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The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

Availability of data and material

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available from AMS Acta Institutional Research Repository – University of Bologna at http://doi.org/10.6092/ unibo/amsacta/6420. This data is made available for open access in compliance with H2020 Program regulation, following the guidelines stipulated by the Data Management Plan adopted by the CATCH-EyoU research project.

Abstract

Democratic school climate, critical reflection, and student participation at school have been linked to the development of civic and political attitudes. The study aims to identify the contribution of these characteristics to the development of civic and political attitudes and their impact on students' participation (civic, political, activist, and lifestyle/online). Questionnaire data were collected in two waves with 1589 students from four European countries (Italy, Sweden, Germany, and the Czech Republic). Structural equation modelling tested the effects of school characteristics on different types of participation, mediated by institutional trust, political efficacy, and political interest.

The results highlight the importance of opportunities for active involvement and critical reflection in fostering interest, efficacy, and all forms of participation activities. Democratic school climate was found to positively impact institutional trust and efficacy, but not participation. The findings highlight the need for a school environment that invites critical reflection and gives value to students' participation.

Keywords: civic engagement, political participation, school climate, school participation, critical reflection

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Existing literature has argued that effective citizenship education focuses on more than the teaching of civic knowledge and provides opportunities for participation that foster the development of citizenship skills and efficacy (e.g., Lawy & Biesta, 2006). The perception that one's school is characterized by opportunities for open discussion, student influence, critical reflection, and active engagement can be part of youth positive development of participatory citizenship.

The present study seeks to contribute to recent research examining how students' experience of democratic citizenship at school fosters civic and political participation. The study focuses on the influence of perceived school characteristics on participative behaviors through the increase of factors such as trust, efficacy, and interest. Citizenship education at school, however, often refers to a normative idea of civic and political engagement, in which dissent and criticism of existing power relations are rarely contemplated (Zimenkova, 2013). In this sense, schools' characteristics might be oriented toward promoting dutiful citizenship and conventional forms of participation, but not critical and lifestyle-based forms (Bennett et al., 2009). To explore this, we extend previous analyses (Tzankova et al., 2021) by examining the effects of school democratic characteristics on different forms of participation.

Democratic School Characteristics

Several authors have stressed the importance of providing opportunities for open and respectful discussions in the classroom, as well as centering the school climate around democratic values (Ehman, 1980). Democratic school climate has been shown to promote political attitudes and behaviors, when students feel they can discuss topics openly in the classroom, take part in decision-making at school, and that there is fair treatment at their school (e.g., Flanagan et al., 2007; Geboers et al., 2013; Lenzi et al., 2014; Torney-Purta, 2002).

There is also increasing attention to the need to foster critical active citizenship by providing opportunities for participation and reflection in a supportive and challenging environment (Ferreira et al., 2012). Schools can be pivotal in offering experiences that allow critical thinking and the consideration and integration of plural diverse perspectives for adolescents (Ferreira et al., 2012; Piedade et al., 2020; ten Dam & Volman, 2004). The contribution of perceived critical reflection at school to the promotion of civic participation, however, has received limited attention in empirical research in comparison to democratic school climate and student participation (Tzankova et al., 2021).

Finally, schools can involve students in their governance and recognize them as social agents with claims and interests (Lawy & Biesta, 2006). Democratic experiences can be offered through structures for student participation, such as student elections and councils, extra-curricular activities, student projects, and networks (Flanagan et al., 2007). Previous research has shown that opportunities for active learning lead to greater civic participation in the future (Davies et al., 2014; Kahne & Sporte, 2008).

Democratic Schools and Promotion of Trust, Efficacy, and Interest

Different school characteristics have been investigated as explanatory variables of engagement attitudes and behaviors. However, contributions analyzing multiple democratic experiences and the processes that could explain the promotion of active participation are rare. In the present study, we investigate how perceived democratic school characteristics could promote different types of civic and political participation through the increase of institutional trust, efficacy beliefs, and political and social interest.

Existing research has shown that an open classroom climate contributes to the development of institutional trust (e.g., Barber et al. 2015). Participating in school councils has also been shown to predict higher trust in institutions (Claes & Hooghe, 2017).

The value that the school attributes to the participation of students in the school environment can strengthen students' beliefs in their abilities to act and engage concretely (Schulz et al., 2010). Empirical evidence suggests that democratic school climate and classroom deliberation increase perceptions of political efficacy among students (Barber et al., 2015; Pasek et al., 2008; Sohl & Arensmeier, 2015).

Political interest has also been shown to be influenced by participation in school councils (Claes & Hooghe, 2017) and, less strongly, by open classroom climate (García-Albacete, 2013).

Types of Participation

Distinctions have been drawn between political and civic forms of participation. *Political participation* has been defined as having the aim of shaping governmental decisions directly or indirectly by influencing the making of public policy or the selection of policymakers (Verba et al., 1995). *Civic participation*, by contrast, refers to voluntary activity focused on helping others, achieving a public good, or participating in the life of a community to effect change (Barrett & Zani, 2015).

Another common differentiation is between *conventional* or *institutionalized* forms of activity related to the electoral process and the support of representative democracy — e.g., voting, party membership, election campaigning — and *unconventional* or *non-institutionalized* forms beyond the electoral sphere, including activism and consumer behavior — e.g., protesting, involvement in social movements, signing petitions, political consumption, boycotting (Barrett & Zani, 2015). Non-institutionalized engagement may also take advantage of online opportunities (e.g., Oser et al., 2013) and political and cause-related consumption (e.g., Gotlieb & Thorson, 2017).

School characteristics might influence in varying degrees different types of participation and through different psychological factors. Previous literature suggests that classroom democratic

climate, for example, increases institutional trust (Barber et al. 2015). However, political trust has generally been related to the promotion of institutional and conventional activities, rather than non-institutionalized and critical engagement (e.g., Hooghe & Marien, 2013; Tzankova et al., 2022). It is not clear what school factors and pathways may provide greater support for engagement in non-institutionalized or protest-based participation. Previous research has been limited to predicting expected future participation without differentiation of activities (e.g., Castillo et al., 2015; Lenzi et al., 2014; Manganelli et al., 2015). We seek to fill such gaps in empirical studies by examining the effects of school factors on levels of past engagement in multiple types of activities.

Aims and Conceptual Model

The two-wave study seeks to contribute to the understanding of the effect of democratic experiences at school on different types of youth participation in four different European countries in the North, South, Central, and Eastern Europe. We examine how perceived democratic school climate, opportunities for critical reflection and student participation relate to different forms of participative behaviors at a one-year interval through their effects on psychological factors such as civic and political trust, efficacy, and interest.

Based on the literature presented above, the overall conceptual model and corresponding hypotheses are presented in **Error! Reference source not found.**. These were tested through four models with different types of participation as the outcome – civic, political, activist, and lifestyle/online. We adopt the use of temporally separated measures, with the advantage to reduce common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2012). The model evaluates the following pathways.

[Insert Figure 1]

Firstly, perceiving a higher democratic school climate at Time 1 is hypothesized to be directly related to higher participation at Time 2 (H1). We also expect that greater participation at

Time 2 is predicted by perceiving to have more experiences of critical reflection at school at Time 1 (H2) and by student participation at school at Time 1 (H3).

Moreover, institutional trust, political efficacy, and political interest are evaluated as mediators between school characteristics and participation. It is expected that a higher democratic school climate predicts higher institutional trust (H4), political efficacy beliefs (H5), and political interest at Time 2 (H6). We also hypothesize that higher critical reflection at school at Time 1 is positively related to political efficacy (H8), and political interest at Time 2 (H9). Student participation at school at Time 1 is also expected to predict higher institutional trust (H10), political efficacy (H11), and political interest at Time 2 (H12). In turn, we expect that participation at Time 2 is influenced positively by higher political efficacy (H13), and higher political interest at Time 2 (H14). Since the effect of political trust has been shown to be ambivalent and to vary according to the type of activity, we do not formulate specific hypotheses on the expected relationship between trust and participation.

Methods

Participants and procedure

The data were collected in two waves, in 2016 and 2017, in four European countries – Italy, Sweden, Germany, and the Czech Republic. The data collection was part of the European-funded H2020 research project CATCH- EyoU (Grant Agreement 64538). Adolescents, aged between 14 and 19 years old, filled out a self-report questionnaire mostly on paper (90%), as well as online (10%). The study was approved by the ethic committees in each country. The participants were approached in upper secondary schools from different school tracks (i.e., lower and higher). To allow for the pairing of data between waves and protect data privacy, participants were instructed to create anonymous codes. The procedure could result in the exclusion of participants due to spelling mistakes, identical codes, or change in schools and classes. Attrition rates varied between countries:

16% in Italy; 22% in the Czech sample; 44% in Sweden; and 65% in Germany. Attrition analysis showed differences for the Czech and German samples in variables such as place of residence, country of birth, income, and school track. Overall, there were mean-level changes between the two waves of the survey consistent with developmental changes in adolescence, but these could also be related to broader events throughout the year (e.g., elections; Noack & Macek, 2017).

The final sample consisted of 1589 participants (51.1% were female; 48.7% were male). The distribution across countries was as follows: 685 (43.1%) from Italy, 226 (14.2%) from Sweden, 263 (16.6%) from Germany, and 415 (26.1%) from the Czech Republic. The average age of the participants was 16.65 years old (*SD* = 1.16) at the time of the first wave of data collection. Students coming from a higher school track were 74.3% of the sample. Those with a migrant background – born abroad or with parents who were born abroad – were 19.3%.

Measures

The independent variables were all measured at Time 1 (T1) in the first wave of the survey in winter 2016. The mediators and the outcomes were measured one year later in the survey's second wave at Time 2 (T2). Moreover, country, school track, age, gender, and perceived family income were controlled for.

Independent Variables at Time 1

Demographic Information. Participants were asked to report their age, gender, and perceived family income ("Does the money your household cover everything your family needs?"; 1 = *not at all* to 4 = *fully*).

Democratic School Climate. Perceived democratic school climate was assessed with six items measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). The items measured: open classroom climate (adapted from Schulz et al., 2010; e.g., "Teachers respect our opinions and encourage us to express our opinions during the classes"); school external efficacy

(e.g., “Students at our school can influence how our school is run”); and perceived fairness of teachers and rules (Torsheim et al., 2000; e.g., “Our teachers treat us fairly”). The reliability was good (α = .83) and consistently acceptable across countries (α > .74).

Critical Reflection at School. Critical reflection at school was measured by three items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*), corresponding to the dimension of reflection within the Quality of Participation Experiences Scale (Ferreira et al., 2012; e.g., “I have observed conflicting opinions that brought up new ways of perceiving the issues in question”). Cronbach’s alpha was .76 and consistently acceptable across countries (α > .72).

Student Participation at School. Participants were asked whether in the past year they: had represented other students in student councils or in front of teachers or principals; had been active in a student group or club; had been active in a school sports group or club. Answers were dichotomous and a composite score was obtained by summing the three items (range 0-3).

Mediator Variables at Time 2

Institutional Trust. Institutional trust was measured by two items assessing trust in European and national institutions (e.g., “I trust the national government”). Both were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*), with sufficient reliability (α = .68). Cronbach’s alpha was above .61 across countries.

Political and Societal Interest. Interest in politics, European and national politics, and societal issues were measured by four items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*), adapted from Amnå and colleagues (2010). An example was “How interested are you in politics?”. The reliability was very good (α = .86), and consistently acceptable (α > .83) across countries.

Political Efficacy. Two items adapted from Barrett and Zani (2015) assessed collective efficacy (e.g., “I think that by working together, young people can change things for the better”).

Three items adapted from Russo and Stattin (2017) measured internal political efficacy (e.g., "If I really tried, I could manage to actively work in organizations trying to solve problems in society"). All were assessed on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*), with good reliability (α = .79). Cronbach's alpha was consistently acceptable across countries (α > .74).

Dependent Variables at Time 2

Civic and Political Participation. Participation in civic and political activities in the last 12 months was measured on a 5-point scale (1 = *no* to 5 = *very often*) with items from the Civic and Political Participation scale (CPP; Enchikova et al., 2019). Internal reliability was consistently acceptable (α > .71) across countries. According to Cicognani et al. (2017, p. 57), the items of this scale assess four forms of participation: *civic participation* (3 items); *political participation* (3 items); *activist participation* (4 items); *lifestyle and online participation* (5 items). Confirmatory factor analysis revealed a good fit of the hypothesized four-factor model, χ^2 (84) = 191.71, p <.001, CFI = .96, TLI = .95, RMSEA = .029. Appendix A reports all items that form the specific subscales.

Analysis

To test the model, we performed a structural equation modelling (SEM) with a robust weighted least squares estimation (WLSMV) in Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 2015). The analysis took into account the nested structure of the data according to classrooms. In particular, standard errors and a chi-square test of model fit were computed taking into account clustering, using a sandwich estimator for standard error computation. We estimated the structural model separately on each type of participation (civic, political, activist, or lifestyle and online) as endogenous latent outcomes. Students' country, age, gender, perceived family income, and school track were included as observed control covariates.

Additionally, to examine the specific cross-country differences, we performed multiple group analyses through structural equation modelling with partial least squares using the Stata

package plssem (Venturini, & Mehmetoglu, 2019). These results are reported in Appendix B. Before conducting multiple group analyses, we used alignment optimization to test the measurement invariance. Measurement invariance was supported because the percentage of noninvariant parameters was relatively small (e.g., < 25%; Muthén & Asparouhov, 2014). Results of the measurement invariance analysis are available from the corresponding author upon request.

Results

Civic Participation

The measurement model provided a good fit to the overall data: $\chi 2(278) = 671.06$; $p < .001$; CFI = .956; TLI = .949; RMSEA = .030.

The overall structural model fitted the data well: $\chi 2(366) = 987.14$; $p < .001$; CFI = .939; TLI = .929; RMSEA = .029. Figure 2 reports the results of the test of the hypothesized mediation model.

[Insert Figure 2]

The results show that civic participation is predicted at a one-year interval directly by student participation, political interest, and political efficacy. Democratic school climate and critical reflection at school measured at T1 did not have a significant direct effect on civic participation at T2. Democratic school climate at T1 showed a positive influence on institutional trust and political efficacy at T2, while critical reflection and student participation lead to greater political interest and political efficacy after one year.

Student participation at school also presented a significant indirect effect on civic participation through its influence on political interest (ß = .049; $p < .001$) and on political efficacy (ß = .057; $p < .001$). Critical reflection at school also had a small significant indirect effect on civic participation via political interest (ß = .028; $p < .01$) and political efficacy (ß = .021; $p < .01$).

Moreover, being a student in higher school tracks led to having higher political interest (ß = .15; $p < .01$) and efficacy levels (ß = .12; $p < .01$). Higher age was related to higher political interest (ß = .10; $p < .05$) and higher political efficacy (ß = .09; $p < .001$). Male participants showed lower civic activity (ß = -.15; $p < .001$) and trusted institutions less than female students (ß = -.11; $p < .01$). Higher perceived family income was associated positively with political interest (ß = .06; $p < .05$), political efficacy (ß = .06; $p < .01$), and institutional trust (ß = .15; $p < .001$).

Cross-country controls were performed with the Czech Republic as a reference group. German participants had higher levels of political interest (ß = .12; $p < .001$), political efficacy (ß = .09; $p < .01$) and institutional trust (ß = .21; $p < .001$), Swedish participants had higher efficacy (ß = .17; $p < .001$) and institutional trust (ß = .25; $p < .001$), while Italian participants had lower interest (ß = -.11; $p < .05$) and lower institutional trust (ß = -.16; $p < .001$). There were no significant differences in civic participation according to country.

Political Participation

The measurement model provided a good fit to the overall data: $\chi2(278) = 703.87$; $p < .001$; CFI = .953; TLI = .945; RMSEA = .031.

The overall structural model fitted the data well: $\chi2(366) = 967.26$; $p < .001$; CFI = .942; TLI = .932; RMSEA = .028. Figure 3 reports the results of the test of the hypothesized mediation model.

[Insert Figure 3]

In comparison to civic participation, the results differ in the direct impact of student participation, which did not significantly predict political participation after one year. Institutional trust, however, was related to lower political participation.

Student participation at school presented a significant indirect effect on political participation through its influence on political interest (ß = .08; $p < .001$) and on political efficacy (ß

= .055; $p < .001$). Critical reflection at school also had a small significant indirect effect on political participation via political interest (ß = .046; $p < .01$) and political efficacy (ß = .021; $p < .05$).

Older students showed higher political participation (ß = .08; $p < .01$). There were no significant differences in political participation according to country.

Activist Participation

The measurement model provided a good fit to the overall data: $\chi 2(303) = 667.18$; $p < .001$; CFI = .958; TLI = .951; RMSEA = .028.

The overall structural model fitted the data well: $\chi 2(395) = 981.25$; $p < .001$; CFI = .941; TLI = .931; RMSEA = .027. Figure 4 reports the results of the test of the hypothesized mediation model.

[Insert Figure 4]

While student participation showed a direct positive influence, the democratic school climate predicted activist participation negatively. Similar to the political participation model, higher institutional trust was related to lower activist participation.

Student participation at school presented a significant indirect effect on activist participation through its influence on political efficacy (ß = .044; $p < .01$) and interest (ß = .027; $p < .01$). Critical reflection at school also had a small significant indirect effect on activist participation (ß = .041; $p < .001$), particularly through the increase of political efficacy (ß = .017; $p < .05$) and interest (ß = .015; $p < .05$). The total indirect effect of school climate was not significant, but there was a small positive effect through the increase of political efficacy (ß = .02; $p < .05$) and a negative effect through the increase of political trust (ß = -.035; $p < .05$).

Students from higher school tracks had higher levels of activism (ß = -.13; $p < .05$). In terms of country belonging, activist participation was higher among Italian (ß = .27; $p < .001$), Swedish (ß = .12; $p < .05$), and German participants (ß = .14; $p < .01$).

Lifestyle and Online Participation

The measurement model provided a good fit to the overall data: $\chi 2(329) = 757.11$; $p < .001$; CFI = .954; TLI = .947; RMSEA = .029.

The overall structural model fitted the data well: $\chi 2(497) = 1095.031$; $p < .001$; CFI = .937; TLI = .927; RMSEA = .028. Figure 5 reports the results of the test of the hypothesized mediation model.

[Insert Figure 5]

Results were similar to the activist participation model, as student participation showed a direct positive influence and democratic school climate – a direct negative influence on activist participation after one year. Higher political interest and political efficacy were related to higher participation, while institutional trust was associated negatively with lifestyle and online participation.

Student participation at school presented a significant indirect effect on lifestyle and online participation through its influence on political interest (ß = .12; $p < .001$) and political efficacy (ß = .065; $p < .001$). Critical reflection at school also had a significant indirect effect on lifestyle and online participation (ß = .11; $p < .001$), particularly through the increase of political interest (ß = .07; $p < .001$). The total indirect effect of school climate was not significant, but there was a small positive effect through the increase of political efficacy (ß = .02; $p < .01$) and a negative effect through the increase of political trust (ß = -.05; $p < .001$).

Higher levels of lifestyle and online activity were found among older (ß = .09; $p < .001$) and higher track students (ß = .125; $p < .001$). This type of participation was higher among Swedish (ß = .14; $p < .01$) and German participants (ß = .19; $p < .001$), but lower among Italian ones (ß = -.125; $p < .05$).

Discussion

The present research sought to examine the role of school-related opportunities that impact the development of youth participation in four European countries. The paper seeks to fill gaps in the literature by analyzing multiple democratic experiences and the processes that could explain the promotion of actual active participation in civic, political, activist, and lifestyle/online activities among adolescents.

The results indicate that students' perceptions of openness in the classroom, fairness, and influence in schools' decision-making seem to influence the perception of institutions and to promote greater confidence in personal and collective civic abilities. These results are consistent with previous findings (Barber et al. 2015). However, contrary to what could be expected, democratic school climate did not influence reported civic and political participation activities in our sample, while it even decreased activist and lifestyle/online participation. This suggests that the benefits of perceived school climate were not enough to promote engagement in contrast to other school opportunities for democratic experience. It should be noted that previous research has reported an association between civic engagement and participation intentions rather than actual participation (e.g., Quintelier, & Hooghe, 2013). The association between student civic engagement and school climate is more complicated than previously expected (Geller et al., 2013), and future theorizing cannot take for granted the impact of democratic school climate on civic and political participation. Moreover, school climate had small contrasting effects on lifestyle/online and activist behavior through institutional trust and political efficacy. Indeed, political trust has a varying relationship to different activities in our results. It does not influence traditional civic participation, while it is negatively related to political and non-institutionalized behavior. In this sense, the discontent that such forms entail may be tempered by promoting trust through a democratic school climate. Our findings suggest that school climate's role in promoting trust in authorities and

normative values may play a role in future inaction by youth who may not feel the need that social or political action is imperative since institutions do their work, thus displaying *standby* engagement (Amnå & Ekman, 2014).

Opportunities for involvement in student activities and for reflecting critically at school promoted greater engagement in all forms through the increase of efficacy and interest in social and political issues. Moreover, participation in student councils and extra-curricular groups was associated directly with civic, activist, and lifestyle/online participation as well. These findings give support to the claim that schools promote broader civic development toward self-actualizing citizenship (e.g., Bennett et al., 2009) when they represent supportive and challenging environments, in which students can experience opportunities for participation and reflection (Ferreira et al., 2012; Piedade et al., 2020).

The results also suggest that there are cross-national differences in the studied variables. Students from Sweden and Germany showed greater efficacy, trust, and lifestyle/online participation than Italian and Czech participants. Czech students also showed lower activism. Additional analyses also suggest that there are some differences in the strength of effects among the countries (see Appendix B). These variations could be related to macro-institutional determinants related to the level of democratic development, the socio-economic conditions, and the political culture of the state (Vráblikova & Císar, 2015). According to the EIU Democracy Index 2017 (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2018), for example, Sweden and Germany are ranked as "full democracies", while Italy and the Czech Republic are ranked as "flawed democracies". Future cross-national comparative research could shed more light on the national political and educational contexts that determine variations in school-based democratic experiences. Multilevel studies could provide important evidence of the interplay between national and individual factors, which was not possible in the present study due to the low number of countries involved.

While the study is based on non-representative data, it presents a large sample from several European countries which gives us confidence in the results. The inclusion of both large and small countries with different traditions of democratic experience provides cultural representativeness to the study. Further research with large-scale representative samples, however, would help confirm our findings. Moreover, the inclusion of non-European countries could provide greater insight into the possibility to generalize our findings. Moreover, longitudinal designs with longer periods and more time points would help understand better the development of civic and political attitudes in relation to democratic school factors over time. Finally, one measure used in this study (i.e., trust) had low internal consistency reliability and could be improved by using better measurement scales.

The study has significant implications for the existing literature and citizenship education programs in Europe, pointing to how practice-based citizenship education can nurture participation for the public good and social change by promoting the discussion of different perspectives, the integration of conflicting opinions in class, and involvement in student participation at school.

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Appendix A

Civic and Political Participation scale

Civic participation

Volunteered or worked for a social cause (children/ the elderly/refugees/ other people in need/youth organization)

Participated in a concert or a charity event for a social or political cause

Donated money to a social cause

Political participation

Worked for a political party or a political candidate

Contacted a politician or public official (for example via e-mail)

Donated money to support the work of a political group or organization

Activist participation

Taken part in a demonstration or strike

Painted or stuck political messages or graffiti on walls

Taken part in an occupation of a building or a public space

Taken part in a political event where there was a physical confrontation with political opponents or with the police

Lifestyle and online participation

Signed a petition

Boycotted or bought certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons

Shared news or music or videos with social or political content with people in my social networks (e.g., in Facebook, Twitter etc.)

Discussed social or political issues on the internet

Joined a social or political group on Facebook (or other social networks)

Appendix B

Multiple Group Cross-country Analysis

Partial Least Squares path modeling was performed to examine the specific cross-country differences. The tests indicate that there are differences between countries on: three paths in the civic participation model; five paths in the political participation model; four paths in the lifestyle/online participation model; two paths in the activist participation model (see Table B1). The country plays a moderating role in all models on the relationship among critical reflection (CRS) and political interest (PI), and among democratic school climate (DSC) and political efficacy (PE). CRS has stronger association with greater PI in Sweden in comparison to Italy. DSC is associated with greater PE in Italy, but negatively in the Czech Republic. Moreover, the country has moderating roles on the relationships between PI and civic participation, student participation (SP) and political participation, PI and political participation, PE and political participation, PE and lifestyle/online participation, and institutional trust (IT) and lifestyle/online participation. These differences were mainly observed between Italy and the Czech Republic: the paths from PI to civic and political participation were stronger in Italy; the paths from PE to political and lifestyle/online participation were stronger in the Czech Republic, as was the path from SP to political participation. Finally, IT had a stronger negative association to lifestyle/online participation in Italy than in Sweden.

The findings imply that some of the hypothesized effects differ among Italy, Sweden and the Czech Republic. According to these results, political interest may be a more central predictor of civic and political participation in Italy, while political efficacy is more central in the Czech Republic. Institutional trust does not seem to inhibit lifestyle or online participation in Sweden, suggesting

that institutionalized and non-institutionalized spheres are less opposed in Swedish students' patterns of participative behavior.

Table B1

Multi-group analysis results

Paths	Difference β_{Sweden} vs. β_{Italy}	Difference $\beta_{Germany}$ vs. β_{Italy}	Difference $\beta_{Czech\ R.}$ vs. β_{Italy}
Civic Participation Model			
DSC → PI	0.078	0.074	0.073
CRS → PI	0.196*	0.007	0.079
SP → PI	0.021	0.016	0.031
DSC → PE	0.080	0.063	0.318***
CRS → PE	0.080	0.003	0.097
SP → PE	0.004	0.010	0.054
DSC → IT	0.144	0.013	0.011
CRS → IT	0.088	0.012	0.103
SP → IT	0.004	0.008	0.012
DSC → Civic participation	0.017	0.004	0.082
CRS → Civic participation	0.033	0.113	0.039
SP → Civic participation	0.168	0.090	0.071
PI → Civic participation	0.122	0.060	0.133*
PE → Civic participation	0.007	0.051	0.116
IT → Civic participation	0.044	0.111	0.071
Political Participation Model			
DSC → PI	0.082	0.101	0.074
CRS → PI	0.197*	0.000	0.080
SP → PI	0.006	0.015	0.032
DSC → PE	0.083	0.074	0.325***
CRS → PE	0.080	0.015	0.090

SP → PE	0.002	0.027	0.032
DSC → IT	0.146	0.012	0.009
CRS → IT	0.083	0.026	0.107
SP → IT	0.011	0.004	0.018
DSC → Political participation	0.060	0.154	0.037
CRS → Political participation	0.121	0.096	0.090
SP → Political participation	0.170	0.020	0.164*
PI → Political participation	0.127	0.102	0.176*
PE → Political participation	0.036	0.132	0.134*
IT → Political participation	0.005	0.042	0.018
Activist Participation Model			
DSC → PI	0.077	0.077	0.073
CRS → PI	0.201*	0.020	0.079
SP → PI	0.008	0.007	0.037
DSC → PE	0.073	0.087	0.347***
CRS → PE	0.095	0.008	0.077
SP → PE	0.019	0.031	0.036
DSC → IT	0.147	0.017	0.016
CRS → IT	0.084	0.020	0.106
SP → IT	0.019	0.007	0.017
DSC → Activist participation	0.111	0.067	0.113
CRS → Activist participation	0.019	0.014	0.156
SP → Activist participation	0.153	0.013	0.002
PI → Activist participation	0.006	0.025	0.147
PE → Activist participation	0.037	0.072	0.020
IT → Activist participation	0.074	0.044	0.070
Lifestyle/Online Participation Model			
DSC → PI	0.082	0.114	0.081
CRS → PI	0.194*	0.016	0.079
SP → PI	0.014	0.013	0.030
DSC → PE	0.077	0.078	0.333***

CRS → PE	0.085	0.013	0.095
SP → PE	0.000	0.022	0.047
DSC → IT	0.146	0.001	0.023
CRS → IT	0.087	0.014	0.100
SP → IT	0.017	0.010	0.013
DSC → Lifestyle/Online participation	0.071	0.130	0.015
CRS → Lifestyle/Online participation	0.087	0.009	0.056
SP → Lifestyle/Online participation	0.003	0.009	0.083
PI → Lifestyle/Online participation	0.067	0.053	0.035
PE → Lifestyle/Online participation	0.092	0.126	0.162*
IT → Lifestyle/Online participation	0.181*	0.059	0.009

Note. Significance levels are based on 5000 replications bootstrap t-test. DSC, democratic school climate; CRS, critical reflection at school; SP, student participation; PI, political interest; PE, political efficacy; IT, institutional trust.

*$p < .05$; ***$p < .001$.

Figures

Figure 1. Conceptual model

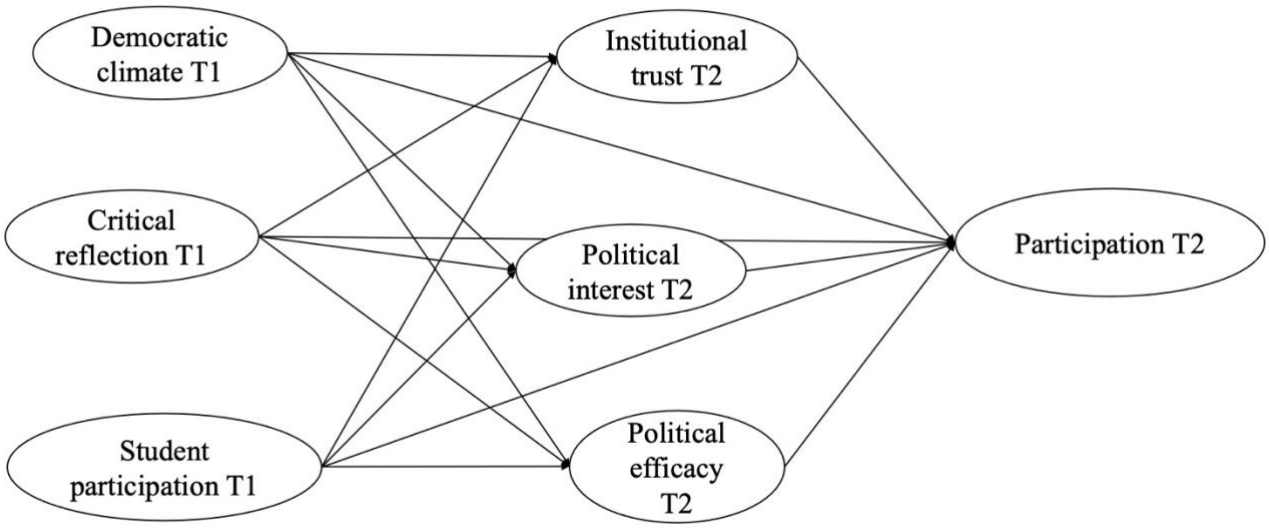

Figure 2. Civic participation: Results. Parameter estimates are standardized. Dashed lines represent not significant relationships. $^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$

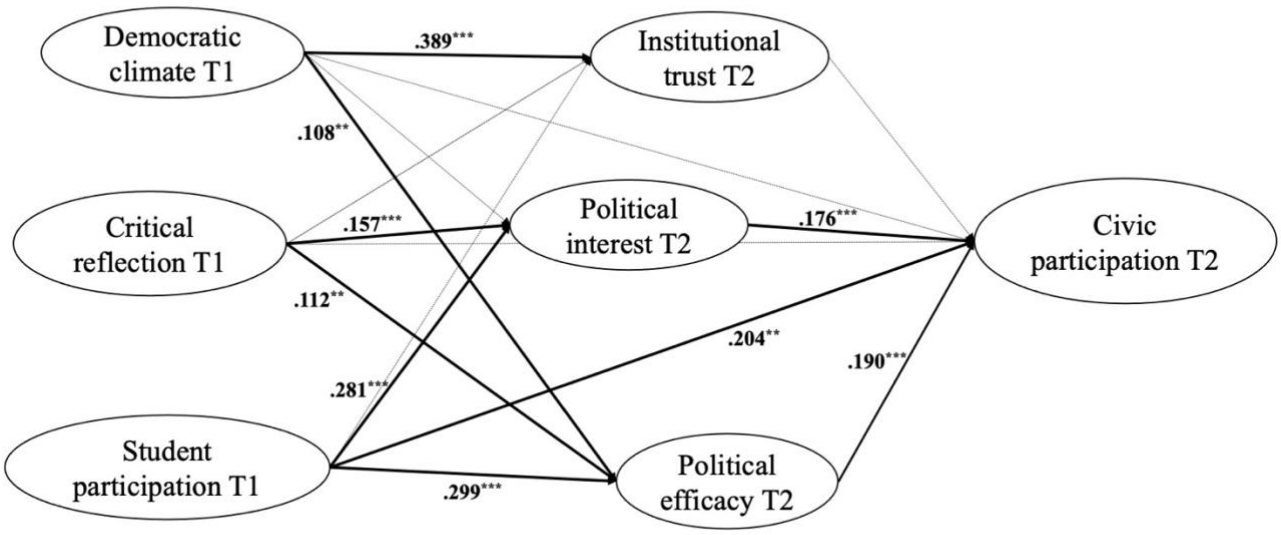

Figure 3. Political participation: Results. Parameter estimates are standardized. Dashed lines represent not significant relationships. $^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$

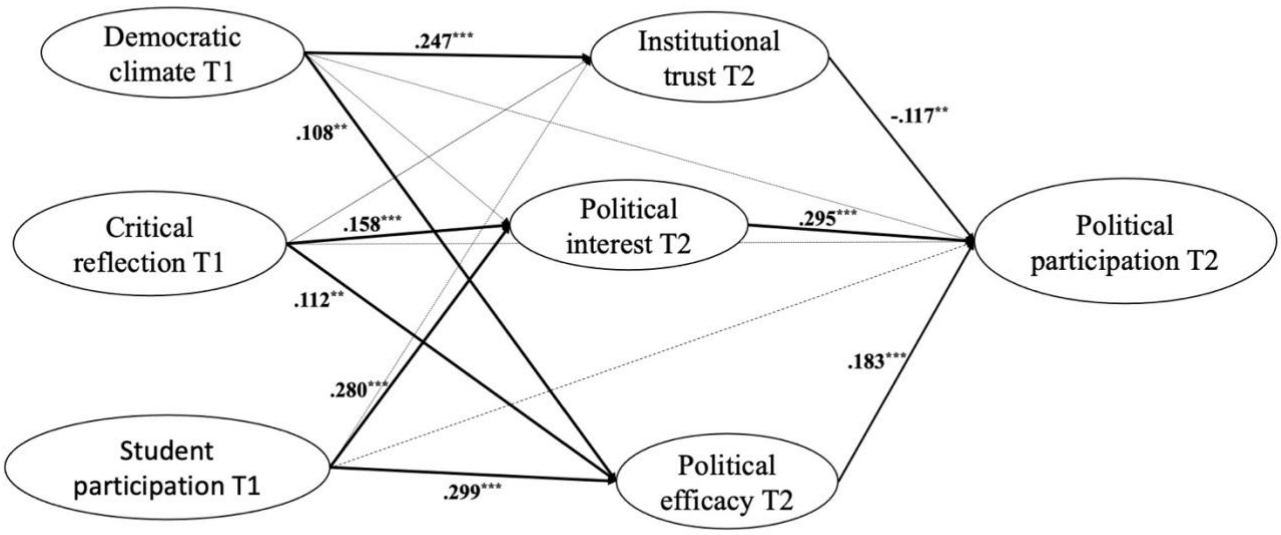

Figure 4. Activist participation: Results. Parameter estimates are standardized. Dashed lines represent not significant relationships. $^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$

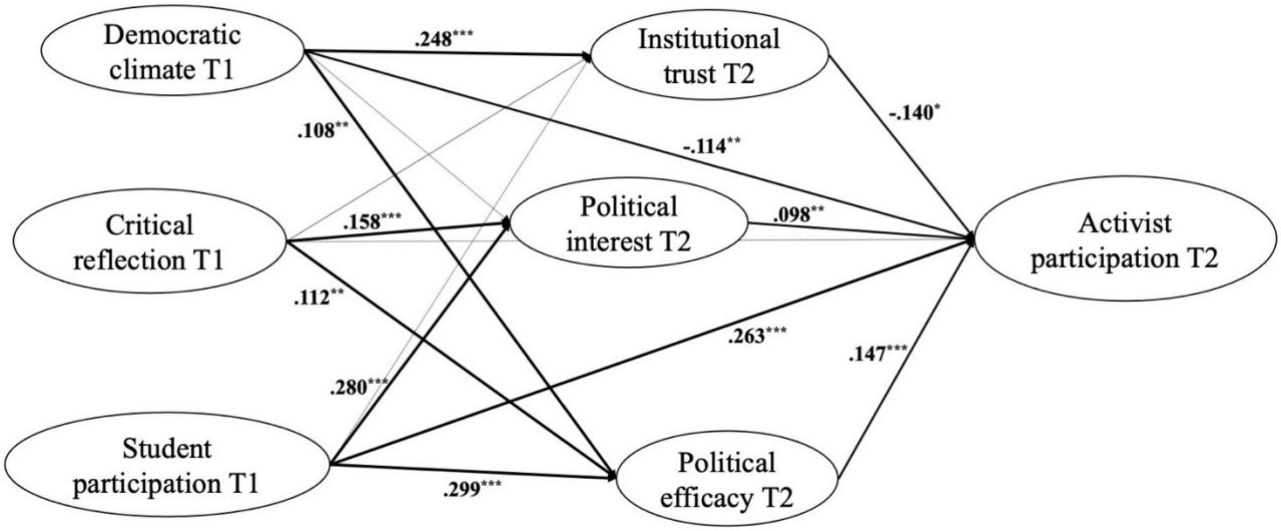

Figure 5. Lifestyle/online participation: Results. Parameter estimates are standardized. Dashed lines represent not significant relationships. $^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$