

Adolescents' transitions between different views on democracy: Examining individual-level moderators

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify individual patterns of adolescents' views on democracy, adolescents' transitions between the patterns over time, and individual-level predictors of these transitions. Two waves of longitudinal survey data from 768 Czech high school students (T1 mean age 15.97) were analyzed using latent transition analysis. Results suggested three basic patterns of adolescents' views on democracy: majority-oriented (disregarding minority rights and interests), conventional (having narrowed understanding of civil liberties), and liberal (supporting both minority rights and civil liberties). Of these, the liberal view pattern was the least stable over time, and its stability was linked to adolescents' institutional trust and civic participation. Specifically, adolescents who were less trusting of institutions were more likely to adopt the majority-oriented (vs. liberal) view, while less civically active adolescents were more likely to switch to the conventional view. Authoritarianism was linked to adolescents' initial views, but it did not predict change over time.

Introduction

Current political debate is, to a considerable extent, fueled by concerns about the recent successes of populist political movements and their potential impact on the prospects of democracy. While some authors warn of a slow erosion of democratic norms and institutions (e.g., Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018), others argue that popular support for democracy as a preferred system of government remains relatively high and stable in established democracies (van Ham & Thomassen, 2017). However, citizens' high and stable support for democracy does not have to mean that there is a wide consensus on preferred political arrangements, because different people can understand democracy in different, even opposing, ways (Landwehr & Steiner, 2017). For instance, a view of democracy emphasizing a democratic principle of the protection of equal rights for all might be in a stark opposition to a view that citizens of a democratic society should always submit to majoritarian decisions. Hence, it is essential to know not only whether people support democracy but also what exactly democracy means to them.

From a developmental perspective, it is vital that the debate about the future of democracy considers adolescents' views on democracy. Adolescence is traditionally understood as a formative period during which people's political views are open to change and to socialization influences, in contrast to their relatively stable views later in adult life (Krosnick & Aiwin, 1989; Vollebergh, Iedema, & Raaijmakers, 2001;

Wölfer, Schmid, Hewstone, & Zalk, 2016). Considering this, it is quite disturbing that a recent qualitative study found that young people's views on democracy do not become more nuanced in the course of adolescence; instead, there is a growing tendency for adolescents to adopt a reductionist conception of democracy as a simple majoritarian rule—that is, decision-making based on the will of the majority (Nieuwelink, ten Dam, Geijsel, & Dekker, 2018). This finding is consistent with previous research showing that adolescents, compared to children, tend to put more emphasis on pragmatic concerns pertaining to feasibility and effectiveness of democratic procedures when thinking about democracy (Helwig, 1998; Helwig, Arnold, Tan, & Boyd, 2007). On the other hand, it is less consistent with the assumption that the complexity of political thinking generally increases during adolescence (Patterson, 1979; Steinberg, 2005).

Therefore, further attention should be paid to the question how and why young people's views on democracy change. This study addresses adolescents' transitions between different views on democracy over time. A potentially novel contribution is that it aims not only to capture the changes per se, but also to investigate individual-level characteristics making young people more susceptible to transitions from one view on democracy to another. Specifically, adolescents' levels of trust in public institutions, authoritarianism, and civic participation are considered as potential moderators of the changes.

Moreover, this study employs a person-oriented approach to

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adolescents' democratic views. Compared to a variable-oriented approach, which understands adolescents' different views as separate dimensions, the person-oriented approach focuses on patterns (i.e., configurations) in adolescents' views. A similar approach was previously used by Flanagan, Gallay, Gill, Gallay, and Nti (2005), who identified three patterns of American adolescents' views, characterized by their emphasis on individual rights, majoritarian rule and representative government, or civic equality (i.e., equality of rights and representation).

Development of adolescents' views on democracy

General support for democracy, including its basic norms and procedures, is typically present in children from a relatively early age (Helwig et al., 2007; Helwig, Ruck, & Peterson-Badali, 2014). This is not surprising, considering that political development is co-determined by the integration of social norms (cf. Flanagan et al., 2005; Flanagan, Cumsille, Gill, & Gallay, 2007; Hooghe & Wilkenfeld, 2008; Tyler & Trinkner, 2017; van Zalk & Kerr, 2014) and that general support for democracy is a widespread norm in established democracies (van Ham & Thomassen, 2017). What changes with age, however, is a relative emphasis on different components of democracy and the way in which young people reconcile potential conflicts between particular democratic principles. Previous developmental research has illustrated these changes at least in two domains, which will also be scrutinized in this study: adolescents' perceptions of civil liberties and the majoritarian rule.

Civil liberties

Civil liberties, such as freedom of speech and participation, are already recognized by children prior to adolescence, similar to their general support for democracy (Helwig, 1995, 1998; Sigelman & Toebben, 1992). During adolescence, the recognition of civil liberties becomes increasingly differentiated from other democratic principles, such as the need for governmental power to be constrained (Husfeldt & Nikolova, 2003), and young people are able to consider an increasing number of rationales to justify civil liberties (Helwig, 1998).

In addition to greater differentiation and ability to justify civil liberties, the way in which young people deal with practical conflicts between civil liberties and other moral principles or social conventions changes over time. Research driven by the social domain theory of moral development (Smetana, 2013; Turiel, 1983) has pointed out that there might be conflicts between some ways in which people exercise their civil liberties and social regulations, such as norms of good behavior or laws (Helwig et al., 2014). For instance, some political protests, which are legitimate from the perspective of civil liberties, might simultaneously be non-conventional or even illegal. With age, adolescents tend to increasingly agree that it is possible to exercise one's civil liberties even when they are in conflict with hypothetical social conventions, such as restrictive laws (Adelson & O'Neil, 1966; Helwig, 1995).

Moreover, young people are increasingly able to understand the abstract nature of civil liberties and their independence from individual wishes and preferences. This occurs progressively from childhood through early and then to middle adolescence when, for instance, support for freedom of speech becomes less dependent on young people's agreement with the speaker's concrete opinions (Sigelman & Toebben, 1992). Hence, older adolescents' reasoning about civil liberties seems to be more sophisticated than that of younger adolescents. Older adolescents are more aware of the unconditional nature of civil liberties compared to social conventions, which reflects the process of adolescent cognitive maturation.

Majoritarian rule

Adolescents' understanding of and support for the majoritarian rule (i.e., decisions based on the will of the majority) represent another

domain of development. Compared to young children, adolescents are less positive about democratic decision-making based on consensus and more positive about majority-based decision-making (Helwig, 1998). In line with the idea of cognitive maturation, this shift reflects adolescents' greater ability to take into account pragmatic concerns such as practical difficulties involved in reaching a consensus (Helwig et al., 2007). Early research in this area has also suggested that adolescents, compared to children, have a growing tendency to understand that political majorities in democracy are shifting (i.e., a majority is formed of different people for each decision), and this understanding enables adolescents to perceive the majoritarian rule as fair and acceptable (Mann, 1984; Moessinger, 1981). From this perspective, it is understandable that adolescents often tend to give special preference to direct democracy (Esaiasson, Gilljam, & Persson, 2012; Gilljam, Esaiasson, & Lindholm, 2010; Helwig, 1998; Persson, Esaiasson, & Gilljam, 2013), as it represents the most straightforward implementation of the majoritarian rule.

One implication of the support for majority-based decision-making is a need to cope with situations in which majoritarian decisions have the potential to harm out-voted political minorities. This can happen, for instance, by restricting minorities' rights or not taking their interests into account. Considering the process of cognitive maturation, it could be expected that, with age, adolescents are able to analyze such situations because they are able to consider more principles at once and become more sensitive to specific contexts in which the principles are applied (Flanagan, 2013; Helwig et al., 2014). Moreover, adolescence is related to a growing ability to comprehend conflicting perspectives of people with different social and cultural backgrounds (Selman, 2003) and to consider impacts of social regulations on different social groups (Adelson & Beall, 1970). This should enable adolescents to understand the situations of majoritarian decision-making from the perspectives of out-voted minorities, whose rights have been restricted by the majority or whose interests have not been taken into account.

However, there are findings inconsistent with this expectation. A qualitative study of Dutch adolescents, who were interviewed at the ages of 13–15 and then interviewed again two years later, showed that the older adolescents tended to perceive democracy in a less complex way, putting emphasis on the majoritarian rule and downplaying the importance of minority rights and consensual solutions (Nieuwelink et al., 2018). Moreover, the study found that older adolescents tend to apply this narrowed majoritarian approach, derived from their perceptions of national-level politics, to other domains of social life. The authors suggest that their findings can be explained by adolescents' socialization experiences, in particular their limited opportunities to acquire a complex view of democracy in schools, their use of social media as a dominant source of news, and a national-level shift towards a populist political culture. In addition, another explanation can be found in the above-mentioned tendency of adolescents to pay more attention to pragmatic concerns, which facilitate reaching concrete decisions (Helwig, 1998; Helwig et al., 2007).

Indeed, there seems to be a certain contradiction in the processes of adolescents' political development, resulting in ambivalent predictions on their views on democracy. On the one hand, as adolescents' thinking becomes more complex and aware of differing perspectives, they should adopt a less absolutist approach to democratic principles and procedures and become more aware of potential negative consequences if these principles are applied unquestioningly. On the other hand, research suggests that older adolescents, compared to younger adolescents, have more unconditional understandings of not only civil liberties (Adelson & O'Neil, 1966; Helwig, 1995; Sigelman & Toebben, 1992) but also the majoritarian rule (Nieuwelink et al., 2018), as they tend to apply such principles consistently across different situations.

Therefore, one aim of this study is to capture changes in views on democracy between middle and late adolescence, focusing on adolescents' support for civil liberties and the majoritarian rule. With respect to the latter, we will investigate whether a narrowed understanding of

majoritarianism (i.e., disregarding minorities) increases or decreases in this given period of life.

Predictors of changes in adolescents' views on democracy

Although the changes in adolescents' views on democracy are co-produced by their cognitive maturation and the integration of social norms present in the culture (cf. Tyler & Trinkner, 2017)—that is, the processes present for the whole cohort—these changes may also be moderated by individual characteristics of adolescents. Specifically, we propose that three variables can play a role here: adolescents' trust in institutions, authoritarian tendencies, and civic participation.

Institutional trust

Political and social institutions, such as parliament or courts, can be understood as a real-world incarnation of an abstract democratic ideal. Although adolescents are typically able to distinguish between democracy as an ideal principle and its incarnation in specific institutions (Helwig, 1995), long-term distrust in institutions might affect their general views of democracy. More specifically, a lack of institutional trust and dissatisfaction with politicians might make people less satisfied with the current form of (representative) democracy and, thus, more open to populist appeals that accentuate a narrowly understood majoritarianism, lacking institutional checks and balances, or consensus seeking (cf. Canovan, 1999; Hooghe & Dassonneville, 2018; Hooghe, Marien, & Pauwels, 2011; Stanley, 2008). This tendency can be easily complemented by the tendency of populist discourse to downplay minority rights by pointing out the alleged alliance between political elites and minorities (Mols & Jetten, 2016). Hence, we expect adolescents with lower institutional trust to be more likely to shift towards support for the form of majoritarianism that disregards minority rights.

Authoritarianism

Next, right-wing authoritarianism represents a tendency to support coercive social control, to submit to authorities, and to conform to social conventions (Altemeyer, 1981; Duckitt, 2009). Although individual susceptibility to right-wing authoritarianism probably has its early basis in a person's temperament (McCourt, Bouchard Jr., Lykken, Tellegen, & Keyes, 1999), it fully develops and stabilizes during adolescence (Altemeyer, 1996; Duckitt, 2009). Hence, the adoption of views favorable to right-wing authoritarianism might interfere with the development of adolescents' views on democracy. Right-wing authoritarianism has a relatively strong negative link to general support for democratic principles (Canetti-Nisim, 2004). Because conventionalism represents an important component of right-wing authoritarianism, high levels of authoritarianism are expected to be particularly associated with a restrictive view on civil liberties (Sullivan & Transue, 1999), which manifests, for instance, in low support for non-conventional activism that disturbs social order (Duncan, 1999; Duncan & Stewart, 1995). Moreover, an authoritarian wish to establish strict social control and to endorse those in power leads to support for the majority-based rule, even though its practical application violates one's interests or in-group loyalties (Duckitt & Farre, 1994). Thus, we assume that adolescents with strong authoritarian tendencies will be more susceptible to trading civil liberties for maintenance of public order and endorsement of narrowly conceived majoritarianism.

Civic participation

Finally, adolescents' involvement in civic activities is a socialization experience with the potential to influence their worldviews and ideologies (Yates & Youniss, 1996; Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1997). Previous research has shown that adolescents' civic participation predicts changes in their political attitudes, such as their level of political interest or efficacy (Metzger, Ferris, & Oosterhoff, 2018; Quintelier & van Deth, 2014; Šerek, Macháčková, & Macek, 2017). Therefore, we

propose that adolescents' own participation experiences might also contribute to changes in their views on democracy. Specifically, civic participation represents one of the most important realizations of civil liberties. Because people often seek to maintain consistency between their attitudes and behaviors in order to avoid feelings of dissonance (Festinger, 1962; Olson & Stone, 2005), it is likely that adolescents, based on their participation experiences, will acknowledge the importance of civil liberties and, thus, will be more prone to perceive them as something unconditional and inalienable. In our research, we will distinguish between three forms of civic participation: social movement (or protest) participation, addressing social and political issues outside formal institutional channels (e.g., signing petitions or attending demonstrations); standard political participation, employing the formal channels of representative democracy (e.g., working for political parties); and community service, which aims to achieve a public good through hands-on community-oriented work (cf. Syvertsen, Wray-Lake, Flanagan, Wayne Osgood, & Briddell, 2011; Teorell, Torcal, & Montero, 2007; Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins, & Carpini, 2006). We expect all three types of participation to predict shifts towards a greater preference for civil liberties over maintaining social conventions such as public order.

Current Study

Overall, this study aims to overcome inconsistencies from previous research by capturing changes in young people's views on democracy from middle to late adolescence. Building on the person-oriented approach, we expect that adolescents' views are not separate dimensions, but they form meaningful patterns. Hence, we will identify a typology of adolescents with respect to their democratic views, and, additionally, adolescents' potential transitions between the identified types. We will put specific emphasis on adolescents' support for civil liberties and the majoritarian rule, two democratic principles presumed to structure the typology of adolescents' views. We expect the support for civil liberties to become more unconditional with age, which should become evident in situations in which the exercise of civil liberties interferes with social conventions (e.g., in the case of non-conventional activism). At the same time, we will pay attention to potential tendencies of adolescents to employ a narrowed understanding of majoritarianism (i.e., to disregard minority rights). There are no clear indications from previous research regarding whether these tendencies should increase or decrease with age.

Another aim of the study is to identify individual-level predictors of the changes in adolescents' views on democracy. As explained above, we have specific expectations regarding the effects of young people's institutional trust, right-wing authoritarianism, and civic participation. In addition, we will consider the effects of adolescents' gender and two indicators of their socioeconomic background (i.e., school track and parental education). Both gender (Flanagan et al., 2007; Husfeldt & Nikolova, 2003) and socioeconomic background (Flanagan et al., 2005) are potentially linked to adolescents' perceptions of democracy, but the previous findings are heterogeneous, which precludes positing concrete hypotheses.

Method

Participants and procedure

We employed two waves of longitudinal data from 768 high school students who were approached first in May/June 2014 (T1) and then again one and a half years later in November/December 2015 (T2). Sampling was conducted in four out of 14 regions in the Czech Republic using random cluster sampling of schools, based on an official register of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. All ninth and tenth grade classrooms available at the time entered the study. At T1, 1137 students were sampled, while 768 out of them (approximately two

thirds) were present at T2. Attrition analyses showed that students who participated only at T1 did not substantially differ from longitudinal participants in their sociodemographic profiles and other studied variables (see Attrition Analysis below).

Participants in the final sample, of which 54% were female, were relatively homogeneous in terms of age at T1 (1% 14-year-olds, 15% 15-year-olds, 72% 16-year-olds, and 13% 17-year-olds; $M = 15.97$, $SD = 0.56$). About one third (34%) of students were from academically-oriented high schools, while two thirds were from vocationally-oriented high schools. In 32% of the students' families, at least one parent had a university/college education.

Data collections at both time points were conducted in schools by trained administrators during regular classes. Before their participation, students were extensively informed about the anonymity of collected data, the voluntary nature of participation, and the freedom to skip items they did not wish to answer. School principals approved the whole procedure and could choose whether students completed paper or online self-report questionnaires. In the present analysis, we employ T1 and T2 data on adolescents' democratic views and T1 data on other variables (covariates).

Measures

Views on democracy (T1 and T2)

Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with eight items presented in Table 1. One item captured participants' general support for democracy (D1). Four items focused on their support for civil liberties – item D2 captured general support for freedom speech, while items D3 to D5 captured whether freedom of participation, another civil liberty, was supported or given up in the context of potential violations of social conventions (non-conventional activism disturbing public order and non-constructive criticism of the government). Two items measured a narrowed understanding of majoritarian decision-making, maintaining that minorities should always submit to majoritarian decisions (D6 and D7). A final item additionally measured participants' general support for minority rights (D8). General items D1, D2, and D8 were adapted from traditional scales measuring democratic values (cf. Finkel, Sigelman, & Humphries, 1999). Items D3 to D5 were loosely based on measures of so-called repression potential, which is a tendency to grant authorities instruments to contain protests and non-conventional activism (Finkel et al., 1999; Marsh & Kaase, 1979). Finally, items D6 and D7 were newly created for this study, but they closely overlap with items commonly used to capture support for populist majoritarianism (cf. Landwehr & Steiner, 2017). A four-point response scale ranging from 1 (absolutely disagree) to 4 (absolutely agree) was used for all items.

Institutional trust (T1)

Participants were asked whether they trusted five institutions (national government, local government, courts, police, and political

parties), employing a four-point response scale ranging from 1 (I do not trust [the institution] at all) to 4 (I trust [the institution] completely). A total score was computed by averaging the items ($\alpha = 0.76$). Such a measurement of institutional trust was previously employed, for instance, in the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2009, which captured trust in six institutions, of which five were identical to our study (Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Kerr, & Losito, 2010).

Right-wing authoritarianism (T1)

Participants' willingness to conform to authorities and social conventions was measured by six items selected from the scale by Funke (2005), translated to Czech by Tápal (2012; sample item: "Obedience and respect for authority are the most important values children should learn"). A four-point response scale ranged from 1 (absolutely disagree) to 4 (absolutely agree). All items were averaged to obtain a total score ($\alpha = 0.72$).

Civic participation (T1)

Respondents were asked about their participation, in the past 12 months, in activities linked to social, local, environmental, or political issues. Of the total number of nine items, three items captured social movement participation (i.e., signing a printed petition; signing an online petition; and taking part in a demonstration or other public protest); three items captured standard political participation (i.e., taking part in a rally of some political party or candidate; helping for free in a political campaign of some political party or candidate; and contacting a politician to communicate the respondent's ideas); and three items captured community service (i.e., working for free to improve the place where the respondent lives; helping people in need; and helping for free in an organization focused on social, local or environmental issues). An ordinal response scale included the responses from 1 (never) to 4 (more than twice). Because the scale was created specifically for this study, we assessed its factor validity using confirmatory factor analysis based on polychoric correlations. Results showed that a three-factor model, assuming no residual correlations or factor cross-loadings, fitted the data well, $\chi^2(24) = 51.24$, $p < .01$, CFI = 0.96, TLI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.04, 90% CI [0.02, 0.05], with standardized factor loadings between 0.57 and 0.84. The correlation between social movement and standard political participation was 0.48, that between social movement participation and community service was 0.22, and that between standard political participation and community service was 0.35. Standardized factor scores based on this model were used in the subsequent analysis.

Control variables

Other measured variables were gender (0 = male, 1 = female), school track (0 = vocational, 1 = academic), and parental education (0 = no university/college education; 1 = at least one parent with a university/college education).

Table 1
Participants' agreement with the views on democracy (%).

Item		Time 1	Time 2	McNemar	ϕ
D1	Democracy is the best system of government that I know.	67	76	**	0.37
D2	All people have right to express their opinion.	86	87		0.09
D3	We should restrict so-called activists who only criticize the government but do not actually do anything.	60	65	*	0.21
D4	Protesters who disregard the police should always be punished hard.	43	49	*	0.24
D5	Demonstrations and protests at squares should be under stricter control.	59	58		0.33
D6	If most citizens do not want certain minority in the country, this minority should listen and leave.	51	62	**	0.30
D7	Minorities in our country should lay low, because the majority makes decisions in our country.	63	74	**	0.27
D8	Rights of the minorities should be respected in our society.	64	55	**	0.32

Note. ϕ = cross-time correlation between dichotomous variables.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

Table 2
Cross-sectional LCA at Time 1 and Time 2.

N of classes	G ²	AIC	BIC	Likelihood ratio tests (p value)		Entropy
				VLMR	LMR	
Time 1						
2	426.65	7247.15	7325.67	0.00	0.00	0.58
3	297.59	7134.33	7254.42	0.00	0.00	0.59
4	245.69	7099.61	7261.27	0.11	0.11	0.62
5	216.70	7088.66	7291.89	0.68	0.68	0.59
6	202.38	7091.60	7336.39	0.54	0.54	0.59
Time 2						
2	391.61	7134.47	7213.22	0.00	0.00	0.57
3	280.92	7032.49	7152.92	0.02	0.02	0.55
4	242.07	7007.50	7169.62	0.33	0.34	0.62
5	213.40	6994.31	7198.12	0.13	0.14	0.64
6	197.25	6995.43	7240.93	0.84	0.84	0.65

Note. G² = Likelihood Ratio χ^2 . AIC = Akaike Information Criterion. BIC = Bayesian Information Criterion. VLMR = Vuong-Lo-Mendell-Rubin. LMR = Lo-Mendell-Rubin Adjusted. Selected class solution in bold.

Analysis plan

Because we took a person-oriented approach and were looking for individual patterns of adolescents' views on democracy, latent class analysis (LCA) and its longitudinal extension – latent transition analyses (LTA) – were chosen as optimal analytical methods (Collins & Lanza, 2010; Nylund, Asparouhov, & Muthén, 2007). Latent classes were formed based on the eight items measuring participants' views on democracy. The items were dichotomized before the analysis: participants who indicated *absolutely* or *somewhat disagree* were recoded as 0 (*disagree*), while participants who indicated *somewhat* or *absolutely agree* were recoded as 1 (*agree*). This step was done to make the models more parsimonious (i.e., to reduce the number of estimated parameters), to avoid potential problems caused by low numbers of responses in some response categories (e.g., only 3% participants indicated *absolutely disagree* for item D2 at Time 2), and to facilitate the interpretation of latent classes.

We proceeded in several steps. First, we computed LCA separately for both time points and assessed the fit of models with two to six classes in order to select the most adequate number of classes for both times. Preferable models are characterized by lower values of likelihood ratio χ^2 (G²), Akaike Information Criterion (AIC), and Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC), as well as statistically likelihood ratio tests comparing models with *k* classes to models with *k*-1 classes (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2012; Collins & Lanza, 2010; Nylund et al., 2007). Second, after the number of classes was selected, we computed LTA and tested measurement invariance across time points (i.e., whether the interpretation of latent classes in terms of item-response probabilities remained the same over time). The final description of the classes and the assessment of latent transitions was based on the LTA model assuming measurement invariance. Finally, we added eight covariates (i.e., gender, school track, parental education, trust in institutions, right-wing authoritarianism, social movement participation, standard political participation, and community service), one by one, into the LTA model to test whether they predicted adolescents' transitions between latent classes.

All LCA and LTA models were estimated in Mplus 7.4 using a maximum likelihood estimator with robust standard errors (MLR). A total of 500 random starts and 50 final optimizations were used (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2015). Occasional missing data at the item level (i.e., covariance coverage ranging from 91 to 99%) were treated using the full-information maximum likelihood approach. Hierarchical nature of the data (i.e., students nested in classrooms) was controlled

for using the “complex” analysis in Mplus, which took into account classroom as a cluster variable when computing standard errors and model fit indices.

Results

Attrition analysis

Prior to the main analysis, were compared 768 longitudinal participants included in the study with 369 participants who participated only at T1 and were thus excluded. We found no considerable differences in participants' gender, $\chi^2(1) = 1.73, p = .19, V = 0.04$, their parents' university/college education, $\chi^2(1) = 1.88, p = .17, V = 0.04$, or school track, $\chi^2(1) = 0.34, p = .56, V = 0.02$. Next, the two groups did not significantly differ in their views on democracy (χ^2 tests showed *ps* > 0.05 for all eight items, *Vs* ranged from 0.00 to 0.06). The largest difference was present for item D1 (67 and 61% agreed in the included group and the excluded group, respectively), but even this difference was non-significant, $\chi^2(1) = 3.31, p = .07$, and negligible, *V* = 0.06. Finally, no differences were found in institutional trust, *t*(1120) = 0.22, *p* = .83, *d* = 0.01, right-wing authoritarianism, *t*(1073) = 0.47, *p* = .64, *d* = 0.03, or any of the nine items capturing participation (Mann-Whitney *U* tests showed *ps* > 0.05, medians being identical between the groups for all items).

Descriptive statistics

Adolescents' overall agreement with the items (i.e., the percentage of participants that agreed) is shown in Table 1. Six changes were significant based on McNemar's test. Specifically, there were increases in support for items D1, D3, D4, D6, and D7, while support for D8 decreased. A full correlation matrix can be found in the Appendix.

Latent class model selection

A series of cross-sectional LCAs was conducted to determine the most adequate number of classes at each time point. Based on results presented in Table 2, we selected a three-class model at both time points. The models with three classes were characterized by the lowest levels of BIC, and they represented considerably greater improvements in terms of AIC and G² than the four-class models. Moreover, both likelihood ratio tests suggested a significantly better model fit of three-class models compared to two-class models (*p* < .05), while no improvement of model fit was present for the four-class models. Although the three-class models were not the most preferable ones in terms of entropy, overall deviations of this index across the models were rather small.

Measurement invariance

In the next step, we tested measurement invariance—that is, whether the three classes had the same interpretation over time. Two LTA models with three classes at both times were estimated. One model assumed that the probabilities of all items in all classes were the same from T1 to T2 (i.e., full invariance). In the second model, the probabilities could vary freely over time, and thus the interpretation of the classes could be different at each time point (i.e., no invariance).

Comparisons of the two models showed that full measurement invariance over time could be assumed (Table 3). Although G² increased after imposing full invariance, the change was not significant. Moreover, the model with full invariance was superior to the model with no invariance in terms of BIC.

Interpretation of the classes

Based on the probabilities shown in Table 4 and Fig. 1, we labeled

Table 3
Tests of measurement invariance over time.

	G ²	AIC	BIC	ΔG ²	Δdf	p
Full invariance	2710.09	14022.04	14170.60			
No invariance	2677.50	13991.00	14250.98	32.59	21	0.05

Note: G² = Likelihood Ratio χ^2 . AIC = Akaike Information Criterion. BIC = Bayesian Information Criterion. df = degrees of freedom.

the classes as *majority-oriented*, *conventional*, and *liberal* with regard to their views on democracy. All classes were characterized by a relatively high general support for democracy (D1) and a very high support for freedom of speech (D2). Compared to other classes, adolescents with the majority-oriented view on democracy typically showed an emphasis on majority rule (D6 and D7) and a low support for minority rights (D8). Adolescents with the conventional view on democracy were distinct in their support for repression of non-conventional political activism—that is, a less unconditional understanding of civil liberties (D3, D4, and D5). They also partly endorsed majoritarian decision-making, but to a lower extent than majority-oriented adolescents and without questioning minority rights. In our understanding, conventionalism of this class manifested itself not only in its members' unfavorable attitudes to non-conventional activism, but also in their relatively high endorsement of normative democratic principles (i.e., those principles that are wide-spread and strongly accepted through the society, such as general support for democracy or civil liberties). Finally, young people with the liberal view on democracy were supportive of civil liberties, even in the case of non-conventional activism; tended to reject narrow majoritarian decision-making; and exhibited the strongest support for minority rights. The most distinctive characteristic of this group was its strong emphasis on people's individual rights—the right to freedom of speech and participation, but also the right to be protected from a potentially despotic majority. This characteristic is commonly shared by both philosophical and political liberalism, which was the reason for labeling the class as liberal. Although all classes were relatively equally represented, the majority-oriented class became larger and the liberal class smaller over time (Table 4).

We compared the classes at T1 based on the covariates (see Table 4 for group descriptive statistics). Female adolescents were under-represented in the majority-oriented class and overrepresented in other two classes, $\chi^2(2) = 30.27, p < .01, V = 0.20$. Adolescents' school

Table 4
Final LTA model parameters, class counts, and class comparisons.

Item	Probability of agreement		
	Majority-oriented	Conventional	Liberal
D1 Democracy is the best system of government that I know.	0.61	0.81	0.74
D2 All people have right to express their opinion.	0.80	0.93	0.87
D3 We should restrict so-called activists who only criticize the government but do not actually do anything.	0.55	0.92	0.44
D4 Protesters who disregard the police should always be punished hard.	0.38	0.75	0.27
D5 Demonstrations and protests at squares should be under stricter control.	0.43	0.93	0.43
D6 If most citizens do not want certain minority in the country, this minority should listen and leave.	0.90	0.57	0.20
D7 Minorities in our country should lay low, because the majority makes decisions in our country.	0.92	0.75	0.39
D8 Rights of the minorities should be respected in our society.	0.24	0.74	0.81
Class counts based on the most likely class membership			
Time 1	235 (31%)	241 (31%)	291 (38%)
Time 2	301 (39%)	255 (33%)	211 (28%)
Mean comparisons of the classes (T1)			
Gender (female)	40%	62%	60%
School track (academic)	30%	37%	35%
Parental education (university/college)	33%	29%	34%
Trust in institutions	1.87	2.23	2.12
Right-wing authoritarianism	2.82	2.99	2.62
Social movement participation	0.11	-0.17	0.05
Standard political participation	0.05	-0.12	0.06
Community service	-0.11	0.08	0.03

track, $\chi^2(2) = 2.92, p = .23, V = 0.06$, and parental education, $\chi^2(2) = 1.45, p = .49, V = 0.05$, were not related to their class membership. Institutional trust was highest in the conventional class and lowest in the majority-oriented class, $F(2, 755) = 29.97, p < .01, \eta^2 = 0.07$, all between-class differences significant, $p < .05$, based on Bonferroni post-hoc tests. Right-wing authoritarianism was highest in the conventional class and lowest in the liberal class, $F(2, 729) = 35.63, p < .01, \eta^2 = 0.09$, all between-class differences significant, $p < .01$, based on Bonferroni tests. Social movement participation was slightly higher in the majority-oriented and liberal classes than in the conventional class, $F(2, 735) = 5.07, p < .01, \eta^2 = 0.01$, with all between-class differences significant at $p < .05$, based on Bonferroni tests. Finally, there were no significant differences in standard political participation, $F(2, 735) = 2.52, p = .08, \eta^2 = 0.01$, or community service, $F(2, 735) = 2.28, p = .10, \eta^2 = 0.01$.

Latent transitions and their predictors

The majority-oriented and conventional views on democracy were very stable over time (i.e., adolescents in these classes had probabilities of 0.89 and 0.86, respectively, of making no transition at T2). The liberal class was less stable, as its members at T1 had a 0.61 probability of making no transition, a 0.26 probability of moving to the majority-oriented class, and a 0.13 probability of moving to the conventional class at T2 (Table 5).

Because the transitions away from the majority-oriented and conventional classes were marginal, we focused only on transitions from the liberal class when testing the predictors of changes in class membership. To limit model complexity and to avoid estimation problems, we tested all predictors in separate models, one by one. For each predictor, we estimated an LTA model, in which the predictor was set to predict latent class membership at T1 and transition from the liberal class at T2. The liberal class was used as a reference category.

Results, presented in Table 6, showed that transitioning from the liberal to the majority-oriented class, compared to staying in the liberal class, was more likely for male adolescents and for adolescents with lower trust in institutions. Specifically, the conditional probability of having the majority-oriented view at T2 after having had the liberal view at T1 was 0.40 for males but 0.20 for females. Similarly, the conditional probability was 0.42 for adolescents with lower (-1 SD), but 0.13 for adolescents with higher (+1 SD), trust in institutions.

Transitioning from the liberal to the conventional class, compared

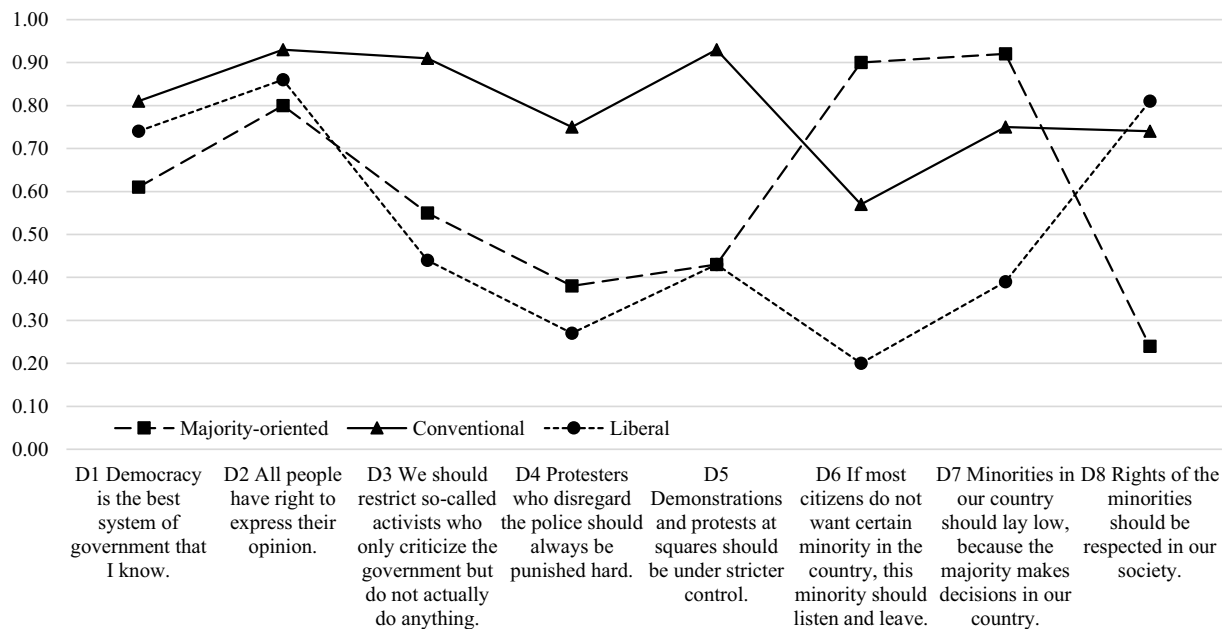


Fig. 1. Probability of agreement with items D1 to D8 for members of three latent classes based on the final LTA model. Numbers of class members in majority-oriented, conventional, and liberal class were 235 (31%), 241 (31%) and 291 (38%), respectively, at T1, and 301 (39%), 255 (33%), 211 (28%), respectively, at T2.

Table 5
Latent transition probabilities.

Time 1	Time 2		
	Majority-oriented	Conventional	Liberal
Majority-oriented	0.89	0.06	0.06
Conventional	0.06	0.86	0.07
Liberal	0.26	0.13	0.61

to staying in the liberal class, was significantly more likely for adolescents with lower participation. The conditional probability of having the conventional view at T2 after having had the liberal view at T1 was 0.30, 0.31, and 0.24 for adolescents with lower (-1 SD), but 0.03, 0.03, and 0.05 for adolescents with higher (+1 SD), social movement participation, standard political participation, and community service, respectively.

Table 6
Predictions of time 1 class membership and time 2 transitions from the liberal class.

	Membership at time 1				Transition at time 2 from the liberal class			
	Majority-oriented		Conventional		Majority-oriented		Conventional	
	B	OR	B	OR	B	OR	B	OR
Gender (female)	-1.09**	0.34	0.20	1.22	-1.01*	0.37	0 ^a	
School track (academic)	-0.41	0.66	0.07	1.07	-0.62	0.54	-0.63	0.53
Parental education (university/college)	-0.13	0.88	-0.33	0.72	-0.58	0.56	-1.39	0.25
Trust in institutions	-1.36**	0.26	0.72	2.06	-1.25*	0.29	1.70	5.49
Right-wing authoritarianism	1.30*	3.68	2.07**	7.95	-0.20	0.82	0.74	2.09
Social movement participation	0.00	1.00	-0.34**	0.71	0.19	1.21	-1.20*	0.30
Standard political participation	-0.05	0.95	-0.25*	0.78	-0.02	0.98	-1.29*	0.28
Community service	-0.16	0.86	0.14	1.15	-0.08	0.92	-0.96*	0.38

Note. B = logistic regression parameter. OR = odds ratio. Liberal class is a reference category.

^a For at least one level of the covariate, one cell in row of transition probability matrix was empty. Regression parameter was not estimated for this row.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

institutions, and a one-eighth probability of developing the conventional view, with the probability being higher for civically passive adolescents.

Our results are consistent with previous findings that general support for democracy and civil liberties is widespread among adolescents (Helwig, 1995; Husfeldt & Nikolova, 2003), similar to the adult population (van Ham & Thomassen, 2017). Adolescents with all three types of views on democracy identified in this study all shared strong support for the belief that democracy is the best system of government and for the principle of free speech. Hence, support for democracy and free speech seems to be normative, and most adolescents, irrespective of their other views, tend to integrate this norm into their worldviews. For this reason, in order to reveal substantive differences among adolescents' views, one has to focus on their more specific views regarding potential restrictions of civil liberties and majoritarianism.

Transitions from the liberal understanding of democracy

The findings of this study are contrary to the expectation that, due to cognitive maturation, adolescents tend to develop more complex views on democracy over time. We assume that of the three types of views described in this study, the liberal view can be understood as the most complex, as it involves both the superiority of civil liberties over social conventions (Helwig, 1995) and the acknowledgement of minority rights versus narrow majoritarianism. Paradoxically, the liberal view appeared to have the highest vulnerability to change according to our results. Although the liberal view does not seem to be completely unstable (as adolescents were still more likely to maintain this view on democracy than to change it), a considerable proportion of young people who had the liberal view in their middle adolescence adopted less complex views over time.

Specifically, a considerable group of young people underwent the transition found by Nieuwelink et al. (2018) towards simplistic endorsement of the majoritarian rule, which is characterized by disregard for minority rights. Although this tendency seems to be inconsistent with the idea of adolescents' cognitive maturation, it should be acknowledged that the largest influences of cognitive maturation on adolescents' views on democratic decision-making were observed primarily with respect to changes occurring between childhood and adolescence or between early and middle adolescence (cf. Helwig et al., 2014). Therefore, it is possible that cognitive maturation becomes less important between middle and late adolescence, at which point other factors, such as the integration of social norms, become the primary drivers of changes in young people. Indeed, this explanation has been proposed by Nieuwelink et al. (2018), who hypothesized socialization effects on adolescents' transition towards narrow majoritarianism. A similar process can also be expected in our study, because exclusionary populist language and a strongly majoritarian vision of democracy have become noticeable components of the current political debate in the Czech Republic (Císař & Štětka, 2017; Havlík, 2018). Hence, we believe that the most likely explanation for the observed transitions towards the majority-oriented view on democracy is that adolescents adopt and integrate the populist political views circulating in the public debate. This tendency might be further reinforced by older adolescents' pragmatic consideration that democracy should be effective in reaching concrete decisions (Helwig, 1998; Helwig et al., 2007), which is another issue highlighted by current populist discourse (Havlík, 2018).

In addition, we identified a group of adolescents whose views changed from liberal to conventional over time. Although this group was relatively small, these young people are remarkable from a theoretical perspective, as they have moved towards a more restrictive view on civil liberties, or, specifically, a more restrictive view on non-conventional activism that potentially violates social conventions (e.g., by disregarding police during demonstrations). It is possible that development of this specific group reflects a more general tendency in which an approval of "hard" political tactics (e.g., blockades or damages to

property) peaks in middle adolescence and decreases later on (Watts, 1999). Hence, these adolescents might be those who perceive non-conventional activism as primarily illegal and, in turn, tend to apply a generally decreasing support for "hard" political tactics to non-conventional activism as well. Thus, the shift towards a more restrictive understanding of civil liberties within this group could be motivated by a growing aversion to potentially illegal political behavior.

Alternatively, the change from the liberal to the conventional view can be linked to adolescents' understanding of moral aspects of non-conventional protest activism. Previous research has found that young people vary considerably in their views on non-conventional political protest, which can be perceived as an obligatory component of good citizenship, a matter of personal choice, but also as something inappropriate (Alvis & Metzger, 2019; Metzger & Smetana, 2009). Consequently, it is possible that the transition to the conventional view occurs because some adolescents, as they age, stop perceiving non-conventional protest as an obligatory activity and as a civic duty. This change can go hand-in-hand with a more critical reasoning about non-conventional political engagement and with a greater willingness to limit related civil liberties.

Moderators of the transitions

As a novel contribution, this study examined adolescents' individual characteristics moderating the transitions between different views on democracy. There were two relevant types of transitions in our sample, both from the liberal view on democracy. Adolescents' individual characteristics played a role in both of them.

Adolescents with higher levels of institutional trust were less likely to change from the liberal to the majority-oriented view on democracy. Consistent with our expectations, we assume that sufficient trust in public institutions makes young people more resistant to populist appeals, according to which allegedly corrupted institutions should be replaced by a more effective and resolute version of majoritarianism (cf. Hooghe et al., 2011; Hooghe & Dassonneville, 2018). This finding points out the essential role of a trustworthy institutional environment for adolescents' civic development. If adolescents grow up in a social milieu characterized by distrust in public institutions and adopt this view themselves, they might consequently tend to modify their more general views on democracy. A specific consequence of low institutional trust seems to be the adoption of a narrowed majoritarianism that disregards minority interests and rights.

This is not to say, however, that the liberal view on democracy is linked to high trust in public institutions in a simple manner. In our results, we observed that the highest level of institutional trust was present among adolescents with the conventional view on democracy, not the liberal one. Although a parallel longitudinal tendency for adolescents with high institutional trust to have greater odds of changing from the liberal to the conventional view was not statistically significant (due to the small number of participants in a given cell), there might be a complex relation between institutional trust and adolescents' democratic views. Thus, while higher institutional trust prevents adolescents' from adopting narrow majoritarianism, it remains an open question whether it also makes them less critical, for instance, of institutional regulations aiming at restricting civil liberties.

Next, adolescents with higher levels of civic participation, irrespective of its specific type, were less likely to develop the conventional view on democracy. This finding extends existing knowledge on how adolescents' civic participation changes their beliefs and attitudes (Metzger et al., 2018; Quintelier & van Deth, 2014; Šerek et al., 2017) by showing the effects of adolescents' participation on their democratic views. Civic participation represents one of the most important realizations of civil liberties, and it is likely that adolescents' personal experiences with participation result in a greater integration of the unconditional support of civil liberties into their understanding of democracy. Consequently, adolescents' unconditional support for civil liberties remains more stable and less vulnerable to change (i.e., transition into the conventional view) over time.

Moreover, our results suggest that the positive effect of civic participation on the stability of the liberal view does not have to be bound to a specific type of participation. More specifically, the effect was present for less conventional (protest) activities, activities focused on traditional political institutions, and non-political community service. This conclusion, however, must be taken as preliminary because all types of participation were inter-correlated (i.e., a considerable number of young people was engaged in multiple types of activities) and our data did not allow including all types of participation in one common model. Hence, there is still a question whether some type of participation is more critical for preventing the transition from the liberal to the conventional view than the other.

Contrary to our expectations, we found only limited effects of right-wing authoritarianism on democratic views. In our results, authoritarianism was meaningfully linked to participants' initial views in middle adolescence, since it was generally higher among adolescents with the conventional and majority-oriented views on democracy, compared to those with the liberal view. This is consistent with authoritarian tendencies towards adherence to social conventions and maintaining social order, as well as the aversion to groups deviating from the social majority (Altemeyer, 1981; Duckitt, 2009). However, we found no effect of authoritarianism on changes in adolescents' views. The most likely explanation is that right-wing authoritarianism is already a relatively stable attitudinal orientation between middle and late adolescence. Although changes in one's level of authoritarianism might occur in late adolescence and adulthood, they are typically driven by specific personal experiences, such as attending university or having children (Altemeyer, 1996). Similar experiences and the corresponding changes in authoritarianism were probably very limited among adolescents in our sample. Therefore, we assume that authoritarian tendencies had already shaped adolescents' views on democracy before the study started (i.e., in middle adolescence or earlier), but since there were no relevant changes in authoritarianism later on, it did not affect the further development of their views.

An unexpected finding was that male adolescents were more likely than female adolescents to switch from the liberal to the majority-oriented view. We suppose that the effect of gender can be explained by other variables, specifically social attitudes that differ by gender. One example could be social dominance orientation, which refers to a general preference for inequality versus equality between social groups, resulting in approval of situations in which powerful groups dominate over minorities (Duckitt, 2009). Social dominance orientation is known to be systematically higher for men than for women (Pratto, Stallworth, & Sidanius, 1997), and this gender difference has also been confirmed in adolescent samples (e.g., Duriez, Vansteenkiste, Soenens, & De Witte, 2007; Mata, Ghavami, & Wittig, 2010). Thus, it is possible that males' higher social dominance explains their higher tendencies to adopt majoritarianism and to disregard minority rights. However, a further examination of this link is needed.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. First, as expected, a final typology of adolescents' democratic views was structured based on their views on civil liberties and majoritarianism. Moreover, the three views on democracy found in this study partially overlap with those identified by Flanagan et al. (2005). Both typologies share a distinct type oriented to the majority rule, while the view oriented to the equality of rights and representation described by the previous study can be likened to the liberal view in the present study. However, it should be acknowledged that our items do not cover all relevant principles that might shape people's views on democracy. One example is a tendency to value political competition, or, by contrast, political consensus and harmony (Landwehr & Steiner, 2017). Hence, by using a broader set of items representing other democratic principles, a more nuanced typology of adolescents' views could be found.

Second, although adolescents' civic participation was identified as a moderator of their transitions between different democratic views, our study did not measure a content of adolescents' participation—for instance, whether adolescents pursued democratic or anti-democratic goals. By

employing more detailed measures of civic participation, future studies could find that participation with specific contents, rather than civic participation per se, have effects on adolescents' democratic views.

Third, a strength of this study is its longitudinal nature, which allows for capturing changes in adolescents' views. Nevertheless, since a two-wave design does not allow us to determine whether the transitions are stable or temporary (e.g., driven by situational factors), future studies should investigate whether we can expect adolescents to return to their initial views after some time. This question can be answered by replicating this study utilizing data with measurements taken at three or more time points.

Finally, although we believe that the observed changes in adolescents' views are primarily due to socialization influences, our design does not allow us to disentangle the effects of socialization and cognitive maturation. Therefore, future studies should directly examine the effects of socialization influences on adolescents within their families, schools, and other relevant proximal developmental contexts. With respect to the effects of more distal social contexts, it is advisable to conduct similar studies across different cultures to see which patterns of transitions and predictors remain stable and which are contextually contingent (e.g., affected by the level and the form of the populist discourse in the country).

In this context, it should be kept in mind that our data come from a former communist country even though adolescents participating in this study have already grown up in a fully democratic society. According to previous research, there seem to be no systematic differences between Czech adolescents and adolescents from other European countries in terms of their democratic views (Husfeldt & Nikolova, 2003) or no evident links between the democratic history of the country and adolescents' support for people's basic rights (Torney-Purta, Wilkenfeld, & Barber, 2008). However, only future research can rule out a possibility that the non-democratic past affects adolescents' democratic views in more subtle ways, for instance, by increasing their vulnerability to change.

Conclusions

This study has found three possible views on democracy among middle and late adolescents. Surprisingly, the most complex view, characterized by an unconditional support for civil liberties and a critical stance towards narrow majoritarianism, was somewhat less stable and more likely to be abandoned between middle and late adolescence compared to the other two views. The study has also identified two protective factors preventing young people from abandoning the complex view on democracy – trust in public institutions and civic participation. Hence, trustworthy performance of public institutions and sufficient opportunities for youth civic participation seem to be important factors helping young people to maintain complex views on democracy.

Building on our findings, schools and other institutions involved in civic education can contribute to the stability of adolescents' complex views on democracy at least in two ways: by creating trustworthy institutional environments, and by encouraging youth civic participation. As for the former, it is expected that young people's day-to-day experiences with public institutions, such as schools, affect their expectations from other public institutions in more distal (e.g., governmental) contexts (Amnå & Zetterberg, 2010). Thus, it is beneficial if public institutions shaping youth's early experiences are characterized by trustworthy and predictable authorities, sensible rules, and just treatment, because such institutional settings might lay the foundation for adolescents' more generalized institutional trust. In addition, by providing young people with ample participatory opportunities, building their confidence and civic skills, and setting social norms favoring participation, young people's civic participation and its positive impact on democratic views can be boosted in schools and extra-curricular organizations.

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Appendix

Table A.1
Correlations between variables.

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.
1. D1																
2. D2	0.16**															
3. D3	0.07	0.01														
4. D4	-0.05	0.06	0.23**													
5. D5	0.07	0.05	0.23**	0.29**												
6. D6	-0.06	0.02	0.00	0.01	-0.06											
7. D7	0.05	0.02	0.06	0.07	0.00	0.39**										
8. D8	0.15**	0.17**	0.05	0.05	0.09*	-0.29**	-0.22**									
9. Gender (female)	0.09*	0.04	0.01	-0.01	0.09*	-0.13**	-0.08*	0.18**								
10. School track (academic)	0.14**	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.02	-0.08*	0.01	0.05	0.07							
11. Parental education (univ./college)	0.05	0.05	-0.01	-0.05	-0.04	-0.04	0.02	-0.03	-0.01	0.31**						
12. Trust in institutions	0.19**	0.12**	0.13**	0.13**	0.20**	-0.18**	-0.06	0.23**	0.11**	0.16**	0.07					
13. Right-wing authoritarianism	0.04	0.11**	0.21**	0.20**	0.25**	0.15**	0.18**	0.00	0.01	-0.07*	-0.01	0.07				
14. Social movement participation	0.01	-0.08*	-0.01	-0.09*	-0.13**	0.01	-0.04	0.01	-0.08*	0.01	0.08	-0.14**	-0.02			
15. Standard political participation	-0.01	-0.10**	0.00	-0.06	-0.06	-0.02	-0.07	0.01	-0.10**	0.03	0.08*	-0.07	0.06	0.71**		
16. Community service	0.01	0.01	0.05	0.03	0.07	-0.02	-0.09*	0.08*	-0.07*	-0.04	0.01	0.06	0.12**	0.32**	0.55**	

Note. Inter-correlations between all variables at T1 are presented below the diagonal. Inter-correlations between views on democracy at T2 and correlations between views on democracy at T2 and T1 covariates are presented above the diagonal. Full wording of the items on democracy can be found in Table 1.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

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