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The Political Reputation of Students in Upper Secondary School: Consequences for Their Collective Political Activities Four Years Later

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This longitudinal study examines the role that students' political reputation in class plays in their future political activities offline together with other people. When aged 16, students were asked to nominate the classmates they considered politically knowledgeable and verbal in class, that is, as having a political reputation. This measure of political reputation was used to predict the participants' political activities offline four years later at age 20 and their attempts to take a stand in public in the national election the same year. The study controlled for individual differences in political interest, self-perceived political impact in class, the students' political activities at age 16, and also gender and immigrant status. About 300 Swedish students were followed up four years later. Political reputation in class positively predicted future political activities offline, membership of political organizations, and attempts to take a stand in public for a party in the forthcoming national election. At the same time, the role played by political reputation depended upon students' other characteristics, especially their levels of anger and popularity, as observed by classmates. Evidently, the group dynamics in class that give some students a political reputation have long-term consequences for their future political activities.

KEY WORDS: political interest, political efficacy, political reputation, political activities, national election

Through the provision of civic education, schools may have substantial effects on young people's political socialization (Alscher et al., 2022; Torney-Purta et al., 2001), but discussions of the role of schools in political socialization should benefit from a perspective that also considers the group dynamics in class. In most school classes, there are some students who, in their classmates' opinions, are politically knowledgeable and verbal. We examine if the political reputation of these students among their classmates predicts their future political activities and behaviors in relation to a national election. If it can be shown that students' political reputation in class predicts their long-term political activities, this will yield new insights into how the class environment can be a formative setting for the future active political citizenship of some of

them. The findings should highlight the school's role in reinforcing the political tendencies that emerge from group dynamics in class.

Social Identity and Reputation

In a social group that extends over a lengthy period of time, like a school class, group members will have ample opportunity to observe each other's characteristics and verify their observations by talking to others in the group. Emler's (1990, 2013, 2019) reputation enhancement theory links social identity to social group processes. A person's social identity is the social representation of her- or him-self. In various ways, people generate behaviors, observable to others, that are in accordance with their social identity. These behaviors are the basis for acquiring personal reputations in the group. Across many encounters, people in a group will form collective judgments about others' social identities, and these will constitute to the personal reputations of these persons. Reputation enhancement theory proposes that adolescents can choose a particular social identity, and through the ways in which they behave, talk, dress, prefer some types of music, and hold certain opinions, they communicate their social identity to others. The ways others react may reinforce or discourage these adolescents' behaviors, opinions, attributes, and identities.

Personal reputations certainly can play a role in the classroom setting. Students spend several hundreds of hours every year observing their classmates, and they have ample opportunities to validate their impressions with others (Baumeister et al., 2004; Foster, 2004). They are attentive to which classmates have reputations, like being high achievers, popular with the opposite sex, sociable, physically attractive and sporty, and to negative identities, like being delinquents and bullies (Suitor et al., 2004). Some students will gain a political reputation in the class, which is defined here as the collective impression among classmates that the person knows a lot about what is going on in the world and often brings up societal issues in class.

Social scientists have paid little attention to the group dynamic processes in normal classes that lead to a student having a political reputation in class. To date, only one empirical study has examined students' political reputation. Stattin et al. (2021) made use of peer nominations among 13- and 16-year-old students and asked them who in their class kept track of what was going on in the world and often started discussions about societal issues. Analyses showed that political reputation in class was highly stable over 1 year in both cohorts, with temporal stabilities over 1 year of .75 in the younger cohort and .82 in the older. Hence, adolescents' political reputation in class seems to take shape very early on, at least by age 13, and is very stable over time. These findings agree well with other studies that have used peer nominations and found that classmates' nominations of characteristics like aggression, shyness, leadership, achievement orientation, peer victimization, and immaturity show 1- or 2-year stabilities of over .50 even by age 9 or 10 (Aleva et al., 2017; Bukowski & Newcomb, 1984; Liu et al., 2014). In Stattin and colleagues' study (2021), predictions over 1 year revealed that political reputation in class positively predicted the adolescents' political interest and internal political efficacy in both cohorts. Apparently, the group dynamics in classes whereby some students obtain a political reputation seem to have at least short-term consequences for these students. They become more politically interested and more convinced that their political activities can affect others.

Political Interest and Political Reputation

Young persons' political reputation in class needs to be seen in the light of their political interest. Political interest is commonly defined as being attentive to political issues

(Levy & Akiva, 2019) and having an ongoing positive evaluation of politics (Prior, 2010). There is a strong link between people's political interest and their engagement in various political and civic activities (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; van Deth & Elff, 2004; Hooghe & Dejaeghere, 2007; Prior, 2019; Shani, 2009; Thorson et al., 2018; Verba et al., 1995). That political interest is a consistent predictor of political activities and engagements in the civil society is also found among adolescents and young adults. More than others, politically interested young people believe that their civic contribution can make a difference in the society (Levy, 2013; Russo & Stattin, 2017), and they aspire to or are already more engaged in different types of political activities (Barrett & Brunton-Smith, 2014; Brunton-Smith & Barrett, 2015; Fieldhouse et al., 2007; Levy & Akiva, 2019; Maurissen, 2020). This raises the question of whether a political reputation in class can predict adolescents' future political activities independent of their political interest. There are two reasons to believe that this could be the case.

First, Stattin and colleagues' (2021) study showed that the association between political reputation and political interest was modest. The reported correlations were in the .30 range for both the 13- and the 16-year-olds. Hence, political reputation is distinct from political interest. Second, whereas political reputation positively predicted political interest highly significantly over 1 year, political interest was a nonsignificant longitudinal predictor of political reputation for the 13-year-olds and a weak predictor for the 16-year-olds. This is probably due to the high stability over time of political reputation. It means that once established, the political reputation of adolescents is not so much affected by political interest. These two observations together indicate that political reputation at school could be a predictor of future political activities—independent of their political interest.

This study is a follow up to the original study by Stattin et al. (2021) and poses the following question: How do students' political reputations in class affect their political participation long term? Political activities that took place when the participants were in upper secondary school, at the age of 16, will be followed up with the same measures 4 years later, which was also a national election year. Most of the students had become eligible to vote, at the age of 20, for the first time in an election to the Swedish parliament. Their political behaviors connected with this election will be analyzed here.

Collective and Self-Selected Political Activities

We hypothesize that taking part in political activities together with others requires high social skills, since it requires that people expose their political views to others' scrutiny. Apparently, students who gain a political reputation in class possess such social skills. These skills might transfer to other types of situations where the students engage in political inter-actions with others. The basic assumption in this study is that young people's reputations as politically knowledgeable and verbal in class are likely to be reproduced later in situations where they are politically active together with other people. We use the label *collective* political activities to mean that young people make political efforts conjointly with others or in the immediate eyes of others. Examples include engaging in various types of political or civic activities together with other people, such as collecting signatures or attending meetings concerned with political issues and being a member of a political/civic association. Concerning the upcoming national election, the now early adults might also engage in collective forms of taking a stand, such as working on a nonprofit basis for a party or supporting a party by wearing their badge or T-shirt. These types of collective activities are examined here.

As a contrast to taking part in collective activities, young persons can engage in *self-selected* political activities, here meaning solitary political activities that do not involve contact with others. It was not expected that political reputation in class would matter much for self-selected political activities, but it was still possible to compare collective election-related political activities with others with self-selected activities.

Conjoint Social Behaviors

The study hypothesis, that youth's political reputation in class has positive consequences for their future collective political activities, needs qualifying. Being a student with a political reputation and being looked up to by classmates and considered popular may reinforce this student's engagement in political activities that involve contact with other people. By contrast, being a student with a political reputation and simultaneously being regarded as a person who gets angry and causes trouble may discourage the student from engaging in collective political activities with other people. In this study, we will examine whether students' reputations for being popular and/or angry in class are moderating conditions that increase or decrease the effects of their political reputation on future collective forms of political activities.

Confounding Factors

Establishing a potentially causal influence of political reputation in class on future political activities requires consideration of confounding factors. To avoid common pitfalls in prediction studies, most notably selection bias (Stattin & Kerr, 2009), relevant measures need to be controlled for. A causal explanation of future political activities in terms of political reputation in class may hide the role that political interest plays in the acquisition of that political reputation. Hence, we considered the covariance of individual differences in political interest in upper secondary school when examining the effect of political reputation in class on the collective political-activity outcomes measured after leaving school.

Second, a rival hypothesis is that it is students' own perceptions of their political impact in class, rather than the collective judgment of who is knowledgeable and politically verbal, that explain their future political activities. Accordingly, the study controlled for the participants' own self-perceptions of their political impact in class in upper secondary school.

Finally, as is customary in longitudinal studies, the two collective forms of political activity at age 20 examined in this study—engaging in collective activities offline and being a member of a civic/political associations—were controlled for by the same two political activities measured at age 16, so as to direct attention at what happened between the ages of 16 and 20. Overall, the study design should minimize the impacts of alternative interpretations of the role played by political reputation in class in predicting participants' future collective political activities offline and their behaviors in relation to an election.

Current Study

In the present study, a community sample of 16-year-olds in upper secondary school is followed-up over 4 years. We examine whether the political reputation in class in upper secondary school is a predictor of students' later collective political activities. We also deal with moderating conditions. Having reputations for being popular or angry in class may act

as moderators of the link between having a political reputation and future political activities offline and behavior related to the national election. Hence, the interactions between political reputation and popularity and anger, respectively, were included when predicting all age-20 measures.

Taking part in offline political activities together with other people and being a member of a civic/political association are the two collective political activities examined in the study. Working on a nonprofit basis for a party and supporting a party by wearing their badge or T-shirt are the collective behavioral manifestations of taking a public stand in the election. In addition, we examine self-selected behaviors in relation to the election. Given a lack of any specific hypotheses related to the gender of the participants and immigration status, these individual and social characteristics were controlled for.

Method

Sample

A cohort of 16-year-old adolescents was followed in a longitudinal project on the political socialization of young people (Amnå et al., 2009). A younger age group of 13-year-olds were too young to vote 4 years later, and they were excluded. The study was conducted in a midsized city in Sweden from 2010 to 2015. We used information from two follow-ups of these adolescents when they were 20 years old (T2). The first age-20 data collection took place in April and May of an election year. This was before the election. The national election took place in September. The second age-20 data collection took place right after the election. A postelection questionnaire was distributed in October. The target sample at age 16 (T1), all students who were listed in the selected schools' student files, comprised 1,052 persons. The number of respondents who filled in the questionnaire was 870 at T1 (83% response rate), 463 at T2 (44% of the initial target), and 383 at T2 postelection (36% of the initial target). The analytic samples, participants who were in classes with eight or more students at T1 and had complete data on the measures used at both time points, comprised 337 persons in the T2 data collection and 278 persons in the T2 postelection survey.

The city was similar to the country as a whole regarding its immigration rate, income, level of education, unemployment rate, and the percentage who voted in the last election (Statistics Sweden, 2010). There were totally 768 participants in this study with complete data at T1 and who were followed up at T2. Of these participants, the proportion with both parents born outside the Nordic countries was 17%. Ninety-two percent of the adolescents were born in Sweden, and 34% of the parents were divorced. Of the 768 adolescents, a questionnaire was answered by 457 parents (60%) at T1. On a question about their economic situation, 1% of the parents reported that their household income did not cover all expenses, 14% stated that the income scarcely covered all expenses, 74% stated that their income covered the expenses—and they we are not worried—and 11% stated a good economic situation and that they did not even think about their expenses. Among the parents with the highest education in the family, 58% had a university college or university education.

Procedure

The cohort was recruited from three high (upper secondary) schools, with a total of 57 classes involved, strategically chosen to represent the social and demographic characteristics of

adolescents in the city. The study employed an opt-out procedure where parents of the young persons in the two youngest cohorts were informed about the study prior to the first assessment and had the possibility to refuse their children's participation (less than 2% did). The school assessments took place in the participants' classrooms during regular school hours. Trained test administrators distributed a self-report questionnaire to the participants without their teachers being present. At the first assessment, a contribution of 1,000 SEK (about US$120) was made to the class fund, and, at the subsequent assessment, the participants were compensated with movie tickets. One of the six local ethical review boards of the National Ethics Review Board in Sweden approved all the procedures.

Measures

Independent variables age 16 were as follows.

Political reputation in class. All students in the classes in the 10 schools were asked the question: "Here, different types of people are described. Which of your classmates are like these people? Two of the types described were "Keeps track of what is going on in Sweden and in the world" and "Often starts discussions about societal issues in class." The students were asked to nominate three students in their classes who matched each of the two descriptions. Self-nominations were not counted. For classes with more than eight students, the number of times the students were nominated for each of the two descriptors was divided by the total number of students who participated on the day of the data collection (and multiplied by 100); the two resulting scores were then averaged. The correlation between the two nominations was .75, $p < .001$.

Popular and angry in class. Using the same nomination procedure, students were asked which classmates were popular (*is popular—does things that others follow*) and angry (*is often angry, disruptive, and causes trouble*). As above, the nominations were divided by the total number of students who participated on the day of the data collection and multiplied by 100.

Political interest. The students' level of political interest was measured using two questions at T1. The first was: "How interested are you in politics?" (see the ANES 2014 Panel Study for the same item). The response options ranged from 1 (*totally uninterested*) to 5 (*very interested*). This direct question has become a standard measure in the literature. Second, the participants' emotional reactions to politics were assessed by the question: "People differ in how they feel about politics. What are your feelings?" They answered on a six-item response scale ranging from 1 (*loath*) to 6 (*great fun*). The interest question was rescaled to a 6-point scale, and the two items were aggregated. The correlation between the two political-interest measures was .77, $p < .001$.

Reported political activities in class was a four-item scale about the participants' self-perceived political activities in the classroom, with questions such as "Have you ever brought up political issues during class?" and "Has it happened that you have brought up a societal problem for discussion during class?" The response scales ranged from 1 (*has never happened*) to 5 (*very often*). Alpha reliability was .88.

Dependent variables age 20 were as follows.

Two scales measured the participants' collective political activities and memberships in civic/political organizations. The questions were asked in the age-20 data collection that took place 5 months before the election.

Collective activities offline. The participants were asked if, during the last year, they had been involved in the following seven activities, which were assumed to tap into taking part in collective political activities: "Attended a meeting concerned with political or societal issues";

"Collected signatures"; "Worked voluntarily for a good cause"; "Distributed leaflets with a political content"; "Worn a badge or a t-shirt with a political message"; "Taken part in a legal demonstration or strike"; and "Taken part in a concert or fundraising event with a political message" The response scale ranged from 1 (*never*) to 3 (*several times*). The same questions were also asked at age. Alpha reliability was .85 at age 16 and .81 at age 20.

Member of a political/civic association. The participants were asked if they were a member of any of three types of associations: political association, environmental association, or an association for peace or human rights (the Peace Movement, Amnesty International, or the like). The same question was also asked at age 16.

The following questions about behaviors in relation to the election were asked in October, after the national election in September.

Participation in the national election. The participants were asked if they had taken an active stand publicly in the election. There were two merged forms of collective political activities: "Worked on a non-profit basis for a party in the parliamentary elections, for example by handing out leaflets for the party" and "Supported a party by wearing their badge or t-shirt." There were also two merged forms of self-selected political activities: "Used the Internet to support the parties I like" and "Followed and 'liked' parties on social networks, such as Twitter and Facebook." The response options were 1 (*no*) and 2 (*yes*).

Control variables were gender (coded 0 = female, 1 = male) and immigrant status.

Immigrant status was a dichotomous measure differentiating between students both of whose two parents were born outside the Nordic countries (coded 1) and other students (coded 0).

Attrition Analyses

Logistic regression analyses compared the T1 participants who took part and did not take part in the data collection at age 20 on all the study variables at T1. There were significant results for political reputation ($OR = 1.01$, $p = .041$), for popularity ($OR = 0.98$, $p = .016$), for gender ($OR = 0.47$, $p < .001$), and for immigrant status ($OR = 0.61$, $p = .016$). The youth who participated at age 20 had a higher political reputation, were less popular, were more likely to be male, and were less likely to have parents from outside the Scandinavian countries. Converting the odds-ratios to effect sizes, all these differences are small (Chen et al., 2010). A second logistic regression analysis compared the T1 participants who answered and did not answer the postelection questionnaire. Again, there were significant results for gender ($OR = 0.44$, $p < .001$), a medium effect size, and for political reputation ($OR = 1.01$, $p = .038$), a small effect size. Nagelkerke R^2 was .08 for both the attrition analyses. In view of these findings, we consider the age-20 and the postelection data collections to be somewhat gender biased. Females were less interested in taking part.

Results

Intercorrelations

Table 1 reports on the correlations between all the measures at T1. There were low to moderate correlations among the measures of political reputation, political interest, self-reported political activities in class, and offline activities at T2. Boys had a higher political reputation in class and higher peer nominations for being angry. Of note is that political reputation in class also showed a positive and significant correlation with being popular in class.

Table 1. Correlations Among All Measures at T1

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Reputation	.32***	.28***	.11**	.11**	.26***	.11**	.14***	-.08*
2. Political interest	–	.39***	.19***	.20***	.01	-.02	.02	.05
3. Self-perceived activity		–	.26***	.21***	.07*	.00	.03	.08*
4. Political activities			–	.30***	.05	.03	-.04	.12***
5. Member of an association				–	.02	.01	.01	.03
6. Popularity					–	.19***	.07*	-.01
7. Anger						–	.12***	.12***
8. Gender							–	.03
9. Immigrant status								–

***$p<.001$; **$p<.01$; *$p<.05$.

Predicting Collective Political Activities and Behaviors

The main analyses predicted changes from T1 to T2 for the two types of political activities offline together with others and the two types of attempts to take a stand for a party in public from students' political interest, self-perceived political activities in class, political reputation, as well as gender and immigrant status. The two types of collective political activities at age 20 were controlled for by the same two measures at age 16. To account for the nested structure of the data (adolescents nested in classes), the models were two-level random-intercept models. In this way, there is an explanation for individual-level variation in the dependent variables while controlling for variation in mean responses across different classes. As shown in Table 2, the adolescents' political interest predicted all four outcome measures, while their political reputation predicted all activities except the self-selected election activities. Hence, students' political reputation in class predicted their political activities 4 years later even after controlling for their political interest. It is noteworthy that the adolescents' self-reported political activities in class were nonsignificant in all cases. Further, students' anger negatively predicted membership of a civic/political associations and positively predicted self-selected election activities. Neither gender nor immigrant status was a significant predictor of the four outcome measures at age 20. Overall, the results suggest that the collective judgment of a school class that a student is politically knowledgeable and verbal is a potent predictor of future collective political activities and behaviors over and above the students' political interest and how the students themselves perceive their political activities in class.

There were significant interactions between political reputation and classroom nominations of being popular or angry. Simple slope analyses indicated that the effect of political reputation was influenced by whether the students were popular. Having a political reputation predicted political activities with popular youth ($+1SD$, coeff. $= .008$, $p < .001$), but less so than with unpopular youth ($-1SD$, coeff. $= .004$, $p = .019$, see also Figure 1a). There was a similar interactive effect when predicting taking a public stand for a party during the election. Having a political reputation predicted engagement in such activities among popular youth ($+1SD$, coeff. $= .015$, $p < .001$), but not among unpopular ones ($-1SD$, coeff. $= .000$, $p = .958$, see also Figure 1b).

Also, youth with a political reputation were less likely to engage in political activities with others ($+1SD$; coeff. $= .005$, $p = .002$) and take a public stand for a party (coeff. $= .006$, $p = .080$) when they were known in class for being angry ($+1SD$, coeff. $= .006$, $p = .080$). When they were not known for being angry ($-1SD$), the equivalent coefficients were .008, $p = .001$, and .010, $p = .001$. See also Figure 1c,d.

Further, we found a significant interactive effect between political reputation and anger when predicting self-selected electoral activities, which indicates that the effect of political reputation differs significantly between youth known for being angry ($+1SD$, coeff. $= -.002$, $p = .601$) and those not known for being angry ($-1SD$, coeff. $= .005$, $p = .171$). In both cases, however, they were not significantly different from zero. The presence of interaction effects supports the hypothesis that the role played by political reputation in class in future collective political activities and behaviors is moderated by how classmates perceive their other social behaviors in class.

Finally, there was a low R^2 for the self-selected electoral activities (.072). This is in line with the expectation that reputation would affect collective political activities more than self-selected activities. However, being a member of a political association also had a low R^2 (.107). The most reasonable explanation for this is that few persons were members (6%), which reduces variability.

Table 2. Predicting Political Activities With Others and Political Participation in an Election at the Age of 20

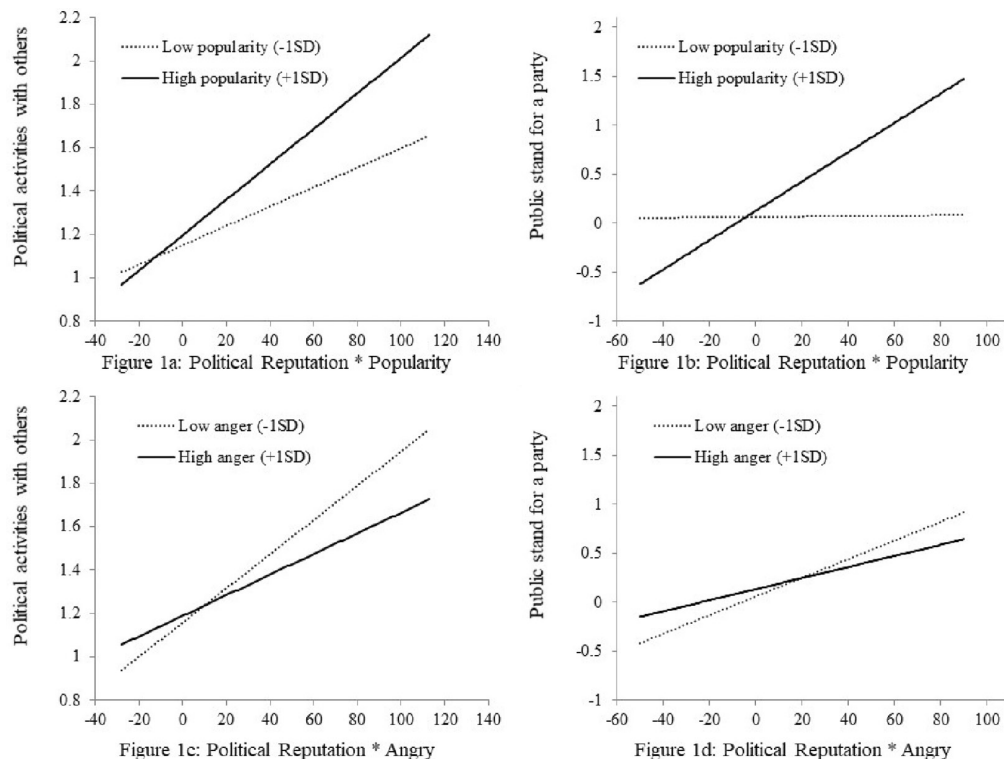|	Political Activities With Others				Member of a Civic/Political Association				Taking a Stand Publicly for a Party at an Election				Self-Selected Electoral Activities			
	Coeff.	SE	p	Std.	Coeff.	SE	p	Std.	Coeff.	SE	p	Std.	Coeff.	SE	p	Std.
Activity at T1	.100	.042	.017	.108	.048	.162	.765	.034	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Political interest	.022	.010	.035	.081	.046	.022	.037	.107	.050	.014	<.001	.141	.100	.037	.007	.154
Self-perceived activity	.018	.022	.429	.045	.049	.054	.362	.081	–.018	.027	.499	–.034	.030	.044	.504	.031
Political reputation	.006	.002	.001	.277	.007	.002	.003	.190	.008	.003	.013	.249	.002	.003	.585	.031
Popularity	.003	.002	.150	.075	.003	.004	.411	.054	.004	.003	.197	.077	–.004	.005	.454	–.039
Anger	.002	.003	.469	.050	–.004	.002	.044	–.078	.005	.004	.257	.090	.015	.004	<.001	.155
Reputation×Popularity	.000	.000	.027	.086	.000	<.001	.255	.073	.001	.000	<.001	.273	<.001	.000	.175	.067
Reputation×Anger	.000	.000	.015	–.166	.000	<.001	.146	–.055	.000	.000	.005	–.135	<.001	.000	<.001	–.123
Gender	.027	.034	.425	.043	–.029	.048	.541	–.029	.049	.048	.302	.057	–.108	.088	.222	–.069
Immigrant status	.044	.046	.342	.049	.096	.087	.271	.067	–.016	.051	.762	–.013	–.178	.124	.149	–.081
R^2	.181				.107				.250				.072			

Figure 1. Interactive effects of political reputation and reputations for being popular and angry. (a) Political reputation * popularity, (b) Political reputation * popularity, (c) Political reputation * anger, and (d) Political reputation * anger.

Discussion

Gaining a reputation as politically knowledgeable and verbal in class, according to class-mates, seems to have long-term consequences for a student's political activities. Four years after they had entered upper secondary school at the age of 16, the students with a high political reputation were, as 20-year-olds, more often engaged in political activities together with others, more often members of civic/political associations, and more likely to take a stand publicly for a party at a national election. Notably, even after controlling for political interest and self-reported political activity in class, political reputation in class was still a significant predictor of most of the political activities measured 4 years later.

In most of the analyses, the role of political reputation in future political activities was on par with youth's political interest. This is noteworthy for two reasons. First, political interest is recognized as perhaps the most robust predictor of youth's various political engagements and activities (Prior, 2019). That political reputation at school has almost the same ability to predict future political activities as political interest adds, qualitatively, to the previous presumption of the supreme role of political interest in forecasting future political behaviors. Second, political interest is ordinarily, as here, a self-reported measure. By contrast, political reputation is measured by classmates' nominations. The correlation between the two measures is modest, $r = .32$, $p < .001$, which suggests that both information from the

person and from outside that person are in themselves sources for predicting a person's future political activities.

The basic assumption in this study is that young people's reputations as politically knowledgeable and verbal in class are likely to be reproduced in later situations when they are politically active together with other people. We did not have access to information about the students' self-selected political activities at age 20. However, when it comes to their self-selected behaviors in relation to the national election at age 20, measured by questions about their use of the Internet to support political parties and following and 'liking' parties on social networks, there was no main effect of political reputation.

Classical social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982) is concerned with people's identification with a social group or category and the role that ingroup and outgroup differentiation plays in their behaviors. Identity theory (McCall & Simmons, 1978; Stryker & Burke, 2000; Udall et al., 2020) examines how people's perceptions of their social identities determine their behaviors. Emler's (1990) reputation enhancement theory, by contrast, concerns how the collective judgment of a person's social identity affects this person's behavior. Here, we examined whether the person's own perception of their political activity in the classroom, a marker of the person's social identity, and collective agreement among classmates in identifying the person as politically active jointly predict that person's future political activities together with others and their behaviors in relation to a national election. These are the things that make up political reputation. The findings show that it is the participants' political reputation, not their own self-image of bringing up political and social issues in class, that is the prime predictor. It is noteworthy that it is classmates' perceptions of who in the class are politically active that stand out as an explanation for their future political activities.

This study focuses on the psychological group processes in normal classrooms that lead some students to gain a reputation as politically knowledgeable and verbal in class. In the earlier study by Stattin and colleagues (2021), political reputation in class was not predicted by students' perceptions that teachers encouraged attendance to sociopolitical topics or the students' receptiveness to teachers' sociopolitical communications. This suggests that the group dynamics that contribute to a social reputation as politically knowledgeable and verbal may operate rather independently of the ways that schools conduct civic education (cf. Campbell, 2019; Lin, 2015; Schulz et al., 2017). This study provides evidence that such a reputation has long-term effects on future political activities, which has been hard to establish when considering schools' role in developing students' interest in politics and society and in fostering civic engagement (Torney-Purta, 2002).

Being a person whose classmates consider to be one who knows a lot about politics and who brings societal issues up in class does not necessarily ensure that this will happen in other groups in the future. Students with a political reputation differ among themselves, and other characteristics of the students with a political reputation may hinder or facilitate their future engagements in various political activities. In this study, we paid attention to peer nominations of the popularity of these students and their anger. For two of the outcome measures—political activities with others offline and taking a public stand for a party at a national election—we found that the effects of students' political reputations were moderated by how these students were perceived by their classmates in other ways. Having a political reputation positively predicted political activities offline and taking a public stand for a party among popular youth to a greater extent than among unpopular youth. Further, youth who were considered as both politically knowledgeable and angry were less likely to engage in these political activities. We had expected the same moderating effects of popularity and

anger on future membership of civic/political associations but did not find support for this idea. Nevertheless, it seems that political activities with other people in the future among students with a political reputation in their class need to be seen in the light of other characteristics of these students that are recognized by their classmates. Note that, as a main effect, popularity in class was not significantly predictive of any of the age-20 outcomes. Classroom nominations of anger had two significant direct effects, one negative ($p = .04$) on membership of civic/political associations, and one positive ($p < .001$) on self-selected electoral activities.

The findings of this study have implications for researchers, policymakers, and school personnel. Young students cannot be seen as blank sheets on which schools can write about current and future happenings in politics and society. There are dynamic processes in classrooms, where some students gain a reputation for being particularly politically knowledgeable and influential. The students with this reputation seem to have more information about politics and society than other students. And their political reputation seems to have the effect that they increase their political interest and political efficacy over shorter periods of time more than other students. Also, their political reputation seems to help them in their political development over longer time periods, as shown in this study. Up to now, these dynamic group processes in class have been largely neglected. Given the information that they do exist, future research examining the role that schools play in students' political development should be able to differentiate between what schools can do to inform students about society and the world, on the one hand, and what happens in ordinary classrooms where some students seem to have more knowledge and better verbal skills in bringing up these issues than others, on the other. Further, we need a better understanding of what actually happens in classrooms to make some students gain the reputation of being politically sophisticated.

Strengths and Limitations

This study is the first to provide empirical evidence that the psychological group processes in class that make some students gain a social reputation as politically knowledgeable and verbal have long-term consequences for these students. The results concerning the predictive power of students' political reputation, after controlling for important alternative explanations (initial political interest, perceptions of their own political activity in class, gender, and immigrant status), seem to be robust. Not only was it shown that political reputation affected later political activities together with others but also that political reputation was related to various options for taking a stand publicly for a party in a national election.

The main limitation of the study is that it was conducted in a country, unlike some others (see Lin, 2015), where civic education is not a separate school subject but one that is integrated into the teachings of many different subjects. The Swedish sample, collected in a midsized city, is representative of the country as a whole on major social indicators (immigration rate, income, level of education, unemployment rate, and voting turnout). This does not preclude the possibility that findings might be different in samples of young people in Sweden or in other countries.

One other limitation that needs mentioning is that the dependent variables at age 20 were limited to collective political activities offline. This limitation was governed by the hypothesis that students who have a class reputation of being politically skilled possess social skills that will also be found in future situations where these students have political interactions with other people.

Conclusion

Group dynamic processes in normal classrooms have the consequence that some students in a class gain the reputation of being politically active, which has consequences for these students' future political activities. Study findings show that students with such a reputation are more involved in political activities together with others 4 years later, and they are more disposed to convey their political preferences in public in connection with a national election. But the role that political reputation plays is also affected by other features of these adolescents that their classmates perceive. The details of how these group processes emerge, and how classmates' views reinforce these students' political engagement and participation, are key issues for further understanding of political reputations.

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