and family (Harris et al., 2010; Russell, Fieldhouse, Purdam, & Kalra, 2002). Furthermore, in a study about political socialisation agents, Quintelier found that the discussion of politics within the family is especially successful in increasing the level of political participation among youth (Quintelier, 2013). It is also relevant to highlight the conclusion from Vromen's research on youth politics; that new typologies of political participation need to be used to capture the ways young people engage with and act on concerns that are relevant to them (Vromen, 2003). Furthermore, there is a considerable difference between conventional definitions of politics and young people's concerns with local manifestations of social and political matters in their own lives (Manning & Ryan, 2004).

What is Politics?

Before addressing the different conventional and unconventional forms of political participation it is necessary to take a step backwards and briefly outline what is meant by politics and also how do young people define and/or understand politics themselves. Generally speaking there are two different main approaches to the concept of Politics, a narrower definition and a broad one (Briggs, 2016). The narrow definition refers to the activity directed towards the state and its power relations (Schwarzmantel, 1987). The broader characterisation of politics refers to politics and conflict, and this relates more to the notion of political awareness. Considering the wider definition, politics can be seen as encompassing all human activities, because the idea that prevails is that politics arises from the basic human problem of diversity (Crick & Crick, 1987). Furthermore, under the second definition of politics, the personal becomes political

and issues like sexual politics, environmental politics or the politics of health are included (Milbrath, 1965). There is a much more complex and long history of debate around the meaning and definitions of politics, however in this thesis this is not going to be addressed (see: Hay, 2007; Leftwich, 2015; Minogue, 2000; Stoker, 2016).

As Briggs (2016) suggests, "the narrow definition of politics could be referred to as party politics or politics or politics with a capital "P", whereas the broader definition expands 'politics' to include activities on a number of different levels" (p.35). Furthermore, if this broader definition of politics is considered, more young people are likely to be seen as having been politicised than if the focus was purely upon those who entered the party political arena (for example, the ones who voted or who belong to or support a political party). However, given that this thesis is investigating young people's political engagement, more than taking into account how politics is defined it is important to understand how young people describe what politics is for them. Some authors (for example, Coffé & Campbell, 2019; Henn et al., 2005; Manning, 2013; O'Toole, 2003; Sloam, 2007; Sveningsson, 2016) have explored young people's perceptions of politics. For example, Sloam (2007) concluded that non-activist youth and the young people who were activists had different perceptions of politics. The first group (non-activists) had conventional views of politics due to their narrow perceptions of politics (strongly linked with electoral politics) where ideas like voting and political parties were associated with it. The activists, on the other hand, provided more varied, analytical and reflective views on politics and some young people mentioned that they were frustrated with the perceptions around conventional politics (Sloam, 2007). However, both groups (non-activists and activists) did not trust politicians and were not happy with the way politics works. Henn and colleagues' (2005) findings were similar to Sloam's regarding the young people's negative

orientation when characterizing politics. Furthermore, the authors concluded that the definition of politics given by young people was generally very close to a formal, electoral conception of politics where they associated themes like 'government' or 'how the country was run' when asked what politics meant to them exactly (Henn et al., 2005, p.562).

A study conducted by O'Toole (2003) showed more nuanced definitions of politics, where the author also concluded that the definitions given were highly related with youth's backgrounds and socio-demographic (like ethnicity, gender or socio-economic inequalities) for example) characteristics. For instance, the findings indicated that young men viewed politics as a series of authority relationships (linked with a more traditional definition of politics), whereas the ethnic minority (Asians) and the females' group viewed politics as a place or mechanism for change (however, these groups also recognised the lack of visibility ethnic minorities and women have in national politics). In a study entitled "Understanding the link between citizens' political engagement and their categorization of 'political' activities", Coffé and Campbell (2019) examined how citizens (of all ages) categorize political activities and investigated to what extent the modes of activities that citizens engage in relate to the activities they consider to be political. The authors concluded that young people tend to define political activities along party and non-party lines rather than the distinction between traditional/new or online/offline political participation activities. Moreover, the authors identified that people's categorizations of specific activities as political or not varied between the extent and mode participants engaged in politics. In other words, those who tended to participate in non-party political activities were significantly more likely to consider both party activities and non-party activities to be political than those who do did not engage in the non-partisan activities. The authors

also mentioned that when participants engaged in non-party activities it led them to have a broader definition of politics. On a slightly different note, Gann's (2011) paper on young people's perceptions and views on the study of politics at university (as part of the HEFCE/DEL PREPOL project) offers some insights on young people's understandings of what politics is. Overall, participants seemed to perceive the study of politics as essential and a vital everyday subject given that everything is somehow related to politics (Gann, 2011).

From the different studies addressed, a finding that appears to be transversal is the association of politics with a more traditional definition, linking it to formal/electoral activities like voting, being a member of a political party or campaigning for a political party. Taken into account the approach given by Briggs (2016), young people appear to associate the notion of politics with a more narrow definition (that refers to the activity directed towards the state and its power relations). Therefore, it is expected that young people are perceived as having low levels of political participation, because it has been found that young people do not trust in politicians, and feel a lack of connection with political institutions (and with formal, party politics) (for example, Erik Amnå & Ekman, 2014; Henn & Oldfield, 2016).

Conventional and unconventional political participation

Conventional political participation, also known as formal politics or traditional politics, is related to institutionalised actions or inspired by political elites, and usually linked with the idea of party politics (Conway, 2000; Ekman & Amnå, 2012; Sartori, 1973; Zukin et al., 2006). Moreover, it is commonly associated with actions or activities that are performed within the legal institutionalised framework such as voting, electoral politics or work for a party and contacting officials (for example,

Goroshit, 2016). Nevertheless, during the 1970s, various scholars show how there was a decline of political and civic activism, mainly party membership and voting in post-industrial societies (Crozier, Huntington, & Watanuki, 1970; Habermas, 1975). This conventional approach on how political participation was perceived and assessed changed after the seminal study of Verba and Nie (1972), which suggested that the action repertoire available to citizens should be multidimensional and involve non-electoral paths of influence as well, including efforts to affect the 'actions' taken by elected officials (Teorell, Torcal, & Montero, 2007). This change in the approach to political participation led to the development of a different strand of forms of political participation known as 'unconventional political participation' (Brady, 1999).

A few researchers accept that voting and institutionalized activities are not the only way to recognise citizen engagement in politics. Barnes and Kasse (1979) were the first authors to identify a typology of political participation based on conventional and unconventional politics. The emphasis was that engagement in politics ought to comprise other alternative modes of participation or so called 'unconventional' participation, like protests, riots, and civil disobedience, to influence political decisions (Barnes & Kasse, 1979; Conge, 1988). Furthermore, this typology has been broadly accepted and has been developed upon by many scholars (for example, Norris, 2002; Parry et al., 1992; Teorell et al., 2007). Unconventional political participation also referred to as 'new', non-institutionalized, alternative, elite-challenging, and extra-parliamentary, relates to non-institutionalized actions. It usually includes activities like joining demonstrations, signing petitions, or boycotting, for example, and are generally not structurally embedded in the political system, and are often directed against the system (Della Porta, 2005; Ekman & Amnå, 2012; Inglehart, 1990;

Li & Marsh, 2008; Marien, Hooghe, & Quintelier, 2010; Marsh, 1979; Sveningsson, 2016; Van Deth, 2014).

When considering the topic of youth political participation, the picture that emerges in much research is that they are not participating in politics (Phelps, 2012); however, as some authors argued, although they tend to not participate in formal forms of political participation they may still get involved in alternative, unconventional forms of political participation (Barrett & Pachi, 2019). Youth appears to be attracted to these alternative forms of participation because they are loosely structured, community-based initiatives, and focused on a clear issue (for example, Fahmy, 2017; Inglehart, 1990; Sloam & Henn, 2019; Van Deth, 2001). Furthermore, it has also been argued that young people are more likely to involved in unconventional forms of participation or cause-oriented political action in post-industrialized societies, so there is a wider cultural shift among young people "from the politics of loyalties towards the politics of choice" (Norris, 2003, p.17). The ways in which unconventional and traditional modes of participating in politics differ relate to the fact that the targets of unconventional political participation are powerful state actors (and to governments and international organizations of other countries – the recent climate change school strikes lead by young people serves as an example, here). Additionally, rather than following a fixed schedule, unconventional acts tend to happen occasionally, and usually for a specific reason (Rafail & Freitas, 2016), such as the march for free education (*#FreeEdNow*) organised by young people where they demanded free education to be funded by taxing the rich. Finally, these acts tend to make pressure on the actors being challenged, although they sometimes fail to achieve their goals, such as in the case of the recent young people's school strikes to fight climate change and bring awareness about the issue (for example, González-Hidalgo & Zografos, 2019).

The changing patterns of youth political participation and political engagement[4]

Much of the existing literature on youth political participation confirms that the 'millennial generation' or young people are less likely to vote in the elections than their older counterparts (Barrett & Pachi, 2019; Henn & Foard, 2012). It is also noticeable in other conventional political activities that young people are reluctant to participate in politics. It has been shown that young people have a weaker party identification (Gauja & Grömping, 2019; Mycock & Tonge, 2012) and, when compared with older people, less likely to join political parties (Grasso, 2018). They were also less likely to engage in traditional institutions, such as churches and labour unions (Aghazadeh & Mahmoudoghli, 2017; Kurtenbach & Pawelz, 2015) and are shown to interact less with politicians than older generations (Henn & Foard, 2012). Some studies also suggest that, when compared to older people, young people have a lower level of political knowledge (Finkel & Smith, 2011).

The hypothesis of youth apathy – that young people are apathetic with regards to politics – has been associated with the decline of youth engagement in conventional politics (Amnå et al., 2018). Political apathy refers to someone's lack of motivation for personal involvement with politics. Consequently, this could mean that political activities are seen as undesirable and not something young people are motivated to engage with (Cammaerts, Bruter, Banaji, Harrison, & Anstead, 2013). In fact, perceived as politically apathetic, young people are said to be disengaged from political activities (mainly traditional/formal forms of political participation), show low levels of political literacy and interest, and are really under-represented at all the

[4] I would like to acknowledge the work of Norhafiza Mohd Hed, namely her PhD thesis entitled "The Dynamic of Youth Political Participation in Southeast Asia: The Case of Malaysia" from where I took some of the examples used in this sub-section (The changing patterns of youth political participation and political engagement).

different government's levels. So, the question is why do young people appear to be politically inactive? A potential explanation of youth (dis)engagement could lie in the theory of life-cycle effects: the changes in maturity, physical and social experiences that take place as an individual's age influences their political attitudes (Prior, 2010). Research has been showing that youth tend to be less interested in politics because they are facing more important life tasks, (for example, starting a career and/or a family), but they will participate in politics when these issues resolve themselves (Martínez et al., 2019). Some studies have explored the idea that young people will start getting interested to participate in politics may arise when they begin to take on the role of adults in society and settle down (Smets, 2012). For example, youth may start voting when they get married and start a family in order to influence government policies. Moreover, while family is a key socializing agent that tends to develop children's political interest in becoming politically engaged adults (O'Toole, 2015), adolescents from very politicised families are more likely to diverge from the party preferences of their parents due to the new (or different) social context and political issues that affect young people more directly (Dinas, 2014), and because they usually have more idealistic views of the world than older generations young people tend to be marginalised for their approach to politics. While this approach has been extensively recognised, life-cycle theories alone do not provide sufficient explanations of the decline in formal politics in established democracies (Hooghe & Wilkenfeld, 2007).

Some authors suggest another potential explanation of youth political apathy other than the 'generational' or cohort effects (Grasso, 2014). For instance, members of the same generations who face similar experiences and encounter similarly vulnerable events tend to develop a shared set of attitudes that may differ from older

generations (Barrett & Pachi, 2019). Consequently, it could be anticipated that the apathetic young people of today will be the apathetic older generations of tomorrow. For example, Grasso (2014) shows how the Western European 1960s-70s generations who came of age in a more radical political context are more likely than both the younger generation coming of age in the 1980s and also those generations coming of age in the 1990s to demonstrate and petition and more likely than the 1990s generation to participate in social movement organizations. In their recent study, Grasso and Giugni (2016) show how extra-institutionalised participation such as protest activism cannot be the solution to raise participation levels or stemming the weakening of democracy, because both conventional and unconventional participation will continue to decline in future, based on the evidence that the politically active 1960s-1970s generation will be replaced by politically passive 1980s-1990s generation in the population.

Although young people may be seen as less active than some older generations in political activities such as voting or protest, this should not be taken as a sign of apathy towards politics in itself. Instead, some scholars (Henn et al., 2002; D. Marsh, O´Toole, & Jones, 2006; O'Toole, Lister, Marsh, Jones, & McDonagh, 2003; Phelps, 2005) underline a number of problems with 'mainstream survey-based' research (O'Toole et al., 2003, p. 46) or 'conventional political science' (Henn et al., 2002, p.170). Firstly, they criticised the methodological grounds of the mainstream literature for over-reliance on close-ended questions in measuring youth political participation and assuming that older people shared similar view about politics with young people (Henn et al., 2002; O'Toole et al., 2003). They also argue that heavy reliance on quantitative approaches in studying participation caused a very narrow concept of political participation to be embraced by mainstream research. They argue that the

failure of most of this research to go beyond conventional politics to consider other forms of political activity has resulted in young people being considered apathetic and undermining the importance of other ‘alternative’ forms of political action. For example, O’Toole et al., (2003) criticised the use of ‘top-down’ scientific approaches by arguing that it is difficult to determine youth disengagement without exploring how young people themselves define politics (p.46). This is because young people understand ‘politics’ in a different way from older generations (Quintelier, 2007; White, Bruce, & Ritchie, 2000). Only when researchers apply a qualitative approach to investigate youth participation would they be able to identify youth’s conception of political participation and find evidence for higher levels of youth political activism (Henn et al., 2002; D. Marsh et al., 2006). In this thesis, I consider O’Toole et al. (2003) and Henn et al. (2002) advices. Therefore, as these authors suggest, qualitative methods will be employed alongside quantitative techniques, and a broad concept of political engagement and youth-based definitions of politics will be explored, in order to include diverse political repertoires that lie outside mainstream politics if we are to better understand why young people are not interested and engaged in politics.

Different qualitative-based studies (Henn et al., 2005; Norris, 2007; Sloam, 2014), especially those conducted by authors who oppose the youth apathy thesis, make contrasting findings: young people support the democratic process and are politically engaged, and are indeed interested in political matters. Nevertheless, by participating in informal forms of political participation such as online actions, political consumerism, and single-issue groups that are not counted in some conceptions of ‘politics’ they are doing politics differently to older people. For example, Sloam (2013) found evidence that young Britons are more actively engaged in protest activism than their elders by pointing to their involvement in protests against

the Iraq war and in the Occupy movement. These new forms of political participation may be considered as “less political” (Quintelier, 2007, p.167) but they may be more attractive to youth.

Some scholars have pointed out that, far from being apathetic, young people are distinctly alienated from the political process, including its actors and institutions (Fahmy, 2017; Henn et al., 2005; Marsh et al., 2006) which leads them to be typically characterised as ‘engaged sceptics’ (Henn et al., 2002; O’Toole et al., 2003). Considering the perspective of youth alienation, there are some reasons why young people are alienated from politics. The first reason that is liked with young people’s alienation is related to lack of trust in political actors (for example, politicians) due to their unresponsiveness in prioritising the interests of young people and to fulfilling promises (Henn et al. 2002; Fahmy, 2006; Wilkinson and Mulgan, 1995). For example, research by Henn and Foard (2012) shows that less than half of the youth claimed that the government treated them fairly, and half of young people felt that politicians cared enough about their thoughts. Young people tend to perceive politicians in a very cynical light as only pursuing their own-self-interest, remote, and unresponsive. The second reason, is somehow linked with young people’s lack of political knowledge and understanding as one of the reasons behind youth political alienation (Delli Carpini, 2000; Henn & Foard, 2012; White et al., 2000). Consequently, young people are pictured as ignorant about how the political system and government function. According to White et al., (2000), this lack of knowledge about politics makes young people perceive politics as a complex and irrelevant subject, leaving them uninterested in participating. To some extent, politicians’ use of political jargon and ‘vague’ language fosters a deficit in young people’s understanding of politics. In particular, young people were unable to become interested and lacked knowledge to facilitate

political participation because of their little engagement with the sources of information such as political parties (Butler & Stokes, 1969; A. Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960) and the media (Bennett, 1997). In addition, the nature of the political system and parties (which are seen as too complicated), has undermined youth's capacity to influence political decisions (Sloam, 2014; Wattenberg, 2002). For example, some research suggests that political parties' members, including the younger ones, feel increasingly marginalised by highly centralised policymaking in both the Labour Party and the Conservative (for example, Seyd & Whiteley, 2002). Similarly, Marsh (1975) finds that, in developed countries like Britain, young people are blame the system (that is, democracy) for their dissatisfaction with living conditions. If the system does not provide the opportunity for young people to speak about their views, it discourages them from participating because they feel that their demands are not represented by their country's institutions. Sometimes, government-regulated policies are problematized in a way that does not reflect young people's interests. Therefore, there are times when the youth are increasingly criminalised by the state because of their participation in politics, particularly those actions that aim to challenge the social or political conditions (Bessant, 2016). For example, in 2010, UK's demonstration 'Fund Our Future' (FoF) saw the use of riot police, kettling and mass arrests against students protesting about government's austerity measures. In addition, the rise of individualisation has undermined the role of traditional parties and organisations in society (Giddens, 2013; Piven & Cloward, 2000). This is to say that political parties, which should serve as a central recruitment channel for party members to mobilize support for citizens and facilitate governance, have weakened as the candidate-centred or issue-centred approaches have become more of a priority to citizens, especially youth. Campaigns are now being channelled through the media,

rather than candidates directly speaking to the voters. Political parties are understood to be withering and politicians are viewed as detached from the people, in particularly youth. Additionally, Inglehart (1990) has argued that young people's values can no longer be understood in terms of the traditional left-right cleavage, but are increasingly dependent on single-issue politics (see also, Norris, 2002). According to Inglehart's post-materialism thesis (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005), this was due to a modernization process in which material well-being and physical security have been achieved so that there is a move to post-material concerns such as self-expression and emancipatory values, as well as priorities like individual freedom and quality of life.

This literature review on the contemporary patterns of youth political engagement and participation was drawn from evidence on the decline of young people's engagement in conventional politics in established democracies and summarised some of the main findings. Furthermore, most of this research provides comprehensive analyses using a combination of variables in examining the patterns of young people's political (dis) engagement. In the next sections, different conceptualisations of the concepts of political engagement and political participation will be explored.

Political engagement: Conceptual definitions and dilemmas

It has previously been argued that there is in existence a lack of adequately validated measures of youth political engagement (e.g., Albacete, 2014; Pontes et al., 2016) and that this raises the prospect of improper assessment leading to biased statistical conclusions. Consequently, there is a need to advance the field of assessment of young people's political engagement by taking a more robust psychometric approach, including the development of reliable, valid and sensitive methods of measurement.

However, before developing such an instrument, there is a need to clarify the definition of political engagement (Mueller, 2004) which allows the field to examine distinct conceptualizations both systematically and consistently. Moreover, when studying youth political engagement, it is crucial to decide which conceptual approach is going to be used. Given the lack of agreement on the definitions of some politically-related concepts such as civic engagement, political engagement, civic participation, and political participation (Ekman & Amnå, 2012), it is important to start working towards a definition of political engagement and to understand how it differs from these other concepts. This is because these different concepts relate to different phenomena. Thus, despite the fact that political and civic engagement appear to have different meanings (e.g., Adler & Goggin, 2005; Barrett & Zani, 2014), much research appears to fail in achieving such distinctions. Therefore, it is essential to clarify and critically examine the differences between the concepts of civic participation, political participation, civic engagement and political engagement.

Civic participation and civic engagement

The concepts of civic participation and civic engagement are often conflated in the literature (e.g., Adler & Goggin, 2005). The concept of civic participation can take an extensive variety of different forms. For example, Barrett and Brunton-Smith (2014) provide a relatively comprehensive operationalisation of the concept that includes several forms of civic participation. For instance, they claim that it may involve informally assisting the wellbeing of others in the community or making direct donations to charities or involvement in fundraising activities for good causes. These civic participation activities extend a previous definition of the construct offered by Zukin et al. (2006). There, the term refers to activity which is focused either on helping

others within a community, working on behalf of a particular community, solving a specific community problem, or participating in the life of a community more generally to achieve a particular aim such as improving the wellbeing of others (Barrett & Brunton-Smith, 2014; Barrett & Zani, 2014; Zukin et al., 2006). Such activities can include work which is undertaken either alone, or in co-operation with others (Barrett & Brunton-Smith, 2014).

Kahne and Sporte (2008) employed a five-item measure of civic participation in their study of the impact of civic learning opportunities on students' commitment to civic participation – a measure that was previously developed by Westheimer and Kahne (2004) - and its psychometric properties have been independently assessed by other authors (e.g., Lenzi et al., 2012). The items included in this measure are in line with the definitions of civic participation with the exception of one item, "In the next three years, I expect to be involved in improving my community".

In line with the definition given by Zukin et al (2006) and adopted by Barrett and Brunton-Smith (2014), Gil de Zúñiga, Valenzuela, and Weeks (2016) conceptualised civic participation taking into account the definition of civic culture previously developed by Almond and Verba (1963), which defined civic participation "as citizens' voluntary civic actions and activities that are not political in nature, pursuing to resolve community problems as a main objective" (p.4). The rationale used by Gil de Zuñiga and colleagues was to capture individuals' behaviours that aimed to foster community life and citizenship via charity donations, voluntary work for non-political groups, or by simply getting involved in community projects. Furthermore, Shah, Cho, Eveland, and Kwak (2005) give particular focus to social capital in their conceptualisation of civic participation, following other authors' definitions, where

participating in civic actions plays a central role in the functioning of democratic societies.

From the definitions considered, a specific pattern can be identified - namely a conceptualisation of civic participation as referring to community-oriented activities aiming to resolve problems and helping other people within that community. In their typology of different forms of (dis)engagement, involvement, civic engagement, and political participation (see Table 1), Ekman and Amnå (2012) added a different nuance to the concept of civic participation by introducing a political dimension that contrasts with the other conceptualisations considered so far. Moreover, their conceptualisation of civic participation provides an example of the ease with which politically-related concepts – in this case civic participation and political participation – often fuse together (Ekman and Amnå 2012). Indeed, the concept of civic engagement has been used to cover everything from giving money to charity and voting in elections, to participating in political rallies and marches (Berger, 2009; Van Deth, 2001), using social networks, interpersonal trust, and associational involvement (Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti, 1993).

Table 1. Typology of different forms of disengagement, involvement, civic engagement and political participation by Ekman and Amnå (2012)

	Non-participation (disengagement)		**Civil participation (latent-political)**		**Political participation (manifest)**		
						Activism (extra-parliamentary political participation)	
	Active forms (antipolitical)	Passive forms (apolitical)	Social Involvement (action)	Civic engagement (action)	Formal political participation	Legal/extra-parliamentary protests or actions	Illegal protests or actions
Individual forms	Non-voting; Actively avoiding reading newspapers or watching TV when it comes to political issues; Avoiding talking about politics; Perceiving politics as disgusting; Political disaffection.	Non-voting; Perceiving politics as uninteresting and unimportant; Political passivity.	Taking interest in politics and society; Perceiving politics as important.	Writing to an editor; Giving money to charity; Discussing politics and societal issues, with friends on the Internet; Reading newspapers and watching TV when it comes to political issues; Recycling.	Voting in elections and referenda; Deliberate acts of non-voting or blank voting; Contacting political representatives or civil servants; Running for holding public office; Donating money to political parties or organizations.	Buycotting, boycotting and political consumption; Signing petitions; Handing out political leaflets.	Civil disobedience; Politically motivated attacks on property.

Collective forms	Deliberate non-political lifestyles, e.g. hedonism, consumerism; In extreme cases, random acts of non-political violence (riots) reflecting frustration, alienation or social exclusion.	“Non-reflected” non-political lifestyle	Belonging to a group with societal focus; Identifying with a specific ideology and/or party; Life-style related involvement: music, group identity, clothes, et cetera; For example: veganism, right-wing, skinhead scene, or left-wing anarcho-punk scene.	Volunteering in social work, e.g. to support women’s shelter or to help homeless people; Charity work or faith – based community work; Activity within community based organizations.	Being a member of a political party, an organization, or a trade union; Actively involved within a party, an organization or a trade union (voluntary work or attend meetings).	Involvement in new social movements or forums; Demonstrating, participating in strikes, protests and other actions (e.g. street festivals with a distinct political agenda).	Civil disobedience actions; Sabotaging, obstructing roads and railways; Squatting in buildings; Participating in violent demonstrations or animal rights actions; Violent confrontations with political opponents or the police.

Alder and Goggin (2005) also highlighted the wide variety of activities encompassed within different notions of civic *engagement*. From their analysis of the literature, they proposed a definition of civic engagement as, "how an active citizen participates in the life of a community in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community's future" (Adler & Goggin, 2005, p. 241). Ehrlich (1997) defined civic engagement as the process of believing that individuals can and should make a difference in enhancing their community. This requires that an individual possesses particular knowledge, skills, and values necessary to make such a difference by promoting the quality of life in a community, through either political or non-political processes. However, Ehrlich focused his research on civic engagement specifically in community service (Ehrlich, 1997). An alternative definition by Astin and colleagues (2006) characterises civic engagement as "civic leadership, working with communities, volunteerism, charitable giving, and involvement with alma mater" (p. 2) which may positively impact communities by addressing and assisting with local needs (Astin et al., 2006). Civic engagement has also been more broadly defined as the engagement of an individual with the interests, goals, concerns, and common good of a community (Barrett & Zani, 2014).

Overall, apart from the lack of agreement in a single definition of civic engagement and civic participation, it has also been noted that both concepts are often used interchangeably and that there appears to be no distinction between the two. For example, the definition of civic engagement given by Adler and Goggin (2005) is very similar to the definitions for civic participation given by Zukin et al. (2006), Barrett and Brunton-Smith (2014) and Kahne and Sporte (2008). Moreover, while comparing the various definitions of civic participation and civic engagement, it can be argued that typically such definitions emphasise the actions that individuals take in their

respective communities and the potential impact of such actions. An exception is the conceptualisation offered by Ekman and Amnå (2012), who introduced a political dimension to civic *participation*. However, in the definitions of civic *engagement*, a greater focus on community service is given, contrary to the definitions of civic participation where the focus is either on community and/or politics. It should also be noted that after reviewing the literature on the concepts of civic participation and engagement, some authors (for example, Ball, 2005) use these concepts without defining them.

Political participation

Although the concept of political participation has been already introduced while examining the definitions of civic participation and civic engagement, there is still a need to further explore and understand the characteristics of this particular concept and compare it with the concept of political engagement. For that purpose, several definitions of political participation will be considered in this section (see Table 2).

When Verba, Nie, and Kim (1978) defined political participation they were referring to "those legal acts by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions that they take" (p.1). A similar definition is offered by Parry et al. (1992) who defined political participation as the "action by citizens which is aimed at influencing decisions which are, in most cases, ultimately taken by public representatives and officials" (p.16). Additionally, an almost identical approach is offered by Brady who defines political participation as "action by ordinary citizens directed toward influencing some political outcomes" (Brady, 1999). As with Verba et al. (1978), Brady considered that: (i) political participation should first-and-foremost be considered as manifested and

observable actions or activities in which people voluntary participate; (ii) “people” means ordinary citizens, not political elites or civil servants; and, (iii) the concept refers to deliberate attempts to influence people in power to make a difference. Similarly, Barrett and Zani (2014) also used the term political participation to denote behaviours that have the intent to influence the content or the implementation of specific public policies, or more indirectly to influence the selection of individuals who are responsible for making those policies.

Table 2. Definitions and dimensionality of the concepts of political participation and political engagement (offline and online)

Concept	Author	Definition	Dimensions
Political Participation	Verba et al. (1978)	Political participation is defined as "those legal acts by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions that they take" (p.1).	Voting Participating in campaign activities Contacting public officials Participating in cooperative or communal activities
	Parry et al. (1992)	Political participation as the "action taken by citizens which is aimed at influencing decisions which are, in most cases, ultimately taken by public representatives and officials" (p.16).	Not applicable or available (N/A)
	Brady (1999)	Political participation as "action by ordinary citizens directed toward influencing some political outcomes" (p.737). Moreover, political participation should first-and-foremost be considered as manifested and observable actions or activities in which people voluntary participate; "people" means ordinary citizens, not political elites or civil servants; the concept refers to deliberate attempts to influence the people in power to make a difference.	N/A
	Teorell et al. (2007)	Adopted the definition provided by Brady (1999): "Action by ordinary citizens directed toward influencing some political outcomes" (p.737).	Electoral participation Consumer participation Party activity Protest activity Contact activity
	Fu et al. (2016)	Political participation is based on two propositions: firstly, that the individual's political participation behaviour is represented by a holistic list of political activities (either conventional, online, manifest or latent forms of political	Voting Party activity Consumer participation Protest activity

		participation); secondly, that the role of online media in political participation varies across a set of political activities and needs to be contextualised.	Contacting Latent participation (this dimension encompasses three sub-dimensions: information-seeking; information dissemination; content contribution).
	Barrett and Zani (2014)	Political participation as the behaviours that have the intent or the effect of influencing the content or the implementation of specific public policies, or more indirectly at influencing the selection of the individuals who are responsible for making those policies.	N/A
	Petrosyan (2016)	Political participation as the “involvement of citizens (in the broader sense including public subjects like organizations, groups, etc.) in political processes, decision making ceremonies, as well as citizens influence on the formation of political systems and institutions, their operation, drafting political decision” (p.206)	N/A
Political Engagement	Barrett and Zani (2014)	Political engagement as the engagement of an individual with political institutions, processes, and decision-making.	Cognitive political engagement Emotional political engagement Behavioural political engagement
	McCartney et al. (2013)	Political engagement as a specific type of civic engagement that refers more explicitly to politically-oriented activities that seek a direct impact on political issues, systems, and structures.	Political engagement
	Conroy et al. (2012)	Political engagement as offline conventional forms of political participation and political knowledge.	Offline conventional political participation Political knowledge
	Carreras (2016)	Political engagement distinguished into two different forms: cognitive political engagement and active engagement. As cognitive political engagement, the author refers to citizens’ psychological attachment to the political system. The active political engagement should manifest itself in a higher probability of contacting politicians, attending meetings of political parties, and participating in town public meetings.	Cognitive political engagement Active political engagement

	Eckstein, Noak and Gniewosz (2012)	The term political engagement is used when referring to the attitudinal dimension (i.e., attitudes toward political engagement).	Political engagement
	Gibson and Cantijoch (2013)	Four main aspects of political engagement: "e-party" including activities specifically relating to electoral campaigns (e.g., registering as a supporter of a party); "e-targeted" encompassing traditional online political activities (e.g., signing online petitions); "e-news" capturing a more passive form of engagement (e.g., paying attention to online new sources); and "e-expressive" encompassing online activities related to the social media (e.g., posting comments of a political nature on a blog), thereby tapping into web-based political communication.	e-party e-targeted e-news e-expressive

Notes: N/A: not available.

These definitions of political participation are quite similar and each relate to the actions taken by citizens for the purposes of influencing governments (at local, regional, national or other levels). A more recent definition of political participation was suggested by Petrosyan (2016) as the “involvement of citizens (in the broader sense including public subjects like organizations, groups, etc.) in political processes, decision making ceremonies, as well as citizens [sic] influence on the formation of political systems and institutions, their operation, drafting political decision [sic]” (p. 206). Here, the chief differences are between the idea of participation as taking an action towards influencing politics present in some of the oldest definitions of political participation (for example, Brady, 1999; Parry et al., 1992; Teorell et al., 2007; Verba et al., 1978) and the idea of participation as involvement in politics (Petrosyan, 2016) in more recent definitions (see Table 2).

Examining these five definitions, the concept of political participation appears to have consistency from definition to definition. Additionally, various typologies of political participation have also been developed. For instance, Verba and Nie (1972) listed four types of participation, including voting, participating in campaign activity (including membership in or work for political parties and organisations as well as donating money to such parties or groups), contacting public officials, and participating in cooperative or communal activities (all forms of participation that focused on issues in the local community). Teorell et al. (2007) proposed a broader typology (based on Verba and Nie’s work) encompassing five activities: (i) electoral participation, (ii) consumer participation (including donating money to charity, boycotting and political consumption, and signing petitions), (iii) party activity (being a member of, active within, doing voluntary work for, or donating money to, a political party), (iv) protest activity, and (v) contact activity (e.g., citizens writing to politicians

or civil servants in order to try to influence the political agenda and outcomes, and the individuals themselves either in local or national government).

However, Ekman and Amnå (2012) observed that the typology developed by Teorell and colleagues (2007) was not optimal because it failed to consider *latent* forms of political participation. Thus, they developed a new typology where they differentiated between latent and manifest forms of political participation. They suggest that this notion of latency is important because it acknowledges that many activities that citizens actually undertake may not be directly classified as political participation (for example, being a member of a charity organization, volunteering, watching the news on television, or being an environmentalist), but at the same time they could be of great significance for future activities of conventional types of political participation. In other words, a lot of citizens' interest in the contemporary democracies appears to result in activities that are not directly aiming at influencing the people in political power, but activities that somehow entail involvement in the society by discussing politics in general or consuming political news on television. This involvement is important for their future participation in a political demonstration or even for voting. In light of this, Ekman and Amnå (2012) tried to improve the understanding of the changing patterns of political participation, low electoral turnout, and eroding public confidence in the institutions of representative democracy, by taking into account citizens' political (i.e. manifest) and "pre-political" (or latent) behaviour in their typology. They argue that this notion of pre-political behaviour is crucial for the understanding of new forms of political behaviour and the prospects for political participation. This is important because, in addition to political action that comprises deliberative attempts to influence people in power, many citizens are

engaged in activities that entail involvement in society beyond the immediate concern for one's family and friends.

Furthermore, Ekman and Amnå (2012) argue that political participation can take many different forms, both conventional and non-conventional. *Conventional* forms of political participation include voting, election campaigning, donating money to a political party, standing for election, and other related actions. Other forms of political participation take place outside of the electoral arena. These *non-conventional* forms of political participation include signing petitions, participating in political demonstrations, protests and marches, writing political articles or blogs, and daubing political graffiti or buildings (Ekman & Amnå, 2012). Both conventional and non-conventional political participation can be undertaken either alone (for example, voting, writing a political article) or collectively in cooperation with other people (for example, election campaigning, marching for a cause). This distinction between conventional and non-conventional forms of political participation is also reflected in the work of others such as Barrett and Zani (2014), Albacete (2014) or Zukin et al (2006).

Van Deth (2014) has also proposed a set of seven decision rules to address the question of whether a specific phenomenon may be considered as political participation or not. These rules cover different questions which should be asked in order to help determine what constitutes political participation, including: (i) whether we are dealing with behaviours, (ii) whether the activity is voluntary or not, (iii) whether the activity is undertaken by citizens, (iv) whether the activity is located in the sphere of government or state or politics, (v) whether the activity is targeted at the sphere of government or state or politics, (vi) whether the activity is aimed at solving collective or community problems, and (vii) whether the activity is used to express

political aims and intentions of participants. With this set of rules, a conceptual map was developed which results in the depiction of four analytically unambiguous types of political participation, as well as various sub-variants. According to the author, the four types of political participation systematically and efficiently cover the complete range of modes of political participation, and offer a comprehensive conceptualisation of political participation without excluding future innovations inherent to a vibrant democracy. Following van Deth's political participation conceptual map, Theocharis and van Deth (2016) proposed to expand the debate concerning the conceptualisation of political participation, by advancing the understanding of emerging and new forms of political participation by systematically establishing their conceptual and empirical relevance within the broader repertoire of participation. They concluded that old and new forms of political participation are systematically integrated into a multi-dimensional taxonomy covering voting, digitally networked participation, institutionalised participation, protest, civic participation, and consumerist participation. Furthermore, they concluded that whereas creative, expressive, and individualised modes appear to be expansions of protest activities, digitally networked forms clearly establish a new and distinct mode of political participation that aligns with the general repertoire of political participation.

Finally, it should be noted that recent typologies of political participation tend to be broader than earlier versions, although from the definitions alone, a complete picture cannot be envisioned. As young people are disengaging from more traditional forms of politics, a gradual transformation of modes of political participation and involvement appears to be taking place, and some authors (Ekman and Amnå, 2012; Barrett and Brunton-Smith, 2014), have started to distinguish between conventional, formal, and traditional forms of political participation and non-conventional, informal,

and alternative forms, and between latent and manifest forms of this construct. Moreover, other authors (van Deth, 2014) have also contributed to the debates around the conceptualisation of political participation by developing a set of rules designed to assist researchers with identifying a political participation act. Rather than a steady withdrawal from political life, these new modes of participation appear to reflect the actions and preferences of a new type of post-modern, critical citizen, who still supports basic democratic values, but who rejects conventional systems of representation and mediation, and prefers instead to participate in more horizontal and autonomous ways (Danziger & Smith, 2015).

Political engagement

As with the concepts of civic engagement, civic participation and political participation, *political engagement* also has broader and more detailed definitions. In terms of general definitions, Conroy and colleagues (2012) described political engagement as offline conventional forms of political participation (that does not involve political actions engaged with on the Internet) as well as political knowledge. They assessed political participation by actions such as whether the individual had plans to vote in the next general election, had tried to persuade someone to vote, had donated money to a political campaign, or had previously worked as a paid employee for a candidate's campaign. To assess knowledge, they considered whether the individual provided the correct answers to questions such as, 'Which party holds the majority in the House of Representatives?', or 'Can you vote online in a presidential election?' (Conroy, Feezell, & Guerrero, 2012). According to Carreras (2016), political engagement captures a variety of different attitudes and behaviours comprising two different forms – cognitive political engagement and active

engagement. Carreras argued that cognitive political engagement refers to citizens' psychological attachment to the political system. As an example, a citizen who is cognitively engaged should be politically interested, seek political information, and is more likely to feel attached to a particular political party. On the other hand, active political engagement should manifest itself in a higher probability of contacting politicians, attending meetings of political parties, and participating in town public meetings (2016, p.7). By differentiating between the cognitive and the active, the author creates two intensity levels of political engagement. For example, according to this distinction, reading information about Brexit would be considered as a cognitive political engagement action, whereas participating in a meeting to discuss the pros and cons of Brexit would be considered as active political engagement.

In their study of adolescents' attitudes toward political engagement and willingness to participate in politics, Eckstein, Noack, and Gniewosz (2012) used the term 'engagement' when referring to the attitudinal dimension, such as attitudes toward political engagement. When using the term attitudes towards political engagement, the authors are referring to the belief whether people in general should become engaged in political activities to affect change, for example join a political party in order to change the way it works. The concept of political engagement was assessed by using a scale developed by Fisher and Kohr (2002) and comprises four items: (i) there are not too many, but too little [sic] people politically active in Germany; (ii) somebody who complains about political parties should join a party to change it; (iii) we should take the chance to participate in politics; and (iv) we should participate more in politics to influence political decisions. However, it is important to highlight that what Eckstein and colleagues actually assessed were the *attitudes* toward political engagement, and not the concept of political engagement itself.

Recently, McCartney and colleagues (2013) have conceptualised political engagement as a specific type of civic engagement, which they postulate as a means of participating in, and seeking to influence the life of, a community. Political engagement refers more explicitly to politically-oriented activities that seek a direct impact on political issues, systems, and structures. As an example, they contrast "participating in a community recycling program" with "working to enact community laws regarding recycling" (McCartney, Bennion, & Simpson, 2013, p.14). Both demonstrate civic engagement, but only the latter indicates political engagement. Another definition of political engagement was presented in the "*European Processes Influencing Democratic Ownership and Participation*" (PIDOP) project. Here, Barrett (2012) contended that engagement could be considered as a precondition to participation, and suggested that a state of engagement encompasses behaviours, but also includes a psychological dimension where individuals' cognitions and emotions are also taken into account. Thus, assuming that political engagement involves participatory behaviours which are directed towards the polity, someone may also have interest in, pay attention to and have knowledge, opinions or feelings concerning political matters without necessarily participating in any overt actions towards the polity. In other words, individuals may be cognitively or emotionally engaged without necessarily being behaviourally engaged. For example, cognitive engagement can be demonstrated via levels of political or civic knowledge, or levels of attention to media sources such as newspapers, news on the Internet, and the extent to which an individual discusses politics or civic affairs with family or friends; emotional engagement may be demonstrated by the intensity of feelings about political or civic matters.

Following Barrett's (2012) conceptualisation of political engagement, Emler (2011) proposed that political engagement should be regarded as a developmental

process, the central element of which is some driver to pay attention to politics. In a discussion concerning the essence of being a political actor in a multicultural society, Emler offered the view that the two prime candidates for the motivational role of being politically engaged are interest in politics and a sense of civic duty, and that these can work either in combination or as alternatives. Attentiveness to what is happening in the political arena or active information searching (as indicated by such activities as reading articles about politics in newspapers, reading literature produced by political parties, listening to broadcasts specifically about politics, and discussing politics with others), in its turn underpins the extent to which individuals may become politically informed. Political information – how much people know about politics – then provides the basis on which opinions are formed or judgements are made. Opinions in their turn may then become organised into more integrated, overarching structures. The author proposes that such structures are in effect the bases for the more stable political identities, and therefore for someone to become a political actor.

Cognitive, emotional and behavioural political engagement

Although political engagement typically involves participatory behaviours, not all engagement is behavioural (Barrett, 2012). Consequently, individuals can be cognitively or emotionally engaged without necessarily being behaviourally engaged. The cognitive and emotional dimensions are understood by Barrett (2012) as *psychological* engagement while the behavioural dimension of political engagement is what the author considers as political participation.

Regarding the different dimensions of political engagement, namely cognitive, emotional and behavioural, there is a clear distinction between psychological engagement (cognitive and emotional engagement) and political participation but that

is not the case when addressing the differences between cognitive and emotional engagement (Barrett, 2012; Barrett & Brunton-Smith, 2014; Barrett & Zani, 2014). For the authors, political participation (which is the behavioural dimension) takes many forms from conventional (for example, voting or election campaigning) to non-conventional actions (for example, participating in political demonstrations or writing political articles or blogs) (for more details on the conceptualisation of political participation see Chapter 2, section Political engagement: conceptual definitions and dilemmas, sub-section Political participation). As different forms of *psychological* engagement, the authors suggested, for example, paying attention to or following political or civic events, having political or civic knowledge or beliefs; holding opinions about political or civic matters; having feelings about political or civic matters; having political or civic skills; understanding political or civic institutions; understanding or holding political or civic values (Barrett & Zani, 2012).

The insights provided by Barrett (2012) and elsewhere do not offer detailed distinctions between the cognitive and emotional dimensions. However, work conducted by other authors like Fredricks and colleagues (2005) and by Nystrand and Gamoran (1991) in the area of student engagement can be a useful way to help inform and clarify those distinctions in this thesis. Fredricks and colleagues (2005) developed a scale to assess students' engagement based on the definition of student engagement proposed by Nystrand and Gamoran (1991) that understood engagement as a multidimensional construct encompassing two different types, namely procedural and substantive engagement [5]. Although Fredricks and colleagues (2005) followed

[5] Nystrand and Gamoran (1991) define student engagement as having two dimensions, namely procedural and substantive. The first (procedural engagement) reflects an accommodation to classroom rules and regulations. The other type of engagement, substantive engagement, involves sustained commitment to the content and issues of academic study. In class, for example, procedural engagement is characterized by normal, unproblematic, but otherwise undistinguished behaviour; hence, procedurally engaged students are less likely to be offtask than disengaged students. By contrast,

Nystrand and Gamoran's work, they operationalised engagement as having three dimensions, namely behavioural, emotional and cognitive components (see Fredricks et al., 2005 for more details on how it was adapted).

Fredricks et al. (2005) suggested that behavioural engagement draws on the idea of participation, including involvement in academic, social, or extracurricular activities; which are considered crucial for achieving positive academic outcomes. Emotional engagement, on the other hand, draws on the idea of appeal to emotion (Fredricks et al., 2005). It also includes positive and negative reactions to teachers, classmates, academics, or the school and is presumed to create ties to the institution and to influence willingness to complete academic work. Other scholars conceptualise emotional engagement as identification with the school, which includes belonging, or a feeling of being important to the school, and valuing, or an appreciation of success in school-related outcomes (Finn, 1989; Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Voelkl, 1997). Finally, cognitive engagement draws on the idea of investment; it incorporates being thoughtful and being willing to exert the necessary effort for comprehension of complex ideas and mastery of difficult skills. In regard to cognitive engagement, definitions from the school engagement literature conceptualize it in terms of a psychological investment in learning, a desire to go beyond the requirements of school,

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substantively engaged students may well ask more questions than other students, especially about the content of study, and not just about how many words they need to write, or whether they may use pencil instead of pen (which would be questions typically asked by procedurally engaged students). According to Nystrand and Gamoran (1991), the substantive engagement transcends the procedural engagement which means that procedural engagement can be understood as a first level of engagement, followed by a second level that is the substantive engagement. In other words, procedural engagement lasts only as long as the tasks themselves, whereas substantive engagement is concerned with the quality of students' schoolwork, the investment they put in the class activities (which can ultimately lead to their mastery of those activities) and their interest and willingness to know more about a specific topic or task. Compared to more recent studies (for example Fredricks et al., 2005) the substantive engagement (Nystrand and Gamoran, 1991) would correspond to the cognitive dimension of engagement (see Ben-Eliyahu et al., 2018 or Fredricks et al., 2005).

and a preference for challenge (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Newmann, Wehlage, & Lamborn, 1992).

In this thesis, I suggest that youth political engagement encompasses two dimensions, namely cognitive and emotional, and that political participation (behavioural dimension) is a separate concept from engagement (see Chapters 5 and 6 for more details about this distinction between engagement and participation). The way cognitive and emotional engagement was defined and operationalised in this thesis was mainly influenced by the work of Fredricks and colleagues (2005) and Maroco and colleagues (2016), who use the same instrument to assess students engagement in their studies (developed by Fredricks et al., 2005).

To develop the *Youth Political Engagement Scale,* the behavioural dimension (political participation) is defined as the behaviours that have the intent or the effect of influencing the content or the implementation of specific public policies, or more indirectly at influencing the selection of the individuals who are responsible for making those policies (Barrett, 2012). Cognitive engagement is defined in this thesis as young people's investment and willingness to exert the necessary efforts for the comprehension and mastering of complex ideas and difficult skills related to political issues. For this conceptualisation, Fredricks and colleagues (2005) definition of students' cognitive engagement was adapted keeping the idea of investment in learning, in this case about politics, and the willingness to exert effort for understanding difficult ideas around politics or about what is going on in politics. A similar logic was used for the definition of emotional engagement, which in this thesis is defined as reflecting both the positive and negative reactions to politician's actions and instructions, other people's opinions about politics, perceptions of party

belonging, and beliefs about the value of politics (also adapted from the definition of emotional student engagement from Fredricks et al., 2005).

Regarding the different items that belong to the cognitive and emotional dimensions, some items were adapted from the student's engagement scales (Fredricks et al., 2005; Maroco, Maroco, Campos, & Fredricks, 2016). For example, for the cognitive dimension Fredricks and colleagues (2005) used items like 'I try to watch TV shows about things we do in school' (p. 319), that was adapted in this thesis as 'I usually watch political debates (e.g., on television, Youtube or Facebook)' (see Appendices, items list on Appendix 4). In the case of emotional engagement, Maroco and colleagues (2016) used an item 'I discuss with my colleagues about possible was to improve our coursework/school' (p. 6) that was adapted in this thesis as 'Discuss with colleagues possible ways to improve young people's political engagement and participation' (see sub-section *Operationalising young people's political engagement*, Table 3. Operationalisation of political engagement and political participation). The same logic was applied for more items used in the questionnaire, and for those that were not adapted from the student's engagement scales I based myself on the definitions of cognitive and emotional engagement to best allocate the items to each dimension.

A more detailed set of examples on different items that belong to the cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions of political engagement is evidenced later in this Chapter under the heading of Operationalising young people's political engagement (Table 3).

Online political participation and engagement

The existing literature uses different terms when referring to these concepts of political participation and political engagement on the Internet. For example, when referring to political participation, some authors use the concept e-participation (Cantijoch, Cutts, & Gibson, 2016), while others label it digitally networked participation (Theocharis, 2015). The majority of papers referring to these two concepts in the online environment simply refer to them as online political participation and online political engagement (e.g., Dalisay, Kushin, & Yamamoto, 2016; Ekström & Shehata, 2016; Fu, Wong, Law, & Yip, 2016; Gil de Zúñiga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012; Skoric, Ying, & Ng, 2009). However, for the purpose of this particular analysis, it is important to understand whether or not there are conceptual differences between the constructs of political participation and political engagement, offline and online.

Typically, existing definitions of both online political participation and online political engagement are adapted from the offline versions of these concepts (e.g., Skoric et al., 2009), and the majority of authors assume that online political participation activities represent new forms of political participation in general (Gibson and Cantijoch, 2013; Theocharis, 2015). Some studies have referred to online political participation as citizens' use of the Internet as a new medium for engaging in politics, or as an innovative medium for engaging in politics, or even as an extension of conventional modes of political participation (e.g., Gil De Zúñiga, Puig-I-Abril, & Rojas, 2009; Theocharis, 2015). Various approaches to online engagement include searching for online political information, contacting politicians via the Internet (di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006), donating money online to political parties, or petitioning online (Anduiza, Gallego, & Cantijoch, 2010). Additionally, Fu et al. (2016) argue that existing definitions and typologies of political participation have not taken into

account the change in the modes of participation in online platforms. In other words, the authors argue that when defining and operationalising political participation, researchers should take appreciate that in present contexts, individuals may perform some political activities online as well as offline (for example, signing petitions). Ekman and Amnå (2012) and Fu et al. (2016) emphasised that latent forms of political participation have not previously been considered when operationalising political participation, and that they should be included. Additionally, Fu and colleagues highlighted that in many contemporary societies, these latent forms of political participation are usually enabled by online platforms, with for instance, online political discussions or mobilizations actualised through social networking sites such as *Facebook* (Fu et al., 2016). However, the Internet also creates opportunities to fashion unique forms of participation that are otherwise difficult, costly, or even impossible to achieve by conventional means. Such methods of political participation may include circulating messages about public affairs via e-mail, posting political thoughts on social media, setting up online groups to mobilize like-minded people to join an activity, and/or using online video or animation to voice opinion (Winneg, 2009).

When operationalising political participation, Fu et al. (2016) considered six dimensions that distinguish between observable political participation (voting, party activity, consumer participation, protest activity, and contacting) and latent political participation (information-seeking, information dissemination, and content contribution). These features are presented in Table 2. In the dimension labelled as latent participation, the authors considered only those political activities that were undertaken online, such as discussing politics online or forwarding an email with a political content. Gibson and Cantijoch (2013) have suggested that similar to offline political engagement, online political engagement includes a variety of Internet-based

political activities. They considered online political engagement as comprising four main lines of political engagement that encompassed conventional and alternative (as well as passive and active) forms of online political participation (see Table 2) (Gibson and Cantijoch, 2013).

These discussions of the various conceptualisations of online political participation (Fu et al., 2016) and online political engagement (Gibson & Cantijoch, 2013) suggest that there is no clear distinction offered within the literature between the different activities that participation and engagement address. Furthermore, it is even more difficult to distinguish between online versions of participatory and engaged forms of political behaviours than is the case for offline versions.

Comparing the concepts of political participation and political engagement

As Eckstein et al. (2012) have noted, the terms 'political engagement' and 'political participation' are usually understood to have a similar meaning and, therefore, are not usually differentiated as to their content. Barrett (2012) conceptualises political engagement by taking into account the various dimensions of engagement in its broadest sense – and as applied in other areas such as education or marketing, and comprising emotional, cognitive and behavioural aspects (see also Schaufeli, 2013). In particular, Barrett considers the *behavioural* dimension of political engagement to encompass the actions taken to influence politics, and consequently factors-in the concept of political participation in the operationalisation of political engagement. Furthermore, when reflecting on the distinction between online forms of political participation and political engagement, the boundaries between these two concepts are notably more blurred than in the offline reality, in large part because of the passive connotation of political online activities. There is widespread debate concerning this

distinction. For instance, researchers are divided on whether or not online activities such as giving a “Like” on a *Facebook* page with political content could be considered as a form of political involvement, and indeed whether such behaviour illustrates engagement or participation (for example, compare: Gamson and Sifry, 2013; Karpf, 2010). Liking something on *Facebook* is an action (participation), but it involves considerably less intensity and effort than voting in an election or participating in a community meeting. However - and especially for young people - social media and social networking sites are becoming key spaces to perform their daily activities, so there is also the need to encompass such a lifestyle in definitions and theories.

We can infer from this critical examination of the concepts of political participation and political engagement as presented in the literature, that these conceptualizations can be grouped into two distinct categories. Firstly, those that use the concepts of ‘political participation’ and ‘political engagement’ interchangeably (Cantijoch, Cutts and Gibson, 2016; Dalton, 2008), and secondly, those that clearly distinguish the concepts of political participation and political engagement (Barret, 2011; Barrett & Brunton-Smith, 2014; Carreras, 2016).

Comparing political engagement with civic engagement

The forms of political engagement appear to differ in terms of their goals, the places in which they occur, and the level of effort entailed. In the literature, political engagement usually concerns influencing government policy and political institutions. In contrast, civic engagement aims to achieve a public good in the interests of a community or within non-governmental organisations, and rarely involves electoral politics (Adler and Goggin, 2005; Barrett and Brunton-Smith, 2014).

The boundaries between political and civic engagement are nonetheless, not entirely clear. While civic engagement occurs largely outside of the domains of elected officials and government action, it can have important consequences for matters with which the government is also concerned, such as public safety, homelessness, education, and even national security (Zukin et al., 2006). Furthermore, Putnam (1993, 2000) has argued that an effective democratic public sector depends upon the existence of a strong civic sector, because there is a strong link between the government and citizens' civic engagement, for example the case of the relation between a decentralized government and its network of voluntary groups and associations (Skocpol, 1999).

In contemporary societies, it is becoming easier to discern increasingly diverse and complex participatory repertoires that combine institutionalized and non-institutionalized, collective and individualized, and public and private types of participation, taking into account the significant diversity of actions that could be understood as political. Some scholars warn that expanded typologies will lead to "a theory of everything" (van Deth, 2001), blurring the distinctions between political and non-political activities. While some authors strictly focus on expanding (institutionalized and non-institutionalized) "political" forms that only take into account activities and behaviours aiming to impact political institutions and politicians, others see the contours of an "engaged citizenship" that include both political and wider social participation (Dalton, 2008). Additionally, some have claimed that actions and behaviours conducted in a community could serve as a precursor to political engagement (Ekman & Amnå, 2012).

Discourses and discussions concerning political disengagement and non-participation

Barrett and Brunton-Smith (2014) noted an important conceptual distinction between young people who are engaged with, and those who may be considered disengaged from, politics - especially formal (electoral) politics. They claim that disengagement is displayed when (for example) an individual does not exhibit any of the characteristics of engagement, such as reading political news or participating in a rally. They also highlighted that being apolitical is not the same as being anti-political. Essentially, the "apolitical" are those disengaged individuals who consider politics to be uninteresting or boring, and who therefore feel no desire or need to participate or to make their voices heard. In contrast, the "anti-political" are those who might refuse to engage with, or participate in, politics by any means, perhaps because they view politics as fundamentally objectionable, corrupt or dishonest (Barrett & Zani, 2014; Ekman & Amnå, 2012).

In his article entitled "The politics of youthful antipolitics", Farthing (2010) contends that the distinction between engaged and disengaged people is shaped by the context of young people's political participation. Using Beck's (2001) risk theory, Farthing suggests that viewing young people as radically *unpolitical* might have the potential to empower young people's aversion to politics more constructively, in such a way that their position of not participating would be recognized without censure, implying that young people's rejection of formal politics is considered a form of political action in itself. For that, he noted that young people's states of engagement and disengagement have to be considered as occurring simultaneously. Characterising young people as radically unpolitical foresees new "agendas for youthful politics, new spheres of power and novel forms of action, including, powerfully, the ability to do nothing" (Farthing 2010; p. 9).

Moreover, following the conceptual distinction of politically engaged/disengaged young people, O'Toole (2003) claimed that there is a need to investigate young people's own conceptions of the political, take a more complex view of non-participation, and explore the specific circumstances and experiences of young people. Furthermore, there are several authors who have already addressed young people's understanding of politics (Henn et al. 2002), their conception of political participation (Henn and Oldfield, 2016; Ataman et al. 2012; Sant, 2015), and what being politically interested and engaged represents for them (Sveningsson, 2016).

O'Toole (2003) claims that there are three problems that tend to inhibit a fuller understanding of the complexities of youth non-participation. The first problem, also identified by Henn et al. (2002), is that research into political engagement tends to operate within a rather narrow conception of 'the political' which is effectively imposed upon the research participants, due to the dominance of quantitative survey research methods. When using such an approach, little attempt is made to explore how people themselves define politics. The second problem is that in much of the empirical literature, non-participation is routinely seen as evidence of political apathy, yet non-participation is a much more complex phenomenon (see also Farthing, 2010). For instance, it is not clear why people do not participate – whether this is due to apathy, alienation, contentment or because people choose to participate in ways which research has not identified (see Fox, 2015). Thirdly, there are insufficient youth-specific explanations for declining political engagement among young people. Most of the cited reasons for why people appear to be 'tuning out' - such as cynicism about politicians, lack of choices between parties, dissatisfaction with local government procedures – might equally apply to adults.

In the remaining part of this chapter, there is an attempt to tackle the first problem as identified by O'Toole by developing a definition of political engagement that clearly identifies the main aspects of what being engaged entails, and which distinguishes between a state of engagement and participation. Although the second and third issues identified by O'Toole (2003) are not directly addressed, this chapter creates a means to resolve those two problems. With respect to the second problem, a scale to assess political engagement among young people will be developed (in Chapter 5), and by doing so issues related to disengagement are taken into account; this allows for developing of an understanding, for example, of whether or not there are different stages of political disengagement and how they may differ from non-political participation behaviours. Therefore, based on those patterns of disengagement, a further potential explanation of young people's disengagement with politics could be achieved, which will help to resolve O'Toole's third problem.

Towards a conceptualisation of political engagement

Concept formation: how to know if a concept is a good concept

After carefully mapping out the existing definitions for the concept of political engagement and before moving on to the operationalisation for an updated concept of political engagement, it is also important to understand what features are considered to comprise a "good" concept, so that it can be properly operationalised. According to Gerring (1999), the term 'conceptualization' is a synonym for conceptual explanation, and those concepts acquire meaning within a conceptual framework such as a theory or a model. Following the criteria set out by Gerring, various steps can be taken to ensure that conceptualization is pareto-optimal, so that beyond a specific point, improving the performance of a concept on one dimension will imply losses on other

dimensions. For instance, greater parsimony (the shortness of a term and of the number of its attributes) could result in reduced differentiation, as fewer attributes are mobilized to distinguish this concept from others; therefore, concepts need to be formed in relation to their purpose in a specific research context. In other words, the process of creating concise conceptual definitions may lead to a generalization of the construct being defined. Gerring (1999) therefore suggests that a concept's definition must take into account terminology already existing in the specific research area of research.

As part of this process, Gerring (1999) identified eight evaluation criteria related to the functions fulfilled by concepts. The first criterion is *familiarity* which refers to how recognisable the concept is to a lay or academic audience. The concept of democracy, can used as an example to illustrate this first criterion. Being used for decades, it can be considered as a familiar concept and easy to understand by both lay and academic population (Goertz, 2006). *Resonance* is where people are able to identify what the construct represents. For example, using again the concept of Democracy, it takes many different forms in the real world but it has nevertheless been helpful for social researchers to use this concept to refer to the common and distinctive features of democratic political systems, because the concept of Democracy allows us to refer to democratic political systems without continually having to list all the feature we have in mind (6 & Bellamy, 2011) because individuals are able to identify what Democracy represents. The third criterion, *parsimony* is associated with the length and economy of the concept, and with its list of defining attributes. For example, looking at the different conceptualisations of political participation in Table 2, comparing the definition given by Verba et al. (1978) of political participation as "those legal acts by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of

governmental personnel and/or actions that they take" (p.1) and the one given by Teorell et al. (2007) – political participation as the "actions by ordinary citizens directed toward influencing some political outcomes" (p.737); both are relatively short but in terms of parsimony the second one would fulfil the third criteria better. This is because the second one is shorter, but still contains a similar meaning of what political participation is when compared with Verba's conceptualisation.

Coherence addresses the internal consistency of the instances and attributes of a concept and of how these are logically related. The concept sense of community[6] (McMillan & Chavis, 1986), is a good example on how all the attributes are logically interlinked and all converge to the same idea, showing coherence and internal consistency to the concept being measured. To understand how the instances and the attributes are differentiated - or how bounded and operationalisable the concept is - Gerring (1999) proposed an additional criterion, *differentiation***.** Using civic engagement's definition to illustrate how differentiation would be identified in a concept, as it was conceptualised by Barrett and Zani (2014) (as the engagement of an individual with the interests, goals, concerns, and common good of a community), it bonds the concept of civic engagement by excluding from its definitions all the participative actions that have been included in previous definitions of civic engagement (see Chapter 2, section *Civic participation and civic engagement*). By delimiting what civic engagement is, it will lead to a more accurate operationalisation of the concept, being easier to identify the items that better assess each of the concept's dimension (see Barrett and Zani, 2014 for the complete operationalisation of civic engagement). The sixth criterion, *depth* explores the number of accompanying

[6] McMilland and Chavis (1986) defined sense of community as the "feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (p.9).

properties that are shared by the instances under definition. Because the larger purpose of the concept formation is not simply to enhance the clarity of communication, but also the efficiency of communication, the greater the number of properties shared by the phenomena in the extension, the greater the depth of a concept (Gerring, 1999). The concept of political participation (see Chapter 2, section *Political participation*, Table 2, definition given by Fu et al, 2016) for example, could be considered a deep concept as the main concept attributes' all converge to the same idea of participation in politics and each of these attributes will allow better differentiation of the concept of political participation from a concept of political engagement.

According to Gerring, *theoretical utility* of the construct also needs to be taken into account, to understand how useful the concept is within a wider field of inferences. Additionally, knowing that concepts are the building blocks of all theoretical structures and the formation of many concepts is legitimacy theory-driven (Gerring, 1999), a concept with theoretical utility would be the aforementioned concept of sense of community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986) because it is an important concept to understand other different but related concepts as the concept of civic participation (Talò, Mannarini, & Rochira, 2014) or community engagement (Ball, 2005), for example. The final criterion suggested by Gerring was *field utility* and is associated with the concept's usefulness within a field of related instances and attributes. Taking sense of community as an example again, this concept establishes clear relationships with neighbour terms (for example, civic participation and/or community engagement).

After going through all the eight criteria that a concept should meet in order to be a good concept as proposed by Gerring (1999), I will consider the concept of political engagement in more depth in the next sections and how these criteria apply

to the concept. Furthermore, it should be highlighted that the examples used to better illustrate the relevance of the Gerring's criteria were considered individually for each criteria. In other words, the concepts used for one of the criteria, do not necessarily meet the other criteria unless mentioned for more than one of the criteria.

Bounding the concept of political engagement

Setting the limits concerning the concept of political engagement is fundamental for efficiently identifying, systematically assessing, and understanding the democratic consequences of political engagement or its absence. Thus, it would be inappropriate to infer that young people are disengaged from politics if the majority of concepts deployed in the literature correspond to political participation rather than to what political engagement actually means. Therefore, prior to developing a valid and reliable research instrument to assess political engagement (Albacete, 2014), there is a need to construct a concept of political engagement from which to generate such a scale; this will minimise any bias in conclusions drawn from research into political engagement. However, the key issue is how such a concept can be kept to a 'manageable size' because political engagement depends on personal identity and individual self-expression, and can potentially expand into every aspect of social life, especially when researching young people (Norris, 2002). By accepting that political engagement has endless combinations, and that it could easily mutate into a "theory of everything" (Van Deth, 2001), two possible approaches are presented to study the expansion of forms of young people's political engagement. The first approach is to permit extension of the definition to capture almost every potential political action and behaviour, drawing from the principle that every human act can become politically relevant at some time (Hooghe, 2014). On the other hand, a second approach involves

the attempt to delimit the concept of political engagement to a list of all the behaviours illustrating the various forms of political engagement performed by young people.

Given the risk of diluting conceptual clarity present in the first approach (Hooghe, 2014) - which could render the definition meaningless by accepting general, all-embracing definitions - the second approach appears preferable and is the one adopted here. Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that due to the expansion of the available forms of political engagement, and to the existing conceptual ambivalence, conclusions related to this construct may differ extensively depending upon the conceptual definition used. So, the changes related to society's political engagement have to be analysed by taking into account not only the theoretical approaches or previous empirical findings, but also the ways in which political engagement is conceptualized by people outside the academic sphere (Van Deth, 2014). Additionally, Albacete (2014) argues that for an instrument to assess the concept of political participation adequately, it should comply with several requirements. It should allow assessment of the latent concept of political participation, the broad number of forms it can take, the different levels of difficulty those activities entail, and its dimensionality. Albacete (2014) contends that it should also address recent developments in citizens' repertoire of political actions, and allow the equivalent assessment of political participation in several countries over time. Although these requirements were initially drawn by Albacete regarding the concept of political *participation*, they can also be adapted to the concept of political *engagement*. Nevertheless, few attempts have been made toward a constructive debate on how to conceptually and empirically deal with the expansion of forms of political engagement (e.g., Ekman & Amnå, 2012; Gibson & Cantijoch, 2013; Van Deth, 2014),

and a consensus on what it means to be politically engaged appears to be difficult to achieve.

Conceptualising political engagement

In order to contribute to the debate around the distinction between the different politically-related concepts (for example, civic engagement or political participation) and the concept of political engagement, a definition of this latter construct is proposed in this chapter. From all the existing conceptualisations of political engagement, the definition given by Barrett (2012) has been updated. He defined political engagement as “having an interest in, paying attention to, having knowledge of or having opinions about either political or civic matters” (p.11). In this thesis it is argued that political engagement is defined as a psychological process, and should be defined as *having interest in, paying attention to, having knowledge or opinions about, being conscious, proactive, and constantly informed about political matters*[7].

Furthermore, in the context of defining young people’s political engagement, a key question to address is the extent to which Gerring’s eight criteria might be fulfilled. In terms of *familiarity*, the definition of political engagement under consideration is relatively easy to understand for a lay or academic audience. However, due to the fact that political engagement and political participation have previously often been used interchangeably, a direct and demonstrable fit between this updated definition of political engagement and previous versions is not particularly easy to discern. Additionally, this is one of the main reasons for the need of a concept of

[7] This definition was informed by the focus groups results (see Chapter 5) since the literature review on the different concepts of political engagement and the qualitative study to explore young people’s perspectives on what it means to be politically engaged happened at the same time within the timescale of my PhD.

political engagement that refers specifically to *engagement* and which excludes consideration of political participation.

Despite being a new conceptualisation of political engagement, this particular term has been in usage in research studies in recent decades, so the concept is still powerful in terms of Gerring's criteria of *resonance* and meaning. This particular conceptualisation of 'political engagement' is also succinct as are the list of its attributes - the behaviours that are defining what engagement entails - so the criterion of *parsimony* is also fulfilled. In terms of *coherence*, all the attributes used to describe political engagement (that is, having interest in, paying attention to, having knowledge or opinions of, and of being conscious, proactive and constantly informed about politics) belong to a person's psychological state, and are related to each other creating a strong internal consistency for this concept. Regarding how *differentiated* are the instances and attributes of the newly developed definition of political engagement in comparison to existing definitions, this new version bounds the concept of political engagement by excluding from its definitions all the participative actions that have been included in previous definitions of political engagement. By delimiting what political engagement is, this leads to a more accurate operationalisation of the concept, and the items that are used to assess each of the concept's dimension are easier to identify.

Given that the larger purpose of the concept formation is not simply to enhance the clarity of communication, but also the efficiency of communication, then the greater the number of properties shared by the phenomena in the extension, the greater the *depth* of a concept (Gerring, 1999). This conceptualisation of political engagement could be considered a *deep* concept because it's attributes (having interest in, paying attention to, having knowledge or opinions about, being conscious, proactive and

constantly informed) all converge to the same idea of engagement, and each of these attributes will allow better differentiation of the concept of political engagement from the concept of political participation. Furthermore, an updated concept of political engagement will contribute to the existing debates about young people's political participation and engagement - mainly through a distinction between the concept of engagement and participation, having what Gerring refers to as a relevant *theoretical utility***.** The eighth and final criterion suggested by Gerring to estimate a concept's goodness is *field utility*, which is related to how useful a concept is within a field or related instances and attributes. The newly developed concept of political engagement presented, establishes clear relationships with its neighbouring concepts of political participation, civic engagement and civic participation. Of equal importance, by clarifying the limits of the newly reconceptualised political engagement, it may be clearly distinguished from these other concepts. After analysing the reconceptualised notion of political engagement in light of the eight criteria set by Gerring (1999), it was concluded that Barrett's (2011) conceptualisation of political engagement can be considered a comprehensive concept that adequately and fully explains the phenomenon it seeks to represent.

It is also important to highlight that although the existing definitions of engagement generally take into account actions and behaviours covered in the concept of political participation, a potential distinction between the concepts of political engagement and political participation is proposed. However, it should also be noted that the conceptualisation presented in this thesis is specifically for young people, and that political engagement may be understood differently by other generations.

Operationalising young people's political engagement

After reviewing the literature on the different definitions and operationalisations of political engagement, it was clear that there is no agreement on how political engagement should be best conceptualised and operationalised (see Chapter 2, section *Political engagement*). Conceptualising a construct is slightly different from operationalising it, because a conceptual definition provides meaning to a construct in theoretical terms and an operational definition specifies how a construct is going to be assessed (such as through a measurement instrument) (Mueller, 2004). The definition of political engagement proposed in this thesis considers this construct as a psychological process, described as having interest in, paying attention to, having knowledge or opinions about, being conscious, proactive, and constantly informed about political matters.

Political engagement has been operationalised differently by different authors. For example, Barrett and Zani (2014) considered political engagement to have three dimensions, namely cognitive, emotional and behavioural political engagement (the authors defined that the behavioural dimension would be the equivalent to political participation, because they understood political participation to be part of the concept of political engagement). McCartney and colleagues (2013) operationalised political engagement as a unidimensional construct which refers to explicitly politically oriented activities. Because the purpose of the conceptualisation was not to develop an instrument to assess political engagement, relatively little attention was paid to the creation of items (or questions) that would help understand how the authors would operationalise the construct of political engagement. Other authors like Carreras (2016), considered political engagement to encompass two dimensions namely cognitive political engagement and active political engagement. The cognitive items

included “How much interest do you have in politics?” or “Do you currently identify with a political party?”, for example, and the active political engagement included items like “Meetings of a community improvement committee or association? Do you attend them…?” (p.163). Furthermore, from all the operationalisations provided (see Chapter 2, Table 2) Fu et. al (2016) provide a more complete operationalisation, considering voting, party activity, consumer participation, protest activity, contacting and latent participation (information seeking or information dissemination, for example) as dimensions to take into account when considering political engagement.

In this thesis young people’s political engagement will be operationalised taking into account two dimensions, namely cognitive political engagement and emotional political engagement. Cognitive engagement is defined as people’s investment and willingness to exert the necessary efforts for the comprehension and mastering of complex ideas and difficult skills related to political issues. Emotional engagement reflects both the positive and negative reactions to politician’s actions and instructions, other people’s opinions about politics, perceptions of party belonging, and beliefs about the value of politics (adapted from the work of Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991 and Fredicks and colleagues, 2004 – see sub-section *Cognitive, emotional and behavioural engagement* in the present chapter for more details on how it was adapted). Each of these cognitive and emotional dimensions encompasses a group of items that are proposed in this chapter should be used to assess the construct of political engagement (see Table 3[8]).

[8] I would like to highlight that the items on Table 3 are just some examples of the items used for each dimension. The complete list of items used is on the Appendices, Appendix 4 (however, the items on appendix 4 are not divided considering the different dimensions of engagement, namely cognitive, emotional and behavioural).

After analysing existing definitions of the concepts of political engagement and of political participation, this thesis adds to the existing literature by presenting an updated conceptualisation of political engagement. Using Gerring's (1999) guidelines for "good" concept formation, the proposed concept of political engagement has clearly limiting boundaries and is differentiated from the concept of political participation. In terms of operationalisation, the consideration of political engagement as encompassing both a cognitive and an emotional dimension (see Table 3) represents a novel approach which also contributes to its distinction from a state of participation. Moreover, by operationalising political engagement as encompassing two dimensions (cognitive and emotional) it suggests that political engagement has more than one dimension being a multidimensional concept rather than unidimensional (the dimensionality of political engagement will be tested later in Chapter 6).

Table 3. Operationalisation of political engagement and political participation

Political engagement[9]		Political participation[10]
Cognitive	**Emotional**	**Behavioural**
Look for information on the web	Send an email to a politician	Vote
Sign an online petition	Send an email to a political organisation	Participate in a strike
Pay attention to what is going on in politics	Being a member of a young people's political group to discuss what is going on in politics	Actively campaign for a political organisation
Being interested in political agendas	Discuss with colleagues about possible ways to improve young people's political engagement and participation	Use theatre, music or arts in general to protest or manifest political opinions
I am interested in how politics works	Post or share links on Social Networking Sites to political stories or articles for others to read	Run for a political election
When reading any news related to politics, I make sure to understand what I am reading	Post/share your own political thoughts or comments on SNS for others to read	Take part in protests, demonstrations, marches
Voluntarily search about political issues that are going on in my country/ Europe	Encourage other people to take action on a political issue that is important to you using SNS	Participate in illegal actions in support of a political cause
Knowing what Brexit was about	Participate in an online chat about politics	Community problem solving through community organisations
Usually watch political debates (e.g. television, Facebook, YouTube)	Promote public initiatives to support political programmes you believe to be just	Boycotting

[9] Proposed operationalisation of political engagement, encompassing two dimensions, namely: cognitive engagement, which is defined as people's investment and willingness to exert the necessary efforts for the comprehension and mastering of complex ideas and difficult skills related to political issues; emotional engagement that reflects both the positive and negative reactions to politicians' actions and instructions, other people's opinions about politics, perceptions of party belonging, and beliefs about the value of politics.
[10] Proposed operationalisation of political participation, which encompass one behavioural dimension.

Read/assess official websites	Promote effective activities or information and mobilisation in the community (work, friends and family), to sustain political programmes in which you believe	Buycotting
Use online tools to campaign/promote parties	Use the means you have as a citizen to critically monitor the actions of your political representatives	
Join/start a political group on a Social Networking Site (SNS)	Membership of a political party	
Sign petitions	Wear or display a symbol or sign representing support for a political cause	
Pay attention to or follow political events	Membership of a political lobbying or campaigning organisation	
Have political knowledge or beliefs	Informally assisting the wellbeing of others in the community	
Hold opinions about political matters	Have feelings about political or civic matters	
Understanding political institutions		
Understanding or holding political values		

Conclusion

After reviewing the literature on the existing definitions of political engagement it was concluded that there is a lack of consensus regarding how to define democratic engagement and participation. According to Barrett and Zani (2014), the term *political engagement* is used to denote the engagement of individuals with political institutions, processes, and decision-making. By way of contrast, *civic engagement* is used to signify the engagement of individuals with the interests, goals, concerns, and common good of a community (Barrett & Zani, 2014). For McCartney and colleagues (2013), political engagement is a specific type of civic engagement;

they posit that while civic engagement is a means of participating in and seeking to influence the life of the community, political engagement refers more explicitly to politically-oriented activities that seek a direct impact on political issues, systems, and structures. Nevertheless, broader definitions of political engagement can be found. For example, Conroy and colleagues (2012) describe political engagement as offline conventional forms of political participation and political knowledge (Conroy et al., 2012, p.2).

Engagement typically involves participatory behaviours that are directed towards either the polity (in the case of political engagement) or a community (in the case of civic engagement). Engagement may foster a sense of civic responsibility, creating positive attitudes toward civic involvement (McFadden, Maahs-Fladung, & Beacham, 2009; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). This involvement may lead to a greater sense of understanding and trust by promoting a collective sense of identity, community, and purpose (Keeter, Zukin, Andolina, & Jenkins, 2002b). Most of the time, *political and civic engagement* involve not only psychological states and processes, but also active participatory behaviours. Furthermore, following the debates around the validity and reliability of the instruments used to assess the construct of political engagement among young people, and the need to develop and psychometrically validate a test that will adequately achieve that objective, the primary aim of this chapter was to provide an overview of the already existing conceptualisations of political engagement. Narrative literature reviews serve a particularly useful role in capturing the full range of ideas pertaining to, and the current states of research on, a specific topic. Through this type of review, the aim was to provide a critical analyses of standing works around the conceptualisations of political engagement. However, such literature reviews also have inherent limitations. In this

particular chapter, the subjective nature involved in determining which studies to include (and by implication, which to exclude), the approach adopted in analysing these selected studies, and the possibility therefore to draw misleading conclusions, represented three such potential limitations. In order to overcome this type of limitation, the next chapter (Chapter 3) will offer a systematic literature review that in order to understand if there is any valid and reliable instrument to assess the construct of youth political engagement in the literature. By conducting this type of review, it will allow me to identify any article or research that was not identified in this traditional literature review.

The present literature review supports what has previously been contended regarding the lack of agreement on the definitions of civic participation, civic engagement, political participation and political engagement. Additionally, it addressed the first objective of this thesis, which is to critically evaluate how the construct of political engagement is currently represented in research and propose a specific conceptualisation of youth political engagement (see Chapter 1, section *Research aims and objectives,* objective [i]). Moreover, these findings reinforced the need to work towards an agreement on a definition of political engagement, conceptualised in the present study as a psychological process, conceived as having interest in, paying attention to, having knowledge or opinions about, being conscious, proactive and constantly informed about political matters. With this proposed definition of political engagement, it is possible to begin the process for drawing a distinction between the constructs of political participation and political engagement that will assist in developing a robust, valid and meaningful measure of young people's political engagement (see Chapter 1, section *Research aims and objectives*, Primary aim).

CHAPTER 3. Current methodological practices in the assessment of young people's political engagement

Introduction

Chapter 2 comprised two parts, an initial section where questions regarding contemporary patterns of youth political engagement and political participation where considered and critically discussed. The second part of the chapter reviewed core literature around the conceptualisation of political engagement, where a proposed definition of youth political engagement was presented. Following the existing debates regarding how to best conceptualise youth political engagement, this particular chapter will focus on the discussions about the validity and reliability of the instruments used in political participation research when it comes to assess levels of young people's political engagement. Furthermore, given this demonstrated need for a systematic revision of the instruments used to assess young people's political engagement (see Chapter 1, section *Issues in Measuring Political Engagement and Political Participation*), the main aim of the present chapter is to systematically review, summarize, and critique the extant research evidence concerning the development of psychometric instruments that assess youth political engagement.

The method used to conduct a systematic literature review was the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) statement for reporting that provides a robust and comprehensive framework to conduct systematic reviews and objectively assess indicators of quality and risk of biases of included studies, and is adopted throughout this review (Moher et al., 2009).

Due to the scarcity of studies solely focusing on the psychometric validation of political engagement tools, studies were included in the review if they were either: (i) developing a psychometric instrument to assess political engagement as part of a

single (that is, whole) instrument or (ii) as a subscale (that is, dimension) of other broader related constructs (for example, political participation and engagement, civic engagement). Conversely, studies were excluded from the review if they: (i) were not published in a peer-reviewed journal, (ii) did not develop a psychometric tool to assess political engagement or another-related instrument that assessed political engagement indirectly (for example, single dimension), and (iii) were not published in the English language.

Information sources and search

In order to select potential studies to be reviewed, a computer search was conducted in a number of scholarly databases, including EBSCO (i.e., Academic Search Complete, Child Development and Adolescent Studies and ERIC), PsychINFO, and Google Scholar. The search was directed using the following search strategy:

(Political) AND (Engagement) AND (Psych* OR Assessment OR Evaluation OR Measure* OR Test OR Scale OR Inventory).

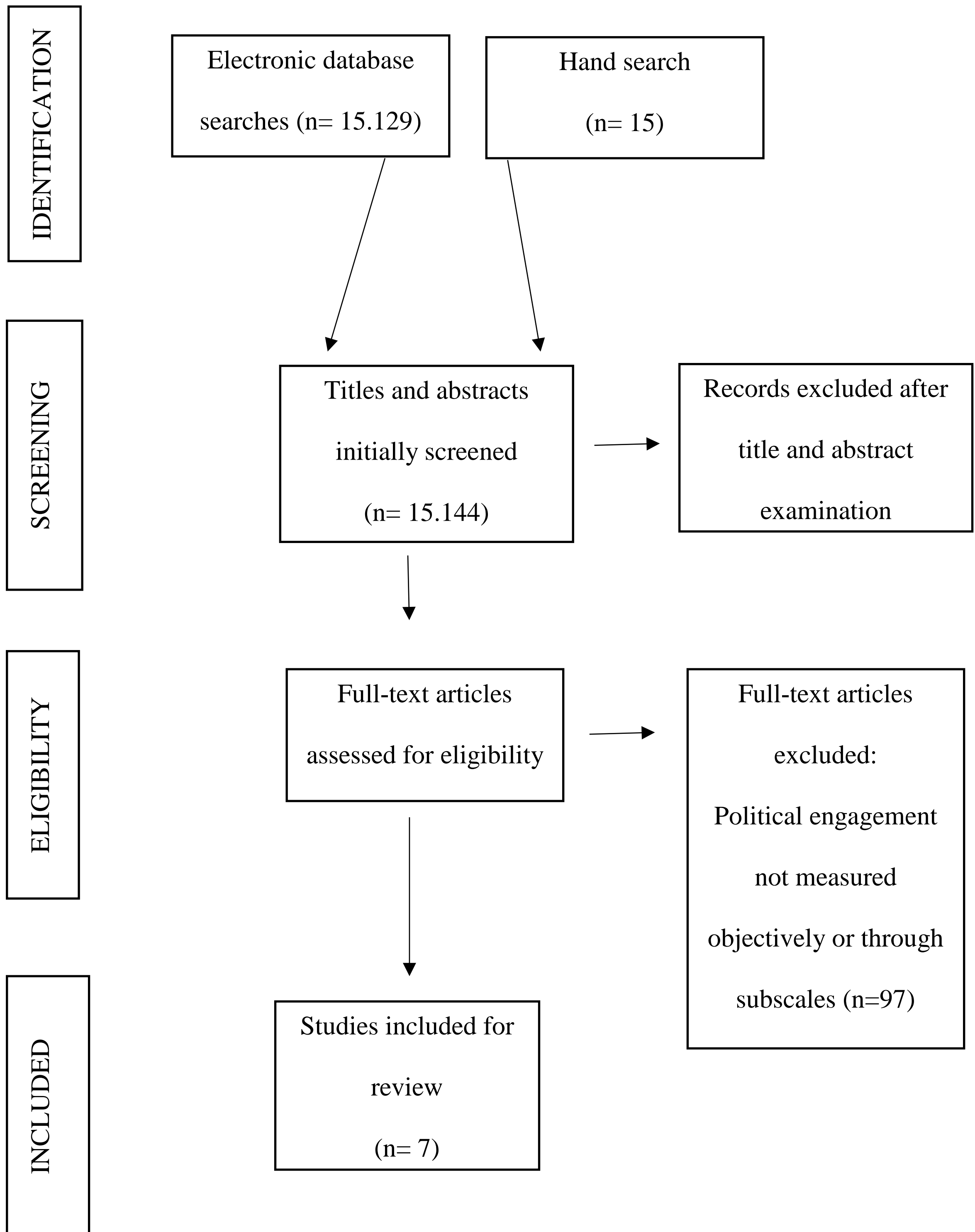
All searches were limited to full text papers published from 1990 to 2015 as, according to Phelps (2004), British citizens have become less inclined to vote since 1992 (Phelps, 2004, p. 4). In addition, manual searching was also carried out when necessary using the retrieved papers' reference lists. A manual search technique is generally used to find additional studies that may have been missed from the review during the online database search (Craane, Dijkstra, Stappaerts, & De Laat, 2012).

Study selection and data collection

After performing the initial literature searches, each paper title and abstract was screened for eligibility. Full texts of all potentially relevant studies were then recovered and further examined for eligibility. The PRISMA flow diagram (see Figure 1) provides more detailed information regarding the process for selection of studies. As the goal of the present review was to investigate the theoretical, psychometric, and practical aspects of the instruments developed to assess political engagement, a number of key characteristics for each psychometric instrument were assessed for evaluation. For each study, the following information was collated:

- key characteristics of participants (e.g., gender distribution, sample size, age range, and segment of population assessed),
- country in which data were collected,
- operationalisation of political engagement,
- theoretical basis for each instrument used,
- factor structure and number of items,
- psychometric characteristics of the instruments (e.g., method of analysis and reliability), and
- methodological features of the studies (e.g., assessment methods, type of study, design, response option format, main findings and study limitations).

Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram of the study selection process



Results

Study selection

A total of 15,129 papers (EBSCO n=3596; PsychINFO n=33; Google Scholar n=11,500) were identified after the initial search in the aforementioned electronic databases. After screening, 15,031 papers were excluded after applying the inclusion/exclusion criteria leaving 113 papers. Of these, 106 studies were excluded for (i) not having objectively assessed (that is, with a psychometric tool) a political engagement variable (n=97) or (ii) being written in a non-English language (n=9). This left seven eligible empirical studies for review (see Figure 1). More detailed information regarding the essential methodological features and general characteristics of all seven studies can be found in Table 4. Features like sample size, gender distribution, age range, sample characteristics, were chosen in order to better understand the different studies' sample characteristics. Furthermore, sample size was important to understand two things: firstly, if the sample was representative of the population, and secondly for scale validation purposes. For example, regarding the scale development, when conducting an Exploratory Factor Analysis it is recommended for the sample to have at least 200 participants (Comrey and Lee, 1992) and to conduct a Confirmatory Factor Analysis around 150 participants minimum (Lomax & Schumacker, 2012; Muthén & Muthén, 2002). The sample size will, therefore, have implications on the scale's validity and reliability (this is explored in more depth in Chapter 4, section *Quantitative study: scale development and validation*, sub-sections Reliability and Validity).

Gender was chosen in order to have clearer insights on how the sample was distributed, because gender can be one of the variables having impact in explaining youth political participation (Ondercin & Jones-White, 2011). It is also important to

understand how the sample was distributed in terms of age, as age is a crucial variable given the purpose of this thesis (that is, to develop a valid and reliable instrument to assess youth political engagement); furthermore, one of the objectives of this systematic literature review was to investigate if an instrument to assess the construct of political engagement regarding specifically “youth” already existed in the literature. The way different studies operationalised the variables they were assessing (mainly politically-related constructs) was also taken into account in order to understand how authors defined and assessed concepts like civic engagement or political self-efficacy, for example. Because political engagement is usually used interchangeably with other politically-related concepts like civic engagement, it is of relevance to understand what type of items are used to assess the different concepts associated with political engagement.

Table 4. Main characteristics of the studies reviewed

Study	Sample size	Gender distribution (%)	Age range (years) and Mean (SD)	Sample characteristics	Operationalisation of political engagement	Main findings	Study limitations
Doolittle and Faul (2013)	354	83.1% females	Range: 17-63 M_{age}: 28.42 (9.58)	University students	Civic Engagement	The Civic Engagement Scale (CES) consists in two dimensions: attitudes and behaviours. The CES has good reliability and good content validity. The CES can provide useful information about individuals' attitudes and behaviours of engagement in their community.	The sample was fairly homogeneous in that all were college students with similar fields of study. The scale only measures two dimensions of civic engagement. The instrument is a self-report measure. The Cronbach's alpha[a] for the whole scale is not reported in the study.
Droege & Ferrari (2012)	Study 1: 762 Study 2: 955	Study 1: 68% females	Study 1 Range: N/R M_{age}: 23.5 (7.7) Study 2	Undergraduate students	Civic Engagement	The Faith and Civic Engagement Scale (FACE) consists in five dimensions: civic engagement, faith life, political importance, university influences and spiritual growth, and university influences personal growth.	Low response rates by undergraduate students. The participants were not randomly selected. All of the data were collected at a single Roman Catholic university.

		Study 2: 65% females	Range: N/R M_{age}: 23.5 (7.7)			The FACE scale is reliable and valid instrument.	The alpha de Cronbach for the whole scale is not reported in the study.
Caprara et al. (2009)	Study 1: 1673	54.6% females	Range: N/R M_{age}: 44.71 (17.59)	Subjects	Political Self-Efficacy	The Political Self-Efficacy Scale (P-PSE) is unidimensional and is a valid and reliable instrument. Socio-demographic variables proved to influence perceived political self-efficacy. Perceived political self-efficacy proved to be independent of political orientation.	The analysis were performed using convenient samples that did not represent the entire population. All the items of the P-PSE scale are positively worded, raising the possibility of acquiescence response set.
Vecchione et al. (2014)	Italy: 697 Spain: 354 Greece: 270	Italy: 57% females Spain: 63% females Greece: 54% females	Italy Range: N/R M_{age}: 37.6 (14.7) Spain Range: N/R M_{age}: 31.0 (13.3) Greece Range: N/R M_{age}: 38.1 (15.1)	Subjects	Political Self-Efficacy	The short form of the Political Self-efficacy scale (PPSE-S) consists in one dimension. The PPSE-S scale has good psychometric properties. Its validity was examined in a cross-cultural perspective and corroborated the robustness of the construct. The perceived political self-efficacy was positively related with several indicators of political participation, supporting the role of self-efficacy beliefs in sustaining citizens' engagement	The results are based in convenient samples that did not represent the general population. The study focuses on three Southern European Countries, and the findings may not apply to other countries from different geo-political regions that differ in socio-economic and cultural characteristics.

						in politics, as well as the criterion validity of the PPSE-S.	
Peterson et al. (2008)	293	57% females	Range: M_{age}: N/R	Community residents	Sense of Community	The measure developed – Brief Sense of Community Scale (BSCS) – is a valid measure. The 4-factor model provided a better fit to the data than the 1-factor model.	The instrument in this study was only applied to Midwestern neighbourhood residents.
Chiessi et al. (2010)	661	53% females	Range: 15-18 M_{age}: 15.6 (0.72)	High school students	Sense of Community	This shortened version of the Sense of Community scale (i.e. SoC-A) has 20 items and a 5 factor structure including: sense of belonging, satisfaction of needs and opportunities for involvement, support and emotional connection with peers, support and emotional connection in the community, and opportunities for influence. The SoC-A is a valid and reliable instrument. Sense of community dimensions are all positively associated with psychological, social, and emotional wellbeing.	The dimension of the sample could be larger. The alpha de Cronbach for the whole scale is not reported in the study.

						Male adolescents report experiencing a higher sense of belonging to their local community, and SoC scores decreased with age.	
Pancer et al. (2007)	Time 1: 890 Time 2: 333	Time 1: NR Time 2: 72% females	Time 1 Range: N/R M_{age}: 17.5 (0.82) Time2 Range: N/R M_{age}: 19.3 (0.79)	Students	Community and Political Involvement	The Youth Inventory of Involvement (YII) proved to be a useful and psychometrically sound measure of young people's involvements. Demonstrates good validity, showing a significant correlation with attitudes toward social responsibility. Youth was divided into four cluster groups, namely: Activists, Helpers, Responders and Uninvolved. Parents and peers play an important role in determining the kinds of activities in which individuals are involved.	The study is not based in a theoretical background. The alpha de Cronbach is not reported for the different factors of the scale. The authors do not report the age ranges.

Note: M_{age} – mean age; **Subjects** – study's participants

[a] – The fact that the study did not mention the Cronbach's alpha (a measure of internal consistency that tells us how closely related a set of items are as a group) value can have implications in terms of the instrument's reliability. Scale's reliability and the importance of the Cronbach's alpha will be examined on the methodology chapter (Chapter 4).

Country in which data were collected

In regards to the geographic characteristics, three studies were from the United States (Doolittle & Faul, 2013; Droege & Ferrari, 2012; Peterson, Speer, & McMillan, 2008), three from Italy where two of the three studies were conducted by the same authors (Caprara, Vecchione, Capanna, & Mebane, 2009; Chiessi, Cicognani, & Sonn, 2010; Vecchione et al., 2014), and one from Canada (Pancer, Pratt, Hunsberger, & Alisat, 2007). These results clearly show that research on political engagement lacks diversity in terms of cultural context as all of the studies reviewed were carried out in just three Westernised countries.

Participants

The seven studies comprised a total of 7,960 participants. In terms of gender distribution, the majority of these reviewed studies recruited slightly more female (n=4,115; 51.69%) than male participants (n=3,845; 48.31%). However, it is worth noticing that the study conducted by Doolittle and Faul (2013) had a bigger gender disparity with 83% of the participants being females. Two of the instruments (Chiessi et al., 2010; Pancer et al., 2007) included adolescent-only samples and four studies included student samples (Chiessi et al., 2010; Doolittle & Faul, 2013; Droege & Ferrari, 2012; Pancer et al., 2007). The age distribution ranged between 15.6 years (SD=0.72) (Chiessi et al., 2010) and 44.71 years (SD=17.59) (Caprara et al., 2009), but the majority of the samples mainly comprised adults (Caprara et al., 2009; Doolittle & Faul, 2013; Droege & Ferrari, 2012; Peterson et al., 2008; Vecchione et al., 2014).

In terms of education, the lowest level in all samples was elementary education (Caprara et al., 2009; Chiessi et al., 2010; Vecchione et al., 2014) and the highest a postgraduate degree (Peterson et al., 2008; Vecchione et al., 2014). In the studies that

referred to racial classification, the majority of participants identified themselves as white (Doolittle & Faul, 2013; Droege & Ferrari, 2012; Peterson et al., 2008). In general, the samples of the seven studies identified were very heterogeneous.

Methodological features of the studies

In regards to key methodological features, all seven studies were quantitative and empirical, although one (Pancer et al., 2007) used a mix methods approach (i.e., quantitative and qualitative). Five of the studies employed cross-sectional design (Caprara et al., 2009; Chiessi et al., 2010; Doolittle & Faul, 2013; Droege & Ferrari, 2012; Peterson et al., 2008), one adopted a cross-cultural design (Vecchione et al., 2014), and one employed a longitudinal design (Pancer et al., 2007). All seven used a self-report questionnaire for collecting data. Additionally, three (Chiessi et al., 2010; Doolittle & Faul, 2013; Pancer et al., 2007) used paper-and-pencil survey methods for assessing their independent and outcome variables while three (Caprara et al., 2009; Peterson et al., 2008; Vecchione et al., 2014) used face-to-face questionnaires to assess participants. One study used a web-based survey (Droege & Ferrari, 2012), and one (Pancer et al., 2007) used face-to-face interviews to complement data collected in the paper-and-pencil survey. As to sampling methods, the majority used a non-probability sampling technique to recruit representative samples. More specifically, six studies (Caprara et al., 2009; Chiessi et al., 2010; Doolittle & Faul, 2013; Droege & Ferrari, 2012; Peterson et al., 2008; Vecchione et al., 2014) used convenience and self-selected sampling, and only one study (Pancer et al., 2007) used probability stratified sampling method. It is interesting to note that only one (Pancer et al., 2007) of the seven studies used a mixed methods approach. However, the purpose for Pancer and colleagues to used mixed methods was different from the reason a mixed methodology approach

was chosen for this thesis. In their study, the authors initially conducted a questionnaire (quantitative study) and then followed that up with interviews (qualitative study) in order to get a greater and more in-depth understanding of some of the findings from the quantitative study (Pancer et al., 2007). In the present thesis, the qualitative study was conducted first, because the results from the focus groups were used in order to inform the development and selection of the most suitable items to include as part of the *Youth Political Engagement Scale* (see Chapter 4 for a clarification on the rational for the choice of mixed methods).

Limitations were identified across all seven studies (see Table 4). The limitations found can be broadly categorized within three major categories at three different levels: (i) *operationalization and measurement issues*, (ii) *sampling issues*, and (iii) *reporting issues*. Operationalization and measurement issues found within the reviewed studies involved problems related to the assessment of political engagement, such as: use of inconsistent definitions, use of non-validated criteria, and a reduced number of dimensions to assess the concept. Sampling issues involved: widespread use of non-probability sampling techniques, homogeneous samples, and low sample sizes. Reporting issues limiting the interpretation of the findings mainly comprised omission of key demographic findings related to the sample recruited (i.e., mean age), and non-reporting of important correlation coefficients associated with the main variables assessed.

Table 5. Political engagement scales

Supporting research	Instrument	Theoretical basis	Number of items	Factor structure	Psychometric Properties	Assessment method	Type of study and design	Response option format	Country of origin
Doolittle and Faul (2013)	Civic Engagement Scale (CES)	Definition of civic engagement developed by Thomas Ehrlich (1997)	14	1. Attitudes 2. Behaviours	α overall scale (NR) Principal component analysis (PCA)	Paper-and-pencil survey	Quantitative Cross-sectional	7-point Likert type scales	United States
Droege and Ferrari (2012)	Faith and Civic Engagement Scale (FACE)	Definition of civic engagement developed by Astin et al. (2006)	20	1.Civic engagement 2. Faith life 3.Political importance 4.University influences spiritual growth 5.University influences personal growth	α overall scale (NR) Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)	Web based survey	Quantitative Cross-sectional	4-point Likert type scales	United States
Caprara et al. (2009)	Perceived Political Self-Efficacy Scale(P-PSE)	Definition of political efficacy by Campbell et al. (1954)	10	1.Perceived political self-efficacy	Study 1: α overall scale = 0.91 Exploratory Factor	Face-to-face questionnaire	Quantitative Cross-sectional	5-point Likert scale	Italy

		Definition of social cognitive theory by Bandura et al. (1997)			Analysis (EFA)				
Vecchione et al., (2014)	Perceived Political Self-Efficacy Scale – Short form (PPSE-S)	Based on the 10 items P-PSE scale, developed by Caprara et al. (2009)	10	1.Perceived political self-efficacy	Italy: α overall scale= 0.83 Spain: α overall scale = 0.79 Greece: α overall scale = 0.77 Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)	Face-to-face questionnaire	Quantitative Cross-cultural	5-point Likert type Scale	Italy
Peterson et al. (2008)	Brief Sense of Community Scale (BSCS)	McMillan and Chavis psychological sense of community model (1986)	8	1.Needs fulfilment 2.Group membership 3. Influence 4.Emotional connection	A overall scale =0.92 Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)	Face-to-face questionnaire	Quantitative Cross-sectional	5-point Likert type scales	United States
Chiessi et al. (2010)	Brief Sense of Community in Adolescents	Based on the work of Cicognani et al. (2006) which was based on McMillan and Chavis	20	1.Sense of belonging 2.Support and emotional connection in the community	α overall scale (NR)		Quantitative Cross-sectional		Italy

	Scale (BSCSA)	psychological sense of community model (1986)		3.Support and emotional connection with peers 4.Satisfaction of needs and opportunities for involvement 5. Opportunities for influence		Paper-and-pencil survey		5-point Likert type scales	
Pancer et al. (2007)	Youth Inventory of Involvement (YII)	Based on recent surveys in the US and Canada that indicate there are wide variations in youth involvement (Bureau of Labour Statistics, 2003; Hall, McKeown & Roberts, 2004)	30	1.Political activities 2.Community activities 3.Passive involvements 4.Helping activities	α overall scale = 0.90[a]; α overall scale = 0.88[b] NR	Paper-and-pencil survey Face-to-face interview	Mixed methods approach (qualitative and quantitative) Longitudinal	5-point Likert type scales	Canada

Notes: [a] = α Time 1; [b] = α Time 2. **Abbreviations:** NA= not assessed; NR= not reported.

Theoretical Basis

As shown in Table 5, all seven psychometric instruments (and their variants) developed to assess political engagement have inconsistently drawn their framework upon several different definitions and/or theories. The *Civic Engagement Scale* (CES) (Doolittle & Faul, 2013) was developed on the basis of Ehrlich's definition of civic engagement (Ehrlich, 1997), defined as the process of believing that individuals can and should make a difference in enhancing their community, and that difference can be expressed through attitudes and/or behaviours (Doolittle & Faul, 2013). Consequently, the CES was devised to assess two specific aspects of political engagement attitudes, for example "I feel responsible for my community" and behaviours "I participate in discussions that raise issues of social responsibility" (p.4). Additionally, a distinction between civic attitudes and civic behaviours was made. Civic attitudes have been defined as the personal beliefs and feelings that individuals have about their own involvement in their community and their perceived ability to make a difference in their community (Doolittle & Faul, 2013). For instance, items like "I am committed to serve my community" or "I believe that is important to volunteer" feelings and beliefs about people's involvement in their community. Civic behaviours have been defined as the actions that people take to attempt to engage and make a difference in their community, such as "I stay informed of events in my community" or "I contribute to charitable organizations within the community" (Doolittle & Faul, 2013, p.4).

The *Faith and Civic Engagement Scale* (FACE) (Droege & Ferrari, 2012) had a number of theoretical reference points including: (i) the definition of civic engagement as "civic leadership, working with communities, volunteerism, charitable giving, and involvement with alma mater" which may positively impact communities

by addressing and assisting with local needs (Astin et al., 2006, p.22); (ii) the notion that engagement - such as the belief that social problems can be solved by the community or someone's feeling that they can have impact on solving their community problems (McFadden et al., 2009, p.10) - may cultivate a sense of civic responsibility, creating positive attitudes toward civic involvement, and that this involvement may lead to a greater sense of understanding and trust by promoting a collective sense of identity, community, and purpose (Droege & Ferrari, 2012; Keeter, Zukin, Andolina, & Jenkins, 2002a); and (iii) research that demonstrates the positive relationship between one's faith-based beliefs and behaviour and civic/political engagement, such as the fact that various religions actively promote community service engagement while offering opportunities to perform community service. According to Droege and Ferrari (2012), the FACE was designed to assess student perceptions on whether they are responsible citizens concerned with the progress of society.

Caprara et al. (2009) developed the Perceived Political Self-Efficacy Scale (P-PSE) based on the work of Dahl (1998), Pasquino, (1997) and Sartori (2007), and focuses on the abilities that citizens need in order to take an agentic role in modern representative democracies, namely the capacities to voice one's own opinions and preferences, to actively contribute to the success of parties which convey one's own ideals, and to exert control over the activities of one's own representatives. In reviewing the literature, Caprara and colleagues (2009) addressed political efficacy within the framework of social cognitive theory and developed a measure of perceived political self-efficacy in accordance with Bandura's guidelines regarding the development of self-efficacy scales (2006). Additionally, Vecchione and colleagues (2014), developed a short-form of the P-PSE scale (i.e., a 4-item PPSE-S) based on a study of Caprara et al. (2009), where a 10-item P-PSE was developed that

conceptualized political efficacy within social cognitive theory, focusing on political self-efficacy beliefs, namely, on judgements people hold about their capacities "to make an agentic role in modern representative democracies" (Caprara et al., 2009, p.3). Special attention was paid regarding the country (i.e., Italy) where the previous study was carried out (Caprara et al., 2009), as this is a country where political turnout is high and ideological affiliations still exert a moderate influence on individuals' personal and social identities (Vecchione et al., 2014). Vecchione and colleagues (2014) also administered the PPSE-S scale in Spain and in Greece.

There are currently two versions of the *Sense of Community Scale*[11] (SCS). Peterson et al. (2008) developed a brief version of the instrument (*Brief Sense of Community Scale* – BSCS) comprising eight items, focused on McMillan and Chavis's (1986) psychological sense of community model. The other version of this instrument was specifically developed to be administered to adolescents (i.e., *Brief Sense of Community in Adolescence Scale* – BSCSA) (Chiessi et al., 2010) and also based on psychological sense of community model. According to this model, four components are identified as crucial for the formation and development of sense of community. These are membership, influence, fulfilment, and shared emotional connection (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). The development of a brief version of the SCS was in accordance with the work of Long and Perkins (2003) who argued that research and evaluation studies of SCS were in need of brief, validated measures of the construct that may be conveniently and efficiently administered in applied community contexts.

Similarly, Chiessi et al. (2010) also based their work on McMillan and Chavis's (1986) proposed theory and definition for sense of community, as "a feeling that the

[11] The Sense of Community Scale (SCS) was originally developed by Cicognani, Albanesi and Zani (2006). However, it was not included in this systematic literature review as it did not meet one of the selection inclusion criteria (i.e., it was not written in English).

members of a community have in relation to their belonging to a community, a feeling that members worry about each other and that the group is concerned about them, and a shared faith that the needs of the members will be satisfied through their commitment of being together" (Chiessi et al., 2010, p.2). Chiessi and colleagues (2010) also highlighted that all the studies conducted to date to assess SCS in adolescents, have mainly used scales developed for adults. This is problematic because the experience of SCS may not be the same for all members of the community (Chiessi et al., 2010). Using the full 36-item version of the SCS for adolescents (Cicognani, Albanesi, & Zani, 2006), Chiessi and colleagues developed a shorter 20-item version.

Finally, the *Youth Inventory of Involvement* (YII) was developed by Pancer et al. (2007) in an attempt to understand what distinguishes adolescents who were active both in community and political life from those who were not. This instrument was specifically developed for their study, noting that in the US and Canada there are wide variations in youth involvement in things such as volunteering and other activities. In addition to the measure of youth involvement, Pancer et al. (2007) also administered several additional measures designed to assess parental and peer influence, identity development, attitudes toward social responsibility, and several variables relating to young people's social and emotional adjustment.

The findings in this section indicate that across the seven instruments, the basis of their development cannot be considered as based on robust theory, as some of them were constructed without using any specific theory (Doolittle & Faul, 2013; Droege & Ferrari, 2012; Pancer et al., 2007).

Reliability

In order to be considered suitable, all psychometric instruments should be both valid and reliable. Reliability concerns the internal consistency of a given measure across different circumstances and at different points in time (Howitt & Cramer, 2011). One of the most commonly used types of reliability is the Cronbach's alpha (CA) coefficient, which assesses the internal consistency of a scale – how closely related a set of items fit or are related as a group. Another application of the reliability is item-total correlation. This demonstrates the degree of consistency of the individual items in an instrument with the total scale score. On the other hand, the test-retest reliability examines consistency over time by administering the same instrument to the same set of people on two separate occasions and then comparing how stable the scores are. Finally, cross-validation of reliability refers to the administration of the instrument to two independent samples and assessing whether the hypothesized dimensional structure of the scale holds true for both samples (Howitt & Cramer, 2011). According to Cicchetti, a CA coefficient of .70 to .79 may be considered "fair"; a CA of .80 to .89 is "good"; and a CA of .90 or higher is "excellent" (Cicchetti, 1994). However, authors such as Groth-Marnat recommended that reliability estimates should be higher than .70 for research purposes (Groth-Marnat, 2003).

In all seven instruments, instrument reliability was primarily assessed using CA. Although only three studies (Caprara et al., 2009; Pancer et al., 2007; Peterson et al., 2008) reported the CA coefficients for the whole scale, each of the reviewed studies stated the CA coefficient for the different scale components developed. The CA was found to be excellent for both the BSCS (.92) (Peterson et al., 2008) and for the P-PSE (.91) (Caprara et al., 2009). The CES (Doolittle & Faul, 2013), had an excellent CA

for the attitude subscale (.91) and the behaviour subscale (.85), further warranting the scale's high internal consistency.

In the FACE scale (Droege & Ferrari, 2012), all the five subscales exhibited good CAs (> .80), with the exception of the faith life sub-scale, which had a fair CA (.74). Droege and Ferrari (2012) also reported the CAs for all five subscales and found them to be greater than .70 for each subscale (between .74 and .88) indicating good internal reliability. For the FACE scale, internal consistency and temporal stability (that is, reliability) were performed on the newly generated subscales identified in the first study. The temporal stability of the five-factor FACE survey (over a one-year period) was assessed with a subsample of participants and all the scores from the first administration were significantly correlated with the scores from the second administration for each of the five factors. In the second administration of the scale, all the five subscales also showed good CAs (> .80), with the exception of the political importance subscale, which had a fair CA (.79). CAs obtained for all the five subscales in the second administration of the scale expressed good internal reliability. The P-PSE scale (Caprara et al., 2009) showed an excellent CA (.91) for the overall scale, indicating excellent internal consistency.

The reliability of the PPSE-S scale (Vecchione et al., 2014), was examined comparing different versions of the scale (that is, a long- and short-version) and has been assessed in terms of internal consistency and temporal stability, using CA and test-retest reliability, respectively. The CA for the whole scale was .83 at Time 1 and Time 2 for a two-week period, and demonstrated good internal reliability (>.80). For the full-length scale, the CAs were .90 (Time 1) and .91 (Time 2), displaying excellent internal reliability. Based on reliability coefficients for both scale versions, the authors concluded that the short-form has a good degree of internal consistency, and dropped

marginally with respect to the original scale. Nevertheless, the stability coefficients (test-retest reliability) values were identical for the scale's two forms (that is, full-version=.68 and short-version=.67). As a second step, analysis of the PPSE-S to Spain and Greece was extended, and demonstrated fair CA values (that is, .79 and .77 respectively).

CA for the overall BSCS was .92 (Peterson et al., 2008), and demonstrated excellent reliability (> .90). CAs among the subscales were .86 for needs of fulfilment, .94 for group membership, .77 for influence, and .87 for emotional connection. Overall, all CAs of the four subscales indicated an acceptable internal consistency, except the influence subscale (<.80).

In assessing internal consistency of the five subscales of the Brief Sense of Community in Adolescents Scales (BSCSA) (Chiessi et al., 2010), the authors reported that the CAs obtained for all subscales were above acceptable (>.70): sense of belonging (82), support and emotional connection in the community (.77), support and emotional connection with peers (.88), satisfaction of needs and opportunities for involvement (.76), and opportunities for influence (.74). All the CA coefficients were between .74 and .88 indicating good internal reliability. Additionally, the two-week test-retest reliability analysis was very high and significant (.99), confirming the instrument has excellent stability over time.

The internal consistency of the YII (Pancer et al., 2007) was also examined using CA coefficients. The values for the overall scale indicated very good internal consistency at Time 1 (.90) and Time 2 (.88). At Time 1, CAs were acceptable (>.70) for all subscales, except the Passive Involvements subscale (.58). At Time 2, CAs were fair for two subscales, namely, political activities (.73) and helping activities (.81), questionable for one subscale (passive involvements=.63), and poor for community

activities subscale (.58). The internal consistency of overall subscales was acceptable, with the exception of community activities and passive involvements subscales. The (nearly two-year) test-retest reliability was .58.

Overall, all the instruments were considered reliable (although not all the seven studies reported the CA coefficients for the whole scale) which suggests that by using these scales we would get similar results under the same conditions.

Factor structure and validity

An instrument's factor structure relates to the number and nature of the variables reflected in its items (Furr, 2011). The factor structure is best assessed using either exploratory data analyses (such as exploratory factor analysis) or a confirmatory approach using structural equation modelling (for instance, confirmatory factor analysis). Factor analysis provides useful and critical information on the validity of an instrument alongside other relevant psychometric information (such as factor loadings) (Groth-Marnat, 2003). Furthermore, factor analysis attempts to discover the unexplained factors that influence the co-variation among multiple versions and these factors represent underlying concepts that cannot be adequately measured by a single variable. For example, various measures of political attitudes may be influenced by one or more underlying factors (Schreiber, Nora, Stage, Barlow, & King, 2006) such as trust in politics and political institutions or civic engagement (De Marco, Robles, & Antino, 2017), for example. Later in this thesis, in Chapter 6, a factor analysis (in this case, confirmatory factor analysis) is used to understand the different factors (or dimensions) the construct of political engagement encompasses.

Validity is usually defined as the degree to which a test measures what it is intended to measure. Construct validity comprises convergent and discriminant

validity (Campbell, Stanley, & Gage, 1963). To demonstrate convergent validity, an instrument must at least moderately correlate with measures that are theoretically related to the construct. For instance, in Chapter 6, an example that illustrates convergent validity with the construct of political engagement can be found. From the three dimensions political engagement was being tested for in terms of convergent validity, namely *cognitive, emotional* and *behavioural* (the behavioural dimension was considered as political participation) engagement, only the first two dimensions (cognitive and emotional) correlated with political engagement. However, the behavioural dimension (political participation) was a good example of discriminant validity, meaning that is was not related to the construct of political engagement. Conversely, discriminant validity is warranted when an instrument is poorly associated with variables that are supposed to be unrelated to the construct being measured (Campbell et al., 1963; DeVellis, 2012). Alternatively, criterion validity assesses how well an instrument correlates with an external criterion for the assessed construct (Barker, Pistrang, & Elliott, 2002). Ultimately, the aim of criterion validity is to demonstrate that test scores are predictive of real-life outcomes (Piedmont, 2014). An example of concurrent validity would be, considering political self-efficacy, to test if an instrument that assesses political self-efficacy is related to a measure of political interest. Testing whether a measure can predict membership of two separate criterion groups (e.g., whether a civic engagement scale can distinguish between engaged and disengaged citizens) also indicates concurrent validity (Barker et al., 2002). In short, construct validity evaluates how well the construct in question relates to other constructs and measures, convergent validity measures how strongly the instrument correlates with measures of related constructs, and discriminant validity measures the extent to which items correlate with measures of unrelated constructs (Barker et al.,

2002). All seven instruments assessing political engagement showed great variability in terms of factor structure, with instruments ranging from one factor (Caprara et al., 2009; Vecchione et al., 2014) to five (Chiessi et al., 2010; Droege & Ferrari, 2012) (see Table 4). Moreover, all seven instruments used different measures and methods providing evidence regarding the validity of the political engagement.

The CES (Doolittle & Faul, 2013) provided evidence of factorial validity using principal component analysis to examine the scale's factorial structure, resulting in two factors being identified (i.e. attitudes and behaviours). Additionally, Doolittle and Faul (2013) conducted an item-analysis to demonstrate the instrument's content validity and ascertain whether the items significantly contributed to the instrument's total score. With regard to construct validity of the CES, convergent and discriminant validity were tested, with findings providing support for the instrument's discriminant validity at the subscale level of analysis for the CES. To further test the instrument's convergent validity, the attitudes subscale correlated moderately with the normative helping and connectedness subscales. The civic behaviour subscale also showed moderate correlation with the intentions subscale. These results indicated preliminary evidence for convergent construct validity of the CES, suggesting that from the variables that the authors suggested to be related with CES, these are the ones (normative helping and connectedness for the attitudes subscale, and intentions subscale for the civic behaviour subscale) that are in reality related in a stronger way.

The FACE comprises five factors: civic engagement, faith life, political importance, university influences spiritual growth, and university influences personal growth. Droege and Ferrarri (2012) used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assess the construct validity of the five-factor model of FACE. The chi-square statistic (which assessed whether or not two models from the same data were significantly different)

was significant, but knowing that significant chi-squares can result from inflated power imparted by large samples (indicating false positives), the authors used other fit-indices to determine goodness of fit. The authors reported an acceptable fit as assessed by the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), normed fit index (NFI), and the adjusted goodness of fit index (GFI). These results provided evidence of the adequacy of this instrument in terms of construct validity and suitability of the proposed five-factor model as it was supported by the overall CFA goodness of fit.

The Perceived Political Self-Efficacy Scale both in its long-form (P-PSE) (Caprara et al., 2009) and short-form (PPSE-S) (Vecchione et al., 2014) assesses only one factor (that is, perceived political self-efficacy). To determine the number of factors to retain in the scale, the authors examined the eigenvalues and a goodness of fit index (standardized root mean square residual [SRMR]). The analysis of the eigenvalues suggested a one-factor solution and through the SRMR value, the authors concluded that the one-factor solution fitted their data well. In a follow-up study (Caprara et al., 2009), CFA was conducted to evaluate the convergent and discriminant validity of the P-PSE scale, with the authors reporting that CFA provided satisfactory results regarding validity. Caprara et al. (2009) reported that the factor loadings of the P-PSE scale were all high (average of .71), providing further support for the scale's convergent validity. To analyse the criterion validity, Caprara and colleagues (2009) examined correlations between the estimated factor scores of three measures of political efficacy and the continuous indicators of political interest and participation (controlling for standard socio-demographic characteristics and comparing it with their newly developed measure). To assess the unique contribution of each scale of political efficacy, multiple regression analyses were conducted and semi-partial correlations

were obtained. As hypothesized, the P-PSE scale and all other relevant measures used were moderately related.

The psychometric properties of the P-PSE scale (in both long-form and short-form), were examined by Vecchione and colleagues (2014) across several studies. The authors compared both versions of their scale in terms of reliability, factor structure, and criterion validity. The factor structure of the P-PSE scale was examined through a CFA and the model comprised a single latent factor explaining the co-variation among the four scale items. Furthermore, the results obtained in terms of factor loadings also provided further support to the validity of the scale. Another purpose of Vecchione et al.'s (2014) study was to assess the degree to which the two versions of the P-PSE scale shared similar psychometric properties by examining the correlation between them, as well as correlations with relevant criteria. Consequently, the authors concluded that there was an adequate overlapping variance between the short-form and long-form of the scale. The criterion validity of the P-PSE scale was also investigated by examining the degree to which individuals' scores on the short-form of the PPSE-S were related to several indicators of political participation in their sample, including for example "contacted a politician or government official" or "taken part in lawful public demonstration", and others (Vecchione et al., 2014, p.5). The authors expected that the short-form would be related to high levels of political engagement, so they compared its criterion validity with the long-form. After analysing the results, the authors concluded that the criterion validity of the P-PSE scale was substantially equivalent (i.e., .33 and .33 respectively) for both versions, and correlations tended to be higher with conventional forms of participation (e.g., voting). As a second step, Vecchione and colleagues (2014) extended PPSE-S analysis to Spain and Greece, concluding that the one-factor model adequately fitted both of those countries as well.

Vecchione et al. (2014) also tested the cross-cultural equivalence of the PPSE-S using multi-group confirmatory factor analysis, to test the instrument's equivalence across three countries (that are, Italy, Spain, and Greece) and suggested that the scalar equivalence was not completely acceptable. However, partial scalar invariance was established across the three examined countries. Criterion validity was examined by positing a multi-group structural equation model linking political self-efficacy to the composite index of political participation. The most important finding was that political self-efficacy beliefs predicted political participation in all three countries.

The BSCS (Peterson et al., 2008) comprises four factors: needs fulfilment, group membership, influence, and emotional connection. To test the factor structure of the BSCS and examine its relationship with a set of theoretically relevant variables, two sets of analyses were performed (that is, CFA and partial correlation analysis). In the CFAs that were conducted, two first-order models were tested – the one-factor BSCS and four-factor BSCS. Only the second model provided a good fit to the data. Peterson et al. (2008) concluded that the overall BSCS and its subscales correlated as expected with community participation, psychological empowerment, mental health, and depression. These results demonstrated robust empirical support for BSCS validity and its underlying multidimensional theory of sense of community.

To test the factor structure of the BSCSA, a CFA was conducted. The results confirmed the five-factor structure found by the original authors (Cicognani et al. 2006), further confirming the multi-dimensional nature of the BSCSA. The BSCSA's five factors comprised: sense of belonging, support and emotional connection in the community, support and emotional connection with peers, satisfaction of needs and opportunities for involvement, and opportunities for influence (Chiessi et al., 2010). Regarding the validity of the BSCSA, concurrent validity was assessed by

correlational analysis exploring the relationships between the sense of community wellbeing measures (that is, 12 items corresponding to three dimensions of wellbeing: emotional, social, and psychological). Results showed that the sense of community subscales correlated positively and significantly with wellbeing demonstrating that the BSCSA has some concurrent validity. Finally, the YII comprises four factors: political activities, community activities, passive involvement, and helping activities (Pancer et al., 2007). The validity of the YII was assessed by correlating the YII total scores with the Youth Social Responsibility Scale. The correlation between both scales was deemed to be satisfactory by the authors.

The findings in this section highlight many different ways that political engagement is operationally defined psychometrically in these instruments. The results obtained regarding the factor structures and validity of instruments illustrate that several sources of validity are used in order to provide evidence of instrument validity (for example, factorial validity, content validity, convergent/discriminant validity, construct validity, and criterion validity). On the whole, this is a positive aspect of research in this area and highlights the robustness in the analysis conducted in order to investigate the validity of developed measures.

Appropriate measurement of political engagement

For an instrument to be considered appropriate to assess a concept, it should take other principles into account. Koronczai et al. (2011) developed a set of psychometric requisites that an instrument should meet to be considered. They noted that such an instrument should have:

- Brevity (making surveys as short as possible to help overcome question fatigue);

- Comprehensiveness (examining all essential aspects);
- Reliability and validity across age groups (e.g., adolescents compared with adults);
- Reliability and validity across data collection methods (e.g., online, face-to-face interview, paper-and-pencil);
- Cross-cultural reliability and validity;
- Clinical validation.

These criteria – mainly used in epidemiology and psychology – are adopted here to help critically evaluate the seven instruments identified. All the criteria are examined, with the exception of the last one – clinical validation – because this is not relevant in assessing political engagement.

When examining the seven instruments in light of these criteria, it can be seen that, regarding the brevity question, the number of items within the instruments varies from 8 to 30 items. The instruments with 8 (BSCS), 10 (P-PSE and PPSE-S) and 14 (CES) items are considered briefer than the instruments with 20 (FACE and BSCSA) or 30 (YII). Therefore, only four of the seven measurement instruments are considered brief. Nevertheless, it is important to note that even if brief scales are appealing, they have important psychometric costs (e.g., their psychometric quality might be poor) (Furr, 2011), but this was not the case in the seven instruments reviewed.

In terms of comprehensiveness of the seven instruments in examining all the main aspects of political engagement, it can be noted that none of the scales assessed the concept of political engagement as a whole, but only dimensions and/or items relating to political engagement. Consequently, comprehensiveness was not found in any of the seven instruments.

When considering reliability and validity across age groups, the seven instruments can be separated into those adopted for use with the whole population (with no distinction between adults and adolescents) and others utilised in studies with adolescents only. Of the seven instruments, only two were specifically designed for an adolescent population (BSCSA and YII), and were not tested in an adult population. The five remaining instruments were developed without explaining the target population. Three (P-PSE, PPSE-S, and BSCS) were validated in the general population (including adolescents and adults), and two were validated with university populations (CES and FACE) with wide age ranges. However, even if these were designed for students, a distinction between teenagers and adults was not evidenced. None of the seven instruments were assessed in terms of reliability and validity across different age groups.

Regarding the reliability and validity across data collection methods, six of the seven studies used only one assessment method (Caprara et al., 2009; Chiessi et al., 2010; Doolittle & Faul, 2013; Droege & Ferrari, 2012; Peterson et al., 2008; Vecchione et al., 2014). Only one study used two assessment methods (Pancer et al., 2007). Nevertheless, the intention was to use them as complementary methods, not to assess the validity or reliability. Finally, when it comes to the cross-cultural validity and reliability, only one study assessed these properties in three different countries (Vecchione et al., 2014). In summary, when analysed using Koronczai and colleagues' (2011) criteria, none of the seven scales reviewed comprised all of the requirements.

Discussion

The present chapter set out to systematically review, summarize, and critique the extant research evidence on the development of psychometric instruments assessing

young people's political engagement. Seven instruments were examined in terms of their psychometric properties. It is important to note that, even if the initial objective was to focus on youth political engagement scales, most instruments targeted the whole population irrespective of age (that is, young people and adults). Of the seven instruments, only two were explicitly developed for adolescents (Chiessi et al., 2010; Pancer et al., 2007). Regarding the data extracted, attention should be paid to the following components, because these will allow a better understanding of how authors have conceptualised and assessed the construct of political engagement: (i) conceptualisation of political engagement (the process of development and clarification of the concept of political engagement), (ii) theoretical background (theories – or lack of them – used for the development of the seven instruments reviewed), and (iii) how appropriately the instruments assess the concept of political engagement, regarding the psychometric properties of the instruments (factor structure, reliability and validity) and criteria proposed by Koronczai and colleagues (2011).

Regarding the conceptualisation of political engagement, for some authors (e.g., Adler & Goggin, 2005; Barrett & Brunton-Smith, 2014; Ekman & Amnå, 2012), there is a lack of consensus when it comes to the conceptualisation of politically-related constructs, like political participation and civic engagement. In the previous chapter (Chapter 2), an enumeration of some of the existent definitions of political participation, political engagement, civic participation, and civic engagement was made, and a variety of definitions were found. Therefore, there is disagreement when it comes to the definition of those concepts. Concerning the definition of political engagement itself, there is no precise and agreed conceptualisation, thus political

engagement is often considered as civic engagement and/or participation (Barrett & Zani, 2014), hence clear distinctions need to be made.

In terms of the theoretical backgrounds used across the seven studies supporting the development of the instruments, it can be noted that the authors based their work on either: (i) theories (Chiessi et al., 2010; Peterson et al., 2008) (ii) definitions (Doolittle & Faul, 2013; Droege & Ferrari, 2012), (iii) models (Caprara et al., 2009; Vecchione et al., 2014), or (iv) recent surveys (Pancer et al., 2007). These observations highlight the lack of theory used in instrument development (that is, five of the seven instruments were constructed on primarily non-theoretical bases).

When it comes to the assessment of political engagement, Albacete (2014) stated that instruments should allow the assessment of the latent concept of political participation, take into account recent developments in citizens' repertoire of political actions, and allow the equivalent measurement of political engagement in several countries and over time (see Chapter 1, section *Issues in Measuring Political Engagement and Political Participation*). When comparing Albacete's requirements (that are more theoretical) with the criteria developed by Koronczai and colleagues (that are more psychometric), there is one main overlapping point – the need for instruments to be validated across different countries. Of the seven instruments, only one (Vecchione et al., 2014) assessed the validity of the instrument across different countries.

Only one of the seven instruments – the PPSE-S (Vecchione et al., 2014) – takes into account the latent forms of participation (of Ekman and Amnå's [2012] conceptualisation of manifest and latent forms of political participation) such as displaying a badge, signing a petition, taking part in public demonstrations, and boycotting products. Another study using the P-PSE (Caprara et al., 2009) assessed

different forms of political participation (for example, maintaining personal relationships with representatives of national government authorities, playing a decisive role in the choice of the leaders of political movements to which one belongs). The remaining instruments only included latent and manifest forms of civic participation and engagement. For example, in the CES (Doolittle & Faul, 2013), the items relate with latent forms of civic engagement (for example, feeling responsible for the community, participating in discussions that raise issues of social responsibility), whereas in the YII (Pancer et al., 2007) there are some examples of manifest forms of civic participation (for example, volunteering with a community service organisation) and latent forms (for example, helping others in the school or in the community) at the same time. In accordance with Albacete (2014), it is concluded that there in existence are a lack of instruments assessing latent forms of political participation and engagement. Although the seven instruments are valid and reliable, none of them appropriately assesses the concept of political engagement in its totality. In addition, there is a need for a definitive and agreed conceptualisation of the concept of political engagement, based upon relevant theories.

The present systematic review identified ways in which political engagement assessment procedures may be improved. Given that no single instrument provided a conceptualization of political engagement, the first step would be to carefully differentiate between civic engagement, civic participation, political participation, and political engagement, in order to develop a valid and reliable standardised instrument to assess political engagement. In addition, latent and manifest actions should be taken into account in order to improve the understanding of the declining levels of political engagement and electoral turnout. Also, in regard to youth political engagement, a specific assessment instrument should be designed because there is a lack of

psychometrically validated measures that specifically assess young people's political engagement. In the next Chapter 4, I will set out the methodology for the instrument's development and validation which will be addressed by two studies in Chapter 5 (qualitative study) and Chapter 6 (quantitative study).

Conclusion

The present review adds to the literature of political participation and engagement by identifying and evaluating the instruments assessing people's political engagement. The seven instruments identified in the present review had good psychometric properties, but they did not appropriately assess the core concept of political engagement, and only assessed related concepts (for example, civic engagement) and/or dimensions (for example, perceived political self-efficacy, sense of community). When it comes to the assessment of youth political engagement, only two instruments were identified (BSCSA and YII), so if there is a lack in instruments assessing political engagement across the whole population, the scenario is even more of an issue when it comes to youth. It should also be noted that some authors have debated the validity and reliability of the instruments used in political participation research. For instance, there is a group of academic researchers who argue that measures need to be refined to capture the full range and methods of young people's political participation (Albacete, 2014; Henn & Foard, 2012; O'Toole, 2015).

However, the present systematic literature review has some limitations. The main limitation of the present review is that there is always a possibility that some studies may have been missed during the literature searches. Consequently, this review should be only considered as a starting point for further conceptual development of a political engagement instrument. Several research avenues may lead to improvement

in political engagement assessment. Firstly, the development of a valid and reliable measure to assess political engagement, and more specifically youth political engagement. As all seven of the psychometrically validated instruments were administered in Western countries, it would be useful to test these instruments elsewhere (for example, South East Asia), to see if cultural differences influence young people's political engagement. Secondly, it would be useful to administer a youth political engagement instrument taking into account other ethnic groups (that is, minorities), given that the majority of the studies surveyed white people as the main racial classification in their samples. Statistically speaking, future studies should explore additional forms of validity that have not yet been investigated, for example, predictive validity. In other words, the way in which the instrument can predict objective political engagement behaviours (for example, interest in politics, or discussing political issues with friends and family).

With this systematic literature review, objective (i) was addressed (see Chapter 1, section *Research aims and objectives*). Overall, the systematic review highlights the need for the development of a political engagement instrument that assesses the construct in its totality rather than single dimensions or aspects of it (which is the primary aim of this thesis – see Chapter 1, section *Research aims and objectives*, Primary aim). This will be addressed in Chapters 5 and 6 with a qualitative and a quantitative study respectively. In Chapter 5, the qualitative study will inform the development of the items for the scale that is then addressed in Chapter 6. Moreover, both studies (Chapter 5 and 6) will contribute in different ways to test the validity of the scale being developed in this thesis (the *Youth Political Engagement Scale*), which is going to be explored in more detail in the methods chapter (see Chapter 4, section *Quantitative study: Scale development and validation*).

PART II: METHODS

CHAPTER 4: Methodology

Introduction

The main aim of this thesis is to advance the field of political participation by developing a new robust psychometric instrument to assess young people's political engagement that ultimately will help clarify current conceptual debates in the field (see Chapter 1, section *Research aims and objectives,* objective [i]). This is important given the lack of psychometrically validated instruments to assess youth political engagement (Pontes et al., 2016) and the fact that measures that are not properly validated are being used to assess this construct. This can lead to biased conclusions about young people's levels of engagement with politics; in order to overcome this issue it is first is crucial that questions concerning youth political engagement require coherence between the concept which implies the repertoire of actions citizens can get involved in and its assessment. Given this need, this PhD also sets out to critically evaluate how the construct of political engagement is currently represented in research and to propose a conceptualisation of youth political engagement (see Chapter 1, section *Research aims and objectives*, objective [i]), and to critically examine how adequately existing research instruments measure the phenomena of young people's political engagement (see Chapter 1, section *Research aims and objectives*, research objective [ii]). Furthermore, it also intends to explore the dimensionality of the construct of political engagement and ascertain if the concept of political engagement is statistically different from political participation (see Chapter 1, section *Research aims and objectives*, objective [iii]).

A mixed-methods approach was adopted in order to explore this topic, because it provides a better approach for the understanding of research problems than either approach alone. For instance, quantitative research has some limitations, namely that it is a weak methodology in understanding the context or setting in which people talk because the voices of participants are not directly heard in quantitative research (Creswell & Clark, 2017). For example, if a quantitative approach on its own has been adopted, I would not have been able to explore young people's perceptions of what it means to be engaged with politics in order to propose a conceptualisation of youth political engagement (see Chapter 1, section *Research aims and questions*, objective [i])**.** Qualitative research, on the other hand makes up for this weakness but can also be seen as a deficient methodology because of the personal interpretations made by the researcher and the difficulty in generalising findings to a larger group (Sarantakos, 2013). If I had chosen to adopt a qualitative methodology as the only form of data collection and analysis, it would not be possible to develop the political engagement scale and the main aim of this thesis could not be addressed.

Furthermore, this chapter will include an examination of the epistemological assumptions behind the selected mixed-methods approach, to explain the philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how it can be assured that they are legitimate and adequate for this research. Therefore, an overview of the research methodology and design adopted in this thesis will also be provided in order to explain the methodological strategy and design lying behind the choice and use of the methods adopted in this thesis.

Research aims and questions

This thesis seeks to contribute to the advance of the field of political participation by developing a new psychometric instrument to assess young people's political engagement. Additionally, it also endeavours to contribute to conceptual debates around politically-related constructs (specially the distinction between youth political participation and youth political engagement). This PhD also sets out to critically evaluate how the construct of political engagement is currently represented in research and to propose a conceptualisation of youth political engagement, and critically examine how adequately existing research instruments measure the phenomena of young people's political engagement. Within this PhD project, two major studies were conducted with young people between 18 and 24 years old in the United Kingdom and in Portugal: a qualitative study (Chapter 5) and a quantitative study (Chapter 6).

Research questions

Informed by the literature review and research aims, the following section refines the research questions presented in Chapter 1. The research questions are as follows:

i) How is political engagement conceptualised and operationalised in the literature?

Before developing an instrument to assess youth political engagement, it is crucial to decide which conceptual approach is going to be employed. Barrett (2011) has been using the term political engagement in his work when referring to the engagement of an individual with political institutions, processes and decision making. As has been seen in Chapter 2, engagement may be differentiated from participation, and was defined by Barrett as having an interest in, paying attention to, having knowledge of

or opinions about either political or civic matters. Engagement is then considered as a psychological matter and can be indexed in many different ways, for example, via levels of political or civic knowledge or considering the extent to which an individual discusses politics or civic affairs with family or friends. In Chapter 2, political engagement was then considered to have three dimensions, being cognitive, affective and behavioural (which the author calls political participation). So, one can be cognitively or emotionally engaged in politics without being behaviourally engaged (or in other words, without participating in the political sphere). This was considered to be the most complete conceptualisation and operationalisation of the concept of political engagement, when conducting a literature review on the existing definitions of politically-related concepts (like, civic engagement, civic participation, political engagement, and political participation). However, given the lack of agreement on the definitions of political engagement considering young people's perspectives on what political engagement is for them, Chapter 5 presents a study where youth's perceptions and conceptualisations of political engagement were explored.

ii) How is the construct of political engagement being assessed? Is there any valid and reliable instrument that assesses young people's political engagement?

As has been discussed in Chapter 1, according to Albacete (2014), the instruments that are being deployed by researchers to measure youth political engagement often lack adequate validation. Consequently, some researchers may end up adopting inconsistent criteria without statistical and/or psychometric validity to assess young people's political engagement. After conducting a systematic review of the literature (in Chapter 3), only seven instruments presented good psychometric proprieties, but they did not assess the core concept of political engagement, assessing related concepts

(like civic engagement, for example) and/or dimensions (like perceived political self-efficacy or sense of community, for example) instead. As conclusion, the systematic literature review highlighted the need for the development of a political engagement assessment instrument that assesses the construct in its totality rather than single dimensions or aspects of it (see the *Youth Political Engagement Scale* development and validation study in Chapter 6).

iii) Is political engagement a unidimensional or a multidimensional construct? If the latter, which are these dimensions?

Political engagement has been conceptualised and operationalised in the literature as both a unidimensional (for example, Eckstein et al., 2012) and a multidimensional (for example, Barrett & Brunton-Smith, 2014; Carreras, 2016) construct (see Chapter 2 for more details). However, the issue of dimensionality is not commonly addressed in the literature. Barrett's (2012) operationalisation of political engagement considers the concept to be defined by three main dimensions, namely cognitive, emotional and behavioural (which the author considers to be political participation). In this thesis, Barrett's operationalisation of political engagement was statistically tested in order to confirm those three dimensions as being part of the concept of political engagement. Given that one of the arguments of this thesis was that engagement and participation are different concepts (based on youth's perceptions on what it means to be politically engaged), this operationalisation was chosen in order to test for convergent and discriminant validity. The results for the dimensionality of political engagement and for the statistical information that sheds light on the proposed distinction between political engagement and political participation can be found in Chapter 6.

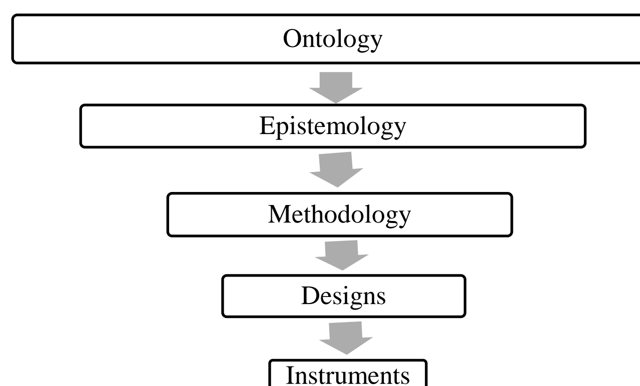
vi) Are young people really disengaged from politics per se, or are they abstaining from participating in "formal" institutionalised methods of political but nonetheless still engaged?

The debate around young people's political (dis)engagement and (lack of) participation has been dividing scholars researching the field of youth politics. Young people are frequently singled out as a problematic group, displaying low levels of electoral turnout, a lack of trust in democratic institutions and signs of scepticism and cynicism regarding politicians and political parties (Dalton, 2013; Kiisel, Leppik, & Seppel, 2015). Furthermore, while activities associated with traditional politics have declined, young people have also found interest in political issues and alternative forms to participate and engage with politics (Henn & Foard, 2012; O'Toole, 2015). However, given that the measures that have been used to assess young people's political engagement need refinement (Albacete, 2014), the conclusions around the levels of (dis)engagement may be biased because the main outcome would have been assessed improperly. The purpose of this thesis is, as stated previously, to contribute to this debate by developing and validating an instrument to assess the construct of political engagement among young people. In Chapter 6, where the scale is developed, some preliminary results on the levels of engagement for the samples being used can be found (further information about the processes used and statistical coefficients considered in validation of the scale can be found in Chapter 4).

Philosophical assumptions

Usually, the different philosophical approaches in Social Sciences[12] are contrasted on three bases: ontological (related to the existence of a real objective world), epistemological (related to the possibility of knowing this world and the forms this knowledge would take), and methodological (referring to the technical instruments that are used in order to acquire that knowledge) (Corbetta, 2003, p.12-13). Because these are the bases upon which the research is built, there are several reasons for wanting to have a clear and transparent knowledge of the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpin research because they will help comprehend the methodological choices and the methods adopted later in this project. Therefore there is a need to understand the interrelationship of the key components of research (ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods) to avoid confusion when discussing theoretical approaches to social phenomena; and, to be able to recognise others', and defend our own positions as researchers (Grix, 2019).

Figure 2. The foundations of social research



Source: Adapted from Sarantakos (2013) and Henn, Weinstein, and Foard (2009).

[12] In this thesis the term Social Sciences encompasses different areas like psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics and political science, and links with the idea of the disciplined and systematic study of society and its institutions, and of how and why people behave as they do, both as individuals and in groups within society (Halloran, 2010).

The specific way in which ontologies and epistemologies influence the structure and process of social research is explained by the area of study known as the philosophy of science. Ontology has been defined as the science or theory of 'being' and asks questions of how our world is built, like "is there a 'real' world 'out there' that is independent of our knowledge of it?" (Marsh & Stoker, 2002, p.18). This notion of reality can range from a world that is real and independent from our knowledge (realism), to the idea that there is no real world, which means that this world is socially constructed, dependent from time or culture (constructionism) (Creswell, 2013; Sarantakos, 2013). These are the two dominant ontologies, realism (or essentialism or foundationalism) and constructionism (or anti-foundationalism or relativism) (Marsh & Stoker, 2002). For realists for example, the answers to questions are objective and 'out there', just like the answers to questions about the nature of electrons (Sider, 2009, p.409), whereas for constructionists answers to questions are subjective to each individual, and concepts like electrons were arbitrarily created by us humans. For example, a realist or foundationalist ontological position would be considering that young women and young men have fundamental differences that are features of their very existence, which persist over time and are common across cultures that lead them to vote or not. On the other hand, a constructionist or anti-foundationalist ontological position would understand the differences between men and women (which would lead them to vote or not) as socially constructed. As such, they are not essential differences but are particular to a different time and culture.

Epistemology is how we know things, a branch of philosophy that addresses the question of the nature, sources and limits of knowledge (Klein, 2005), especially in regard to its methods, validation and the possible ways of gaining knowledge of social reality, whatever it is understood to be (Blaikie, 2009). Focused on the

knowledge-gathering process, epistemology is also concerned with developing new models or theories that are better than compelling models and theories. When reflecting on theories, and concepts in general, we have to reflect on the assumptions on which they are based and where they originate from in the first place. Two contrasting epistemological positions are those contained within the research paradigms[13] 'Positivism' (usually associated with quantitative research strategies) and 'Interpretivism' (often associated with qualitative research strategies) (Howe, 1992). Broadly speaking, the former is an epistemological position that advocates the application of the methods of the natural sciences to the study of social reality and beyond. For example, a positivist epistemological position would be believing that youth propensity to vote or not is due to individual differences and personality traits that can easily be assessed by a psychometric personality test (for example, see Ackermann, 2016; Gerber, Huber, Raso, & Ha, 2009; Hennessy, Delli Carpini, Blank, Winneg, & Jamieson, 2015). The latter, on the other hand, can be seen as an epistemological position that is predicated upon the view that a strategy is required that respects the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action (Bryman, 2016). An example of a study that takes an interpretivist epistemological position is Sloam's (2018) article on #Votebecaue, where the author explores (by using a qualitative approach) the motivations for youth political participation and seeks out to understand the processes by which young people become politically active (Sloam,

[13] The definition or paradigm used is the one from Kuhn (1970), who defined paradigms as "what members of a scientific community share, and which acts as a guide or map, dictating the kinds of problems scientists should address and the types of explanations that are acceptable to them" (p.176). For example, Henn and colleagues (Henn et al., 2002) were among the first of many studies which marked a turning point in academic research on young people's political engagement, and which concluded that young people were not disengaged from politics, but they were indeed a "generation apart". Prior to the late 1990s, the common paradigm with youth and politics research was based in notions of apathy or alienation (e.g., Dean, 1960).

2018). Consequently, by choosing one of these epistemological positions will lead to the employment of a different methodology according to the position taken.

Methodological movements: quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods

When considering the relationship ontology and epistemology have with methodology, ontologies inform methodologies as to the nature of reality, or better as to 'what' social research is supposed to study. For instance, taking into account the examples given in the previous section about the different ontological positions, if I consider a realist or foundationalist position - for instance, assuming that the young males and females have different levels of turnout simply because they are male or female - quantitative methodology could be used to research this. In other words, I could use a questionnaire where I would ask the gender of the respondent along with voting behaviour questions and explore the statistical relations between the different variables. If a constructionist or anti-foundationalist position is taken, for example assuming that the differences that exist between young men and young women are socially constructed, I would use a qualitative methodological approach to explore their reasons to vote or not. Epistemologies inform methodologies about the nature of knowledge, or about what counts as a fact and where knowledge is to be sought. A positivist epistemological position would therefore, as per my example given in the previous section (that young people's vote is determined by individual differences and personality characteristics), suggest the need for a quantitative methodological approach. A post-positivist, on the other hand, like the case of Sloam's study (2018) suggest the choice for a qualitative approach. Methodologies prepare 'packages' of appropriate research designs, to be employed by researchers, instructing them as to where to focus their research activity, and how to recognize and extract knowledge

(Sarantakos, 2013). Furthermore, different methodological approaches would call for different research designs (different research designs will be explored later on in this chapter, under the section *Research designs*). A quantitative methodological approach, would suggest the need for a cross-sectional or for a longitudinal case study, for example a questionnaire exploring young people's political participation (generally using a representative sample) where data could be collected in a specific moment in time or across a longer period of time. A qualitative study would more likely adopt a case study as research design, for example a group of five interviews exploring young people's sense of political efficacy could not be extrapolated (therefore, not representative) to a wider population.

The debate around the application of quantitative or qualitative methodologies has evolved from discussions concerning the incompatibility of the techniques and procedures to debating the incompatibility of the epistemological assumptions of quantitative and qualitative methodologies (Howe, 1992). The quantitative research methodology is strongly associated with the positivist research paradigm, and usually uses the scientific approach to study social phenomena. This type of research emphasises numerical data gathering and analysing this data using statistical methods; it has an objectivist view on social reality and it measures the variables and tests hypotheses or theories that are linked to general causal explanations (Bryman, 2016; Creswell, 2013; Sarantakos, 2013). Although this approach has been used across a great number of studies in the field of politics (for example, Caprara et al., 2009; Eckstein et al., 2012; Henn & Oldfield, 2016; Pontes, Henn, & Griffiths, 2017; Vecchione & Caprara, 2009), an example is Reichert's (2016) study on how internal political efficacy translates political knowledge into political participation where the author used mediated multiple regression analyses to explore this issue. The results

showed that political knowledge translated into internal political efficacy, thus it affects political participation of various kinds indirectly. Furthermore, the author could also ascertain that internal political efficacy and intentions to participate politically yielded simultaneous direct effects only on conventional political participation. Sequentially mediated effects appear for voting and conventional political participation, with political knowledge being mediated by internal political efficacy and subsequently also by behavioural intentions (Reichert, 2016). This type of analysis would be more difficult to acquire using qualitative methods, considering that a representative sample is being used, hypothesis were tested and results were presented on the different causal relationships between the variables in the study.

Additionally, quantitative methods are deductive in nature, where the researcher starts from a theory to hypotheses to data, to ultimately add to or to contradict the theory (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Henn and colleagues suggest that this approach (deduction) is often referred to as using the hypothetic-deductive method associated with the theory-then-research strategy (Henn et al., 2009, p.52). This means that theory is consulted and then guides the formulation of specific research questions, and these research questions are constructed as hypotheses, which are then tested with empirical data. Additionally, if the data then demonstrates that the theory has any lapse it needs to be revised, and data have to be looked at in different ways to improve the theory (Henn et al., 2009). A useful example of this can be found in a study conducted by Henn and colleagues (2017), where the authors assessed the veracity of Inglehart's (1971) postmaterialist thesis[14] by examining recent patterns of youth political participation. This research was conducted in order to contribute to the debate around

[14] In his influential book *The Silent Revolution* (1971), Ronald Inglehart anticipated some of the patterns of contemporary political participation which constituted the base for his postmaterisalist thesis where he considered the centrality of economic forces in shaping citizens' values and behaviours.

whether a postmaterialist generational shift in political participation preferences had actually occurred in recent years. Based on their findings, the authors concluded that Inglehart's postmaterialist thesis is still relevant to help understand the patterns of youth political participation even under existing economic austerity conditions (Henn, Oldfield, & Hart, 2017).The data collection techniques commonly employed in quantitative research are mostly surveys, experimental studies and quasi-experimental research.

Qualitative methods, on the other hand are mainly used for naturalistic studies. They attempt to interpret different phenomenon based on the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Similarly, qualitative research has also been defined as "how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (Merriam, 2009, p.13). Thus, qualitative researchers have engaged themselves directly in society to observe people in their social interactions. Qualitative research encompasses several features, namely that it belongs to the interpretative school of thought, it has a subjective view of social reality, is flexible and uses an inductive approach. Induction, contrary to deduction, moves from a set of observations to a theory, and it allows a theory to be constructed from emerging patterns in the research data. As suggested by Henn and colleagues, it is associated with an analytic-inductive method, which is part of the research-then-theory strategy (Henn et al., 2009, p.53). In other words, it is deployed when researchers are not attempting to test how useful a particular theory is, but instead are seeking to understand a particular phenomenon, and through this, trying to build up an explanation of it (Marsh & Stoker, 2002).

These two methodologies (namely, quantitative and qualitative) use quite distinct research techniques and modes of operation (Sarantakos, 2013) that have associated merits and limitations. Quantitative research usually employs highly

structured techniques of data collection that allow quantification, hypotheses, measurement and operationalisation, as well as the use of statistical methods of data analysis. Qualitative researchers on the other hand use less structured techniques of data collection and analysis, because their emphasis is on discovery, exploration and of acquiring social meaning rather than on hypothesis testing. Although quantitative research is often considered more reliable due to statistical methods than qualitative research, it does not always shed light on the full complexity of what is being investigated (Bryman, 2016). For example, O'Toole (2003) conducted a study on young people's conceptions of the Political where she explored how young people themselves define politics. The author used a qualitative methodology instead of a quantitative methodology in order to allow respondents to report their own terms and to permit a deep description of how participants conceive the political (O'Toole, 2003). Qualitative research, on the other hand, can provide rich and in-depth details about the topic of research but is not always generalizable due to small sample sizes and the subjective nature of research. Additionally to these two methodological traditions (qualitative and quantitative), a third methodological movement has emerged as a methodological choice for academics across a variety of discipline areas (Cameron, 2011; Creswell, 2013). Commonly known as mixed-methods research, it encompasses a research design with its own philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry (Creswell & Clark, 2017) and suggests an integration of quantitative and qualitative data within the same investigation. As a methodology, it involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either

approach used alone (Creswell & Clark, 2017; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). For example, in a study that investigates what encourages or impedes young people to participate in everyday political talk, Ekström used mixed methods (diaries, individual interviews, group interviews and a survey) in order to get a comprehensive view on the participants' everyday activities, experiences as well as how they reflect and talk about various activities with their peers (Ekström, 2016). Additionally, the philosophical reasoning frequently adopted when using this style of mixed-methods research when approach is "pragmatism" (Cameron, 2011) as outlined in the next section.

The mixed-methods approach

Although pragmatism is the most frequently adopted philosophical foundation in mixed-methods research, Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) reconstructed what is now becoming a well-known inventory of different stances about different philosophical foundations of mixed-methods. In this chapter I will only focus on two of the most commonly known positions which are the incompatibility thesis and the compatibility thesis. The first stance holds that paradigms are different (incompatibility thesis) and cannot be mixed; thus, mixed-methods research is an untenable proposition. This is due to the fundamental differences in the paradigms underlying those differences (positivism for quantitative research and constructivism for qualitative research), meaning that the incompatibility thesis is associated with the supposed link between paradigms and research methods. Therefore, if the underlying premises of different paradigms conflict with one another, the methods associated with those paradigms cannot be combined.

On a philosophical level, mixed methodologists countered the incompatibility thesis by positing a different paradigm: pragmatism. The main principle of pragmatism as a research paradigm is that quantitative and qualitative methods are compatible (compatibility thesis), thereby rejecting the premises presented by the incompatibility thesis. For instance, Howe (1988) described the compatibility thesis as supporting the view, beginning to dominate practice, that combining quantitative and qualitative methods is epistemologically coherent (p.10). A pragmatic approach would encourage researchers who use different methods in different paradigms to place an emphasis on shared meanings and understandings to develop shared lines of behaviour. Furthermore, pragmatism does not reject the relevance of concepts of the philosophy of knowledge, but it does reject that what is regarded in other paradigms as the privileging of ontology over epistemology and epistemology over method. Morgan (2007) advocates a pragmatic approach that centres on methodology and its connection with epistemology and methods with equal attention being devoted to each connection, with a greater focus on the research questions being posed in the research. For example, by adopting pragmatism in this study it was assumed that from an epistemological perspective at some stage during the research it was going to take an objective approach by not interacting with participants (the quantitative study); while during the qualitative study it was going to be necessary to take a more subjective approach by interacting with research objects to construct realities (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

These different positions suggest a lively and unresolved conversation about paradigms in the mixed-methods field, differences of opinions, and a continuation of the paradigm debate (e.g., Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989), that is the conflict

between the competing scientific world-views of positivism and constructivism on philosophical and methodological issues (Howe, 1988; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

Pragmatism was the paradigm adopted in this thesis, given that this approach is more concerned with research questions rather than the worldview or the method that is supposed to underline the research. As the purpose of this research is to find a solution to a real world problem (that is, to improve the way young people's political engagement is being assessed), it is important to choose the methods that help achieve that accurately (Howe, 1992). The pragmatic paradigm has what Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) and Creswell and colleagues (2003) see as a permission to study areas that are of interest, embracing methods that are appropriate (Creswell et al., 2003). More specifically, pragmatism was adopted as this research project's paradigm because it allows exploration of an in-depth understanding of the concept of political engagement as defined and perceived by young people themselves, and it embraces at the same time a strong belief that youth political engagement can be studied scientifically, and therefore statistically. This rationale led to the justification on the implementation of a mixed-methods approach including both qualitative and quantitative analysis.

Types of mixed-methods

There is a vast array of different perspectives and designs in mixed-methods research (Creswell & Clark, 2017). According to Creswell (2013) there are three main strategies of inquiry for mixed methods research: *concurrent mixed-methods*; *transformative mixed-methods*; and *sequential mixed-methods* (p.18). *Concurrent mixed-methods* procedures are those in which the researcher converges or merges quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide comprehensive analysis of the research problem.

In this design, an investigator collects both forms of data at the same time during the study and then integrates the information in the interpretation of the overall results, where the quantitative and qualitative data have equal weight. For example, Schrum, Skeele, and Grant (2002-2003) utilized a case study approach to evaluate the integration of technology in a college curriculum during a 2-year period from the perspectives of faculty, students, administrators, and technology project directors. In the quantitative component, 13 faculty as well as students, 183 in Year 1 and 135 in Year 2, completed a pre-questionnaire and a post-questionnaire designed to assess their technology skills. In the qualitative component, faculty members, technology project directors, and university administrators participated in focus groups to discuss ways to improve the technology project. The quantitative and qualitative studies were subsequently analysed at the same time (Schrum, Skeele, & Grant, 2002).

Transformative mixed-methods procedures are those in which the researcher uses a theoretical lens as an overarching perspective within a design that contains both quantitative and qualitative data. This lens profiles a framework for topics of interest, methods for collecting data, and outcomes or changes anticipated by the study (Creswell, 2013). This type of mixed method is chosen especially when the research is focused on the tensions that arise when unequal power relationships permeate a research context that addresses intransigent social problems (Leavy, 2017). For example, the question of power arises in terms of privileges associated with economic status, religious beliefs, immigrant status, race/ethnicity, tribal identity, gender, disability, and status as an indigenous person or a colonizer just to name a few. This approach (transformative mixed methods) also focuses on the strengths that reside in communities that experience discrimination and oppression on the basis of their cultural values and experiences (Mertens, 2010). Hodgkin's (2008) study provides an

example of a transformative feminist mixed methods study of the differences between men and women in terms of their social capital. She began with a quantitative survey of a large representative sample of men and women about their social, community and civic participation. She followed this with a qualitative data collection stage in which she conducted in-depth interviews with women about their processes of interacting with social, community, and civic settings and how they felt about their activities and their lives. Thus, she was able to broaden understandings of differences between men and women beyond economic differences to include social capital (Hodgkin, 2008).

Finally, *sequential mixed-methods* procedures are those in which the researcher seeks to elaborate on or expand on the findings of one method with another. This may involve beginning with a qualitative method for exploratory purposes and following up with a quantitative method with a large sample so that the researcher can generalize results to a population. An example can be the Youth Civic and Character Measures Toolkit (2015) by Syvertsen and colleagues, where the authors' main goal was to develop and test a set of measures to assess civic engagement and character strength measures that were appropriate for youth in middle childhood and adolescence. The authors adopted a sequential mixed methods approach where the qualitative study (interviews) were conducted first in order to assess young people's understandings of different civic-related character strengths and the perceived links between these character strengths and different forms of civic engagement (like voting, volunteering or environmental activities). Young people's narratives were used to inform the development of survey items on different civic engagement related scales (Syvertsen, Wray-Lake, & Metzger, 2015). Alternatively, the study may begin with a quantitative method in which theories or concepts are tested, to be followed by a qualitative method involving detailed exploration with a few cases or individuals (Creswell, 2013, p. 18-

19). An example would be the study conducted by Li and colleagues (2015) that aimed to examine the current technology usage of digital generation student teachers and the impact of possible internal and external barriers on their use of technology. Here, the authors employed a sequential mixed methods research design which included an initial quantitative survey and the follow-up qualitative interview. The qualitative results helped the authors explain the initial survey results and build better understanding of the significant and nonsignificant quantitative findings (Li, Worch, Zhou, & Aguiton, 2015).

There are also different sequences (the order the methods take in time) used in mixed-methods designs as well as the relative importance of each method. Morgan (1998) suggested four possible mixed-methods designs according to methods' sequencing and priority, namely, (i) qualitative followed by **quantitative**[15]; (ii) quantitative followed by **qualitative**; (iii) **quantitative** followed by qualitative; and (iv) **qualitative** followed by quantitative.

The findings from one type of study can be checked against the findings from a different study. For example, the results of a qualitative study might be checked against an earlier quantitative study, with the aim to generally clarify and enhance the validity of findings (Bryman, 2016). For example, if this thesis had been conducted in a different way, I could have set out to develop and validate the scale to assess young people's political engagement first and then interview young people to explore some of the quantitative results in more depth. On the other hand, qualitative research can help to provide background information on context and subjects, or it may act as a source of hypotheses, or it could aid scale construction (Bryman, 2016). For example, this is the approach taken in this thesis that will be further explained below.

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[15] The methods in bold denote the primary method in that sequence.

The sequential mixed-methods approach was adopted for the thesis: an exploratory set of focus groups interviews (qualitative) that were used to facilitate the quantitative research, which is the preeminent methodology in this project. Given that the main aim of this thesis was to develop and validate a scale to assess young people's political engagement, and that there is an ongoing discussion in the literature regarding the conceptualisation of political engagement, by adopting this sequential approach using qualitative focus group findings in phase one, it allowed me to: i) explore young people's understandings of the concept of political engagement and their perceptions on what someone should or should not do to be considered engaged in politics; ii) start designing a set of items (or questions) that would be part of the scale to assess political engagement, based on participants contributions; iii) compare the ideas on political engagement young people came up with, with the ongoing debates in the literature; and finally iv) after deciding which items would be part of the scale, design a questionnaire to collect data (quantitative) in order to ascertain the psychometric properties of the instrument.

Purposes for conducting mixed-methods research

Greene et al. (1989) propose that there are five major purposes for conducting mixed-methods research, namely *triangulation, complementarity, development, initiation,* and *expansion*. *Triangulation* means seeking convergence and corroboration of results from the different methods, quantitative and qualitative. In their study entitled "Two worlds of participation: young people and politics in Germany", Busse, Hashem-Wangler, and Tholen (2015) used triangulation of original empirical survey data and interview data with complementary secondary data from another project that had been

previously carried out. With this procedure, the authors wanted to assure that they would obtain the same results through the different methods of data collection.

Complementarity is related to seeking elaboration, enhancement, illustration and clarification of the results from one method with the results from the other method. In other words, qualitative and quantitative methods are used to measure the overlapping but also different facets of a phenomenon, yielding an enriched, elaborated understanding of that phenomenon. This differs from triangulation because the logic of convergence requires that the different methods assess the same conceptual phenomenon. For example, the idea of triangulation implies that the results of an investigation employing a method associated with one research strategy (a quantitative approach, for example) are cross-checked against the results using a method associated with the other research strategy (a qualitative approach, for example). Complementarity, on the other hand, indicates that a more complete answer to a research question or set of research questions can be achieved by including both quantitative and qualitative methods. It implies that the gaps left by one method can be filled by another (Bryman, 2016). The complementarity intent can be illustrated by the use of a qualitative interview to understand young people's views on what they understand political self-efficacy to be and how would someone be recognised as self-efficacious in politics, combined with a quantitative questionnaire to collect data on young people's levels of political self-efficacy.

By *development*, the authors meant using the results from one method to help develop or inform the other method, where development is broadly constructed to include sampling and implementation, as well as measurement decisions. The main purpose is to increase the validity of constructs and inquiry results by taking advantage of inherent method strengths, and it involves the sequential use of qualitative and

quantitative methods, where the first method is used to help inform the development of the second. This was the approach chosen in this thesis, where focus groups were primarily conducted in order to explore young people's understandings of political engagement, followed by a questionnaire to validate a scale to assess youth political engagement (more details can be found in the previous sections: Types of mixed-methods).

Initiation is related to discovering paradoxes and contradictions that lead to a reframing of a research question. The rationale behind this purpose is to increase the breadth and depth of inquiry results and interpretations by analysing them from the different perspectives of different methods and paradigms. In a complex study, for example, or even across different studies, the consistencies and discrepancies in qualitative compared with quantitative findings can be intentionally analysed for fresh insights invoked by means of contradiction and paradox. In other words, initiation is the further exploration of unexpected outcomes in a research (unexpected outcomes are usually not seen, and therefore cannot be included in the design of the study in advance). For instance, it is where different methods are used to investigate different aspects or dimensions of the same phenomenon but, in contrast to complementarity, the intention is divergence in order to generate new understandings. For example, initiation can be the further exploration of unexpected outcomes in research in a quantitative study about young people's political participation with a qualitative approach to further explore the results of the quantitative study. Finally, by the purpose of *expansion,* Greene et al. (1989) meant that the researcher's aim is to extend the breadth and range of inquiry by using different methods for different inquiry components. For example, Redmond and colleagues (2008) conducted a longitudinal mixed methods study on the attitudes, perceptions and concerns of student social

workers where the main purpose was to understand participants' future plans as they progress through a two year professional training (Redmond, Guerin, & Devitt, 2008). A mixed-method study that adopts an expansion intent usually aims for scope and breadth by including multiple components, and it is commonly used in evaluation contexts (for example, see Greene et al., 1989; Odendaal, Atkins, & Lewin, 2016), where the researcher would use qualitative methods to assess program processes and by quantitative methods would assess the program outcomes.

In the project for this doctoral thesis, one of the main reasons for using a mixed-method approach was to use the findings from the qualitative focus groups interviews to enlighten the development of the *Youth Political Engagement Scale* (YPES) items. This addresses objective i) of this thesis (Chapter 1, section *Research aims and objectives*), which seeks to critically evaluate how the construct of political engagement is currently represented in research and propose a conceptualisation of youth political engagement. This was important because the data collected in the focus groups (young people's understandings of what it means to be politically engaged) helped with defining what political engagement means to young people and distinguishing it from other concepts such as political participation or civic engagement that are usually used interchangeably with political engagement. By developing a conceptualisation and operationalisation of young people's political engagement first, it was possible to more accurately design a scale to assess that construct, to be posteriorly validated. As has already been addressed in this section, and according to Green and colleagues' typology, a mixed-methods design with a developmental purpose was chosen for this thesis.

Research design

Research design is usually defined as a systematic plan or structure for the entire research process, from conceptualising a problem to writing research questions, to data collection, analysis, interpretation and report writing (Creswell, 2013; Henn et al., 2009). Deliberately, research design aims to ensure that the evidence acquired enables us to answer the primary question as explicitly as possible (De Vaus, 2001), and provides a logical framework for choosing suitable research methods, and for deciding how data will be gathered and analysed to answer the initial questions (Yin, 2009).

There are different and numerous research designs, however the main ones are: comparative; experimental; cross-sectional; longitudinal; case study; action research; and, evaluation (for definitions see: Bryman, 2016; Henn et al., 2009; Sarantakos, 2013). In this research project two different research designs were used, a case study for the qualitative study, and a cross-sectional research design for the quantitative study. A case study usually entails the detailed and intensive analysis of a single case[16], and is concerned with the complexity and particular nature of the case in question (Bryman, 2016; Sarantakos, 2013). Although the case study design provides a rich and insightful output for investigating a specific situation, it usually relies on a small number of cases, which may lead to issues of validity of generalisability (Crotty, 1998). In this thesis, the qualitative study conducted was a case study because it included four focus groups, two with Portuguese young people and the other two with British young people, and essentially focused on understanding their perceptions of political engagement.

[16] According to Bryman (2016), the most common use of the term 'case' associates the case study with a location, such as a company or organization, and this emphasis tends to be upon an intensive examination of the setting (p. 67).

The cross-sectional design - often referred to as a survey design (Bryman, 2016) - uses a relatively large number of cases at a specific moment in time, and will aim to take quantitative measures on the topic of the research (Henn et al., 2009). The quantitative study conducted in this thesis employed a cross-sectional design because the data were collected by questionnaire gathering 554 participants (257 for the UK and 297 for Portugal) during the same period in time (between March 2018 and October 2018). Both research designs chosen for the studies conducted within this research project were the most appropriate for the purpose of each study, and further details will be given later on in this chapter (see section, *Study Outlines*, sub-sections Qualitative study: Focus groups interviews and Quantitative study: Scale development and validation).

Country selection: why Britain and Portugal?

This research project included young people living in Britain and in Portugal. These countries were selected for this project because they represent two European democracies with similar and very low recent levels of turnout in general elections (Portugal, 55.8% in 2015 (IDEA, 2017); United Kingdom (UK) 66% in 2015 (MORI, 2015)) and both display similar patterns of contemporary youth political engagement (Norris, 2001). Additionally, if we consider the voter turnout by age in the 2014 European Elections (Table 6), the percentages of 18 to 24 years old who turned out to vote is 19 for both Portugal and the United Kingdom. There is no recent evidence of specific youth election turnout published in Portugal due to the data privacy legislation in that country (Silva et al., 2016). However, survey data from 2013 suggests that both Portugal and the UK have some of the lowest youth election turnout rates when asked, "During the last 3 years, did you vote in any political election at the local, regional or

national level? If you were, at that time, not eligible to vote, please say so" (European Commission, 2013).

Table 6. Profile of Voters by country in 2014 European General Elections

Country	Total (%)	Age			
		18-24	25-39	40-54	55+
Belgic	89.64	90%	93%	89%	88%
Luxemburg	85.55	87	78	86	92
Malta	74.80	62	66	80	82
Greece	59.97	45	55	68	64
Italy	57.22	45	59	66	53
Denmark	56.30	38	49	59	64
Ireland	52.44	21	37	60	76
Sweden	51.07	66	50	49	49
Germany	48.10	29	38	49	59
Lithuania	47.35	44	33	47	61
Austria	45.39	29	40	51	50
Cyprus	43.97	29	32	42	64
Spain	43.81	27	37	46	52
EU28	42.54	28	35	45	51
France	42.43	25	30	40	57
Finland	41.00	10	45	47	43
Netherlands	37.32	18	34	35	48
Estonia	36.52	16	28	40	49
Bulgaria	35.84	27	30	35	43
United Kingdom	35.40	19	21	32	53
Portugal	33.67	19	27	38	41
Romania	32.44	20	25	35	42
Latvia	30.24	17	27	28	45
Hungary	28.97	20	20	32	37
Croatia	25.24	13	20	27	32
Slovenia	24.55	14	18	19	37
Poland	23.83	14	19	28	28
Czechia	18.20	16	17	18	20
Slovakia	13.05	6	12	13	18

Source: Post-election survey 2014, Socio-demographic annex (TNS, 2014).

Moreover, in a study on political participation of young people in the European Union, Sloam (Sloam, 2016) concluded that Portugal and Britain were also two of the countries where young people's turnout to vote is below the EU15 average, and have

also very low levels of participation in politics in general. Using data from the European Social Survey (ESS) from 2000-2002, Albacete (Albacete, 2014), found that the average levels of young people's institutional political participation is the same for both Portugal and Britain. Similarly, Fieldhouse, Tranmer, & Russell, 2007 reported that the ESS estimate overall population turnout at general elections in both Portugal and the UK as 75.9% and 73.2% respectively (using data from 2002 to 2003). Regarding young people between 18 and 24 years old, Fieldhouse outlined that the percentages were 47 for Portugal and 31.6 for the UK (Fieldhouse et al., 2007). Moreover, it has been reported that the patterns of engagement with and participation in politics are relatively similar across West-European countries (e.g., Kestilä-Kekkonen, 2009). Despite these similarities, some evident differences have been noted regarding young people's political engagement in both Portugal and Britain. For instance, using data from 2002, Albacete noticed that young people in Portugal were more attentive to politics and held higher levels of postmaterialist values compared to young people in the United Kingdom (Albacete, 2014). Additionally, using data from the ESS from 2016, I conducted some statistical analyses (correlations) using the variables age, voting in the last national election and interest in politics[17]. The results indicated that 25% of Portuguese young people between 15 to 25 years (N=1247) voted in the last national election, 24% did not vote and approximately half of those young people were not eligible to vote at that time. Regarding the United Kingdom (UK), only 17% of young people aged 15 to 25 years old (N= 2237) voted in the last national election, 38% did not and 45% were not eligible to vote at the time.

[17] To conduct these analyses, different databases from the ESS round 7 (2016) for both countries (one for Portugal and other for the United Kingdom) were used in separate when conducting the analysis. The design weight was the most appropriate to be applied in all the analyses conducted. Additionally, the variable "age" was recoded into different age categories of 10 years each.

Nonetheless, the 2016 ESS reveals that young peoples' levels of interest in politics in the two countries were broadly similar. In Portugal almost half of youth aged 15 to 25 (45.9%) indicated that they were interested in politics against 54% that were not interested. In the UK, the scenario is relatively similar, where around 40% of young people expressed an interest in politics and more than half were not interested (59.3%). These data present a more updated understanding on the patterns of youth political participation in both countries.

The research for this thesis permits a more nuanced understanding of whether there are particular differences in terms of how young people from broadly similar European countries perceive political engagement, or whether their understandings are the same (the qualitative study). Moreover, it also allows a greater understanding of the patterns of young people's political engagement in these two countries through the validation of a scale to assess political engagement among youth (the quantitative study). Although two different countries were used in this project, the main purpose was not to offer a comparison between each. Instead, the rationale for conducting the research in these different countries was to assess whether or not the data had value beyond one country case rather than being unique and particular to one specific cultural context, mainly for purposes of cross-cultural validity.

The different types of validity will be explained later in this chapter (see section *Study outlines*, sub-section Quantitative study: scale development and validation, Reliability and validity), but in summary, this type of validity is important because even when a test is confirmed to be adequate for residents of a particular country it does not necessary mean that it is (equally) adequate for residents of any other country. Countries represent different cultural settings that differ from each other along a number of dimensions (e.g., Hofstede, 2003). These differences influence the way

people in these countries understand and interpret the same questionnaire items (measurement equivalence) as well as the way they answer these questions (reference bias). This may obscure or prevent the meaningful comparison of results across countries. In general, the more culturally similar countries are, the more valid will be measures designed in one country and applied in another (e.g., Kankaraš & Moors, 2012). For example, in their study about the validation of the Perceived Political Self-Efficacy Scale (short form), Vecchione and colleagues (2014) collected data in three different countries namely, Italy, Spain and Greece in order to ascertain if the scale would be valid in the three countries (Vecchione et al., 2014). Thus, it is desirable that any given measure has been adapted and verified in different countries, but also that the selected countries come from as different cultural, linguistic and geo-political contexts as possible.

Defining and operationalising youth

There are multiple perspectives on how best to define youth (other relevant definitions used in this thesis, like political engagement and political participation, can be found in Chapter 2). The concept of youth has been viewed historically in a number of ways, including a state of mind, a legal age, a developmental stage, or a cultural phenomenon (Delgado & Staples, 2007). The term youth is also constructed both in popular and in much academic discourse as a key period of transition and change, marked by individual development from the status of 'child', through 'youth', and onwards towards 'adulthood'. As an intermediary zone between childhood and adulthood, youth as a life stage has taken on a special status, as a time when people are regarded as being particularly vulnerable to risk-taking and negative influences (Heath et al., 2009, p.7).

Not surprisingly, the Applied Research Centre's research concluded that there is no consensus on what constitutes youth (Weiss, 2003). There is little disagreement that individuals under the age of 18 years would fall into the youth category; however, there is some disagreement about the range beyond the age of 18 years, where the young adult label is meant to capture this age bracket, reflecting a trend toward expanding how society defines youth. In the British Election Studies survey (BES) and the British Sociological Association (BSA), youth includes those aged between 18 and 24 years old, and the United Nations define youth as persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years old. Although the term adolescence or youth is now typically defined as the period between 15 and 24 years of age, most recent definitions of the terms young adulthood and emerging adulthood range from about 18 to 26 years of age (Arnett, 2007). It is also important to highlight that recent debates on what constitutes 'youth' (e.g., Flanagan, Finlay, Gallay, & Kim, 2012), suggest that new perspectives on what constitutes 'youth' need to be developed (Sawyer, Azzopardi, Wickremarathne, & Patton, 2018). In their recent paper entitled "Youthquake was real – here's how we know it was more than a myth", Ehsan and colleagues noted shifts in party support for age groups up to 40, suggesting that new perspectives of what constitutes 'youth' in Britain need to be developed (Ehsan, Sloam, & Henn, 2018). In this project, the term youth is used interchangeably with young people or adolescents (Sawyer et al., 2018), and includes people aged between 18 and 25 years old.

Using Internet for research: advantages and disadvantages

Both the qualitative and the quantitative studies in this thesis used the Internet for the purpose of data collection. For the qualitative study the Internet was used to recruit participants, and for conducting the focus groups interviews with young people from

Portugal. For the quantitative study, an online survey was conducted to examine young people's political engagement and other politically-related behaviours (such as civic engagement, political participation, and political interest) in both countries (the United Kingdom and Portugal).

The main advantages of conducting research and collecting data via the Internet have been identified by different authors (e.g., Fricker & Schonlau, 2002; Hays, Liu, & Kapteyn, 2015; Reips, 2007). These include: the possibility to test large numbers of participants quickly; opportunity to recruit large heterogeneous samples and people with rare characteristics (Schmidt, 1997; Steelman, Hammer, & Limayem, 2014); and web-based methods are more cost effective in administration, time, and space in comparison with face-to-face research. Web-based methods are capable of achieving high levels of validity (Crano, Brewer, & Lac, 2014; Krantz & Dalal, 2000), and have even been found to produce high quality data (Birnbaum, 2004; Reips, 2000; Reips, Buchanan, Krantz, & McGraw, 2015).

In terms of disadvantages of online research, issues such as reliability, validity, self-selecting sample, and generalisability are included (Bell, 2014; Bryman, 2016; Denscombe, 2014). However, Griffiths (2010) argues that these issues are just as likely to happen in online as offline research environments. For example, participants can voluntarily choose to participate in a study offline as well or they can choose not to be involved. When collecting data online and offline, the main difference noted in the research for this thesis was regarding the control I had on the people I approached. In other words, when I was asking people if they could kindly fill in the questionnaire (mainly in the university context, both in Nottingham and in Lisbon) people tended to agree to participate and there was only a small group of people who declined. Whereas online, I shared posts asking people to participate in my research, but a much bigger

group of people did not accepted to participate because it appears to be easier to do so when you are not in a face to face situation (Brüggen & Willems, 2009). Additionally, there may also be different types of problems with online research, when compared to traditional offline research, such as lack of research control (which links to the example offered in the previous sentence), and lack of knowledge about participant behaviour, which is particularly relevant for Psychology studies (Griffiths & Whitty, 2010). However, it was relevant for the studies in this thesis as well, because I could not know if participants were concentrating when answering the questionnaire or participating in the online focus groups (for instance, were they fully-focused on the research or were they also watching television or playing videogames which may have had an impact on their answers). It can be difficult to verify that the participants are actually who they say they are. A further disadvantage of Internet research is that it requires that participants have access to a computer and the Internet, but because the majority of young people from Britain[18] (Prescott, 2017) and Portugal[19] have access to computers and to the Internet, this was not a concern (Eurostat, 2017) for this particular doctoral research study.

Study outlines

Qualitative study: Focus groups interviews

Focus group methodology is a way of collecting qualitative data, which essentially involves engaging a small number of people in an informal group or discussion(s), focused around a particular topic or set of issues (Duchesne, 2017; Sarantakos, 2013). For the purpose of this study, focus groups were chosen since they were considered to

[18] For instance, 99% of the 16 to 34 year olds used the Internet in 2017 (Cecil Prescott, 2017).
[19] Data indicate that 95% of the 15 to 24 year olds used the Internet in 2016 (Eurostat, 2017).

have a number of distinct advantages over one-to-one interviews. In particular, given the nature and the aims and objectives of this research, the use of focus groups provided a scenario closer to an everyday conversation where I could understand better how the interactions between participants regarding their perceptions of political engagement happened and were negotiated (Redmond & Curtis, 2009). In other words, I was interested in the dynamic quality of group interaction, as participants discussed, debated and sometimes disagreed about the topics being discussed. For instance, as we shall see in Chapter 5, on the Results section, the focus groups offered the opportunity for participants to come to a collective position regarding the prioritisation of aspects of political engagement offered by previous academic scholars writing in the field. Additionally, focus groups also allowed the participants to react to and build upon the responses of other group members creating a synergistic effect (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014). This often leads to the production of more elaborated accounts than the content generated in individual interviews, since in the context of a focus group members may enthusiastically extend, or elaborate more on an initially vague account. In the focus groups conducted for this study, one particular example to illustrate this point occurred when I asked participants to talk about the importance of the topic youth political engagement. They started by saying it was an important topic to be discussed since young people are able to become politically engaged, and started extending to more elaborated examples on what they think is preventing young people to become engaged, for example (see Chapter 5, section Results, Theme 1: Importance of the topic of young people's political engagement). The relatively free flow of discussion and debate between members of the focus groups also offered an excellent opportunity for a familiarity with the way research participants habitually talk and the

particular idioms, terminology, and vocabulary they typically use regarding political engagement.

The purposes of this qualitative study using focus groups were twofold. Firstly (see Chapter 1, section *Research questions and objectives*, objective [i]) to propose a specific definition of young people's political engagement—because before developing measures to evaluate such a concept, there is a need to clarify its definition. The second objective (see Chapter 1, section *Research questions and objectives*, objective [i]) is to provide qualitative insights into how young people perceive political engagement. The main difference between these two objectives is that in the first one it was intended to develop a new concept of young people's political engagement, adding to the debates around a potential distinction between the concepts of political engagement and political participation when considering youth. The second one was concerned with the exploration of which actions and behaviours young people would recognise as engagement, in order to help in the item development for the Youth Political Engagement Scale. Moreover, a 'bottom-up' youth-led approach was chosen, because it involves young people defining their own approach to political engagement and gives them some freedom regarding the ways in which they view this particular phenomenon (Coles, 2000). This is important in the context of this particular study because, because using an inductive approach the objective was to explore young people's perspectives on the concept of political engagement without actually testing any hypothesis. By doing this, and because the scale to be developed is aimed at young people, it allows for a more accurate conceptualisation of political engagement.

In terms of participant recruitment, eighteen young people aged between 18 and 25 years participated in the study. Four focus-groups of mixed gender (N=18) were conducted during October and November 2016, two with British-based young people

(n=8) while the other two included Portuguese youth (n=10). For this study I was satisfied with 18 participants, given that after every focus group, the definitions of political engagement given by young people were analysed, and reached the point where the second focus group conducted for each country did not add new insights beyond the findings from the first focus group for each country (i.e., that theoretical and data saturation had been achieved) (Guest, Namey, & McKenna, 2017; Henn et al., 2009). Moreover, as Carlsen and Glenton (2011) have noted, focus groups should be the unit of analysis in focus group studies, meaning that the sample size should refer to number of groups and not to the total number of participants in a study. Additionally, it has been recommended that focus groups should range from two to five groups per category of participants (Carlsen & Glenton, 2011). Because participants belonged to two different nationality categories (British and Portuguese) and two focus groups for each of these categories was conducted, this infers that the present study met the methodological requirements previously specified by Carlsen and Glenton.

The research participants were recruited using a two-step process. For both the British and Portuguese focus groups, an email explaining the aims and purpose of the research was sent to university colleagues and each were asked to help with finding people who met the sampling requirements (of being British or Portuguese aged 18 to 25 years, and that both genders should be evenly distributed across the groups). Willing participants were then screened for eligibility, and were asked to identify other potential participants to take part in research. Requests for volunteers were also posted on social media (i.e., *Facebook* and *Twitter*). This snowball sampling strategy (Babbie, 2014), is commonly used across qualitative studies in the field of political engagement and political participation (e.g., Thomas, McGarty, & Louis, 2014), and in particular allows researchers to increase the diversity of the participants (Babbie, 2014). This

approach uses a set of initial participants who nominate other participants who are eligible to participate from their social networks (Morgan, 1996). Furthermore, although age and an equal gender distribution were taken as characteristics that the sample should meet, no other characteristics were required. Due to the exploratory nature of this phase of the research, other characteristics were not taken into account, because the objective was not to compare the different participants' answers according to their characteristics, but to understand if a pattern concerning their understanding of political engagement could be identified across youth.

Of the four focus groups conducted, two (British) were carried out in person and the remaining two (Portuguese) were carried out online. All the four group interviews lasted approximately one hour, and were each facilitated by myself. The offline focus groups were conducted on university campus, given that all the participants were students from the same university. With the participants' permission, the group interviews were audio recorded and the researcher-moderator also recorded notes to capture key themes and additional data such as body language and other aspects of the discussions that would otherwise remain lost if relying solely on audio equipment. Group interviews conducted online were synchronous (i.e., carried out in real time), and were conducted using the chat tool available on *Facebook.* Due to the popularity, affordability, and ease of access of this particular online social platform, researchers are increasingly utilising this approach to conduct studies in a variety of different areas of study (e.g., Biedermann, 2017; Lijadi & van Schalkwyk, 2015; Thrul, Belohlavek, Hambrick, Kaur, & Ramo, 2017). However, given the different nature of the focus groups conducted (i.e., offline and online), a few considerations were taken into account before implementing them. A study conducted by Brüggen and Willems (2009) concluded that it was methodologically feasible to use these different approaches within the same study and to do so with confidence. They critically compared online focus groups and offline focus groups with respect to their depth, breadth,

efficiency, group dynamics, non-verbal impressions, and respondent attitudes. Their findings demonstrated a high degree of similarity between the online and offline focus groups in terms of each of the characteristics analysed. The experience gained from conducting online and offline focus groups in the same study for the present study – and further details on the differences and implications identified – are discussed later in the paper.

A single semi-structured discussion guide was developed to ensure consistency in the areas of discussion addressed for each focus-group. This guide enabled the exploration of participants' perceptions of political engagement as well as comparison of the responses between the groups. The questions were theoretically-based and guided by the discussion outlined in Chapter 2 concerning conceptual comparisons of political engagement and political participation. Following procedures suggested by Krueger and Casey (2014), each group discussion began with a general question that explored participants' views on the importance for discussing the topic of young people's political engagement. This was followed by items designed to address three research questions (that can be found in Chapter 5), including their experiences of politics and what meanings they ascribed to politics. Following this, images shared on *Twitter* were presented to evoke Brexit (because it was a topical issue at the time that the focus groups were conducted) as well as notions of solidarity, which were designed to encourage participants to think about political engagement in its wider sense, and to discuss how they conceptualised political engagement.

Each participant was then asked to write down three to five behaviours they perceived to be political engagement, and these were then discussed in the group. This was a completely open exercise and no prompts were given to participants because they were allowed to offer any political engagement items that they considered important. Following this, each participant was presented with a list of 100 items that

are commonly used within the literature to assess the politically-related constructs of political engagement and political participation (such as political self-efficacy or civic engagement). They were asked to select a total of 20 items that they considered to represent the most complete set of activities and behaviours concerning young people's political engagement. Through this process, each participant developed a scale assessing the concept. Finally, the group collectively discussed their choices, and each participant was then asked to share their thoughts and opinions on the value and appropriateness of the political engagement scales generated during the focus group.

Thematic analysis

Thematic analyses was the method chosen to analyse the data collected from the focus groups interviews, and is defined as the way of recognising, analysing and describing patterns, or 'themes', within qualitative data, providing rich and minimally organised information (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Holloway & Todres, 2003; Sarantakos, 2013). Some researchers propose that thematic analysis should not be regarded as a method in its own right, but rather as a tool for use in other methods of analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Ryan & Bernard, 2000). This point of view emerged from the fact that coding data is carried out in a number of other methodologies, such as grounded theory, content analysis, and interpretative phenomenological analysis. However, Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that qualitative analysis can be divided into two main 'camps'; the first encompassing methods which are bound with a specific epistemological position, such as grounded theory; the second which remains independent of epistemology and can be applied across a range of theoretical approaches. According to Braun and Clarke, thematic analysis belongs in the second 'camp' as it has relative theoretical freedom, because as a qualitative method it employs an inductive approach

whereby themes emerge from the data and are not pre-constructed by the researcher (Sarantakos, 2013). For example, in a study conducted by Sveningsson (2016) about Swedish young people's understandings of political participation thematic analysis was used as the method for analysing data because the aim of the study was not to develop new theory (that grounded theory aims to do, for example) but to work from an inductive data analysis to understand the recurring themes in the data set (Sveningsson, 2016). Conversely, this theoretical freedom brings with it a lack of succinct guidelines as to how to carry out thematic analysis, and it has been suggested that thematic analysis lacks clear definition in research (Boyatzis, 1998; Bryman, 2016).

Thematic analysis is a flexible method of research which allows for the generation of unexpected insights from the data. However, increased flexibility indicates that the range of things that can be derived from the data may be broad. This may potentially make it difficult for the researcher to focus on what is important to draw out from data. For example, although in the focus groups conducted for the purpose of this research the questions discussed were directed at the concept of political engagement, throughout the discussion young people ended up giving suggestions for what could be done in terms of citizenship education to improve their knowledge about politics.

Analysing data using thematic analysis encompasses different phases (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Following their method, after the data transcription, I familiarised myself with the data. This is an important phase that usually involves active repeated reading during which meaning and patterns are searched for. Personally I found that conducting and the transcribing the focus groups interviews helped getting familiarised with the data and the themes that were emerging in the different groups.

Additionally, I also took some notes regarding coding that were revisited in subsequent phases, for example explaining why that specific code was identified and what it means. In the case of the transcripts analysed in this research, I also highlighted all the codes that belonged to the same theme with the same colour to help identify them. Verbal data was transcribed verbatim, which is a useful way of familiarising with the data (Riessman, 1993) and has been suggested as a key phase of analysis itself (Bird, 2005). It was important in this case, because the participants belonged to a specific group that has a slightly different language (youth) and it can give emphasis to their ideas and how they are trying to express them. Phase two started when I started generating the different codes. In general, codes identify a feature of the data that is interesting and usually refers to the "most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon" (Boyatzis, 1998, p.63). Coding the data allowed me to sort it into meaningful groups (Tuckett, 2005) and that is also part of the analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). However, the themes which emerged were much broader than the individual codes, and in data driven (rather than theory driven) research will depend on the data itself. Phase three was when I started searching for themes, and for that I focused on the themes' analysis at a broader level in order to start sorting codes into particular themes. For example, one of the broader themes identified was "Importance of the topic of young people's political engagement" which is quite broad but some of the themes that fell under this category ranged from "Poor citizenship education at schools" to "Ambiguity on what political engagement means". Also, relationships between and within themes and the levels of themes (potential hierarchy, for example) were considered during this phase as well. On phase four, I started reviewing the themes, and once a set of proposed themes have been devised, I then refined and adjusted them.

After this step, I started defining and naming the different themes that emerged, and identified the essence of each theme, ensuring it is not too diverse or complex, and organised data extracts into a coherent and internally consistent account with an accompanying narrative. Sub-themes were identified, which can be useful for structuring and giving some hierarchy to the theme. In the case of this data, the sub-themes ended not having that much of hierarchical function because all the sub-themes identified were of a similar importance. At last, on phase six, the final stage of thematic analysis, was when I started reporting the data having in mind that it was important that it shed light on the merit and validity of the research.

Quantitative study: scale development and validation

Questionnaire development

For this research, I considered important to use questionnaires as they permit a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population. Furthermore, by using questionnaires, it was possible to get a feel for the range of likely responses, and to discover how common these responses may be (Sarantakos, 2013). This was important for my research since it also allows for accurate accumulation of demographic data in addition to any open ended responses, enabling more detailed statistical analyses to be carried out (Bryman, 2016).

Questionnaires are a cost effective method of data collection, particularly when deployed as self-completion or online, where the researcher's presence is not necessary for the questionnaires to be filled in (Creswell, 2013; McNabb, 2015). With self-completion questionnaires, it is possible to obtain responses from a wide geographical area, giving greater potential for generalisability from the results (e.g., Clausen &

Ford, 1947; McNabb, 2015). It is also a relatively quick method of data collection, as arrangements do not always need to be made for the researcher to be in attendance while each questionnaire is being filled out, therefore large amounts of data can be gathered in a short period of time. Questionnaires are generally familiar to most people, and therefore explanation other than written instructions specific to the questionnaire are unlikely to be necessary (e.g., Bryman, 2016; Sarantakos, 2013). For example, for the research in this thesis, online and offline questionnaires were deployed, and particularly the online ones were filled-in by participants whenever it was more convenient for them as I did not need to be there with them. In the case of the self-completion paper and pencil questionnaires, these were given to the participants and only took around 15 minutes to be filled in; furthermore, during this time I was able to focus on completing other research tasks. .

The questionnaire used in this study was carefully designed, and included clear and specific questions, having in mind that the sample is constituted by young people from 18 to 25 years old, so when specific terms were used throughout the survey, they were always explained. It is important to highlight that the questionnaire was in very large part informed by the focus groups (the list of items given to the participants on Appendix 4). Namely, participants were asked to choose from a list of 100 different questions that have been used in the literature to assess politically-related constructs (like civic engagement or political participation, for example) which were the ones that they considered best illustrated political engagement. Then, based on their choices I analysed the items (questions) that were selected more often (more than 5 people choosing it) and put them together in the questionnaire for the question aimed at the political engagement scale. The main purpose of this questionnaire was to collect quantitative data in order to validate a scale to assess young people's political

engagement, because numerical data were needed from a relatively big sample (554 young people). Apart from the political engagement scale, there were also socio-demographic questions, questions about young people's civic engagement, political participation, voting behaviour, political interest, and political self-efficacy (details about each of these constructs and/or variables can be found in Chapter 6).

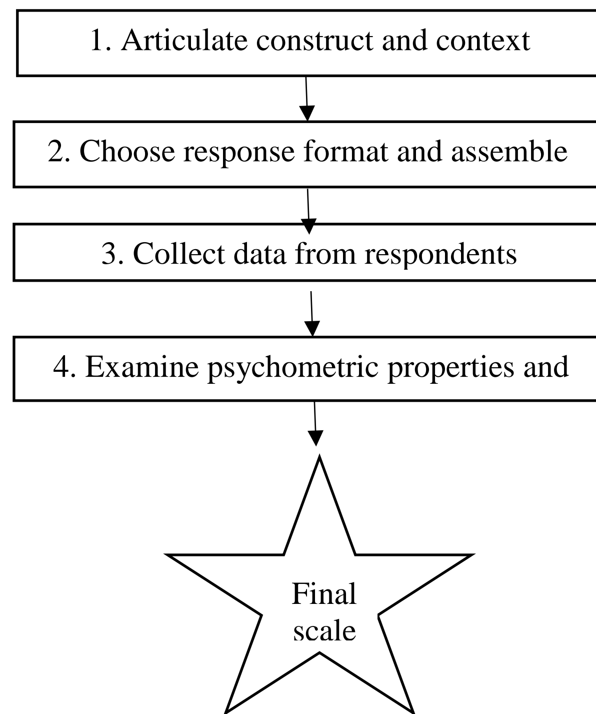
Before starting collecting the data using the questionnaire, it was translated to Portuguese, and discussed with a Portuguese and English speaker to confirm the adequacy of the translation and if there were any amendments to be done. Additionally, the structure and the questions presented in the survey were also carefully discussed with the supervisory team. Before the questionnaire was distributed, a pilot test (Sarantakos, 2013) of both versions (English and Portuguese) was also tested with a small sample of British and Portuguese young people to check the suitability of the questionnaire as a whole and to confirm that respondents did not have any difficulties or doubts completing the questionnaires. Finally, after checking for spelling mistakes, legibility, instructions to participants, layout, spaces for responses, pre-coding, scaling issues and the general presentation of the questionnaire, a final version was printed and also published online using *Qualtrics.*

Scale development

Scale development is an essential stage in the assessment of constructs and variables in different areas of Social Sciences (DeVellis, 2012). Because that is one of the main aims of this thesis - to develop a psychometric instrument to assess young people's political engagement (see Chapter 1, section *Research aims and objectives*) - it is important to go through the stages of scale development in some detail. This section is mostly based in Furr's (2011) four-step interactive scale construction (see Figure 3).

Although each step is important, some are ignored in some scale construction procedures. Unfortunately, bypassing any of these steps might produce a scale with unknown psychometric quality and ambiguous meaning (Furr, 2011). For example, if the construct being assessed is not adequately defined (which coincides with phase 1 in Furr's proposed guidelines) and articulated within the context in which it is going to be used that will lead to results that do not accurately illustrate reality (in other words, biased conclusions). If we consider the construct of political engagement (see Chapter 2 for more details about the debate around the lack of agreement on how political engagement is being conceptualised in the literature) and want to develop a scale that assesses it within young people (which is the main aim of this thesis) it is crucial that there is an understanding of how young people understand political engagement in order to assess it. Otherwise what I would be measuring would not be accurate (see Chapter 5 for young people's definitions of political engagement).

Figure 3. The scale construction process



Source: Furr (2011).

The first aspect of scale construction is articulating the construct(s) to be measured. The construct (one or more) can be viewed as an attitude, or a perception such as political engagement or sense of community, for example, and it must be carefully differentiated from similar constructs. For example, distinguishing between civic engagement and civic participation, which are similar but are not the same exact concept (see Chapter 2 for more details on the existing definitions for civic engagement and civic participation). Questions like how many constructs are going to be measured, or which is the exact definition of each construct, guide the subsequent steps in scale construction and evaluation, ultimately determining the scale's meaning and quality. In the case of this project, it was confirmed at an early stage that the construct to be assessed was one and was (youth) political engagement. However, due to the lack of agreement within the literature (see Chapter 2) on what being politically

engaged means, and the overlap between political engagement and other politically-related constructs (for example, political participation or civic engagement) a clear definition of political engagement was not available. For instance, if an intended construct is not clearly differentiated from other constructs, then subsequent steps might produce a scale with poor validity and ambiguous meaning. An example could be the concept of political engagement that due to ongoing discussions regarding its conceptualisation (see Chapter 2), the concept's assessment has been done using politically-related constructs (like political participation or civic engagement, for example). Therefore without a scientific definition of what political engagement encompasses, the validity of its assessment will be questionable.

Additionally, when creating a new scale, the context in which it is likely to be used needs to be articulated. This needs to be clarified in terms of the target population (that is the group of people for which the test is developed – in the case of this project the target population is youth from 18 to 25 years old) and the likely administration context (that is the place where the scale will likely be used – in the case of this project the likely administration context can vary because the scale can be used in the University context or in an organisation that deals with youth). That is why prior to the scale development, a literature review was conducted in order to clarify the distinctions between politically-related constructs like political participation and political engagement. Moreover, the focus groups conducted with young people allowed to better understand the target population to whom the scale would be tested for.

In the second step of scale development, the response format was chosen and an initial item pool was assembled. For this purpose, I started looking for items that appeared relevant to the construct of political engagement, and this was dependent on

factors such as the number of constructs that were going to be measured (which in this case was just one, namely political engagement), the intended length of the scale (that should always be as short as possible – see Chapter 6 for more details on the rationale for the number of items chosen), and the clarity of the construct's definition (which in this case was not clear and ended up leading to the qualitative study in Chapter 5). This step often includes iterative sub-steps in which items are discussed, considered in terms of conceptual relevance and linguistic clarity and revised or discarded. The focus groups (see the qualitative study in Chapter 5) were also relevant for this step, as young people were faced with the questions to be present in the questionnaire for the scale validation, which helped in terms of ascertaining the conceptual relevance and the clarity of the language used. On step three, after one or more constructs have been articulated, the likely assessment context has been determined, and items have been put together, I then proceeded to the administration of those items to respondents representing the likely target population (namely, young people). For example, before starting collecting data using the questionnaire, it was given to two young people between 18 and 25 years old to get their feedback. The main objective was to ascertain if there were any questions that they did not understand or if they had any doubts while completing the questionnaire. This step helped to reveal obvious problems through respondent feedback, and it also produced data for the next step of scale construction (evaluation of the item pool's psychometric properties and quality).

The fourth and final step involved testing for the instrument's dimensionality, reliability, and validity (see Chapter 6). The results of psychometric analyses determine subsequent phases of scale construction. If analyses reveal clear psychometric properties and strong psychometric quality (which they did), I was able to confidently complete scale construction and validation. However, psychometric

analysis might also reveal ways in which scales could be improved, leading researchers back to item re-writing, and the after this the newly-revised scale should be again evaluated in terms of its psychometric properties. However, this step (namely, re-writing items) did not happen in the case of this project because the scale presented good psychometric quality and this back and forth process of writing, analysis, and re-writing might require several iterations is usually required when the scale does not have good psychometric quality and clear psychological meaning.

Factor analysis

The *Youth Political Engagement Scale* (YPES) was developed based on the qualitative study's findings which captured the meaning of political engagement for young people. Furthermore, the dimensionality of the instrument was determined by using Factor Analysis. Factor analysis is widely used for theory and instrument development to assess the construct validity of an instrument. Usually, after performing an exploratory factor analysis, the next step is to perform a confirmatory factor analysis to rigorously test the scale structure, the validity of the factor solution and the scale length. However, in this study the exploratory analysis was not performed because the operationalisation of youth political engagement has been already proposed and the objective was to determine which items would form the scale and how they would group with each other (how many dimensions would the concept have) (see Chapter 2, section *Operationalising political engagement*, Table 3 and Chapter 5, section *Results*, Table 8).

The term factor analysis was firstly introduced by Thurstone (1931) and is a statistical procedure for use with multivariate data. The main purpose of factor analyses is to firstly reduce the number of variables and secondly to detect the structure

in the relationships between variables to “classify” the variables. Factor analysis helps us to identify which variables appear to be strongly linked together, and produces an associated set of variables which are known as a “factor” (Pett, Lackey, & Sullivan, 2003). Factor analysis also reduces a large set of variables into a smaller number of factors with common characteristics or underlying dimensions and can be used to describe many of the variables under study (Pett et al., 2003). Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) defined factor as a cluster of related observed variables that represents a specific underlying dimension of a construct which is as distinct as possible from the other factors included in the solution. For example, in the case of this research the construct being investigated and tested (using Factor Analysis) is political engagement, and it was important to understand if it would group into different factors (or dimensions) and to make sure all of the items under each factor were different from the factors in other dimensions. For example, Factor Analysis was used to address research question (iii) (Chapter 1, section *Research questions*) about the dimensionality of political engagement and also to understand if political engagement and political participation can each be considered different constructs statistically or not (see Chapter 6 for more details on concurrent and discriminant validity).

Factor analysis is not only useful in describing and reducing data, but also in instrument development. It can be used to test the validity of ideas about the grouping of items into sub-scales (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Pett et al. (2003) argue that factor analysis is particularly useful when examining complex concepts made up of a number of variables as it can be used to determine the extent to which variables are related to the same dimension (this relates to the example offered in the previous paragraph). The researcher then interprets and names the factors following an examination of the variables within a factor (Pett et al., 2003). Therefore, the method of factor analysis

will be used in this study to examine the interrelationships among the items that measure the construct of young people's political engagement and then to identify its sub-dimensions (the dimensions being tested are cognitive, emotional and behavioural – see Chapter 6 for detailed information). The main goal in using this method in this thesis is to arrive at a reduced set of factors that summarises and describes the structural interrelationships among the items in a concise and understandable manner.

Factor analysis can be exploratory (EFA) or confirmatory (CFA). In this study, however, only a confirmatory factor analysis, which is a theory testing model, was performed in order to test the theoretical constructs of the YPES and to confirm the factor structure of the instrument. When undertaking CFA a comprehensive analysis of covariance structures is required and the common measurement model for this is structural equation modelling (SEM). The measurement model for CFA and SEM is a multivariate regression model that examines the relationships between a set of observed dependent variables (factor indicators) and a set of continuous latent variables (factors) (Brown, 2006).

In conclusion, the CFA provided an explicit framework for confirming prior notions about the structure of a domain of content and is strongly recommended for assessing the extent to which the hypothesised organisation of a set of identified factors fits the data (Pett et al., 2003). CFA was deemed the most appropriate method for establishing the validity of the factor model on the YPES, the relationship between factor loadings (namely, which factors have higher factor loadings for which dimension), whether a set of factors are correlated or uncorrelated (which means, if the items chosen to be part of a specific dimension are correlated), and the convergent and discriminant validity of the measures (which tell if two measures that are supposed to be measuring the same construct are related or not) In this thesis (Chapter 6), an

initial Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed and the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was skipped, because the items that would belong to each of the dimensions of political engagement being tested (cognitive, emotional and behavioural[20]) were defined *a priori* (based on the insights from the focus groups) (see Chapters 2 and 5). After this first CFA, the four items with the higher loadings were selected for each of the dimensions. This choice was based on the fact that I wanted the scale to be as brief as possible (this point will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 6). After choosing which items belonged to each dimension, a set of models were run in order to answer to address research question iii) as well as the primary aim of the thesis which is to advance the field of youth political participation by developing a new robust psychometric instrument to assess young people's political engagement and validate that in both Britain and Portugal (see Chapter 1, section *Research questions and objectives*). Furthermore, convergent and discriminant validity of the *Youth Political Engagement Scale* (YPES) was also tested in order to understand if the YPES would converge with other measures of political engagement identified (convergent validity) and if it the scale would differ from scales assessing other politically related constructs (discriminant validity).

<u>Sample size</u>

The lack of agreement on sample size in scale development is well noted in the literature (Hogarty, Hines, Kromrey, Ferron, & Mumford, 2005; MacCallum, Widaman, Zhang, & Hong, 1999). Anthoine and colleagues (2014) conducted a systematic literature review on the adequate sample size for scale validation, and

[20] Although only two of the dimensions (cognitive and emotional) were considered to be part of the construct of political engagement, the behavioural dimension were also included to conduct analysis in order to test if political engagement and political participation are different concepts or not.

concluded by recommending a range from two to 20 subjects per item (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1995; P. Kline, 2013), with an absolute minimum of 100 to 250 subjects (Cattell, 2012; Everitt, 2018), when conducting an EFA. In other words, it means that for each item in the scale there has to be a ratio of two to 20 people answering it. For example, if the scale being developed has 10 items, at least 20 people (considering two people per question minimum) have to have answered the questionnaire (in particular to have answered the scale question). Comrey and Lee (1992) provided the following guidance: 100 = poor, 200 = fair, 300 = good, 500 = very good, ≥1000 = excellent. Recommendations in the literature for the sample size determination when conducting a CFA are also disparate (ranging from 150 to 1000 subjects), and appear to depend on the normality of data, and parameter estimation methods (Lomax & Schumacker, 2012; L K Muthén & Muthén, 2002).

Based on these recommendations, the sample size chosen for the quantitative study will comprise a total of 554 participants, 257 from Britain, and 297 from Portugal, or in the "very good" category as classified by Comrey and Lee (1992). However, this sample size did not allow for more complex analysis using Structural Equation Modelling (L. K. Muthén & Muthén, 2012).

Doing confirmatory factor analysis

The statistical software packages SPSS version 24 and Mplus version 7.2 was used to undertake the CFA (see Chapter 6, to have access to the different steps conducted). In order to confirm the structure of the different factors (or dimensions) of political engagement and political participation (see Chapter 6, Figure 4), a CFA with maximum likelihood with robust standard errors estimation method (MLR) was initially performed on the British sample in order to ascertain which items would have

higher loadings in which factor, or in other words to confirm the factor structure (for the different dimensions being tested, cognitive, emotional and behavioural). This estimation methods was preferred over the more traditional maximum-likelihood method because it deals better with non-normality issues. More steps were performed following this first one (please see Chapter 6) in order to achieve the main aim of the thesis, to (develop and) validate a scale to assess youth political engagement.

Reliability

Reliability refers to whether or not we get the same answer by using an instrument to measure something more than once. In other words, research reliability is the degree to which research method procedures stable and consistent results. Therefore, a specific measure is considered to be reliable if its application on the same object of measurement number of times produces the same results. The four most well-known types of reliability are: test-retest reliability, parallel forms reliability, inter-rater reliability and internal consistency reliability. In this thesis (see Chapter 6) the analysis of the scale reliability was conducted by using different coefficients and indicators of internal consistency, namely, Cronbach's alpha, factor determinacy, and composite reliability (see Chapter 6, section *Convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability analysis*). Internal consistency showed the extent to which all the items in a test are measuring the same concept or construct (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). There are different reports about the acceptable values of alpha and there is a consensus with the range value from 0.70 to 0.95 but a maximum value of 0.90 has been recommended (Field, 2013; Streiner, 2003; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). A low value of alpha could be due to a low number of questions or poor inter-relatedness between items or heterogeneous constructs and too high value may suggest that some items are

redundant as they are testing the same question but in a different guise (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). In this thesis (see Chapter 6, section *Convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability analysis*), the internal consistency of the factor solution was also evaluated with the factor score determinant coefficient, which represents the correlation between the true and the estimated factor scores. The factor score determinant coefficient ranges from 0 to 1 and describes how well the factor is measured (L K Muthén & Muthén, 2001). The larger the coefficient is (≥ 0.70), the more stable and reliable are the factors identified through factor analysis (Tabachnick, Fidell, & Ullman, 2007). A *p* value of equal to or less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant. In this thesis, after calculating all the coefficients and indicators mentioned to assess the internal consistency of the *Youth Political Engagement Scale* (Cronbach's alpha, factor determinacy, and composite reliability) all fitted within the expected values which led to the conclusion that the scale being tested showed good reliability properties.

Validity

The classical definition of validity is whether the measure does in fact measure what it is designed to measure (Barker et al., 2002). For example, does a scale to assess youth political engagement actually measures youth political engagement, or does it measure some other construct like civic engagement or political participation? When developing and/or evaluating measures we should first look at reliability and then to the instrument's validity (Groth-Marnat, 2003). Reliability (if a measure is consistent over time) is a necessary but not sufficient condition for validity. In other words, for a measure to be valid it should first be reliable (otherwise it would mainly consist of error) but a measure can still be reliable but still invalid. For example, a measure that

is intended to assess political self-efficacy is consistent over time but the questions/items being used to assess political self-efficacy are related to civic engagement instead; in such a case, the instrument can be reliable without being valid – in other words, without measuring what it aims to measure).

There are four main types of validity, namely, content validity, face validity, criterion validity and construct validity (Greenstein & Davis, 2012). Content validity assesses whether the measure adequately covers the different aspects of the construct that are specified in its definition. For example, does a scale assessing youth political engagement have items which capture the components in its definition? This is a qualitative judgement, so there is no coefficient or any statistical way to calculate it. In this thesis, the qualitative study in Chapter 5 was conducted in order to contribute for the content validity of the *Youth Political Engagement Scale* in two ways: first, by getting people to provide their own definitions of political engagement, and secondly in choosing from a list of different items the ones they would consider to be associated with their conceptions of political engagement. Face validity, similarly to content validity, assesses whether the measure looks right in the face of it, that is, that it self-evidently measures what it claims to measure. For example, the items of a political participation scale should ask about political participation and not about work engagement. Like content validity, face validity is a qualitative concept and there is no face validity coefficient. In this thesis, face validity was tested by giving the questionnaire with the questions that would further allow for the development and validation of the *Youth Political Engagement Scale* (which were informed by the focus groups results) and asked a group of 10 young people in Britain and 10 in Portugal for their opinion on the extent to which they would say the items assessing political engagement were actually adequate to assess the construct of political engagement.

Criterion validity assesses how well the measure correlated with an established criterion or indicator of the construct it is measuring. It is divided into concurrent and predictive validity, depending on whether the criterion is measured at the same time or later on (Frick, Barry, & Kamphaus, 2005). For concurrent validity, the scale is correlated with current criterion, for example in this thesis the *Youth Political Engagement scale* was highly associated with the scores of another instrument assessing political engagement (Syvertsen et al., 2015) in both the British and the Portuguese sample (see Chapter 6, section *Concurrent validity: Youth Political Engagement Scale and theoretically related measures*). For predictive validity, the scale is correlated with a future criterion. Predictive validity was not calculated in this study, but an example to illustrate the idea of this type of validity could testing if a scale assessing young people's political self-efficacy could be used to predict young people's political participation (as it has been suggested in the literature, see for example Vecchione et al. [2014]).

Construct validity examines the validity of a construct, and is established by accumulating studies which test predictions about how the construct in question should relate to their constructs and measures (Barker et al., 2002). The relevant associations are displayed in a table that sets out the correlations between several ways of measuring several different constructs. This matrix reveals the extent to which measures of the construct of political engagement are positively correlated with measures of related constructs (convergent validity) and uncorrelated or weakly correlated with measures of unrelated constructs (discriminant validity) (Lee, Cheung, & Chan, 2015). In this thesis (see Chapter 6, section *Convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability analysis*) convergent and discriminant validity were tested (using to ascertain if the concepts of political engagement and political participation

were statistically different or the same construct. Based on the results of this analysis, it was concluded that political engagement and political participation are uniquely distinct concepts at a psychometric level.

Evaluating model fit

Fit refers to the ability of a model to reproduce the data which is usually the variance-covariance matrix (Kenny & Garcia, 2012). In CFA, several statistical tests are used to determine how well the model fits the data but there are varying opinions and several number of fit indices and evaluation criteria cited in the literature (Holtzman & Vezzu, 2011; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2015). Having a good-fitting model does not necessarily mean that the model is correct (see the different steps in Chapter 6 and the *Discussion* section of the same chapter for some examples), valid and it also does not explain the large proportion of the covariance, instead it only indicates that the model is plausible (Kenny & Garcia, 2012; Schermelleh-Engel, Moosbrugger, & Müller, 2003). The absolute fit indices proposed by Kline (2015) is the most commonly used test which determines how well the model fits the data (Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2008; McDonald & Ho, 2002). However, there is no consensus on the fit indices for evaluating structural equation models (see Bollen & Long, 1993; Boomsma, 2000; Hoyle & Panter, 1995). Furthermore, in this thesis the goodness of fit was based on the following fit indices and thresholds: χ^2/df [1;4]; Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) [0.05;0.08]; RMSEA 90% confidence interval with its lower limit close to 0 and the upper limit below .08, *p-close* > .05; Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) [0.05;0.08]; Comparative Fit Index (CFI); and Tucker-Lewis Fit Index (TLI) [.90; .95].

Chi-squared test

The chi-square likelihood ratio is generally used in SEM and CFA to evaluate the "exact fit index" which quantifies how well a model fits the data (Matsunaga, 2010; Maxwell, 2008). The chi-squared test will be used in this study which indicates the difference between expected and observed covariance matrices. Values closer to zero and a chi-square p-value greater than 0.05 indicate a smaller difference between the expected and observed covariance matrices, which is one indicator of good fit (Holtzman & Vezzu, 2011; Kenny & Garcia, 2012; Matsunaga, 2010). However, one difficulty with the chi-square test is that it is very sensitive to sample size (Jöreskog, 1969; Kenny & Garcia, 2012). Although it is simple and easy to interpret it is widely recognised to be problematic and criticised because of its susceptible to the impact of sample size. As a result, other measures of fit have been developed which suggest that researchers using a CFA/SEM should employ the "two criteria" strategy to evaluate model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Therefore given the argument for researchers to examine at least two different types of indices (Holtzman & Vezzu, 2011; Kenny & Garcia, 2012; Matsunaga, 2010), this study employed other fit statistics such as the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), the root mean square residual (SRMR), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) to evaluate the fit of the model.

Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)

The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) represents the cluster called approximate fit index which is an estimate of discrepancy per degree of freedom in the model (R. B. Kline, 2015). RMSEA is currently the most popular measure of model fit which is virtually reported in all papers that uses CFA/SEM (Kenny & Garcia,

2012). The RMSEA (Steiger, 1990) was used in this study as it avoids issues of sample size by estimating the amount of error of approximation and the degrees of freedom per model. This is relevant in the case of my research because the sample size was relatively small, and to overcome the limitations of the chi-square mentioned in the section above. RMSEA values range from 0 to 1 with a smaller value indicating better model fit. A value of .06 or lower is typically indicative of good model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999), but a value of 0.08 or less is also considered acceptable (Browne & Cudeck, 1993; H. W. Marsh, Hau, & Wen, 2004). MacCallum et al. (1999) suggest that .01, .05, and .08 indicate excellent, good, and mediocre fit respectively whilst Kenny and Garcia (2012) suggested .10 as the cut-off for poor fitting models.

Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI)

The next cluster of fit indexes used in the analyses for Chapter 6 when conducted a CFA, is called incremental fit index which assesses the overall improvement of a proposed model as opposed to an independence model where the observed variables are uncorrelated (Bentler, 1990; Byrne, 2006). The Comparative Fit Index (CFI; Bentler, 1990) and the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI; Tucker & Lewis, 1973) are two incremental fit index that are commonly used to measure model fit. CFI values range from 1 to 0 with larger value considered as a good model fit. For a model to be considered adequate fit, it should have CFI value of .95 or higher (Hu & Bentler, 1999) although a cut-off of .90 is argued in the literature (Russell, 2002). The TLI and CFI are highly correlated but only one should be reported and CFI is reported more often than the TLI (Kenny & Garcia, 2012).

Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)

The final cluster of model fit index used in this study is called the residual-based index which focuses on covariance residuals or discrepancy between the observed covariance and the predicted covariance (Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003). The standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) is the most widely residual-based index used and was used in this study. The SRMR is an absolute measure of fit, it tends to be smaller as sample size increases and as the number of parameters in the model increases (Kenny & Garcia, 2012). SRMR value ranges from 0 to 1 but should be less than .10 (Bentler, 1990; Kline, 2015). A value of .08 or less is indicative of good fit model (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kenny & Garcia, 2012).

Methodology: Discussion of Potential Limitations

In this section, the aspects related to the methodology adopted across this thesis will be briefly discussed. In addition to explaining the methodological aspects of the present research, this section also highlights and discusses a number of limitations present in each particular aspect of the methodology of this research, in addition to the ones presented already in each of the previous empirical chapters.

Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods

In this doctoral research project, mixed methods were employed, integrating advanced quantitative methodology with qualitative methods. In fact, in the first empirical study of this thesis, focus groups were used to collect data (Chapter 5). According to some authors there are inherent advantages that need to be acknowledged when it comes to the employment of qualitative research methods (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005; Winters & Carvalho, 2014). For example, in this type of

research (i) participants' own words can be captured; (ii) the interview and focus (in the case of this thesis, focus groups were conducted) on issues salient to the participants, rather than being driven by the researcher's agenda; (iii) clarification can be sought; (iv) they allow opportunities to prove and explore in greater depth; (v) non-verbal behaviours can be noted and recorded; (vi) it requires little specialist equipment; and (vii) the process draws on existing skills of conversation and communication (McNabb, 2015; Merriam, 2009). The objective of the focus groups study in Chapter 5 was to understand how young people define political engagement and which behaviours would they associate with political engagement. Given the exploratory nature of this study, the number of individuals in each focus group and the total number of focus groups conducted (two in the UK and two in Portugal) was appropriated (Mack et al., 2005). However, a greater number of focus groups could have been conducted, but it was very difficult to get participants to be part of this study because there was no incentive being offered for participant participation. Moreover, the fact that the participants were self-selected may have also introduced some bias in the way participants answered to the questions (Babbie, 2014).

In Chapter 6 of this thesis, quantitative research methods were employed with the aid of robust and sophisticated statistical modelling such as structural equation modelling, and factor analysis. As a consequence, survey data were collected and analysed for the study conducted. Quantitative research was the most suitable method for the present study because it allowed the analysis or considerably large datasets, which is necessary for psychometric validation studies because they often require large amounts of data to be collected (Squires et al., 2013). Moreover, this type of research presents with two key advantages (among others): (i) quantitative research can reliably determine whether one concept or theory is better than alternatives via empirical

hypothesis testing, and (ii) the results generated can be projectable to the wider population under specific sampling circumstances (Bryman, 2016). However, the primary disadvantages of quantitative research are that the variables are only investigated if they are known prior to the beginning of the survey, and therefore have been taken into account into the questionnaire (Barker et al., 2002). For the quantitative study of this thesis (Chapter 6), the number of participants for each sample ended up not being enough to conduct more sophisticated Structural Equation Modelling Analysis in order to understand which factors relate to political engagement and to what extent (Wolf, Harrington, Clark, & Miller, 2013). Moreover, it was also not possible to conduct any further analysis to understand the different groups (or profiles) within the individuals that would be considered as politically engaged using this scale (Williams & Kibowski, 2016). However, because this is a newly developed instrument, there is still no clarity on the thresholds between potential levels of engagement among young people and more studies testing the scale need to be conducted.

Online and offline data collection

In a study concerning the potential impact that online and offline methods of data collection can have when used in the same study, Ward and colleagues (2014) concluded that it must be recognised that participants are slightly more socially biased when using the (offline) paper/pencil method, but likely not to the extent that would call into question the results of previous research. Another key point the authors suggest for researchers to consider is that in today's technologically advanced world, individuals (especially young people) appear to be comfortable with using computers and respond similarly to online versus offline (paper-and-pencil) data collection methods. Furthermore, they assert that researchers clearly have viable options for data

collection or they may even combine online and paper/pencil methods when collecting data in the same study (Ward, Clark, Zabriskie, & Morris, 2014). In this PhD thesis, both the qualitative (Chapter 5) and the quantitative study (Chapter 6) used online and offline data collection methods and there did not appear to be any major implications in terms of the quality of data produced in either of the studies. Furthermore, online data collection worked very well as an alternative for data collection in another country (especially when the researcher cannot be there in person, which was the case for the focus group study).

Research Designs: Case Studies and Cross-sectional Studies

In this thesis, two different research designs were used, a case study for the qualitative study (Chapter 5) and a cross-sectional design for the quantitative study (Chapter 6). A case study was chosen as it usually entails the detailed and intensive analysis of a single case, and is concerned with the complexity and particular nature of the case in question (Bryman, 2016; Sarantakos, 2013). Although the case study design provides a rich and insightful output for investigating a specific situation, it usually relies on a small number of cases, which may lead to issues of validity of generalisability (Crotty, 1998). Moreover, although the purpose of the focus groups was exploratory and a theoretical saturation was reached with the four focus groups (because similar results were emerging in each focus groups independently of their nationality), the findings from these focus groups cannot be generalizable to the wider population of young people. Therefore, more studies would need to be conducted to validate the findings from these focus groups.

For the quantitative study of this thesis (Chapter 6), a cross-sectional research design was adopted for the empirical study conducted because this research design is the

most adequate for psychometric validation studies because it can help effective investigation of instruments' psychometric properties (DeVellis, 2012). Furthermore, cross-sectional designs allow the researcher to assess a group of participants at approximately the same point in time (Bryman, 2016). Although cross-sectional designs are commonly used for descriptive studies, they can also provide suggestive analytic information that can pave the way to future research in a specific field. In addition to this, the utilisation of cross-sectional designs presents with several advantages because they are relatively simple and inexpensive as no follow-up measures are necessary to be in place (DeVellis, 2012; Maydeu-Olivares & McArdle, 2005). However, the disadvantages include limited utility in establishing causal inferences because the assessments are made only at one point, and the temporal relationship what individuals say they will do and what they actually end up doing (for example, when a participant says in a questionnaire that he/she intend to vote in the next General Election, researchers do not have access to the information on whether he/she actually voted or not) cannot be tested empirically across time (Poole, 2005). Despite these potential problems, the studies conducted in this thesis are likely to not be affected by such issues because the types of studies conducted (i.e., validation studies) did not imply generating holistic and causal inferences or theories to be generalised to the broader population (Bryman, 2016).

Ethical Issues

All the studies conducted in this thesis received ethical approval from Nottingham Trent University (NTU) and followed the Political Studies Association (PSA) guidelines for good professional conduct.

Ethical issues in qualitative research

Ethical issues are an intrinsic part of the research process from the initial formulation of the research question through the actual interviews, to transcriptions and analyses, and even further when results are published (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2008). Ethical problems arise because of the complexities of researching private lives and placing accounts in the public arena (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001). There are four main fields that are traditionally discussed in ethical guidelines for researchers and which are relevant for this particular research project. These are informed consent, confidentiality, consequences, and the role of the researcher. The informed consent form given to focus groups' participants (in the Appendix 2) fully informed them about the nature of the research, the implications of their participation, and explained that they could withdraw their data from the study at any time (and how they could do that). Similarly, the questionnaire also included provision for informed consent where the purpose of the study was explained along with details explaining what they had to do to withdraw their data from the study. The informed consent sheets also assured participants that confidentiality and their anonymity were each going to be guaranteed. Furthermore, to make sure these promises were met, numbers were used in the focus groups transcripts instead of participants' real names; the recordings were stored separately from the transcripts and participants' contact details. The consequences of disclosure of the participants' details wouldn't, in this case, cause any particular harm to the people who participated but a potential embarrassment or annoyance by knowing that their details have been disclosed. Nevertheless, confidentiality was viewed as an extremely important issue, and the ethical research guidelines of NTU and PSA require this to be addressed. Regarding my role as a researcher, the primary focus was a duty of care toward each of the participants (this is mainly applicable to the qualitative study

– focus groups – especially while conducting the in-person group interviews). Additionally, these fields should not be seen as questions that can be settled once and for all in advance, but rather problem areas that should continually be addressed and reflected upon (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2008).

Qualitative research methods such as interviews and focus groups involve different ethical issues than those of a questionnaire survey. As an example, in a qualitative interview, participants' statements may be published in public reports so precautions need to be taken to protect each participant's anonymity. For instance, the results of the qualitative study conducted for the purpose of this thesis was published in an academic journal and numbers were used instead of participants' names in order to ensure their anonymity. In a questionnaire, confidentiality is assured by the computed averages of survey respondents. For the focus groups conducted for this study, all participants had to sign an informed consent form, and their confidentiality was assured. They were also informed of the right to withdraw from the study whenever they wanted to.

Ethics of Internet research

All participants should expect rights to privacy, confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent and in both studies conducted for the purpose of this thesis (in particular for the qualitative element), it was important to ensure those rights were respected and protected. When choosing to conduct research online, it is important to consider whether online research is indeed preferable to offline research, precisely for ethical reasons. As Ess (2007) points out offline research may offer specific ethically relevant advantages, however, research online offers a distinctive set of advantages and potential benefits. Ess (2007) argues that these potential advantages must be

weighed against the distinctive costs and risks of online research, including: greater risks to individual privacy and confidentiality (because of grater accessibility of information online regarding individuals, groups, and their communications – and in ways that may prevent subjects from knowing that their behaviours and communications are being observed and recorded); and greater difficulty in obtaining informed consent; and greater difficulty of ascertaining subjects identity because of the use of pseudonyms, multiple online identities, etc. In this thesis, the use of online data collection methods was relevant mainly given the purpose that at the time I could not travel to Portugal to conduct the focus groups (and given the short timescale they had to be conducted as quick as possible) and it turned out to be an appropriate alternative without posing any major ethical issues.

With regards to the informed consent, it can be difficult to obtain consent from individuals if data is gathered from online message boards. There is also the debate over what is a 'public' or 'private' space online. Although online interactions are often observed by many other people (e.g., chat rooms, forums, etc.) the person online may not perceive their interaction as public (Griffiths & Whitty, 2010). In the case of the qualitative study of this thesis, the focus groups conducted online happened in a private *Facebook* chat group to which only the participants and I had access. Moreover, after each focus group, the transcripts were saved in a folder on my laptop and the chat groups were deleted. Regarding the informed consent, I sent the document to the group chat and then asked for each participant to individually send it to my email account. Although it may be a more complex process than it is offline (where participants are given a paper to sign) it worked well and I received the informed consent signed from all the participants involved in the focus groups online (Portuguese sample). My main objective was to ensure that the anonymity of the participants was protected. Despite

the debates around if the space where the online data collection happens is 'private' or 'public', participants must give consent for personal information to be gathered online; be given notice as to why data is being collected about them; be able to correct erroneous data; and be able to opt-out of data collection (the exact same way as if data collection had happened offline/in person). As an online survey was also to be used for the quantitative study of this project, participants were be directed to the information page at the start of the questionnaire and by continuing with the survey it was expected that participants would consent to their data being used.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a detailed account of the research methodology used in this thesis, including a brief discussion on the research paradigm, research design and data collection methods. Pragmatism was chosen as the most appropriate philosophical approach because the main intention of this thesis is to find a solution for a real problem (the way young people's political engagement is being assessed) and this approach allowed me to focus more on the research questions rather than the worldview or the method I choose in order to meet the aim and objectives of this thesis. Furthermore, a mixed methods methodology was chosen in order to meet the main aim – developing a robust psychometric instrument to assess young people's political engagement (see Chapter 1, section *Research aims and objectives*, Primary aim) – and the different research objectives (see Chapter 1, section *Research aims and objectives*, Objectives) of the present thesis. Moreover, a combination of focus groups and the development and validation of the psychometric instrument – was used to achieve the overall objectives of this project and to provide a deeper understanding of youth political engagement in Britain and in Portugal. The aim of the qualitative study was

to understand young people's perceptions of the concept of political engagement and to help inform the item development for the scale (Chapter 5), while the aim of the quantitative study was to examine the psychometric properties of the YPES in and the factor model (Chapter 6). Both studies contribute to the main aim of this thesis which is to develop a valid and reliable measure of young people's political engagement using the quantitative methods outlined above. However, although the study relies heavily on quantitative methods, qualitative analyses were also needed in order to allow a more accurate development for the scale items and consequently for the scale validation. The next chapter will discuss and present the qualitative study on young people's perceptions about what it means to be politically engaged. Namely, it will:

i) Explore young people's general perceptions of political engagement and how do these contrast with their understandings of political participation;
ii) Investigate if the definitions of political engagement given by young people differ from the existing definitions of this concept;
iii) Understand what behaviours and actions do young people regard as political engagement indicators.

These different points will be explored in order to meet the thesis objective i) (see Chapter 1, section *Research aims and objectives*) and to inform the development and structure of the items that will used in Chapter 6 for the purposes of the *Youth Political Engagement Scale* validation. In Chapter 6, the results from the quantitative study will be presented and considered in order to:

i) Understand how many dimensions does the construct of political engagement have (see Chapter 1, section *Research questions and objectives*, objective iii) and research question [iii]);

ii) Explore if the construct of political engagement is statistically different from the construct of political participation (see Chapter 1, section *Research questions and objectives*, objective [iii]);

iii) Develop and validate a scale to assess young people's political engagement – the *Youth Political Engagement Scale* (see Chapter 1, section *Research questions and objectives,* Primary aim).

Overall, both studies in Chapter 5 (qualitative study – focus groups) and in Chapter 6 (quantitative study) will contribute to achieve the main aim of this PhD thesis, where the qualitative methods have been used in an effort to engage with and understand young people's experiences and perceptions of what political engagement means for them, whilst recognising the importance of quantitative research in producing knowledge about the different components (and items) that constitute political engagement. The next two chapters will present the empirical studies that were conducted in order to gain a greater understanding about the conceptualisation and measurement of political engagement.

CHAPTER 5: Towards a reconceptualisation and operationalisation of youth political engagement

Introduction

In Chapter 2, the case was made that political participation and political engagement are considered to be necessary conditions for democracy to function effectively (Barrett & Zani, 2014). Furthermore, researchers have noticed a shift in how young people think about and engage in politics – leading to the emergence of significant paradigm controversies concerning differences between political 'participation' and 'engagement' (Barrett & Brunton-Smith, 2014; Ekman & Amnå, 2012; Sveningsson, 2016; Van Deth, 2014).

Nevertheless, the conventional image that prevails is that young people are 'apathetic' or even 'disinterested' when it comes to politics, while compared with older generations (Dalton, 2013). In her article about differences in political participation between young and old people, Quintelier (2007) identified three reasons for these images and the perceived political participation gap between younger and older people. Firstly, due to life cycle and generational effects; secondly, the attractiveness of new forms of participation has caused younger people to divert from traditional forms of political participation as practised by older generations (such as voting), and thirdly that there is a difference in the way young people embrace politically-related conceptions compared to older people. Of these, the third reason is the most relevant for the context of this thesis given that it is important to highlight that avoiding such definitional discrepancies is critical in social research: it is not sufficient in itself for a researcher to offer a definition of the investigated topic, but also for that definition to be used and accepted by the surveyed population. Researchers should be careful that the acts they consider to represent political engagement are likewise considered as

political engagement acts by a younger audience. For example, Parry and colleagues (1992) identified a huge discrepancy between the definitions of politics espoused by older and younger people, a finding that has also been suggested in other studies (Hay, 2007; Henn et al., 2005).

As addressed in Chapter 1, there has been discussion concerning the validity and reliability of the instruments used in youth political participation research. For instance, one position claims existing measures used to assess young people's engagement need refinement in order to capture the full range of behaviours that being engaged entails (Albacete, 2014; Henn & Foard, 2012; O'Toole, 2015). According to Albacete (2014), properly validated measures of youth political engagement are lacking. Consequently, research assessing the youth political engagement construct may be susceptible to usage of inconsistent criteria that lack statistical/psychometric validity. Such practices may result in biased statistical conclusions, because the main outcome would be assessed improperly. Furthermore, answering questions regarding young citizens' political engagement requires coherence between the concept and its assessment. To address this, it is essential to develop an instrument to adequately assess the political engagement construct among contemporary youth (Pontes et al., 2016). The approach utilised for this purpose has been outlined in detail in Chapter 4 (section, *Study outlines,* sub-sections Qualitative study: Focus groups interviews and Quantitative study: scale development and validation).

However, before developing such a scale, there are specific aspects that should be taken into account to adequately assess political engagement among young people. Firstly, the instrument should allow the assessment of the latent concept of political engagement, the broad number of forms it can take, the different levels of intensity and difficulty those activities entail, and its dimensionality. It should also take into

account recent developments in the youth repertoire of political actions. Finally, it should allow the equivalent assessment of political engagement in several countries and over time (Albacete, 2014). Given that evidence from the UK and Western Europe suggests that young people are not politically apathetic but have their own views about political issues and engage in democratic politics through a variety of modes of participation (Briggs, 2016; Janmaat & Keating, 2017; Kisby & Sloam, 2014), their understandings have to be explored in order to better understand the ways in which they engage in politics. Moreover, White and colleagues (2000) also argue that "without clear understanding of how young people conceptualise political interest and engagement, it is difficult to know how they interpret such questions or the reasons for their responses" (p.1). The authors note that many young people are engaged in activities which may indicate political engagement to the researcher, but which young people themselves do not consider to be representing that construct - thus incurring a problem of under-reporting of political engagement among young people.

The purposes of this chapter are twofold. Firstly, to propose a specific definition of young people's political engagement – because before developing measures to evaluate such a concept, there is a need to clarify its definition (Mueller, 2004). Previous studies have investigated what political participation means to Spanish students (Sant, 2015), understandings of citizenship among Turkish and Roma youth (Ataman, Çok, & Şener, 2012), British young people's perspectives on what politics *in general* means to them (Henn et al., 2002), and which behaviours Swedish young people associate with political engagement (Sveningsson, 2016). However, there are no studies conducted in Britain or Portugal that specifically consider young people's conceptual definitions of political engagement.

The second aim is to provide qualitative insights into how young people perceive political engagement. What does being ‘engaged’ in politics mean to them? Would they consider engagement and participation in politics to be the same, or are they perceived differently? First, this chapter provides an overview of the existing conceptualisations of political engagement and political participation, and the distinctions between these two concepts. Second, the results from a series of four focus-groups with young people aged 18-25 years are presented, and the findings offer an original contribution to advance the assessment of young people’s political engagement.

Conceptual definitions of political engagement and political participation

Any advance in understanding young people’s political engagement requires clarity on what conceptual approach to use. However, in Chapter 2 it was revealed that the literature displays a lack of agreement on how best to define political engagement and how to distinguish it from related concepts such as political participation (Ekman & Amnå, 2012). For instance, while these concepts relate to different phenomena, the distinctiveness of each is left wanting (e.g., Adler & Goggin, 2005; Barrett & Zani, 2014). In order to gain a clear understanding of the key features of - and how to assess -young people’s political engagement, it was important to critically examine the differences between political engagement and political participation, and this was addressed in Chapter 2.

Young people's perceptions of what it means to be politically engaged

Chapter 2 has identified and critically examined existing conceptualisations of (offline and online) political dis/engagement and political non-participation, and examined the

extent to which they overlap and differ. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a scientific definition of young people's political engagement. Because the target population is youth, and the political engagement conceptualisations identified in the critical examination of the literature were drawn predominantly for the general population, there is also a need to develop a conceptual definition of political engagement that takes into account young people's perceptions of political engagement. Moreover, a 'bottom-up' youth-led approach was chosen, because it enables young people to define their own approach to political engagement and gives them some freedom regarding the ways in which they view this particular phenomenon (Jones, Starkey, & Orme, 2003).This is important because as Coles also suggests, research should be conducted that takes into account young people's views if the aim is a deeper involvement of young people with politics (Coles, 2000). This is the case for the research that underpins this particular thesis which has as a key purpose to gain a deeper, more nuanced and valid understanding of young people's political engagement than currently exists – one which therefore fully articulates the breadth and different dimensions of their political engagement in the context of their current disillusionment with democratic politics (Hay 2007; Whiteley 2012; Tormey 2015; Sloam and Henn 2018).

Research design

In this chapter, youth perspectives on what it means to be politically engaged were explored via three of the four key research questions research questions outlined in Chapter 1 (section *Research questions*):

i) What are young people's general perceptions of political engagement and how do these contrast with their characterisation of political participation, both in theory and in practice?

ii) Are young people's definitions of political engagement different from existing definitions of this concept?

iii) What behaviours and actions do young people regard as political engagement indicators?

The full details about this study's research design (specifically, about participant recruitment and materials and procedure) are outlined in Chapter 4. However, I would like to highlight that the research in this particular chapter is exploratory rather than a hypothesis-driven, in nature. Focus-group methodology was chosen to investigate meanings, ideas, beliefs and values, allowing deeper examination of youth perceptions concerning political engagement (e.g., Braun & Clarke, 2006). The groups were conducted both offline in-person (Britain) and online (Portugal).

Data analysis

Interview transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis and following prescribed steps (e.g., King & Horrocks, 2010). All data in Portuguese were translated to English along with an initial reading of all transcriptions to gain familiarity with each. An inductive data-driven method of analysis was deployed to identify recurring themes. Commonalities and differences amongst participants' views were noted concerning the role of politics in young people's lives, their general perceptions for engaging and participating in politics, and their motivations. General themes emerged through a process of interpretative coding. In order to ensure the quality of this qualitative analysis process, investigator and theoretical triangulation.

Table 7. Key themes and sub-themes that emerged from the focus groups analysis

Key themes	Sub-themes
Importance of the topic of young people's political engagement	Politics is not a platform for young people to be involved; Ambiguity on what political engagement means; Difficult to find information about politics; Young people's political engagement happening online; Poor citizenship education at schools; Biased political news shared by the media; Need to simplify/explain political jargon.
Voting: Attitudes and opinions toward Brexit	Impact of voting for Brexit; Wearing a badge as a platform to induce political discussions; Posting and sharing political information on social networking sites.
Political engagement actions and behaviours	Voting as a poor indicator of political engagement.
Defining political engagement	Engagement versus participation.

Results

Results are organised according to the different themes discussed during the focus-groups (see Table 6). Four superordinate dimensions were identified: (i) importance of the topic of young people's political engagement, (ii) attitudes and opinions toward voting (focussing on the 2016 Brexit referendum), (iii) political engagement – actions and behaviours, and (iv) defining political engagement.

Theme 1: Importance of the topic of young people's political engagement

All participants (British and Portuguese) considered it important to discuss the topic of political engagement because they felt that few young people were politically aware or able to become politically engaged. They also stated that any absence in political engagement does not necessarily signal a lack of interest in political issues. Instead, they felt that politics was not a platform for them to be engaged and intervene, because they had the impression that politics is for older people:

> *"Young people are just not really engaged with politics…because it is not that it doesn't interest us, but because it's not like a platform for us to be engaged and for us to intervene…it's like I feel that our voice isn't heard or we feel like it doesn't really count in a sense"* P6 (British).
>
> *"I think that not as many young people are into politics. I think it is…for older people who have their reason"* P1 (British).

One participant highlighted the ambiguity with respect to the term political engagement, and that most political information about politics (e.g., about political parties) is too complicated to understand and discern what is important and true. Another participant expressed the view that given the amount of information online, it is easy to hear an opinion and what is happening in politics but people consider this as "*noise*" to be avoided, leading to low political engagement:

> *"It's not always easy to find information online about what is going on in politics, there is always so many news regarding the same thing, so many views on the same thing, it gets confused"* P16 (Portuguese).

Despite stating it is not easy to find relevant information online, one participant claimed that the Internet provided young people with means to organise and acquire potential political impact because even small interactions can be political:

> *"I know that is what people say, that young people do not care about politics and election turnout…but I think this does not take into account that young people have a large political impact on the Internet and will organise themselves more. But because these are often not visible or shown in numerical data they are ignored"* P8 (British).

Participants also suggested potential factors that contribute to low levels of engagement and participation, including the lack of political education in schools, general lack of trust in politicians and institutions, and having no evidence that their opinions and preferences are treated seriously by politicians. Another issue triggering disengagement was a perceived bias in the way in which political news is shaped by the media. A commonly-held view, expressed by one participant:

> *"I don't want to find excuses for young people's lack of interest in politics, but in the majority of the times, the approach the media take on politics is totally biased and I think that this leads to a lack of trust in politics…They induce us to think in a certain way"* P11 (Portuguese).

A shared view was that in order to increase levels of political engagement among young people, the political discourse should be more accessible and young person-centred. Participants claimed that political information was often presented in an overly-technical way, alienating many young people who subsequently lose interest in the political message:

> "*I believe one of the main reasons of disengagement is the fact that people do not really understand what is being said...political jargon should be simplified"* P9 (Portuguese).
>
> *"Because people don't understand what politicians say they are going to do, they don't know which party to vote, so they don't vote or they end up voting for the same party their parents"* P11 (Portuguese).

Table 7. Items selected by British and Portuguese young people

Selected items	BR (%)	PT (%)
Looking for political information	3 (37.5)	6 (60)
Sending an email to a political organisation	3 (37.5)	3 (30)
Voted	5 (62.5)	8 (80)
Discussed politics with friends/family	4 (50)	7 (70)
Engage in strike activity	5 (62.5)	5 (50)
Joined a political organisation	5 (62.5)	5 (50)
Actively campaigned for a political organisation	3 (37.5)	5 (50)
Paying attention to what is going on in politics	3 (37.5)	5 (50)
When having doubts about political issues, I ask questions and get involved in debates about politics	3 (37.5)	7 (70)
I usually watch political debates (e.g., television, Facebook, YouTube)	3 (37.5)	5 (50)
Use the means you have as a citizen to critically monitor the actions of your political representatives	3 (37.5)	4 (40)
Membership of a political party	4 (50)	6 (60)
Take part in protests, demonstrations, marches	3 (37.5)	4 (40)
Membership of a political lobbying and campaigning organisations	3 (37.5)	3 (30)
Signing petitions	3 (37.5)	4 (40)
Understanding or holding political or civic values	3 (37.5)	8 (80)

BR: Britain**; BR (%):** Number or participants, from a total of 8, who selected a specific item, with the respective percentage in parentheses; **PT:** Portugal; **PT (%)**: Number of participants, from a total of 10, who selected a specific item, with the respective percentage in parentheses.

Theme 2: Attitudes and opinions toward voting - Brexit

The majority of British participants voted in the 2016 UK Referendum on European Union (EU) membership with the exception of one participant who stated she thought it was not going to change anything because the majority of people would vote for Britain to leave the EU ('Brexit'). Of the seven participants who voted, two were in another country during the time of the referendum, but registered online to vote in advance because it was important to vote:

> *"I was living abroad at the time, so it wasn't so simple to vote, I had to register online in advance, but it was important for me to vote…because I knew it was going to make an impact on my future…as well as my country, and future relation with the EU"* P5 (British).

When asked, all Portuguese participants confirmed that they had heard about Brexit. Furthermore, they agreed that if a similar situation happened in Portugal they would definitely vote to remain in the EU. This clearly indicates that youth are aware of what is happening in politics, and demonstrates political engagement. Only one participant (from the total sample) had heard about the symbolic wearing of a safety pin post-Brexit as a way of displaying solidarity and empathy to immigrants who were victims of xenophobic and hateful behaviours (Cresci, 2016). She was abroad when the referendum occurred in Britain, and wore the safety pin herself:

> *"[I wore] a safety pin for what was happening and people asked me why are you wearing that? Is so stupid…and I was like, 'No', if you know what is going on in England…I used it as a platform to talk about Brexit…to kind of share my ideas about Brexit, what I thought it was a bad idea…so in a way it was with a political influence"* P3 (British)

When asked if the wearing of safety pins and sharing via photos uploaded to social media could be an indicator of political engagement, opinions diverged. Some participants agreed, signifying they were following the news and current political events. Others disagreed, stating young people could not be considered politically engaged because people on social media simply follow trends and merely shadow what other people are doing, without knowing the precise meaning of such actions. Other participants stated that such people could not be considered politically engaged because such actions merely reflected social influence – they observed other people posting that particular photo and wanted to do the same, but without any intention to challenge or change xenophobic behaviours. Others considered such people to be politically engaged, because wearing a safety pin signified awareness of what was happening in politics and of actively seeking to effect change, even if a relatively small act. However, focus-group participants also acknowledged that because it does not contribute to election results, such displays are considered as of little consequence by

those in power. In general, most participants considered the use of the safety pin in the context of Brexit as a political engagement indicator.

Theme 3: Political engagement – actions and behaviours

After the Brexit discussion, participants were asked to write three to five actions, behaviours, or ideas they consider as demonstrating political engagement, and then to share responses with the others. Examples suggested by participants as illustrative of the concept resulted in two distinct categories, political engagement and political participation. Examples of political engagement included understanding politics and politicians, being involved in an organisation, asking questions about world events, choosing sources of media they relied upon, showing interest in political news, sharing political opinions, and attending political debates. In terms of political participation, actions included attending rallies, protesting (offline or online), fundraising and donating to parties, signing petitions, being an activist, voting, and artistic performance and theatre. Initially, some participants raised voting as a political engagement item. However, after discussion, the general consensus was that voting was not as good as a political engagement indicator as they had initially thought. They claimed it may be a purely expressive act without necessarily reflecting any knowledge about politics, or that voters had read manifestos:

> *"A lot of people vote without knowing what they are doing, the impact it could have"* P17 (Portuguese)
>
> *"A lot of young people that I know voted, but they did not know why they were voting for, some of them voted because their parents told them to"* P9 (Portuguese).

Following this, all 18 participants were asked to choose 20 items from an offered list. After collectively analysing these 18 groups of items, participants then

identified the most selected items (selected by at least five participants). These are summarised in Table 7and include signing online petitions, engaging in strike activity, and paying attention to political events. Generally, the message from this discussion is that for young citizens, the concepts of political participation and political engagement entail different actions and behaviours, and are therefore considered by the participants to be different concepts.

Theme 4: Defining political engagement

When asked whether or not there is any distinction between political participation and political engagement, participants concluded that: (i) if individuals are politically participating they are normally considered as politically engaged but there were exceptions (such as voting without being engaged); and (ii) higher levels of enthusiasm and engagement lead to more participation. Other participants saw political participation as more conventional, electorally-oriented action as opposed to more passive and symbolic engagement methods (e.g., listening to the news). Analysis of all political engagement definitions offered by the young participants (see Table 9), demonstrated the most recurrent ideas across political engagement definitions: (i) looking for information and being informed, (ii) being conscious, (iii) being involved, (iv) having an opinion, (v) being interested in political issues, (vi) being proactive, and (vii) standing for one's beliefs:

> *"Because you can participate, by voting for example, without being engaged, and then you vote without being informed…because your parents told you to vote"* P9 (Portuguese).

> *"Participating does not imply being engaged…being engaged does not mean you are going to participate, but both can happen at the same time…the ideal scenario"* P4 (British).

> *"If you are politically participating you are engaged, but you can be engaged but not participate"* P6 (British).

> *"When you show interest in any level of politics and political engagement has several levels in it, and participation can be one of them"* P7 (British).

Young people consider political engagement an important topic. However, they feel there are few (if any) available platforms to intervene in politics because their voices go unheard by politicians. They also note differences between political *engagement* and political *participation*, and this distinction reinforces the need for political engagement definitions taking into account young people's understandings of what being engaged means.

Table 9 shows all the definitions of political engagement given by the participants in the focus groups. As specified earlier in this thesis (Chapter 2, section *Political engagement: conceptual definitions and dilemmas*, sub-section Cognitive, emotional and behavioural political engagement), to develop the *Youth Political Engagement Scale,* the behavioural dimension (political participation) is defined as the behaviours that have the intent or the effect of influencing the content or the implementation of specific public policies, or more indirectly at influencing the selection of the individuals who are responsible for making those policies (Barrett, 2012). Cognitive engagement is defined in this thesis as young people's investment and willingness to exert the necessary efforts for the comprehension and mastering of complex ideas and difficult skills related to political issues. For this conceptualisation, Fredricks and colleagues (2005) definition of students' cognitive engagement was adapted keeping the idea of investment in learning, in this case about politics, and the willingness to exert effort for understanding difficult ideas around politics or about what is going on in politics. A similar logic was used for the definition of emotional engagement, which in this thesis is defined as reflecting both the positive and negative reactions to politician's actions and instructions, other people's opinions about politics,

perceptions of party belonging, and beliefs about the value of politics (also adapted from the definition of emotional student engagement from Fredricks et al., 2005).

Table 8. Young people's definitions of political engagement

Focus group identification		Participant	Definition of political engagement
British young people	Focus group 1	1	Is choosing yourself to be politically active, and not having your parents or anybody else influencing you, and just actually making an effect and doing your thing.
		2	Do anything that you can do to make a change even if you feel alone or insecure, because you have the power to be informed and engage yourself.
		3	It is about looking for information and then deciding your opinion and sharing that with people and making discussions about political issues, because we can talk about it, the thing is finding information and process that information and share it with our friends, colleagues.
		4	It's finding out information for yourself and doing it because you want to and not because thought you have to… discussing it and sharing it and do your best to figure out things, gather all the information that you need for you to make decisions.
		5	I think it is being pro-active, doing things your own, taking your own initiatives and going towards information, listening to debates, taking your time and effort.
	Focus group 2	6	Taking an active interest in political matters and topics, but not necessarily acting on this interest.
		7	Is when you show interest in any level of politics and political engagement has several levels in it, and participation can be one of them
		8	Engagement shows your interest in politics without official form of acts. It can be passive and more personal than participation.

Portuguese young people	Focus group 3	9	Is being interested in what's happening nowadays, being politically interested, and that could be done in different ways, but we should always keep in mind that we should get out of our comfort zones.
		10	It requires a compromise with what we stand for what we believe in. We don't need necessarily to participate, but to be conscious of what is happening in politics.
		11	Being politically engaged is being involved in politics, and be clear about wat we believe in and about our political opinions.
		12	Involvement/interest/willingness to participate in constructive political debates, get out of your comfort zone and show your position about political issues.
		13	To be politically engaged we have to know the current political paradigm in which we find ourselves and be part of it through actions that actually impact on it.
	Focus group 4	14	Being politically engaged is expression your opinion about political questions, having interest and questions about politics and creating debates about them.
		15	All actions we do in our daily routine that affect politics could be considered as political engagement, from the small acts to the more relevant ones, such as voting.
		16	Is being proactive in politics, conscious and informed about political issues… We need to know how to intervene and how to have impact.
		17	Is related to political, economic and social charisma with which a citizen can interact and learn from it. A politically engaged citizen should be someone which knowledge, ideas, and opinions could help improve or change the political reality.
		18	Is related to the interest about political issues, standing for a position and a point of view and try to reach an agreement about diverse political questions. Being politically engaged is being politically conscious.

Note: Each colour corresponds to a different dimension of political engagement: cognitive – orange, emotional – blue, and behavioural – green. The way the different dimensions are represented refers to the definitions of each dimension [based in the work of Barrett (2012) and Fredricks et al. (2005)] provided on Chapter 2 under the sub-heading Cognitive, emotional and behavioural engagement.

Discussion

This chapter has reported on the findings from focus groups that were designed to explore perceptions of political engagement behaviours amongst English and Portuguese youth. This is particularly important and relevant because there is a lack of (i) psychometrically validated instruments assessing young people's political engagement (Pontes et al., 2016), and (ii) agreement on what this particular concept means (e.g., Ekman & Amnå, 2012). Moreover, the existing conceptualisations of different politically-related constructs (including political participation and political engagement) have usually been developed for entire populations and do not consider the behaviours young people understand as illustrating political engagement. Therefore, these results are of great interest because the few studies exploring these phenomena claimed young people are disengaged from politics, when what the studies are actually assessing is political participation. This misunderstanding supports the views of Albacete (2014) and Phelps (2012) who argued that changes being witnessed in the way people are engaging and participating with, and in, politics are not always adequately explained. This has the potential to result in biased conclusions and information concerning young people's political engagement and interventions.

Importance of young people's political engagement

There are clear associations between themes raised (see Table 7) by young participants regarding the importance of youth political engagement and those encountered in the existing literature. It has been suggested (e.g., Albacete, 2014; Birdwell, Cadywould, & Reynolds, 2014; Ekström, 2016; Henn & Foard, 2012; O'Toole, 2015) that young people are withdrawing from traditional forms of political participation, but are still interested in politics and alternative forms of political action. Participants noted

ambiguity in terms of the political engagement concept leading to confusion with respect to what it is or what it means. This mirrors debates within the existing literature concerning distinctions between political engagement and political participation (e.g., Phelps, 2012). Additionally, due to the expansion of the available forms of political engagement (Albacete, 2014; Phelps, 2012), along with the existing conceptual ambivalence, conclusions related to this construct may differ extensively depending upon the conceptual definitions used (Van Deth, 2014).

The data also reflect conclusions developed elsewhere (e.g., Henn & Foard, 2012, 2014; Sveningsson, 2016), that contemporary youth do not feel political institutions and processes provide effective platforms to intervene in, and shape, political outcomes. For example, Henn and Oldfield (2016) demonstrated that young people consider the political system is relatively closed to them, and they have only limited opportunities to influence political decision-making processes. Other recurrent themes in the literature were raised by the participants, namely that school citizenship education positively impacts on youth political engagement (Keating & Janmaat, 2016), and that lack of trust in politicians and political parties is a main cause for political disengagement among youth (Amnå and J. Ekman, 2014).

Attitudes and opinions toward voting – Brexit

Most British focus group participants voted at the 2016 EU referendum, and voted to remain in the EU. This reflects data from opinion polls published by *YouGov* showing the majority of UK youth (18-25 years) voted to remain in the EU, because they are less hostile to the EU and more tolerant of immigration (Fox, 2016).

Participants were divided on whether the act of tweeting selfies with a safety pin depicting solidarity with UK-based foreign nationals was a political engagement

indicator or not. This echoes the debate concerning whether online behaviours and actions should be regarded as expressing political engagement (e.g., Best & Krueger, 2005; Gibson & Cantijoch, 2013; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012; Russo & Amnå, 2015; Theocharis & Lowe, 2015). However, previous studies found individuals with a personal interest in specific political topics often discussed such matters on social media (Abdu, Mohamad, & Muda, 2017; Bekafigo & McBride, 2013; Kim, 2016; Theocharis & Lowe, 2015; Warner, 2017). This suggests online political behaviours involving sharing political content on social media and discussing political issues online, should be considered when assessing political engagement among young people. As one participant claimed, young people are doing politics online but that is usually not taken into account because it is not seen by those in power. This idea is tied to the fact that young people live in the digital era, and digital citizens (Bimber, Cunill, Copeland, & Gibson, 2015) perform their daily tasks online, and naturally resort to online platforms to engage politically (Collin, 2008).

Political engagement: Actions, behaviours and definitions

In a study of what political participation means to Spanish students, Sant (2015) found that although young people were sceptical of the value of conventional electorally-oriented politics, they were able to articulate distinctions between such traditional forms of political participation and new alternative forms. In the present study, young people distinguished between what political participation is and what they understand it to be, and how they contrast this with their understandings of political engagement. All participants differentiated states of political engagement and political participation. Furthermore, the idea that political participation is part of political engagement was also raised during focus-group discussions. This confirms Barrett's (2012) findings

that indicated that political engagement comprises three dimensions (cognitive, emotional and behavioural), considering political participation to be the behavioural dimension. Similarly, a study of young people's perceptions of political engagement (Sveningsson (2016) concluded the majority of participants associated being 'engaged' with formal political participation that takes place within parties and their youth associations. Some acknowledge that extra-parliamentary participation (e.g., being members of human rights organizations), might also be considered as political engagement, additionally to participating in protest marches and demonstrations. Sveningsson reported that political engagement examples were activities exercised within the fields of manifest political participation, considering Ekman and Amnå (2012) typology, while latent political participation activities were less likely viewed as engagement.

Previous studies have demonstrated young people associate politics with values and ideology, with political engagement perceived to be taking a position, having values, and fighting for them (Sveningsson, 2016). However, when describing what they understood political engagement to be, participants in the present study evoked ideas such as looking for information and being informed, being conscious, being involved, having one's own opinions, showing interest in political issues, being proactive, and standing for one's beliefs. Furthermore, participants did not refer to voting when discussing the main political engagement indicators – similar to other studies (Lister, 2007; Sveningsson, 2016). Nowadays, young people prefer to engage with NGOs rather than with political parties because such organisations allow them to support particular issues they care about while not having to align to a whole package of political items (Henn & Oldfield, 2017). This may explain why, in the present study, some of the items commonly chosen by young people as indicators of political

engagement were linked to the community (e.g., promoting information and mobilisation in the community to sustain political programmes they believed in).

Conclusion

Although the focus group research for this chapter is the first to qualitatively investigate young people's understandings of what it means to be specifically politically engaged, in both the British and the Portuguese context, it is not without limitations. Firstly, the exploratory nature of the research does not permit the drawing of any definitive conclusions. Secondly, all data were self-report and subject to well-known biases (recall bias, social desirability bias and so on). Thirdly the participants were self-selected and findings may not be generalizable to other cultures.

However, the focus group research sought to develop a definition of youth political engagement that is rooted in young people's own perceptions of what it means to be engaged. Such an approach ultimately enables those in the field to examine distinct conceptualizations systematically and consistently. In terms of the actions and behaviours chosen by young people to define political engagement (Table 7), and the definitions they offered (Table 8), a common pattern emerged independently of participant nationality. Young adult participants consider political engagement to be related to cognitive and emotional dimensions and the concept of political participation related with a behavioural (active) dimension. This strengthens the argument that political engagement and political participation should be considered as discrete concepts, and therefore operationalised as independent concepts when researching young people. Furthermore, this qualitative study was of utmost relevance to achieve the main aim of this thesis (which is to develop and validate an instrument to assess youth political engagement), because the conceptualisations and the items young

people suggested that would better illustrate political engagement were the ones included in the questionnaire that was used to collect data for the analysis conducted in Chapter 6.

The following chapter (Chapter 6) will present some findings from statistical analyses (namely, descriptive statistics, factor analysis, and tests for validity and reliability) of the data from the questionnaire surveys of young people in the UK and Portugal. It will inform and discuss the steps taken in order to understand if the concepts of political engagement and political participation are different, and to develop and validate the *Youth Political Engagement Scale* (YPES) to assess youth political engagement.

CHAPTER 6: Development of the Youth Political Engagement Scale (YPES)

Introduction

One of the conclusions of Chapter 5 was that youth tend to distinguish the concept of political engagement and political participation which reflects the proposed operationalisation presented earlier in Chapter 2 (section *Operationalising people's political engagement*), where it was suggested that political engagement and political participation should be operationalised as different concepts. In the present chapter, the main objectives are to clarify the dimensionality of political engagement, namely to test if political engagement is a unidimensional construct or not (see Chapter 1, section *Research questions*, research question [iii]); and consequently, to assess if the concepts of political engagement and political participation are different (as the results from the focus groups suggested) or if political participation is one of the dimensions of political engagement as previously suggested in the literature (see Barrett, 2012)[21]. Furthermore, the ultimate aim of this chapter is to validate a psychometric instrument to assess the construct of political engagement among young people (see Chapter 1, section *Research aims and objectives*) – the *Youth Political Engagement Scale* (YPES), which is the main aim of this project.

As previously suggested at the beginning of this thesis (Chapter 2, section *Operationalising people's political engagement*), political engagement has only two dimensions, a cognitive and an emotional dimension, and political participation has one dimension which is the behavioural dimension. Furthermore, cognitive engagement is defined as an individual's investment and willingness to exert the

[21] Barrett (2012) suggested that the construct of political engagement comprised three dimensions, namely a cognitive dimension, an emotional dimension, and a behavioural dimension (which the author called political participation). Consequently, as defined by Barrett (2012), the construct of political participation is a component of political engagement.

necessary efforts for the comprehension and mastering of complex ideas and difficult skills related to political issues. Emotional engagement reflects both the positive and negative reactions to politician's actions and instructions, other people's opinions about politics, perceptions of party belonging, and beliefs about the value of politics. Finally, the behavioural dimension (proposed as being associated with the concept of political participation) is defined in terms of young people's participation in politics, for example, voting, boycotting, taking part in marches, and protests (adapted from the Students Engagement Scale developed by Fredricks et al., 2005).

Method

Participants and procedure

The participants comprised 554 young people (257 from the Britain and 297 from Portugal) aged between 18 and 25 years old (see more details about the sample characteristics below in the Results section of this chapter). The data were collected using questionnaires, completed on a voluntary basis online or in common areas of the University (such as a library or a students' union both in Portugal and Britain). The University area chosen to collect the paper and pencil questionnaire answers was the Nottingham Trent University (NTU) in Britain, and the University of Lisbon (ISCTE-IUL) in Portugal.

Measures

Sociodemographic information, voting and political interest: Sociodemographic data were collected on age, gender, whether or not participants were still in full time education, and whether or not they had gained work related qualifications. Participants were also asked to indicate their level of interest they are in politics, and their recent

voting behaviours – either at the past general election or at the "Brexit" referendum (for this particular question, the British sample was asked whether they voted or not in the referendum, whereas the Portuguese sample was asked if they would have voted in the referendum if that had happened in Portugal).

Political Engagement Scale[22]*:* This is a validated tool developed by Syvertsen et al. (2015) for assessing youth engagement with politics among young people from 9 to 17 years old (M_{age}=13, SD=2.7). The questions provided the following prompt to participants: *'Have you ever done or plan to do the following?'* and asked participants to rate four items, 1) *'Attend community meetings about an issue that affects people where I live'*; 2) *'Volunteer to campaign for a political candidate'*; 3) *'Contact politicians, governments, or authorities about issues that are important to me'*; and 4) *'Participate in a rally or protest for a cause'.* Participants rated each item on the following 5-point scale: 5= 'I will do this or have done this already', 4= 'I will probably do this', 3= 'I am unsure', 2= 'I probably wouldn't do this', and 1= 'I wouldn't do this'.

Online Political Engagement Scale (OPEnS): is a psychometric validated tool developed by Pontes, Henn, Griffiths, and Pontes (2017) to assess online political engagement. The questions provided the following prompt to participants: '*During the election campaign did you visit any of the following websites, and if so, how frequently?*' and asked them to rate seven items: 1) *'official national or local websites*

[22] This scale was not addressed in the literature review since it belongs to a toolkit (The youth civic and character measures toolkit) and not in an academic format. However, it was used for purposes of validity testing in this particular chapter. This toolkit emerged as part of a larger project 'The Roots of Engaged Citizenship Project' that had the purpose of studying how young people become good citizens and identifying the developmental roots of active participation in communities and society (Syvertsen et al., 2015).

of the political parties'; 2) *'local candidates' websites'*; 3) *'political blogs (e.g. Conservative Home, Iain Dale's Blog Spot, Lib Dem Voice, Political Betting, Labour List)*'; 4) *'social networking groups (e.g. Facebook) organized around a political issue'*; 5) *'online video channels (e.g. YouTube) to view official or unofficial videos about election issues, party leaders or local candidates'*; 6) *'Twitter sites of parties, leaders, or local candidates'*; and 7) *'news organization websites (e.g. BBC, Guardian, Daily Mail)*'. Participants rated each item on the following four-point scale: 3 = 'Many times', 2 = 'Several times', 1 = 'Once or twice', and 0 = 'Never visited'. Total online political engagement scores are obtained simply by creating a sum of the scores for all seven questions, with a response range of 0 to 21; higher scores indicate higher levels of online political engagement. For comparison purposes, researchers may classify participants as online politically-engaged (i.e., if the total score is ≥ 1) or non-online politically-engaged (i.e., if the score is 0 for every question).

Data management strategy

The data were cleaned in two steps prior to the statistical analyses. The first step included cleaning the data via a thorough analysis of each case to identify missing values above the threshold of 10% in all relevant instruments of the study, which resulted in 126 cases being excluded (see Table 10). The second step of the data management process involved the analysis of the (i) univariate normality of all nine items of the YPES, (ii) univariate outliers, and (iii) multivariate outliers in the dataset. As for the univariate normality, no item of the YPES had absolute values of skewness > 3.0 and kurtosis > 8.0 (R. B. Kline, 2015), thus supporting univariate normality of the main measure. In order to screen for univariate outliers, a standardized composite sum score of the YPES using all twelve items was created and participants were

deemed univariate outliers if they scored ± 3.29 standard deviations from the YPES z-scores, as this threshold includes approximately 99.9% of the normally distributed YPES z-scores (Field, 2013). Based on this analysis, no cases of univariate outliers were found, and therefore no further cases were excluded. Finally, the data were screened for multivariate outliers using Mahalanobis distances and the critical value for each case based on the chi-square distribution values, which resulted in seven cases being excluded from the dataset. Thus, the final sample size for all subsequent analyses was 554 participants.

Table 9. Databases cleaning steps

Cleaning Step/Procedure	**UK**	**PT**	**UK**	**PT**
	Cases Detected		**Final Sample**	
Missing > 10%	**105**	**21**	**257**	**297**
Univariate normality (Skew. > 3 | Kurt. > 8; Kline, 2011)	**0**	**0**	**-**	**-**
Univariate outliers (z-scores ± 3.29; Field 2013)	**0**	**0**	**-**	**-**
Multivariate outliers (Mahalanobis distances + critical value)	**0**	**0**	**-**	**-**

Statistical analyses

The statistical analysis of the clean dataset included:

(i) Descriptive statistics of the main sample's characteristics (i.e., frequencies and percentages);

(ii) Assessment of the dimensionality and factorial structure of the YPES with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA);

(iii) Nomological validation of the YPES to strengthen the case of construct validity by performing a full structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis of the coefficient estimates of a theoretical model reflecting a nomological network that replicates the pattern of association known

for each construct in the model with political engagement and political participation;

(iv) Concurrent and criterion validity analysis by investigating the correlation coefficients between the YPES and its related measures (i.e., political engagement, cognitive political engagement, emotional political engagement, political participation, and online political engagement);

(v) Analysis of the reliability of the YPES using different coefficients and indicators of internal consistency (i.e., Cronbach's alpha, factor determinacy, and composite reliability).

Conventional practices regarding the assessment of the overall quality and fit of the structural equation models estimated were employed in the present study. However, because there is no consensus on the fit indices for evaluating structural equation models (see Bollen & Long, 1993; Boomsma, 2000; Hoyle & Panter, 1995), the goodness of fit was based on the following fit indices and thresholds: χ^2/df [1;4]; Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) [0.05;0.08]; RMSEA 90% confidence interval with its lower limit close to 0 and the upper limit below .08, *p-close* > .05; Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) [0.05;0.08]; Comparative Fit Index (CFI); and Tucker-Lewis Fit Index (TLI) [.90; .95]. All analyses were performed using MPLUS 7.2 (Muthén & Muthén, 2012) and SPSS Statistics v.24 (IBM Corporation, 2011).

Results

Descriptive statistics

Table 11 summarises all relevant socio-demographic information collected in the current sample. Results of the analysis showed that for the British sample (n=257) there were more females (74.3%) than males and the mean age was 20.9 years (knowing that the age range was from 18 to 25 years old). Additionally, the great majority of the British youth sample reported that they were interested in politics (75.1%) and over 70% of the young Britons (i.e., 73.5%) said that they voted in the last General Election (held on the 8th of June 2017). Almost two-thirds of the sample were still in full-time education (86.4%), and 91.5% of the sample reported to have work-related qualifications. However, when it came to voting in the Brexit referendum, only three-fifths of young British people (59.1%) voted.

Results of the analysis for the Portuguese sample (n=297) showed that there were also more females (61.4%) than males that responded to the questionnaire, and that the mean age was 20.6 years (18 to 25 years old) which is a similar mean of the British sample. Over half of the Portuguese young people reported as being interested in politics (64.1%) and only 40% of the sample voted in the last General Election (held October 4, 2015). Similar to the British sample, almost two-thirds of the sample was still in full-time education (87.1%) and 60% of the young people reported as having work-related qualifications. When it came to the Brexit referendum, almost all the Portuguese youth that responded to the questionnaire claimed that they knew what Brexit was about (92.9%).

Table 10. British and Portuguese samples demographic characteristics and related political behaviours

Variables	Sample	
	British	*Portuguese*
Sample size (n)	257	297
Gender (female, %)	191 (74.3)	181 (61.4)
Age (years) (mean, SD)	20.9 (2)	20.6 (2)
Interest in Politics (have interest, %)	193 (75.1)	177 (64.1)
Voted at the last General Election (yes, %)	189 (73.5)	119 (40.1)
Still in full time education (%)	204 (86.4)	257 (87.1)
Work related qualifications (yes, %)	216 (91.5)	177 (60)
Voted Brexit Referendum (yes, %)	152 (59.1)	-
Knew what Brexit was about (yes, %)	-	276 (92.9)

Tables 12 and 13 present summarise the distribution of both samples (British and the Portuguese) regarding the questions that were selected to be part of the *Youth Political Engagement Scale* (YPES) (the complete table with the distribution for both samples on all the questions asked in the political engagement and in the political participation questions can be found in Appendix 6). The political engagement questions (see Appendix 4 and 5) and the political participation questions (see Appendix 4 and 5) comprised 39 items and 22 items respectively, and each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale: 1=Never; 2=Rarely; 3=Sometimes; 4=Often; 5=Always. The question asked for each was '*Please read the following statements carefully and indicate how often do you…*' followed by the items. It should be pointed out that in each table there are some items highlighted which were the ones selected to be part of the YPES later in this chapter. The different ways in which the data are distributed across the questions in both Table 12 and Table 13, helps make the case for

the cross-cultural validation of YPES (see Chapter 4, section *Country selection: why Britain and Portugal?*).

Youth political engagement and political participation

The descriptive results on Table 12 indicate that young people from both countries (Britain and Portugal) appear to have very similar patterns of engagement in politics. In terms of cognitive engagement, young people appear to be paying attention to what is going on in politics, with the highest percentage of youth saying that they do it sometimes (27.6% for the UK and 36.4% for Portugal) or often (30.4% for the UK and 26.3% for Portugal). Regarding the question about taking interest in political policies, the results were similar where the majority of young people selected that they do it sometimes (35% for the UK and 21.5% for Portugal). However, there was a difference between the UK and the Portuguese samples about the people who rarely do so (11.3% for the UK and 32.2% for Portugal) and the ones who never take interest in political policies (7.4% for the UK and 25.3% for Portugal), with the UK sample reporting lower percentages for these options when compared with the Portuguese sample. When it came to young people's interest in how politics works, the pattern of response for these samples (UK and Portugal) was similar. The majority of the participants said they are sometimes (29.6% for the UK and 32.7% for Portugal) and often (26.8% for the UK and 24.9% for Portugal) interested in how politics works. The majority of the participants also said that they voluntarily search for information about political issues that are going on in their country quite often (28% for the UK and 23.6% for Portugal).

Considering the emotional political engagement items, the patterns of response for the questions are slightly different from the cognitive ones, being that young people do not appear to engage emotionally as much as they do cognitively (see Table 12 for

more details). For example, when asked how often do they encourage other people to take action on political issues that are important to them, the majority of British young people said they sometimes do it (28.4%) whereas the majority of the Portuguese youth rarely do this (26.9%). However, the majority of young people in both countries reported that they never do this (encourage other people to take action on a political issue that is important for them) using Social Networking Sites (38.5% for the UK and 46.8% for Portugal). Similar patterns (that is, greater frequency of response for the option "never") were found for the other two questions under the emotional dimension of political engagement. For instance, the largest reported response of both the British and the Portuguese young people said they never promote public initiatives to support political programmes that they believe to be just (44% for the UK and 69.4% for Portugal). Similarly, young people seem to rarely promote effective information in the community to sustain political programmes in which they believe (45.1% for the UK and 58.9% for Portugal).

When analysing the items that were selected in this thesis to assess the construct of political participation, it is clear that the patterns are different from the engagement items (both cognitive and emotional). For the four questions (or items) selected, the majority of young people from both countries appeared to choose responses with some consistency between 'never' and 'rarely' as to answer how often they do each of those things. For example, 58.6% and 75.8% for the UK and Portuguese samples respectively, said that they had never actively campaigned for a political organisation. The remaining three items participate in protests (52.7% for the UK and 59.3% for Portugal), participate in demonstrations (57.4% for the UK and 75.1% for Portugal), and participate in marches (53.9% for the UK and 65.7% for Portugal) also had higher percentages for the response option 'never'.

Table 11. Youth Political Engagement indicators tested in both British and Portuguese sample

	Never (%)		Rarely (%)		Sometimes (%)		Often (%)		Always (%)		Mean (SD)	
	UK	**PT**	**UK**	**PT**	**UK**	**PT**	**UK**	**PT**	**UK**	**PT**	**UK**	**PT**
Pay attention to what is going on in politics	13 (5.1)	18 (6.1)	33 (12.8)	61 (20.5)	71 (27.6)	108 (36.4)	78 (30.4)	78 (26.3)	62 (24.1)	32 (10.8)	3.56 (1.14)	3.15 (1.06)
Take an interest in political policies	19 (7.4)	75 (25.3)	29 (11.3)	96 (32.3)	90 (35.0)	64 (21.5)	74 (28.8)	40 (13.5)	45 (17.5)	22 (7.4)	3.38 (1.12)	2.45 (1.21)
Take an interest in how politics works	16 (6.2)	27 (9.1)	50 (19.5)	52 (17.5)	76 (29.6)	97 (32.7)	69 (26.8)	74 (24.9)	46 (17.9)	47 (15.8)	3.31 (1.16)	3.21 (1.18)
Voluntarily search about political issues that are going on in your country	32 (12.5)	45 (15.2)	48 (18.7)	74 (24.9)	58 (22.6)	74 (24.9)	72 (28.0)	70 (23.6)	47 (18.3)	34 (11.4)	3.21 (1.29)	2.91 (1.24)
Encourage other people to take action on a political issues that is important to you	67 (26.1)	104 (35.0)	49 (19.1)	80 (26.9)	73 (28.4)	55 (18.5)	51 (19.8)	37 (12.5)	17 (6.6)	21 (7.1)	2.62 (1.25)	2.30 (1.26)
Encourage other people to take action on political issues that are important to you using Social Networking Sites (SNS)	99 (38.5)	139 (46.8)	49 (19.1)	75 (25.3)	64 (24.9)	42 (14.1)	33 (12.8)	29 (9.8)	12 (4.7)	2 (4.0)	2.26 (1.23)	1.99 (1.17)
Promote public initiatives to support political programmes that you believe to be just	113 (44.0)	206 (69.4)	55 (21.4)	41 (13.8)	59 (23.0)	26 (8.8)	22 (8.6)	17 (5.7)	8 (3.1)	7 (2.4)	2.05 (1.14)	1.58 (1.02)
Promote effective information in the community (work, friends and family), to sustain political programmes in which you believe	116 (45.1)	175 (58.9)	59 (23.0)	61 (20.5)	51 (19.8)	32 (10.8)	25 (9.7)	20 (6.7)	6 (2.3)	9 (3.0)	2.01 (1.12)	1.74 (1.09)

Notes: UK – United Kingdom; **PT** – Portugal; **Green** – the questions highlighted in green were the ones selected as part of the cognitive dimension, to distinguish these from the remaining four which form the emotional dimension of political engagement.

Table 12. Youth Political Participation indicators tested in both British and Portuguese sample

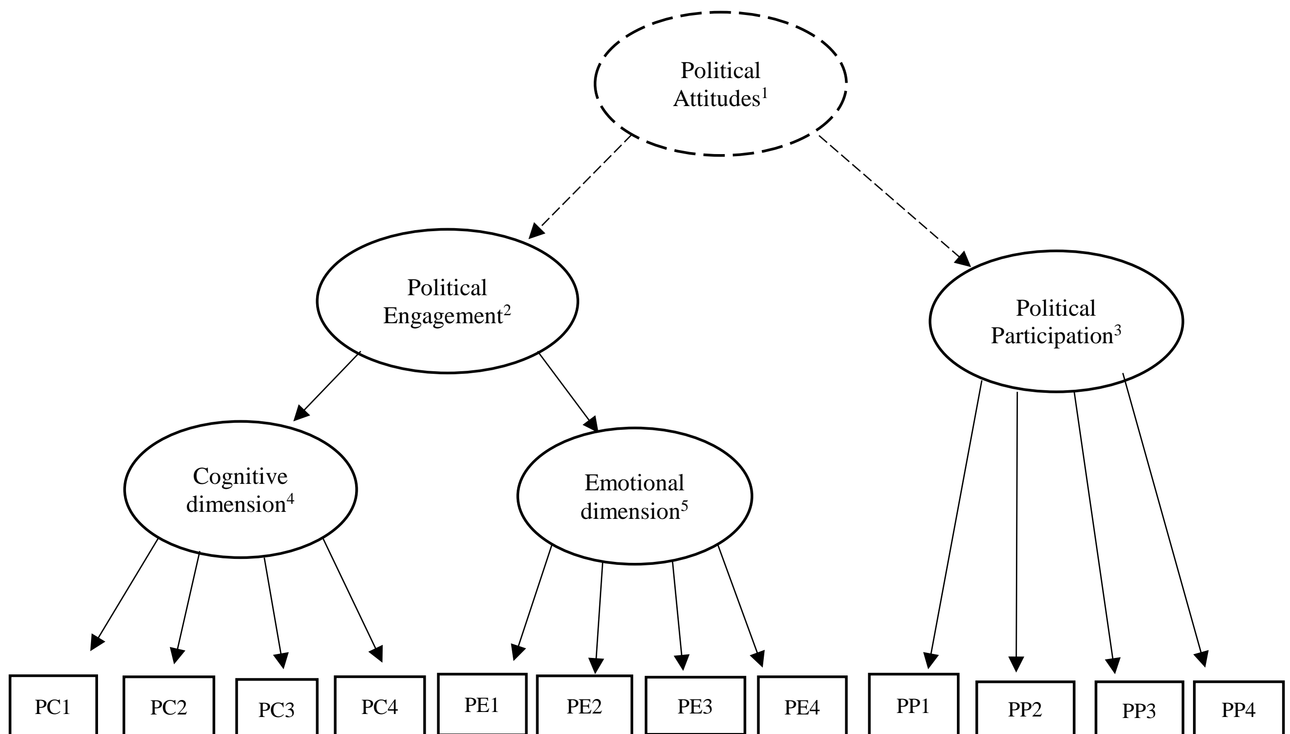
	Never (%)		Rarely (%)		Sometimes (%)		Often (%)		Always (%)		Mean (SD)	
	UK	**PT**	**UK**	**PT**	**UK**	**PT**	**UK**	**PT**	**UK**	**PT**	**UK**	**PT**
Actively campaign for a political organisation	150 (58.6)	225 (75.8)	49 (19.1)	45 (15.2)	38 (14.8)	12 (4.0)	16 (6.3)	12 (4.0)	3 (1.2)	3 (1.0)	1.72 (1.01)	1.39 (0.83)
Participate in protests	135 (52.7)	176 (59.3)	46 (18.0)	67 (22.6)	50 (19.5)	37 (12.5)	21 (8.2)	11 (3.7)	4 (1.6)	6 (2.0)	1.88 (1.09)	1.67 (0.97)
Participate in demonstrations	147 (57.4)	223 (75.1)	42 (16.4)	45 (15.2)	47 (18.4)	17 (5.7)	16 (6.3)	11 (3.7)	4 (1.6)	1 (0.3)	1.78 (1.05)	1.39 (0.79)
Participate in marches	138 (53.9)	195 (65.7)	49 (19.1)	62 (20.9)	46 (18.0)	23 (7.7)	18 (7.0)	11 (3.7)	5 (2.0)	6 (2.0)	1.84 (1.07)	1.56 (0.93)

Notes: UK – United Kingdom; **PT** – Portugal

Factorial validity: Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Dimensionality Testing

The development and construct validity testing of the *Youth Political Engagement Scale* (YPES) was investigated using a six-step modelling approach to test the theoretical framework for political engagement and political participation as proposed in Figure 4[23].

Figure 4. Conceptual model of Political Engagement and Political Participation



Notes: [1]**Political attitudes:** the latent construct of political attitudes represents a broader range of political actions that do not follow under any particular concept; [2]**Political engagement:** defined in this thesis as a psychological process, described as having interest in, paying attention to, having knowledge or opinions about, being conscious, proactive, and constantly informed about political matters; [3]**Political participation:** the latent construct of political participation is associated with the behavioural dimension; [4]**Cognitive dimension:** which encompasses items related to people's investment and willingness to exert the necessary efforts for the comprehension and mastering of complex ideas and difficult skills related to political issues; [5]**Emotional dimension:** is associated with items related to both the positive and negative reactions to politicians' actions and instructions, other people's opinions about politics, perceptions of party belonging, and beliefs about the value of politics; **PC1-PC4:** items selected to be part of the cognitive dimension of political engagement; **PE1-PE4:** items selected to be part of the emotional dimension of political engagement; **PP1-PP4:** items selected to be part of the latent construct of political participation which is associated with the behavioural dimension.

[23] Some notes regarding the geometric figures and type of lines used in Figure 4. The circular shapes indicate that the constructs inside each of them are latent constructs (that they are not directly observed); the square shaped boxes indicate that each of the items in the different boxes are observed variables which means that there was a direct way of assessing each of them. The dashed lines mean that that the relationships between Political Attitudes with Political Engagement and Political Participation were not tested.

Step 1 – More specifically, in the first step, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was run in the British sample (n = 257) to determine the most suitable items (that is, those presenting at least 0.70 factor loading[24]) (Chen, Curran, Bollen, Kirby, & Paxton, 2008) to assess political engagement (encompassing a cognitive and an emotional domains) and political participation (encompassing a behavioural domain). Based on this, the results yielded a poor model fit for the model tested. More specifically, χ^2 [1767] = 6690.8, $p < .01$; CFI = 0.62; TLI = 0.61; RMSEA = 0.104 (90% CI: [0.101–0.107]), *pclose* < .01; SRMR = 0.131. Table 14 shows all factor loadings for all items of the YPES. Based on the results of this first step, the most suitable items (that is, those presenting at least 0.70 factor loading) (Chen et al., 2008) were selected and entered for analysis in the second step (see bold items on Table 14). Furthermore, although the literature on structural equation modelling concerning the different thresholds for good and/or poor factor loadings suggests that factor loadings of 0.70 and above are significant, four items that had the highest loadings in each of the dimensions were selected. This decision was made in order to keep the instrument brief (for example, Elsman, van Rens, & van Nispen, 2018), and brevity was privileged over depth (see the *Discussion* section in this chapter).

Table 13. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Political Engagement and Political Participation Factors (UK Sample)

	Political Engagement		**Political Participation**
Item	**Cognitive**	**Emotional**	**Behavioral**
Engagement 1	0.895		
Engagement 2	0.520		
Engagement 3	0.435		
Engagement 4†	**0.922**		
Engagement 5†	**0.927**		
Engagement 6†	**0.929**		
Engagement 7	0.862		

[24] A factor loading is the weighting which reflect the correlation between the original variables and derived factors.

Engagement 8†	**0.904**		
Engagement 9	0.799		
Engagement 10	0.751		
Engagement 11	0.720		
Engagement 12	0.610		
Engagement 13	0.569		
Engagement 14	0.316		
Engagement 15	0.844		
Engagement 16	0.831		
Engagement 18	0.833		
Engagement 19	0.867		
Engagement 20	0.824		
Engagement 35	0.693		
Engagement 17		0.266	
Engagement 21		-0.663	
Engagement 22		-0.704	
Engagement 23		-0.773	
Engagement 24		-0.803	
Engagement 25		-0.797	
Engagement 26		-0.807	
Engagement 27		-0.819	
Engagement 28†		**-0.820**	
Engagement 29†		**-0.841**	
Engagement 30		-0.755	
Engagement 31†		**-0.853**	
Engagement 32		-0.826	
Engagement 33†		**-0.854**	
Engagement 34		-0.832	
Engagement 36		-0.720	
Engagement 37		-0.540	
Engagement 38		-0.627	
Engagement 39		-0.644	
Participation 1			0.165*
Participation 2			0.357
Participation 3			0.690
Participation 4†			**0.707**
Participation 5			0.695
Participation 6			0.435
Participation 7			0.660
Participation 8			0.660
Participation 9			0.647
Participation 10			0.653
Participation 11			0.671
Participation 12			0.610
Participation 13			0.645
Participation 14†			**0.811**
Participation 15†			**0.783**
Participation 16†			**0.790**
Participation 17			0.691
Participation 18			0.669
Participation 19			0.292
Participation 20			0.561
Participation 21			0.651
Participation 22			0.555

*Factor loadings are not statistically significant at the $p = 0.05$. †Item selected for the final scale

Step 2 – After the four items had been chosen for each dimension, the second step was to test the model shown in Figure 4. A latent construct named 'Political Attitudes'[25] was considered as encompassing the concepts of political engagement and political participation, each of them with the respective dimensions (cognitive and emotional for political engagement, and behavioural which is political participation) and indicators. This model was run on Mplus, but could not be tested due to sample size limitations (Wolf et al., 2013).

Step 3 – Because the aforementioned model (Figure 4) was not verified, a third step was conducted to test if the concept of political engagement was a unidimensional construct meaning that there are no different dimensions within the concept or if it has more than one dimension. The null hypothesis was that the construct of political engagement is a unidimensional construct. The model was run on MPlus, and the null hypothesis was rejected in both British (χ^2 [54] = 1014.3, $p < .01$; CFI = 0.55; TLI = 0.45; RMSEA = 0.263 (90% CI: [0.249 –.277]), *pclose* < .01; SRMR = .176) and Portuguese (χ^2 [54] = 567.4, $p < .01$; CFI = 0.71; TLI = 0.65; RMSEA = 0.179 (90% CI: [.166–.192]), *pclose* < .01; SRMR = .105) samples. These findings lead to the conclusion that political engagement is not a unidimensional construct.

Step 4 – As a fourth step, a model that tested if the cognitive dimension, emotional dimension, and behavioural dimension were part of the same construct was conducted. The model presented an adequate fit in both the British sample (χ^2 [51] = 143.4, $p < .01$; CFI = 0.96; TLI = 0.94; RMSEA = 0.084 (90% CI: [0.068 –.100]), *pclose* < .01; SRMR = .068) and the Portuguese sample (χ^2 [51] = 188.4, $p < .01$; CFI = 0.92; TLI = 0.89; RMSEA = 0.095 (90% CI: [.081–.110]), *pclose* < .01; SRMR = .070).

[25] The term Political Attitudes was chosen because of it being a broad concept that could encompass a range of different forms of political engagement and participation.

However, when considering the correlations between the different dimensions, the cognitive dimension and the emotional dimension were strongly correlated in both samples (.73 for the Portuguese sample and .67 for the British sample), but the behavioural dimension presented very low correlation scores with both the cognitive and emotional dimensions (for the British sample, the behavioural dimension correlated with 0.27 the cognitive dimension and 0.37 with the emotional dimension; for the Portuguese sample, the behavioural dimension correlated 0.24 with the cognitive dimension and 0.33 with the emotional dimension). Given that the two dimensions (cognitive and emotional) were not strongly correlated with the behavioural dimension (political participation), a further step was conducted in order to understand if a model where the cognitive and emotional dimensions were part of the construct of political engagement and political participation as a separate construct would yield a better model fit.

Step 5 – This step was conducted performing a CFA on the British (n = 257) and the Portuguese (n = 297) samples independently to test the model for political engagement and participation as assessed by the most suitable items of the YPES as found in the first step outlined. A total of four items for each domain of political engagement (cognitive and emotional) and participation (behavioural) were selected (see Tables 15 and 16 for further details). The improved model presented an adequate fit to the data across the British sample (χ^2 [52] = 157.2, $p < .01$; CFI = 0.95; TLI = 0.94; RMSEA = 0.089 (90% CI: [0.073–.105]), *pclose* < .01; SRMR = .136) and the Portuguese sample (χ^2 [52] = 203.9, $p < .01$; CFI = 0.91; TLI = 0.90; RMSEA = 0.099 (90% CI: [0.085–.114]), *pclose* < .01; SRMR = .131). Here it is interesting to note that what the cognitive and emotional dimensions of political engagement share in common, are

highly correlated with the construct of political participation (.67 for the British sample and .74 for the Portuguese sample).

Step 6 – A final step was performed, namely a CFA conducted on the British (n=257) and the Portuguese (n=297) samples independently to test the model for political engagement considering the two dimensions (cognitive and emotional) of the scale. The model presented a good fit to the data across the British sample (χ^2 [19] = 53.9, p < .01; CFI = 0.97; TLI = 0.96; RMSEA = 0.085 (90% CI: [0.058–.112]), pclose < .01; SRMR = .03) and the Portuguese sample (χ^2 [19] = 110.8, p < .01; CFI = 0.93; TLI = 0.90; RMSEA = 0.128 (90% CI: [0.105–.151]), pclose < .01; SRMR = .046).

Table 14. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Political Engagement and Political Participation Factors in the British sample (N = 257) (Step 5)

	Political Engagement		**Political Participation**
	Cognitive	**Emotional**	**Behavioral**
4. Pay attention to what is going on in politics	0.94		
5. Take an interest in political policies	0.95		
6. Take an interest in how politics works	0.95		
8. Voluntarily search about political issues that are going on in your country	0.88		
28. Encourage other people to take action on a political issue that is important to you		0.86	
29. Encourage other people to take action on a political issue that are important to you using Social Networking Sites (SNS)		0.83	
31. Promote public initiatives to support political programmes you believe to be just		0.85	
33. Promote effective information in the community (work, friends and family), to sustain political programmes in which you believe		0.83	
4. Actively campaign for a political organization			0.64
14. Participate in protests			0.97
15. Participate in demonstrations			0.92
16. Participate in marches			0.94
Mean	13.45	8.95	7.22
Standard Deviation	4.38	4.12	3.77

All standardized factor loadings are significant at least at $p < 0.001$.

Table 15. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Political Engagement and Political Participation Factors in the Portuguese sample (N = 297) (Step 5)

	Political Engagement		**Political Participation**
	Cognitive	**Emotional**	**Behavioral**
4. Pay attention to what is going on in politics	0.93		
5. Take an interest in political policies	0.88		
6. Take an interest in how politics works	0.90		
8. Voluntarily search about political issues that are going on in your country	0.87		
28. Encourage other people to take action on a political issue that is important to you		0.87	
29. Encourage other people to take action on a political issue that are important to you using Social Networking Sites (SNS)		0.79	
31. Promote public initiatives to support political programmes you believe to be just		0.79	
33. Promote effective information in the community (work, friends and family), to sustain political programmes in which you believe		0.81	
4. Actively campaign for a political organization			0.59
14. Participate in protests			0.86
15. Participate in demonstrations			0.80
16. Participate in marches			0.89
Mean	11.73	7.61	6.01
Standard Deviation	4.22	3.86	2.91

All standardized factor loadings are significant at least at $p < 0.001$.

Convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability analysis

Convergent validity refers to the degree to which items of a test appear to be indicators of a unique underling latent factor (Lee et al., 2015). Convergent validity is deemed adequate when the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of the latent factor is ≥ 0.50 and the Composite Reliability (CR) coefficient is ≥ 0.70 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). As illustrated in Table 14, the AVE for each of the political engagement (i.e., cognitive and emotional) and political participation (i.e., behavioural) latent factors across both samples were all above the recommended thresholds. Furthermore, the CR coefficients on both samples were also above the conventional threshold across both samples (i.e., ≥ 0.70). This indicates that the items under the different dimensions of political engagement all converge to measure

engagement, and the items under political participation all converge to assess participation.

Discriminant validity relates to the extent in which unique latent factors differ (Lee et al., 2015), and can be demonstrated when the square root of the AVE for each latent factor is greater than the correlations between t and the rest of the constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2010). As seen on Table 17, the square root of the AVE for each latent factor was located in bold on the diagonal of the table. Furthermore, based on the results of this analysis, it can be concluded that political engagement and participation alongside their specific domains were uniquely distinct at the psychometric level because the correlation coefficients between these factors were not greater than their square root of the AVE. This seems to indicate that the concepts of political engagement and political participation are distinct constructs.

Finally, the reliability of the YPES and each specific domain was examined using Cronbach's alpha, factor determinacies scores, and the CR coefficients (see Table 17). As shown in Table 17, all indicators of internal consistency of the three domains related to political engagement and participation were all excellent across the British and the Portuguese samples. Overall, these results suggest that the YPES has excellent convergent and discriminant validity properties and reliability to assess political engagement and political participation.

Table 16. Reliability, convergent and discriminant validity of the Youth Political Engagement Scale (YPES)

British	α	FD	CR	AVE	(1)	(2)	(3)
(1) Political engagement (cognitive)	0.95	0.98	0.96	0.86	**0.74**		
(2) Political engagement (emotional)	0.89	0.96	0.91	0.71	0.58	**0.50**	
(3) Political participation (behavioural)	0.92	0.98	0.93	0.77	0.42	0.49	**0.59**
Portuguese							
(1) Political engagement (cognitive)	0.92	0.98	0.94	0.80	**0.79**		
(2) Political engagement (emotional)	0.87	0.96	0.89	0.67	0.65	**0.68**	
(3) Political participation (behavioural)	0.95	0.95	0.87	0.63	0.52	0.63	**0.79**

Note: The square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct is located in bold on the diagonal of the table. α = Cronbach's alpha; FD = factor determinacies; CR = composite reliability

Concurrent validity: Youth Political Engagement Scale (YPES) and theoretically related measures

Concurrent validity is a type of criterion-related validity and it posits that a psychometric test should demonstrate substantial correlations with other psychometric tests that are theoretically related (Frick et al., 2005). In the present study, the concurrent validity of the YPES was investigated by examining its degree of association between the British and Portuguese samples in relation to key constructs related to political engagement, such as: overall political engagement (Syvertsen et al., 2015) and specific domains of political engagement that included cognitive, emotional and behavioural engagement alongside online political engagement (Pontes, Henn, Griffiths, et al., 2017).

Table 17. Concurrent validity analysis of the YPES across British (N = 257) and Portuguese (N = 297) participants

British	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
(1) Political engagement (Syvertsen et al., 2015)	1	.68	.58	.62	.52	.55
(2) YPES (Pontes et al., 2018)		1	.90	.88	.57	.67
(3) Cognitive political engagement (YPES)			1	.58	.42	.65
(4) Emotional political engagement (YPES)				1	.60	.54
(5) Political participation (behavioural) (YPES)					1	.39
(6) Online political engagement (Pontes et al., 2017)						1
Portuguese	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
(1) Political engagement (Syvertsen et al., 2015)	1	.67	.61	.60	.53	.60
(2) YPES (Pontes et al., 2018)		1	.84	.88	.83	.77
(3) Cognitive political engagement (YPES)			1	.65	.52	.76
(4) Emotional political engagement (YPES)				1	.63	.68
(5) Political participation (behavioural) (YPES)					1	.53
(6) Online political engagement (Pontes et al. 2017)						1

Note: All correlations are significant at the 0.01 significance level

Overall, the concurrent validity analysis yielded adequate results showing overall political engagement as measured by the YPES exhibits adequate degree of association with theoretically related measures (see Table 18). The scores obtained by participants in the YPES were highly associated to the scores in the political engagement (Syvertsen et al., 2015) across both British participants (r = .68, R^2 = .46, $p < .01$) and Portuguese participants (r = 0.67, R^2 = .45, $p < .01$) as can be seen from Table 15. Similar results were found for the other measures and they were also highly consistent across both samples. Taken together, these results provide robust support to

the concurrent validity of the YPES. Thus, it can be concluded that the YPES is a suitable measure for assessing youth political engagement.

Discussion

As addressed in Chapter 2 of this thesis, young people are often considered to be disengaged from politics and not participating in the political sphere in general (see Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 for a more detailed approach). However, there is a group of academics that have been arguing that these results might be due to the fact that researchers have not been assessing politically-related constructs using valid and reliable instruments (Albacete, 2014; Henn et al., 2005; O'Toole, 2015; Pontes et al., 2016). Therefore, this might lead to biased conclusions that young people are not engaged in politics. As seen in the literature, engagement and participation are often used interchangeably and usually assessed in questionnaires using very similar questions for the two concepts (apart from the fact that usually such questionnaires are not validated, so it does not necessarily mean that all the questions that are being used are actually assessing the concepts that is intend to assess). When the concepts of political participation and political engagement appear in the literature, there appears to be no agreement on how they are conceptualised and therefore distinguished from other politically-related constructs (like civic engagement, political self-efficacy, or political interest, for example). Some of the existing definitions of political engagement and political participation can be found in Table 2 in Chapter 2. Furthermore, although some authors have conceptualised political engagement and political participation (see Chapter 2) they were targeting the whole population and not taking into account young people’s realities and perspectives on what it means to be politically engaged, and on what they perceive engagement in and with politics to

be (see Chapter 5, sections *Introduction* and *Young people's perceptions of what it means to be politically engaged*).

To contribute to the ongoing discussions on the conceptualisation of youth political engagement and to help fill in the existing gap on psychometrically validated instruments to assess the construct of political engagement among young people, Chapter 6 (the present chapter) was set to (i) help clarify a potential distinction between political engagement and participation, (ii) explore the dimensionality of political engagement, and (iii) to develop and validate the *Youth Political Engagement Scale* (YPES) (see Chapter 1, section *Research aims and objectives*, Primary aim, objective [i] and [iii] and research question [iii]). This chapter also intended to share some results on the patterns of youth political engagement and participation (see Chapter 1, *Research questions*, research question [iv]).

Young people's political engagement and political participation

Considering the descriptive results regarding Tables 12 and 13 (and here, it is relevant to reinforce that these values have only descriptive properties), it is clear that the items selected for political engagement have higher percentage of young people from both samples (UK and Portugal) mentioning that they do pay attention to what is going on in politics and take an interest in how politics works (for example) when compared with political participation items (both conventional or alternative forms of political participation). This appears to go in line with findings from previous studies concluding that young people are engaged in politics but they are not actively participating in political processes (for example, Henn & Oldfield, 2016).

A proposed distinction between the concepts of political engagement and political participation

In terms of a potential distinction between the concepts of political engagement and political participation as suggested in the previous chapter (Chapter 5), the results of the discriminant validity (that is, the extent to which unique latent factors differ) showed that political engagement and political participation (alongside their specific dimensions, cognitive and emotional for political engagement and behavioural for political participation) are uniquely distinct at the psychometric level[26]. Furthermore, although the two concepts are distinct they are still correlated. This finding goes in line with the proposed operationalisation presented in Chapter 2 (see section *Operationalising people's political engagement*, Table 3) and with the results from Chapter 5 (see section *Results*) which concluded that young people from the four focus groups perceived engagement and participation to be different things. Figure 4, illustrated the conceptual model being proposed in this thesis, namely that political engagement and political participation are different concepts, each of them encompassing different dimensions, but both deriving from a common construct (which could not be tested due to sample size limitations)[27]. This finding (namely that political engagement and political participation are psychometrically considered as different constructs when considering a youth-based sample) challenges previous conceptualisations where political engagement and political participation have usually

[26] To be able to conclude if the concepts of political engagement and political participation were different through exploring the construct's discriminant validity (by calculating the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of each latent factor (namely, cognitive political engagement, emotional political engagement, and (behavioural) political participation), the three dimensions (cognitive, emotional, and behavioural) had to be included in the analysis at the same time.

[27] The name given to the construct which political engagement and political participation derive from is Political Attitudes, since it is a broad term that does not relate to a specific activity or attitude. Different concepts and models can be tested in future studies, in a way to better understand which are the concepts related with youth political engagement and political participation.

been understood to have a similar meaning and, consequently, not differentiated in terms of their content (Cantijoch et al., 2016; Dalton, 2008; Eckstein et al., 2012). Barrett and Brunton-Smith (2014) are the authors who have the closest conceptualisation (and therefore operationalisation) of political engagement. However, those particular authors understand political engagement to include three dimensions (cognitive, emotional, and behavioural) instead of the two proposed in this chapter (i.e., cognitive and emotional dimensions) (see Chapter 2, section *Political engagement*).

This finding is also supported by Quintelier (2007) who identified three reasons to justify the image of a politically apathetic and disinterested youth, along with the perceived political participation gap between younger and older people (see Chapter 5, section *Introduction*). One of the reasons the author points out is that there is a difference in the way that young people embrace politically-related conceptions compared to older people. Furthermore, the data used to develop the YPES scale were collected using a questionnaire that incorporated the items suggested to better assess the construct of political engagement by young people during the focus groups (therefore, based on their definitions of what being politically engaged means or looks like) (see Chapter 4, section *Qualitative study: focus groups interviews* for more details on how the qualitative study was conducted). Additionally, this finding is of great importance to help understand youth political engagement and more adequately use both terms when referring to young people's political attitudes. It is also interesting to note that, in the items with the higher loadings on the political participation concept, the item 'Voting' did not come up. This may suggest that the ways that contemporary youth do politics and participate in formal politics are changing and that perhaps voting

is not as important for them as it was for previous generations (Grasso, 2014; Kurtenbach & Pawelz, 2015; Tormey, 2015)

Youth Political Engagement Scale (YPES) – development and validation

The results from the CFA that was first run in the British sample helped determine the items that would belong to each concepts' dimension. It should be highlighted that only the strongest four items were selected because smaller scales are easier to be applied in future studies (Boateng, Neilands, Frongillo, Melgar-Quiñonez, & Young, 2018). Furthermore, the items chosen for each dimension of political engagement and political participation demonstrated excellent fit to the British and Portuguese samples. Additionally, as the main conclusion, the YPES is a valid and reliable scale that can be used to assess the construct of engagement across young people. The items that comprise the YPES are:

Cognitive dimension

- Pay attention to what is going on in politics;
- Take an interest in political policies;
- Take an interest in how politics works;
- Voluntarily search about political issues that are going on in your country.

Emotional dimension

- Encourage other people to take action on a political issue that is important to you;
- Encourage other people to take action on a political issue that is important to you using Social Networking Sites (SNSs);
- Promote public initiatives to support political programmes you believe to be just;

- Promote effective information in the community (work, friends and family), to sustain political programmes in which you believe.

When considering the definition of political engagement proposed in this thesis, where political engagement is a *psychological process that is defined as having interest in, paying attention to, having knowledge or opinions about, being conscious, proactive and constantly informed about political matters* (see Chapter 1, section *Operationalising young people's political engagement*), and the items selected to be part of the *Youth Political Engagement scale*, they appear to cover all the different components of the definition (see Table 19). So, although each dimension only has four items each (the ones that presented the highest factor loadings in each dimension) and brevity was chosen over depth (less items for each dimension), the scale covers all the components that are part of the definition of political engagement.

Table 18. Relationship between the definition of political engagement proposed in this thesis and the items selected for the Youth Political Engagement Scale

	Definition components						
	Having interest	Paying attention	Having knowledge	Having opinions	Being conscious	Being proactive	Being constantly informed
Pay attention to what is going on in politics		X					
Take an interest in political policies	X						
Take an interest in how politics works	X						
Voluntarily search about political issues that are going on in your country							X

Encourage other people to take action on a political issue that is important to you		X		X
Encourage other people to take action on a political issue that is important to you using Social Networking Sites (SNS)				X
Promote public initiatives to support political programmes you believe to be just	X			X
Promote effective information in the community (work, friends and family), to sustain political programmes in which you believe			X	

The study presented in this chapter is not without limitations because it relied on a convenience sample of young people (universities and specific online groups and forums) that was self-selecting, and therefore was not necessarily representative of all youth. Consequently, the present findings need to be cautiously interpreted in terms of their generalisability to youth more broadly. Another important and difficult issue to overcome is the use of self-report questionnaires and their associated possible biases (for example, social desirability biases and/or short-term recall biases).

Taken as a whole, the findings of the present study support the distinction between a conceptual differentiation of the concepts comprising political engagement and political participation among the present sample of British and Portuguese young people. Furthermore, the current findings also suggest that the YPES is a valid and

reliable standardised and psychometrically sound measurement tool for assessing youth levels of political engagement. Additionally, YPES was designed to be applicable and cover all young people (especially those aged between 18 to 25 years old), demarcating from previous trend of researching youth political behaviours without adequate measures that would consider young people's perceptions about what is being assessed and/or investigated. Consequently, it is hoped that the YPES adds to the ongoing debates in the field of youth political participation in terms of assessment and conceptual definition of this increasingly studied phenomenon (that is, youth political engagement) (see Chapter 2).

PART III: CRITICAL EVALUATION AND GENERAL DISCUSSION

CHAPTER 7. Implications, future research, and conclusions

The overarching aim of the present thesis was to advance the field of political science by developing and further validating an instrument to assess youth political engagement - the *Youth Political Engagement Scale* (YPES). By utilising the theoretical framework that youth are engaged in politics (a theoretical framework based on the existing literature and further findings from the qualitative focus groups study conducted as part of the research for this thesis) to conceptualise and develop the new psychometric tool, this thesis makes a unique contribution to knowledge in the field of youth political participation by fostering and promoting a much-needed unified approach to the field of psychometric assessment of political engagement. This was a shortcoming extensively highlighted and widely reported by numerous authors that argued that the use of many different understandings, conceptualisations, and inconsistent assessment tools to assess this political behaviour has hindered progress in the field (Albacete, 2014; Henn & Foard, 2012; O'Toole, 2015).

Major results of the research

In order to achieve the main aim of this thesis, three steps were taken throughout the project. Firstly, the initial part of this thesis (Introduction, Chapters 1, 2 and 3) extensively reviewed the literature related to the issues of the patterns of youth political engagement and participation, assessment, and conceptualisations of political engagement. Furthermore this first part also illustrated how methodological drawbacks and hindrance in research emerged as a result of the adoption of inconsistent and non-standardised assessment tools concerning the evaluation process of politically-related concepts (especially youth political engagement). The second part of this thesis

(Chapter 4) clarified and carefully justified the methodological approach taken in this research, namely a mixed methods approach, along with the philosophical assumptions of this thesis. The third part of this thesis (Chapters 5 and 6) encompassed the two empirical studies of this PhD project, a qualitative study (where a set of four focus groups were conducted) and a quantitative study (the development and validation of the *Youth Political Engagement Scale* – YPES) base on UK and Portuguese youth samples. The psychometrically validated scale can be employed by researchers in order to promote a unified strategy regarding the assessment of the construct of political engagement among young people that is capable of bridging the gaps widely reported in the literature. To further illustrate the unique contributions to knowledge and insights the present thesis offers, the main findings of each chapter will be briefly summarised; the main aims, objectives and research questions will then be addressed.

In Chapter 1 there were no new findings because the main purpose of this chapter was to contextualise youth political participation within the field of Political Science and highlight the ongoing discussion in assessing concepts such as political participation and political engagement in a youth-based sample using psychometrically validated instruments. Furthermore, in this chapter the research aims and objectives were also presented, along with the thesis research questions.

Chapter 2 aimed to further elaborate on the current patterns of youth political engagement and participation. Furthermore, it also summarised and clarified the main issues relevant to a better understanding of the topic of youth political engagement, namely how youth perceive and define politics (based in the existing literature), the distinction between conventional and unconventional forms of political participation, and youth political alienation and apathy. In short, the existing literature on youth political participation and engagement mainly suggests that young people are

disengaged from formal/conventional politics (E Amnå et al., 2018; Furlong & Cartmel, 2008; M. Grasso, 2018). However, there is also a group of scholars that have been arguing that young people are still engaged in politics (Hart & Henn, 2017; Henn et al., 2005; O'Toole et al., 2003). The issue appears to be regarding (i) the lack of agreement on what political engagement is (Ekman & Amnå, 2012); (ii) how young people perceive political engagement (O'Toole, 2003), and (iii) the lack of validity in the measures used to assess youth political engagement (Albacete, 2014). Regarding how young people perceive politics, and based on the findings from other studies, they tend to associate it with a more traditional/formal idea of politics, for example with voting, political parties, and the Government (Briggs, 2016; Coffé & Campbell, 2019). This is relevant because young people's perceptions of politics will consequently inform their understandings of what other politically-related constructs mean. Chapter 2 also reviewed the contemporary patterns of youth political engagement and participation and addressed the ways in which they are changing. Although young people are not participating in, and are usually pictured as apathetic or alienated from, formal politics (Fox & Pearce, 2017), they prefer to engage in alternative, cause-oriented politics (for example, Norris, 2002; Quintelier, 2008), including event-based such as the event *Manchester Together – With One Voice* where thousands of young people joined to pay tribute to the victims of the Ariana Grande concert attack. Furthermore, some of the explanations offered to account for youth political apathy include the life-cycle effect and a generational effect, but given the lack of conclusive evidence for these theories, specific conclusions cannot be drawn (Phelps, 2012).

Additionally, Chapter 2 also addressed the ongoing discussions concerning the conceptualisation of politically-related constructs used in political science research with the main focus being political engagement, and the conclusion was that there is a

lack of consensus regarding how to define democratic engagement and participation (Pontes, Henn, & Griffiths, 2018). Looking at the definitions of political engagement was relevant because in order to develop an instrument the researcher has to first make sure that the concept is adequately defined. The existing definitions of political participation are usually directed at the actions taken towards politics or to influence the political processes (see, for example Teorell et al., 2007; Verba & Nie, 1972) (see Table 2 in Chapter 2). On the other hand, what has been understood by political engagement in the literature is not agreed - it varies from being a form of civic engagement (McCartney et al., 2013) to being a form of political knowledge and political participation (Conroy et al., 2012). Furthermore, given the lack of agreement on what political engagement is, the issue is further compounded because there is no specific account given to specifically "youth" political engagement. Therefore, a conceptualisation of political engagement was also proposed taking into account Guerring's guidelines on what a good concept should include and/or take into account. It should also be highlighted that the proposed conceptualisation and operationalisation was informed by the results of Chapter 5 because both the literature review and the focus groups were carried out simultaneously. In this chapter, the suggested definition of political engagement is an update of Barrett's (2012) definition[28] - *a psychological process, conceived as having interest in, paying attention to, having knowledge or opinions about, being conscious, proactive and constantly informed about political matters*. Additionally, the operationalisation of political engagement proposed for this thesis suggests that political engagement is a multidimensional concept with two dimensions – cognitive and emotional – contrary

[28] Barrett (2012) defined political engagement as "having an interest in, paying attention to, having knowledge of or having opinions about either political or civic matters" (p.5).

to the operationalisation suggested by Barrett (2012) which also encompassed a behavioural dimension that he defined as political participation. Overall, Chapter 2 meets objective (i) and answers Research Question (i) (see Chapter 1, section *Research questions and objectives*).

Chapter 3 focused specifically on the current methodological practices in assessing young people's political engagement that were explored using a systematic literature review (using PRISMA guidelines) (Crocetti, 2015). The main conclusion of Chapter 3 was that there was no psychometrically-validated instrument existing that assessed the construct of political engagement among young people (Pontes et al., 2016). Furthermore, the seven instruments identified in this systematic literature review (Caprara et al., 2009; Chiessi et al., 2010; Doolittle & Faul, 2013; Droege & Ferrari, 2012; Pancer et al., 2007; Peterson et al., 2008; Vecchione et al., 2014) had good psychometric properties (i.e., were valid and reliable), but only assessed related concepts and/or dimensions of political engagement (such as perceived political self-efficacy or civic engagement). Additionally, only two instruments were identified as being developed to target young people (see Chapter 3 for more details). This adds to the argument that measures need to be refined and new measures are needed to assess the concept of political engagement – because using questionnaires and instruments that are not validated (in other words, assessing what they intend to assess) researchers may get biased conclusions on the levels of young people's political engagement (Albacete, 2014). Overall, this chapter met Objective (ii) and answered Research Question (ii) (see Chapter 1, section *Research questions and objectives*).

In Chapter 4, the methodological choices taken in this thesis were carefully explained, along with the philosophical assumptions and the study outlines. Pragmatism was chosen as the most appropriate philosophical approach for this thesis

because the methodology chosen was mixed methods. This methodological choice was made in order to address the main aim of this thesis (that is, the development of a robust psychometric instrument to assess young people's political engagement and validate it in two countries). First, given that there was no agreed definition on what political engagement is and how young people perceived it, a qualitative study was conducted in order to ascertain what people understand political engagement to be. This qualitative study was crucial in comprehending how young people define engagement and to inform the item development for the scale to assess youth political engagement (*Youth Political Engagement Scale* – YPES). The aim of the quantitative study was to examine the psychometric properties of the YPES, to explore how many dimensions political engagement has, and whether or not the concepts of political engagement and political participation were psychometrically different.

The two empirical studies in this PhD thesis were reported in Chapter 5 (the qualitative study) and Chapter 6 (the quantitative study). The qualitative study in Chapter 5 used focus groups as the preferred data collection method, and explored young people's perceptions concerning what it means to be politically engaged. The main aim was to develop a definition of political engagement, along with identifying the behaviours and actions youth associated with what being politically engaged entails. Furthermore, it aimed to understand whether or not young people perceived political engagement and political participation to be the same construct or if they would suggest a distinction between the two. Chapter 5's main conclusions were that a pattern of what young people consider political engagement emerged between the British and the Portuguese sample (ultimately, two samples from different countries were used in order to test for cross-cultural validity of the scale) understanding engagement to encompass two dimensions (cognitive and behavioural) and that this

concept was distinct from political participation (the behavioural dimension in Barrett's [2012] operationalisation of political engagement). This qualitative study was of utmost relevance to achieve the main aim of this thesis (which was to develop and validate an instrument to assess youth political engagement), because the conceptualisations and the items young people suggested that would better illustrate political engagement were the ones included in the questionnaire that was used to collect data for the analysis conducted in Chapter 6. Overall this chapter helped meet Objective (i) – the development of a conceptualisation of youth political engagement (see Chapter 1, section *Research questions and objectives*).

Chapter 6, the scale development and validation chapter was to some extent based on the results of the focus groups, and set out to ascertain whether or not the *Youth Political Engagement Scale* was valid and reliable and could be used in future studies to assess young people's political engagement. It further explored whether or not the concepts of political engagement and political participation as proposed in this study should be considered as different concepts. The main conclusions of this chapter were that, based on the descriptive results for all the questions selected for the three dimensions being tested (cognitive, emotional, and behavioural), young people presented higher levels of political engagement than political participation, and that between cognitive and emotional engagement, a higher percentage of young people appeared to cognitively engage more often than emotionally engaged with politics. This answered Research Question (iv) (see Chapter 1, section *Research questions and objectives*). Furthermore, the quantitative study in Chapter 6 also supported the suggestion for a distinction between the concepts of political engagement and political participation supporting the findings from the focus groups (Chapter 5). Moreover, when tested if the three dimensions (cognitive, emotional and behavioural) were all

part of the concept of political engagement, results showed that political engagement had only two dimensions and that political participation (that encompasses the behavioural dimension) was a distinct dimension. Although political participation is a separate dimension and therefore different from engagement, both concepts were shown to be correlated.

Given the sample characteristics from both countries (Britain and Portugal) there are a few points that need some reflection given the potential impact they can have in the results of the quantitative study. As the samples were mainly composed of young women (Britain, 74% and Portugal, 61%), this could have affected the results of the study since previous research has suggested that young women do engage and participate in politics in a different way when compared to young men. For example, that women tend to be more involved in political parties than men (Cicognani, Zani, Fournier, Gavray, & Born, 2012; Djupe, McClurg, & Sokhey, 2017; Malin, Tirri, & Liauw, 2015). Further studies with more participants and a more even gender distribution would be of value to understand if this did actually have impact in the results or not. This logic is also applicable considering participants' levels of interest in politics (Britain, 75% and Portugal 64%) and the fact that the great majority of participants were still in full-time education (Britain, 86% and Portugal 87%), that is also known to have impact on how young people engage with politics. For example, young people with higher levels of interest in politics tend to participate more in politics or have higher levels of political engagement (Russo & Stattin, 2017). Regarding young people in full-time education, they also tend to be more participative in politics (Mayer, 2011) and have more interest in political issues (Stadelmann-Steffen & Sulzer, 2018). To really understand if these sample characteristics actually had an impact in the study's results, further studies need to be conducted.

In terms of the scale validation, the *Youth Political Engagement Scale* (YPES) yielded good psychometric properties, being a valid and reliable instrument that can be used to assess the construct of youth political engagement. Taken together, the findings of Chapter 5 and 6 offer preliminary support in favour of the idea that political engagement and political participation should be conceptualised as different concepts. Additionally, it also offers a context whereby researchers can benefit from using the YPES in order to facilitate unified research in the field of youth political participation and engagement, which is one of the key areas that need to be improved if this issue is to be better understood. Overall, this chapter helped meet Objective (iii) and answered Research Questions (iii) and (vi) (see Chapter 1, section *Research questions and objectives*).

Re-visiting the aim, objectives and research questions

Main aim

This thesis aimed to advance the field of political participation by developing a new robust psychometric instrument to assess young people's political engagement and validating it both in Britain and in Portugal – the *Youth Political Engagement Scale* (YPES). The main aim was successfully achieved and a newly developed instrument was developed and validated in both countries (see Chapter 6). The new instrument encompasses two dimensions (cognitive and emotional) and includes the following items:

- Cognitive dimension
    - Pay attention to what is going on in politics;
    - Take an interest in political policies;
    - Take an interest in how politics works;

- o Voluntarily search about political issues that are going on in your country.
- Emotional dimension
  - o Encourage other people to take action on a political issue that is important to you;
  - o Encourage other people to take action on a political issue that is important to you using Social Networking Sites (SNSs);
  - o Promote public initiatives to support political programmes you believe to be just;
  - o Promote effective information in the community (work, friends and family), to sustain political programmes in which you believe.

Objectives and research questions

In this section I will go through each of the three objectives and the four research questions and highlight the main results and conclusions regarding each of them (when possible, I paired objectives and research questions on the same section in order to illustrate how the different objectives and research questions are linked).

Objective i) "to critically evaluate how the construct of political engagement is currently represented in the research and propose a conceptualisation of youth political engagement", and **research question i)** "how is political engagement conceptualised and operationalised in the literature?"

After reviewing the literature (Chapter 2), the various definitions found for political engagement, political participation, civic engagement and civic participation suggest that there is a lack of consensus regarding how to define these concepts. The case is

most evident for the concept of political engagement. For example, according to Barrett and Zani (2014), the term *political engagement* is used to denote the engagement of individuals with political institutions, processes, and decision-making, whereas *civic engagement* is used to signify the engagement of individuals with the interests, goals, concerns, and common good of a community (Barrett & Zani, 2014). Nevertheless, broader definitions of political engagement can be found. For example, Conroy and colleagues (2012) describe political engagement as offline conventional forms of political participation and political knowledge (Conroy et al., 2012, p.2).

Most of the time, *political and civic engagement* involve both psychological states and processes as well as active participatory behaviours (Barrett, 2012). In chapters 1 and 2, the first objective of this thesis as well as the first research question (see Chapter 1, section *Objectives, and section Research questions*) were addressed. Here, the findings reinforced the need to work towards an agreement on a definition of political engagement, conceptualised in the present study as a psychological process, conceived as having interest in, paying attention to, having knowledge or opinions about, being conscious, proactive and constantly informed about political matters. Furthermore, with this proposed definition of political engagement, it is now possible to clearly draw a distinction between the constructs of political participation and political engagement using the YPES scale, as this offers a robust, valid and meaningful measure of young people's political engagement (see Chapter 1, section *Research questions and objectives*, Primary aim).

Objective ii) "to critically examine how adequately existing research instruments measure the phenomena of young people's political engagement" and **research**

question ii) "how is the construct of political engagement being assessed? Is there any valid and reliable instrument that assesses young people's political engagement?".

To meet research objective ii) and answer research question ii), a systematic literature review was carried out on the existing instruments to assess the construct of youth political engagement (Chapter 3). By conducting this systematic review, it was possible to identify and evaluate the instruments assessing people's political engagement. Seven instruments were identified, all with good psychometric properties. However, they did not appropriately assess the core concept of political engagement, and only assessed related concepts (namely, civic engagement) and/or dimensions (for example, perceived political self-efficacy, sense of community). When it comes to the assessment of youth political engagement, only two instruments were identified, namely The Brief Sense of Community in Adolescents Scale (BSCSA) (Chiessi et al., 2010) and the Youth Inventory of Involvement (YII) (Pancer et al., 2007). Given that there is a lack of existing instruments assessing political engagement across the whole population, the scenario is even more of an issue when it comes to young people. This supports the findings of those academic researchers who have previously argued that measures need to be refined to capture the full range and methods of young people's political participation (Albacete, 2014; Henn & Foard, 2012; O'Toole, 2015).

It is important to re-emphasise that one of the main limitations of this type of literature review (that is, systematic literature review) is that there is always a possibility that some studies may have been missed during the literature searches (however, any such those studies that might also be missed in a more traditional approach). Overall, the systematic review highlighted the need for the development of

a political engagement instrument to assess the construct in its totality rather than single dimensions or aspects of it (which is the primary aim of this thesis).

Objective iii) "to explore the dimensionality of the construct of political engagement and ascertain if the concept of political engagement is statistically different from political participation" and **research question iii)** "what are the dimensions of political engagement?"

To address Objective iii) and answer research question iii), both the existing literature (see Chapter 2) and the scale development (see Chapter 6) were relevant. The concept of political engagement been conceptualised and operationalised in the literature as both a unidimensional construct (for example, Eckstein et al., 2012) and a multidimensional construct (for example, Barrett & Brunton-Smith, 2014; Carreras, 2016). Barrett (2012), for instance, operationalised political engagement by considering three main dimensions - cognitive, emotional and behavioural (the latter is considered to be *political participation*). In this particular thesis, Barrett's operationalisation of political engagement was statistically tested in order to confirm whether or not those three dimensions as being part of the concept of political engagement. Given that one of the arguments of this thesis was that engagement and participation are different concepts (based on youth's perceptions on what it means to be politically engaged – focus groups on Chapter 5), this operationalisation was chosen in order to test for convergent and discriminant validity.

The results of the discriminant validity (that is, the extent to which unique latent factors differ) indicated that political engagement and political participation (alongside their specific dimensions, cognitive and emotional for political engagement and behavioural for political participation) are uniquely distinct at the psychometric

level (see Chapter 6). Furthermore, although the two concepts are distinct they are still correlated. Figure 4 on Chapter 6, illustrates the conceptual model being proposed in this thesis, namely that political engagement and political participation should be understood as different concepts, since each of them encompass different dimensions – although both derive from a common construct (which could not be tested due to sample size limitations – see Chapter 4 and 6 for more details on this). This finding (namely that political engagement and political participation are psychometrically considered as different constructs when considering a youth-based sample) challenges previous conceptualisations and operationalisations where political engagement and political participation have usually been understood to have a similar meaning and, consequently, are not differentiated in terms of their content (Cantijoch et al., 2016; Dalton, 2008; Eckstein et al., 2012). Barrett and Brunton-Smith (2014) have come the closest to conceptualising (and therefore operationalising) political engagement. However, the authors understand political engagement to include three dimensions (cognitive, emotional, and behavioural) instead of the two proposed in this thesis (cognitive and emotional dimensions) (see Chapter 2, section *Political engagement*). This finding is important as it helps to understand youth political engagement and more adequately use both terms when referring to young people's political attitudes.

Research question iv) "are young people really disengaged from politics per se, or are they abstaining from participating in "formal" institutionalised methods of politics but nonetheless still engaged?"

The debate around young people's political (dis)engagement and (lack of) participation has often resulted in the characterisation of young people as a problematic group, displaying low levels of electoral turnout, a lack of trust in democratic

institutions and signs of scepticism and cynicism regarding politicians and political parties (Dalton, 2013; Kiisel et al., 2015). Furthermore, while activities associated with traditional politics have declined, young people have also found interest in political issues and alternative forms to participate and engage with politics (Henn & Foard, 2012; O'Toole, 2015). However, given that the measures that have been used to assess young people's political engagement need refinement (Albacete, 2014), the conclusions around the levels of (dis)engagement may be biased because the main outcome would have been assessed improperly.

The instrument developed in this particular thesis (YPES) is a newly developed scale, therefore, further studies would help to more sharply define the limits to distinguish the politically engaged youth from the disengaged. Latent profile analysis might help to enhance a deeper understanding of the different group profiles of politically engaged and disengaged young people, but given the sample size (N=554), that was not possible. However, clarity regarding the patterns of youth political engagement and participation is possible to discern from the statistics on Tables 12 and 13 on Chapter 6. Overall, young people from both countries (Britain and Portugal) appear to have very similar patterns of engagement in politics. In terms of cognitive engagement, young people of both countries appear to be paying attention to what is going on in politics, taking interest in political policies and how politics works, and they voluntarily search for information about political issues that are going on in their country, where the majority of young people selected that they do it sometimes (see Chapter 6, section *Results* section for detailed percentages). When considering the emotional political engagement dimension, the patterns of response for the questions are slightly different from the cognitive ones, being that young people do not appear to engage emotionally as much as they do cognitively (see Chapter 6, section *Results*,

Table 12 for more details). For instance, young people appear to be paying attention to what is going on in politics (cognitive political engagement), with the highest percentage of youth saying that they do it sometimes (27.6% for the UK and 36.4% for Portugal) or often (30.4% for the UK and 26.3% for Portugal) whereas the largest reported response of both the British and the Portuguese young people said they never promote public initiatives to support political programmes that they believe to be just (emotional political engagement) (44% for the UK and 69.4% for Portugal).

When analysing the items that were selected in this thesis to assess the construct of political participation, it is clear that the patterns are different from the engagement items (both cognitive and emotional). For the four questions (or items) selected, the majority of young people from both countries appeared to choose responses with some consistency between 'never' and 'rarely' when reporting how often they take part in each of those political activities and actions.

Future Research

The present thesis offers some fruitful directions for future research. At the empirical level, much work still needs to be conducted so that a more complete understanding of youth political engagement can be acquired. Given that the development of a psychometrically sound assessment tool for youth political engagement has now been developed, more focus should be given to ways in which it can help improve strategies and policies that promote a positive change in the levels of youth engagement with politics. Moreover, although by administrating this scale in two different countries (UK and Portugal), it needs to be validated in other countries – and because there is a greater number of studies validating scales in Western countries, it would be useful to validate the *Youth Political Engagement Scale* (YPES) elsewhere (Asia, for example),

to see if there are any other cultural differences that emerge. Additionally, it would also be of interest to administer the YPES to different ethnic groups (minorities). Future studies could also test for predictive validity of the YPES to understand if the scale could predict future political behaviours (for example, participating in politics, or being more civically active). For instance, it would be possible to investigate if a participant who is highly engaged in politics today will vote in the future (essentially, to understand if these two behaviours are highly correlated or not). Furthermore, as already stated in this chapter, it would also be relevant to conduct further analysis to understand the different profiles that would form within young people that would be considered as politically engaged using this scale (Williams & Kibowski, 2016). This would allow stakeholders such as politicians, policymakers, political scientists, and youth advocacy agencies and organisations to gain a deeper understanding of the process of youth political engagement and the variables affecting it, so better policies and strategies can be designed in order to address young people's concerns and encourage them to better engage with the different aspects of politics.

Final Remarks

The present thesis has highlighted the main issues surrounding the conceptualisation and psychometric assessment of youth political engagement. Inconsistencies regarding these aspects were illustrated across Part I of this thesis (Chapters 1, 2 and 3), and an alternative potentially unifying theoretical framework for conceptualising and assessing this concept was developed and presented in Part II (Chapters 5 and 6). Similar to previous research, the overall findings of this research suggest that young people might not be disengaged from politics but the instruments being used to assess political engagement among young people lack psychometric validation and

conceptual clarification. Ultimately, in this PhD thesis, a new robust psychometric instrument to assess young people's political engagement was developed that can be used to more accurately assess young people's levels engagement with politics.

Original Contribution to Knowledge

This PhD thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge in developing a valid and reliable psychometric instrument to assess young people's political engagement. This is the first such academic project (to the author's knowledge) to carry out the development of a standardized measure to assess the construct of young people's political engagement, and also the first study to explore in depth young people's own definition of what it means to be politically engaged in Britain and in Portugal. This study also contributes to the existing debates on the conceptualization and operationalization of young people's political engagement suggesting that political engagement and political participation should be defined and operationalised as different concepts. Ultimately, this thesis offers a contribution to advance the field of assessment of young people's political engagement.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Declaration of Collaborative Work

Part I: Introduction (Chapter 3)

Pontes, A.I., Henn, M., & Griffiths, M.D. (2017). Assessing young people's political engagement: A critical and systematic literature review of the instruments used to measure political engagement. International Politics Reviews, doi: 10.1057/s41312-016-0002-4.

Overall contributions of the first author (AI Pontes) to this literature review:

- Development of the main ideas and design for each review study
- Initiation of the review process
- Data collection from the literature
- Organisation of the literature
- Analysis of the literature
- Write-up of the initial draft of the manuscripts
- Integration of all feedbacks provided by the co-authors of the study
- Online submission and resubmission of the manuscripts
- Write-up of the initial draft for the rebuttal letter containing the authors' reply to the reviewers' feedback and concerns

Part II: Methods (Chapter 5)

Pontes, A. I., Henn, M., Griffiths, M.D. (2018). Towards a conceptualization of young people's political engagement: A qualitative focus group study. Societies 8, 0-17, doi: 10.3390/soc8010017.

Overall contributions of the first author (AI Pontes) to this empirical study:

- Development of the rationale, key ideas, and design for the study
- Application for ethical approval within the Nottingham Trent University
- Participants' recruitment
- Conduction of the four focus groups, in person and online
- Write-up of the initial draft of the manuscripts
- Integration of all feedbacks provided by the co-authors of the studies
- Online submission and resubmission of the manuscripts
- Write-up of the initial draft for the rebuttal letter containing the authors' reply to the reviewers' feedback and concerns

All research stages and tasks listed above have been carried out by AI Pontes.

Appendix 2: Informed Consent (Focus groups)

Informed consent to participate in this research

Thank you for agreeing to consider participating in this research project. Before you decide whether to join this focus group, it is important that you understand the reason why this research is being carried out, and what your participation will involve. I would be very grateful if you could take some time to read the following information carefully. Please feel welcome to get back to me or to one of my supervisors if anything is unclear, and to take as much time as you need to decide whether or not to take part.

The purpose of this focus group is to reveal whether or not we have the same understanding of what it means to be politically engaged. A set of questions will be presented and you will be asked to discuss if you consider those as useful ways of defining what we mean by political engagement. You will also be asked if you can suggest any other political engagement pointers that were not previously identified. Additionally, some questions regarding your country of residence, age, gender, etc, will also be included. Be aware that this survey is solely intended for people with ages between 18 and 25 years old.

You are being asked to take part in a focus group lasting approximately 45 minutes. Your contribution to the discussion (your sayings) will be saved in a private database in a password-protected NTU computer. Only the researcher and respective supervisors will have access to the raw data.

During the focus group, a note-taker will also be present to help the researcher to take notes throughout the discussion, and that will help identify the participant's quotes in

case they want to withdraw from the focus group. In those notes the participant's names will not be used, instead a number will be assigned to each participant.

You have the right to withdraw at any point during the focus group. If you wish to withdraw from the research, please let me know by 17th of December 2016, and your contribution to the discussion will be deleted from the recorder. To protect your anonymity, we will not ask you to disclose any personal information that can reveal your identity, since the data collected in the focus group will be used for PhD purposes and for possible subsequent publications. All data will be deleted from the database after the end of the research.

Upon completion of the focus group, you are free to ask any questions you may have about the research project. An e-mail address will be available at the end of this document in case any issue is raised or you further want to understand the nature of this research.

Participation is voluntary and greatly appreciated. If you are happy to take part in this research please tick the box below. If you have any questions or concerns before, during, or after your participation in this research you may speak with the researcher in the end on the focus group or use the e-mail provided at the end of this document. Thank you for agreeing to consider participating in this research.

Please note that:

- After participating in the focus group you can ask the researcher to withdraw your data from the collected data by 17th December of 2016. In order to do this,

please contact me by email at ana.nunes2015@my.ntu.ac.uk so that I can remove the associated data from the collected data.

By ticking the box you agree that you are at least 18 years, have read and understand the purpose of this research and your part in it (__).

Thanks very much indeed for taking the time to read this and for your interest.

For further questions please do not hesitate to contact me Ana Isabel Pontes (ana.pontes2014@my.ntu.ac.uk), or one of my supervisors: Matt Henn (matt.henn@ntu.ac.uk) or Mark Griffiths (mark.griffiths@ntu.ac.uk).

Appendix 3: Focus Groups Script

Good evening and welcome to this session. Thanks for taking the time to join me to talk about political engagement. My name is Ana and I am a PhD student at Nottingham Trent University, and I am researching on the topic of young people's political engagement. "The development of a valid and reliable instrument to assess young people's political (dis)engagement in Britain: A Psychometric Approach" and I aim to develop a new robust psychometric instrument to assess young people's political engagement.

You've probably noticed the microphone. We're tape recording the session because we don't want to miss any of your comments. People often say very helpful things in these discussions and we can't write fast enough to get them all down. We will be on a first name basis tonight, and we won't use any names in our reports. You may be assured of complete confidentiality.

Would like to remember that:

- There are no right or wrong answers, only different points of view;
- We are tape recording, so try to speak one at a time;
- You don't need to agree with others, but you must listen respectfully as others share their views;
- I ask you to put your phone on silent mode, and in case you really need to answer to a call, please do so as quietly as possible and re-join us as quickly as you can.

Well, let's begin. Let's find out some more about each other by going around the table. Could you please tell me your name? Thank you. And what do you think about the issue that has brought us here today?

I would like to start this session by mentioning a recent event that most of you have heard of, Brexit. Did you vote in the referendum?

Following the outcome of the Brexit, the media reported a few controversial incidents that took place in the context of the referendum. On the one hand, there was an increase of xenophobic and hateful behaviours against immigrants from the EU. However, on the other hand, there was also a wave of solidarity towards these immigrants, where people in the UK started to wear a safety pin in order to express solidarity and empathy to these immigrants. So, based on the safety pin example, would it be fair to consider that these people were politically engaged? Yes, no? What would be the reasons?

So, what I would like you to do know is think in three to five questions of behaviours what you consider as reflecting political engagement. Then, could you please briefly discuss with the person next to you your choices.

What I would like you to do now is… from this list of items, could you please write in the first column your level of agreement with the ability one item is assessing political engagement, and then in the second column, you would write yes if you agree this item could be part of a scale to accurately assess the construct, and no, if you don't think it is measuring it.

In the end, I would like you to choose from those items in the list, or add anyone you think that should be there, and gather a set of 20 questions in groups of 2. Like if it was your scale to assess young people's political engagement.

- Any other thoughts about this?
- What do you think about what (name) just said?

Appendix 4: List of Items (Focus Group)

Items	1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Agree 4-Strongly agree	Yes/No
Looking for political information on the web		
Visiting a political organization's website		
Signing up for an e-news bulletin		
Discussing politics in a chat group		
Joining an email discussion about politics		
Sending an e-postcard from a political organization's website		
Downloading software (screensavers, etc.) from a political organization's website		
Signing an online petition		
Sending an email to a politician		
Sending an email to a political organization		
Donating funds online to a political cause		
Joining a political organisation online		
Participating in an online question and answer session with a political official		
Voted		
Discussed politics with friends/family		
Contacted an elected official		
Engage in strike activity; donated money to a political cause		
Attended a rally		
Joined a political organisation		
Actively campaigned for a political organisation		
I pay attention to what is going on in politics		
When I have doubts about any political issue, I ask questions and get involved in debates about politics.		

I usually support a political party without reading the party's manifesto		
I have problems with my friends because of my political orientation		
I am interested in political agendas		
I am a member of a young people's political group to discuss what is going on in politics		
I have used theatre, music, or arts in general to protest or manifest my political opinion		
I can say I am engaged in politics		
I am interested in how politics work		
I usually talk to my family and friends about politics		
I discuss with my colleagues about possible ways to improve young people's political engagement and participation		
When I read any news related to politics, I make sure I understand what I am reading		
I voluntarily search about political issues that are going on in my country		
I voluntarily search about political issues that are going on in Europe		
I know what Brexit was about		
I usually watch political debates (e.g. on television, YouTube, Facebook)		
I am vegetarian or vegan		
Joining a group on a social networking site that is involved in political or social issues or that is working to advance a cause		
Posting (sharing) links (on Facebook, Twitter, or Google +) to political stories or articles for others to read		
Posting your own thoughts or comments (on Facebook, Twitter, or Google +) on political or social issues		
Encouraging other people to take action on a political or social issue that is important to you using on Facebook, Twitter, or Google +		

Reposting content (on Facebook, Twitter, or Google +) related to political or social issues that was originally posted by someone else		
"Liking" or promoting material related to political or social issues that others have posted		
I followed a live video on Facebook with political content		
Read/accessed official sites		
Signed is as supporter/for e-news		
Used online tools to campaign/ promote parties		
Read/accessed mainstream news sites		
Viewed/accessed nonofficial online video		
Joined/started political group on a SNS (Social Networking Site)		
Posted political comments to own/other blog/SNS		
Forwarded nonofficial content (jokes, news)		
Embedded/reposted nonofficial content		
Online contact with government official		
Offline contact with government official		
Online donation to political cause/orientation/party		
Offline donation		
Signed offline petition		
Discussed politics online		

Discussed politics offline		
Read newspaper		
Participated in an online chat about political issues		
Participated in an online chat about issues related to the community		
Promote public initiatives to support political programs that you believe are just		
Maintain personal relationships with representatives of national government authorities		
Promote effective activities of information and mobilization in your own community (of work, friends, and family), to sustain political programs in which you believe		
Use the means you have as a citizen to critically monitor the actions of your political representatives		
Honestly, I feel that if we engage more, we would be able to improve things for young people in this country		
If only we had the opportunity, I think that we could be able to organise something special for our country		
Membership of a political party		
Running for political election		
Working on political election campaigns for candidates or parties		
Donating money to parties		
Trying to persuade others to vote		
Take part in protests, demonstrations, marches		

Signing petitions		
Writing letters/emails to politicians or public officials		
Writing letters/emails/phone calls with a political content to the media (both old and new media)		
Using social networking sites on the Internet to join or like groups which have a political focus		
Using social networking sites on the Internet to distribute or share links which have a political content to friends and contacts		
Wearing or display a symbol or sign representing support for a political cause Distributing leaflets which express support for a political cause		
Participating in fund-raising events for a political cause		
Writing graffiti on walls which express support for a political cause		
Participating in illegal actions (e.g. burning a national flag, throwing stones, rioting, etc.) in support of a political cause		
Membership of political lobbying and campaigning organisations/attending meetings of these organisations/expressing one's point of view at these meetings/participating in the activities of these organisations/holding an office in these organisations		
Informally assisting the well-being of others in the community		

Community problem-solving through community organisations/membership of community organisations/ attending meetings of these organisations expressing one's point of view at these meetings/participating in the activities of these organisations/holding an office in these organisations		
Membership of other non-political organisations (e.g. religious institutions, sports clubs, etc.)/ attending meetings of these organisations/ expressing one's point of view at these meetings/ participating in the activities of these organisations/ holding an office in these organisations		
School-based community service		
Undertaking organised voluntary work		
Translation and form-filling assistance for non-native speakers		
Sending remittances to others living elsewhere		
Donations to charities		
Fund-raising activities for good causes		
Consumer activism: boycotting and boycotting (preferential buying)		
Paying attention to or following political or civic events		
Having political or civic knowledge or beliefs		
Holding opinions about political or civic matters		

Having feelings about political or civic matters		
Having political or civic skills		
Understanding political or civic institutions		
Understanding or holding political or civic values		

Appendix 5: Questionnaire

Welcome,

The purpose of this survey is to get your views on politics. The survey is solely intended for people aged 18 to 25 years old. Your participation is voluntary and greatly appreciated. The survey is anonymous and confidential and only the research team will have access to the data provided.

You have the right to withdraw your data at any time. If you wish to withdraw you should contact the researcher – Ana Isabel Pontes – and ask for your data to be withdrawn from the study by January 1st, 2019.

This survey takes approximately 13 to 15 minutes. After completing it, you can provide an email address in order to enter a prize draw where you can win a £10 or a £50 voucher from Blackwell's bookshop.

Feel free to contact the research team if you have any questions:
Ana Isabel Pontes: ana.pontes2014@my.ntu.ac.uk

By ticking the box you agree that you are between 18 and 25 years old, have read and understand the purpose of this research and your part in it.

Thanks very much for your interest and for taking time to read this.

Ana Isabel Pontes: ana.pontes2014@my.ntu.ac.uk
Matt Henn: matt.henn@ntu.ac.uk
Mark D. Griffiths: mark.griffiths@ntu.ac.uk

☐ I am between 18 and 25 years old and understood the purpose of this research

1. How much interest do you generally have in what is going on in politics?

- A great deal
- A lot
- A moderate amount
- A little
- None at all

2. How interested were you in the general election that was held on June 8, 2017?

- Extremely interested
- Very interested
- Moderately interested
- Slightly interested
- Not interested at all

3. Why? *Please write in the space below.*

____
____
____
____.

4. Did you vote in the general election of June 8, 2017?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

5. Which party did you vote for in the June 8 general election?

- Conservative
- Labour
- Liberal Democrats (Lib Dem)

○ Scottish Nationalist Party (Scotland only)

○ Plaid Cymry (Wales only)

○ Green Party

○ UK Independece Party

○ British National Party (BNP)

○ British Liberal Affairs

○ Don't know

○ Other ______________________________

6. Are you a member of:

	No	Yes
A political party (if you answered yes, write the name of the party in the text box)	○	○
A political lobbying organisation	○	○
A political campaigning organisation	○	○
A member of a young people's political group to discuss what is going on in politics	○	○

7. How much do you personally trust each of these institutions?

	None at all	A little	A moderate amount	A lot	A great deal
UK national Parliament	○	○	○	○	○
The legal system	○	○	○	○	○
The police	○	○	○	○	○
Politicians	○	○	○	○	○
Political parties	○	○	○	○	○
The European Parliament	○	○	○	○	○
The United Nations	○	○	○	○	○

8. You might have heard about the United Kingdom referendum on European Union membership held on the 23rd of June 2016. Did you vote at the referendum?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Don't know

9. Regarding the Brexit referendum, did you vote for the UK to:

○ Stay in the EU

○ Leave the EU

○ Didn't vote

○ Don't remember

10. Please briefly explain why you did not vote in the Brexit referendum

____

____

____

____

____.

11. Thinking about the next few years, using a scale from 0 - 10, how likely is it that you will vote in the next UK General Election? ____________________________ (choose a number from 0 to 10).

12. Thinking about the next few years, using a scale from 0 - 10, how likely is it that you will vote in the next local Council Election? ____________________________ (choose a number from 0 to 10).

13. For each of the following statements, please rate how confident you are in your ability to execute the specific action or behaviour described:

	None at all	A little	A moderate amount	A lot	A great deal
1. State your own political opinion openly, even in clearly hostile settings	○	○	○	○	○
2. Make certain that the political representatives you voted for honour their commitments to the electorate	○	○	○	○	○
3. Promote public initiatives to support political programmes that you believe are just	○	○	○	○	○
4. Maintain personal relationships with representatives of national government authorities	○	○	○	○	○

5. Play a decisive role in the choice of the leaders of political movements to which you belong, or to which you are near	○	○	○	○	○
6. Carry out an effective information campaign for the political movement or party with which you concur regarding beliefs and programmes	○	○	○	○	○
7. Actively promote the election of political candidates in which you trust	○	○	○	○	○
8. Promote effective activities of information and mobilization in your own community (of work, friends, and family), to sustain political programmes in which you believe	○	○	○	○	○
9. Collect a substantial amount of money to sustain the activities of your party	○	○	○	○	○

10. Use the means you have as a citizen to critically monitor the actions of your political representatives					

14. In this section, there are eight statements that are designed to measure an individual's civic attitudes. Please indicate the level to which you agree or disagree with each statement:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I feel responsible for my community	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
2. I believe I should make a difference in my community	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
3. I believe that I have a responsibility to help the poor and the hungry	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
4. I am committed to serve in my community	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

5. I believe that all citizens have a responsibility to their community	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
6. I believe that it is important to be informed of community issues	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
7. I believe it is important to volunteer	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
8. I believe that it is important to financially support charitable organisations	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

15. In this section, there are six statements that are designed to measure the behaviours that indicate a level of civic engagement. Please indicate the level to which you have participated on a scale from never to always.

	Never	Sometimes	About half the time	Most of the time	Always
1. I am involved in structured volunteer position(s) in the community	○	○	○	○	○
2. When working with others, I make positive changes in the community	○	○	○	○	○
3. I help members of my community	○	○	○	○	○
4. I stay informed of events in my community	○	○	○	○	○
5. I participate in discussions that raise issues of	○	○	○	○	○

social responsibility

6. I contribute to charitable organisations within the community

16. During the election campaign did you visit any of the following websites, and if so, how frequently?

	Never	Once or twice	Several times	Many times
1. Official national or local websites of the political parties	○	○	○	○
2. Local candidates' websites	○	○	○	○
3. Political blogs (e.g. Conservative Home, Lib Dem Voice, Political Betting, Labour List)	○	○	○	○
4. Social networking groups (e.g. Facebook) organized around a political issue	○	○	○	○
5. Online video channels (e.g. YouTube) to view official or unofficial videos about election	○	○	○	○

issues, party leaders or local candidates				
6. Twitter sites of parties, leaders, or local candidates	○	○	○	○
7. News organization websites (e.g. BBC, Guardian, Daily Mail)	○	○	○	○

17. Have you ever done or plan to do the following?

	I wouldn't do this	I probably wouldn't do this	I am unsure	I will probably do this	I will do this or have already done this
1. Attend community meetings about an issue that affects people where I live	○	○	○	○	○
2. Volunteer to campaign for a political candidate	○	○	○	○	○

3. Contact politicians, governments, or authorities about issues that are important to me	○	○	○	○	○
4. Participate in a rally or a protest for a cause	○	○	○	○	○

18. Please read the following statements carefully and indicate to what extent do you:

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Often (4)	Always (5)
1. Look for information on the web about politics	○	○	○	○	○
2. Sign petitions online	○	○	○	○	○
3. Sign petitions offline	○	○	○	○	○
4. Pay attention to what is going on in politics	○	○	○	○	○
5. Take an interest in political policies	○	○	○	○	○

6. Take an interest in how politics works ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

7. Make sure to understand what you are reading, when reading any news related to politics ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

8. Voluntarily search about political issues that are going on in your country ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

9. Voluntarily search about political issues that are going on in Europe ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

10. Watch political debates (e.g. television, Facebook, YouTube) ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

11. Read/assess official political websites ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

12. Use online tools to campaign/promote parties ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

13. Join a political group on a Social Netwrking Site (SNS)	○	○	○	○	○
14. Start a political group on a Social Networking Site (SNS)	○	○	○	○	○
15. Pay attention to political events	○	○	○	○	○
16. Follow political events	○	○	○	○	○
17. Feel that you don't know enough about politics	○	○	○	○	○
18. Are confident you understand political institutions	○	○	○	○	○
19. Are confident you understand political values	○	○	○	○	○
20. Are confident about your political values	○	○	○	○	○
21. Send emails to a politician	○	○	○	○	○

22. Send emails to a political organisation	○	○	○	○	○
23. Discuss with colleagues about possible ways to improve young people's political engagement	○	○	○	○	○
24. Discuss with colleagues about possible ways to improve young people's political participation	○	○	○	○	○
25. Post/share links on Social Networking Sites (SNS) to political stories	○	○	○	○	○
26. Post/share political articles on Social Networking Sites (SNS) for others to read	○	○	○	○	○
27. Post/share your own comments on political matters on Social	○	○	○	○	○

Networking Sites (SNS) for others to read					
28. Encourage other people to take action on a political issue that is important to you	○	○	○	○	○
29. Encourage other people to take action on a political issues that are important to you using Social Networking Sites (SNS)	○	○	○	○	○
30. Participate in an online chat about politics	○	○	○	○	○
31. Promote public initiatives to support political programmes you believe to be just	○	○	○	○	○
32. Promote effective activities in the community (work, friends and family), to sustain	○	○	○	○	○

political programmes in which you believe					
33. Promote effective information in the community (work, friends and family), to sustain political programmes in which you believe	○	○	○	○	○
34. Promote effective mobilisation in the community (work, friends and family), to sustain political programmes in which you believe	○	○	○	○	○
35. Use the means you have as a citizen to critically monitor the actions of your political representatives	○	○	○	○	○
36. Wear or display a symbol or sign representing	○	○	○	○	○

support for a political cause					
37. Informally assist the well-being of others in the community	○	○	○	○	○
38. Have feelings about political matters	○	○	○	○	○
39. Have feelings about civic matters	○	○	○	○	○

19. Please read the following statements carefully and indicate how often do you:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. Vote in elections	○	○	○	○	○
2. Choose not to vote in elections (as a way of indicating your dissatisfaction)	○	○	○	○	○
3. Participate in a strike	○	○	○	○	○
4. Actively campaign for a political organisation	○	○	○	○	○

5. Use theatre to protest about politics	○	○	○	○	○
6. Use theatre to manifest your political opinions	○	○	○	○	○
7. Use music to protest about politics	○	○	○	○	○
8. Use music to manifest your political opinions	○	○	○	○	○
9. Use graffiti to protest about politics	○	○	○	○	○
10. Use graffiti to manifest your political opinions	○	○	○	○	○
11. Read politically motivated poetry	○	○	○	○	○
12. Write politically motivated poetry	○	○	○	○	○

13. Run for a political election as a candidate	○	○	○	○	○
14. Participate in protests	○	○	○	○	○
15. Participate in demonstrations	○	○	○	○	○
16. Participate in marches	○	○	○	○	○
17. Participate in illegal actions in support of a political cause	○	○	○	○	○
18. Participate in community organisations to try and solve community problems	○	○	○	○	○
19. Volunteer	○	○	○	○	○
20. Volunteer in environmental organisations	○	○	○	○	○
21. Buycott (proposefully buy products	○	○	○	○	○

for political reasons)

22. Boycott (purposefully avoid buying products for political reasons)	○	○	○	○	○

In the next section, you will find some questions about yourself. It is important that you answer to all questions.

20. When people talk about "politics", what does that mean to you, exactly? *Please write in the space below.*

____.

21. People have many reasons for not voting in elections. If you did not vote in the election on June 8, explain why. *Please write up to 3 reasons.*

____.

22. What is your age? ___________________.

23. Are you male or female?

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female

24. What is your nationality?

____.

25. How old were you when you left full-time continuous education?

- ◯ I left full-time education when I was ____________________________________.
- ◯ Still in full-time education

26. Do you have any educational or work-related qualifications?

- ◯ Yes (1)
- ◯ No (2)

27. Which of the following qualifications do you have?

1 – 4 O levels/CSEs/GCSEs (any grades), Entry Level, Foundation Diploma NVQ Level 1, Foundation GNVQ, Basic Skills	
5+ O levels (passes)/CSEs (grade 1)/GCSEs (grades A* - C), School Certificate, 1 A level/ 2 – 2 AS levels/VCEs, Higher Diploma	
NVQ Level 2, Intermediate GNVQ, City and guilds Craft, BTEC First/General Diploma, RSA Diploma	
Apprenticeship	

2+ A levels/VCEs, 4+ AS levels, Higher School Certificate, Progression/Advanced Diploma	
NVQ Level 3, Advanced GNVQ, City and Guilds Advanced Craft, ONC, OND, BTEC National, RSA Advanced Diploma	
Degree (for example BA, BSc), Higher Degree (for example MA, PhD, PGCE)	
NVQ Level 4-5, HNC, HND, RSA higher Diploma, BTEC Higher Level	
Professional qualifications (for example teaching, nursing, accountancy)	
Foreign qualifications	
Other	
No qualifications	
Don't know	

28. Please, write your email in case you would like to participate in the voucher draw.

____.

Many thanks!

Appendix 6. Tables with the distributions for Political Engagement and Political Participation

Table 19. Youth Political Engagement indicators tested in both British and Portuguese sample

	Never (%)		Rarely (%)		Sometimes (%)		Often (%)		Always (%)		Mean (SD)	
	UK	PT	UK	PT	UK	PT	UK	PT	UK	PT	UK	PT
Look for information on the web about politics	19 (7.4)	47 (15.8)	39 (15.2)	69 (23.2)	73 (28.4)	90 (30.3)	75 (29.2)	68 (22.9)	51 (19.8)	23 (7.7)	3.39 (1.18)	2.84 (1.18)
Sign petitions online	20 (7.8)	66 (22.2)	39 (15.2)	64 (21.5)	85 (33.1)	102 (34.3)	79 (30.7)	49 (16.5)	34 (13.2)	16 (5.4)	3.26 (1.11)	2.61 (1.16)
Sign petitions offline	73 (28.4)	83 (27.9)	99 (38.5)	107 (36.0)	52 (20.2)	80 (26.9)	26 (10.1)	21 (7.1)	7 (2.7)	6 (2.0)	2.20 (1.05)	2.19 (0.99)
Pay attention to what is going on in politics	13 (5.1)	18 (6.1)	33 (12.8)	61 (20.5)	71 (27.6)	108 (36.4)	78 (30.4)	78 (26.3)	62 (24.1)	32 (10.8)	3.56 (1.14)	3.15 (1.06)
Take an interest in political policies	19 (7.4)	75 (25.3)	29 (11.3)	96 (32.3)	90 (35.0)	64 (21.5)	74 (28.8)	40 (13.5)	45 (17.5)	22 (7.4)	3.38 (1.12)	2.45 (1.21)
Take an interest in how politics works	16 (6.2)	27 (9.1)	50 (19.5)	52 (17.5)	76 (29.6)	97 (32.7)	69 (26.8)	74 (24.9)	46 (17.9)	47 (15.8)	3.31 (1.16)	3.21 (1.18)
Make sure to understand what you are reading, when reading any news related to politics	16 (6.2)	20 (6.7)	29 (11.3)	39 (13.1)	55 (21.4)	82 (27.6)	98 (38.1)	98 (33.0)	59 (23.0)	58 (19.5)	3.60 (1.14)	3.45 (1.14)
Voluntarily search about political issues that are going on in your country	32 (12.5)	45 (15.2)	48 (18.7)	74 (24.9)	58 (22.6)	74 (24.9)	72 (28.0)	70 (23.6)	47 (18.3)	34 (11.4)	3.21 (1.29)	2.91 (1.24)
Voluntarily search about political issues that are going on in Europe	47 (18.3)	45 (15.2)	61 (23.7)	71 (23.9)	60 (23.3)	78 (26.3)	62 (24.1)	68 (22.9)	27 (10.5)	35 (11.8)	2.85 (1.27)	2.92 (1.24)

Watch political debates	42 (16.3)	53 (17.8)	51 (19.8)	72 (24.2)	79 (30.7)	106 (35.7)	58 (22.6)	51 (!7.2)	27 (10.5)	15 (5.1)	2.91 (1.22)	2.67 (1.11)
Read/assess official political websites	73 (28.4)	113 (38.0)	81 (31.5)	95 (32.0)	61 (23.7)	49 (16.5)	27 (10.5)	30 (10.1)	15 (5.8)	10 (3.4)	2.34 (1.17)	2.09 (1.12)
Use online tools to campaign/promote parties	124 (48.2)	203 (68.4)	69 (26.8)	53 (17.8)	41 (16.0)	26 (8.8)	17 (6.6)	13 (4.4)	6 (2.3)	2 (0.7)	1.88 (1.05)	1.51 (0.88)
Join a political group on a Social Networking site (SNS)	136 (52.9)	222 (74.7)	49 (19.1)	40 (13.5)	39 (15.2)	16 (5.4)	27 (10.5)	12 (4.0)	6 (2.3)	7 (2.4)	1.90 (1.14)	1.46 (0.94)
Start a political group on a Social Networking Sit (SNS)	198 (77.0)	257 (86.5)	35 (13.6)	23 (7.7)	12 (4.7)	11 (3.7)	10 (3.9)	5 (1.7)	2 (0.8)	1 (0.3)	1.38 (0.81)	1.22 (0.62)
Pay attention to political events	23 (8.9)	76 (25.6)	50 (19.5)	100 (33.7)	64 (24.9)	62 (20.9)	67 (26.1)	44 (14.8)	53 (20.6)	15 (5.1)	3.30 (1.25)	2.40 (1.16)
Follow political events	36 (140)	120 (40.4)	56 (21.8)	75 (25.3)	62 (24.1)	59 (19.9)	53 (20.6)	30 (10.1)	50 (19.5)	13 (4.4)	3.10 (1.33)	2.13 (1.18)
Feel that you don't know enough about politics	24 (9.3)	33 (11.1)	54 (21.0)	34 (11.4)	71 (27.6)	80 (26.9)	58 (22.6)	90 (30.3)	50 (19.5)	60 (20.2)	3.22 (1.24)	3.37 (1.24)
Are confident you understand political institutions	45 (17.5)	50 (16.8)	62 (24.1)	110 (37.0)	79 (30.7)	80 (26.9)	57 (22.2)	46 (15.5)	14 (5.4)	11 (3.7)	2.74 (1.15)	2.52 (1.06)
Are confident you understand political values	36 (14.0)	46 (15.5)	51 (19.8)	90 (30.3)	79 (30.7)	90 (30.3)	68 (26.5)	57 (19.2)	23 (8.9)	14 (4.7)	2.96 (1.18)	2.67 (1.10)
Are confident about your political values	24 (9.3)	44 (14.8)	31 (12.1)	52 (17.5)	67 (26.1)	69 (23.2)	90 (35.0)	91 (30.6)	45 (17.5)	41 (13.8)	3.39 (1.18)	3.11 (1.27)
Send emails to politicians	162 (63.0)	243 (81.8)	51 (19.8)	33 (11.1)	29 (11.3)	12 (4.0)	10 (3.9)	6 (2.0)	5 (1.9)	3 (1.0)	1.62 (0.97)	1.29 (0.73)

Send emails to political organisation	171 (66.5)	235 (79.1)	49 (19.1)	38 (12.8)	24 (9.3)	14 (4.7)	11 (4.3)	7 (2.4)	2 (0.8)	3 (1.0)	1.54 (0.89)	1.33 (0.76)
Discuss with colleagues about possible ways to improve young people's political engagement	90 (35.0)	100 (33.7)	54 (21.0)	75 (25.3)	63 (24.5)	68 (22.9)	36 (14.0)	39 (13.1)	14 (5.4)	15 (5.1)	2.34 (1.24)	2.31 (1.21)
Discuss with colleagues about possible ways to improve young people's political participation	100 (38.9)	116 (39.1)	49 (19.1)	76 (25.6)	56 (21.8)	52 (17.5)	38 (14.8)	39 (13.1)	14 (5.4)	14 (4.7)	2.29 (1.27)	2.19 (1.22)
Post/share links on Social Networking Sites (SNS) to political stories	114 (44.4)	192 (64.6)	43 (16.7)	43 (14.5)	44 (17.1)	36 (12.1)	33 (2.8)	17 (5.7)	23 (8.9)	9 (3.0)	2.25 (1.37)	1.68 (1.08)
Post/share political articles on Social Networking Sites (SNS) for others to read	114 (44.4)	193 (65.9)	47 (18.3)	43 (14.5)	44 (17.1)	31 (10.4)	35 (13.6)	22 (7.4)	17 (6.6)	8 (2.7)	2.20 (1.31)	1.68 (1.09)
Post/share your own comments on political matters on Social Networking Sites (SNS) for others to read	126 (49.0)	194 (65.3)	51 (19.8)	55 (18.5)	42 (16.3)	29 (9.8)	26 (10.1)	14 (4.7)	12 (4.7)	5 (1.7)	2.02 (1.22)	1.59 (0.96)
Encourage other people to take action on a political issues that is important to you	67 (26.1)	104 (35.0)	49 (19.1)	80 (26.9)	73 (28.4)	55 (18.5)	51 (19.8)	37 (12.5)	17 (6.6)	21 (7.1)	2.62 (1.25)	2.30 (1.26)
Encourage other people to take action on political issues that are important to you using Social Networking Sites (SNS)	99 (38.5)	139 (46.8)	49 (19.1)	75 (25.3)	64 (24.9)	42 (14.1)	33 (12.8)	29 (9.8)	12 (4.7)	2 (4.0)	2.26 (1.23)	1.99 (1.17)
Participate in an online chat about politics	130 (50.6)	193 (65.0)	56 (21.8)	51 (17.2)	34 (13.2)	38 (12.8)	26 (10.1)	10 (3.4)	11 (4.3)	5 (1.7)	1.96 (1.20)	1.60 (0.95)
Promote public initiatives to support political programmes that you believe to be just	113 (44.0)	206 (69.4)	55 (21.4)	41 (13.8)	59 (23.0)	26 (8.8)	22 (8.6)	17 (5.7)	8 (3.1)	7 (2.4)	2.05 (1.14)	1.58 (1.02)

Promote effective activities in the community (work, friends and family), to sustain political programmes in which you believe	118 (45.9)	193 (65.0)	56 (21.8)	50 (16.8)	51 (19.8)	33 (11.1)	26 (10.1)	4 (4.7)	6 (2.3)	7 (2.4)	2.01 (1.13)	1.63 (1.01)
Promote effective information in the community (work, friends and family), to sustain political programmes in which you believe	116 (45.1)	175 (58.9)	59 (23.0)	61 (20.5)	51 (19.8)	32 (10.8)	25 (9.7)	20 (6.7)	6 (2.3)	9 (3.0)	2.01 (1.12)	1.74 (1.09)
Promote effective mobilisation in the community (work, friends and family), to sustain political programmes in which you believe	129 (50.2)	192 (64.6)	63 (24.5)	52 (17.5)	41 (16.0)	38 (12.8)	21 (8.2)	11 (3.7)	3 (1.2)	4 (1.3)	1.86 (1.04)	1.60 (0.94)
Use the means you have as a citizen to critically monitor the actions of your political representatives	104 (40.5)	131 (44.1)	52 (20.2)	74 (24.9)	63 (24.5)	45 (15.2)	29 (11.3)	38 (12.8)	9 (3.5)	9 (3.0)	2.17 (1.18)	2.06 (1.17)
Wear or display a symbol or sign representing support for a political cause	148 (57.6)	239 (80.5)	43 (16.7)	33 (11.1)	30 (11.7)	14 (4.7)	30 (11.7)	7 (2.4)	6 (2.3)	4 (1.3)	1.84 (1.16)	1.33 (0.79)
Informally assist the well-being of others in the community	50 (19.5)	76 (25.6)	55 (21.4)	77 (25.9)	86 (33.5)	84 (28.3)	53 (20.6)	46 (15.5)	13 (5.1)	14 (4.7)	2.70 (1.15)	2.48 (1.17)
Have feeling about political matters	16 (6.2)	43 (14.5)	27 (10.5)	63 (21.2)	61 (23.7)	72 (24.2)	81 (31.5)	78 (26.3)	72 (28.0)	41 (13.8)	3.65 (1.17)	3.04 (1.27)
Have feelings about civic matters	21 (8.2)	19 (6.3)	29 (11.3)	26 (8.8)	80 (31.1)	69 (23.2)	72 (28.0)	104 (35.0)	55 (21.4)	79 (26.6)	3.43 (1.18)	3.67 (1.15)

Notes: UK – United Kingdom; **PT** – Portugal; **Green** – the questions highlighted in green were the ones selected as part of the cognitive dimension: **Orange** – the questions highlighted in yellow were the ones selected as part of the emotional dimension.

Table 2. Youth Political Participation indicators tested in both British and Portuguese sample

	Never (%)		Rarely (%)		Sometimes (%)		Often (%)		Always (%)		Mean (SD)	
	UK	PT	UK	PT	UK	PT	UK	PT	UK	PT	UK	PT
Vote in elections	26 (10.2)	53(17.8)	15 (5.9)	14 (4.7)	24 (9.4)	17 (5.7)	65 (25.4)	41 (13.8)	126 (49.2)	172 (57.9)	3.98 (1.32)	3.89 (1.56)
Choose not to vote in elections	182 (71.1)	236 (79.5)	37 (14.5)	31 (10.4)	20 (7.8)	15 (5.1)	13 (5.1)	5 (1.7)	4 (1.6)	10 (3.4)	1.52 (0.95)	1.39 (0.92)
Participate in a strike	158 (61.7)	175 (58.9)	52 (20.3)	71 (23.9)	38 (14.8)	37 (12.5)	6 (2.3)	10 (3.4)	2 (0.8)	4 (1.3)	1.60 (0.88)	1.64 (0.92)
Actively campaign for a political organisation	150 (58.6)	225 (75.8)	49 (19.1)	45 (15.2)	38 (14.8)	12 (4.0)	16 (6.3)	12 (4.0)	3 (1.2)	3 (1.0)	1.72 (1.01)	1.39 (0.83)
Use theatre to protest about politics	197 (77.0)	265 (89.2)	36 (14.0)	17 (5.7)	10 (3.9)	10 (3.4)	10 (3.9)	4 (1.3)	3 (1.2)	1 (0.3)	1.38 (0.83)	1.18 (0.58)
Use theatre to manifest your political opinions	203 (79.3)	264 (88.9)	30 (11.7)	19 (6.4)	11 (4.3)	10 (3.4)	9 (3.5)	3 (1.0)	3 (1.2)	1 (0.3)	1.36 (0.81)	1.18 (0.56)
Use music to protest about politics	169 (66.0)	215 (72.4)	34 (13.3)	24 (8.1)	38 (14.8)	32 (10.8)	13 (5.1)	19 (6.4)	2 (0.8)	7 (2.4)	1.61 (0.97)	1.58 (1.06)
Use music to manifest your political opinions	177 (69.1)	218 (73.4)	24 (9.4)	31 (10.4)	37 (14.5)	25 (8.4)	17 (6.6)	14 (4.7)	1 (0.4)	9 (3.0)	1.60 (0.99)	1.54 (1.03)
Use graffiti to protest about politics	226 (88.3)	280 (94.3)	16 (6.3)	6 (2.0)	8 (3.1)	6 (2.0)	5 (2.0)	4 (1.3)	1 (0.4)	1 (0.3)	1.20 (0.62)	1.11 (0.51)
Use graffiti to manifest your political opinions	229 (89.5)	279 (93.9)	14 (5.5)	7 (2.4)	9 (3.5)	5 (1.7)	3 (1.2)	5 (1.7)	1 (0.4)	1 (0.3)	1.18 (0.58)	1.12 (0.53)
Read politically motivated poetry	160 (64.0)	213 (71.7)	29 (11.6)	45 (15.2)	39 (15.6)	24 (8.1)	20 (8.0)	12 (4.0)	2 (0.8)	3 (1.0)	1.70 (1.05)	1.47 (0.88)
Write politically motivated poetry	206 (82.4)	268 (90.2)	19 (7.6)	15 (5.1)	17 (6.8)	5 (1.7)	7 (2.8)	8 (2.7)	1 (0.4)	1 (0.3)	1.31 (0.75)	1.18 (0.62)
Run for a political election as a candidate	229 (89.5)	279 (93.9)	17 (6.6)	8 (2.7)	6 (2.3)	3 (1.0)	3 (1.2)	4 (1.3)	1 (0.4)	3 (1.0)	1.16 (0.55)	1.13 (0.58)

Participate in protests	135 (52.7)	176 (59.3)	46 (18.0)	67 (22.6)	50 (19.5)	37 (12.5)	21 (8.2)	11 (3.7)	4 (1.6)	6 (2.0)	1.88 (1.09)	1.67 (0.97)
Participate in demonstrations	147 (57.4)	223 (75.1)	42 (16.4)	45 (15.2)	47 (18.4)	17 (5.7)	16 (6.3)	11 (3.7)	4 (1.6)	1 (0.3)	1.78 (1.05)	1.39 (0.79)
Participate in marches	138 (53.9)	195 (65.7)	49 (19.1)	62 (20.9)	46 (18.0)	23 (7.7)	18 (7.0)	11 (3.7)	5 (2.0)	6 (2.0)	1.84 (1.07)	1.56 (0.93)
Participate in illegal actions in support of a political cause	224 (87.5)	272 (91.6)	18 (7.0)	12 (4.0)	7 (2.7)	10 (3.4)	7 (2.7)	1 (0.3)	0	2 (0.7)	1.21 (0.62)	.14 (0.54)
Participate in community organisations to try and solve community problems	134 (52.3)	155 (52.2)	67 (26.2)	57 (19.2)	43 (16.8)	46 (15.5)	10 (3.9)	29 (9.8)	2 (0.8)	10 (3.4)	1.75 (0.93)	1.93 (1.17)
Volunteer	23 (9.2)	57 (19.2)	49 (19.5)	68 (22.9)	96 (38.2)	85 (28.6)	59 (23.5)	62 (20.9)	24 (9.6)	25 (8.4)	3.05 (1.09)	2.76 (1.22)
Volunteer in environmental organisations	116 (45.3)	134 (45.1)	55 (21.5)	68 (22.9)	55 (21.5)	55 (18.5)	19 (7.4)	33 (11.1)	11 (4.3)	7 (2.4)	2.04 (1.16)	2.03 (1.14)
Buycott	162 (63.3)	251 (84.5)	31 (12.1)	21 (7.1)	25 (9.7)	13 (4.4)	25 (9.7)	10 (3.4)	13 (5.1)	2 (0.7)	1.81 (1.25)	1.29 (0.76)
Boycott	115 (44.9)	217 (73.1)	38 (14.8)	27 (9.1)	57 (22.3)	19 (6.4)	30 (11.7)	23 (7.7)	16 (6.3)	11 (3.7)	2.20 (1.29)	1.60 (1.13)

Notes: UK – United Kingdom; **PT –** Portugal; **Blue –** the questions highlighted in yellow were the ones selected as part of political participation (that is, behavioural dimension)