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Electoral participation through life transitions

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Electoral Participation Through Life Transitions

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Resumé et mots clés

Cette dissertation a pour but d'examiner les effets des transitions adultes sur la participation électorale dans le contexte de la Grande-Bretagne et de la Suisse. En effet, un grand nombre de transitions sont considérées y compris celles qui ont lieu dans la vie personnelle et dans la vie professionnelle des individus. Les transitions étudiées dans le cadre de cette thèse sont la cohabitation/le mariage, la parentalité, le divorce ou la séparation, le chômage, la retraite et le veuvage. Deux questions de recherches vont donc être abordées: quelles sont les effets de chacune de ces transitions sur la participation électorale? Est-ce que le genre mitigent leurs effets sur le comportement politique? Dans ma revue de la littérature, je mobilise plusieurs cadres théoriques pour essayer de comprendre comment ces transitions vont influencer le vote, y compris les théories du choix rationnel, de la socialisation, de la mobilisation des ressources et des perspectives de cycle de vie. À partir de celles-ci, je développe une série d'hypothèses qui prédit la façon dont différentes transitions vont influencer la participation électorale. Afin de tester mes hypothèses, j'utilise des données de sondages d'études longitudinales à panel tels le *British Household Panel Survey* et le *Understanding Society, United Kingdom Household Longitudinal Study* ainsi que le *Swiss Household Panel*. Utiliser ce type de données me permet de coder la participation électorale avant et après chaque transition afin de voir s'il y a eu un changement au niveau de la participation électorale des individus. Pour analyser les données de la Grande-Bretagne, j'utilise des tableaux croisés avec des tests McNemars ainsi que des modèles de régressions logistiques. Dans le cas de la Suisse, j'utilise des tests t appariés ainsi que des modèles de régressions linéaires multiples. Je trouve que la majorité des transitions de vie n'exerce pas d'influence sur la participation électorale dans le contexte de la Grande-

Bretagne et de la Suisse à l'exception du veuvage et possiblement du divorce. Ces transitions mènent à un déclin dans les niveaux de participation.

Mots clés : **Transitions, mariage, cohabitation, chômage, parentalité, divorce, séparation, retraite, veuvage, participation électorale**

Abstract and key words

The goal of this dissertation is to examine the effects of adult life transitions on political participation in the context of Great Britain and of Switzerland. Many transitions will be analysed throughout the course of this thesis, including those that take place in individuals' personal and professional lives. These transitions are cohabitation or marriage, parenthood, divorce or separation, unemployment, retirement and widowhood. The questions guiding this research project are: what are the effects of each of these life transitions on electoral participation? And does gender mitigate the effects of transitions on turnout? In my review of the literature, I mobilize various theoretical frameworks to try and understand how these transitions will impact voting behaviour. I look at rational choice, socialization, resource mobilization and life course perspective theories. I then develop a series of hypotheses that predict how each life transition will influence electoral participation. In order to test these, I use data from longitudinal household panel studies such as the *British Household Panel Survey*, the *Understanding Society*, *United Kingdom Household Longitudinal Study* and the *Swiss Household Panel*. Using this type of data allows me to code electoral participation before and after each life transition and to see if there is a change in individual level participation. To analyse the data from Great-Britain I use cross-tabulations with McNemar's test along with logit regression models. For the Swiss data, I use paired t-tests and OLS regressions. I find that the majority of life transitions do not exert a significant influence on electoral participation in the context of Great Britain and Switzerland with the exception of widowhood and possibly of divorce. These transitions lead to a decline in turnout.

Key words: Transitions, marriage, cohabitation, unemployment, parenthood, divorce, separation, retirement, widowhood, electoral participation

Table of contents

List of figures

List of tables

List of Abbreviations

BHPS: British Household Panel Survey
SHP: Swiss Household Panel
UKHLS: United Kingdom Household Longitudinal Study

Pour Ulysses

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Life is delineated by a series of changes that we would call transitions. Some of these changes are planned and sought out, while others take us by surprise. Change can also occur in different facets of our lives. We experience transformations in our personal lives when we meet a partner, get married, start a family or lose someone through separation or widowhood. We also live through changes in our careers when we get our first job, change fields, get a promotion or a demotion, face unemployment or decide to retire. Some life transitions are widely perceived as being positive while others are often associated with negative outcomes. As such, transitions can represent times of excitement or of turmoil and can lead to heightened emotional states. Whether or not a transition is deliberative or not, they are periods of upheaval and require certain adjustments.

But what exactly is a life transition? We all experience them, so why are they so difficult to define? Why do so few studies in the field of political science try to understand their influence on individual level behaviour? This thesis will expand on various definitions of transitions, but for now, let us suppose that they are major life changes. These changes introduce paradigm shifts in an individual's life and can challenge their view of themselves or of society at large. They may also alter how we live our day to day lives. For example, an average day may look very different after becoming a parent or retiring. As such, life transitions often create periods of stress and instability in the life cycle. It is therefore important to understand how these changes affect our behaviour, and in this case, our political behaviour. The purpose of this dissertation is to understand how life changes such as marriage and cohabitation, parenthood, divorce or separation, unemployment, retirement and widowhood affect voter turnout in the context of Great Britain and

Switzerland. This thesis makes two distinct contributions: a theoretical and an empirical one. The theoretical contribution involves creating a typology of life transitions based on two dimensions: whether the change is personal or professional and whether it involves a role gain or a role loss. The empirical contribution consists of estimating the effect of a series of transitions on voter turnout in two distinct contexts.

This brief introduction explains why it is important to study life transitions, outlines the purpose and objectives of this dissertation, the methods used to answer each of my research questions, and a brief overview of the chapters to come along with the questions they seek to address.

Puzzle

Research on political socialization and behaviour often focuses on childhood and adolescence. However, it is unlikely that our political development stops evolving after we reach a certain age. We know this to be false. After all, age is a good predictor of voter turnout, with older people being more likely to vote than younger electors (i.e. Glenn and Grimes, 1968; Smets, 2012, etc.). It is therefore probable that certain events in adulthood lead to changes in behaviour. For this reason, I look at the impact of adult transitions on individuals' political conduct. Despite the importance of transitions in our everyday lives, few studies have looked at their impact on political participation, and on turnout in particular. The few studies published on the subject tend to look at only one transition or are restricted to a single context. For example, Elder and Greene have written several articles comparing the political preferences of parents compared to those of individuals without children. These studies are solidly anchored in the American context (Elder and Greene, 2007; 2012 and 2016). A lack of longitudinal data also means that we are often

left observing differences between groups (as in the above examples where parents are compared to non-parents) rather than comparing the same individual before and after a life transition. Some researchers have estimated the impact of marriage on political behaviour such as Hayes (1992) and Stoker and Jennings (1995) but these two studies only look at a single context (Australia and the USA respectively). A recent study (Rapeli et al., 2021) looks at multiple major life changes, but again this is done in a single context and relies heavily on the literature on voting as a habit. Recognizing the role of transitions can also help understand the influence of sociodemographic variables on turnout since transitions represent rare occurrences where an individual's profile may change. My principal research question is: do life transitions affect electoral participation? A secondary question is whether gender mitigates the effects of transitions on turnout.

Purpose and objectives

The purpose of this dissertation is to provide a better understanding of how life transitions influence political behaviour, and in particular, how they influence voter turnout. Are individuals more or less likely to vote after experiencing a major life change? This study aims to be the first to offer a general understanding of how multiple life transitions affect electoral participation in two different contexts. If the results are consistent in both case studies, that is, in Great Britain and Switzerland, we can be more confident that these findings may be generalized to other democratic contexts in Europe and North America. However, further research is needed in order to confirm whether or not this is the case. Regardless, this is an important exploratory step for the scholarship of life transitions and political behaviour since few studies have looked at the influence of major life events in

the political sphere. This will help to assess how this topic should be further explored in future research.

Research Design

The research design of this dissertation consists of mobilizing two data sources that allow me to identify when a life transition has taken place. I use data from the *British Household Panel Study (BHPS)* and its follow-up *Understanding Society, the United Kingdom Longitudinal Household Panel (UKHLS)* to see the impact of life transitions on electoral participation in the United Kingdom, and data from the *Swiss Household Panel (SHP)* to estimate the influence of transitions on turnout in Switzerland.

My main dependent variables are self-reported and hypothetical levels of turnout. These take slightly different forms in the context of both surveys. In the case of the BHPS, respondents are asked if they voted in the last general election. This allows me to create a variable that indicates whether or not the respondent participated in the election preceding and following a major life change. This is a binary variable taking the form of 0 if one abstained and of 1 if the respondent voted. In the SHP, the question is hypothetical in nature. In multiple waves of the panel, respondents are asked in how many federal polls they would vote if there were 10 held throughout the year. This gives us a scale variable going from 0 to 10. Although the question is hypothetical, it seeks to measure turnout and considers the aspects of referenda and of direct democracy found in the Swiss context. Again, I look at the voting behaviour before and after the transition.

In this study, I look at six different transitions. These are: marriage and cohabitation, parenthood, divorce or separation, unemployment, retirement and widowhood. Undoubtedly, there are many other life transitions that can take place in

adulthood, however, the transitions studied have been picked because they are quite common and easy to quantify using survey data (in comparison to other transitions, for example, it is very difficult to have survey data that will indicate a career change or a promotion). Both surveys ask a variety of questions in each wave on civil status and employment that make it easy to identify when a personal or professional life transition has taken place. A variable is then created in order to assess if and when a life change has occurred. In the wave prior to the transition, the transition variable is coded as a 0, it becomes 1 in the wave following the change. This makes it easy to identify individual differences in participation between time 1 and time 2.

In order to see if there is a difference in individual level participation I begin by running bivariate analyses comparing participation levels before and after each life event. This means that I only look at the behaviour of individuals who have experienced a given transition. For the BHPS, I run cross-tabulations with McNemar's test in order to see if there is a significant change in turnout after the transition. In the case of the SHP I run paired t-tests to see if there is a general shift. With both the BHPS and the SHP, I then run more complex regression analyses. These include a variety of control variables such as gender, age, age squared, level of education and a control for each year. Because the dependent variable is binary in the case of the British data I opt to run logit regressions. In the case of the SHP, I run OLS regressions. I also run regression models with interaction effects in order to see if the effect of each transition on electoral participation varies by gender.

Organization

This dissertation will be organized in three parts. The first will give an overview of the literature on life transitions and develop my theoretical framework. This chapter answers the fundamental questions that lay the groundwork for this thesis such as: what is a life transition? How can life transitions be defined and categorized? How are they experienced? This chapter also introduces the literature on life transitions in many different fields and shows that major life events influence a series of outlooks and behaviours. We will see that life changes can affect happiness levels and can lead individuals to alter behaviours such as their participation in sports. I will also look at the few studies that have linked life changes with political behaviours and attitudes. A distinction is made between cross-sectional studies and those that use longitudinal panel data. Studies that use longitudinal panel data are essential in order to truly understand the impact of life transitions. As interesting as these studies may be, there are very few of them. Most of these focus on only one life transition or on a single context. This highlights the need of further research and introduces a gap in the literature on voter turnout. The rest of the chapter mobilizes a variety of theoretical frameworks in order to develop hypotheses for the following questions: how will each life transition influence voter turnout? Will some transitions increase turnout while others depress it? Does gender mitigate the effect of major life events on electoral participation? In order to come up with a series of hypotheses, I draw on a multitude of theories used in the field of political behaviour such as rational choice, socialization, and resource mobilization theory. I also look at life course perspective theories which are often used in research on major life events in other disciplines.

The second part of the dissertation outlines the methodological considerations taken in order to execute this study. The main questions addressed in this chapter are: How have

other researchers studied life transitions? What are the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches? I discuss my own method in order to study the effect of life transitions on turnout in the context of the United Kingdom and of Switzerland. The chapter also introduces the data sources that I will be using and the benefits of using longitudinal panel studies when researching events in the life course. This chapter also presents the variables used in each model (including why certain controls are deemed relevant).

Finally, the final section of the dissertation presents my empirical findings. I present cross-tabulations with McNemar's tests and logit regressions done with the BHPS and t-tests and OLS regressions conducted with waves of the SHP. I am therefore able to answer my research questions. I show that most life transitions do not significantly influence turnout in either the United Kingdom or Switzerland. There is however one clear exception: that of widowhood. In both contexts, widowhood significantly depresses turnout. A potential second exception is that of divorce. Divorce also lowers turnout in Britain and Switzerland but is only significant in my analyses using data from the United Kingdom. In this chapter, I also compare my results to those found in other studies on life transitions and electoral participation.

The last chapter of the dissertation seeks to answer any remaining questions such as: what does this research mean for the study of life transition and political behaviour? Is the study of life transitions and political behaviour a worthwhile avenue for future research in political science? And if so, what additional research questions should be addressed?

Chapter 2: Theory

All individuals go through periods of change over the course of their lifetime, but how do these transitions influence behaviour, and more specifically, political behaviour? In this chapter, I will seek to define what is a life transition. We will see that life transitions are periods of change that lead to new interludes of stability in a person's life. This can usher an individual to take on a new role (i.e. becoming a parent) or to no longer associate with a role they have grown accustomed to (for example, after divorce or widowhood, one is no longer a spouse; after retirement, one is no longer a worker). Transitions alter various aspects of an individual's routine and represent changes in one's personal or professional life. In the first part of this chapter, I will review the literature on transitions in order to define them and to provide an overview of the ways that they have been categorized. I will then develop and discuss my own typology of life transitions based on two dimensions: whether a transition is professional or personal and whether the transition is associated with a role gain or a role loss. This classification will guide me throughout this dissertation and will also help to justify the transitions that will be studied throughout the course of this thesis. I will then examine each of the transitions that I study: cohabitation/marriage, parenthood, divorce/separation, unemployment, retirement and widowhood along with some of their repercussions on everyday life.

Following this, I will explain why life transitions matter and why they are of interest for the study of political behaviour. Research has demonstrated that life events can have a profound influence on individual's actions, activities and outlooks. For example, changes in civil status can influence habits such as exercise (Brown and Trost, 2003) and feelings of well-being (Williams and Umberson 2004). Despite this, there is very little research that

examines the relationship between life transitions and political behaviour, especially when it comes to studies on political participation. That said, I will give a detailed overview of the few articles that have looked at transitions' effects on political preferences and participation. During this exercise we will see that many of these papers use cross-sectional data and do not allow us to observe the direct impact of a transition on behaviour. Rather, these studies compare individuals with different profiles (i.e. comparing those who are married to those who are not). Although interesting, this does not allow us to see the effect on the same individual. Following an overview of cross-sectional studies, I will discuss the limited body of work that has used longitudinal data to evaluate the effect of transitions on political behaviour. I will demonstrate that the only two studies (Stoker and Jennings, 1995; Rapeli et al., 2021) that look at multiple life transitions' effect on political participation do so in a single context, that of the United States and of the United Kingdom respectively. Further research is needed in order to generalize these results. Furthermore, most of the other research papers on this subject only look at a single transition and issue (i.e. Milfont et al., 2020 look at parenthood's effect on environmentalism). This thesis will build on these studies in order to see if their results can be generalized by looking at transitions in two different contexts: that of Great Britain and Switzerland. I will also seek to give an overview of the general impact of transitions on turnout.

Finally, I will conclude this chapter by looking at different theories that aim to explain electoral participation in order to show how transitions can influence voter turnout. The theories I will cover are rational choice, socialization, resource mobilization, and life course perspective theories. I will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each of these

frameworks. Based on these theories I will develop hypotheses in relation to each transition and its impact on individual level turnout.

Life transitions

Throughout our lives we are constantly confronted with change. Many of these are small, like altering the paint colour in one's home, while others are large and can be understood as significant life events or transitions. A life transition is a period of change in between two phases of stability during the life cycle (Cowan,1991). Depending on the transition and the individual in question, these changes can be exciting, stressful or both. Once a transition is complete, the daily reality of the individual who lived through it may be very different than the one lived prior to this period.

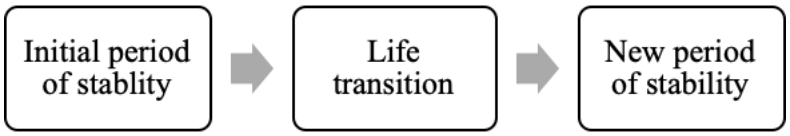
In the following section I will examine several definitions of life transitions along with the various ways that authors have categorized them. I will also develop my own typology of life transitions based on two dimensions: whether the transition is personal or professional and whether it is associated with a role gain or a role loss. Only transitions that lead to a change in role will be studied throughout the course of this thesis. I will then discuss the six transitions that will be included in my dissertation: marriage and cohabitation, parenthood, unemployment, divorce or separation, retirement, and widowhood. Four of these transitions represent changes in one's personal life while two are professional transitions. It is also in this section that I will justify my decision to treat cohabitation and marriage interchangeably along with divorce and separation.

Defining life transitions

Before assessing the value of studying life transitions and their importance on individual's outlook and behaviour, we must first and foremost define what exactly is a life transition.

According to Cowan (1991) there are two types of periods in people's lives: phases of stability and transitional phases. Transitions create life altering changes but eventually lead the individual to a new period of stability. An individual's reality or daily life is considered to be relatively stable most of the time despite the presence of small changes. However, periods of transitions are capable of overhauling that reality (Selder, 1989). The new period of stability may look very different than the one that preceded the transition. Figure 1.1 illustrates the initial period of stability, followed by the life transition and leading to a new period of stability.

Figure 1.1 Life transitions



Some authors have made the distinction between major and minor life transitions. Wheaten (1990) makes such a distinction in a study that focused on life transitions and mental health. He defines life transitions as events that alter a person's role in life. In his study, he examines divorce, pre-marital break-up, unemployment, retirement, widowhood, having one's children move out, getting married, being promoted, and having a child. He describes some of these transitions has being "major" while others are considered "minor". He defines divorce, unemployment, retirement, widowhood and having another child as major life transitions. On the other hand, pre-marital break-up, having a child move out, and getting a job promotion are seen as minor life transitions. However useful this distinction may be, it can also be perceived as being value-laden. Individuals do not all experience life transitions in the same way. For some people a pre-marital breakup may represent a large change while the transition to retirement may be less pronounced if this

transition happened gradually (for example, by slowly reducing work hours). As such it is better to turn to other definitions of what constitutes a major life transition. A major life transition can be defined as an event that causes substantial changes in an individual's work activities, free time, daily life and interpersonal relationships (Segen, 2006).

Life transitions can influence the way people think and feel. Because life transitions represent a change in a person's role, it may be unsurprising that these periods of change can influence the way individuals perceive themselves. Research in the field of psychology has extensively looked at the notion of a self-concept. The self-concept can be defined as "a general term used to refer to how someone thinks about, evaluates, or perceives themselves. To be aware of oneself is to have a concept of oneself" (McLeod, 2008). Studies have shown that the self-concept develops throughout the life cycle, especially during childhood and adolescence, and that it remains relatively stable throughout adulthood (Mortimer and Lorence 1981, Cheek and Hogan, 1983; Gecas and Mortimer, 2003). However, Mortimer and Lorence (1981) find that certain environmental factors can influence the self-concept such as one's experiences at work. It seems likely that larger changes in the work place such as unemployment and retirement and those related to other types of transitions could also impact one's sense of self.

Life transitions can have an impact that goes beyond one's perceptions of themselves. It is also important to note that life transitions are often perceived as periods of stress in an individual's life. Life transitions bring on periods of change and the adjustment period can often be challenging. This is true of all life transitions but may be more pronounced for some than for others. The way the change is experienced will ultimately vary across individuals. The pressure experienced by individuals going through

life transitions is made clear by an abundance of literature written in order to help individuals get through life transitions or to help those counselling them through this new period in their lives (e.g. examples of titles that do so include the *Handbook on Managing Life Transitions, Coping with Life Transitions*, *Managing Difficult Life transitions*, etc.). Because these periods can be seen as periods of stress, they can have large implications on people's thoughts and feelings. Many resources are present to help people cope through transitions and there is a body of research that focuses on life transitions' impact on mental health (i.e. Wheaton,1990; Strohschein et al. 2005; Lee and Gramatnev, 2007; Howard et al., 2010; etc.).

How are life transitions experienced?

If life transitions can be understood as periods of upheaval and stress in an individual's life, they can also be seen as processes. These processes may be comprised of various stages and may last for an unspecified amount of time. The transition is considered complete only once the individual settles into a new period of stability. Many authors (i.e.; Latack, 1984; Adams and Spencer, 1988; Nicholson and West, 1990; Bridges, 2004; Musamali,2018) have developed models in order to explain how a transition is lived by describing the different phases related to them. In the following section, I will describe various models of transition. The majority of these models present transitions as occurring in steps while others were developed in order to ascertain whether a given transition will lead to heightened levels of stress. These models also introduce the idea that certain factors may mitigate the effects of the transition such as the resources at the individual's disposal.

One of the most well-known models of transition was developed by Adams and Spencer (1988). The authors stipulated that a life transition is experienced in seven stages.

The first stage is “destabilization and losing focus” in which the individual may feel overwhelmed by the changes they are experiencing. In this initial period, it may be difficult for the individual to keep things in perspective or even to concentrate. It is followed by a second stage, that of “minimizing the impact”. During this period the subject tries to act as normal as possible in the hopes of diminishing the impact of the transition. Some may even experience denial at this stage. Stage three is when an individual begins to “question [their] self-worth” this is the point where one may begin to feel more intensely the stress of the transition. It is in this stage that feelings of depression or anger may also arise. The authors point out that this stage and these feelings can even be experienced when a person wanted or initiated the transition. It is at this point that they may be faced with the size of the change which can lead to experiencing thoughts related to “self-doubt” and “self-questioning”. The following step, or stage four is called “letting go of the past”. In this stage of the process an individual may look back at an idealised version of their life pre-transition but must eventually let go in order to move forward with their lives. In stage five, one begins to “test the new situation”. This represents the time-point in which one begins to embrace change and to develop more self-confidence in their new reality or role. This is followed by stage six which is characterized by a “search for meaning” in which an individual tries to understand some of the activity that took place earlier in the process and may seek to evaluate the meaning of the transition within their life cycle. Finally, the last stage identified by Adams and Spencer (1988) is “integrating the experience”. This is the last stage and it completes the transition. The transition no longer requires the majority of the person’s resources and stops being a constant concern in their life. The authors also highlight many factors that influence the way someone experiences a transition. These

include factors such as whether the transition is a new experience, the individual's expectations related to the transition, one's age, and the number of transitions experienced.

A simpler model of transition was developed by Bridges (2004) and is composed of three stages: that of an ending, a neutral zone and finally of a new beginning. Every transition is thought to begin with somewhat of an ending. The individual in question must therefore leave something in the past. For this reason, transitions can often lead a person to feel as if they have lost something and may create an emotional reaction. The following stage is that of the neutral zone in which one is preparing for the next stage, however, this may sometimes lead to feelings of unknowns, etc. Finally, the third and final stage is that of new beginnings where the individual enters an exploratory phase. This resembles the final step described by Adams and Spencer (1988).

Nicholson and West (1990) also developed a model of life transitions. Again, this model treats life transitions as a process involving multiple stages but unlike the other models we have seen so far, this one is based solely on transitions within the workplace. His model has four stages: 1) preparation, 2) encounter, 3) adjustment and 4) stabilization. In the first stage, individuals start preparing for the transition by developing their expectations and feelings. In the following stage the individual begins to cope with the transition and may find meaning in it. In the adjustment stage he or she begins to fully develop their new role and may build new relationships within the workplace. Finally, the last stage in this model is a period of stabilisation where the employee becomes more effective with both his work and the people he/she works with.

This model also introduces three distinct concepts: recursion, disjunction and interdependence. The first concept suggests that we are all constantly in a transition cycle

or getting prepared for potential transitions. The second implies that there will often be a need to use coping mechanisms in order to deal effectively with transitions. This may involve resorting to strategies to lessen the amount of stress present throughout the transition. The last concept suggests that changes will often lead to more changes. For example, a work transition may eventually lead to future work transitions, etc.

Latack (1984), like Nicholson and West, worked on a model that aims to explain and understand transitions in the workplace. The model accounts for whether or not a given career transition will create stress. The first element in his model is the "magnitude of career transitions". This suggests that if the career change is small and resembles the worker's previous position it will bring on minimal stress in comparison to that associated with a much larger move. His model then suggests that two variables may mitigate the effect of the transition: the individual's role and the coping strategies at one's disposal. The role variables included in the model are those of "role ambiguity" and "role overload". Changing one's work position can create some complications related to one's role at work because it can create a situation where the individual may not be sure how to fulfill one's new role or may feel like this new role is beyond their capabilities and resources. Both of these scenarios can lead to an increase in work-related stress. However, the coping strategies that an individual has can contribute to a successful transition. Other mitigating factors such as transitions outside of the work place can also influence the transition. If an individual is experiencing stress related to transitions at home at the same time as those at work, one is expected to experience more stress than those who are only experiencing a transition at work. The level of stress experienced by an individual throughout the

transition can influence their performance, with a general understanding that higher levels of stress will be detrimental to performance.

Many of the models we have seen present life transitions as periods of stress within an individual's life. They show that a transition may be less turbulent if an individual has resources or coping strategies at their disposal that can help them with the impending changes. These coping strategies include things like relying on one's support network, the capacity to alter negative thoughts, and having effective ways with which one can reduce stress (Brammer, 1992). This means that transitions will not be experienced equally among individuals because the availability of certain resources can influence the process.

Typologies of life transitions

Now that we have seen what is a life transition and how they are experienced it is imperative to look at the ways in which these have been organized and classified in the literature. Since the 1970s, many authors have attempted to categorize life-transitions into subgroups. In the following paragraphs I will summarize various typologies of life transitions. As we will see, authors sometimes try to make the distinction between "normative" and "non-normative" transitions. This type of classification differentiates between changes that typically occur in most individual's life course and those that do not. However, the majority of typologies that we will see in this section look at the trigger of the transition in order to categorize them. For example, some transitions are seen as being the result of some forethought while others just happen. This is the basis of Selder's (1989) distinction between "deliberative" and "forced" transitions and Adams et al's (1976) typology based on both the voluntariness of a transition and its predictability. Towards the end of this section we will also see two typologies of life transitions that were explicitly

created in order to classify changes in one's career trajectory: Louis's (1980) and Bruce's (1994). Finally, I will discuss some of the limitations of these systems and explain why it is important to develop a new categorization in order to guide me throughout the course of this dissertation.

Cowan (1991) points out that many authors that have studied transitions have made a distinction between "normative" and "non-normative" life transitions. Normative life transitions are considered to be those that are expected and experienced by virtually everyone in a population or at least by a majority of people, Non-normative transitions are more unexpected and less common. To illustrate what can be considered a normative transition Cowan gives us the example of puberty. Almost everyone who lives to be a certain age will experience it, even though experiences might differ. Another example of a normative transition may be something experienced by the majority of the population, such as entering the labour force. Non-normative events or transitions are often perceived to be those that are linked with certain unpredictable changes, such as losing one's home following a natural disaster or going to war.

Liddle et al. (2004) categorize life transitions in a very similar way but introduce three categories. They are: developmental transitions, situational transitions and those related to health or illnesses. Developmental transitions would fall within the category of "normative transitions" which are anticipated and usually correlated with attaining a certain age. On the other hand, situational transitions are unexpected and are not directly linked with a period in the life span. The final category is related to changes in one's health status. However, this categorization is not self-evident because certain transitions (like marriage) may be qualified as "normative" because they tend to happen at a certain point in the life

course but the timing of the transition can vary widely between individuals (ex: there are certain ages where more people tend to get married but one can get married at any age). Cowan (1991) points out that scholars sometimes pay too much attention to the distinction between normative and non-normative transitions. This causes them to focus too much on the event that triggers the transition and not enough on the process itself. This same critique can be applied to many of the typologies that we will see.

Even though one must not exclusively look at the elements that bring on transitions, it is still important to understand the various mechanisms that can bring on a period of transition in an individual's life. According to Selder "a life transition is initiated when a person's current reality is disrupted. This disruption can originate in a crucial event or from a determined decision" (1989, p.437). Some transitions are forced on people. To illustrate how this may be the case, Selder gives us the example of a spinal cord injury. Individuals typically do not choose to get injured, usually, an injury is the result of an accident. This type of "forced transition" can have important ramifications on someone's life and can influence the way a person will perform many of their daily tasks. The individual's reality after such a life-changing event may look very different than the one lived prior to the accident. Other transitions are much more deliberative and are brought on by the individual in question. In order to illustrate this type of transition and to contrast it with that of a forced transition, Selder gives us a different example: that of divorce. Divorce is considered to be a deliberative transition because one needs to decide to get a divorce. Indeed, this transition often comes after much thought and requires many steps in order to be finalized.

Although describing transitions as being either "deliberative" or "forced" or "normative" and "non-normative" can be useful, many transitions do not fall within such

clear-cut categories. For example, the transition to parenthood is often deliberate, this is the case when people try to start a family. However, the transition to parenthood may sometimes be unexpected and unplanned. Different typologies have therefore been used to categorize transitions. Adams et al (1976) developed a categorization of life transitions based on two dimensions: the predictability of the transition and whether or not the transition is voluntary. According to this categorization, transitions can be classified in four different ways: those that are predictable and voluntary, those that are predictable and involuntary, those that are unpredictable and voluntary, and finally those that are unpredictable and involuntary. A predictable and voluntary transition is both anticipated and wanted, an example of this can be something as simple as entering marriage or a partnership (although there may be exceptions, such as is sometimes the case for arranged marriages, etc.). A predictable and involuntary transitions is something that is not wanted by the individual but that allows for some foresight. For example, one may be conscripted into the armed forces or be mandated to retire by a certain age. An unpredictable but voluntary transition is wanted but not necessarily foreseen, this could include a surprise promotion. Finally, the last category in this typology are transitions that are both unwanted and not anticipated. This can include a variety of life events such as accidents or the emergence or discovery of health issues. This type of categorization allows us to classify almost all life transitions. Unfortunately, one of the drawbacks of using this typology is that some of the same transitions will be categorized differently based on certain individual traits or characteristics. For example, for one individual a promotion may be both voluntary and unpredictable, while for someone else this same transition was predictable. We can imagine many cases where this could happen, which makes this typology highly subjective.

Another categorization was developed by Schlossberg (1989). She described four different types of transitions: anticipated transitions, unanticipated transitions, non-events and sleeper transitions. Anticipated transitions represent changes that are expected such as graduating, joining the labour force, getting married and having children. Although these transitions can be deliberative or forced, they are often perceived as being expected in adult life and are often planned. Unanticipated transitions on the other hand, are unpredictable. These transitions are not expected to occur at any particular given time in the life cycle and can include losing one's job, getting diagnosed with a disease or having an accident. Non-events are different than the other transitions we have seen so far but they can also influence an individual's life. They occur when a transition is expected but then fails to happen. For example, an individual may expect to have children but be unable to have them, which would prevent them from experiencing the transition to parenthood. This can have important consequences because it can create a gap in how a person pictured one's life and reality. Finally, sleeper transitions occur gradually over a period of time. As such, the individual may not realise that they are experiencing a transition. A sleeper transition can be something as simple as slowly losing a friendship or gaining a new skill. Regardless of how these transitions come to be, what is important to retain is that they have the potential to change one's daily reality and can have important implications on the way individuals see themselves, in their perception of certain things, and, ultimately, on how they behave.

As we have seen, transitions can create a great deal of change in an individual's life, but so can changes in one's career trajectory or employment status. Adults spend a great deal of time at work. Whether we like it or not, work represents an important aspect of our lives. Indeed, the average person will spend around 90 000 hours at work throughout

their lifetime, which represents around one third of our lives (Pryce-Jones, 2000, p.12). Because of this, some scholars have attempted to create various typologies of the different types of transitions experienced in the workplace. Louis (1980) developed a typology of inter-role career transitions that is composed of five distinct categories. These include transitions that lead to one's entry into the labour force, changing roles within the same organization, moving to a different organization, changing professions and leaving the labour pool. Each of these five transitions can happen in a variety of ways. Entry into the labour force can represent a young person's first employment after graduation but can also include re-entry events such as coming back from parental leave or from a sabbatical. Changing roles within the same organization where one is currently employed is also considered to be a significant transition because one's role is likely to be different in the new position. The employee is also likely to work with different people in this new role, they will have to follow different processes and also have access to different resources. Changing professions is a transition that takes place when an individual completely changes career paths, when this happens one is introduced to an environment that may have very different norms and standards than one's previous employment. Finally, the last inter-role category identified by Louis is leaving the labour pool. This includes a myriad of transitions that can lead to one not working such as being let go (unemployment), retiring or taking a leave of absence. Louis (1980) also identifies a series of intra-role transitions in which a person experiences a type of career transition without necessarily leaving their current job or gaining a new role. These intra-role transitions include things such as adopting a new style of work based on experience or when one's personal life may come into conflict with one's work role.

Bruce (1994) built on this typology in order to extend Louis's categorization of career transitions. One of his critiques of the original typology is that it does not make sufficient distinctions. For example, changing roles within the same organization does not distinguish between a promotion or a demotion. Bruce's typology is also based on five categories: entry events, promotion events, lateral moves, resignation and retirement. He also adds two dimensions to these five categories: the desirability of the transition and the magnitude of the transition. These detailed typologies of career trajectories and transitions highlight the variety of changes that may take place over the course of one's career and that may require the individual to adjust to new circumstances. In this study I will look at both personal and professional life transitions because they both represent important periods of change in an individual's life. Looking at personal transitions and career transitions does not need to be a mutually exclusive exercise.

Table 1.1 summarizes the various typologies that were developed in order to classify both professional and personal life transitions.

Table 1.1 Summary of life transitions typologies

Typology Name	Type of transitions	Categories
Adams et al (1976)	All	A four-category typology based on the following types, each of these types is a combination of two dimensions: predictability and voluntariness. 1) Predictable and voluntary 2) Predictable and involuntary 3) Unpredictable and voluntary 4) Unpredictable and involuntary
Louis (1980)	Professional transitions	A five-category typology based on the following types: 1) Entering the labor pool. 2) Taking on a different role or responsibility within the same organization. 3) Moving from one organization to another 4) Changing professions or occupational specialization. 5) Leaving the labour pool
Schlossberg et al (1995)	All	A four-category typology based on the following types: 1) Anticipated transitions 2) Unanticipated transitions 3) Non-events 4) Sleeper events
Bruce (1994)	Professional transitions	A five-category typology based on the following categories: (1) Entry events (2) Promotion events (3) Lateral moves (4) Resignation (5) Retirement And two dimensions: (1) Desirability (2) Magnitude

Liddle, Carlson and Mckenna (2004)	All transitions	A three-category typology based on the following categories: (1) Developmental transition (2) Situational transition (3) Health and illness related transition

Typology of life transitions used in this study

The typologies we have seen so far are useful in helping us understand how life transitions are categorized and how they have been studied in previous research. However, they do not allow me to easily classify the life transitions that I will be studying or to identify the life transitions that should be studied within the course of this thesis. In order to do this, I will create my own typology. This will allow me to classify transitions using two dimensions: whether the transition happens in the individual's personal life (which will include all transitions related to civil status, having children, etc.) or one's professional life (which includes all transitions related to the work life including entering and leaving the workforce and changes at work such as getting promoted or demoted, etc.). The second dimension is related to whether the transition leads to a role gain or to a role loss. Only transitions that lead to a substantial role gain or role loss will be studied throughout the course of this dissertation. Not all transitions are related to role change (this is the case for sleeper transitions and for all intra-role transitions identified by Louis (1980)), therefore not all transitions will be included. For example, having an illness or an accident can be an important transition for an individual, but this transition does not necessarily lead to a role gain or loss (although it may trigger events that could lead to shifts in one's personal or professional life such as going on disability leave or losing one's employment). Table 1.2 illustrates how different life transitions fall within this typology.

One may ask why these two dimensions are particularly important and why they were selected over other possible dimensions. The first dimension makes the distinction between the personal and the professional. This distinction is fairly intuitive. It is easy to identify which transitions take place in our work lives and which ones happen in our personal lives. When we hear people discussing their work-live balance it becomes clear that individuals themselves make the distinction between these two facets of their lives. Although the personal and the professional can impact each other, they are often viewed as separate. As such, I believe it is important to differentiate between professional and personal life transitions. All life transitions can easily fit within this category. If a transition takes place or is related to work it is a professional transition. If it is not, it is a personal one. The second dimension is that of a role gain or of a role loss. This dimension makes it easy to identify which life transitions are to be included by providing a clear criterion for inclusion. If the transition does not lead to the gain or the loss of a role it is excluded. This allows me to select transitions without making normative claims. As we have seen earlier in the chapter, distinguishing between major and minor life events can sometimes leave us trying to decide which transitions are more important than others. My typology seeks to avoid making any normative claims or to create a "hierarchy" or transitions. Although individuals may describe certain transitions as more salient than others, this is deeply personal and can vary from person to person. This dimension provides a clear way to sort through potential transitions. My typology also seeks to avoid differentiating between anticipated and unanticipated transitions. This is because there is always the possibility that what is expected for someone may not be for someone else and vice versa. For example, the transition to parenthood can be both planned or unplanned. Even the transition to

widowhood, which is usually unanticipated, may not be completely unexpected for someone whose partner had a terminal illness. The two dimensions are chosen because they allow us to classify life transitions without having to make normative claims or guesses about how people experience a transition.

Table 1.2 Typology of Life Transitions

Dimensions	Role Gain	Role Loss
Personal	• Marriage/Cohabitation • Parenthood	• Divorce/Seperation • Children leaving home • Widowhood
Professional	• First employment • Promotion	• Unemployment • Demotion • Retirement

Unfortunately, not all life transitions that fall within this categorization will be studied in the course of this research. Throughout this dissertation, I will study six adult life transitions: marriage/cohabitation, parenthood, divorce/separation, unemployment, retirement and widowhood. These transitions will be studied because they offer a clear breaking point which makes it easier to identify the time directly preceding and following the transition (making it easier to code t1 and t2 in survey data).

In this study, marriage and cohabitation will be studied as a single transition (for more information on the coding of these transitions, please see the methodology chapter). It is however important to note that many studies have made distinctions between marriage and cohabitation (Nock, 1995; Laufer and Gemici, 2011; Lampard 2014; Horowitz et al., 2019). For example, although most couples who are married or cohabited express a certain level of trust in their partners, married couples express more trust that their partners would

be faithful to them, would act in their best interest, would tell them the truth or think their partner would handle money responsibly (Horowitz et al., 2019).

Even though there are some differences between marriage and cohabitation, cohabitating also distinguishes itself from dating which may put the cohabitating couple in a unique situation where they face issues that are common in both dating and marriage. Indeed, Rhoades et al (2012) show that cohabitating couples distinguish themselves from dating pairs by being more committed to each other, expressing a higher likelihood of one day marrying their partners and have a higher degree of material constraints that could potentially prevent them from ending the relationship. Material constraints include items such as owning a pet or a home together, signing a lease together and having a joint bank account. Using a longitudinal sample, the authors also show that as soon as a couple begins to cohabitate, the material constraints holding them together begin to increase. The material constraints that cohabitating couples are likely to face when separating from their partners resemble those experienced by a married couple divorcing. Also, many elements present in the transition to marriage are likely to emerge when a couple begins to cohabitate. Couples also express similar reasons for deciding to cohabit or to get married, the primary reason given by most couples for either arrangement is love, with 73% of American cohabitators and 90% of married couples expressing this a primary reason for either cohabitation or marriage (Horowitz et al., 2019).

It is also important to note that in many western countries, cohabitation has become much more widespread than in previous decades, indicating that a cultural shift is taking place. In the United States, 78% of young adults believe that it is acceptable to live with a partner even if they never plan to marry (Horowitz et al., 2019). Indeed, the age of first

marriage has gone up in recent years and this has largely been replaced by couples deciding to cohabitate. In the early to mid-20th century cohabitating was uncommon, and usually marriage represented the first time that a couple lived together. When taking into consideration cohabitation, the age of the first union has only slightly declined in comparison to previous generations (Bumpass et al., 1991). Living together may therefore represent an important transition on par with that of marriage. For these reasons, marriage and cohabitation will be used interchangeably within this study. For the same reason, divorce and separation will also be treated interchangeably.

Some transitions will be excluded such as first entering the workforce because it is typically associated with other large life changes (such as leaving school or the parental home). Identifying the initial transition into the workplace is also difficult because some individuals enter the workforce while they are still in school (whether through part-time work or through other programs), which would make it difficult to evaluate when one has truly entered the work force (is the transition at first employment or at first "permanent" or "full-time" employment?) including this transition would require difficult distinctions that are not obvious or clear-cut. However, the most important difficulty related to studying this original transition into the workplace is the young age of the people experiencing it which makes it unlikely that they have sufficient electoral experience to compare their voting behaviour before or after the transition. Another transition that falls easily within my typology are career moves made within employment such as a promotion, demotion or a career shift. The reason for excluding these types of transitions is simply because they are difficult to identify using survey data. The surveys used in the course of this study do include data on employment but it is not clear when a given career transition is a promotion

or a demotion (and indicators such as household income may not be the most useful in order to evaluate this). For this reason, this study will focus solely on the above listed transitions. In the next section of the chapter I will discuss why life transitions are an important avenue for research on political behaviour and provide an overview of the few studies that have been done on the subject.

Why are life transitions important?

Life transitions are important in the study of individual development because they have the capacity to influence both attitudes and behaviour. Everyone experiences transitions throughout their lives. These periods of change are therefore essential to our understanding of the life cycle. But how can transitions influence political behaviour and political opinions? In this section I will provide a detailed overview of the literature on life transitions and politics and more specifically on how life transitions relate to political outlook and participation.

Life transitions and politics

While surveying the literature on life transitions and politics, I will make the distinction between two types of studies: cross-sectional studies and longitudinal studies. Cross-sectional studies allow us to compare individuals that have undergone a transition in comparison to individuals who have not undergone a transition. These surveys take place over a single time period. As such, they do not allow us to see the effect of a transition per se, rather they signal differences between different states (for example, they may show us differences between unmarried and married people) but they cannot show us differences at the individual level before and after a transition. As we will see, there are many cross-sectional studies that allow us to see differences in behaviour and outlook based on an

individual's sociodemographic profile. When it comes to studying transitions, the gold standard is to use longitudinal data in order to be able to see the direct effect of a transition. This type of study allows us to observe the same individual at multiple different points in time. This permits us to see whether or not there is a change in behaviour or opinion following a transition. Studies that have looked at life transitions typically tend to use longitudinal data. However, studies on life transitions in the field of political behaviour are few and far in between. I will look at the studies that have used longitudinal panel data in order to study transitions in great detail. Although the articles I will discuss constitute an important beginning, I will show that much more research needs to be done in order to understand this topic and to develop this sub-field. I will also highlight the strengths and weaknesses of these studies in order to demonstrate how my dissertation will contribute to this literature.

Cross sectional studies

Marriage/ Cohabitation

We can begin to observe the emergence of cross-sectional studies comparing the political behaviour of married and unmarried people in the 1980s (e.g. Kingston and Finkel, 1987; Wersberg,1987; Plutzer and McBurnett, 1991; Hayes 1993; etc.). Kingston and Finkel decided to explore the differences in political attitudes and participation when it was made clear that there were some differences in voting choice in the 1984 presidential election. Using data from the 1984 American Election Studies, the researchers confirmed that married individuals were more likely to vote for the republican candidate than those who were single or who had never been married. After a series of multivariate analyses, the authors found that married people were slightly more conservative than single ones. They

also concluded that although the data showed that married participants were more likely to vote than the unmarried, the relationship was not significant in their multivariate analysis. It seemed as though single people were more likely to participate in a variety of political activities compared to married ones. Age also represented an important control in this study of marital status on political opinions and behaviours. For young and middle aged American, marriage was linked to being more conservative and participating less. However, for elderly people, this was not the case. Elderly electors who were single were more conservative and participated less than their married counterparts.

Wersberg (1987) also explored the marriage gap in voting preferences in the United States by publishing an article in the same year. The author pointed out that the marriage gap in vote choice was not a new phenomenon and that data from the American National Election Study shows that this gap emerged in the 1972 presidential election and continued from that point onwards. He also noticed that this gap was smaller than that of other more conventional cleavages in the American electorate but remained important because unmarried individuals represent a large part of the electorate. For example, in 1984, 36% of the American voting public was unmarried. Differences between these two groups are therefore numerically important (perhaps even more so than differences between other groups). The author demonstrates that married people vote more for republican candidates by 10-15 percentage points but when exploring the gap, he concludes that the differences between unmarried and married individuals can be explained by two other sociodemographic variables: ethnicity and income. When controlling for ethnicity, Wersberg finds that the gap is greatly reduced. This is because Caucasian voters were more likely to be married and are already more likely to support republican candidates while

Black voters are less likely to be married and are more likely to support democratic candidates. When controlling for this factor, the author notices that there is still a gap of 6 percentage points between married and unmarried white voters when it comes to supporting republican candidates. However, this gap disappears when he controls for income. Married people are more likely to have higher incomes when both partners work, which explains the rest of the difference.

Because both of these studies used the same data but arrived at different conclusions, Plutzer and McBurnett decided to investigate the matter further (1991) using the same dataset. The authors suggest that it is important to look at family structure when studying the effects of marriage, especially considering that marriage began changing in the late 20th century. They point to the importance of women in the workforce, creating different and less traditional marriages. Nevertheless, they conclude that there is a marriage gap in vote choice and that it should be further explored.

There have been fewer cross-sectional studies that have looked at marriage and participatory behaviour. However, some authors have suggested that married people tend to turnout to vote more than those who are single (Denver, 2008; Wolfinger and Wolfinger, 2008). This is somewhat at odds with Kingston and Finkel's findings but may suggest that marital status influences the types of political participatory behaviour that a person chooses to engage in.

Parenthood

Cross-sectional studies have also looked at parenthood and political behaviour. These studies seek to see if parents have different political opinions and preoccupations than individuals who do not have children. In the United States, political scientists Laurel Elder

and Stephen Greene have studied how parenthood effects political attitudes extensively, usually by using cross-sectional data in order to compare the political attitudes of parents and of non-parents. They conducted different studies in the 2004, 2008 and 2012 American Presidential Elections. Their 2012 study wanted to assess whether parents had different political attitudes and policy preferences than those who did not have children. The authors used data from the American National Election study to see if parents viewed spending on education and childcare differently than those who did not have children living at home. They also wanted to see if parents were more liberal or conservative when it came to various social issues such as gay marriage or abortion. They hypothesized that parents will have differing opinions because parenthood represents a socialization process that will most likely alter the way an individual perceives things. They also anticipated that there would be gendered differences between mothers and fathers because previous research suggests that mothers, on average, spend more time engaging in child rearing activities. The authors found that parents, regardless of gender, tended to be more supportive towards spending on education and child care when compared to non-parents. This would coincide with their own self-interest. They were also more liberal on a social welfare index. When it came to social issues such as gay marriage, parents also tended to have more liberal opinions, but they were more conservative when it came to their opinions on abortion. The authors suggest that this may be because of parents' own personal choices (which led them to parenthood) or because being a parent may make them more susceptible to see the issue in a certain light (Elder and Greene, 2012).

In order to see if parents' opinions varied in comparison to non-parents in a non-American context, Banducci et al. (2016) used data from the European Social Survey in

2008 to see if similar results could be found throughout Europe. They were also interested in seeing whether mothers and fathers would have different policy preferences. The study found that women with children were slightly more traditional when it came to family values than those who did not have children. However, when it came to traditional family values, the largest differences were between men and women, and fathers were no more or less traditional than men without children. The authors also found that motherhood did lead to more liberal views on social welfare policies. They speculated that the reason for this may be because motherhood brings on certain maternal instincts that may be well-aligned with these policies.

Although many studies have looked at the effect of parenthood on political attitudes and preferences (i.e. Elder et al., 2007; Elder et Greene 2012; Banduccci et al., 2016; Elder et al., 2016), fewer studies have looked at the effect of parenthood on political participation or voter turnout. An early study showed slight differences in participation between parents and non-parents, with parents less likely to participate in political campaign activities (Jennings, 1979). Perhaps unsurprisingly a study conducted in Ukraine showed that parents of small children were slightly less likely to participate in out of town protests in comparison to non-parents (Nikolayenko, 2021). Some evidence also suggests that mothers are less likely to be politically engaged, but that this difference was not present when it came to voter turnout (Greenlea, 2007). A study conducted in the United States also suggests that having young children at home depresses turnout and that the effect is more pronounced for women (3.5 percentage points) than for men (2.5 percentage points) (Cools, 2020). Bhatti et al. (2019) published a study on the short-term effects of parenthood on voter turnout. The authors were able to collect turnout data from Finish and Danish

municipal elections as well as a variety of sociodemographic data including the birth dates of children. This allowed them to see if having a child around the date of the election would depress turnout among parents. They found that this was indeed the case, but that the effects were short-lived. Having a child in the week before the election depressed turnout by 19 percentage points for Danish citizens and by 10 percentage points for Finnish electors. An effect was also observed when one had a child two weeks before the election, but it was much smaller. In Denmark there was also a significant difference in the time that it took men and women to recover to their baseline levels of turnout, with women's participation taking longer to return to their original levels. There was no significant difference in turnout between genders in Finland. Another study conducted in Denmark used similar data to assess the impact of having an additional child on voter turnout. The authors compared parents that had twins to those who had only had one child in municipal elections between 2009 and 2013. They found that having twins depressed turnout by an additional 1.6 to 3 percentage points for women. The effect for men was much smaller and varied between 0.7 to 1.4 percentage points (Dahlgaard and Hansen, 2021).

These two last studies represent an important step in order to better understand the effects of parenthood on voter turnout. However, there are certain limits to these studies, notably the use of cross-sectional data does not allow us to compare individuals to their own baseline levels of turnout. Another caveat is that it looks only at turnout in municipal elections and in two Scandinavian countries. More research needs to be done in order to see if these results can be generalized to other contexts and to see if the transition to parenthood can be linked with less immediate effects on political behaviour.

Unemployment

Over the years, many studies have showed that electors take into consideration economic factors when deciding who to vote for. These studies often use surveys with questions that ask individuals to evaluate the economic condition either retroactively or to make economic predictions for the next few months. Voters have a tendency of either rewarding or punishing the incumbent based on these economic evaluations (i.e.: Lewis-Beck, 1986; Anderson, 2000; Duch and Stephenson, 2008; Dassonville and Lewis-Beck, 2014). A study conducted in 43 countries looked at individual level turnout and macroeconomic data in order to observe trends in voter turnout during times of economic hardship. They found that those with lower sociodemographic profiles were more likely to vote in times of financial hardships than more privileged voters (Carreras and Castanada, 2016). However interesting, these articles do not necessarily look at one's personal employment condition in order to gauge the effect of unemployment on vote choice and on participatory behaviour.

Cross-sectional studies have long looked at the effect of unemployment on voter turnout (i.e. Rosenstone, 1982; Burden and Wichowsky, 2014, 2016; Cebula, 2017, Aytaç et al., 2020. etc.). One such study (Rosenstone, 1982) used data from the 1974 American Population Study to see whether or not unemployment influenced turnout. The author suggested that unemployment would make it more difficult to meet the costs of voting. This is because an individual faced with job loss and under financial strain may have more pressing concerns than an upcoming election. However, a study conducted using observational data from the United States posits that the unemployed are less likely to vote but that this effect is much smaller when unemployment rates are higher (Aytac et al., 2020). In order to better understand why this may be the case, the authors conducted a

survey experiment. In the presence of a vignette that suggested that unemployment was the fault of politicians, the unemployed participants were more likely to report wanting to vote in the following election. The authors suggest that when unemployment is high, these types of messages may be more prevalent which can create feelings of anger which mobilizes individuals (Aytac et al., 2020). These studies however do not show us within-individual variation or give us a clear idea of how the transition from employed to unemployed affects voter turnout.

Divorce/Separation

There are not many studies that use cross-sectional data in order to assess the political behaviours and orientations of divorcees. As we will see, a few longitudinal panel studies have looked at the influence of divorce on political orientations (Edlund and Pande, 2002; Fahs, 2007) and participation (i.e. Stoker and Jennings 1995; Kern 2010).

Retirement

Like divorce, not many cross-sectional studies have looked at the impact of the transition to retirement on political ideology and participatory behaviours. There is however some evidence that geographic areas with many retirees have higher voter turnout than other neighborhoods (Fieldhouse and Cutts, 2008). The impact of the transition to retirement on turnout is therefore not well understood. However, as we will see, a recent longitudinal study has examined the effects of retirement on participation along with that of other transitions (Rapeli et al., 2021).

Widowhood

The few studies that have looked at widowhood and political participation tend to have mobilised longitudinal data sources (Stoker and Jennings 1995, Kern 2010; Rapeli et al.,

2021). I will describe these studies in the following section. An interesting study was however conducted on the effects of widowhood on voter turnout in California using both voting and death records. The authors found that widowhood depressed turnout by nine percentage points (Hobbs et al., 2014).

Although all of the studies we have seen in this section are useful in demonstrating some of the differences in opinion and in behaviour between different civil and employment status, they do not allow us to see the effect of the transition itself on behaviour. This is because these studies compare different people that fall within different categories. As such they reflect certain biases. For example, the marriage rate is lower now than it was in the past, it may therefore be unsurprising that electors who choose to get married are slightly more conservative than those who decide to stay single or to cohabitate. However, what interests me is not the difference between certain states, but rather the within-difference of a given transition on an individual.

A couple studies have however tried to assess the impact of certain transitions on youth turnout. Highton and Wolfinger (2001) tried to evaluate the impact of certain life transitions on electoral participation. To conduct their study, they used data from the United States' Current Population Survey. The goal of their study was to examine whether certain transitions to more "adult" roles would encourage voting amongst citizens in their twenties. They looked at several different factors such as residential mobility, marital status, home ownership, labour and student status and whether or not the young adult respondents lived with their parents. Although the authors claim to be studying life transitions, they are simply comparing the participation level between different groups. They find that many of the characteristics associated with more "adult" roles did not necessarily lead to higher

levels of turnout. For example, being a student was the variable with the largest estimated effect in percentage points and is traditionally linked to a less "adult" role than gaining full time employment or moving out of one's parents' house. Residential stability, home ownership and being in the labor force all had a significant and positive influence on voter turnout while marriage and living with one's parents were insignificant and yielded negative coefficients. The authors find that the transition to more adult roles does not necessarily increase turnout amongst young adults. However, Smets (2016) suggests that young people today may be less likely to vote than the young people of previous generations because they take longer to adopt adult roles. Using data from the British Elections Studies from 1964-2010, the author creates a "maturation index" comprised of transitions to adulthood such as leaving education, home ownership, long residential stability, having a job, being married and having children. The findings indicate that earlier maturation is linked with higher levels of voter turnout. These studies are very interesting but they do not inform us on the impact of transitions for older adults and do not mobilize panel data. In the following pages I will discuss the few studies that have looked at transitions using longitudinal panel data in the context of political behaviour.

Longitudinal studies

Only a few studies have looked at within differences in political participation following a life transition. The study that comes the closest to what this dissertation will seek to do was conducted by Laura Stoker and Kent Jennings in 1995 and was called "Life-Cycle Transitions and Political Participation: The Case of Marriage". Because this study is closely related to my research topic I will explain its goal and results (the methodology of each study will be further explored when I discuss my own methodological approach in the

following chapter). This paper mobilised panel data from three waves from the Youth-Parent Socialization Study conducted in the United States. The waves took place in 1965, 1973 and 1982. This study therefore had data from the primary participants, which were high school seniors during the first wave, their parents and (in the later waves) their partners. The data offered the authors multiple different measures of political participation since respondents were asked about a variety of behaviours such as trying to influence others' vote, going to meetings or demonstrations, engaging in some type of work for a political party, representing an issue or a candidate, wearing a visual representation of political support (like a button), donating money to a campaign, voting in the last and penultimate elections. The authors also had at their disposal a few other measures of participation such as writing a letter to a politician, writing a letter to a news organization, protesting or trying to solve problems within their communities. The authors found that marital transitions tended to lead to a short-term drop in participation. They also found that individuals tended to adjust their participatory behaviours in order to be more similar to that of their partners.

Although this study is very interesting, it still has a few limits that my dissertation will try to overcome. First of all, this study uses only a single context in order to study the effects of life transition on political participation: that of the United States. This is therefore far from a universal case and it is impossible to tell whether the effects found in this study may be the results of American exceptionalism. By using data from the United Kingdom and Switzerland, I will be able to assess whether the same trends can be observed throughout different contexts. This study also only looks at marital transitions and therefore ignores the transition to parenthood or of any professional transition. It is also important to

study this phenomenon in more recent years since the institution of marriage has greatly changed since the 1970s when many of the individuals in the cohort studied are likely to have gotten married. Indeed, age of first marriage has increased quite a bit as have divorce rates. We also see more people cohabitating today then before and we have reason to believe that cohabitators probably experience similar changes following a transition than those who are formally married.

Another very recent study has explored the impact of major life events on political participation using longitudinal panel data in the United Kingdom (Rapeli et al., 2021); it is entitled "When Life Happens: The Impact of Life Events on Voter Turnout". The study looks at multiple major life events such as changes in health, marital or cohabitation status and employment. The goal of the study is to see how these events affect the electoral participation rates of different groups: those who usually vote, those who sometimes vote and those who usually do not vote. The authors found that moving in with a partner increased turnout. Divorcing depressed turnout among all three groups of voters. Those who retired and usually voted also became even more likely to vote. This study is very interesting, however, like the Stoker and Jennings (1995) study, it only looks at these major life events in a single context. This does not allow us to understand whether the results found can be generalized to other contexts.

A few other longitudinal studies have been used to study one or a few life transitions. For example, some studies have used longitudinal data to explore the differences in political orientations prior and after divorce. Edlund and Pande (2002) suggests that in the United States, women are more likely to support the democratic party after a divorce. Fahs (2007) also found that amongst a small sample of Americans, women

who had divorced were more likely to be more liberal in comparison to their married counterparts. Some studies have also looked at the effects of divorce and of widowhood on participation. Using data from the British Household Panel Survey, Kern (2010) looked at the impact of divorce and widowhood on political orientations and participation. He did not find that these transitions had an influence on political preferences but did show that divorce tended to depress turnout. He suggests that one of the reasons that this may be the case is because divorce increases the chances that one will move. Another study (Dehdari et al., 2022) looking at the impact of divorce on turnout using data from Sweden found that divorcing around the time of an election decreases voter turnout. The authors found that it took about seven years for turnout rates to return to their pre-divorce levels, they also found that the negative influence of divorce on electoral participation begins before the official separation, with an initial drop happening three years prior to the event. However, the larger effect is found around the time of the actual divorce. They also found that in this case, the effect was greater for men than it was for women. The authors stipulate that there is probably a social reason for this, as women are more likely to have children in the house and that this seems to reduce the decline in turnout. They also mention that in the context of Sweden, women tend to vote more than men, so the more pronounced negative effect of divorce on turnout may be a consequence of divorcing the partner who is more politically engaged.

Recent work in Italy has also tried to show the influence of marriage and of having children on electoral participation. The study conducted by Bellettini et al (2023) used a variety of data sources from the city of Bologna and matched administrative and sociodemographic data with voter turnout records in municipal, European and

parliamentary elections in order to see the effects of these transitions on turnout. The authors were particularly interested in the gendered effect that marriage and parenthood could have on political participation. They found that marriage increased men's political participation. It boosted their turnout levels to that of the higher, pre-marriage turnout levels of their wives. The increase in turnout for men was around two percentage points. A small negative effect of marriage on women's rates of electoral participation was also observed. However, since women's participation rates were higher to begin with, marriage is perceived by the authors has being an equalizer of political participation. They also found that the effect was not seen in richer couples. They attribute this to signs of potential assortative mating. As for the transition to parenthood, women who had children under the age of five saw a decrease in their levels of participation, no effect was however witnessed for men. However, having older children seemed to increase political participation. Men had higher rates of turnout when their children were between the ages of six and eleven and women saw an increase in turnout when their children were in secondary school.

A few studies have also further explored the concept of assortative mating which can further explain the relationship between marriage or cohabitation and turnout. Gruneau (2020) used data from the BHP and the UK longitudinal Household Panel to explore the similarities between couples when it comes to their voting behaviour. Using a matching design and difference-in-difference model, the authors showed that those who begin a relationship with a voter are more likely to vote themselves and that those who have higher levels of education and income are more likely end up with someone who votes, which in turn can influence one's chances of participating in an election. The concept of assortative mating however stipulates that we are more likely to end up with a partner with similar

characteristics as ourselves. This seems to be the case, Gruneau (2018) showed that the education levels of most couples was homogeneous in the United States and in Europe. There were however some variations in countries, Germany having the most heterogeneous couples at 18%. This still shows that a large majority of couples share similar educational backgrounds. However, in the rare case where one did have a partner with higher levels of education, the individual was more likely to vote.

Naurin et al. (2023) have also published recent work on the effect of pregnancy and parenthood on political engagement using the Swedish Citizen Panel. This panel followed individuals every six months for a period of five years which allowed the authors to identify pregnant individual, their partners and new parents. They looked at various different forms of political engagement, including seeking out news about politics, having political discussions, their attitudes regarding the importance of politics, political participation and trying to change things. They found that the transition to parenthood did have a negative impact on political engagement, including on political participation and that this effect began during pregnancy. Women were 5% less likely to vote both during and after their pregnancies. They also found that men's baselines levels of political engagement were quicker to return, with gaps in engagement being more prominent between genders when children are aged between two and four years old.

Why should transitions be further explored?

This thesis seeks to make an empirical contribution by doing research on the impact of life transitions on political participation across two different political contexts: that of Great Britain and Switzerland. Most research that has been done to date only focuses on one type of life transitions (like changes in civil status) effect on political behaviour. In addition,

many of the studies only look at the American context (for exemple see: Niemi et al., 1977; McGlen 1980; Kingston and Finkel 1987; Elder and Greene, 2007, Fahs, 2007, Elder and Greene 2012; Elder and Greene 2016). On the rare occasions that one study is found outside of the American context, it usually only looks at one particular case, like Hayes' studies that focuses exclusively on Australia (Hayes and Jones, 1992, Hayes 1993). It is therefore important to examine the impact of life transitions in a broader context. When looking at a single case it is impossible to generalize or to see if one's findings hold through various contexts. This study will also allow us to see the magnitude of the effects associated with all of these life transitions. I will be able to discern which life transitions exercise a larger impact on electoral behaviour and we will see if these differences hold up across contexts.

Life transitions represent some of the most important events that individuals will go through in the course of their lives, as such it is surprising that there is not more literature on the subject. In the following section, I will present different theories that can help us explain how life transitions can influence political participation.

Overview of Relevant Theories

Many theories have been used to explain why some individuals turn out to vote while others abstain. Many of these same theories can be help us understand why life transitions may affect turnout. Because I am interested in factors that influence an individual's propensity to vote in a given election, I present a brief overview of these theories along with some of their strengths and weaknesses. I only present theories that can help us understand how life transitions can impact political participation. The theories I will describe are: rational choice, socialization, resource mobilization, and life course perspective theory. Building on these different theories, I develop a series of hypotheses.

Rational choice theory

Rational choice theory is most often associated with Anthony Downs' 1957 work *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. In his book, Downs seeks to explain both electoral participation and vote choice. A rational elector seeks to vote for the party that maximizes his utility, but voting itself is not a given in Downs' text. Indeed, voting is perceived as being somewhat irrational because it is extremely unlikely that an elector would cast the deciding vote in a given election. A rational voter would recognize this and decide to abstain. Since then, the rational choice theory has been used many times to explain turnout.

Although many studies on individual electoral behaviour have mobilized rational choice theory the continued use of this framework raises many questions: Are voters rational? Do individuals really weigh the costs and benefits of their vote before going to the polling station? Does the argument that people vote to protect democracy hold up? In order to fully delve into this framework, we must look at the equation elaborated by Downs and at each of the items included. Downs suggests that the following equation can help us understand whether or not an elector will turn out to vote: $V = pB - C$. In this equation "V" represents whether or not an individual will vote, while "p" is the probability that one's vote will matter. One's vote is considered to matter if it decides the outcome of the election (and is therefore highly unlikely). The "B" term in the equation represents the benefit that the elector will derive from voting while the "C" term is related to the cost of voting. However, this would mean that the majority of electors act in a way that is irrational. This led to the addition of a D term in the equation ($V=pB-C+D$). Riker and Ordeshook (1968) critiqued the idea that most electors are irrational. They suggest that a "D" term can explain additional benefits one may get from voting such as the satisfaction from the act or from

showing allegiance to one's political party, by giving the opportunity to affirm one's preferences or showing faith in the system itself. The "D" term typically represents citizen's goodwill towards democracy or the duty to vote.

Many studies have looked at whether or not electors take into consideration the probability of casting a deciding vote during an election when choosing whether or not to abstain. Because voter turnout remains relatively high despite the small chance of casting a vote, studies have suggested that electors may be poor statisticians and that they may overestimate the likelihood that their vote would decide the election. Research conducted during referendums in British Columbia and Quebec has shown that a large majority of participants thought that their chances of influencing elections results were low or very low. However, a minority of 15 to 22% in both of provinces thought that their chances of casting the deciding vote for the election was somewhat or very high (Blais et al., 2000, p.186) This seems to suggest that a segment of the population does overestimate the likelihood that they will cast a deciding vote. Nevertheless, since a majority of people are aware that it is very unlikely that their vote will decide who wins but choose to vote anyways, we may assume that there are limits to this particular aspect of rational choice theory. However, there is some evidence that the probability of casting a deciding vote does increase turnout, as turnout tends to be higher in electoral contexts where the population is smaller and where it is more likely that one's vote will count (Breux et al, 2017).

But what about the benefits that electors derive from voting? Traditionally the benefits derived from voting were seen as the utility that an elector would gain if the party that maximized his benefits were to take power. However, like the other elements in the

rational choice equation, the benefit term has evolved and has been interpreted differently in a variety of studies. The term can be interpreted closely to its original version by using survey questions that seek to gauge how important the election results are for a given individual (Blais et al., 2000) or can include a variety of other benefits that the individual may get from voting. This includes studies that have looked at the social benefits, sometimes called the altruistic benefits of voting (i.e.: Fowler, 2006; Edlin et al, 2007). Individual would therefore consider the effect of their vote on others and would decide to vote in order to contribute to a group victory. Fowler (2006) confirms that people may take group benefits into consideration based on experimental data. He reached this conclusion by making participants play a dictator game. He found that those who had a strong party identity and who shared more with their opponent were more likely to vote.

Scholars have also looked to determine whether the cost of voting is a relevant factor when deciding whether or not to vote. Many of the strengths of rational choice theory are encompassed in the cost term. This is because many institutional factors that have an impact on voter turnout at the aggregate level are those that make voting harder. For example, research has consistently shown a relationship between less stringent registration laws and higher voter turnout (for example: Rosenstone and Wolfinger, 1978; Franklin and Grier, 1997; Highton, 1997; Brians and Grofman, 2001; Avery and Peffley 2005; Ansolabehere and Konisky, 2006; Neihensel and Burden 2012; Burden et al, 2014; etc.). Similarly, turnout tends to be lower when elections are held more frequently (for example: Boyd, 1981; Boyd, 1986; Rallings et al.,2003; Garmann, 2017). One of the reasons that this may be the case is because these institutional factors are related to a higher cost of voting. Li et al (2018) developed a highly complex cost of voting index to compare the cost

of voting in each U.S state. They looked at 33 institutional factors in order to develop this index which can be summarized in seven categories: registration deadlines, registration restrictions, registration drive restrictions, pre-registration laws, voting inconvenience, voting ID laws and poll hours. After running a principal component analysis, the authors found that there were two components to the cost of voting: the cost of registration and the cost of voting. Many voting reforms therefore seek to reduce the cost of voting. For example, initiatives like introducing internet voting could make voting easier and improve turnout (i.e. Goodman and Stokes, 2020). These studies help us understand why some elections have higher rates of participation in comparison to others but they do not help us make distinctions amongst citizens within the same electoral context.

It is important to understand differences in individual level costs. Some research has shown that the cost of voting may be higher amongst certain groups. For example, youth may face higher voting costs because they are unfamiliar with the electoral system in comparison to older electors who have more experience with the voting process (Julich et al., 2020). But what exactly is entailed by the cost of voting and generally speaking is the cost high or low? One of the critiques that comes up when discussing rational choice theory is that the cost of voting is often exaggerated (Niemi, 1976). So, do individuals really take into consideration the cost of voting when deciding whether or not to cast a vote in an election? And if so, what exactly is the cost of voting?

To assess the cost of voting Sigelman and Berry (1982) asked electors about their thoughts on it. They asked survey respondents if they agreed that voting takes a lot of time and effort. Maybe unsurprisingly, but in line with rational choice theory, 35% of abstainers thought that the cost of voting was high. The authors also studied other aspects of the

Downsian model, but concluded that cost was the most important predictive element to explain why one participates or abstains. The cost of voting is however generally speaking perceived as being small (Blais et al., 2019; Blais and Sevi, 2021). In a study conducted using data from Canada's National Election Study, it was found that the highest burden for voters was deciding who to vote for, and that even this did not require much from electors (Blais and Sevi, 2021).

The addition of the *D* term helps to explain why someone would choose to vote when the act of voting itself should be considered irrational. It suggests that an elector could vote and remain rational because he or she decides that they value democracy. However, this does not solve the free-rider problem because it is unlikely that deciding to abstain would endanger democracy. One's vote is after all only one vote (Blais, 2000; Clarke et al., 2002; Goldfarb and Sigelman 2010, etc.). Some rational choice models have decided to account for a civic duty variable in order to measure its impact on rational choice theory and have found that the rational choice model explains more of the variance in turnout compared to a model that only accounts for civic duty (Clarke and al., 2002). Others have suggested that although adding the duty term in the model is useful to explain turnout it also contributes to reducing the rationality component (Goldfarb and Sigelman, 2010). The addition of a duty term has gathered much skepticism with some suggesting that it should be treated as a small benefit derived from voting (Niemi, 1976).

Although rational choice theory has its critics and has its fair share of weaknesses, research has empirically demonstrated the worth of certain elements in Downs' equation. One of the stronger aspects of the theory is the cost term that can help to account for both aggregate and individual level differences in turnout. In the 1970s, one of Niemi's critiques

of the cost term was that it was only used to explain individual level variations and not variations in turnout levels across elections. This is no longer the case, many institutional factors that depress voter turnout are seen as increasing the cost of voting. The cost element also helps us account for individual level participation with voters who find voting more difficult less likely to vote than those who perceive voting as being easy (Sigelman and Berry 1982). Although many do not perceive the cost of voting as being particularly high, it can encompass many different elements such as getting informed, deciding whether or not to vote, deciding who to vote for and the time required to go to the polling station to cast a ballot. It is this aspect of the rational choice theory that can help us understand why life transitions may matter in the electoral context. Because life transitions are periods of upheaval in a person's life, it may be temporarily more difficult for the individual to meet the cost of voting in the election following the period of change. This is because when one is dealing with large life changes, it may be more difficult to gather information on the election and to go out to vote. Other life considerations are likely to take precedence over voting at these times.

The other elements in the calculus of voting equation do not necessarily help us to understand why transitions are important. The probability of casting a deciding vote and the benefits derived from voting may change for a given individual from one election to another (although in all likelihood the probability of casting a deciding vote will always remain infinitely small), but should not be influenced by the transition. The cost term remains the most important element in explaining why a life transition will influence political behaviour.

We now turn to socialization theories in order to see how transitions can influence an individual's outlooks and opinions.

Socialization theories

Socialization theories have been used to help us understand the development of political attitudes and behaviours. These theories originated in psychology to explain the development of behaviours that affect the way individuals interact in society (Maccoby, 2007). Socialization also became a key theory in many fields where it developed its own identity including but not limited to sociology and anthropology. Socialization theory presents the concept of agents of socialization. These agents are "the significant individuals, groups or institutions that influence our sense of self and the behaviours, norms and values that help us function in society" (Bell, 2019). A wide range of agents contribute to the development of social skills. Some of these agents are individuals or groups such as the family, peers, and teachers, but can also include religion, media, school or the workplace. Much of socialization research is focused on childhood and early adolescence although socialization continues throughout the life cycle. The idea that socialization continues throughout the life course is a key component in the life course perspective (which will be seen in the following pages). Mortimer and Simmons (1978) also explain that understanding adult socialization is important because it helps explain both how adults adapt to new roles and to changing societies. It is however important to note that the agents of socialization that exert the most influence on us tend to change as we age. For example, one's parents represent an extremely important agent of socialization throughout childhood and adolescence but in later life interactions with a spouse or in the workplace may take precedence in terms of influence (Maccoby, 2007).

Research in political science has demonstrated that socialization in childhood and adolescence can influence adult political behaviour. For example, Holbein (2017) suggests that when we encourage children to develop prosocial behaviours in their early childhood their chances of engaging in politics is higher in adulthood. The development of political interest, a strong correlate of political participation, can also be influenced by the number of conversations one has about politics in adolescence with parents and friends (Dostie-Goulet, 2009). Children are also likely to adopt some of their parents' political opinions and party preferences (Baker, 1974; Beck and Jennings, 1991; Boonen 2019; etc.).

However, socialization theory has sometimes been critiqued because it does not take into consideration certain factors that explain differences in opinion and behaviour such as genetic predispositions (Rowe, 1994). In political science, there is some research on genetics, political preferences and partisanship (i.e. Alford et al., 2005; Amodio, 2007; Fowler et al, 2008; Cesarini et al, 2014). These various studies have shown that genetics do seem to play a role in an individual's political life. Nevertheless, socialization theory does have a strength that theories on genetic factors do not: our genes remain the same throughout our life cycle but our attitudes, opinions and behaviours are capable of change. Socialization can help to explain changes in opinions, attitudes and political preferences. Exposure to new agents of socialization through changes in one's work environment and in civil status can therefore help us explain how a transition could lead to changes in political attitudes. This could in turn influence behaviour.

Some research has looked at the specific implications of life transitions or of major life events on socialization. One of the ways in which socialization theory can be directly linked to transitions is based on the idea of role acquisition. Socialization is often seen as

a process in which an individual is socialized in order to be able to play a given role in society (Bush and Simmons, 1990). When an individual goes through a life transition, he or she often has to adjust to a new role. This can sometimes be difficult as some of the implications of the new role may contradict some of the elements that the individual has come to value in their old roles. For example, in the transition to retirement, one must get used to not working, this can be difficult because one may have learned to value productivity in order to be a good worker (Bush and Simmons, 1990). After a transition, an individual may also see more or less of certain people, which can have an influence on their perceptions of certain things.

Socialization theory advances that life transitions can lead individuals to acquire new roles and that these experiences may very well influence political behaviour and opinion. In the course of this thesis, I will mostly use socialization theory in order to assess the influence of partner acquisition and loss on electoral participation. Studies have shown that what happens within a household can be important. What happens within a household is related to our strong ties. For example, Foos et De Rooij (2017) suggest that households with heterogeneous political views lead to higher levels of voter turnout because members of those households are more likely to engage in political discussions than in homogeneous households. It is also known that members of a household tend to go to the polls together (Bhatti et al., 2020). This makes voting a potential social activity.

Socialization is also present within the workplace through our interactions with coworkers. It is therefore likely that leaving a work place (through unemployment or retirement) could exert some influence on one's political life. Weak ties are known to have an influence on our integration within groups and communities and can introduce us to a

variety of opportunities (Granovetter, 1973). Research has also suggested that we are more likely to be influenced to vote by those with whom we have face to face interactions (Bond et al., 2012). Leaving the work force may diminish are weak ties and lead to fewer face to face interactions with members of our network. This could in turn influence turnout.

Resource theory

When resource mobilization theory emerged in political science it was initially used to explain the emergence of social movements in the 1960s (Jenkins, 1983). Theorists were trying to explain why movements emerged at this particular point in time. Existing theories suggested that social movements appeared when a group experienced a grievance. Resource theory therefore added a new dimension to the study of social movements, it hypothesizes that the emergence of a movement happens when there is a grievance *and* when a group has sufficient resources for mobilization. The heightened number of protests in the 1960s could therefore be explained by access to the political and economic resources required for collective action (Dalton, 2008). There has also been a shift in resource mobilization theory in order to explain individual participation in various political activities.

A resource model of political participation was developed in an article written by Brady et al., (1995). In this article, the authors suggest that the possession of various resources will influence whether or not an individual will participate in different types of political action. In order to do this, they look at a variety of resources including having time and money at one's disposal and having civic skills. They hypothesize that possessing these resources will make it more likely for an individual to participate in activities that require time, donating money to a political cause and voting. They found that much of

voting behaviour can be explained by political interest but that other forms of political participation are more resource dependent. It will be interesting to see if life events that influence resources will have an impact on turnout. I expect that changes in financial resources or leisure time may influence voter turnout. Less leisure time will make it less likely that an individual will take the time to get informed and to turn out to vote. When it comes to financial resource, the link between these and voter turnout is less direct. However, it can be expected that when someone lives through financial hardships, voting may fall off their list of priorities.

But what are the expected effects of life transitions on resources? Table 1.3 summarizes the anticipated impact of life transitions on leisure time and on financial resources. As we can see, marriage and cohabitation will most likely have a mitigated effect on leisure time. This is because the literature suggests that a transition to marriage and cohabitation leads to more household tasks for women but lessens the housework of men (Baxter et al., 2008). The transition to cohabitation and marriage can also increase financial resources when both partners are in the labour pool. Parenthood on the other hand, is expected to both decrease leisure time and financial resources. This is because child-rearing is a time-consuming activity for both parents and costs associated with child care can be expensive. However, a study has suggested that the birth of a child only resulted in a statistically significant increase in household tasks for women (Baxter et al., 2008). When it comes to unemployment, there may be competing effects on the leisure time at an individual's disposal. On the one hand, the individual will have more spare time because the hours that they spent gainfully employed are now liberated. However, a lot of time may be required for the individual to search and apply for new positions. Unemployment has a

clear negative impact on financial resources because it represents a loss of income. Like marriage and cohabitation, divorce and separation can have different impacts on leisure time based on gender. After divorce, the amount of time that men spend on household tasks tends to increase (Baxter et al., 2008). Divorce is typically associated with financial loss as both parties split the assets that they have accumulated throughout the marriage. Certain parties may also have to provide either child or spousal support payments. After retirement, an individual will find themselves with more spare time. Retirement will however have some financial implications and is typically associated with somewhat of a loss in income. The effects of widowhood on leisure time and financial resources are less clear, and there are few studies that have looked at the matter in depth. It seems as though the effect on leisure time and financial resources will greatly vary based on the time of the transition (for example, losing a partner earlier in the life course may increase the amount of time spent child-rearing or on household tasks and may have a more long-term effect on finances than the loss of a partner in old age).

Table 1.3 Anticipated Impact of Transitions on Individual Resources

Resources/Transitions	Leisure time	Financial resources
Marriage/Cohabitation	+/-	+
Parenthood	-	-
Unemployment	+/-	-
Divorce/Separation	+/-	-
Retirement	+	-
Widowhood	x	x

Life Course Perspective Theory

Life course perspective theory has been particularly useful in the study of life transitions. Indeed, it has been used in various studies on transitions and across a large range of topics (e.g. Moen, 1996; Williams and Umberson, 2004; Langenkamp, 2011; Burton-Jeangros,

2015). However, this theoretical framework has been underused in studies that have looked at the impact of life transitions on political participation and on turnout in particular. It is of note that none of the studies that we have seen in our review of the literature on the impact of transitions on turnout has explicitly referenced or mobilized this theory. One of the contributions of this dissertation will be to integrate this framework to studies on voter turnout. Before we can delve into the theoretical expectations that the life cycle will have on turnout we must first explain the life course perspective. However, before we can even do that, we must first explain what the life course perspective is not.

Many studies in the field of voter turnout have looked at the life cycle and at how it influences political participation. Many of these studies have looked explicitly at factors like age to evaluate how it affects political participation (e.g. Rubenson et al., 2004; Wass, 2007; Bhatti et al., 2012, etc.). Often, these studies will show that older individuals are more likely to participate than younger ones, sometimes these studies will also make distinctions between cohort and generational effects. However, just because a study references the life cycle, it does not necessarily fall within a life course perspective approach. Looking only at the life span or at generational effects does not go far enough in order to fall within this framework. The goal of the life course perspective is to look at certain trajectories in the form of personal histories, it

> "*looks at how chronological age, relationships, common life transitions, life events, social change, and human agency shape people's lives from birth to death. It locates individual and family development in cultural and historical contexts... It has become a major theoretical framework in criminology and the leading perspective driving longitudinal study of health behaviors and outcomes*." (Hutchinson, 2014).

The theory traces its origins to the 20th century, but did not have much traction when it was first developed. The success of life course perspective theory emerged in the latter half of

the previous century and its newfound traction is perceived by Elder et al., (2003) as being the result of five observable trends. The first of these was what is called the "maturation of early childhood samples". Some longitudinal studies on childhood development were undertaken in the early 20th century but rather than ending in adolescence and young adulthood as was the initial goal, these studies kept going. This access to data that showed the importance of later life. The second factor identified by Elder and his colleagues is the vast amount of social change which led to an increase in diversity and a change in the composition of the population of the United States. This created a push to understand how individual lives were shaped by this diversity and by diverging experiences. The third reason cited by the authors is that of the changing age structure in American society. Individuals tend to live much longer than they did a few decades ago and fertility rates have also been in decline. Scholars that studied these demographic shifts were therefore interested in seeing how certain events or phases in earlier life affected the future development and decisions of individuals.

Finally, the last reason cited by the authors as contributing to the growing interest in this framework is the development of longitudinal research. In the last few decades many more longitudinal studies have been conducted, which has enabled scholars to truly study the impact of certain events on latter outcomes. The emergence of longitudinal studies has aided in making life course perspective theory more mainstream but George (1993) points out that these studies can still be hard to come by and that it is therefore easier to study transitions rather than trajectories within this framework. The concepts of transitions and of trajectories are both key for the life course perspective. The trajectory which an individual will follow will be heavily based on the individual's history and social

institutions. Transitions on the other hand, as we have seen earlier in this chapter, can be defined as events or processes in which an individual goes from one role to another. The study of transitions can therefore help us to understand later outcomes. In this study we will look particularly at how a variety of transitions will influence voter turnout in elections. Future research will however be necessary to evaluate the long-term impact of these transitions.

According to Elder et al, (2003) there are five paradigmatic principles of life course theory. The first is that "human development and aging are lifelong processes". The individual continues to evolve throughout their lifespan, which can help to explain how events that take place even in adulthood can influence both behaviour and outlook. This is in line with some elements of adult socialization, though many studies on socialization have a rather limited scope that is often anchored solidly within infancy and adolescence. The second tenant of life course theory is that individuals have agency, individual decisions and actions will therefore have an influence on their trajectory (without however, ignoring the context of the trajectory which can influence opportunities). The third tenant is that "the life course of individuals is shaped by historical times and places they experience over their lifetime" which again, is meant to place a certain emphasis on context. Individuals will therefore be influenced by the time and place in which they live. For example, if one is to live through a war or another important event, this will have an influence on their life course. The fourth tenant is that consequences of life transitions and events will vary based on when they occur within a person's life. For example, when an individual makes a transition such as leaving the parental home, this transition can have a different impact depending on where one is located in the life cycle (the transition may be more difficult if

the individual is younger). This makes the case for including controls such as age, etc., in the models that I run in order to see the impact of transitions on voting behaviour. Finally, the fifth and last principle of this theory is that of linked lives, this suggests that individuals are influenced by their networks and relationships. For example, the emergence of new relationships could very well lead to changes in behaviours. This is one of the reasons that I will look at life transitions that are likely to influence individuals' networks.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

In the following section I will establish the research questions that guide this thesis along with a series of hypotheses based on the four theories that I summarized in the previous section.

Research Questions

Three main research questions will be addressed in this thesis. The first is do life transitions affect electoral participation? We know that many individual level characteristics can influence voter turnout, but less research has looked specifically at how important life events can influence participation. Life events have a tendency of restructuring our lives and can introduce us to different roles and tasks. It therefore seems likely that they should exert an influence on our political lives. The second research question I ask is whether gender will mitigate the effect of life transitions on participation.

Hypotheses

Based on rational choice, socialization, resource mobilization and life course perspective theories, I have developed eight hypotheses. Some of these hypotheses rival each other because they are based on different theoretical frameworks. The empirical demonstration

will allow me to see which theory is more convincing in explaining changes in turnout following a life transition.

Because life transitions represent periods of upheaval in an individual's life, they may temporarily limit resources which makes it more difficult to meet the cost of voting. This will make it less likely that the individual will vote in the election following the transition (based on rational choice and resource mobilization theory) or in the year following the life change. This leads to my first hypothesis:

1) *All life transitions will depress voter turnout.*

Personal life transitions that make voters lose a potential voting partner will lead to a decrease in voter turnout. This is based on socialization theory. There is a chance that the effect would be nil if the partner is an abstainer, however, the loss of a potential voting partner should lead to an overall decrease in turnout. This leads to my second hypothesis:

2) *Personal life transitions that involve a role loss (such as divorce and widowhood) will lead to a decrease in voter turnout.*

Following the same logic, and also based on socialization theory, we can expect that life transitions that lead to the gain of a potential voting partner should have an overall positive effect on turnout. This brings us to the third hypothesis:

3) *Personal life transitions that involve a role gain (such as marriage and cohabitation) will lead to an increase in voter turnout.*

We can also expect, based on socialization theory, that life transitions that reduce our number of social ties will lead to a decrease in electoral participation. Professional life transitions that involve a role loss (such as unemployment and retirement) have a detrimental effect on social ties by reducing the number of interactions with coworkers.

Because these transitions are more likely to influence our weak ties rather than our strong ties, we can expect that the effect of these transitions will be smaller than that of personal life transitions such as marriage, divorce and widowhood. This leads to my fourth hypothesis:

4) Professional life transitions that lead to a role loss such as unemployment and retirement will lead to a decrease in voter turnout.

Because voting is an act that requires the individual to choose how to vote and to cast a ballot, voting requires a certain amount of time. Certain life transitions, such as the transition to parenthood, lead to lower levels of free time for both parents. Because of this, individuals may be less likely to vote. This is based on resource mobilization theory. This leads to my fifth hypothesis:

5*) Personal life transitions that diminish the amount of free time (such as having a child) will diminish electoral participation.*

In the same vein, it is likely that life transitions that increase the amount of spare time, will make it easier for individuals to turn out to vote. A life transition that clearly increases the amount of spare time is the transition to retirement. This leads to my sixth hypothesis:

6) *Professional life transitions that increase the amount of spare time (retirement) will increase electoral participation.*

For women, both marriage and child rearing are associated with an increase in household tasks. Women's participation rates will therefore be more affected than men by these transitions (based on resource mobilization theory). According to the literature, marriage and parenthood are the transitions that are most likely to have a gendered impact, but the

possibility of an interaction effect will be explored for other life transitions as well. This leads to my seventh hypothesis:

7) The effect of personal life transition on turnout will be gendered. The effect of marriage and parenthood on turnout will be greater for women.

Finally, resources other than spare time may be altered following a life transition. Divorce and unemployment are both life transitions that decrease household income. Having access to fewer resources will make it less likely that individuals will turn out to vote. This idea is also based on resource mobilization theory. This leads to my eight and final hypothesis:

8) *Life transitions that decrease household income (like unemployment and divorce) will lead to a decrease in political participation.*

Conclusion

I began this chapter by defining life transitions. Life transitions are large events in our lives that bring us from one period of stability to another. I discussed different models that have been used to explain how life transitions are experienced before giving an overview of how life transitions have been categorized by various authors. I then offered my own typology of life transitions based on two dimensions: whether a life transition is personal or professional and whether it is associated with a role gain or a role loss. Only transitions that are associated with a role change will be studied throughout the course of this thesis. The transitions that I study are: marriage/cohabitation, parenthood, divorce/separation, unemployment, retirement and widowhood. I then surveyed the few studies that have been done on the topic of transitions and electoral participation. Following this I gave an overview of four theoretical frameworks that can help to explain why transitions matter. They are rational choice, socialization, resource mobilization, and life course perspective

theory. Based on these theories I developed eight hypotheses in order to predict how life transitions will influence electoral participation.

Chapter 3: Methods

In this chapter I describe the methodology used in the empirical section of my thesis. The goal of this chapter is threefold. First, I wish to introduce the reader to the two datasets mobilized in order to conduct my analyses: The *British Household Panel* (BHPS) and the *Swiss Household Panel* (SHP). Secondly, I present my dependent, independent and control variables along with how they have been created and operationalized. We will see how each variable was computed and from which survey questions they are derived. I also discuss how my independent and dependent variables fit within both the British and the Swiss context. Thirdly, I present a detailed outline of the analyses that I will run, along with the reasons for opting for certain research strategies.

In order to study life transitions, it is important to mobilize longitudinal panel studies. These unique datasets allow us compare the same individuals at different points in their lives. Indeed, it is innovations in data collection that have led to increased interest in studies of the life cycle (Elder et al., 2003). In this dissertation, I use data from the *British Household Panel Survey* merged with its follow-up survey*, Understanding Societ*y, and from the *Swiss Household Panel Study.* I describe the sampling methods used by researchers in order to collect these data, the time period and elections they cover, along with any other worthwhile information related to these datasets.

I then describe my main dependent variable: having voted. The question wording for this variable varies slightly in the panels and I discuss the availability of this question in various waves of the surveys. The BHPS asked respondents whether they voted in the last general election. We therefore have *self-reported voting behaviour* in the form of a binary variable distinguishing between voters and non-voters. I briefly explore the voting

context in the United Kingdom and see how data from the BHPS compare to official turnout figures. In the SHP respondents were asked in how many federal polls they would vote if there were 10 polls in a given year. In the Swiss case our variable measures *hypothetical turnout* and can take on any value between 0 and 10. In order to truly understand this question, it is important to give an overview of the Swiss political system likened by many to a modern direct democracy. I ascertain how the results found in the SHP compare to turnout rates in recent federal polls. I will also offer a brief discussion on the comparability of these two variables along with reasons why we should trust the results of the Swiss survey despite the use of a hypothetical turnout variable.

After this overview of my dependent variables, I introduce my six principal independent variables: various life transitions. These life transitions include marriage and cohabitation, parenthood, unemployment, divorce or separation, retirement, and widowhood. I discuss how each of these variables was coded and provide descriptive data showing how the transitions in these surveys compare to actual population trends in both Britain and Switzerland. I also describe some additional variables that will be used in my multivariate analyses. These include gender, level of education, age, age squared, as well as the year in which the survey took place.

Finally, I conclude the chapter by describing my research strategy. This strategy is twofold. I begin by running simple bivariate analyses to see if there is a change in participation amongst those who have experienced a given life transition. This will involve looking at behaviour before and after each transition. Following this, I use the same approach but create models that account for various controls. Because the BHPS employs a binary voting variable, I run logit regressions. When the results are significant, I calculate

marginal effects. In keeping with recent trends, I also run OLS analyses for the BHPS. These supplementary analyses are included in the appendix (see appendix 1). For the SHP, the analyses are run using OLS regression.

Data sources

In the following section of this chapter, I give a brief overview of the two data sources used to assess the impact of life transitions on electoral participation. These datasets are the *British Household Panel Survey* merged with its follow-up study, *Understanding Society*, and the *Swiss Household Panel.* Why use household panel studies rather than traditional election surveys? There are many reasons why this is helpful when the main independent variables involved are life transitions. The first benefit of this is that these studies are longitudinal panel surveys. The use of longitudinal panel data has many distinct advantages. Unlike cross-sectional studies, this type of data allows us to follow the same respondents throughout an important segment of their lives. Both household panel studies have followed their participants for more than twenty years. This allows us to see changes in reported individual level-behaviour. This makes these datasets ideal source in order to study life transitions. There are many advantages to using these types of data, one of them is that they allow us to test certain theories and hypotheses that would be virtually impossible to test otherwise. Another advantage of using these studies is that they allow us to control for unobserved time-invariant factors. In order to illustrate how this may be the case, Longhi and Nandi (2017) use the case of motivation, moving and income. When using cross-sectional data, a researcher may notice a correlation between greater residential mobility and higher wages. These two factors may be linked to an individual time invariant factor such as motivation. In this scenario, motivation may lead to higher residential

mobility and higher wages. By using a longitudinal panel survey, we can assume that an individual's motivation, although unobserved, will remain the same throughout different waves of the survey. Although there are some recent election studies that are now using a panel structure (for example, the British Election Study has a panel component that tracked individuals from February of 2013 to May of 2022), these studies are not readily available in many contexts and when they are, they tend to cover a shorter time frame than that found in the household panels, making it less likely that we would find many individuals experiencing each transition. Household panels also include a large number of respondents and have very detailed information in relation to the sociodemographic profile of participants. This makes them great studies to identify various life events and their large-scale scope makes it more likely that we will have sufficient participants in each life transition category in order to compare the political behaviour of respondents both before and after they experience a life transition.

Finally, one may wonder why the cases of Great Britain and Switzerland were selected. This is due to data availability. When I began this dissertation, these two data sources were the only household panels that had large enough samples to conduct analyses on each life transition and that had a clear voting question in multiple waves of the panel. As we will see later, my approach involves identifying the voting behaviour of electors before and after they lived a certain life transition. In order to do this, I needed datasets that had a sufficient number of electors undergoing each event. Even in large datasets like the BHP and the SHP, this can sometimes be narrowed down to only a few hundred individuals. For example, the transition to widowhood is experienced by less than a

thousand individuals in the BHPS and by only 129 people in the SHP (when we exclude those who did not answer the participation question at least twice).

The British Household Panel Survey and The UK Household Longitudinal Study

To see the impact of life transitions on voter turnout in the United Kingdom, I use a dataset composed of two panels: the *British Household Panel Survey* and the *Understanding Society UK Household Longitudinal Study*. The British Household Panel Survey is a longitudinal study that took place between 1991 and 2009. Over 5500 households participated in the first wave of the survey. This represents a sample of over 10 000 individuals throughout the United Kingdom. In 1999, two additional samples were incorporated in the study. This signified another 3000 households with half of these from Wales and the other half from Scotland. In 2001, a final supplementary sample was added, with an additional 2000 households, this time from Northern Ireland. Since its inception, the survey gradually became more regionally representative. The panel has 18 waves. During the time period between 1991 and 2009, four general elections took place. They occurred in 1992, 1997, 2001 and 2005. Although the *British Household Panel* ended in 2009, a larger and more comprehensive household panel was launched that same year. This was the *Understanding Society UK Household Longitudinal Study*. Almost 7000 of the original participants agreed to partake in this new study and are included from wave 2 onwards. The *Understanding Society* survey sampled 40 000 households in the United Kingdom. It followed a similar methodology as the BHPS, with the collection of annual waves (and contains data about both the household itself and individual household members). There are 11 waves of the survey available for study. These waves give us data on political participation for an additional four general elections. These elections were held

in 2010, 2015, 2017 and 2019. For those participants that took part in both panels we potentially have data for a period of 29 years and information related to voting behaviour in eight general elections. However, most respondents did not participate in so many waves. As we will see later, the approach taken in this thesis prioritizes mobilizing only two waves of the survey per respondent (in order to compare their voting behaviour before and after a life transition). Many questions of interest were asked during the course of the panel. These include yearly questions on civil status and employment as well as frequent questions on political behaviour. The data is provided for use by the University of Essex. The original study has previously been used to assess the effects of both divorce and widowhood on political participation (Kern, 2010). The combined dataset was also utilized in a study on major life events and voting habits (see literature review, Rapeli et al., 2021).

The Swiss Household Panel

Like the BHPS survey, the *Swiss Household Panel* is a longitudinal household panel that collects data on both the household and the individual members that compose it. The study began in 1999 and continues with yearly waves to the present day. The first wave of the study included over 5000 households and data from over 12 000 individuals. Since the beginning of the study additional samples have been added periodically. These include new samples in 2004, 2013 and 2020. These added thousands of new households to the study. I had access to 22 waves for analysis covering a period of over 20 years. Within the course of this panel, there have been six Swiss federal elections. The first election took place in 1999 during the first year of the survey. Swiss federal elections also took place in 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019. However, the surveys do not ask a question about voting in these elections. Rather, respondents are asked an almost yearly hypothetical question

related to voting in federal polls. Swiss citizens are often asked to vote in a series of referendums and the question available in the SHP inquires in how many federal polls respondents would vote if 10 were held in a given year. There are some controversies related to the use of hypothetical measures of voting, with some authors suggesting that people are bad at predicting their electoral behaviour (Rogers and Aida, 2013). However, some studies have shown that researchers sometimes underestimate electors' ability to look introspectively at their own behaviour. Indeed, Blais and al. (1998) showed that voters were better equipped at answering questions about their motivation to vote a certain way than previously thought. In this particular study, talking to respondents about the reasons for which they would vote a certain way in the Quebec 1995 referendum allowed the researchers to identify relevant considerations for voters. This does not mean that we should always take survey responses at face value, but rather that we should not ignore or discredit answers just because they come from the individuals themselves. The hypothetical turnout question asked in the SHP closely resembles questions of anticipated turnout. Swiss electors can expect to be called to vote in a variety of polls in any given year and the question therefore is not so different than asking voters if they intend to participate in a particular election. Using data from the American National Elections Studies of 1980, 1984 and 1988, Achen and Blais (2016) were able to compare differences between intention to vote prior to an election, self-reported vote after the election and validated turnout. They found that almost all electors who claimed that they did not intend to vote before the election became abstainers. There was however a gap between those who claimed they intended to vote and actually voted, and this bias was slightly higher than that found in self-reported voting behaviour. However, they conclude that even though using a

measure of vote intention (or in my case of hypothetical voting) may lead to small biases in coefficients, it is very unlikely that such a measure would mislead researchers in their conclusions on voting behaviour. If anything, this measure will only make my estimates more conservative (because we will have a larger number of people claiming they intend to vote, we can also infer that those who exaggerate their participation would do so consistently across waves). Having an almost yearly measure of predicted participation makes the SHP an ideal source of data to explore the effects of life transitions on electoral participation. The availability of various survey questions on marital status and employment history also make it possible to identify when a life transition has taken place. The data is provided by the *Swiss Centre of Expertise in the Social Sciences*.

Coding of Variables and Context

Now that I have described the datasets that I will be using, I provide an overview of the variables included in my models along with how they have been coded. My main dependent variable is voter turnout. This is because I wish to see whether or not life transitions exert an influence on individual level participation in elections. The turnout question differs in the United Kingdom and Switzerland and we will see how this affects comparability. It is also important to situate turnout in the political context of both countries and to see how the participation levels reported by respondents in these panel studies compare to actual turnout. The principal independent variables are life transitions. These include marriage or cohabitation, parenthood, unemployment, divorce or separation, retirement and widowhood. I also provide some descriptive statistics related to the number of observations available for each transition as well as how these transitions are experienced by the general population in both Britain and Switzerland. This information is key to understanding the

practical choices made in order to develop an effective research strategy. I also present the control variables included in multivariate models. These include those needed to test some of my hypotheses such as gender as well as other controls often associated with electoral participation such as level of education and age.

Dependent variables

Voted in Elections in the United Kingdom

My main dependent variable is individual level voter turnout in elections. In the *British Household Panel Survey* and in its follow-up, *Understanding Society,* respondents were asked in twenty waves of the panel if they had voted in the last general election. The BHPS therefore measures *self-reported* participation in general elections. This question is sometimes asked regardless of whether or not it is an election year (for example, there is an election in 2005, but the question is asked in 2005, 2006, 2007, etc.). This means that one must use caution because many of the questions regarding turnout in different waves are associated with the same election. For example, when looking closely at the BHPS's codebook and questionnaires, we can assess that the question on voting behaviour asked in both waves 2 and 7 are generally about the 1992 General Election. On the other hand, the questions asked about turnout in waves 8 to 10 relate to the election that took place in 1997 and so on. Because of this, I use the data from the first wave in which the question was asked for any given election. I believe that this answer will be the most accurate because the election and the act of voting itself will be closer in time and will therefore be fresher in respondents' memory. Furthermore, I verify the date at which each individual questionnaire was administered. Only answers from respondents who answered after election day will be included. For example, when looking at data from wave 2 of the

questionnaire, I will only include those who answered the survey after April 9, 1992. This is because those who responded before would be reporting on whether or not they had voted in the 1987 general election. The same careful approach will be used for all election years and waves in the panel.

It is important to note that the United Kingdom has a first past the post electoral system which represents a template model for other commonwealth legislatures such as Canada and India. The country is divided in constituencies. The candidate that wins the most votes in a given riding gets a seat in parliament. Like other countries that use this type of voting system, voter turnout in the United Kingdom tends to be lower on average than in countries that use a proportional representation or a mixed-member system. When comparing national election turnout in member states of the European Union between 1945 and 2002, Rose (2019) found that the United Kingdom was generally outperformed in terms of turnout by other member countries. The average rate of participation throughout this time period was of 75% (below the EU overall average of 83%). The author also points out that the UK was the only EU state during this time period to experience turnout levels under 60 percent. However, this was a one-off event, representing the low turnout witnessed in the 2001 general election (Rose, 2019). As we shall soon see, although the Swiss electoral system is very different than the one in the United Kingdom, both countries have relatively low levels of turnout in comparison to other countries.

Table 2.1 compares the official turnout for British general elections to the participation rates reported by all respondents in the *British Household Panel* and the *Understanding Society* datasets. The table also compares the participation rates found in the BHPS and the UKHLS to those found in the *British Election Studies*. We can see that

participants' self-reported turnout is higher than the official voting figures. However, turnout in the panel follows the same trend as turnout in the general population. For example, participation was low for the 2001 general elections, with only 59.4% of eligible voters participating. In that election 70.7% of the respondents in the BHPS report having voted. Although this is higher than the actual turnout rate by over 10 percent, it is much lower than the reported turnout in earlier waves of the survey; for example, in the 1997 election, as many as 80.3% of respondents reported turning out to vote. We can also see that reported turnout in the BHPS and Understanding Society tends to be slightly lower than self-reported turnout in the cross-sectional and post-election British Election Studies from 1992 to 2019 (sometimes it is however higher in the panel surveys).

Table 2.1 Official Electoral Turnout and Participation reported in the *BHPS* and *Understanding Society*, entire sample

Election	Official turnout	Turnout in the British Election Study	Turnout in BHPS and Understanding Society
1992	77.7%	87.6%	84.4%
1997	71.4%	78.79%	80.5%
2001	59.4%	72.71%	70.8%
2005	61.4%	74.05%	70.4%
2010	65.1%	77.92%	74.2%
2015	66.2%	73.80%	76.9%
2017	68.8%	79.09%	81.9%
2019	67.3%	80.30%	78.1%
*Official turnout figures for participation in general elections are taken from Cracknell and Pilling, 2022			

Participation in Federal Polls Switzerland

In the *Swiss Household Panel* respondents were questioned about turnout in a very different way. This means that they were not asked about their voting behaviour in a specific election. However, a hypothetical measure of turnout is available in many waves of the panel. Participants were asked in how many elections they would vote in if there were 10 federal polls in a given year. This voting variable is available in wave 1 through 11 of the SHP and is also present in 13, 16, 19 and 22. The availability of frequent participation data eases comparisons between waves. In the Swiss data, we therefore have a scale variable where "0" means that the respondent does not plan to participate in any federal polls and where "10" means they intend to vote in all of them.

The parliamentary system and the voting system in Switzerland are different than the ones found in other liberal democracies and Switzerland is often perceived as a modern nation that has embraced some of the tenants of direct democracy. The federal assembly itself employs a bicameral model with an upper and lower chamber. Both of these chambers are elected every four years but employ different voting systems (Confédération Suisse, 2021). The lower chamber is that of the National Council, its 246 members are elected using a proportional representation system (Confédération Suisse, 2021). On the other hand, the upper chamber, that of the Council of States, allows each canton to choose their own voting system. However, most cantons (except for two which use proportional representation) use a plurality voting system to elect councillors (International Foundation For Electoral Systems, 2023). The various members of this chamber represent the different cantons of the Swiss federation. However, the measure of turnout available in the SHP is not a question about the election of representatives in either its upper or lower chamber.

Although the elections of representatives for the federal assembly represent an important aspect of participatory life in Switzerland, Swiss citizens have many more opportunities to participate in politics and to turn out to vote. There are three ways to participate directly in the politics of the country. The first way is by launching a popular initiative. If a citizen wishes to make an amendment to the country's constitution or if they want to add something to it, they can propose an amendment. In order to do this, they will have to create a petition and gather 100 000 signatures within a period of 18 months (Confédération Suisse, 2021). The proposed amendment will be brought to the attention of the federal assembly. Citizens can also vote in referendums that directly influence the laws of the country. There are two types of referendums in Switzerland: optional referendums and mandatory referendums. The first type of referendum allows citizens to contest laws or decisions made by the federal assembly. Once a new piece of legislation is published, citizens have 100 days to present a petition to put the law to a federal vote. To do this, they must gather at least 50 000 signatures (Confédération Suisse, 2021). There are also mandatory referendums. If lawmakers wish to make constitutional amendments, or if they want Switzerland to join an international organization, they must put it to a referendum (Confédération Suisse, 2021).

This means that citizens have many opportunities to participate in federal polls in a given year. Turnout for these votes tend to be relatively low, averaging around 45% (Confederation Suisse, 2021). The question found in the Swiss Household Panel is about participation in these types of polls. This makes the question different than the one found in the United Kingdom because it deals with direct democracy. However, the two questions are measures of different forms of turnout. The impact of life transitions on voter turnout

should be similar in federal polls and in general elections. At the root of the matter, they both focus on the decision to vote or not to vote.

Table 2.2 shows the levels of participation in popular votes in Switzerland from 2019 to 2022. As we can see, turnout tends to be low in federal polls, ranging from 38% to 66% depending on the referendum. We can also see that electors are asked to participate in multiple referendums each year and that the topics of these polls vary greatly. Although voters are often invited to the polls, it is important to note that in recent years, the number of referendums is much smaller than the hypothetical "10 federal polls" asked in the SHP survey question. However, the number of elections in which Swiss citizens are able to participate is much higher than that found in other contexts, and the low turnout associated with many of these elections brings forth concerns related to voter fatigue.

Table 2.2 Federal Polls and turnout in Switzerland (2019-2022)

Date of Federal Poll	Issue or Issues	Turnout
February 10, 2019	Urban Sprawl Initiative	38%
May 19, 2019	1. Tax Reform and AHV Financing 2. EU Weapons Directive	44%
February 9, 2020	1. More affordable homes 2. Ban on discrimination based on sexual orientation	42%
September 27, 2020	1. For moderate immigration 2. Amendment of the Hunting Act 3. Amendment of the federal Act on Direct Federal Taxation 4. Amendment of the Loss of earnings Compensation Act 5. Federal Decree on the Procurement of New Fighter Aircraft	59%
November 29, 2020	1. Responsible Business Initiative 2. Initiative Against War Business	47%
March 7, 2021	1. Ban on full facial coverings 2.Electronic Identity Act 3. Initiative Against War Business	51%
June 13, 2021	1. For clean drinking water and healthy food 2. For a Switzerland without artificial pesticides 3. Covid-19 Act 4. CO2 Act 5. Federal Act on Police Measures to Combat Terrorism	60%
September 26, 2021	1. For lower taxes on wages, tax capital fairly 2. Marriage for all	52-53%
November 28, 2021	1. Nursing initiative 2. Judge initiative 3. Amendment of the 19 March 2021 to the Covid Act	65-66%
February 13, 2022	1. Ban on animal and human experiments 2.No tobacco ads for children and young adults 3.Amendment od the Federal Act on Stamp Duties 4.Federal Act on a Package of Measures to benefit the Media	44%
May 15, 2022	1. Amendment to the Federal Act on film Production and Film culture 2. Transplantation Act 3.Adoption of the Regulation on the European Border and Coast Guard and repealing Regulations	40%
*Information on voting initiatives and turnout figures comes from the Swiss's Confederation Federal Statistical Office (2022)		

Having short intervals between elections (and/or referenda) is thought to introduce voter fatigue and may be one of the reasons why turnout tends to be lower in Switzerland. The United States is often cited as an example of voter fatigue. This because it requires electors to vote often and has low levels of turnout (Boyd 1981; Boyd 1986). Voter fatigue is also closely related to rational choice theory. This is because the cost of voting increases with each election (Lijphart, 1995). For each election, voters must decide whether they want to vote as well as how they want to vote. If the elector decides to vote, he or she must also factor in the costs associated with getting to the voting place and casting a ballot. Many studies have shown that the frequency of elections does depress turnout, with elections held closer together yielding lower rates of participation (Rallings et al., 2003; Garmann, 2017).

Despite low levels of turnout in Switzerland, many respondents in the SHP reported that they would participate in many polls if 10 were held in a given year. Table 2.3 shows the distribution of this variable in all waves of the survey in which this question was asked. We can see that the largest percentage of respondents (between 41 to 52 percent, depending on the wave) claim that they would participate in all 10 elections. If the variable is dichotomized in order to assess which individuals would be more likely to vote (representing those who claim that they will vote in 6 elections or more) and those who are less likely to vote (claiming that they will vote in five elections or less) we can see that each time the question was asked, 68% of respondents or more claimed that they would vote in at least six elections (68.3% to 79.9% depending on the wave). On the other hand, only between 20.1% and 31.7% reported that they would vote in five elections or less. It is important to note that the most popular answer is stating that one would vote in 10 elections, followed by 8 polls and then by 5. The fourth most popular option is claiming

that one would vote in none of the federal polls. The popularity of stating that one would vote in all ten elections or in at least eight leads us to believe that survey respondents may be prone to exaggerate their hypothetical participation.

Table 2.3 Number of Elections would participate in if 10 federal polls in a year, entire sample

Wave	Would vote 0 times	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Would vote 10 times	Total
Wave 1 (1999)	477 7.5%	161 2.5%	322 5.1%	247 3.9%	193 3.0%	615 9.7%	254 4.0%	354 5.6%	772 12.1%	345 5.4%	2,619 41.2%	6,359 100%
Wave 2 (2000)	359 6.1%	115 2.0%	237 4.0%	187 3.2%	145 2.5%	565 9.6%	237 4.0%	366 6.2%	681 11.5%	365 6.2%	2,642 44.8%	5,899 100%
Wave 3 (2001)	331 6%	93 1.7%	221 4.0%	203 3.7%	121 2.2%	486 8.8%	216 3.9%	351 6.4%	661 12.0%	391 7.1%	2,429 44.1%	5,503 100%
Wave 4 (2002)	228 4.7%	91 1.9%	152 3.2%	131 2.7%	118 2.4%	403 8.3%	196 4.1%	239 5.0%	614 12.7%	342 7.1%	2,316 48.0%	4,830 100%
Wave 5 (2003)	246 5.6%	79 1.8%	164 3.7%	150 3.4%	87 2.0%	374 8.5%	154 3.5%	258 5.9%	531 12.1%	339 7.7%	2,019 45.9%	4,401 100%
Wave 6 (2004)	370 5.5%	107 1.6%	220 3.3%	168 2.5%	137 2.1%	546 8.2%	229 3.4%	362 5.4%	768 11.5%	439 6.6%	3,331 49.9%	6,677 100%
Wave 7 (2005)	264 4.8%	78 1.4%	153 2.8%	142 2.6%	99 1.8%	373 6.8%	172 3.1%	288 5.3%	622 11.3%	405 7.4%	2,892 52.7%	5,488 100%
Wave 8 (2006)	307 5.5%	107 1.9%	198 3.5%	146 2.6%	125 2.2%	395 7.0%	220 3.9%	325 5.8%	697 12.4%	378 6.7%	2,722 48.4%	5,620 100%
Wave 9 (2007)	374 6.3%	128 2.2%	191 3.2%	176 3.0%	118 2.0%	431 7.3%	240 4.1%	338 5.7%	703 11.9%	411 7.0%	2,789 47.3%	5,899 100%
Wave 10 (2008)	346 5.9%	118 2.0%	193 3.3%	183 3.1%	117 2.0%	470 8.0%	227 3.8%	291 5.0%	702 12.0%	417 7.1%	2,783 47.6%	5,847 100%
Wave 11 (2009)	318 5.3%	116 1.9%	215 3.6%	185 3.1%	123 2.0%	485 8.0%	206 3.4%	335 5.5%	738 12.2%	433 7.2%	2,887 47.8%	6,041 100%
Wave 13 (2011)	425 6.5%	128 2.0%	225 3.4%	206 3.2%	138 2.1%	549 8.4%	232 3.6%	433 6.6%	827 12.7%	509 7.8%	2,865 43.8%	6,537 100%
Wave 16 (2014)	327 5.2%	97 1.6%	180 2.9%	160 2.6%	119 1.9%	403 6.4%	228 3.6%	327 5.2%	847 13.5%	523 8.4%	3,050 48.7%	6,261 100%

Wave 19 (2017)	475 5.7%	137 1.6%	242 2.9%	188 2.3%	137 1.6%	558 6.7%	238 2.9%	417 5.0%	1,023 12.3%	630 7.6%	4,287 51.5%	8,332 100%
Wave 22 (2020)	737 5.6%	228 1.7%	408 3.1%	286 2.2%	221 1.7%	790 6.0%	387 2.9%	756 5.7%	1,398 10.5%	1,048 7.9%	7,003 52.8%	13,262 100%

Comparing a hypothetical and non-hypothetical voting question

Unfortunately, the dependent variable was not measured in the same way in these two surveys. This makes it more difficult (but not impossible) to compare the results across different contexts. It is important to begin by noting that neither self-reported turnout or hypothetical measures of voting behaviour are ideal measures of participation.

Self-reported turnout is often perceived as being a notorious victim of social desirability bias in surveys. Social desirability biases occur when respondents overreport certain behaviours that are perceived as being "good" and underreport behaviours that are normatively thought of as "bad". This can be done in order to preserve a more positive image of one's self or in an attempt to try to avoid eliciting a negative evaluation from another person, for example, from the interviewer (Lavrakas, 2008). This type of bias has often been observed in surveys asking respondents whether or not they have participated in elections. This is detected when a greater proportion of survey respondents (in an otherwise representative sample) claim to have voted in comparison to official turnout data found in the general population (i.e. Abelson et al., 1992; Burden 2000; Karp and Brockington, 2005; Holbrook and Krosnick, 2010). Although more respondents claim to have voted in the BHPS than in official reports, the levels of turnout in the panel follows trends set in general elections (with lower participation rates reported in elections with lower turnout). Hypothetical questions on turnout suffer from similar problems, with some authors stating that electors are not very good at predicting their behaviour (Rogers and

Aida, 2013). As we have already seen, the turnout figures in the SHP are higher than those we would expect to see when looking at the average rates of participation in Swiss federal polls. Because the BHPS and the SHP use different measures of turnout, it is difficult to estimate in which context there is a bigger bias. The bias is however, unsurprisingly, in the same direction for both surveys, with more respondents claiming to have voted than what we find in the general population. This may be due to people exaggerating their participation or because some of the traits that make an individual likely to participate in a survey (political or otherwise) may be similar to those that make one more likely to vote. However, as these surveys are not political in nature, we can assume that the bias is not due to greater levels of political interest among participants than in members of the general public. These surveys are likely to be more representative than those that only touch subject matter related to the field of political science (since those who are more interested in politics are more prone to participate in surveys on politics).

However imperfect these measures are, I am able to observe changes in voter turnout following life transitions, and these estimates may be more conservative. This is because respondents are more likely to exaggerate their voting behaviour rather than underestimate it (and those who tend to do this will probably do it consistently across waves of the panels, we are therefore less likely to witness changes in their behaviour). We can also expect that those who are bad at assessing their hypothetical participation, will do so steadily across the duration of the panel.

But can these two different measures be compared across contexts? It may be impossible to directly compare the size of the results obtained with both surveys, but having different measures of electoral participation might actually be a strength of this study rather

than a detriment. This is because if we can find a relationship between life transitions and turnout in these different contexts, when the questions were asked in two distinctive ways, we can be more confident that there is truly an underlying relationship between these life events and electoral participation.

Independent variables

The main independent variables are the various life transitions I have described thus far. They are: transition to marriage/cohabitation, parenthood, unemployment, divorce/separation, retirement and widowhood. Each of these transitions will be coded as a binary variable. If a respondent in one of the surveys is identified as having lived through a transition, they will be coded 0 in the year preceding the transition and 1 in the year following the transition. The transition variable is coded as missing for all respondents who have not experienced the life event in question. This makes it easy to identify the individuals who will make up my sub-samples of the dataset. As we will see later, I will create new datasets containing only those who have experienced each transition. For the SHP a transition is considered to have taken place if the respondent's state changed from one wave to another (the transition therefore took place within a year's time). In the BHPS, a transition is considered to have taken place if the respondent's state changed from one election to the next. For example, if an individual got married or started cohabitating between Election 1 and Election 2 and are still married and cohabitating at the time of Election 2, they will be coded as having undergone a transition which will be coded as 1 in the year of Election 2 and as 0 in the year of Election 1. This means that we can easily identify the year or election before a transition took place and the election or year following the change. Because I am looking specifically at the transition between two separate states,

the variable in the first wave of the panel for each respondent is treated as "missing". This is because it represents the baseline necessary to construct the variable for further waves. Only individuals who have experienced a life transition throughout the course of the panel will be included in my bivariate and multivariate analyses.

Transition to marriage/cohabitation

The first of the many life transitions that I study is the transition to marriage and cohabitation. As mentioned earlier, marriage and cohabitation will be treated interchangeably. A person is considered as having undergone the transition to marriage or cohabitation if they reported being single in one wave of the survey and claim to cohabit or to be married in the subsequent wave (or by the next election). Both the BHPS and the SHP contain questions that assess the civil status of respondents. However, since both panels take place over a relatively large time period, it is important to note that there have been changes to the institution of marriage in both countries. In the following paragraphs, I discuss how marriage has evolved and how question wording has been modified over time to reflect some of these changes.

In the United Kingdom, there is a distinction to make between marriage, civil partnership and cohabitation. A marriage represents a legally binding union. This is similar to a civil partnership which gives the couple the same legal rights and protections as married individuals. Civil partnerships were first introduced in the United Kingdom in 2004. Their goal was to give same-sex couples the opportunity to have the same rights as those found in a heterosexual marriage. It is important to note that same-sex marriage is now legal in the United Kingdom. This option became available in 2013 in England and Wales and in 2014 in Scotland, it was however only introduced in Northern Ireland in 2019

(Masci et al., 2019). The Act on civil partnerships was therefore updated in 2019 to allow opposite-sex couples to enter into a civil union (Fairbairn, 2020). This represents "a legally affirmed partnership" that requires the individuals in question to "register themselves under UK law" (AY&J Solicitors, 2022). After this is done, the members of the partnership are granted the same rights as a married couple. Civil partnerships are therefore very similar to marriages, but vary slightly in the way in which they are formed and in the way that they end. These relationships end in a dissolution rather than a divorce (although the process to end both a civil partnership and a marriage are very similar). Cohabitators, on the other hand, do not have all of the same benefits and rights as individuals who are either married or in a civil partnership.

What is the marriage and cohabitation rate in the United Kingdom and how has it shifted in recent years? The marriage rate in Great Britain is in decline while cohabitation is on the rise. The rate of cohabitation has increased by up to 25.8% between 2008 and 2018 (Office for National Statistics, 2019). However, married couples and those who are in civil partnerships still make up the majority (67%) of British families (Office for National Statistics, 2019). It is also important to note that over 70% of individuals entering a marriage do so for the first time (Office for National Statistics, 2022). This is also the case for same-sex civil partnerships, but only a little over 50% of opposite-sex couples entering a civil partnership are beginning their first marriage or partnership (Office for National Statistics, 2021). We can also see that the marriage rate is declining for individuals over the age of 16. In 1972 this rate was 84% for men and 64% for women, as of 2018, the marriage rate is 20% for men and 19% for women (Office of National Statistics, 2021). This also means that the average age of marriage is on the rise, but it remains younger for

women than it is for men. This is because men tend to marry younger partners. The average age of marriage in the United Kingdom is around 34 years old for men and 32 years old for women (Office for National Statistics, 2022a). Fewer young women between the ages of 20 and 34 years old live with their parents than men from the same age groups, which suggests that women may be more likely to begin cohabitating earlier than their male counterparts (Office of National Statistics, 2016). It is however important to note that most individuals between the ages of 16 and 29 are not living as a couple, over 70% of these individuals are not married, cohabitating or in a civil partnership (Office of National Statistics, 2020).

Those who enter civil partnerships as opposed to marriages tend to be a little older. The average age of men entering a civil partnership is 59 years old and the average age of women entering this type of union is 56 years old. Same-sex partners tend to be a little younger when entering civil partnerships, but the average is still around 50 years of age (Office for National Statistics, 2021). This shows that some important changes have taken place in the transition to marriage and cohabitation and that this transition is continuing to evolve in the United Kingdom.

These changes are reflected in the way the question on marital status has been asked in both the *British Household Panel Survey* and its follow up study *Understanding Society*. Throughout the course of these panels, additional categories have been added (for example, civil partnership was added as a category in the BHPS). Treating marriage and cohabitation interchangeably makes it easier to account for these changing dynamics.

Like in the United Kingdom, Switzerland makes a distinction between civil (or registered) partnership, marriage, and cohabitation. Partners in both a civil partnership and

a marriage benefit from the same legal rights, but same-sex marriage was not allowed in Switzerland until 2022 (Neghaiwi and Wiegmann, 2022). This meant that same-sex couples who married abroad would be recognized as civil partners upon their return to Switzerland. The average age at first marriage for men is around 32 years of age and 30 years of age for women (Confédération Suisse, 2022b). The marriage rate in the population is of about 4.2% (Confédération Suisse, 2022b). Cohabitation is on the rise in Switzerland, but cohabitating couples do not have the same rights as married or civil partners. This means that the law continues to treat individuals in these types of unions as two separate entities rather than as a couple. These partners are not allowed to share a last name, must file individual tax forms and have no right to each other's assets in the case of separation or death (Confédération Suisse, 2022c). However, partners are able to draw up a cohabitation contract in which they may detail the terms of their relationships and these agreements are legally binding. Most of the first unions experienced by Swiss couples will be that of a cohabitating relationship rather than a marriage (Charton and Wanner, 2001). Unfortunately, the SHP's categories for civil status are not as detailed as the ones found in the BHPS and do not contain a special category to identify cohabitators although we can identify when a transition to a marriage or to a formal civil partnership has taken place.

As we can see in table 2.4 we have 1961 individuals who got married or who began cohabitating during the course of the BHPS and that answered the voting question in at least two waves of the survey. Of these respondents, 1089 are women while 872 are men. The average age at which women enter marriage in the BHPS is 34.4 years old. This is very close to what we find in the general population (with the average age being 32). The average for men is of 35.2 years of age (which is also very similar to the population estimate

of 34 years old). In the SHP we have fewer individuals who experience this life transition. 467 respondents marry throughout the course of the panel and answered the hypothetical voting question in at least two waves. Of the 467 respondents, 233 are female and 234 are male. The average age of marriage in the panel is of 35.5 years of age for women and 38 years old for men. This is slightly higher than what we find in population estimates that situates the average age of marriage for a Swiss citizen to be in their early thirties.

Table 2.4 Transition to marriage BHPS and SHP

Transition to marriage											
Gender	**Female**					**Male**					**Female and Male**
Survey	**Mean age**	**Std. dev**	**Min**	**Max**	**N**	**Mean age**	**Std. dev**	**Min**	**Max**	**N**	**Total**
BHPS	34.44	11.40	20	90	1089	35.21	12.15	18	86	872	1961
SHPS	35.46	9.64	19	67	233	38.0	10.83	20	80	234	467

Transition to parenthood

The second transition variable that I study is the transition to parenthood. A person will be considered as having transitioned to parenthood when they go from reporting having no children to having some in a subsequent wave of the survey. The data in both panels is quite detailed and allows us to identify the relationship between family members. For example, in the BHPS and its follow-up we have access to information related to the number of children one has, the number of children one has under the age of 18 and the number of children living in the household. The variable used in order to assess if a transition has taken place is the number of one's own children. Using this numerical variable, I created a new binary variable indicating whether the respondent was a parent or not. Those with no children were coded as 0 and those with one child or more were coded as 1. A second additional variable was created in order to see if a transition had taken place

(when one goes from 0 in one wave to 1 in another). In the SHP I identify the transition to parenthood by looking at whether or not there is a new baby in the household. In order to verify if the respondents are first time parents, I use a second variable that identifies the number of kids under the age of 18 in the household.

Like marriage and cohabitation, parenthood has also experienced some changes in the United Kingdom. The last census has shown for the first time since its inception, half of British women are still childless when they reach age 30 (Campbell, 2022). Indeed, during the 2020 census, the Office for National Statistics found that the total fertility rate was the lowest it had ever been since records started being collected in 1938. This means that the current fertility rate of 1.58 children per woman is lower than it was for the duration of the Second World War. This is a result of trends which include more couples choosing not to have children, people having less children and having children at a later age. Indeed, the average age at which a woman gives birth in the United Kingdom is at 30.7 years of age (Office for National Statistics, 2022b). This reflects a trend that began in the 1970s, with the average age at birth slowly increasing throughout the decades.

In Switzerland, the majority of children are born to married couples. Only 20% of children have unmarried parents (Leybold-Johnson, 2013). The proportion of married couples having children is therefore higher than what is observed in the rest of Europe. This is because couples often choose to get married when they are expecting a child because of Switzerland's legal context (Leybold-Johnson, 2013). It is easier to have equal parental rights if the couple having the child is married. The average age of a woman giving birth to her first child is around 31 years old, while the average for the father is 35 (Maître, 2019). The average number of children born to each woman is 1,54 (Kohler, 2020).

In the BHPS we have 1873 respondents who experienced the transition to parenthood and who reported on their turnout in at least two elections. We have slightly more women than men in the British parent sample. The average age at which this transition is experienced in the panel is at 31.4 years of age for women and at 34.6 years of age for men. In the SHP, the age of the transition to parenthood resembles that found in the population. Women are on average 32.3 years old when they become mothers and men are on average 34.8 years old. There are 329 respondents in the transition to parenthood sample in the SHP.

Table 2.5 Transition to parenthood BHPS and SHP

Transition to parenthood											
Gender	**Female**					**Male**					**Female and Male**
Survey	**Mean age**	**Std. dev**	**Min**	**Max**	**N**	**Mean age**	**Std. dev**	**Min**	**Max**	**N**	**Total**
BHPS	31.40	5.60	19	57	978	34.60	6.52	21	65	895	1873
SHPS	32.26	5.73	19	71	176	34.80	6.58	21	77	153	329

Transition to unemployment

The first professional life transition that I study is unemployment. A person will be considered to have transitioned to unemployment when they go from being employed to unemployed in a subsequent wave of the survey (or in the case of the BHPS, when they were employed for the last election and unemployed in the following election).

The transition to unemployment is an interesting one to study and is often an unexpected transition that can put the person experiencing it in a vulnerable position. The unemployment rate in the United Kingdom has shifted throughout the period covered by the *British Household Panel Survey* and its follow-up study *Understanding Society*. The dataset also covers a particular volatile period for the economy: the downturn from the

2008 recession. In the 1990s, when the panel started, unemployment was relatively high in the United Kingdom. It is measured as the percentage of individuals over the age of 16 that are unemployed. To be included in this unemployment rate, one must be unemployed and actively looking for work. In 1991, the first year of the panel, unemployment stood at 8.9% and remained high throughout the 90s, reaching a peak in 1993 at 10.4% (Macrotrends, 2022). The unemployment rate than started to drop in the early 2000s, reaching its lowest point in 2004 and 2005 at 4.8% (Macrotrends, 2022). After 2008, the unemployment rate was again on the rise, reaching a peak in 2011 at 8.1% before starting to drop again. It reached a low point in 2019, at only 3.8% (Macrotrends, 2022). The unemployment rate in the BHP and in Understanding Society is similar to that found in the population. It follows similar trends, sometimes being a little bit higher or lower than that found in the population (with a variation of up to three percent).

Table 2.6 Unemployment rate in the United Kingdom

Year	Unemployment rate	Unemployment rate BHP (entire sample)
1991	8.55%	8.53%
1992	9.78%	9.42%
1993	10.35%	9.25%
1994	9.65%	8.75%
1995	8.69%	6.97%
1996	8.19%	6.71%
1997	7.07%	6.13%
1998	6.20%	5.66%
1999	6.04%	6.41%
2000	5.56%	6.17%
2001	4.70%	6.18%
2002	5.04%	5.47%
2003	4.81%	5.67%
2004	4.59%	4.81%
2005	4.75%	5.30%
2006	5.35%	5.30%
2007	5.26%	4.37%
2008	5.62%	5.72%
2009	7.54%	11.09%
2010	7.79%	9.58%
2011	8.04%	9.08%
2012	7.88%	8.77%
2013	7.52%	7.76%
2014	6.11%	8.24%
2015	5.30%	7.24%
2016	4.81%	6.71%
2017	4.33%	6.64%
2018	4.00%	6.46%
2019	3.74%	6.96%
*Data from Macrotrends, 2022		

The United Kingdom offers its citizens certain protections against unemployment. Both employees and employers contribute to the system and employees who lose their jobs are able to access what is known as the “jobseeker’s allowance”. In order to get this benefit, certain conditions must be met. These include but are not limited to: having contributed to

the system for at least one year, not being a full-time student, residing in the United Kingdom and being able, willing and looking for work (Government of the United Kingdom, 2022). A report by the International Labour Organization suggests that the United Kingdom unemployment benefits class amongst "medium-level" systems. This means that unemployment benefits in the UK are not as advantageous as those found in some other countries. One of the reasons that this is the case is because fewer people who are unemployed in this context claim benefits and the benefits are available for less than a year (International Labour Organization, 2000).

The unemployment rate in Switzerland has been under 5% in recent years. When one loses their job in Switzerland, they can begin collecting unemployment benefits. Like in other contexts, certain conditions must be met in order for this to happen, but the requirements are less strict than those found in other countries. In order to apply for unemployment benefits, an individual must be living in Switzerland, must be partially or completely unemployed and needs to have worked for a total of 12 months in the last two years (Confédération Suisse, 2022d). There are also certain age limits in place in order to collect this benefit. An individual must be over the age of compulsory schooling and must be under the official retirement age (Confédération Suisse, 2022d). The number of days one can collect the unemployment benefit varies depending on the number of months one worked in the previous two years period, their age and whether or not they have dependents in their household. The minimum amount of time for which one can collect the benefit if eligible is 200 days, but some people are eligible for as many as 500 days, which represents an almost two-year period (Confédération Suisse, 2022d). This maximum period is much longer than the one we saw offered in the United Kingdom and Switzerland is often ranked

amongst countries considered to have the best unemployment benefits in the world (International Labour Organization, 2000). The size of the benefit is also rather generous in comparison to that offered in other countries. In general, those who apply for the benefit will collect 70% of their wages. However, those who have dependents in the household can receive as much as 80% of their salary throughout the course of their unemployment spell (International Labour Organization, 2000).

As we can see in table 2.7 we have 466 individuals in the United Kingdom's unemployment sample. The average age at which individuals tend to experience unemployment is in their early forties. For the SHP we have 294 individuals who experienced the transition from being employed to unemployed. The average age at which respondent lived through this event was in their late thirties.

Table 2.7 Transition to Unemployment BHPS and SHP

Transition to unemployment											
Gender	**Female**					**Male**					**Female and Male**
Survey	**Mean age**	**Std. dev**	**Min**	**Max**	**N**	**Mean age**	**Std. dev**	**Min**	**Max**	**N**	**Total**
BHPS	42.27	11.43	21	64	211	42.03	12.33	21	67	261	466
SHPS	39.47	13.20	19	67	174	36.06	13.37	19	66	120	294

Transition to divorce/separation

Like marriage and cohabitation, divorce and separation are treated interchangeably. This means that I will look at whether an individual reported being separated or divorced when in the previous wave of the survey (or in the last wave with an election) they reported that they were either cohabitating, married or in a civil partnership.

Just as there are different types of unions in the United Kingdom, there are also different kinds of divorce and separation. In order to get divorced certain conditions must

be met. The couple in question has to be in a marriage that is recognized by the UK, has been married for at least a year and wishes to permanently end their relationship (Government of the United Kingdom, 2022a). Married couples also have the option to get a legal separation rather than a divorce. This separation resembles divorce but is sometimes seen as an alternative to those who have religious objections to divorce or who have been married for less than a year (Government of the United Kingdom, 2022b). Like in divorce, arrangements need to be made for the division of assets and property. A similar process is taken to dissolve civil partnerships, although the process differs slightly by region (i.e. Scotland and Northern Ireland have different procedures) (Government of the United Kingdom, 2022c). The simplest relationship to dissolve is therefore that of cohabitators because they do not have the same legal ties as the parties in other types of union.

In Switzerland, the divorce rate remains around 2%, about half that of the marriage rate. Marriages headed for divorce in Switzerland last an average of 15 years (Confédération Suisse, 2022b). While the marriage rate is in decline in Switzerland, the divorce rate is on the rise (Confédération Suisse, 2022b). In order to get a divorce in Switzerland, one or both parties involved must address the judicial authority on the matter in their canton. In the case where both partners wish to be divorced and agree in regards to the conditions of the dissolution of their marriage, the divorce procedures can be finalized in as little as four months (Confédération Suisse, 2023). The procedures to end a registered partnership are very similar to that of a divorce (Confédération Suisse, 2023a).

As we can see in table 2.8, we have 952 respondents who make up our divorce sample in the BHPS. In this particular sample we have almost twice as many women as men (693 women versus 352 men). The average age at which a divorce took place in the

BHPS was in the mid-forties for both men and women. In the SHP we have a sample of 254 individuals who undergo the transition towards divorce or separation. This sample is more balanced between genders with 140 women and 114 men. Again, the average age of divorce is within one's forties but is slightly earlier for women (42.7 years of age) than for men (46.4 years of age). This is unsurprising since women, on average, tend to marry older partners.

Table 2.8 Transition to divorce BHPS and SHP

Transition to divorce											
Gender	**Female**					**Male**					**Female and Male**
Survey	**Mean age**	**Std. dev**	**Min**	**Max**	**N**	**Mean age**	**Std. dev**	**Min**	**Max**	**N**	**Total**
BHPS	44.60	12.72	23	87	603	46.11	12.80	23	88	352	952
SHPS	42.71	9.27	22	70	140	46.40	9.87	28	81	114	254

Transition to retirement

The second and last professional life transition that I study is the transition to retirement. This event can easily be identified using survey questions asking respondents about their participation in the labour market. Both surveys interrogate participants about their employment status. I create a binary "retirement" variable, once this is done, it is easy to create a "transition to retirement" variable by identifying those who were not retired in one wave of the survey (or at the time of an election) and that were retired in the next wave (or at the time of the following election).

Retirement is a transition that is also undergoing some changes in the United Kingdom and Switzerland. This is similar to trends seen in other advanced democracies. One of the reasons is that there are important demographic changes taking place. In many European and North American countries, we can witness an ageing population. This is the

case in the United Kingdom where between 2002 and 2012 the proportion of the population over the age of 65 rose by 15% (Emmerson et al., 2014). People in these countries also have a higher life expectancy than they did before. This is due to advances in health care and in living conditions. Because of these factors, some countries have risen the age of availability for state pensions and citizens are therefore expected to work longer. In the United Kingdom, the eligibility age for the state pension is on the rise and it is expected to continue increasing in the next decades (Age UK, 2022). The current age at which one can begin to collect the state pension is 66 years old for both men and women. However, the age is increasing based on one's year of birth. For those who were born in 1960, this is expected to rise to 67 and soon after to 68 (Age UK, 2022). This means that people will stay in the work force longer and experience retirement at an older age. The changes will affect women more than men, since men tend to work later in life on average than women (Emmerson et al., 2014). In the United Kingdom only 16% of women between the ages of 65 and 69 were employed. This is expected to rise and 37% of women in this age group are likely to be employed by 2022-23 (Emmerson et al., 2014). This reflects important changes in demographics and in the way that retirement is experienced. Furthermore, the transition to retirement is often mitigated by health factors. Healthy individuals are more likely to remain in the work force longer, while those suffering from medical conditions are more likely to retire at an earlier age (Emmerson et al., 2014).

The age of retirement in Switzerland is 65 years old for men and 64 years old for women (Confédération Suisse, 2022e). This age is very similar to the retirement age in the United Kingdom and in other European and North American countries. This is the age that most people will start collecting their pension, although they can apply to do so earlier or

later if they choose to keep working. Retiring early by one to two years is possible, but will have certain implications on one's pension. The typical pension plan in Switzerland is based on three pillars. The first is the state pension. It is the minimum pension available to Swiss citizens and is composed of three distinct benefits: the Old Age and Survivor Insurance, Disability Insurance, and Income Compensation Allowance (Confédération Suisse, 2022e). The second pillar making up people's pensions is their occupational pension plan. Joining one of these pension plans is mandatory for all employees over the age of 17 that make a certain salary, both the employee and the employer contribute to this pension plan. The third and last pillar making up Swiss pensions is that of a private pension plan. Unlike the second pillar, participating in this type of plan is not mandatory, but facilitates retirement savings for Swiss citizens (Confédération Suisse, 2022e).

As we can see in table 2.9, the average age of retirement in both the British and Swiss sample closely resembles the official retirement age found in both countries. The average age of retirement for women is 63.3 years of age in the BHPS and 65.8 years of age in the SHP. The average age of retirement for men is slightly older in both samples with men in the BHPS having an average age of 65.1 years old and those in the SHP having an average age of 66.9 years old. For the BHPS we have a sample size of 1803 respondents. Our sample in the SHP is 235 individuals. The number of years in which the retirement variable is available is smaller in the SHP than the other life transitions because the question directly asking respondents for the reason for which they are not in the labour force was only asked from 1999 to 2003.

Table 2.9 Transition to retirement BHPS and SHP

Transition to retirement											
Gender	**Female**					**Male**					**Female and Male**
Survey	**Mean age**	**Std. dev**	**Min**	**Max**	**N**	**Mean age**	**Std. dev**	**Min**	**Max**	**N**	**Total**
BHPS	63.34	5.86	37	82	939	65.11	6.07	43	86	864	1803
SHPS	65.76	5.82	53	78	108	66.91	5.35	55	88	127	235

Transition to widowhood

Finally, the last transition that I study is the transition to widowhood. One has lived this transition if they reported being married or cohabitating in one wave of the survey and report being widowed in a subsequent wave. This transition will be assessed using the same survey questions that have previously informed us on respondents' civil status.

Like all transitions seen so far, there has been some changes in the transition to widowhood in the United Kingdom in recent years. Widowhood has a tendency of happening later in life than the other transitions we have seen thus far. It is also happening at an older age than it did in the past and it is fairly uncommon amongst younger age groups since life expectancy is on the rise. This means that a smaller proportion of people in their seventies are widowed than in previous generations. For example, the Office for National Statistics points out that in 1991 as many as 49% of women in their seventies were widowed, this however dropped down to 30% by 2016 (2018). In many countries, women are also more likely to experience this transition than men. This is primarily due to two factors: women tend to have longer life expectancy than men and are also more likely to have married men older than themselves (Span, 2016; Office of National Statistics, 2018). The United Kingdom is no different in this regard with a fairly large difference in the number of widowed men and women. In 2014, census data showed that there were as many

as 1.75 million women who were widowed, this was over double the number of widowed men (Office of National Statistics, 2018).

Like in the United Kingdom, Swiss women are more likely to become widows than men. When studying demographic trends in Switzerland throughout the course of the 20th century, Schoen and Baj (1984) found that the chances of a woman becoming a widow were twice as high as those of a man. As we have seen in the section on retirement, one of the benefits included in the Swiss pension plan is the Old Age and Survivor Insurance (Confédération Suisse, 2022e). This offers certain protections to individuals who lose their partners, since widowhood is known to have financial consequences for the surviving partner.

Table 2.10 summarizes some key facts about the widowhood sample in both the BHPS and the SHP. We have a total of 864 widowed respondents in the BHPS, 605 of them are women and only 259 are men. This corresponds to population trends that suggest that women are more likely to be widowed than men. The average age of widowhood for both men and women are in their early seventies. For the SHP we have a total sample of 129 widowed individuals. This is the smallest sample for any of the life transitions being studied in the course of this dissertation. Again, there are many more women than men in this sample. Of 129 respondents who lost a partner, only 25 of them are men. The average age of widowhood in the SHP is in the late sixties for both men and women.

Table 2.10 Transition to widowhood BHPS and SHP

Transition to widowhood											
Gender	**Female**					**Male**					**Female and Male**
Survey	**Mean age**	**Std. dev**	**Min**	**Max**	**N**	**Mean age**	**Std. dev**	**Min**	**Max**	**N**	**Total**
BHPS	70.06	11.98	31	96	605	73.90	11.42	32	97	259	864
SHPS	67.02	11.55	40	89	104	69.04	15.04	35	90	25	129

Control variables

In order to see how the effect of life transitions on turnout compare to that of other variables I include a variety of controls in my multivariate models. These represent some of the "usual suspects" that are well-known to influence turnout such as education level and age (along with age squared). Including these controls will allow me to see how the effects of major transitions compare in strength to those of these typical explanatory variables. I also include a control variable that is essential in order to test one of hypotheses: gender. This is essential for testing hypothesis 7 which is that "The effect of personal life transition on turnout will be gendered. The effect of marriage and parenthood on turnout will be greater for women.". I also control for the year in which the survey took place in order to ensure that the effects observed are independent from moments of particular electoral salience or disinterest.

In the following pages I explain the rationale for including each of my control variables. I also discuss how these variables have been operationalized based on the different question wordings in each panel. I will also explain how I recode these variables to facilitate comparison between contexts.

Level of education

Education is by far one of the individual level variables that has garnered the most research as a predictor of electoral participation and is therefore included in my models as a control. Studies have shown that those with higher levels of education are more likely to vote than those with less education (i.e. Jackson, 1995; Borgonovi et al, 2010; Sondheimer and Green, 2010; Ahlskog 2021). There has however been much debate over whether this relationship is causal or not, since turnout is in decline while education is on the rise (Burden, 2009). Experimental designs and twin studies suggest that this relationship is not spurious (Sondheimer and Green, 2010; Ahlskog 2021). However, many studies have suggested that it is relative education (the educational level of an individual in comparison to that of others in their cohort) rather than absolute education that increases the likelihood of voting (Tenn 2005; Persson 2013). This could help explain why additional years of mandatory schooling do not seem to boost turnout. For example, following an educational reform in Norway, where compulsory education went from seven to nine years, turnout did not increase (Pelkonen, 2010). Tenn (2007) was also able to compare individuals with similar sociodemographic characteristics with different levels of schooling by comparing individuals that were slightly younger to those a little older. The level of education did not increase voter turnout. This brings forth questions as to why schooling may or may not influence electoral participation. Some have made a link between education and political knowledge. For example, Borgovini et al. (2010) found a positive relationship between education, turnout and gaining knowledge on political and current affairs. However, adding an additional year of education did not increase turnout but did have a positive effect on political knowledge. The complexity of the electoral system may also mitigate the effect of education on electoral participation. Gallego (2010) noticed that there is a smaller gap

in turnout between those who are better educated and those who are less in countries that have simple ballots, that have state-initiated registration and that have fewer political parties. Bhatti (2017) also suggests that there is no relationship between the type of education received and turnout. Those studying the natural sciences were not less likely to vote than those studying the social sciences (with the exception of those working towards a degree in political science). In the United States, the link between education, turnout and crime has also been explored, positing that those with lower levels of education are more likely to be disenfranchised (Chevalier and Doyle, 2012). Researchers continue to explore the relationship between education and electoral participation; one's level of schooling remains an important variable to include in models accounting for individual turnout in elections.

For this reason, I will include a control variable that accounts for whether or not the respondent is university educated. This variable will be a binary variable coded 0 if the individual in question does not have a university degree and 1 if the respondent possesses a degree. This will be the easiest way to offer a similar measure of education across different contexts. This is because the British and the Swiss educational systems are different at the secondary level but it is expected that university education will be similar. This variable tends to be relatively stable throughout the life-course, especially when the individual in question has reached a certain age (usually by one's late twenties). Of course, some individuals will go back to school later on in life, but most respondents have a relatively stable level of education throughout the course of the panel.

Age and age squared

Age is a variable that is almost always included in studies on political participation. Conventional wisdom suggests that older individuals are more likely to participate in elections, while younger electors are more likely to abstain. The relationship between age and turnout has long been observed; Glenn and Grimes (1968) discussed it as early as the 1960s. These authors pointed out that from young adulthood to middle age, turnout and political interest is lower than it is from middle age to late adulthood. In recent years, it has also been suggested that the youth of today vote less than the youth of the past. Indeed, youth have become notorious abstainers. Smets (2012) proposes that younger citizens today participate less because their transition towards adulthood is slower. This is because today's young adults get their first jobs, get married and have their first child later in life than in previous generations. Others have explained the widening gap in electoral participation between younger and older citizens as a result of favouring different types of political participation. Younger generations are said to prefer informal political processes such as joining a protest or boycotting rather than more traditional forms of political engagement (Dalton, 2008). There are therefore two ways of looking at the relationship between age and turnout: that of the disengaged youth or of changing citizenship norms with younger citizens preferring to engage in less institutionalized forms of participation. Regardless of the reasons for which young people vote less, age is an important predictor of individual level turnout. Some factors have however been shown to encourage youth turnout. For example, younger voters may be more likely to turn out to vote when the candidates running for elections are also younger (Pomante and Scraufnagel, 2015). When controlling for age, it is important to note that this variable will evidently change throughout the course of the panel, with participants aging at every wave. The age variable

will be computed by subtracting the date of birth from the year of the wave in which the data was collected. This variable will therefore be a continuous variable starting at age 18 (the first year one is eligible to vote in the countries being studied) to around 100 years of age. A control for age square will also be included in my multivariate model. This is done in order to consider the possibility that the relationship between age and turnout may not be linear.

Gender

Another sociodemographic variable that is often studied in relation to political behaviour and included in models that explain individual electoral participation is gender (e.g.: Carpini and Keeter, 1992; Childs, 2004; Quaranta, 2016; Quaranta and Dotti Sani, 2018; Manza and Brooks, 1998; Woliver and Boiter-Jolley 2011; Kostelka et al, 2019; Dassonneville and Kostelka, 2020). Throughout the 20th century it has been suggested that there is a gap in turnout between men and women, with men participating more than women in most elections (e.g. Duverger 1955; Hout and Knoke, 1975). The presence of gender differences in electoral participation may have been due to the lasting impact of disenfranchisement on women's political behaviour (Firebaugh and Chen, 1995). However, some evidence suggests that this gender gap is closing and perhaps even reversing. For example, women in the United States have voted at slightly higher rates than men for every presidential election since 1984 (Igielnik, 2020). Despite these results, some evidence suggests that although women tend to participate at equal rates in first order elections, a gender gap may still be present during second order contests. This could be the result of lower levels of political knowledge and interest among women for second order elections (Kostelka et al., 2019). A traditional gender gap has also been seen in

supranational elections, like the elections to the European parliament. However, this is context dependent and is only observed for two thirds of the countries that make up the European Union, with the largest gaps in Poland and Croatia (Dassonneville and Kostelka, 2020). Even though the gender gap has disappeared for many elections, the evidence suggests that women participate less than men in other types of political activities and more in others. Women tend to be less engaged in political campaign activities but to participate more in cause-oriented politics (Childs, 2004). There is also some indication of differences between genders when it comes to politics in general. Carpini and Keeter (1992) suggest that there is a gender gap in political knowledge in the United States, and many studies have shown differences in party preferences and political opinions between women and men (e.g. Wirls, 1986; Manza and Brooks, 1998, Kaufmann and Petrocik, 1999; Abendschön and Steinmetz, 2014). In order to account for gender, I will create a "female" variable where women are coded as 1 and men are coded as 0. As mentioned earlier, this variable will also be essential in order to test hypothesis 6, which suggests that the effects of some transitions may be gendered because they are experienced differently by men and women.

Year

I finally include a control variable for the year of the survey. In order to do this a dummy variable is included for each year. This is important because we do not want to attribute the effect of a life transition to that of an exceptional election year that may have garnered high or low rates of turnout. This could happen if we have more respondents experiencing a life transition in a given year and if this year is an outlier in terms of turnout level. For example, when we look at the BHPS and at official turnout values in Great Britain, we can

see that 2001 was not a great year for individuals to turn out to vote. Indeed, electoral participation amongst the general population did not reach 60%. This means that turnout in this election was much lower than in the other elections covered in the panel. Controlling for year allows me to make sure that observed changes are not just the result of varying levels of interest or of a particular salient or non-salient election year. For the SHP, this is less of an issue because the question is about hypothetical turnout. We can therefore assume that the actual political climate at the time in which the question is asked would have less of an impact on the answer. However, we cannot discount that possibility and as such year is also added as a control. This also helps to make the models more consistent across both contexts.

Table 2.11 summarizes the dependent, independent and control variables that I will be using along with the way that they have been coded. The coding is consistent across panels. The table also identifies the original variables from which these were derived.

Table 2.11 Summary of control variables and of their coding

Variable name	Type of variable	Coding Scheme SHPS	Coding Scheme BHPS	Derived from these original variables in the SHPS	Derived from these original variables in BHPS
Voted (DV)	Scale (SHPS) Binary (BHPS)	0-10 scale representing number of federal polls one would vote in in a given year	0-Did not vote in the last general election 1-Voted in the last general election	Derived from p06 (participation in federal polls but new variable excludes missing categories)	Derived from "vote7" (voted in the last general election but new variable excludes those who did not vote by the date of an election in a given wave). The variables "istrtdatm" (month of interview) and "istrtdatd (day of interview) are used to identify date.
Transition to married (IV)	Binary	0 – year before transition 1- year of transition to marriage	0-election year before transition 1-election year of transition to marriage	Derived from "Civsta" (civil status) and "d14" (correction to civil status)	Derived from "mastat" (marital status)
Transition to divorced (IV)	Binary	0 – year before transition 1- year of transition to divorced	0- election year before transition 1- election year of transition to divorced	Derived from "Civsta" (civil status) and "d14" (correction to civil status)	Derived from "mastat" (marital status)
Transition to widowed (IV)	Binary	0 – year before transition 1- year of transition to widowhood	0- election year before transition 1- election year of transition to widowed	Derived from "Civsta" (civil status) and "d14" (correction to civil status)	Derived from "mastat" (marital status)
Transition to parenthood (IV)	Binary	0- year before transition 1- year of the transition to parenthood	0- election year before transition 1- election year of transition to parenthood	Derived from "nbb" (new baby) and "nbkid" (number of children in household)	Derived from "nchild_dv" (number of children in household)
Transition to unemployed (IV)	Binary	0 – year before transition 1- year of transition to unemployed	0- election year before transition 1- election year of transition to unemployed	Derived from "wstat" (work status)	Derived from "jbstat" (job status).
Transition to retired (IV)	Binary	0 – year before transition 1- year of transition to retired	0- election year before transition 1- election year of transition to retired	Derived from "w12" and "wstat" (work status)	Derived from "jbstat" (job status).

Age Square (CV)	Continuous	Square age of respondent in wave	Square age of respondent in given election year	Derived from "age" but new variable excludes missing categories.	Derived from "age" and "age_dv".
Female (CV)	Binary	0 – Male 1- Female	0-Male 1-Female	Derived from "sex" but new variable excludes missing categories.	Derived from "sex" but new variable excludes missing categories.
Education (CV)	Binary	0 – No University Degree 1- University Degree	0 -No University Degree 1-University Degree	Derived from isced (International Standard Classification of Education)	Derived from "hiqual_dv" (highest qualification)
Year (CV)	Dummies	1992-2019 for the BHPS 1999-2020 for SHPS	Year (0-1 for each year)	Derived from original wave variable	Derived from original wave variable

Research Strategy

In the following section, I detail the research strategy employed throughout the course of this dissertation. I begin by explaining how I merged the various waves of the panel in order to create a single dataset for each study. I also describe how I set up the data to prepare it for analysis and create separate datasets containing only the sample of respondents that have undergone each life transition. It is important to note that I am only studying the short-term effects of life transitions on turnout. In the BHPS I will be looking at the voting behaviour in the election following the major life change, while in the SHP I will be looking at changes in behaviour in the wave following the life transition. This is a limitation of this study. However, it is important to assess whether these life transitions have an initial effect before undergoing future research on the matter. It is somewhat unlikely that if a life transition has no short-term effect, that it will influence voter turnout in the long run. Studying short-term effects also ensures that what we are witnessing is a

direct result of the transitions and not of other factors that may take place years or even decades after the transition has happened.

The first analyses that I run are simple bivariate tests comparing individuals' voting behaviour in the wave or election prior to experiencing a life transition to their participation the year of the transition or in the election year following the change. This will allow me to see if participation increases or decreases following changes in civil status or employment. This will be a good first step in order to assess whether or not life transitions influence participation. For the BHPS I run cross-tabulations with McNemar's tests in order to see if there is a statistically significant difference in voting behaviour after a life transition. With the SHP, this will be done with the help of paired t-tests.

Bivariate analyses, although a good first step, are not sufficient in order to test my hypotheses. I will therefore turn to multivariate models in order to see how life transitions affect the voting behaviour of individuals. I will describe how the data has been set up for these analyses and the models that I run. For the BHPS I start by running logit regression models. In the case where we find a statistically significant relationship, I will then calculate marginal effects to be able to interpret the size of the effect on my dependent variable. For the SHP I run simple OLS regressions in order to assess whether each life transition has an impact on electoral participation.

What other studies have done

Studies in various fields have looked at the effect of life transitions on behaviour and outlook. We have seen numerous such studies in my review of the literature. However, in the previous chapter I was more interested in elaborating on the findings of these studies than on the methods utilized by different researchers. In the following pages we will see

that there are many ways to approach panel data and just as many ways to analyse the impact of transitions on a dependent variable. These methods have several strengths and weaknesses. These studies will inform me when developing my own research strategy.

As we have seen previously, a few studies have looked at the effects of life transitions on happiness or on life satisfaction. These studies typically use panel data and their dependent variable often represents a scale variable with the respondent's self-evaluated level of life satisfaction (i.e.: Hershey and Jenkens, 2014; Switek and Easterlin, 2018) or a numerical score variable computed based on various different survey items (i.e. Chipperfield and Havens, 2001). Switek and Easterlin's (2018) study on young adult's life satisfaction and life transitions used the previous method. In order to conduct their analyses, the authors ran OLS first difference models without a constant. Furthermore, they predicted the impact of changes in life satisfaction by using the association between life satisfaction with each transition. Brown and Trost (2003) explored the effects of the transition to marriage and motherhood on young women's level of physical activity. The authors use multiple logistic regressions in order to compute the impact of life transitions on physical activity while controlling for baseline levels of physical activity.

Now that we have looked at the methods that have been used in a few studies on life transitions in other fields, it is important to dissect the methodology of the articles that have been written on life transitions and political behaviour. This will allow us to see how various authors have developed models in order to estimate the effects of transitions on turnout. As we have seen in the previous chapter, one of the earliest studies to look at the effect of life transitions on political participation was conducted in 1995 by Stoker and Jennings. These authors used data from the *Youth-Panel Socialization Study* which took

place in three waves between 1965 to 1982 (a fourth wave later took place in 1997 but had evidentially not taken place at the time of publication). They had access to detailed questionnaires accounting for participation in four American elections: the elections of 1968, 1972, 1976 and 1980. The survey questions also asked about the date of a given transition (this meant the authors could detect in which year the respondent changed their civil status). The authors then looked at partners' behavioural patterns both before and after the marriage in what they describe as a "patched up" approach using methods that are both useful in panel and cross-sectional studies. They compared the political behaviour of pre-marital couples (who represent those that were not yet married by the time of the election but who would be married later) to those of couples who were already married at the time of the election. In order to do this, they used Pearson correlation coefficients and observed that the voting behaviour of married couples more closely resembled each other's than the behaviour of those who were yet to be married. Following this, the authors estimated OLS regression models using participation activities between 1973-1982 as their dependent variables. They also ran models with electoral participation in the 1980 presidential election as a dependent variable. A series of independent variables were included in the model that account for marital transitions, spousal participation and previous individual participation. They also ran separate models for the two generations in the panel (one for the parent generation and one for the youth generation). As interesting as these methods may be, they do not maximize the panel design of the study. The authors are also working with a limited number of waves and are relying on individuals to recall events that took place many years prior to the interview. Since the publication of this study, more research has emerged on life transitions and political behaviour

In 2010, Kern published a study using data from the *British Household Panel Survey* in order to assess the impact of marital transitions on voting behaviour. Indeed, the goal of the study was to see how transitions out of marriage (specifically divorce and widowhood) could result in changes in political participation. The study was published in the year after the completion of this first panel and used data from 1991 to 2009. His research strategy identified married couples as belonging to a "control group" and those who were divorced or widowed as being part of a "treated" group. Kern excluded the first election of the panel from analysis because he believed that it was too close in time to the first wave of the survey. He therefore studied electoral behaviour in only three general elections: that of 1997, 2001 and 2005. He created a new sub-sample of the panel by dropping all respondents that were not married (since only married individuals are at risk of getting either divorced or widowed). Once a respondent has been "treated" they are also removed from further analysis. For example, a previously divorced individual would not be re-introduced as a married individual in a later wave. This is done in order to avoid any kind of confusion. Kern also used propensity score matching to find good individuals to compare in the "control" group of married individuals to those of the "treatment" groups. This allowed him to compare individuals that had similar "pre-treatment" characteristics. Finally, in order to estimate the effect of the transition out of marriage, Kern ran multinomial logistic regressions and then estimated expected probabilities in order to present the results. The information available in the panel to reproduce a quasi-experimental design using observational data. The next article I will discuss uses a similar technique.

Rapeli et al. (2021) wrote the most recent article on life transitions and turnout. As such they use sophisticated methods in order to analyse the effect of major life events on turnout. Like Kern (2010) they use data from the *British Household Panel Study.* However, since the study was published at a later date, they were also able to mobilize data from its follow-up panel: *Understanding Society*. The goal of the paper was to observe the impact of life events on turnout for three different groups of voters (habitual voters, occasional voters and habitual non-voters). To do this, they created three different sub-samples of the data (a sub-sample was therefore created for each of the groups mentioned above). Like Kern's study, a life event is considered to be a "treatment" and respondents are matched with "untreated respondents". In this case, the authors use Coarsened Advanced Matching (also known as the CEM algorithm). This is done to create greater balance between those who have undergone a transition or "treatment" and those who have not. The authors then ran logit regressions for each voter group and for each life transition. The dependent variable is a dichotomous variable indicating whether the respondent voted and the main independent variables are life events. The authors also included a series of control variables in their models. One of the controls accounts for the different amount of time spent between elections. This is because the British General Elections have not taken place at regular intervals throughout the panel (for example, sometimes there is a gap of four years between elections, sometimes it is two, etc.). Control variables that may vary over time such as one's income and education level were also included in each model. The researchers are then able to compare the size and significance of the of all major life events for all three groups.

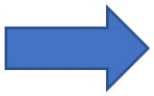
I use a much simpler method of analyses than most of the studies cited above. First of all, I only include individuals that have gone through each life transition in my models. I therefore have a sub-sample of the data for each life transition. Because research on life transitions and electoral participation is still in its infancy, it is important to look at individuals and to see whether or not their participation levels change before and after they experience a transition. This is a very straightforward way of identifying whether or not life transitions actually lead to changes in participation level. If we do not see an effect using these more simple and straightforward methods of analyses, it may not be worthwhile to analyse the research question with more sophisticated methods. The goal of this dissertation is to see if life events have an impact on individual level electoral participation, amongst those that have experienced the event.

Setting up the data

Before running my bivariate and multivariate analyses with both the British and the Swiss data, it was important to first set up the data. The first step was to merge all the waves of a panel to create a single dataset. This was done with all waves of the BHPS and of the SHP. Once this was done I used the "t-fill, full" command in STATA in order to get rid of any gaps in the data. This means that even when an individual is missing from a certain wave of the panel a new row is created in the dataset in order to account for that individual. Figure 2.1 illustrates how the data is transformed using this command.

Figure 2.1 filling the data

Personal ID number	Waves
1	1
1	2
1	3
2	1
2	2
3	1



Personal ID number	Waves
1	1
1	2
1	3
2	1
2	2
2	3
3	1
3	1
3	2
3	3

This step is particularly important when creating transition variables because the code I created will only pick up individuals who experienced a life transition in the previous wave of the survey. This assures that all the individuals who are flagged as having gone through a specific life transition experienced this in a similar time frame (within a year for the SHP or within one electoral cycle for the BHPS). Having the same temporal distance for each individual is important in order to create the transition variables. For example, an individual may have responded to wave 2 of the BHPS or the SHP and may have not answered the survey again until wave 10. Filling the data eliminates this type of gap. When I create the transition variable, this individual would not be picked up as having experienced a transition.

The next step involves creating each transition variable (the way in which this is done is described earlier in the chapter). I created a new variable that flagged individuals in the dataset that had experienced each transition. With this information I was able to create separate datasets that only include individuals who experienced a given transition. For example, this means I created a dataset using a sub-sample of the data that only includes those who got married or started cohabitating throughout the course of the panel. The same

thing was done for all other life transitions. This is important because the bivariate and multivariate analyses that I run only include respondents that experienced a life transition.

Bivariate analyses

In each subsample of the data, I computed a "vote before" and a "vote after" variable. The "vote before" variable takes the value of the voting behaviour observed in the pre-transition wave (when the transition is coded as 0 because it has not yet happened). I can then create a "vote after" variable that takes the form of the voting behaviour in the wave of the transition or of the next election. Once this was done, I transformed the data from long to wide form in order to run simple before and after analyses such as paired t-tests for the SHP and McNemars's tests for the BHPS. Figure 2.2 shows the difference between long and wide form data and helps us understand why it is important to have the data in wide form in order to run these types of analyses. For STATA to be able to run both paired t-tests and McNemar's tests both the before and after voting behaviour of each individual needed to appear in the same row of the dataset. Once the data was set up this way, we can easily compare voting behaviour before and after each life transition.

Figure 2.2 Long versus wide format

Long format	
Personal ID Number	**Waves**
1	1
1	2
1	3
2	1
2	2
2	3
3	1
3	2
3	3

Personal ID number	Wide format		
1	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3
2	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3
3	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3

Multivariate Analyses

In order to run multivariate analyses, I use the subsamples of the dataset created in order to run the bivariate analyses. However, in this case, we maintain the long format of the data. When using the BHPS I run analyses first by using logit regressions. This is because this is the approach that is traditionally taken when we have a binary dependent variable. The first analyses I run are bivariate. I expect the results of these analyses to be very similar to those of the bivariate analyses using cross-tabs with McNemar's tests. The two variables included in these analyses are the dependent variable (voted) and the transition variable. I then add the rest of the control variables: gender, education, age, age squared and year. I then run separate analyses with the same controls but with an interaction effect between the life transition and gender in order to test whether the effect varies for men and women. When running the analyses in STATA I also use the "vce cluster" command. According to the STATA documentation, using this option "specifies that the standard errors allow for intragroup correlation, relaxing the usual requirement that the observations be independent. That is to say, the observations are independent across groups (clusters) but not necessarily within groups." (Statacorp, 2021). This is important because we have two observations for each individual (their participation before and after they experience a life transition). Following the estimation of these logit models, in the cases where I have significant results I calculate marginal effects in order to describe the size of the effect. This is because we cannot interpret the coefficients in logit models, the model only tells us whether or not the effect is significant. In line with current trends, I also run additional models using OLS with the BHPS. Although it is unconventional to use OLS with a binary dependent variable,

this approach is gaining popularity in many publications. These additional models are included in the appendix (see appendix 1).

A similar approach is taken for the multivariate analyses with the SHP. However, because the dependent variable in this case is a scale, the only regression models that I run are OLS. Again, the regressions are only run on the sample of respondents that went through a given life transition. We have two observations for each individual (their hypothetical voting behaviour before and after they live through the transition). I begin by running bivariate regressions only including the dependent variable (the vote scale) and the binary transition variable (coded 0 in the year preceding the transition and 1 in the year that the transition took place). These results should resemble the results of the bivariate t-tests. I then add the additional control variables to the regression, these include gender, education, age, age squared and the year. When estimating the regressions with the SHP I also use the STATA "vce cluster" option by personal identity number so that the software can recognize that the observations are not completely independent. My research strategy therefore involves comparing individuals voting behaviour at time 2 to their previous voting behaviour at time 1. If there is an effect, we can confidently say that life transitions influence electoral participation. I also run separate models with an interaction effect between the life transition and gender to test whether the impact on turnout varies for men and women.

Conclusion

I began this chapter by introducing the datasets used to assess the impact of life transitions on turnout. These datasets were the *British Household Panel Survey* and its follow-up study *Understanding Society* along with the *Swiss Household Panel*. I discussed the way

researchers collected these data, the time-period that they cover and some other particularities related to each study. I also described all the variables that will be used in the thesis, this includes my dependent variables (measures of turnout) my independent variables (life transitions), and my control variables (gender, age, age square, whether the respondent is university educated and year).

Following this, I outlined the methods that will be used in the following chapter. It is important to reiterate that my analyses will only include those respondents that have experienced a life transition. This is different than what we find in many other studies of life transitions, but I am not interested in comparing the electoral behaviour of those who have experienced a major life event to those who have not. I am interested in seeing if there are changes in individual levels of participation before and after experiencing a life transition. To do this, I compare individual behaviour at time 2, to individual level behaviour at time one. I will conduct simple analyses (crosstabulations and t-tests) and straightforward regression models (logit and OLS) to see if there is an increase or a decrease in turnout amongst respondents who experienced each transition. This approach will allow me to answer my research question: do life transition influence voter turnout? Using a straightforward approach will ensure that I get a straightforward answer to this question. This will also allow me to make this dissertation's empirical contribution: to give an overall estimate of the effect of marriage and cohabitation, parenthood, divorce or separation, unemployment, retirement and widowhood on turnout. It will also allow me to see if the effects observed in one context are seen in another and could potentially be generalized to other cases. Finally, if there are effects, I can compare the size of the effects of each life transition on turnout to see if some transitions are more influential than others.

Chapter 4: Results

In the previous section, I gave a detailed overview of the methodology used throughout the course of this dissertation. I will now present the empirical results of my thesis. This chapter will be divided in four sections. The first of these will present the results found in the *British Household Panel*. I will go over each life transition and present the results of my cross-tabulations and McNemar's tests and those of logit regression models. We will see that most life transitions do not yield a significant influence on electoral participation. There are however two exceptions to this trend: both divorce and widowhood depress voter turnout in the United Kingdom. I will also present marginal effects to estimate the size of these effects. We will see that both divorce and widowhood exert a moderate effect on turnout. However, the transition to divorce seems to have a slightly greater impact on turnout than that of widowhood.

The second segment of the chapter will present the results from the *Swiss Household Panel*. I will go over each life transition and present the outcomes of my bivariate and multivariate analyses. In the case of the SHP, the initial analyses take the form of a paired t-test that estimates whether or not there is a statistically significant difference in voting behaviour before and after a respondent has experienced a life transition. These t-tests show us that there is a significant difference for only one of the six transitions: that of widowhood. The multivariate OLS regressions seem to confirm that widowhood has a negative effect on turnout.

The third section of the chapter will discuss these results. I will begin by comparing my findings from the BHPS to those of the SHP. In both surveys, we find that most life transitions do not seem to have a meaningful impact on voter turnout. The British results

show two exceptions to this trend: divorce and widowhood. As expected these transitions both yield a negative impact on voting. Widowhood was significant in both the British and the Swiss case. In both contexts, this effect is negative. Although not significant, divorce did have a negative coefficient in Switzerland. We can therefore be more confident that the loss of a partner depresses electoral participation. I will also go back to each of my hypotheses and discuss the implications of my results.

Finally, in the last part of this chapter I will discuss how my results fit in with the literature on life transitions and political participation. As opposed to other studies on this topic, my results are mostly null.

British Household Panel Study Results

In this first segment of my empirical chapter, I will go over the results found in the *British Household Panel*. I begin by describing the results for marriage before turning to parenthood, divorce, unemployment, retirement and widowhood. As we will see, most life transitions do not have a significant impact on turnout in the British case.

Marriage

Bivariate analysis

I start by looking at the relationship between marriage and voter turnout. I present a simple cross-tabulation in order to see the voting behaviour of individuals before marriage and in the election following this major life change. The results of this cross-tabulation can be seen in table 3.1. We can see that 391 individuals did not vote before or after the transition to marriage. We have 271 respondents who abstained before the transition but voted after. A similar number of individuals (272) voted before marriage and abstained after they were married. However, our largest category of individuals is those that voted both before and

after marriage. There are 1027 respondents who self-report to have voted in both the election before and after the transition. The difference between voters and abstainers pre and post-marriage is extremely small. Before the transition we have 662 individuals who abstained and 1299 who voted. After the transition we have 663 who abstained and 1298 who voted. The overall totals are therefore only different by one. Unsurprisingly, the McNemar's test shows that there is no statistically significant difference in voting behaviour before and after the transition to marriage in the BHPS.

Table 3.1 Cross-Tab Voting Before and After Marriage with McNemar's test

	After transition to marriage		
Before transition to marriage	**Abstained**	**Voted**	**Total**
Abstained	391	271	662
Voted	272	1027	1299
Total	663	1298	1961
McNemar's chi2(1) = 0.00 Prob > chi2 = 0.96			
Exact McNemar significance probability = 1.00			

Multivariate Analyses (logit)

In order to further examine this relationship, I run logit models. The first model has for dependent variable whether the respondent voted or not (at time 1 and time 2) and only has one independent variable: the life transition to marriage which takes on the value of 0 in the election year before the transition and of 1 in the election year following the transition. Like the results of the McNemar's test, the relationship between these two variables remains insignificant. I then run a model adding control variables. The transition to marriage is still insignificant. Age and education however have a positive effect on turnout and certain election years have a statistically significant negative impact on electoral participation (this is the case for 1997, 2001, 2005, 2010 and 2015) when compared to turnout levels in the first election of the sample (that of 1992). We can therefore conclude that getting married does not have much an impact on the decision to vote in general

elections in the United Kingdom. The final model also shows that there is no significant interaction effect between the transition to marriage and gender when it comes to electoral participation.

Table 3.2 Logit Voting and Transition to Marriage

	Model 1 (logit)	Model 2 (logit)	Model 3 (logit)
Transition to married	-.002	-.085	0.010
	(.053)	(.070)	(.093)
Female		.004	.092
		(.083)	(.103)
Transition to married x female			-.173
			(.117)
Age		.071***	.071***
		(.019)	(.019)
Age squared		-.000#	-.000#
		(.000)	(.000)
University Degree		.754***	.756***
		(.094)	(.094)
Year			
1997		-.497***	-.496***
		(.133)	(.133)
2001		-1.268***	-1.270***
		(.146)	(.146)
2005		-1.186***	-1.186***
		(.157)	(.157)
2010		-.944***	-.948***
		(.158)	(.158)
2015		-.794***	-.792***
		(.177)	(.177)
2017		-.305	-.306
		(.276)	(.276)
2019		-.862	-.853
		(1.001)	(.988)
Constant	.674***	-.447	-.498
	(.048)	(.337)	(.340)
R squared	0.000	0.072	0.072
Number of observations	3922	3904	3904
(groups)	(1961)	(1952)	(1952)

#p < 0.10 *p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001

Parenthood

Bivariate Analysis

The next transition that I examine is that of the transition to parenthood. Table 3.3 shows the results of the cross-tabulation and McNemar's test showing participation before and after one becomes a parent in the BHPS sample. We can see that 362 respondents abstained both before and after having a child. We have 241 participants who abstained before they became parents and voted after. A very similar number of individuals (230) voted before the transition and chose not to vote afterwards. Again, like in the case of marriage, our largest category of respondents is those that voted both before and after the transition. We have over 1000 respondents who claim to have voted in the election before having a child and in the following election. Before the transition to parenthood we have 603 abstainers and 1260 voters. After the transition to parenthood we have 592 abstainers and 1281 voters. We therefore have more individuals voting after the transition to parenthood, which is contrary to my hypothesis that transitions that take up more resources (such as time) will lead to a decrease in turnout. It is also important to note that the results of the McNemar's test indicates that the difference in turnout before and after this transition is not statistically significant.

Table 3.3 Cross-Tab Voting Before and After Parenthood with McNemar's test

	After transition to parenthood		
Before transition to parenthood	**Abstained**	**Voted**	**Total**
Abstained	362	241	603
Voted	230	1040	1270
Total	592	1281	1873
McNemar's chi2(1) = 0.26 Prob > chi2 = 0.61			
Exact McNemar significance probability = 0.65			

Multivariate Analyses (logit)

In order to further investigate the relationship between parenthood and voting, I run both a bivariate and a multivariate logit model. Like in the cross-tabulation and McNemar's test presented above, the first logit model (which only regresses the transition to parenthood on

voting) is statistically insignificant. The coefficient in this case is positive. The positive coefficient is what we would expect when looking at the results of the cross-tabulation. More people reported to have voted after the transition to parenthood than in the election before becoming parents (we have 1281 voters in the wave after the transition and 1270 in the wave before the transition). The results of the multivariate model are therefore puzzling. The coefficient is now negative and statistically significant. Many of the other variables in the model also reach conventional levels of statistical significance. This is the case for gender, age, age squared, possessing a university degree and the years 1997 to 2015 show a statistically significant and negative relationship when compared to the control year of 1992. To further investigate what is happening in this model, I ran separate regression models in which I added each control variable individually. When only regressing the transition to parenthood and gender, the transition to parenthood is still positive and insignificant. Gender as well is insignificant. The R square is also very small in this model, it is at 0.0001, which shows that both the first model and this second iteration barely explain any changes in my dependent variable. When running a model with the transition to parenthood, with gender and with whether or not a respondent has a university degree, we get very similar results. The only significant variable is that of having a university degree. As to be expected, this variable is positively associated with turning out to vote. The R-square is now at 0.039. The oddities in the model emerge when adding either the age or the year variable. When adding age, the transition to parenthood becomes negative and significant. Being female, on the other hand, becomes positive and significant (when it was previously negative). The R-square is improved (and is now at 0.07). When excluding age and only including year, a similar story unfolds and when both are added to the model, we

get the results presented below. To check for multicollinearity, I ran both "vif" tests and the "collin" command in Stata. These commands indicated that the only variables that were highly correlated in the model were (unsurprisingly) that of age and age square. Despite this, I believe that the results of the model without age and year are more likely to present the true story, that is that the transition to parenthood does not seem to have a significant effect on participation. This is because when we look at the simple bivariate analyses we see very little difference between the number of voters and abstainers before and after the transition to parenthood. However, there is a possible theoretical reason for age to change the outcome of the model. As we can see in the multivariate analysis, both age and parenthood exert a significant impact on voter turnout. Age has a positive impact while parenthood decreases participation. However, all respondents will be older in the second wave in which they participate. It is therefore possible that the positive effect of age neutralized the negative effect of parenthood on turnout. Nevertheless, in this case I believe that it is better to err on the side of caution and to trust the simpler model. It would seem that having a child does not impact one's decision to vote in the election after becoming a parent. If the effect can be neutralized by the age variable, the effect cannot have been sufficiently important, since parents will always be older than when they were non-parents. Surprisingly, model 3 in table 3.4 shows that there is not a significant interaction effect between the transition to parenthood and gender on voter turnout. This seems to indicate that there is no differential effect on turnout for either men or women following this major life event.

Table 3.4 Logit Voting and Transition to Parenthood

	Model 1 (logit)	Model 2 (logit)	Model 3 (logit)
Transition to parenthood	.027	-.234**	-.217*
	(.053)	(.078)	(.099)
Female		.212*	.230*
		(.091)	(.112)
Transition to parenthood x female			-.034
			(.123)
Age		.233***	.234***
		(.040)	(.041)
Age Squared		-.002***	-.002***
		(.001)	(.001)
University Degree		.838***	.838***
		(.100)	(.100)
Year			
1997		-.561***	-.561***
		(.146)	(.146)
2001		-1.381***	-1.381***
		(.158)	(.158)
2005		-1.179***	-1.179***
		(.168)	(.168)
2010		-.1.048***	-1.048***
		(.168)	(.168)
2015		-.805***	-.805***
		(.194)	(.194)
2017		-.446	-.445
		(.324)	(.325)
2019		-.827	-.825
		(.969)	(.965)
Constant	.745***	-3.398***	-3.420***
	(.049)	(.647)	(.659)
R squared	0.000	0.103	0.103
Number of observations (groups)	3746	3736	3736
	(1873)	(1868)	(1868)

#p < 0.10 *p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001

Divorce

Bivariate Analysis

It is now time to explore the relationship between divorce and turnout in our British case. The cross-tabulation presented in table 3.5 shows us that 179 individuals did not vote before or after the transition to divorce. There are 91 respondents who abstained before divorce and voted in the election following the dissolution of their marriage. The sample contains 157 respondents who claim to have voted before divorce and abstained after.

Again, our largest category of respondents is those that voted both before and after this particular life transition. We have 528 individuals that fall within this category. We can however observe a greater gap in the total number of voters and abstainers before and after the transition to divorce. Before divorce, we have 270 abstainers and 685 voters. After divorce, the number of abstainers rises to 336 and the number of voters falls to 619. The McNemar's test shows that there is a statistically significant difference in voting behaviour before and after the dissolution of a marriage.

Table 3.5 Cross-Tab Voting Before and After Divorce with McNemar's test

	After transition to divorce		
Before transition to divorce	**Abstained**	**Voted**	**Total**
Abstained	179	91	270
Voted	157	528	685
Total	336	619	955
McNemar's chi2(1) = 17.56 Prob > chi2 = 0.00			
Exact McNemar significance probability = 0.00			

Multivariate analyses (logit)

It is therefore important to further investigate this relationship using logit regressions. The logit regression model that regresses only the transition to divorce on voting confirms the significant and negative impact of divorce on turnout. The relationship remains both negative and significant in the multivariate model. Age and having a university degree also influence the decision to vote in general elections. However, unlike divorce, these exert a positive impact on voting. Many of the years included in the regression model also have a negative effect on participation (when compared to the voting levels found in the control year of 1992). The final model presented in table 3.6 shows that there is no interaction effect between the transition to divorce and gender.

Table 3.6 Logit Voting and Transition to Divorce

	Model 1 (logit)	Model 2 (logit)	Model 3 (logit)
Transition to divorce	-.320***	-.428***	-.376**
	(.076)	(.098)	(.147)
Female		.079	.123
		(.127)	(.156)
Transition to divorce x female			-.083
			(.172)
Age		.081**	.081
		(.030)	(.030)
Age Squared		-.000	-.000
		(.000)	(.000)
University Degree		.733***	.733
		(.152)	(.152)
Year			
1997		-.007	-.007
		(.216)	(.216)
2001		-1.063***	-1.064
		(.230)	(.230)
2005		-.959***	-.959
		(.247)	(.247)
2010		-.846**	-.847
		(.247)	(.247)
2015		-.927***	-.926
		(.265)	(.265)
2017		-.663#	-.662
		(.340)	(.340)
2019		-.776	-.762
		(1.584)	(1.585)
Constant	.931***	-1.142#	-1.174
	(.072)	(.640)	(.642)
R squared	0.004	0.081	0.081
Number of observations	1910	1904	1904
(groups)	(955)	(952)	(952)

#p < 0.10 *p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001

Margins at means

Because my dependent variable is a binary (representing whether respondents voted or abstained in a given election) I chose to run logit regression models. However, unlike OLS regression, it is impossible to interpret the size of the coefficients in these models. I therefore run marginal effects post-estimation in order to better understand the size of the effect. This calculates the effect of divorce on voting when all other variables are held at

their mean. With this being the case, we would expect 75% of respondents to vote before divorce and 66% to vote after. This shows that the impact of divorce in reducing turnout in British elections is quite substantial.

Table 3.7 Margins at means

Transition to divorced	Margins	Std.Error	Z	P	95% confidence interval	
0	.75	.02	47.96	0.00	.72	.78
1	.66	.02	37.86	0.00	.62	.69

Unemployment

Bivariate Analysis

I now explore the impact of the transition to unemployment on electoral participation in the United Kingdom. Table 3.8 shows the results of my cross-tabulation. We have 115 respondents who abstained both before and after the transition to unemployment. I find that 51 respondents abstained before losing their jobs and voted in the election after. An almost identical number of participants (52) voted before the transition and did not vote in the following election. Again, our largest category is that of those who claim to have voted both before and after. We have 254 respondents from our unemployed sample who fall within this category. The overall totals show us that there is no difference in participation before and after this life transition. Before unemployment we have 166 abstainers and 306 voters. After the loss of work, we have 167 abstainers and 305 voters. The change in the overall totals is therefore minuscule (as it is a change of only one). Unsurprisingly, the McNemar's test indicates that the difference in participation before and after unemployment is not statistically significant.

Table 3.8 Cross-Tab Voting Before and After Unemployment with McNemar's test

		After transition to unemployment	
Before transition to unemployment	**Abstained**	**Voted**	**Total**
Abstained	115	51	166
Voted	52	254	306
Total	167	305	472
McNemar's chi2(1) = 0.01 Prob > chi2 = 0.9215 Exact McNemar significance probability = 1.0000			

Multivariate Analyses (logit)

To further investigate the relationship, I run logit regression models. Table 3.9 shows the results of these bivariate and multivariate analyses. Unsurprisingly, when running the first model which only includes the transition to unemployment regressed on voting, the coefficient is very small and insignificant. The transition to unemployment remains insignificant in the full model. However, in this case we can see that being female, older and having a university degree are positively and significantly related to turning out to vote in general elections. The third and final model shows that we do not see an interaction effect between the transition to unemployment and gender on voter turnout.

Table 3.9 Logit Voting and Transition to Unemployment

	Model 1 (logit)	Model 2 (logit)	Model 3 (logit)
Transition to unemployment	-.009	-.204	-.350*
	(.094)	(.126)	(.141)
Female		.466**	.291
		(.176)	(.205)
Transition to unemployment x female			.354
			(.219)
Age		.061	.060
		(.049)	(.049)
Age Squared		-.000	-.000
		(.000)	(.000)
University Degree		1.058***	1.057***
		(.254)	(.254)
Year			
1997		-.047	-.026
		(.269)	(.268)
2001		-.475	-.456
		(.294)	(.293)
2005		-.543#	-.536#
		(.302)	(.302)
2010		-.553#	-.526#
		(.317)	(.319)
2015		-.722*	-.694*
		(.329)	(.328)
2017		-.021	-.042
		(.438)	(.442)
2019		0 (empty)	0 (empty)
Constant	.612***	-1.253	-1.174
	(.096)	(.909)	(.909)
R squared	0.000	0.079	0.080
Number of observations	944	931	931
(groups)	(472)	(466)	(466)

#p < 0.10 *p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001

Retirement

Bivariate Analysis

It is now time to explore the effect of the second and final employment transition in the BHPS: the transition to retirement. The cross-tabulation shows that we have 102 respondents who did not vote in the election before and after the transition. In this sample, 95 respondents abstained before retirement and voted after. A few more (105) voted in the

election before they retired and then abstained. Like in all transitions we have seen thus far, the biggest category of respondents is that of those that claim to have voted in both elections. There are 1501 participants who fall within this category (the clear majority in our sample of 1803 retirees). The final numbers also resemble each other. We have 197 abstainers before retirement and 207 after. We have 1606 voters before retirement and 1596 after this life event. The overall difference is ten respondents. Unsurprisingly, this difference is not statistically significant.

Table 3.10 Cross-Tab Voting Before and After Retirement with McNemar's test

		After transition to retirement	
Before transition to retirement	**Abstained**	**Voted**	**Total**
Abstained	102	95	197
Voted	105	1501	1606
Total	207	1596	1803
McNemar's chi2(1) = 0.50 Prob > chi2 = 0.4795			
Exact McNemar significance probability = 0.5246			

Multivariate Analyses (logit)

To further investigate the relationship, I run logit regression models. The initial relationship is negative and insignificant. The relationship remains insignificant in the multivariate model. However, having a university degree is a positive predictor of turnout and many of the years in the model are negatively associated with participation when compared to the control year of 1992. Table 3.11 shows the results of these analyses. Model 3 shows that there is no interaction effect between the transition to retirement and gender on electoral participation. It does not seem that retirement plays a defining factor in the decision to vote in the United Kingdom.

Table 3.11 Logit Voting and Transition to Retirement

	Model 1 (logit)	Model 2 (logit)	Model 3 (logit)
Transition to retirement	-.056	-.169	-.226
	(.079)	(.105)	(.146)
Female		-.130	-.1823
		(.131)	(.157)
Transition to retirement			.103
x female			(.168)
Age		.181#	.179
		(.102)	(.102)
Age Square		-.001	-.001
		(.001)	(.001)
University Degree		.770***	.770***
		(.167)	(.167)
Year			
1997		-.328	-.329
		(.264)	(.265)
2001		-1.057***	-1.057***
		(.289)	(.290)
2005		-1.203***	-1.205***
		(.298)	(.298)
2010		-1.067***	-1.068***
		(.291)	(.292)
2015		-.858**	-.859**
		(.316)	(316)
2017		-.767#	-.767#
		(.400)	(.400)
2019		0 (empty)	0 (empty)
Constant	2.098***	-4.047	-3.960
	(.076)	(3.111)	(3.126)
R squared	0.000	0.038	0.038
Number of observations	3606	3574	3574
(groups)	(1803)	(1790)	(1790)

#p < 0.10 *p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001

Widowhood

Bivariate Analysis

Finally, the last transition that we will see for the BHPS is the transition to widowhood. These analyses will allow us to see if the loss of a partner leads to changes in voter turnout. Table 3.12 shows the results of a cross-tabulation comparing participation before and after the transition to widowhood. We have 71 respondents who abstained in the election before

and after the loss of their partners. There are 38 individuals who abstained before and voted after they were widowed. We have 81 respondents who claim to have voted before the transition to widowhood and who abstained after the loss of a partner. Again, our largest number of respondents in a given category are those who claim to have voted both before and after the transition. There are 674 participants who fall within this category. We do however observe a change in our overall totals of voters and abstainers before and after this life transition. Before the transition to widowhood we have 109 abstainers and 755 voters. After the transition to widowhood, the number of abstainers rises to 152 and the number of voters drops to 712. The McNemar's test indicates that the difference in participation before and after this life transition is indeed significant.

Table 3.12 Cross-Tab Voting Before and After Widowhood with McNemar's test

	After transition to widowhood		
Before transition to widowhood	**Abstained**	**Voted**	**Total**
Abstained	71	38	109
Voted	81	674	755
Total	152	712	864
McNemar's chi2(1) = 15.54 Prob > chi2 = 0.0001			
Exact McNemar significance probability = 0.0001			

Multivariate Analyses (logit)

To further investigate this relationship, I run logit regression models. The first model regresses the transition to widowhood on voting. We observe a negative and statistically significant relationship between the two variables. The transition to widowhood remains significant and negative in the full model. Having a university degree is positively and significantly related to turnout and the year 2010 exerts a negative influence on electoral participation (when compared to the control year of 1992). We can also see that there is

no interaction effect between the transition to widowhood and gender. The full models can be seen in table 3.13.

Table 3.13 Logit Voting and Transition to Widowhood

	Model 1 (logit)	Model 2 (logit)	Model 3 (logit)
Transition to widowhood	-.391***	-.551***	-.461*
	(.099)	(.120)	(.213)
Female		-.054	.016
		(.191)	(.235)
Transition to widowhood x female			-.123
			(.234)
Age		.084#	.085
		(.046)	(046)
Age squared		-.000	-.000
		(.000)	(.000)
University Degree		.637**	.638**
		(.239)	(.238)
Year			
1997		.078	.638
		(.265)	(.265)
2001		-.128	-.127
		(.311)	(.311)
2005		-.330	-.332
		(.324)	(.324)
2010		-.621*	-.622
		(.315)	(.315)
2015		-.185	-.182
		(.349)	(.349)
2017		.670	.671
		(.538)	(.539)
2019		-.450	-.434
		(1.186)	(1.186)
Constant	1.935***	-1.466	-1.537
	(.103)	(1.433)	(1.441)
R squared	0.006	0.041	0.041
Number of observations	1728	1716	1,716
(groups)	(864)	(858)	(858)

#p < 0.10 *p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001

Margins at means

However, the coefficients presented in the table above do not inform us on the size of the effect. To get a better idea of how widowhood impacts voter turnout I run marginal effects estimations post-regression. These effects are calculated at the mean and show what we

could expect if all other variables in the model remained at their mean. Table 3.14 shows the results of the margins command in STATA. It seems that 89% of widowers would vote in the election proceeding the transition and 83% would vote in the election after they have lost their partners. This effect is slightly smaller than that of divorce but remains of moderate size. We can therefore confirm that widowhood depresses turnout in the election following the loss of a partner in the context of the United Kingdom.

Table 3.14 Margins at means

Transition to widowed	Margins	Std.Error	Z	P	95% confidence interval	
0	.89	.01	83.40	0.00	.87	.91
1	.83	.01	58.83	0.00	.80	.85

Swiss Household Panel Study Results

Now that I have explored the findings of both bivariate and multivariate analyses in the United Kingdom, it is time to do the same with the data from Switzerland. In the following section of this chapter, I will present the results obtained for paired t-tests and OLS regressions in the SHP. The results will be presented in the same order as they were in the previous section. I will start with marriage before moving on to parenthood, divorce, unemployment, retirement and widowhood. The only transition that seems to exert a significant influence in the Swiss case is widowhood. In the SHP the voting question was asked in every wave from 1999 to 2009. After this, it was only asked in 2011, 2014, 2017 and 2020. In order to offer more conservative estimates, I present the results of tests and models that only include data from 1999 to 2009. However, supplementary analyses with the full sample are included in appendix (see appendix 4).

Marriage

Bivariate Analysis

In order to see the influence of marriage on turnout in Switzerland, I begin with a simple bivariate analysis. This is done through the means of a paired t-test that compares the voting behaviour of the same individuals right before and right after they experience the transition. The results of the t-test show very similar voting behaviours for our married sample before and after the transition. The mean level of participation before the transition is of 7.23 and of 7.35 in the year after. This signifies that the number of federal polls in which a respondent would plan to vote before and after marriage is nearly identical at a little over seven out of 10 polls. Unsurprisingly, this small difference is insignificant, although it is interesting to note that the miniscule change in participation was in the expected direction. It is expected that when individuals gain a voting partner, their participation is likely to increase.

Table 3.15 Paired t-test voted before and voted after marriage

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. error	Std. dev.	95% confidence interval	
Vote before	467	7.23	.15	3.25	6.93	7.52
Vote after	467	7.35	.15	3.19	7.06	7.64
Difference	467	-.12	.10	2.20	-.32	.08
						T = -1.2
						Degrees of freedom: 466
Ha: mean(diff) < 0			Ha: mean(diff) !=0		Ha: mean (diff) > 0	
Pr(T< t) = 0.12			Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.23		Pr(T> t) = 0.89	

Multivariate Analyses (OLS)

To check if there could be more of a relationship than first indicated in the bivariate t-test, I followed up by running OLS regressions. The dependent variable is voting behaviour while the independent variable is experiencing the transition to marriage. The second model adds a variety of controls such as gender, education, age, age squared and year. The effect of marriage remains insignificant in both the bivariate and multivariate OLS models.

The full results of these analyses are presented in table 3.16. Gender, age, age squared and year are also insignificant. The only variable in the model that has a significant effect on voter turnout is education. Having a university degree has a positive effect on turnout. This is expected considering the well-established literature on the relationship between education and voting behaviour (see previous methods chapter). We can therefore conclude that the transition from single to married does not seem to influence Swiss citizens' willingness to participate in federal polls. The final model presented in the table shows that there is no significant interaction effect between the transition to marriage and gender on turnout.

Table 3.16 OLS Voting and Transition to Marriage

	Model 1 (OLS)	Model 2 (OLS)	Model 3 (OLS)
Transition to married	.122	.070	.117
	(.102)	(.136)	(.162)
Female		-.425	-.378
		(.274)	(.295)
Transition to married x female			-.094
			(.204)
Age		-.009	-.009
		(.067)	(.067)
Age Squared		.000	.000
		(.001)	(000)
University Degree		1.246***	1.246***
		(.263)	(.263)
Year			
2000		.464	.465
		(.502)	(.502)
2001		.112	.111
		(.670)	(.670)
2002		.740	.743
		(.687)	(.688)
2003		.676	.677
		(.667)	(.668)
2004		.831	.831
		(.674)	(.674)
2005		1.528*	1.528*
		(.639)	(639)
2006		1.018	1.016
		(.656)	(656)
2007		.332	.332
		(.660)	(.661)
2008		.397	.398
		(.671)	(.671)
2009		.057	.058
		(.820)	(.820)
Constant	7.227***	5.993***	5.966
	(.1503)	(1.491924)	(1.491)
Number of observation	934	934	934
(groups)	(467)	(467)	(467)
R squared	0.0004	0.0004	0.0794

#p < 0.10 *p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001

Parenthood

Bivariate analysis

To see if there is a change in the participation rate after the transition to parenthood, I run a paired t-test. The results of this test is presented in table 3.17. We can see that the average

rate of participation is of 7.09 elections out of 10 federal polls before the transition takes place. After the transition, the average is of 7.03 elections. This is a very small difference and it does not look as though individual level participation changes after becoming a parent. However, we can see that even though the change is very small, it is in the anticipated direction. The average rate of participation is lower after the transition to parenthood. This is in the same direction as the results found in the BHPS.

Table 3.17 Paired t-test voted before and voted after Parenthood

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. error	Std. dev.	95% confidence interval	
Vote before	329	7.09	.18	3.19	6.75	7.44
Vote after	329	7.03	.18	3.21	6.68	7.38
Difference	329	.06	.11	2.01	-.15	.28
						T = 0.58
						Degrees of freedom: 328
Ha: mean(diff) < 0			Ha: mean(diff) !=0		Ha: mean (diff) > 0	
Pr(T< t) = 0.72			Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.57		Pr(T> t) = 0.28	

Multivariate Analyses (OLS)

To see if there is more to this relationship, I run OLS regressions. Table 3.18 show the results of these analyses. The first regression model confirms the results found in the t-test. When regressing the transition to parenthood on my dependent variable I find that this transition does not significantly influence turnout. I then run a multivariate model using the usual controls. Again, the transition to parenthood remains insignificant. Unlike the results of the BHPS, we do not witness a potential hidden effect because of age. In this model, age is also insignificant. The only variables that are statistically significant are having a university education, which is positively related to turnout and the years 2004 and 2005. These years have a positive impact on participation in comparison to the reference category which is turnout levels in 1999. Model 3 shows that there is no interaction effect between the transition to parenthood and gender. There is therefore no significant gendered effect on turnout.

Table 3.18 OLS Voting and Transition to Parenthood

	Model 1 (OLS)	Model 2 (OLS)	Model 3 (OLS)
Transition to parenthood	-.064	-.184	-.070
	(.111)	(.147)	(.180)
Female		-.365	-.258
		(.321)	(.341)
Transition to parenthood			-.215
x female			(.223)
Age		.271	.272
		(.165)	(.166)
Age Squared		-.003	-.003
		(.002)	(.002)
University Degree		1.028**	1.027**
		(.329)	(.329)
Year			
2000		-.467	-.462
		(.445)	(.443)
2001		-.638	-.638
		(.632)	(.631)
2002		.785	.791
		(.667)	(.667)
2003		.539	.544
		(.656)	(.655)
2004		1.468*	1.466*
		(.582)	(.582)
2005		1.107#	1.112#
		(.581)	(.580)
2006		-.237	-.232
		(.654)	(.654)
2007		-.384	-.373
		(.688)	(.689)
2008		-.036	-.041
		(.652)	(.652)
2009		.513	.519
		(.768)	(.767)
Constant	7.091***	.936	.866
	(.176)	(2.962)	(2.971)
Number of observation	658	658	658
(groups)	(329)	(329)	(329)
R squared	0.000	0.114	0.114

#p < 0.10 *p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001

Divorce

Bivariate Analyses

I now look at the effect of divorce on turnout in the SHP. Again, I begin by running a simple bivariate analysis through the means of a paired t-test comparing the voting

behaviour of respondents before and after this life transition. I find that there is only a very small difference in the mean levels of participation before and after this transition. Before a divorce, respondents claimed they would participate (on average) in 7.09 elections out of 10, after divorce, the mean goes down to 7.05. The results are presented in table 3.19. Again, this change is very small and is not statistically significant. However, it is interesting to note that the relationship seems to be in the direction indicated by my hypothesis (that suggests that losing a potential voting partner will lead to a decline in turnout). It is also in the same direction as that found in the BHPS.

Table 3.19 Paired t-test voted before and voted after divorce

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. error	Std. dev.	95% confidence interval	
Vote before	254	7.09	.21	3.35	6.68	7.50
Vote after	254	7.05	.21	3.29	6.64	7.46
Difference	254	.04	.15	2.31	-.25	.33
						T = 0.27
						Degrees of freedom: 253
Ha: mean(diff) < 0			Ha: mean(diff) !=0		Ha: mean (diff) > 0	
Pr(T< t) = 0.61			Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.79		Pr(T> t) = 0.39	

Multivariate Analyses (OLS)

To see if there could potentially be more to this relationship than first expected, I ran OLS regression models. My dependent variable is the number of federal polls in which one would vote and the transition to divorce is my main independent variable. In the original OLS I only include transition to divorce. In the full model, I control for gender, university degree, age, age squared and year. Divorce itself remains negative but insignificant. The rest of the variables in the model are also mostly insignificant. Similarly to when I looked at the effect of the transition to marriage on voting in Switzerland, the only variable that has a significant impact on turnout is one's level of education. Again, we see that those with a university degree are more likely to state that they will participate in a greater

number of federal polls than those who do not have one. The final model also shows that we do not have an interaction effect between the transition to divorce and gender.

Table 3.20 OLS Voting and Transition to Divorce

	Model 1 (OLS)	Model 2 (OLS)	Model 3 (OLS)
Transition to divorce	-.039	-.084	.176
	(.145)	(.165)	(231)
Female		-.7193109#	-.486
		(.3821149)	(.418)
Transition to divorce x female			-.467
			(.304)
Age		-.052	-.051
		(.109)	(109)
Age Squared		.001	.001
		(.001)	(.001)
University Degree		1.170**	1.170**
		(.379)	(.379)
Year			
2000		.231	.198
		(.623)	(.618)
2001		.397	.392
		(.763)	(.761)
2002		-.324	-.338
		(.779)	(.776)
2003		-.708	-.709
		(.807)	(.806)
2004		.025	.015
		(.760)	(.758)
2005		.352	.311
		(.753)	(.752)
2006		.394	.408
		(.771)	(.768)
2007		-.080	-.104
		(.804)	(.803)
2008		.271	.259
		(.777)	(774)
2009		-.190	-.212
		(.929)	(.931)
Constant	7.091***	6.723*	6.593 *
	(.210)	(2.68)	(2.688)
Number of observation (groups)	508 (254)	508 (254)	508 (254)
R squared	0.000	0.112	0.113

#p < 0.10 *p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001

Unemployment

Bivariate Analyses

I now look at whether or not the transition to unemployment will have an effect of hypothetical turnout in federal polls in Switzerland. The paired t-test indicates that the difference in participation before and after this transition is insignificant. The mean level of turnout before losing one's job is participating in 6.84 elections. After the transition to unemployment we have a mean of 6.94 elections. We therefore see a very small increase in participation.

Table 3.21 Paired t-test voted before and voted after unemployment

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. error	Std. dev.	95% confidence interval	
Vote before	294	6.85	.21	3.53	6.44	7.25
Vote after	294	6.99	.20	3.38	6.60	7.37
Difference	294	-.14	.15	2.56	-.43	.15
						T =-0.94
						Degrees of freedom:293
Ha: mean(diff) < 0			Ha: mean(diff) !=0		Ha: mean (diff) > 0	
Pr(T< t) = 0.17			Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.35		Pr(T> t) = 0.83	

Multivariate Analyses (OLS)

To further explore this relationship, I perform OLS regression analyses. When running a bivariate regression, the effect remains positive and insignificant. The multivariate analysis using OLS however show an insignificant negative effect. Most of the variables in the model are also insignificant, with the exception of female and university degree. Being female is associated with a decrease in turnout while having a university degree (like we have seen in all of our previous swiss models) is associated with reporting higher rates of turnout in federal polls. Model 3 shows that there is no interaction between the transition to unemployment and gender. Table 3.22 shows these findings. These results suggest that the transition to unemployment does not have an influence on the number of federal polls in which one would chose to participate in the Swiss context.

Table 3.22 OLS Voting and Transition to Unemployment

	Model 1 (OLS)	Model 2 (OLS)	Model 3 (OLS)
Transition to unemployment	.139	-.019	-.290
	(.149)	(.187)	(.265)
Female		-.777*	-1.006*
		(.373)	(.412)
Transition to unemployment x female			.457
			(.302)
Age		-.044	-.043
		(.085)	(.085)
Age Squared		.001	.001
		(.001)	(.001)
University Degree		1.095**	1.09**
		(.401)	(.401)
Year			
2000		.678	.638
		(.727)	(.725)
2001		.855	.824
		(.862)	(.863)
2002		1.124	1.093
		(.838)	(.839)
2003		-.025	-.019
		(.890)	(890)
2004		.980	.943
		(.858)	(.859)
2005		.949	.933
		(.865)	(.866)
2006		.732	.718
		(.933)	(.994)
2007		071	.041
		(.993)	(.994)
2008		.427	.402
		(.886)	(.888)
2009		1.124	1.098
		(.968)	(.967)
Constant	6.847***	6.409***	6.555***
	(.206)	(1.816)	(1.819)
Number of observation	588	588	588
(groups)	(294)	(294)	(294)
R squared	0.000	0.077	0.078

*p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001

Retirement

Bivariate Analyses

It is now time to look at the influence of retirement on turnout in Switzerland. Table 3.23 shows the results of a paired t-test comparing participation rates before and after this

transition. We can see that the mean levels of participation amongst the retired sample are almost identical before and after this change in employment status. Before retirement participation stands at 8.6 elections out of 10. After retirement, the mean participation is of 8.58 elections. Unsurprisingly, the difference is not statistically significant.

Table 3.23 Paired t-test voted before and voted after retirement

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. error	Std. dev.	95% confidence interval	
Vote before	235	8.60	.17	2.58	8.26	8.93
Vote after	235	8.58	.18	2.76	8.23	8.94
Difference	235	.01	.14	2.21	-.27	.30
						T =0.09
						Degrees of freedom: 234
Ha: mean(diff) < 0			Ha: mean(diff) !=0		Ha: mean (diff) > 0	
Pr(T< t) = 0.54			Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.93		Pr(T> t) = 0.46	

Multivariate Analyses (OLS)

To further investigate the relationship between voter turnout and the transition to retirement I run OLS regressions. The results of these models are presented in table 3.24. The first model regresses the transition to retirement on voting. We observe a negative effect, although the coefficient is quite small and is not statistically significant. The relationship between voting and the transition to retirement remains insignificant in the multivariate model. However, having a university degree is positively and significantly related to voting in more federal polls. Certain years (2000, 2001 and 2002) are also positively related to turnout when compared to the control year of 1999. The final model presented in the table shows that there is no significant interaction effect between the transition to retirement and gender.

Table 3.24 OLS Voting and Transition to Retired

	Model 1 (OLS)	Model 2 (OLS)	Model 3 (OLS)
Transition to retirement	-.013	-.249	-.339
	(.145)	(.199)	(.228)
Female		-.007	-.106
		(.334)	(.350)
Transition to retirement			-.106
x female			(.350)
Age		-.108	-.110
		(.425)	(.426)
Age Squared		.001	.001
		(.003)	(.003)
University Degree		.742*	.742*
		(.318)	(.318)
Year			
2000		.630*	.624*
		(.295)	(.297)
2001		.917*	.913*
		(.446)	(.447)
2002		1.147*	1.141*
		(.449)	(450)
2003		.241	.243
		(.739)	(.740)
Constant	8.596***	10.426	10.527.
	(.168)	(14.637)	(14.669)
Number of observations	470	470	470
(groups)	(235)	(235)	(235)
R squared	0.000	0.038	0.038

*p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001

Widowhood

Bivariate Analysis

Finally, I look at the effect of the transition to widowhood on electoral participation in Switzerland. Although the transition to widowhood represents my smallest sample size, we observe a significant difference in turnout in the paired t-test comparing the mean participation before and after the loss of a partner. In the year before, mean turnout was participating in 7.9 polls out of 10. This drops to 7.4 polls in the year following the transition. Although this is not a large difference, it is in the direction that I hypothesized. Transitions where individuals lose a potential voting partner should lead to a decrease in political participation. Table 3.25 shows the results of this t-test.

Table. 3.25 Paired t-test voted before and voted after widowhood

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. error	Std. dev.	95% confidence interval	
Vote before	129	7.85	.28	3.18	7.30	8.41
Vote after	129	7.40	.29	3.39	6.80	7.99
Difference	129	.46	.23	2.65	-.00	.92
						T = 1.96
						Degrees of freedom: 128
Ha: mean(diff) < 0			Ha: mean(diff) !=0		Ha: mean (diff) > 0	
Pr(T< t) = 0.97			Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.05		Pr(T> t) = 0.03	

Multivariate Analyses (OLS)

In order to see if this transition maintains a significant effect in a regression model, I run OLS regressions. In the bivariate model, we can see that widowhood exerts a statistically significant and negative effect on turnout. This effect is still present in the full model with all control variables. This suggests that widowhood does indeed have an effect on political participation. This is the only life transition in the SHPS that significantly influences turnout. In the full model we can see that having a university degree also has a significant and positive influence on voter turnout, although none of the other variables have a significant effect. Model 3 shows that there is no significant interaction effect between the transition to widowhood and gender. Therefore, we do not see a differentiated effect between genders on turnout following this life transition.

Table 3.26 OLS Voting and Transition to Widowhood

	Model 1 (OLS)	Model 2 (OLS)	Model 3 (OLS)
Transition to widowhood	-.457*	-.722*	-.406
	(.234)	(.325)	(.859)
Female		-.137	.058
		(.554)	(.717)
Transition to widowhood x female			-.389
			(.848)
Age		-.020	-.021
		(.181)	(.182)
Age Squared		.000	.000
		(.001)	(001)
University Degree		1.290*	1.288*
		(.536)	(.537)
Year			
2000		.609	.604
		(.739)	(.745)
2001		1.509	1.522
		(1.139)	(1.144)
2002		.889	.913
		(1.356)	(1.360)
2003		.515	.540
		(1.389)	(1.376)
2004		-.887	-0.911
		(1.247)	(1.252)
2005		.632	0.628
		(1.176)	(1.180)
2006		1.608	1.607
		(.989)	(0.993)
2007		-.135	-0.133
		(1.133)	(1.136)
2008		.631	0.654
		(1.074)	(1.079)
2009		1.209	1.182
		(1.259)	(1.270)
Constant	7.853***	7.454	7.315
	(.281)	(5.720)	(5.720)
Number of observation	258	258	258
(groups)	(129)	(129)	(129)
R-Squared	0.005	0.072	0.072

*p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001

Comparing results from the BHPS and the SHPS

In this third section of the chapter, I will go over the results found in both the BHPS and the SHP. We will see both the commonalities and the divergences between the findings in the British and the Swiss case. Once this is done, I will go back to the hypotheses presented

in the theory chapter of this dissertation. We will see how these hypotheses hold up to the empirical results.

Results in the BHPS and the SHP (comparison)

Now that we have seen the results for each life transition in both the BHPS and the SHP, it is important to compare the findings found in these two data sources. The results have one main point in common: most life transitions in both the Swiss and the British panels do not exert a significant influence on the decision to turn out to vote in the next election or in one's participation in federal polls. But what other points in common or differences are there between the results found in these two surveys? Table 3.27 summarizes my findings. It shows the expected direction of each transition based on my hypotheses, the coefficients found in my multivariate analyses (logit for the BHPS and OLS for the SHP), the direction of the relationship in the regression model, whether the result was significant and the number of cases in each model. Finally, the final column shows whether or not the direction of the relationship is consistent across both surveys.

Table 3.27 Summary table BHPS and SHP

Survey	BHPS				SHP				SHP & BHPS
Life transition and expected direction	**Coefficient**	**Direction**	**Sig.**	**N**	**Coefficient**	**Direction**	**Sig.**	**N**	**Same direction**
Marriage or cohabitation (+)	-.085	Negative	No	3904 (1952)	.070	Positive	No	934 (467)	No
Parenthood (-)	-.234	Negative	Yes*	3736 (1868)	-.184	Negative	No	329 (658)	Yes
Divorce or separation (-)	-.428	Negative	Yes	1904 (952)	-.084	Negative	No	508 (254)	Yes
Unemployment (-)	-.204	Negative	No	931 (466)	-.019	Positive	No	588 (294)	No
Retirement (+ or -)	-.169	Negative	No	3574 (1790)	-.249	Negative	No	470 (235)	Yes
Widowhood (-)	-.551	Negative	Yes	1716 (858)	-.722	Negative	Yes	258 (129)	Yes
* In full model, but not significant in bivariate analyses, as discussed in the previous chapter, this result should be viewed with some skepticism.									

The transition to marriage or cohabitation does not lead to a significant increase or decline in turnout in either the BHPS or the SHP. I therefore cannot conclude that marriage influences turnout. However, it is interesting to note that the coefficient in the regression analyses in the United Kingdom is small and negative while it is positive in Switzerland. The transition to marriage is associated with a role gain. An elector living through this life event can be seen as gaining a potential voting partner. I therefore hypothesized that marriage and cohabitation would lead to an increase in voter turnout. The lack of consistency across contexts and the failure to achieve conventional levels of significance suggests that marriage does not exert a clear effect on the decision to vote. Indeed, we can infer from my results that the transition to marriage does not really influence whether someone will decide to vote or to abstain at all.

Following the transition to marriage, I explored the relationship between turnout and becoming a parent. In both surveys, my analyses showed a negative relationship

between having a child and voting. Although my results were not significant in the majority of my analyses using this variable, the consistency across contexts seems to suggests that if there was an effect, it would depress turnout. There is also the possibility that there is an effect in the United Kingdom but that it is neutralized by age. If this is the case, the transition to parenthood will not exert a large influence on turnout since parents will always be older than when they were childless. The direction of the relationship is however consistent with resource mobilization theory that hints that transitions that diminish the amount of spare time will also lead to lower rates of participation.

The next transition of interest was that of the transition to divorce. This life event yielded significant results in the British Household Panel Survey. Divorce had a negative impact on voting in this context and the marginal effects indicate that the size of this effect is relatively large. When all other controls are held at their mean, individuals who had just gone through a divorce were less likely to vote by 9 percentage points in comparison to their pre-divorce rates of participation. However, going through a divorce or a separation did not have a significant impact on predicted turnout in federal polls in Switzerland. Although the effect of divorce is not significant in the Swiss case, it is interesting to note that the coefficients in the OLS regression models are negative. The relationship therefore seems to be in the same direction as in the BHPS. The coefficient in the Swiss case is of .08. This means that in the year following the transition to divorce, turnout decreases by .08 on our 10-point scale. The size of the effect is however larger in the alternative analysis with a larger n (with a coefficient of -.3). The effect in both cases is sizeable, but it is difficult to compare their size because the turnout question was asked differently in both surveys.

The drop in turnout is however consistent with my hypothesis that suggests that losing a potential voting partner will lead to a decline in political participation. The results are therefore in the expected direction. Having significant results in one context and not in another raises important questions about sample sizes and whether or not this difference is due to the larger sample available in the United Kingdom. In the case of divorce, there is some evidence this may be the case. In the BHPS I have 952 respondents who went through a divorce, while in the SHP I only have 254. This is less than a third of the size of the BHPS sample. However, I ran supplementary analyses with the SHP that accounted for larger gaps in time but that allowed me to include more respondents (the results presented in this chapter include analyses that account for a yearly gap for each of the voting question, however the question was not asked yearly in the later wave of the survey). In this alternative analysis, I have a larger sample of 675 individuals. The relationship remains negative but now reaches conventional levels of statistical significance. I am therefore more confident that divorce does have an impact on electoral participation, and that it is negative.

I then looked at the impact of the transition to unemployment on electoral participation. I had expected the transition to unemployment to lead to a decrease in voter turnout because it relates to a professional role loss and may lead to fewer social interactions with one's coworkers. In both the British and the Swiss context, I found that losing one's job did not have a significant effect on turnout. In the British case, the coefficients for unemployment are negative, while they are positive in the Swiss case. Unemployment does not seem to influence turnout in any meaningful way in either country. The direction of the relationship is also inconsistent in these two cases. This seems

to suggest that we should not look at the transition to unemployment as an important factor in the decision to vote. It does not seem to encourage or hinder one's electoral participation.

When looking at the second and last employment transition, that of retirement, my findings also indicated null results in both the United Kingdom and Switzerland. Retirement does not significantly influence an individual's decision to vote. However, it is interesting to note that with both data sources, the coefficients for retirement are negative. This suggests that the transition to retirement (although insignificant) may be linked to lower turnout. This would be consistent with my hypothesis that a professional role loss will lead to less social interactions with coworkers and may in turn decrease turnout. It is not consistent with the hypothesis that an increase in spare time after retirement would lead to higher levels of electoral participation. It is also important to note that the transition to retirement in the BHPS had a large number of cases in comparison (1790 respondents) to some of the other life transitions that reached levels of statistical significance. I therefore do not believe that a larger sample would show that this transition influences turnout.

Finally, the last life transition studied in the course of this thesis is the transition to widowhood. This is the only life transition that had a significant impact on voting behaviour in both the *British Household Panel Survey* and the *Swiss Household Panel*. The effect on turnout is negative in both cases. Because the results are consistent across contexts, we can be more confident that the transition to widowhood does indeed have a negative influence on turnout. Electors are less likely to vote after they have lost their partners. It is also important to note that we can be more confident in these results because the transition to widowhood had the smallest sample size for both surveys but still managed to reach conventional significance levels in both cases. In the BHPS, the marginal effects

indicate that when all other variables are at their mean, the likelihood of voting decreases by 6 percentage points. In the SHP, widowhood leads to a decrease of -.7 on our 10-point scale, almost a full point.

Table 3.27 clearly shows that only the results for divorce and widowhood are consistent and mostly significant. However, the results for retirement and parenthood are also consistent across surveys and can be borne out in terms of my predictions. However, because they do not reach conventional levels of statistical significance, it is important not to put too much emphasis on these results. For the transitions to marriage and unemployment, I do not find consistent results across surveys. It is also important to note that widowhood reaches levels of significance even though this transition has the smallest sample size in both surveys. It is therefore unlikely that the other transitions studied do not reach significance because there are too few cases. My results suggest that both divorce and widowhood exert an influence on turnout while the other major life events studied do not seem to matter much.

Results and meaning for hypotheses

But what do these results mean for the hypotheses presented in the first chapter of this thesis? In the following pages, I will look back at each of these hypotheses in order to see how they hold up to the empirical evidence. The first hypothesis I presented was the following "*All life transitions will depress voter turnout*." This does not seem to be the case. Most life transitions in both the BHPS and the SHP do not exert a significant effect on turnout. Furthermore, not all coefficients representing life transitions are negative in my analyses. However, it is interesting to note that the three instances where life transitions are significant (divorce in the BHPS, and widowhood in both the SHP and the BHPS) the

effect of the transition is negative. This can mean that the upheaval from living these transitions lead to a decrease in turnout, however, the following hypothesis may offer a better explanation for why divorce and widowhood ultimately lead to lower levels of political participation.

The second hypothesis was that "*Personal life transitions that involve a role loss (such as divorce and widowhood) will lead to a decrease in voter turnout.*" My results do seem to provide some evidence to corroborate this hypothesis. Divorce is significantly and negatively associated with turnout in the BHPS. Although not significant in the SHP, the coefficients for divorce in the OLS regressions are negative. They are therefore in the right direction to support this hypothesis. Furthermore, widowhood in both surveys is associated with a decrease in turnout. This does seem to support the idea that losing a potential voting partner through either divorce or widowhood can lead to a decrease in electoral participation.

My third hypothesis was that "*personal life transitions that involve a role gain (such as marriage and cohabitation) will lead to an increase in voter turnout*". The empirical evidence does not lend support to this hypothesis. Marriage and cohabitation do not yield a significant influence on turnout in either the British or the Swiss context. Furthermore, the coefficients for marriage in the SHP are positive (which would be in the direction expected) but they are negative in the BHPS. There is therefore no strong evidence to support the idea that gaining a voting partner through marriage increases turnout in these contexts. In this case, further research could see if the effect is mitigated by marrying or beginning to cohabit with a partner that is a voter or an abstainer. The political socialization that marriage or cohabitation can offer is more likely to take place if one finds a partner

that is politically active. Marrying an abstainer may make it unlikely that this life transition would boost political participation.

My fourth hypothesis was related to the effect of professional life transitions on electoral participation and implied the following: "*Professional life transitions that lead to a role loss such as unemployment and retirement will lead to a decrease in voter turnout.*" There is not much evidence to support this hypothesis. Indeed, professional life transitions do not seem to yield much of an effect on turnout at all. This is true in both the British and the Swiss case. Furthermore, when exploring the relationship between these transitions out of employment, the coefficients found in my regression analyses do not show a clear pattern. For example, unemployment has a negative coefficient in the BHPS while the relationship is positive in the SHP. The coefficients are however more consistent for retirement, where they are negative in both cases. However, without significant results, it is important not to jump to too many conclusions based on the direction of this relationship.

My fifth hypothesis was about the transition to parenthood. It stated that "*Personal life transitions that diminish the amount of free time (such as having a child) will diminish electoral participation"*. I find no evidence that the transition to parenthood leads to a significant decrease in turnout in either the United Kingdom or in Switzerland. However, as expected both my analyses with the BHPS and the SHP show a negative relationship. The lack of significance may be because the amount of time required to vote is small. It would be interesting to see if political activities that require more time (for example, participating in a demonstration, etc.) are more likely to be impacted by this transition.

The sixth hypothesis posseted that "*Professional life transitions that increase the amount of spare time (retirement) will increase electoral participation.*". This is in direct

contradiction to hypothesis four. I find no evidence that the increase of spare time following the transition to retirement is associated with greater levels of turnout. Indeed, the transition to retirement does not yield significant results in either surveys and in both studies the relationship between retirement and voting has negative coefficients. I therefore find no evidence in support of the idea that greater spare time in retirement will lead to an increase in turnout.

My seventh hypothesis was that "*The effect of marriage and parenthood on turnout will be greater for women. According to the literature, marriage and parenthood are the transitions that are most likely to have a gendered impact, but the possibility of an interaction effect will be explored for other life transitions as well*." I find no evidence that gender influences the way a life transition will influence voter turnout. This may be because although life transitions are experienced differently by men and women, these differences are not lived in a way that would influence one's decision to participate in elections. It would be interesting to see if transitions lead to differences between the genders across other types of political participation.

Finally, my last hypothesis suggested that "*Life transitions that decrease household income (like unemployment and divorce) will lead to a decrease in political participation.*" Divorce did decrease political participation in both the United Kingdom and Switzerland, but I find no evidence that unemployment leads to a decline in turnout. It is therefore more likely that the decline in participation following divorce is because of the role loss associated with the loss of a partner. The loss of income following a separation or unemployment is probably more likely to influence participatory behaviour that directly requires the use of funds such as donating to a charitable cause or to a political campaign.

Future research should explore the relationship between life transitions and resource mobilization theory by looking at behaviours that directly require the use of each possible resource.

How this study fits in the literature on life transitions and political participation

Now that we have seen how the results of the BHPS and that of the SHP compare to one another, and what this means for my hypotheses, it is important to go back to the literature. This will highlight how my results compare to those of other studies that have been done on the subject. As mentioned in my theory chapter, there are some cross-sectional studies on individual life transitions and turnout but only a few studies have been conducted on the subject using longitudinal panel data (Stoker and Jennings, 1995; Kern, 2010; Rapeli et al., 2021). In this section of the chapter, I will go over each of these three studies and discuss how my results compare to those found by these authors.

One of the first studies done on life transitions and political participation was conducted by Stoker and Jennings in 1995. In order to conduct their study, they used data from the *Youth-Parent Socialization Study*. They had access to three waves of a panel and their study is situated in the American context. Unlike my dissertation, these authors looked at the effect of marital transitions on a large variety of participatory behaviour including wearing political buttons and trying to influence others to vote. Like me, they also looked at electoral participation. Their results found that the transition to marriage temporarily depressed political participation. This is contrary to what I found using data from both the BHPS and the SHP. In the short-term, marriage seems to have no effect whatsoever on voting behaviour. There are many reasons why my findings might diverge from those found by Stoker and Jennings. The principal reason is that I am not studying the effect of

marriage in the United States, I am using data from two very different contexts: that of Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Another reason that may explain why marriage does not seem to exert much of an influence in my study is because, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the transition to marriage is going through some important changes. Stoker and Jenning's (1995) study use data from earlier in the 20th. century, while both the BHPS and the SHP started at a later date. The BHPS began in the 1990s and the SHP started in 1999. Individuals tend to get married and to start cohabitating at a later age than they did in the past, which might influence how this transition is experienced. Going through marriage at a later age may make it less likely to represent a period of upheaval in an individual's life. Furthermore, the impact of marriage may be less important than it was before as many people are likely to have been in a cohabitating relationship before marriage (this may be of particular importance in the Swiss case, where the marital status question does not include cohabitation as a potential category).

Kern's (2010) study used data from the *British Household Panel Survey* to assess the influence of transitions out of marriage, notably that of divorce and widowhood on political behaviour (he studied both political preferences and electoral turnout). We saw in detail the methods that Kern used in order to conduct his study. This included using a quasi-experimental method where respondents were matched and were assigned to either a "treatment" or a "control" group. The treatment group consists of those who become divorced or widowed and the control group are similar individuals who did not go through these life events. Unlike Kern, I only study respondents who lived through each of life transitions. Like me, he found that divorce had a negative impact on voter turnout in British general elections. My study confirms that this is indeed the case and that this trend

continues in further waves of the BHPS. However, he did not find that the transition to widowhood significantly reduced political participation. In my study, which accesses many more waves of the British panel, I find that widowhood does have an effect on turnout, and that like divorce it leads to a decrease in participation. However, the size of the effect is smaller than that of divorce.

Finally, the most detailed study on transitions and turnout was conducted by Rapeli et al (2021). These authors also used data from the *British Household Panel* and a quasi-experimental method using matching in order to assess the influence of a series of life transitions on turnout. They looked at cohabitation, divorce, residential mobility, retirement, unemployment, widowhood and whether an individual became disabled. However, unlike me they split up their sample in "voter groups" in order to see if these events have an effect of "habitual non-voters", "occasional voters" and "habitual voters". To create voter groups, they used voting behaviour from the previous two elections. "Habitual voters" are those that voted in the previous two elections, "occasional voters" voted in one of the two previous elections, and "habitual non-voters" abstained in the previous two elections. I do not make such a distinction because I wish to evaluate the overall influence of these life transitions rather than how they influence a sub-set of the population. It is also important to be critical of an approach that divides the data and that runs separate analyses for three different groups. Doing this increases the likelihood of finding significant results and may therefore exaggerate the effect of life transitions on turnout. Although it was not the aim of their study, this type of approach also fails to offer an estimate of the effect of each of these life transitions in general (without looking at subgroups).

Because of our different approaches, we arrive at different conclusions, my dissertation both corroborates and contradicts some of the results found in this study. The authors look at cohabitation rather than marriage and find that moving in with someone did increase turnout. I did not find that marriage (or cohabitation) had an influence on turnout. Similarly, they found that divorce reduced turnout for all groups of voters. The results of my study confirm this, and also suggests that this relationship may be present in other contexts. They also found that retirement had a positive influence on turnout, but only among the group of habitual voters. One can argue that it may not be worthwhile to see whether or not life transitions will increase the likelihood of voting amongst those that are already more likely to vote. My results show that in general, retirement has a negative impact on turnout. This result is consistent in both Switzerland and the United Kingdom, suggesting that it is more likely that this variable depresses turnout. Rapeli also did not find that widowhood significantly influenced turnout. This may be because the widowhood sample was already smaller than that of other life events, and subdividing the sample in three groups makes it less likely that they will find significant results. On the other hand, I find that there is a general, negative effect of widowhood on political participation.

Table 3.28 compares my approach to the one found in Rapeli's article. I only include those who have experienced a transition in my analysis, whereas they use a matching approach to compare similar individuals to those who have experienced a major life change (for example, they compare those who are divorced to those who are married, etc.). This gives different results than only looking at individuals who have lived through a transition and they find significant results for many of their subgroups (i.e. habitual voters, occasional voters and abstainers) by running separate logit regression models for

each of these groups in comparison to a control group. My study however gives an estimate of the effect of each life transition on individual level participation for *those who have actually lived* each transition (rather than a hypothetical effect, estimated by comparing different individuals).

Table 3.28 Comparing Rapeli to My Study

Study/ Characteristics	Rapeli et al., 2021	My study
Research questions	"How strong is the voting habit in the face of different types of life circumstances? What is the relative importance of different life transitions in disrupting habitual voting?" (p.2).	Do life transitions influence voter turnout? Do sociodemographic variables such as gender, mitigate the effect of life transitions on turnout?
Contexts	• Great Britain	• Great Britain • Switzerland
Data sources	• BHPS • UKHLS	• BHPS • UKHLS • SHP
Years covered (in UK data)	1991-2017	1992-2019
Transitions or major life events included	• Cohabitation • Partnership status (living alone and divorce) • Disability • Widowhood • Unemployment • Retirement • Residential mobility	• Marriage/cohabitation • Parenthood • Divorce • Unemployment • Retirement • Widowhood
Dependent variable	Abstained or voted in 7 elections	Abstained or voted in election preceding the life transition and in the one after the transition.
Methods	CEM matching algorithm that matches individuals on monthly income, age, gender and local authority (compares treated group to non-treated group). The sample is also divided between habitual voters, occasional voters and abstainers). Separate logit model for each of these three groups.	Compares voting behaviour of individuals who have undergone a life transition to their voting behaviour prior to going through a life transition.

Results	**Started cohabitation:** Decreases turnout for voters and increases turnout for occasional voters and habitual non-voters. **Started living alone:** Decreases turnout for habitual and occasional voters. **Divorced:** Negative effect for all three voter groups. **Moved to a new address:** Occasional and habitual voters less likely to vote **Retired:** Habitual voters more likely to vote. **Widowhood:** No effect on all three voter groups. **Unemployment:** Does not impact any of the three voter groups. **Disability:** Decreases turnout for habitual voters.	• In the UK and Switzerland, widowhood depresses turnout. • Divorce depresses turnout in the UK, and probably in Switzerland • All other life transitions lead to null results.

Benefits of my approach

In the following few paragraphs I will discuss the main benefits of my approach in comparison to others, and in particular in contrast to that used by Rapeli and his collaborators. There are three main benefits to my research design: it is more general, it allows us to estimate the impact of a series of control variables, and it uses data from more than one context in order to see whether or not results will be consistent across cases.

1) More general

The main benefit of my approach is that it is simple. It allows us to clearly see if there is a difference in participation levels before and after each life transition by looking only at respondents who have lived a transition. Simple analyses are easy to understand and are often an important first step when it comes to exploring a research topic that has not been

thoroughly investigated. It also allows us to see whether there is a general difference before dividing up a sample into sub-groups. Seeing whether or not there is a general effect is an important step in identifying avenues for future research.

2) Allows us to see the impact of control variables and to compare the size of effects

In my study, I include certain control variables such as age, education and gender. Including traditional control variables in my models allowed me to see how the effect of life transitions compares in terms of coefficient sizes to other variables that are known to influence turnout such as age and education. It also checked for the possibility of interaction effects between life events and gender. I find that there is no significant interaction effect between life transitions and gender. Checking for these potential effects was however important because the literature on life transitions often argues that transitions are experienced differently by men and women (see review of the literature).

3) Uses data from more than one context

Finally, one of the main strengths of my study is that it does not only use data from the United Kingdom. I also include data from Switzerland which makes it more complete and more likely that my results can be generalized to other similar contexts (we can probably expect similar results in other European countries). Rapeli and I however both use data from the BHPS. The data from the previous article includes the years 1991 to 2017, while data in my study encompasses data from 1991 to 2019.As we have seen, there are not many studies that deal exclusively with the topic of life transitions and voting and all three papers cited above only look at life transitions in a single context. My study aims to fill this gap in the literature by looking at many life transitions and exploring these in more than one context. I also only look at the political behaviour of respondents that have

actually experienced each transition. My study suggests that life transitions may not always be important predictors of electoral participation, with two notable exceptions, that of divorce and widowhood.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the empirical section of my thesis. I found that most life transitions have an insignificant effect on voter turnout in the British and the Swiss case. However, interestingly enough, widowhood exerts a statistically significant impact on turnout in both contexts, the effect in both Britain and Switzerland is an overall negative impact on voting, with electors participating less once they are widowed.

It is also important to note that I was unable to confirm the majority of my hypotheses. This is because all of my hypotheses suggested that each life transition would have an influence on turnout and this is mostly not the case. I was however able to confirm that the loss of a voting partner through widowhood and divorce did decrease turnout. I also found that gender (when using interaction effects) did not mitigate the effect of any life transition on turnout.

The last portion of the chapter compared my results to those found in other studies. Similarly, to these studies, I found that some transitions, like that of divorce and widowhood, can be influential in some contexts. My more straightforward research strategy however hints at null results for most life transitions. This suggests that for most people, these important life events do not have a great influence on their decision to vote or to abstain. It is important to highlight this rather than the idea that for a small percentage of people, these transitions may be important.

This chapter also presented the main empirical contribution of my thesis: providing a general overview of whether or not each life transition studied had an impact on turnout and if so what is the size of the effect. Most transitions do not influence turnout, I was however able to discuss the size of the effect of divorce and widowhood on turnout in both the British and the Swiss context. Because the other transitions are not significant we can be more confident that they exert little to no influence on the decision to vote. Looking at two different contexts was also an important first step in seeing whether or not my results would be consistent across cases. I found similar results in the United Kingdom and Switzerland. This means that there is a chance that we would find comparable results in other countries with similar institutions or cultural contexts. Further research will however need to be done in order to see if this is the case. If the importance of life transitions across contexts varies, it would be interesting to see where they exert a greater influence and to explore why this may be the case.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This dissertation began with an overview of the literature on life transitions. I explored how these might influence political behaviour, and in particular voter turnout, by looking at a variety of theories. This included looking at socialization theories, the cost of voting and resource mobilization theory and work done on the life course perspective. In the following chapter, I presented my research design which required me to mobilize data from the *British Household Panel* and its follow-up study *Understanding Society* as well as data from the *Swiss Household Panel Study.* Using longitudinal panel data allowed me to compare the participation rate of individuals before and after they experienced a series of life transitions. This meant creating a dataset for every life transition composed of only those respondents that underwent a major life change. The goal of this study was to see if individual turnout levels changed after marriage or cohabitation, once one became a parent, after going through a divorce or separation, when one loses their job, after retiring or following the loss of a partner through widowhood. Chapter three presented the results of bivariate and multivariate analyses. I found that only widowhood held a significant and negative effect on electoral participation in both the United Kingdom and Switzerland. However, divorce is also likely to depress turnout. Divorce had a significant and negative effect on participation in the United Kingdom. Although my coefficient did not reach levels of conventional significance in Switzerland, the effect was in the same direction and supplementary analyses with a larger sample size showed a significant result.

In this final chapter, I will discuss the main contributions of my dissertation. These represent advances in both the literature on life transitions and the study of voter turnout. These contributions are theoretical and empirical in nature. This study allows us to better

understand life transitions by proposing a new way to classify them and estimates the effect of a series of major life changes on turnout in two different political contexts. In this chapter, I look back at my research questions: do life transitions influence turnout? And does gender mitigate the impact of life transitions? Life transitions do not have a large influence on voter turnout and gender does not mitigate the effect of transitions. However, answering these questions leads to additional queries. Why is it that most life transitions do not influence turnout? I suggest that the reason for this may be that even after experiencing a major life change, the cost of voting remains relatively low. This makes it less likely that transitions will lead to large differences in participation. But what is it about divorce and widowhood that make these two transitions different? Why do they depress individual level turnout despite the relatively low cost of voting? We will see that these two transitions fall within the same category in my typology of life transitions. They are both personal life transitions that involve a role loss. This fits in with the literature on negativity bias that suggests that negative events are more salient and are more likely to influence behaviour. Finally, I will conclude by discussing the three key takeaways of my dissertation. These key takeaways can be summarized as such: 1) most life transitions do not exert a significant influence on turnout, 2) gender does not mitigate the effect of life transitions and 3) personal life transitions seem to have a greater influence on turnout than professional life ones. Finally, I will consider avenues for future research. I suggest studying the impact of these major life changes on other forms of political behaviour, especially those that are associated with a higher cost. It is likely that transitions will have a greater influence on forms of participation that require greater investments of time or money.

Contribution to the field of political behaviour

This study contributed to the field of political science, and of political behaviour specifically, by attempting to look at factors that influence adult political socialization. As such, it is situated in the literature on voting and the life cycle. It takes on the subject of life transitions which is mostly utilized in other fields (such as psychology) and applies it to political science where the concept has been underused. I also make an important theoretical contribution by providing an easy way to classify life transitions based on two dimensions. The typology that I develop makes the distinction between personal and professional life transitions (which are easy to identify) and with whether or not the transition is associated with a role gain or a role loss. I also make an empirical contribution by estimating the effect of a plethora of life transitions on turnout in two different contexts: that of Great Britain and of Switzerland. While the findings are mostly consistent in these two countries, more research is needed to ascertain the generalizability of my conclusions. Although my study has many null results, it does not make its contribution any less important. Scholars have long noticed that there is a publication bias in academia, with studies with null results less likely to be published than those who have significant findings (i.e. Greenwald, 1975; Sterling et al., 1993; Kepes et al., 2014). The null results paired with the lack longitudinal data may be one of the reasons that the topic of life transitions has been understudied in the field of political science. My study provides a first comprehensive look at the effect of life transitions on turnout in more than one context. Future research will be needed in order to see if these results are consistent in other contexts. Knowing whether or not major life events influence turnout is important for the understanding of adult political socialization. If future research finds that transitions have little effect on

turnout or on political attitudes, it would be important to look at what other events or elements may affect adult political socialization. What can lead to changes in adulthood? Are there other factors that are particularly salient in determining the voting behaviour of adults? These are all important questions that should be further studied. After all, the electorate is composed of adults, it is therefore important to understand what factors may lead to changes rather than stability in the political life course. In the following pages I will go back to my research question in order to describe the findings of my dissertation and to make sense of these results.

Do life transitions influence turnout?

The main question that guided this thesis was: do life transitions influence electoral participation? To this question, my dissertation offers one clear answer, the answer is, no, not really. Most life transitions do not exert a sizeable influence on one's decision to participate in elections. The majority of life transitions studied including the transition to marriage/cohabitation, unemployment, parenthood and retirement did not have a significant influence on electoral participation. Indeed, conducting a series of crosstabulations with McNemar's tests and t-tests show nearly identical levels of participation before and after experiencing these four transitions. The multivariate analyses further confirm that there is no hidden effect of these life events on turnout, with the possible exception of the transition to parenthood. In the multivariate regression the transition variable in the United Kingdom's parenthood analysis becomes significant and negative. This may be because the effect of age cancelled out that of the transition in the bivariate analysis because respondents are older and more likely to vote once they become parents. The only transitions that exerted both consistent and significant effects on turnout

was that of divorce and widowhood (although divorce did not reach conventional levels of significance in the original Swiss analysis). Both of these transitions depress electoral participation in the short-term.

But why do life transitions, in general, exert such little influence on voter turnout? One potential answer may be found by looking back at rational choice theory. Early on, I suggested that if life transitions were to influence an aspect of the calculus of voting, they would most likely have an impact on the cost associated with voting. As we have seen in my review of the literature, it is commonly known that institutional factors that make voting more difficult increase the cost of voting and lower participation. The reason that life transitions may exert such a small impact on voting may be because the individual cost of voting remains relatively low even when one goes through a period of disruption in one's life. Those who were likely to vote before a life transition may also perceive the cost of voting to be low and will continue to vote after a life change. Research has shown in pre-election questionnaires that most respondents do not expect to spend much time at the polls (Blais, 2000, Blais and Sevi, 2021). Blais and Daoust (2020) used survey data from the *Making Electoral Democracy Work* project in order to assess whether or not individuals perceived voting to be costly. Respondents were directly asked about the ease of voting in elections. A large majority (78%) described voting as being very or somewhat easy (p.69). This seems to indicate that only a minority of respondents perceive voting to be difficult or costly. The authors also found that certain factors such as higher levels of political interest, seeing voting as a duty, and caring about the results of an elections increase the chances of perceiving voting as a low-cost activity. However, expecting the cost of voting to be high did depress turnout levels (Blais and Daoust, 2020). Since few people will

perceive voting as being costly, it may lead to relatively stable behaviour throughout the life course.

However, it is likely that life transitions would have a greater impact on political behaviours that require more from individuals than simply showing up at a polling station or mailing a ballot. Future research should investigate whether different types of political participation, especially those with a higher cost, are more likely to be influenced by major life changes. For example, some political activities require significant time commitments or necessitate a monetary investment. It would be interesting to see whether life transitions that decrease free time (such as parenthood) lead to a drop in protest behaviour or if transitions that decrease financial resources such as unemployment, retirement and divorce lessen political or charitable donations.

Another reason for my many null results may be because adult political behaviour is more stable than that of youth. The null results found throughout the course of this study may lend support to the impressionable years hypothesis. This theory places great importance on our political development throughout adolescence. The teenage years would therefore be key for the development of political attitudes such as party preferences. For example, Krosnick et Alwin (1989) suggest that what happens within our formative years is more important for the development of our political attitudes than the idea that we gradually become more resistant to change as we age. In order to demonstrate this the authors used data from the American National Election Study collected between 1956 and 1960 and from the 1980 NES. They showed that the youngest respondents showed less political stability in their attitudes than all older cohorts, lending support to the idea that young adulthood is particularly salient in politics. Furthermore, some studies have shown

that formative years may be key to voter turnout. Research has demonstrated that interventions in early childhood can influence political participation in later life (Holbein 2017) and that discussions in adolescence lead to the development of political interest (Dostie-Goulet, 2009). It may be that adult life transitions have a lesser impact on turnout than events earlier in life.

Although life transitions, in general, do not seem to greatly influence electoral participation, I do find a few exceptions to this rule: that of divorce and of widowhood. Widowhood depresses turnout in both the Swiss and the British context. Divorce also seems to have a negative influence on turnout in the United Kingdom and in Switzerland. Going back to the typology of life transitions developed earlier in this dissertation, we see that the life transitions that matter for voter turnout tend to fall in a single category, they are personal life transitions that involve a role loss. This suggests that role losses have a larger impact than role gains. This coincides well with the literature on negativity bias. Research and anecdotal evidence suggest that humans tend to have a "negativity bias". This insinuates that humans pay more attention to negative stimuli. This may be a consequence of evolution because. noticing negative things or threats in one's environment increased the chances of survival (Cherry, 2020).

But what exactly is negativity bias? This bias can be seen in various facets of our lives. Examples of this include remembering negative events more easily, being more likely to retain information about insults than compliments, thinking about negative things more than positive ones and having a stronger reaction to negative occurrences (Cherry, 2022). This in turn can influence the way we think and act as we tend to learn more from negative events and are more likely to take negative information in consideration in

decision making (Cherry, 2022). Rozin and Royzman define negativity bias as "the principle, […] that in most situations, negative events are more salient, potent, dominant in combinations, and generally efficacious than positive ones" (2001, p.297). Although these authors admit that there are exceptions to negativity bias, they nevertheless identify four ways in which this bias may be found in various fields of study: negative potency, greater steepness of negative gradients, negativity dominance and greater negative differentiation ."Negativity potency" suggests that when we find negative and positive events that should be considered as being equal in size, the negative event will be more significant than the positive one (Rozin and Royzman, 2001). "Greater steepness of negative gradients" implies that negativity grows more quickly than positivity while "negativity dominance" indicates that when we combine equal events that are positive and negative, the outcome will be negative. An example of this commonly described by the authors is that when we add one element that tastes bad to an otherwise good recipe, it will ruin the taste, On the other hand, "greater negative differentiation" suggests that there are more words and descriptions available to evaluate negative events and emotions than positive ones (Rozin and Royzman, 2001),

Although these four concepts are interesting, the one that is consistent with my results is the idea of negative potency. Marriage and divorce can be seen as opposite events in an individual's life. Although, it is important not to get carried away with normative evaluations of life transitions, it can be argued that marriage is often perceived as being positive, while divorce is more often regarded in a negative light (although there are some exceptions, as some people would describe their marriages in negative terms and some would describe their divorce positively). Even if we distance ourselves from normative

ideas related to life transition, it is easy to see that divorce is associated with a role loss while marriage is associated with a role gain. Role losses are therefore more salient in the decision to vote than role gains. Like divorce, widowhood is also associated with a role loss and leads to a decline in participation. This suggests that the only life transitions that seem to matter in determining turnout are both personal life transitions associated with a role loss. This study can therefore situate itself in the literature on negativity bias.

The concept of a negativity bias is not foreign to political science. For example, citizens are predisposed to pay more attention to negative rather than positive news stories (Soroka et al., 2020) and there is some research that suggests that individuals that react more to negative stimuli are more likely to be conservative (Hibbing et al., 2014). However, some research questions whether or not this is truly the case (Brandt et al, 2014; Fournier et al., 2020, Johnston and Madsen 2022). Research on negativity bias can take many forms. This study situates itself in this literature by suggesting that negative events are more likely to influence behaviour.

Now that I have answered my research questions, it is time to highlight three key takeaways of this dissertation:

1) Most life transitions do not have a significant effect on voting behaviour, with the exception of widowhood and, possibly, divorce.

Following my empirical demonstration, we can be confident that the majority of life transitions do not exert a significant influence on turnout. Because this is consistent across the Swiss and the British case, we can expect that most of these results can be generalized to other contexts.

However, it is likely that both divorce and widowhood influence voter turnout. These results are consistent with those found in previous studies. For example, prior research conducted in California suggests that widowhood depresses turnout in the United States (Hobbs et al., 2014). Since this seems to also be the case in the United Kingdom and Switzerland, we can assume that this would probably be the case elsewhere as well.

2) Gender does not mitigate the effect of life transitions.

Despite differences between men and women, I find no evidence that life transitions lead to different outcomes in electoral participation for either gender. When there is an effect, like in the case of divorce and widowhood, there is no significant interaction effect. The lack of interaction effect indicates that when a life transition does have an effect, it is not more or less important for men or women.

3) Personal life transitions matter more than professional ones

As expected, personal life transitions seem to matter more than professional life transitions. This is in line with socialization theory, individuals are more likely to be influenced by their close ties, which usually involves people in their home life. Events that take place in one's personal life are therefore more likely to be perceived as salient than those that take place in one's professional life. I only witnessed significant changes in personal life transitions that involved a role loss. Both professional life transitions studied, unemployment and retirement, lead to a role loss but did not have a significant event on turnout. This leads me to believe that these transitions are less important when making the decision to vote.

These key takeaways lead to interesting questions. It would be worthwhile to see if rather than affecting participatory behaviour, life transitions influence political outlook and

orientation. As we have seen in the literature review, there are often differences in outlook between states (for example, parents see politics differently than non-parents, married individuals are sometimes more conservative than single ones, etc.,). Do these distinctions come from experiencing a life transition, or are certain individuals likely to experience a given transition because of their predispositions? Future research could also study the mechanism in place for those transitions that do influence electoral participation. Additionally, it would be interesting to see if life events have a greater influence on behaviour that require large time or monetary investments. For example, the Swiss Household Panel has measures for a series of other participatory behaviours such as participating in protests and donating money to charity or to certain causes. It would be interesting to see if life transitions influence protest behaviour or the willingness to donate to a cause. It would also be interesting to see if life transitions can influence political attitudes. Longitudinal panels often have variables that measure opinions on certain policy issues or partisan preferences. Could life transitions exert an influence on these? If they do not, future research should also look at other factors that may influence adult political socialization. Even if the formative years are more important to the development of political attitudes, adults do change their minds on issues and sometimes change their behaviour. It is important to understand what leads to these changes. These are just a few examples of avenues for future research at the cross-section of life transition and of politics.

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Appendix 1: OLS Regressions for BHPS

Table A1.1 OLS Regression BHPS Marriage

	Model 1 (OLS)	Model 2 (OLS)	Model 3 (OLS)
Transition to married	-.002	-.015	.004
	(.012)	(.015)	(.019)
Female		.002	.020
		(.017).	(.021)
Transition to married x female			-.035
			(.024)
Age		.016***	.016***
		(.003)	(.003)
Age squared		-.000**	-.000**
		(.000)	(000)
University Degree		.151***	.151***
		(.017)	(.017)
Year			
1997		-.094***	-.094***
		(.024)	(.024)
2001		-.261***	-.261***
		(.027)	(.027)
2005		-.241***	-.241***
		(.030)	(.030)
2010		-.187***	-.188***
		(.029)	(.029)
2015		-.156***	-.156***
		(.032)	(.032)
2017		-.071	-.072
		(.044)	(.044)
2019		-.167	-.165
		(.213)	(.210)
Constant	.665***	.388***	.378***
	(.011)	(.064)	
R squared	0.000	0.087	0.087
Number of observations	3,904	3,904	3,904
(groups)	(1952)	(1952)	(1952)

#p < 0.10 *p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001

Table A1.2 OLS Regression BHPS Parenthood

	Model 1 (OLS)	Model 2 (OLS)	Model 3 (OLS)
Transition to parenthood	.006	-.046**	-.041*
	(.012)	(.015)	(.019)
Female		.041*	.045*
		(.017)	(.021)
Transition to parenthood x female			-.009
			(.023)
Age		.051***	.052***
		(.008)	(.008)
Age squared		-.001***	-.001***
		(.000)	(.000)
University Degree		.158***	.157***
		(.018)	(0.018)
Year			
1997		-.099***	-.099***
		(.024)	(.024)
2001		-.265***	-.266***
		(.027)	(.027)
2005		-.221***	-.221***
		(.029)	(.029)
2010		-.193***	-.193***
		(.028)	(.028)
2015		-.150***	-.150***
		(.032)	(.032)
2017		-.092#	-.092#
		(.049)	(.049)
2019		-.159	-.158
		(.190)	(.189)
Constant	.678***	-.258*	-.264
	(.011)	(.130)	(.132)
R squared	0.000	0.124	0.124
Number of observations	3746	3,736	3,736
(groups)	(1873)	(1868)	(1868)

#p < 0.10 *p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001

Table A1.3 OLS Regression BHPS Divorce

	Model 1 (OLS)	Model 2 (OLS)	Model 3 (OLS)
Transition to divorce	-.0691***	-.084***	-.073**
	(.016)	(.019)	(.029)
Female		.015	.024
		(.025)	(.029)
Transition to divorce x female			.018
			(.034)
Age		.018***	.018***
		(.005)	(.005)
Age squared		-.000*	-.000
		(.000)	(.000)
University Degree		.135***	.135***
		(.026)	(.026)
Year			
1997		-.000	-.000
		(.034)	(.034)
2001		-.205***	-.205***
		(.040)	(.040)
2005		-.183***	-.183***
		(.044)	(.044)
2010		-.156***	-.157***
		(.042)	(.042)
2015		-.168***	-.168***
		(.045)	(.045)
2017		-.115#	-.115#
		(.060)	(.060)
2019			
Constant	.717***	-.147	.232
	(.0146)	(.276)	(.120)
R squared	0.006	0.095	0.095
Number of observations (groups)	1910 (955)	1904 (952)	1904 (952)

#p < 0.10 *p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001

Table A1.4 OLS Regression BHPS Unemployment

	Model 1 (OLS)	Model 2 (OLS)	Model 3 (OLS)
Transition to unemployment	-.002	-.044#	.076*
	(.022)	(.027)	(.030)
Female		.097**	.061
		(.036)	(.043)
Transition to unemployment x female			.073
			(.045)
Age		.016	.016
		(.010)	(.010)
Age squared		-.000	-.000
		(.000)	(.000)
University Degree		.202***	.201***
		(.042)	(.042)
Year			
1997		-.008	-.004
		(.054)	(.054)
2001		-.099#	-.095#
		(.060)	(.060)
2005		-.115#	-.114#
		(.062)	(.062)
2010		-.115#	-.109#
		(.064)	(.065)
2015		-.146*	-140
		(.066)	(.066)
2017		-.017	-.023
		(.080)	(.081)
2019		.540***	.559***
		(.065)	(.065)
Constant	.648***	.188	.203
	(.022)	(.196)	(.197)
R squared	0.000	0.097	0.099
Number of observations (groups)	944 (472)	932 (466)	932 (466)

#p < 0.10 *p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001

Table A1.5 OLS Regression BHPS Retirement

	Model 1 (OLS)	Model 2 (OLS)	Model 3 (OLS)
Transition to retirement	-.006	-.017	-.021
	(.008)	(.011)	(.013)
Female		-.012	-.016
		(.012)	(.015)
Transition to retirement x female			.008
			(.016)
Age		.027*	.027*
		(.013)	(.014)
Age squared		-.000#	-.000#
		(.000)	(.000)
University Degree		.069***	.069***
		(.013)	(.013)
Year			
1997		-.023	-.023
		(.016)	(.016)
2001		-.091***	-.091***
		(.021)	(.021)
2005		-.106***	-.106***
		(.022)	(.022)
2010		-.089***	-.089***
		(.020)	(.020)
2015		-.069***	-.069***
		(.022)	(.022)
2017		-.061*	-.061*
		(.030)	(.030)
2019		.064**	.063**
		(.021)	(.022)
Constant	.890***	-.016	-.008
	(.007)	(.429)	(.431)
R squared	0.000	0.027	0.027
Number of observations	3606	3579	3579
(groups)	(1803)	(1790)	(1790)

#p < 0.10 *p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001

Table A1.6 OLS Regression BHPS Widowhood

	Model 1 (OLS)	Model 2 (OLS)	Model 3 (OLS)
Transition to widowhood	-.050***	-.068***	-.053*
	(.013)	(.015)	(.024)
Female		-.006	.004
		(.022)	(.024)
Transition to widowhood x female			-.022
			(.027)
Age		.014#	.014#
		(.007)	(.007)
Age squared		-.000	-.000
		(.000)	(000)
University Degree		.070**	.070**
		(.023)	(.023)
Year			
1997		.008	.009
		(.027)	(.027)
2001		-.015	-.015
		(.033)	(.033)
2005		-.041	-.042
		(.036)	(.036)
2010		-.079*	-.079*
		(.037)	(.037)
2015		-.021	-.021
		(.038)	(.038)
2017		.063	.064
		(.044)	(.045)
2019		-.057	-.053
		(.185)	(.185)
Constant	.874***	.313	.302
	(.011)	(.239)	(.240)
R squared	0.005	0.035	0.035
Number of observations	1,728	1,716	1,716
(groups)	(864)	(858)	(858)

#p < 0.10 *p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001

Appendix 2- VIF Models for BHPS

Table A2.1 VIF for transition to marriage regression

Variable	VIF	1/VIF
Transition married	1.28	0.778746
Female	1.00	0.996673
Age	26.17	0.038216
Age squared	25.87	0.038661
University degree	1.06	0.943375
Year		
1997	2.53	0.395782
2001	2.49	0.401225
2005	2.33	0.428443
2010	2.03	0.492798
2015	2.09	0.477914
2017	1.42	0.702533
2019	1.01	0.702533
Mean VIF	5.77	

Table A2.2 VIF for transition to divorce regression

Variable	VIF	1/VIF
Transition divorced	1.27	0.785798
Female	1.01	0.990140
Age	31.83	0.031421
Age squared	31.39	0.031854
University degree	1.05	0.952798
Year		
1997	2.58	0.387373
2001	2.65	0.377630
2005	2.62	0.381107
2010	2.12	0.472120
2015	2.35	0.426288
2017	1.72	0.581882
2019	1.04	0.964464
Mean VIF	6.80	

Table A2.3 VIF for transition to parenthood regression

Variable	VIF	1/VIF
Transition parenthood	1.39	0.720925
Female	1.09	0.920708
Age	43.56	0.022958
Age squared	42.06	0.023778
University degree	1.15	0.869741
Year		
1997	2.55	0.391399
2001	2.55	0.391399
2005	2.43	0.412013
2010	2.14	0.466938
2015	2.20	0.453593
2017	1.36	0.735873
2019	1.01	0.989421
Mean VIF	8.62	

Table A2.4 VIF Transition to unemployment regression

Variable	VIF	1/VIF
Transition unemployment	1.25	0.798249
Female	1.04	0.960623
Age	49.73	0.020110
Age squared	50.02	0.019992
University degree	1.08	0.922896
Year		
1997	2.54	0.393180
2001	2.59	0.385628
2005	2.77	0.361388
2010	2.44	0.409065
2015	2.61	0.382979
2017	2.13	0.469910
2019	1.02	0.980841
Mean VIF	9.94	

Table A2.5 VIF Transition to retirement regression

Variable	VIF	1/VIF
Transition retirement	1.35	0.738156
Female	1.02	0.977785
Age	134.68	0.007425
Age squared	134.40	0.007440
University degree	1.08	0.926932
Year		
1997	2.65	0.377042
2001	2.74	0.365379
2005	2.81	0.356033
2010	2.96	0.338242
2015	3.21	0.311088
2017	1.87	0.534907
2019	1.02	0.534907
Mean VIF	24.15	

Table A2.6 VIF transition to widowhood regression

Variable	VIF	1/VIF
Transition retirement	1.28	0.779033
Female	1.04	0.959247
Age	64.03	0.015619
Age squared	64.33	0.015546
University degree	1.05	0.954685
Year		
1997	2.55	0.391489
2001	2.59	0.385902
2005	2.63	0.379861
2010	2.23	0.449245
2015	2.39	0.417994
2017	1.63	0.614712
2019	1.04	0.957022
Mean VIF	12.23	

Appendix 3- VIF Models for SHP

Table A3.1 VIF transition marriage regression

Variable	VIF	1/VIF
Transition married	1.14	0.879656
Female	1.03	0.967112
Age	35.20	0.028413
Age squared	35.10	0.028488
University degree	1.07	0.937673
Year		
2000	3.10	0.322859
2001	3.21	0.311389
2002	2.63	0.380913
2003	2.45	0.407765
2004	2.64	0.378594
2005	2.65	0.376651
2006	2.64	0.379336
2007	2.86	0.350146
2008	3.07	0.326110
2009	2.23	0.448769
Mean VIF	6.73	

Table A3.2 VIF Transition parenthood regression

Variable	VIF	1/VIF
Transition parenthood	1.15	0.871103
Female	1.07	0.936015
Age	20.87	0.047924
Age squared	20.29	0.049277
University degree	1.13	0.884379
Year		
2000	2.83	0.353147
2001	2.75	0.363751
2002	2.34	0.427343
2003	2.15	0.464817
2004	2.21	0.452095
2005	2.38	0.420444
2006	2.42	0.412520
2007	2.39	0.419030
2008	2.45	0.408550
2009	2.03	0.491726
Mean VIF	4.56	

Table A3.3 VIF Transition divorce regression

Variable	VIF	1/VIF
Transition divorced	1.12	0.891372
Female	1.10	0.910570
Age	42.58	0.023483
Age squared	42.21	0.023690
University degree	1.10	0.911122
Year		
2000	2.71	0.369681
2001	2.67	0.374300
2002	2.59	0.385376
2003	2.37	0.422204
2004	2.46	0.405953
2005	2.61	0.382803
2006	2.59	0.386609
2007	2.55	0.392436
2008	2.52	0.396226
2009	1.95	0.511669
Mean VIF	7.54	

Table A3.4 VIF Transition unemployment regression

Variable	VIF	1/VIF
Transition unemployment	1.22	0.819827
Female	1.09	0.915541
Age	45.64	0.021912
Age squared	44.77	0.022336
University degree	1.19	0.842639
Year		
2000	2.65	0.377005
2001	2.80	0.356988
2002	3.23	0.309427
2003	2.86	0.350003
2004	2.81	0.356293
2005	3.12	0.320947
2006	2.43	0.411868
2007	2.13	0.470035
2008	2.88	0.346824
2009	2.64	0.379311
Mean VIF	8.10	

Table A3.5 VIF Transition retirement regression

Variable	VIF	1/VIF
Transition retirement	1.44	0.693478
Female	1.15	0.872990
Age	259.11	0.003859
Age squared	259.14	0.003859
University degree	1.13	0.883053
Year		
2000	2.27	0.439772
2001	1.99	0.501715
2002	1.87	0.534817
2003	1.77	0.563730
Mean VIF	58.88	

Table A3.6 Transition widowhood regression

Variable	VIF	1/VIF
Transition widowhood	1.21	0.823355
Female	1.25	0.800003
Age	90.60	0.011038
Age squared	90.81	0.011012
University degree	1.25	0.801547
Year		
2000	2.82	0.354262
2001	2.49	0.401332
2002	1.65	0.606615
2003	1.76	0.567325
2004	2.09	0.477539
2005	2.25	0.444510
2006	2.47	0.405529
2007	2.82	0.354523
2008	2.83	0.353307
2009	2.28	0.437906
Mean VIF	13.91	

Appendix 4- Supplementary Analyses for the SHPS (t-tests and OLS)

Table A4.1 T-test transition to marriage alternative sample

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. error	Std. dev.	95% confidence interval	
Vote before	1,107	6.991	.099	3.290	6.797	7.185
Vote after	1,107	7.236	.095	3.163	7.049	7.422
Difference	1,107	-.245	.068	2.271	-.379	-.111
						T = -3.587
						Degrees of freedom: 1106
Ha: mean(diff) < 0			Ha: mean(diff) !=0		Ha: mean (diff) > 0	
Pr(T< t) = 0.0002			Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0003		Pr(T> t) = 0.9998	

Table A4.2 T-test transition to parenthood alternative sample

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. error	Std. dev.	95% confidence interval	
Vote before	505	7.131	.140	3.156	6.855	7.407
Vote after	505	7.129	.138	3.102	6.857	7.400
Difference	505	.002	.094	2.123	-.184	.188
						T = 0.0210
						Degrees of freedom: 504
Ha: mean(diff) < 0			Ha: mean(diff) !=0		Ha: mean (diff) > 0	
Pr(T< t) = 0.5084			Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.9833		Pr(T> t) = 0.4916	

Table A4.3 T-test transition to divorce alternative sample

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. error	Std. dev.	95% confidence interval	
Vote before	675	7.00	.129	3.342	6.749	7.254
Vote after	675	6.88	.132	3.431	6.616	7.135
Difference	675	.126	.098	2.540	-.066	.318
						T =1.2881
						Degrees of freedom:674
Ha: mean(diff) < 0			Ha: mean(diff) !=0		Ha: mean (diff) > 0	
Pr(T< t) = 0.9009			Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.1982		Pr(T> t) = 0.0991	

Table A4.4 T-test transition to unemployment alternative sample

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. error	Std. dev.	95% confidence interval	
Vote before	456	6.711	.170	3.639	6.376	7.045
Vote after	456	6.925	.160	3.417	6.611	7.240
Difference	456	-.215	.122	2.603	-.455	.025
						T = -1.7625
						Degrees of freedom: 455
Ha: mean(diff) < 0			Ha: mean(diff) !=0		Ha: mean (diff) > 0	
Pr(T< t) = 0.0393			Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0787		Pr(T> t) = 0.9607	

Table A4.5 T-test transition to widowhood alternative sample

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. error	Std. dev.	95% confidence interval	
Vote before	428	8.044	.150	3.112	7.749	8.340
Vote after	428	7.741	.159	3.297	7.427	8.054
Difference	428	.304	.119	2.455	.071	.537
						T =2.5601
						Degrees of freedom: 427
Ha: mean(diff) < 0			Ha: mean(diff) !=0		Ha: mean (diff) > 0	
Pr(T< t) = 0.9946			Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0108		Pr(T> t) = 0.0054	

Table A4.6 OLS transition to marriage SHPS alternative sample

	Model 1 (OLS)	Model 2 (OLS)	Model 3 (OLS)
Transition to marriage	.245***	.086	-.023
	(.068)	(.094)	(.112)
Female		-.473**	-.584**
		(.178)	(.194)
Transition to marriage x female			0.221
Age		-.040	-.041
		(048)	(.048)
Age squared		.001	.001
		(.001)	(.001)
University Degree		1.325***	1.326***
		(.178)	(.178)
Year			
2000		.191	.191
		(.470)	(.470)
2001		.228	.235
		(.550)	(.550)
2002		.643	.647
		(.600)	(.600)
2003		.493	.492
		(.582)	(.582)
2004		.594	.591
		(.583)	(.584)
2005		1.114*	1.120*
		(.574)	(.573)
2006		.527	.536
		(.583)	(.583)
2007		.239	.238
		(.580)	(.580)
2008		.165	.166
		(.587)	(.587)
2009		-.193	-.194
		(.552)	(.551)
2011		.021	.025
		(.545)	(.544)
2014		.482	.485
		(.546)	(.546)
2017		.477	.480
		(.593)	(.593)
2020		2.483**	2.465*
		(.964)	(.962)
Constant	6.991***	6.611***	6.681***
	(.099)	(1.095)	(1.097)
R squared	0.001	0.077	0.078
Number of observations	2,214	2,214	2,214
(groups)	(1107)	(1107)	(1107)

#p < 0.10 *p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001

Table A4.7 OLS transition to parenthood SHPS alternative sample

	Model 1 (OLS)	Model 2 (OLS)	Model 3 (OLS)
Transition to parenthood	-.002	-.167	-.194
	(.095)	(.126)	(.150)
Female		-.465#	-.490#
		(.251)	(.270)
Transition to parenthood x female			0.051
			(.190)
Age		.199	0.199
		(.123)	(.123)
Age squared		-.002	-.002
		(.002)	(.002)
University Degree		1.170***	1.171***
		(.259)	(.259)
Year			
2000		-.500	-.501
		(.455)	(.456)
2001		-.600	-.600
		(.604)	(.604)
2002		.806	.805
		(.649)	(.649)
2003		.386	.385
		(.650)	(.651)
2004		1.571**	1.572**
		(.560)	(.561)
2005		1.079#	1.077#
		(578)	(.579)
2006		-.119	-.120
		(.623)	(.624)
2007		-.167	-.170
		(.655)	(.656)
2008		-.235	-.233
		(.622)	(.622)
2009		.756	.754
		(576)	(.577)
2011		.240	.241
		(.584)	(.584)
2014		.377	.378
		(.586)	(.586)
2017		.806	.804
		(.699)	(.700)
Constant	7.131	2.293	2.309
	(.141)	(2.296)	(2.302)
R squared	0.000	0.112	0.112
Number of observations	1010	1010	1010
(groups)	(505)	(505)	(505)

#p < 0.10 *p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001

Table A4.8 OLS transition to divorce SHPS alternative sample

	Model 1 (OLS)	Model 2 (OLS)	Model 3 (OLS)
Transition to divorce	-.126	-.332**	-.038
	(.098)	(.115)	(.147)
Female		-.605	-0.341
		(.237)	(.253)
Transition to divorce x female			-.528**
			(.194)
Age		-.009	-.008
		(.065)	(.065)
Age squared		.001	.001
		(.001)	(.001)
University Degree		1.454***	1.453***
		(.228)	(.228)
Year			
2000		.701	.658
		(.618)	(.613)
2001		.474	.448
		(.705)	(.702)
2002		.121	.094
		(.714)	(.713)
2003		-.339	-.350
		(.752)	(.750)
2004		-.006	-.026
		(.717)	(.715)
2005		.642	.615
		(.703)	(.701)
2006		.762	.760
		(.720)	(.716)
2007		.327	.300
		(.729)	(.727)
2008		.454	.427
		(.714)	(.711)
2009		.192	.159
		(.669)	(.666)
2011		.431	.421
		(.648)	(.645)
2014		.415	.390
		(.643)	(.640)
2017		.117	.100
		(.643)	(.640)
2020		.366	.330
		(.693)	(.690)
Constant	7.001481***	5.273**	5.118**
	(.1286909) .	(1.701)	(1.701)
R squared	0.000	0.111	0.1125
Number of observations (groups)	1350 (675)	1350 (675)	1350 (675)

#p < 0.10 *p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001

Table A4.9 OLS transition to unemployment SHPS alternative sample

	Model 1 (OLS)	Model 2 (OLS)	Model 3 (OLS)
Transition to unemployment	.215#	.054	-.088
	(.122)	(.145)	(.205)
Female		-.655*	-.778*
		(.302)	(.337)
Transition to unemployed x female			.244
			(.250)
Age		-.040	-.040
		(.068)	(.068)
Age squared		.001	.001
		(.001)	(.001)
University Degree		1.195***	1.193***
		(.317)	(0.318)
Year			
2000		.903	.886
		(.732)	(.733)
2001		1.162	1.149
		(.837)	(.840)
2002		1.184	1.172
		(.827)	(.829)
2003		.290	.297
		(.848)	(.849)
2004		.952	.936
		(.838)	(.840)
2005		1.032	1.027
		(.846)	(.847)
2006		.879	.881
		(.886)	(.887)
2007		.612	.602
		(.953)	(.955)
2008		.814	.801
		(.859)	(.862)
2009		1.016	1.001
		(.833)	(.838)
2011		.351	.341
		(.833)	(.835)
2014		1.236	1.224
		(.825)	(.827)
2017		.977	.983
		(.936)	(.936)
Constant	6.711***	5.738***	5.813***
	(.171).	(1.500)	(1.506)
R squared	0.001	0.081	0.082
Number of observations	912	912	912
(groups)	(456)	(456)	(456)

#p < 0.10 *p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001

Table A4.10 OLS transition to widowhood SHPS alternative sample

	Model 1 (OLS)	Model 2(OLS)	Model 3 (OLS)
Transition to widowhood	-.304**	-.542***	-.416
	(.119).	(.149)	(.270)
Female		-.52#	-.440
		(.292)	(.318)
Transition to widowhood x female			-.168
			(.287)
Age		.279*	0.279 *
		(.126)	0.126
Age squared		-.002*	-.002 *
		(.001)	(.001)
University Degree		1.054***	1.054***
		(.294)	(.294)
Year			
2000		.290	.294
		(.646)	(.647)
2001		.616	.625
		(.956)	(.959)
2002		-.184	-.170
		(1.106)	(1.109)
2003		-.413	-.398
		(1.156)	(1.153)
2004		-.022	-.012
		(.957)	(.962)
2005		-.257	-.254
		(1.052)	(1.052)
2006		.594	.593
		(.872)	(.873)
2007		.013	.026
		(.907)	(.911)
2008		.250	.263
		(.870)	.(872)
2009		-.002	.003
		(.852)	.(854)
2011		-.011	-.002
		(.831)	(.832)
2014		.213	.222
		(.811)	(.813)
2017		.603	.611
		(.814)	(.816)
2020		.860	.862
		(.881)	(.882)
Constant	8.044**	-2.392	-2.489
	(.151)	(4.251)	(4.269)
R squared	0.002	0.073	0.073
Number of observations	856	856	856
(groups)	(428)	(428)	(428)

#p < 0.10 *p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001

Appendix 5- BHPS- Supplementary model for parenthood

Table A5.1 Supplementary logit models for transition to parenthood

	Model 1 (logit)	Model 2 (logit)	Model 3 (logit)	Model 4 (logit)	Model 5 (logit)
Transition to parenthood	.027 (.053)	.027 (.053)	.002 (.056)	-.393*** (.070)	-.234** (.078)
Female		-.034 (.084)	-.079 (.085)	.204* (.090)	.212* (.091)
Age				.219*** (.039)	.233*** (.040)
Age squared				-.002*** (.001)	-.002*** (.001)
University Degree			1.040*** (.092)	796*** (.096)	.838*** (.100)
Year					
1997					-.561*** (.146)
2001					-1.381*** (.158)
2005					-1.179*** (.168)
2010					-.1.048*** (.168)
2015					-.805*** (.194)
2017					-.446 (.324)
2019					-.827 (.969)
Constant	.751*** (.050)	.7683934*** (.0661529)	.463*** (.072)	-3.956*** (.630)	-3.398*** (.647)
R squared	0.000	0.000	0.039	0.076	0.103
Number of observations (groups)	3746 (1873)	3,736 (1868)	3,736 (1868)	3736 (1868)	3736 (1868)

#p < 0.10 *p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001