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## Growing Up as a European? Parental Socialization and the Educational Divide in Euroskepticism

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*Research consistently shows that individuals with higher levels of education express lower levels of Euroskepticism. This relationship has been explained by values and skills acquired in education and by higher labor-market competitiveness. While these explanations assume a causal impact of education, previous research uses cross-sectional data. This is problematic, as students self-select into education. The contribution of this article is twofold. First, it provides a better test of the causal effect of education on Euroskepticism by using data from the Swiss Household Panel (1999–2011) that allow analyzing how Euroskepticism changes as students move through education from the age of 13 years onwards. Second, it advances theory by highlighting the role of parental socialization in explaining Euroskepticism. We argue that children of higher educated parents select into higher education and take over the pro-European attitudes of their parents. We find a strong educational divide in Euroskepticism. However, longitudinal analyses show no change in Euroskepticism as individuals pass through education. Supporting the parental-socialization hypothesis, parental Euroskeptic attitudes and education explain changes in youngsters' Euroskepticism. The results suggest that, rather than a genuine education effect, differences between educational groups are mostly a result of self-selection due to family background.*

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**KEY WORDS:** Euroskepticism, education, political attitudes, socialization, self-selection

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A large body of research has documented an educational divide in Euroskepticism: Lower educated individuals tend to be more skeptical about European integration and the EU than people with high educational attainment (Hobolt, 2016; Hobolt & de Vries, 2016; Hooghe & Marks, 2005, 2018; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2010). This relationship is robust across countries and across time: a recent study covering 81 waves of the Eurobarometer survey in 12 member states over 40 years shows that the link between education and Euroskepticism has even strengthened over time, especially since the signing of the Treaty of the European Union (EU) in Maastricht in 1992 (Hakhverdian, van Elsas, van der Brug, & Kuhn, 2013). Most recently, in the “Brexit” referendum, lower educated voters

were more likely to vote to leave the EU than higher educated Britons (Abrams & Travaglino, 2018; Hobolt, 2016).

While the link between education and Euroskepticism is well established, it is less clear what exactly is behind this relationship. Scholars emphasize three main explanations: First, in education, students acquire the “skills necessary to cope with an extensive political community” (Inglehart, 1970, p. 47), and they develop cognitive sophistication that enables them to form their own opinion and shields them against the influence of populist parties or sensationalist news media (Bobo & Licari, 1989; Schuck & De Vreese, 2006). Also, during education, students are exposed to cosmopolitan values through school curricula emphasizing norms of tolerance and postnational models of society (Gaasholt & Togeby, 1995; Keating, 2009). A third explanation is that low-educated individuals are more Euroskeptic because they are the “losers” of European integration and are less competitive in an integrated labor market (Anderson & Reichert, 1995; Gabel, 1998; Hobolt & de Vries, 2016; Hooghe & Marks, 2005).

While these arguments receive broad scholarly support, they rely on the assumption that attitudes towards European integration are formed while being in education, or shortly thereafter, when graduates enter the labor market and are confronted with international competition. However, most existing work on education and Euroskepticism relies on observational research designs using cross-sectional survey data. A notable exception is a regression discontinuity design on educational expansion in the mid-20th century (Kunst, Kuhn, & van de Werfhorst, 2020), which finds no conclusive support for a causal effect of educational attainment on Euroskepticism. Hence, researchers cannot exclude the possibility that the educational effect is in fact explained by factors that occur prior to education, such as parental socialization (Persson, 2013; Surrridge, 2016). Parents indeed influence the political attitudes and behavior of their offspring (for a meta-analysis, see Degner & Dalege, 2013). Parental background is also decisive in the educational choices and attainment of youngsters (Shavit & Blossfeld, 1993). Consequently, to test the hypothesis that individuals become less Euroskeptic as they become more educated, longitudinal analysis is necessary. Moreover, to analyze the impact of parental background on youngsters’ attitudes, information on parent’s opinions and education is needed.

This article addresses this lacuna by analyzing data of the Swiss Household Panel (1999–2011). To our knowledge, this is the only longitudinal dataset that repeatedly surveys attitudes towards the EU among adolescents (aged from 13 to 30<sup>1</sup>) as well as their parents. Examining Euroskepticism in Switzerland is relevant since joining the EU has been a topic of heated political debates over the past few decades. While Switzerland is not an EU member state, public opinion towards EU membership is structured in a similar way as in EU member states: Swiss citizens with tertiary education and with higher incomes tend to be more pro-European (Kriesi, Longchamp, Passy, & Sciarini, 1993; Sarrasin, Kuhn, & Lancee, 2018), while voters of the populist right-wing party SVP (Schweizerische Volkspartei) are more Euroskeptic (Skinner, 2013).

To analyze if and how education affects Euroskepticism, we estimate hybrid models and person fixed-effects models. Hybrid models allow us to compare the conventional cross-sectional with the longitudinal effect of education in one model and are therefore increasingly used to analyze panel data (Schröder, 2016; Schunck, 2013). Second, we study if specific educational and labor-market transitions result in changes in attitudes and estimate person fixed-effects models.

### *The Educational Divide in Euroskepticism*

The EU might be a moving target in that its institutional setup, political impact, and geographic scope have changed significantly over the past decades, but one thing has remained the same: It

<sup>1</sup> Respondents enter the panel at any age ranging between 13 and 30 years old.

is above all the highly educated Europeans that endorse European integration, whereas citizens with low levels of education have generally been skeptical towards European integration (Curtis & Nielsen, 2018; Hobolt & de Vries, 2016; Hooghe & Marks, 2005; Inglehart, 1970; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2010). The educational divide found in Euroskepticism reflects more general differences in social and political attitudes that have been repeatedly found between low and highly educated individuals, in, for instance, xenophobia (Lancee & Sarrasin, 2015; Ostapczuk, Musch, & Moshagen, 2009) and populist views (Coenders & Scheepers, 2003; Staerklé & Green, 2018).

Why should we expect education to have such an important impact on Euroskepticism? A large body of research suggests that political orientations are formed in childhood and adolescence and that they remain relatively stable afterwards (Prior, 2010). In the “impressionable years,” that is, late adolescence and early adulthood, individuals are particularly open to change (Daniel & Benish-Weisman, 2019), and scholars therefore expect a peak in political learning at that age. Political orientations stabilize once individuals enter adult life, with the possibility of small, but noticeable changes later on (Neundorf & Smeets, 2017). Education plays a major role in the political socialization of adolescents (Neundorf, Smeets, & García-Albacete, 2013). How exactly education influences Euroskepticism is less clear, however. Existing research has focused on three sets of explanations: cognitive skills, cosmopolitan values, and labor-market competition.

### *Cognitive Skills and Values*

The cognitive skills argument posits that education has a strong liberalizing effect on students’ state of mind by improving cognitive skills. Already in the 1970s, Inglehart (1970) argued that educational expansion would foster to cognitive mobilization, that is, the “political skills necessary to cope with an extensive political community” (p. 47) which is key to supporting European integration. According to this explanation, students, while in education, acquire cognitive skills and increase their political awareness (Rasmussen & Nørgaard, 2018), which fosters the ability to form their own opinion. Low cognitive skills have been repeatedly linked to less open social and political attitudes (Hodson & Busseri, 2012). For example, in a cross-national study, Verhaegen, Hooghe, and Meeusen (2013) find that cognitive learning opportunities are linked to stronger European identification among pupils.

The second argument relates to values. While, in the past, educational systems have been (and in some countries still are) promoting nationalist ideologies, it is an outspoken aim of many modern education systems “to educate and socialize people into multicultural thinking, creating citizens who respect human rights and democratic principles” (Hjerm, 2001, p. 38). European school curricula increasingly promote postnational models of citizenship (Keating, 2009). Hence, in education, students are exposed to and internalize liberal and cosmopolitan values (Gaasholt & Togeby, 1995). The educational divide in political attitudes still persists when using techniques to reduce social desirability biases (Ostapczuk et al., 2009; Wagner & Zick, 1995).

*HI:* If educational differences in attitudes are caused by the liberalizing effect of education due to improved cognitive skills and exposure to cosmopolitan values, we should observe a decrease in Euroskepticism as individuals attain higher levels of education.

### *Competition and Self-Interest*

A third explanation for why higher educated people are less skeptical about European integration refers to material self-interest (Gabel, 1998; Kriesi et al., 2008; Walter, 2017), an argument also

demonstrated in studies on attitudes toward immigrants or ethnic minorities (Wagner & Zick, 1995). The cost-benefit explanation posits that low-educated individuals are more likely to be Euroskeptical because, compared to high-educated individuals, they benefit less from the EU (Anderson & Reichert, 1995; Gabel, 1998). Not everyone benefits equally from free movement and an integrated labor market. In fact, European integration and globalization have created new groups of winners and losers (Kriesi et al., 2008). In high-wage countries such as Switzerland, it is generally the lower educated who are confronted with increasing international competition on the labor market, while highly educated individuals benefit from a broader range of career opportunities (Anderson & Reichert, 1995; Gabel, 1998).

In education, students are shielded against, and less aware of, international labor-market competition and insecurity. Once they graduate and search for a job, they are likely to become more aware of international competition. Hence, to the extent that self-interest explains the educational differences in Euroskepticism, these differences should become (more) evident once students enter the labor market. At this point in their life, low- and high-educated individuals should react differently (Walter, 2017). We thus hypothesize that:

*H2:* When lower educated people enter the labor market, they become more critical about European integration, whereas higher educated people entering the labor market are not affected.

### *Parental Socialization*

Research on education and political attitudes often fails to consider that differences between educational groups may exist prior to education. In that sense, the observed cross-sectional differences in education could be the result of another mechanism, that is parental socialization. The lack of scholarly attention for the impact of parental attitudes on Euroskepticism among young people is surprising, since a large body of research has shown that parental socialization plays an important role in forming young adults' political attitudes and their educational trajectory. A meta-analysis has indeed demonstrated that there is a strong proximity in the intergroup attitudes (e.g., toward migrant and ethnic minorities) of parents and their children (Degner & Dalege, 2013). In a review article on the link between education and political participation, Persson (2013) also points to the relevance of preadult socialization as a mechanism underlying educational differences.

The family has long been seen as the prime locus of political socialization (Hyman, 1959; Jennings & Niemi, 1968). Parental influences operate through structural and dynamic mechanisms. Structural factors encompass parental socioeconomic status and other social characteristics that spill over to values (Neundorf et al., 2013) and behavior, such as voter turnout (Gidengil, Tarkiainen, Wass, & Martikainen, 2019). For instance, schoolchildren's identification as European was found to be influenced by parental socioeconomic background (measured by parents' occupational prestige; Agirdag, Huyst, & Van Houtte, 2012). Parental socioeconomic background also has an important influence on youngsters' transnational mobility, which is strongly related to EU support (Kuhn, 2016). Genetics play a role, too, in shaping political attitudes (e.g., Alford, Funk, & Hibbing, 2005). Dynamic factors refer to how daily interactions between parents and their offspring create an atmosphere in which social and political attitudes develop among the latter (Allport, 1954). In that vein, political conversations within the family have been found to align parental and children's political identities (Quintelier, Verhaegen, & Hooghe, 2014).

Put differently, highly educated parents transmit their pro-European attitudes to their children, and—at the same time—encourage them to attend higher education. Similarly, children of low-educated parents tend to enter lower educational tracks with an attitude towards Europe that is similar

to their parents' attitude. Consequently, educational differences in Euroskepticism can be explained by self-selection into education: Pro-European parents transmit pro-European attitudes to their children and encourage their children to achieve higher levels of education. To sum up:

*H3a:* We expect that parental Euroskepticism predicts Euroskepticism of their offspring.

*H3b:* We expect that parental educational attainment predicts Euroskepticism of their offspring.

### The Present Study

To test the aforementioned hypotheses, we examined Euroskepticism among Swiss adolescents and young adults during and after education using the SHP. To our knowledge, the SHP is the only panel that repeatedly surveys attitudes towards European integration among adolescents, with the youngest respondents interviewed at 13 years of age, thereby enabling us to capture a substantial part of individuals' educational trajectory. EU membership is a highly salient topic in Switzerland (Kriesi et al., 2008). While just over half (50.3%) of Swiss people voted against joining the European Economic Area (EEA) in 1992 (Kriesi et al., 1993), Swiss public opinion has become increasingly skeptical about EU membership (Sarrasin et al., 2018; Schwok, 2015). Dynamics underlying popular Euroskepticism in Switzerland are comparable to those among citizens of EU members. As in other European countries, Swiss citizens with higher socioeconomic background are less skeptical about European integration (Kriesi et al., 1993). Similar to EU citizens, Swiss citizens consider their own economic costs and benefits when evaluating EU membership (Christin & Trechsel, 2002; Schraff, 2019). Furthermore, Swiss individuals who perceive the EU as a threat to their national identity are opposed to joining the EU (Christin & Trechsel, 2002).

The Swiss education system is particularly relevant to study differences in Euroskepticism across educational levels because of its early tracking system. In lower secondary education (12–15 years old), adolescents choose between an academic and a vocational track. About two-thirds of adolescents choose the vocational track. Fifteen percent of all Swiss residents obtain a tertiary degree from an institution of professional education and training in the vocational track, while 30% graduate from university (Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education, 2015). Early tracking increases socioeconomic inequalities as it fosters track-specific socialization as students go through secondary education (van de Werfhorst, 2018). Hence, especially in systems with early tracking such as Switzerland, the educational divide is likely to increase over time. For example, Witschge, Rözer, and van de Werfhorst (2019) find that in the Netherlands, also a country with early tracking, students who make transitions in general education develop higher levels of interest in politics and generalized trust than do students in vocational education.

Finally, albeit less present than in other Western European countries, civic education—including information about the EU—is taught in both academic and vocational tracks at the upper secondary level (Stadelmann-Steffen, Koller, & Sulzer, 2013). In its “recommendations on Europe at school” from 1993, the Swiss federal organization of cantonal school directions lists a number of measures, such as promotion of intercultural dialogue, foreign exchange programmes and integration of a “European dimension” into the curriculum, and teaching materials and teacher training (Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education, 1993, p. 179). For these reasons, students—and particularly those in upper secondary and tertiary education—may be assumed to learn about the EU in education. Hence, if education has an impact on Euroskepticism in Switzerland, this is most likely to be observed from secondary education onwards, as this is the stage when track-specific socialization starts, and when civic education is taught at school.

## Method

SHP interviews respondents as young as 13 years old, and each year after that. The SHP regularly refreshes<sup>2</sup> the sample and respondents enter the panel at any age. As such, the first year of observation spreads across the age range in our sample (age at baseline  $M = 21.3$ ,  $SD = 5.3$ ). We restrict our sample to individuals aged between 13 and 30, because beyond that age, the number of educational transitions is low and most individuals have been on the labor market for some years. We further restrict our sample to Swiss citizens born in Switzerland. The analytic sample contains 4480 individuals and 15,908 person-year observations; on average, we observe an individual during 3.6 years.

### *Dependent Variable*

Ideally, we would measure Euroskepticism with an attitudinal scale combining information from several items relating to attitudes towards European integration (Boomgaarden, Schuck, Elenbaas, & De Vreese, 2011; Guinaudeau & Schnatterer, 2019). However, SHP includes only one item on European integration which is repeated each year, namely individuals' opinion towards joining the EU. It reads as follows: "Are you in favor of Switzerland joining the European Union or are you in favor of Switzerland staying outside of the European Union?" The answering categories are: 1 (*In favor of joining the EU*), 2 (*Neither*), and 3 (*In favor of staying outside of the EU*). We think that it is a valid measure of Euroskepticism in Switzerland because whether to join the EU or not captures the most salient issue of the debate on European integration in non-EU member states (Skinner, 2013, p. 126). Moreover, it is very similar to the most widely used operationalization of Euroskepticism among citizens of EU member states, namely support for EU membership (see, for example, Eichenberg & Dalton, 1993; Gabel, 1998) which has also been used in research on educational differences in Euroskepticism (Hakhverdian et al., 2013). It is therefore highly comparable to existing research on this topic. Following previous research (Hakhverdian et al., 2013), we construct a dichotomous variable with the value 0 indicating in favor of joining the EU (37% of the person-year observations) and the value 1 indicating in favor of staying outside of the EU and neither (63%). To ensure that our findings are not affected by this coding scheme, we estimated all models with the three-category version of the dependent variable (Appendix S1 in the online supporting information) and by including "neither" in the zero category (Appendix S1); estimates are highly similar and do not alter the conclusions. There is substantial within-individual variation in Euroskeptic attitudes: Twenty-four percent of the individuals change their opinion towards joining the EU at least once during the period of observation.

### *Independent Variable*

#### *Educational Attainment*

Each year, respondents indicate their highest level of education. Following the coding scheme by Bergman, Hupka, Joyce, and Meier (2009), we recoded the original 17 options into five

<sup>2</sup>SHP has an annual attrition rate of about 17%, which is relatively high compared to other longitudinal surveys, but not more selective (Lipps, 2007; Voorpostel, 2010). The SHP has taken measures to maintain participation in several phases (first contact, at interview, and between waves; Budowski & Scherpenzeel, 2005). Voorpostel (2010) further analyzed attrition in the SHP and concluded that response is likely to be random for the most part, as demographic characteristics and social integration explain the attrition to a small extent only.

educational levels<sup>3</sup>: Primary education (42% of all person-year observations;  $N_{\text{individuals}} = 2313$ ;  $M(\text{age}) = 17$ ), secondary general (18%;  $N_{\text{individuals}} = 1023$ ;  $M(\text{age}) = 23$ ), secondary vocational (27%;  $N_{\text{individuals}} = 1652$ ;  $M(\text{age}) = 24$ ), tertiary vocational (7%;  $N_{\text{individuals}} = 456$ ;  $M(\text{age}) = 27$ ), and university (6%;  $N_{\text{individuals}} = 410$ ;  $M(\text{age}) = 27$ ). We thus differentiate between levels of education but also between vocational and general tracks. For about 27% of the individuals, we observe at least one educational transition.

### *Labor Market Entry*

We use a dichotomous variable to estimate the effect of labor-market entry, indicating whether an individual is not employed (0) versus employed (1) (68%;  $N_{\text{individuals}} = 3783$ ;  $M(\text{age}) = 23$ ). Since, especially for this age group, the unemployment rate is very low in Switzerland, the zero category of this variable primarily consists of individuals being in education, making it unfeasible to separately specify a transition from being *unemployed* to employed (or vice versa).<sup>4</sup> For about one third of the individuals in our sample (36%), we observe at least one transition to employment.

### *Parental Information*

We exploit the household structure of the panel to obtain information on respondents' parents. To analyze structural socialization in the family, we focus on parental education (an indicator for parental socioeconomic status; see, for instance, Quintelier et al., 2014). Parental education is measured in the same way as respondents' level of education and is included as the highest educational level of either parent. To study dynamic socialization in the family, we study parental Euroskepticism, which is operationalized with the same question as our dependent variable. Research on the intergenerational transmission of European identity in Belgium found that mothers have a stronger impact on collective-identity formation of their children than fathers (Quintelier et al., 2014). Hence, we refer to the attitude of the mother, and if this is missing, we use the father's attitude.<sup>5</sup> For about 25% of the individuals, we lack information on either parent's opinion. Mostly, this is because respondents have entered the panel after leaving the parental home. Consequently, the sample for the analysis that includes parental attitudes is smaller (2911 individuals, 116,259 person-year observations), younger (with a mean age of 19.7 years compared to 21.4 in the full sample), and with a lower percentage of observations that have left the parental home (9.9% compared to 23.0% in the full sample).

### *Control Variables*

We control for leaving the parental home as this is likely to reduce parental influences. Note that in Switzerland, around 40% of university students live with their parents (Swiss Federal Statistical Office, 2008). To separate the education effect from an age effect, we control for age. To account for regional differences (Euroskepticism is higher in German-speaking than in French-speaking Switzerland; Theiler, 2004), we include canton-fixed effects. As Swiss public opinion has become more critical towards Europe in the period of analysis, we include a time trend with fixed effects by including year dummies. Additional control variables—that is, interest in politics, left-right

<sup>3</sup> $M(\text{age})$  is based on the highest level of education that an individual has obtained in a given year;  $N$  individuals refers to the number of individuals in each level of education; because individuals can transition from one level to another, the sum is higher than the total number of individuals in the sample.

<sup>4</sup>Naturally, this does not mean that unemployment does not matter for youngster's attitudes; see, for example, Emmenegger, Marx, and Schraff (2017) on the relation between unemployment and political interest.

<sup>5</sup>Instead of the mother as primary source, we also estimated models with the father's attitudes. The results are substantially the same.



self-placement, life satisfaction, satisfaction with democracy, and trust in the federal government—were considered in analyses presented in the robustness-check section.

### *Analytic Strategy*

We estimate linear hybrid models with robust standard errors clustered on the individual (following Schunck, 2013). Hybrid models are increasingly popular to analyze panel data (Lancee & Sarrasin, 2015; Phillips, 2006; Schröder, 2016). However, they are less common in psychological research. We therefore shortly discuss this method.

The hybrid model is closely related to Mundlak's (1978) correlated random-effects model. The hybrid model estimates two coefficients for each covariate: A within-individual effect (equal to the fixed-effects estimator, FE), and a between-individual effect (equal to the between-estimator, or BE). The hybrid models thus allow us to compare time-invariant between-individual effects and time-varying within-individual effects (Schröder, 2016).

The FE estimator uses only within-person variation to estimate coefficients, which makes it suitable for analyzing changes over time. Fixed-effects models are often used to overcome the problem of unobserved heterogeneity by keeping all between-individual differences constant (Plümper & Troeger, 2007). Significant effects of education in FE models are strong evidence that individuals change in attitudes as they pass through education (Hypothesis 1) or enter the labor market (Hypothesis 2).

The BE estimator mimics conventional cross-sectional analysis by analyzing only variance between individuals. The BE estimator is equivalent to the person-specific mean of each variable across time and estimating a regression on the collapsed dataset of means. As with all cross-sectional analysis, a disadvantage of between-effects is that covariates and error terms are assumed to be exogenous. Correlation of the independent variables with the error term (endogeneity) results in biased estimates, for example, due to self-selection.

## **Results**

### *Descriptive Statistics*

Figure 1 presents a descriptive analysis of Euroskepticism by age and level of education. Using the panel structure of the data, we plot the mean level of Euroskepticism for ages of individuals who have not reached their final level of education yet, but of whom we know that they will graduate later on. Figure 1 reveals marked differences between educational groups already during secondary education. There is a clear gap between individuals who will obtain secondary vocational degrees and individuals who will obtain a secondary general degree, that is, one that provides access to tertiary education. Already in secondary education, there is a marked difference between individuals who will obtain a university degree and individuals who will obtain a tertiary vocational degree, highlighting the need to make a distinction not only in terms of low versus high levels of education, but also in educational track. The figure shows that for each educational transition, there does not appear to be a clear change in attitudes. For example, there is no clear visual difference between individuals who are in secondary general education and will obtain a university degree later in their lives, and those having obtained a university degree already. It does seem, however, that individuals who will obtain a secondary vocational degree have on average lower levels of Euroskepticism before obtaining the degree than in the years after having obtained their degree. This descriptive analysis does not show a clear liberalizing effect of education, nor a spike in Euroskepticism at the end of the age range, when individuals enter the labor market.

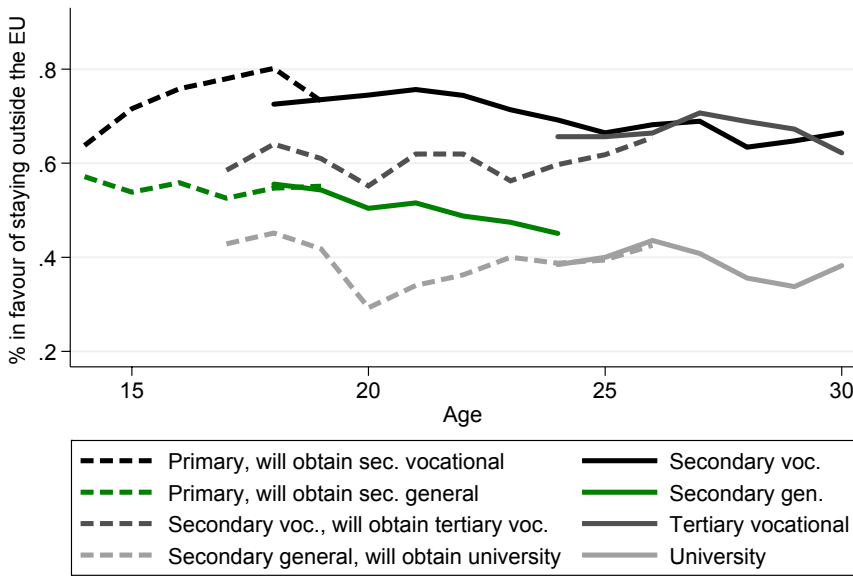


Figure 1. Euroskepticism by age and educational level. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Hybrid Models

We proceed with the multivariate analysis. Table 1 presents a hybrid model predicting support for staying outside the EU. The models contain within-effects (FE estimator) and between-effects (BE estimator). In Model 1 of Table 1, we see the conventional between-effect of education on Euroskepticism: Compared to individuals with primary education, higher educated individuals in the academic track are significantly less Euroskeptic. Individuals with higher vocational degrees are not significantly less Euroskeptic than those with primary education. Hence, there is a negative association between educational attainment and Euroskepticism for individuals in the academic track, confirming existing research (Hakhverdian et al., 2013; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2010).

However, when analyzing variation within individuals (FE estimator), there is no evidence that moving to higher levels of education results in changes in Euroskepticism, neither for vocational nor for academic tracks. That is, when we analyze within-individual variance only and thus control for time-constant unobserved heterogeneity, we do not find an association between education and Euroskepticism. These results challenge the argument that higher educated individuals are less skeptical about EU integration because of cognitive skills and values acquired at school (Hypothesis 1). If education indeed makes people more supportive of international openness, we should observe a change in attitudes as students pass through education. Yet, when looking at variation within individuals and controlling for a general time trend by including year-fixed effects, changes in educational levels are not statistically significantly associated with changes in Euroskeptic attitudes. In Model 1, we also estimate the effect of being employed. While employed individuals are generally less likely to be Euroskeptic than individuals who are not employed (BE), we do not find a change in attitudes as people enter the labor market and find employment (FE).

Transitions

We now proceed with a closer examination of transitions of all educational tracks and entry to the labor market. In Table 1, the estimates of educational attainment need to be interpreted against

**Table 1.** Linear Probability Hybrid Model Predicting Preference for Staying Outside the EU

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Within effects (FE estimator)</i>				
Educational attainment				
Primary	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
Secondary general	-.017 (.015)	-.014 (.015)	.003 (.016)	.002 (.016)
Secondary vocational	-.020 (.014)	-.020 (.014)	-.011 (.014)	-.012 (.014)
Tertiary vocational	-.022 (.027)	-.028 (.028)	-.015 (.033)	-.016 (.033)
University	-.025 (.029)	-.015 (.029)	.011 (.031)	.011 (.031)
Employed	.013 (.009)	.011 (.009)	.018 (.010)	.017 (.010)
Leaving parental home	-.002 (.013)	-.003 (.013)	.001 (.015)	.001 (.015)
<i>Between effects (BE estimator)</i>				
Educational attainment				
Primary	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
Secondary general	-.210*** (.025)	-.184*** (.026)	-.145*** (.029)	-.135*** (.029)
Secondary vocational	.028 (.023)	.018 (.024)	.024 (.026)	.020 (.026)
Tertiary vocational	-.063 (.035)	-.051 (.035)	-.077 (.051)	-.076 (.051)
University	-.296*** (.036)	-.251*** (.037)	-.180** (.057)	-.156** (.057)
Employed	.067*** (.019)	.047* (.019)	.038 (.021)	.031 (.021)
Leaving parental home	-.011 (.020)	-.015 (.020)	.017 (.039)	.012 (.039)
Female	-.041*** (.012)	-.043*** (.012)	-.047*** (.013)	-.049*** (.013)
Age	-.002 (.002)	-.003 (.002)	-.002 (.003)	-.002 (.003)
Parental education				
Primary		ref.		ref.
Secondary general		-.082* (.034)		-.031 (.037)
Secondary vocational		-.055* (.022)		-.051 (.027)
Tertiary vocational		-.086*** (.024)		-.051 (.029)
University		-.171*** (.027)		-.106*** (.031)
Parental Euroscepticism (within effect)			.078*** (.015)	.078*** (.015)
Parental Euroscepticism (between effect)			.371*** (.016)	.364*** (.017)
Constant	.590*** (.047)	.707*** (.054)	.393*** (.062)	.459*** (.069)
<i>N</i> observations	15,908	15,094	11,625	11,625
<i>N</i> subjects	4480	4296	2911	2911

Note: Models contain year fixed effects and canton fixed effects. Robust standard errors clustered on the individual.

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ , two-tailed tests.

Source: SHP 1999–2011.

the reference category of primary education. Whereas the hybrid model convincingly shows how time-constant unobserved heterogeneity affects the estimates of education by comparing the between and within effects, it is less strong in mimicking the actual educational trajectory. For example, individuals do not transition from primary education to university directly; yet, in the hybrid model, the effect of university education is interpreted against the reference category of primary education. Following Lancee and Radl (2014), we therefore model the educational and labor-market transitions by specifying origin and destination states in a person fixed-effects estimation.

Table 2 shows the frequencies of the transitions that we observe, both for all educational tracks and for the transition to the labor market for each level of education. In Table 3, we estimate the effect of these educational and labor-market transitions. A transition model (also sometimes referred to as change-score models) compares the person-specific mean of Euroscepticism for the total number of years in one level of education with the mean level of Euroscepticism of the total number of years in the subsequent level of education.

**Table 2.** Distribution of Live Course Transitions over Individuals

<i>Educational transitions</i>	
Primary → Secondary general	397
Primary → Secondary vocational	478
Secondary general → Tertiary voc.	88
Secondary vocational → Tertiary voc.	101
Secondary → University	155
<i>Labour market transitions</i>	
University → Employed	78
Tertiary vocational → Employed	74
Secondary vocational → Employed	210
Secondary general → Employed	341
Primary → Employed	490

Note: Number of individuals in the sample for whom we observed a transition.

Source: SHP 1999–2011.

**Table 3.** Transitions in Education and Employment Status Predicting Preference for Staying Outside the EU (linear probability model, person fixed-effects estimation)

	Model 1		Model 2	
<i>Educational transitions</i>				
Primary → Secondary general	-.020	(.019)	-.017	(.020)
Primary → Secondary vocational	-.017	(.016)	-.028	(.016)
Secondary general → Tertiary voc.	.054	(.044)	.059	(.052)
Secondary vocational → Tertiary voc.	-.005	(.033)	-.044	(.039)
Secondary → University	-.010	(.030)	-.005	(.034)
<i>Labor market transitions</i>				
University → Employed	.032	(.046)	.007	(.055)
Tertiary vocational → Employed	-.051	(.037)	-.043	(.039)
Secondary vocational → Employed	.058*	(.026)	.081**	(.031)
Secondary general → Employed	.036	(.022)	.030	(.022)
Primary → Employed	.011	(.018)	.009	(.019)
Moving out	.002	(.013)	-.000	(.015)
Parental Euroskepticism			.069***	(.015)
Constant	.459***	(.058)	.437***	(.068)
<i>N</i> observations	15,908		12,057	
<i>N</i> subjects	4480		2911	

Note: Models contain year fixed effects. Robust standard errors clustered on the individual.

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ , two-tailed tests.

Source: SHP 1999–2011.

As shown in Table 3, Model 1, also when specifying educational transitions, we do not observe an effect of education. These findings remain the same when we additionally include parental Euroskepticism (Model 2). That is, in our data, educational transitions are not associated with changes in Euroskepticism. Again, we do not find support for Hypothesis 1. With respect to transitions to the labor market (Hypothesis 2), the evidence is mixed. According to this hypothesis, lower educated people should become more Euroskeptic once they start working due to increasing awareness of international labor-market competition. We see that individuals with secondary vocational education who transition to employment become significantly more Euroskeptic. That is, for individuals with secondary vocational education who start working, the probability to be Euroskeptic increases by about 6%. However, we do not observe any change in Euroskepticism among respondents

with primary or secondary general education. Hence, our analyses do not provide robust evidence in support of Hypothesis 2.

### *Parental Socialization*

Turning to Hypotheses 3a and 3b that parental education and parental attitudes have an impact on respondents' attitudes, we add the highest level of education of the parents in Model 2 in Table 1. Supporting the structural socialization argument, the educational level of the parents has a strong effect on children's attitudes. Model 3 includes mothers' opinion towards the EU. Similarly, confirming the dynamic-socialization hypothesis, parental attitudes are a strong predictor for children's attitudes. There is both a within- and a between-effect of parental attitudes. Hence, while Euroskeptic parents are more likely to have Euroskeptic children, also changes in attitudes are correlated between parents and children. Model 4 in Table 1 shows that the effect of parental education becomes weaker once accounting for parental Euroskepticism, whereas the effect of parental Euroskepticism remains basically the same. Taken together, models 2–4 suggest that the structural socialization effect is partly mediated through dynamic socialization. What is more, when it concerns explaining over-time variation, the within-effect of parental Euroskepticism is the strongest predictor in the entire model. This again suggests that dynamic socialization at home plays an important factor in Euroskepticism. It should be noted, however, that we estimate a hybrid model, which does not consider the causal direction of the effect. Hence, it is possible that not only parents influence their children, but that children influence their parents too. Note that the between-effects of respondents' education on attitudes do not fully disappear even when accounting for parental education and attitudes. This means that parental socialization alone cannot explain the educational differences in Euroskepticism.

### *Robustness Checks*

The following robustness checks are reported in the appendix in the online supporting information. First, we estimated the models in Table 1 using the three categories of the dependent variable and coding the "neither" category as 0 instead of 1 (Appendices S1 and S2 in the online supporting information). It could be that education has a liberalizing effect only among certain groups of people, or in certain contexts. For example, the effect of education could be contingent on intergenerational social mobility: It might be more pronounced for high-educated children of low-educated parents because education exposes them to values that are different to their parents' values (Lindgren, Oskarsson, & Persson, 2019). Conversely, there may be a ceiling effect for children of high-educated parents: Their education may not contribute much anymore because they already grew up in an environment that is favorable of globalization. We tested whether the effect of education varies by parents' educational outcome by including interaction terms (Appendix S3 in the online supporting information). However, none of the interactions is statistically significant. Similarly, the interaction term of level of education  $\times$  parental attitudes did not yield a significant effect either. In Appendix S4 in the online supporting information, we estimated models for a sample where we have information on both the father and the mother. If parental attitudes align, the effect is stronger: If both parents are Euroskeptic, the effect is stronger than when only one of the parents is Euroskeptic.

Furthermore, the effect of parental attitudes could be weaker for older respondents, or for individuals who have left home. We thus estimated models including the relevant interaction terms (Appendix S5 in the online supporting information). The effect of parental attitudes is indeed slightly weaker for older respondents; however, this does not hold for leaving the parental home. While it is likely that the effect of parental attitudes varies with life course events, an explanation might be that we do not have information on the frequency of contact with the parents, something which

might mediate the effect. Last, besides cultural capital, economic capital in the household might affect Euroskepticism, and more importantly, these may be correlated. In Appendix S6 in the online supporting information, we have estimated models including equivalized net household income; the inclusion of income does not substantially change the effect of parental education (nor that of parental Euroskepticism), suggesting that the effect of parental education is due to cultural rather than material resources.

In Appendix S7 in the online supporting information, we estimate a model that controls for interest in politics, left-right self-placement, life satisfaction, satisfaction with democracy, and trust in the federal government. Inclusion of these attitudes does not alter the findings substantially. Furthermore, it may be argued that attitudes do not change after finishing education, but with some delay. In Appendix S8 in the online supporting information, we estimated models with a one-year “lead” of the dependent variable (thus introducing a one-year lag in the independent variables). The results are substantially the same.

Last, it may be argued that, rather than increased, labor-market competition is reduced for individuals who transition to employment, as they were successful in obtaining employment and no longer compete for jobs. In Appendix S9 in the online supporting information, we include the item “Did you have arrears of payments of household bills in the last 12 months?” (*yes/no*). Individuals who are most likely to perceive competition, are those who transition to employment but do have problems with the payment of bills. Table S9 in the online supporting information shows that there is no statistically significant effect of having arrears in payment on Euroskepticism (Model 1), nor does this effect differ for those who transition to employment (Model 2). We also do not find that these effects vary by level of education (Model 3). Based on this robustness check, we thus do not find evidence either in line with the labor-market competition argument (Hypothesis 2).

## Discussion

Existing research has developed three sets of explanations as to why higher educated individuals tend to be less skeptical about European integration: Cognitive skills acquired in education, exposure to cosmopolitan values at school, and higher competitiveness on an international labor market. However, little attention has been paid to the possibility that educational differences in attitudes might preexist education and be the result of parental socialization. Indeed, parental background might influence both the attitudes and the school trajectories of their offspring and hence lead to self-selection into education.

This article has sought to fill this gap by analyzing data of a Swiss longitudinal panel survey. Using hybrid models, we analyzed the differences in Euroskepticism between Swiss citizens aged between 13 and 30 with high and low levels of educational attainment, and we estimated the changes in attitudes as individuals obtain higher levels of education and enter the labor market. Replicating previous research, our results showed that in Switzerland, too, there is an educational divide in Euroskepticism. However, we do not find evidence that individuals become less Euroskeptic as they go through education, which would support the argument that differences in political and social attitudes are the result of cognitive skills or values acquired while in education. By way of contrast, parental education and attitudes were found to be strongly related to their children’s attitudes.

### *Educational Differences Exist Prior to Secondary Education*

Our analyses show that differences between highly and low-educated individuals start before adolescents reach the age of 13. Indeed, already in lower secondary education, students in the secondary general track (very often leading to higher education) are less likely to be Euroskeptic than students in secondary vocational tracks and those who only obtained primary education. These

findings suggest that what happens during childhood and early adolescence—such as within the family—is crucial in determining people’s social and political attitudes. We observed clear evidence in support of the parental socialization argument. Both parental education and parental attitudes on EU membership are strongly related to the respective attitudes of their offspring. When parents become more Euroskeptic, their children are about 8% more likely to become Euroskeptic too. Furthermore, when being compared to non-Euroskeptic parents, Euroskeptic parents are 36% more likely to have Euroskeptic children. Furthermore, the effect of parental attitudes is strongest for younger individuals. Since youngsters of today replicate the educational track of their parents to a greater extent than previous generations (Schneebaum, Rumplmaier, & Altzinger, 2015), education might therefore solidify rather than change their attitudes.

Our findings dovetail nicely with the results of a recent article by Kunst and colleagues (2020) which used a regression-discontinuity design on the impact of increasing the compulsory schooling age in the middle of the 20th century on Euroskepticism and also found no conclusive effect of additional education on Euroskepticism. Taken together, these two studies challenge the widely held belief that education in itself has a causal effect on Euroskepticism.

Nonetheless, it might be too early to dismiss the role of education in fostering open attitudes altogether. The fact that the between-effects of education remained significant when controlling for parental socialization suggests that other explanations besides parental socialization play a role too. For example, education might impact attitudes at an earlier stage than lower secondary school, and the fact that we find an educational divide in attitudes already at age 13 does not contradict this argument. There is little empirical research into political learning during childhood (Hess & Torney-Purta, 2006; Jennings, 2007). Researchers come to varying conclusions on when political learning actually starts, and their findings seem to depend on the complexity and level of abstraction of political issues involved (Sears & Brown, 2013; Van Deth, Abendschön, & Vollmar, 2011). Hence, it is possible that students have already formed their opinion on European integration before the age of 13. However, it is likely that orientations formed during childhood are more influenced by parents than by the school: In Switzerland, civic education is taught in upper secondary education only, and the separation into tracks leading to university education or vocational training starts at the age of 12, so before that age, children are socialized in the same system.

#### *Limitations and Avenues for Future Research*

Some limitations of the present study deserve some attention. First, while we did not observe changes as young Swiss citizens go through education, there might still be differences between study programs and subjects that we were unable to capture. Indeed, certain studies likely foster cognitive mobilization more than others, or some subjects render students more likely to develop cosmopolitan attitudes than others (Guimond, Dambrun, Michinov, & Duarte, 2013; Lindgren et al., 2019; Surrige, 2016). Future studies on the impact of higher education should, when possible, distinguish between fields of study.

Second, we found limited support for the argument that educational differences in Euroskepticism are a result of varying competitiveness on the job market. These cost-benefit calculations should become most evident once individuals enter the labor market and are exposed to international competition. Our analyses show that individuals with secondary vocational education become slightly more Euroskeptic once they enter the labor market. There are two potential explanations for the limited effect of labor-market transitions on Euroskepticism. First, educational differences in Euroskepticism might simply not reflect self-interest. Second, education might be a poor measure of competitiveness on the labor market. Polavieja (2016) shows that educational attainment and skills have independent impacts on individuals’ anti-immigrant sentiment, hinting at different processes through which subjective and objective bases of threat operate.

Finally, while our study has high internal validity and relies on unique panel data that are not available for other countries, we cannot exclude the possibility that education plays a role in other countries. On the one hand, early tracking in the Swiss educational system fosters track-specific socialization (Witschge et al., 2019) and should therefore increase the educational divide over time. On the other hand, the Swiss education system devotes comparatively little attention to civic education. Hence, education might matter in educational systems where civic education plays a more prominent role. Future research could build on the insights gained in this study and analyze the mechanisms underlying educational differences in Euroscepticism across countries, and they could also seek to establish which country-level factors, such as educational systems, contribute to decreasing the educational divide.

### Conclusion

By highlighting the role of parental education and parental attitudes, this article challenges conventional wisdom of the liberalizing effect of education and suggests that educational differences in Euroscepticism are (also) a question of parental socialization and self-selection into education. Parents strongly influence the attitudes of their children, and they likely influence their educational choices. Hence, policymakers and academics alike might overestimate the liberalizing power of education (Kam & Palmer, 2008).

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## Supporting Information

Additional supporting information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's web site:

**Appendix S1.** Linear Hybrid Model Predicting Preference for Staying Outside the EU, (1 “In Favor of Joining the EU,” 2 “Neither,” and 3 “In Favor of Staying Outside of the EU”)

**Appendix S2.** Linear Hybrid Model Predicting Preference for staying outside the EU, (0 “In Favor of Joining the EU,” 0 “Neither,” and 1 “In Favor of Staying Outside of the EU”)

**Appendix S3.** Linear Probability Model Predicting Preference for Staying Outside the EU, Person Fixed-Effects: Interactions

**Appendix S4.** Hybrid Model Predicting Preference for Staying Outside the EU, Attitudes Mother and Father Separately

**Appendix S5.** Linear Probability Model Predicting Preference for Staying Outside the EU, Person Fixed-Effects: Interactions

**Appendix S6.** Hybrid Model Predicting Preference for Staying Outside the EU, Adding Equalized Household Income

**Appendix S7.** Hybrid Model Predicting Preference for Staying Outside the EU

**Appendix S8.** Hybrid Model Predicting Preference for Staying Outside the EU, One Year Lead of the Dependent Variable

**Appendix S9.** Fixed Effects Model Predicting Preference for Staying Outside the EU; Including Arrears in Payment of Household Bills