

The Influence of Civic Knowledge versus Democratic School Experiences on Ethnic Tolerance of Adolescents. A Multilevel analysis¹

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Abstract

In a society of rapid change and increasing complexity, there is a growing need for citizens to be informed, to be actively involved and to take up personal responsibility. However, research points out citizens no longer feel connected to society and that intolerance and distrust tend to increase. Therefore a crucial role has been granted to citizenship education from early ages on.

This paper examines the impact of different school experiences on the attitudes of 14-year olds towards ethnic minorities, using the CivEd 1999 data. In particular, we compare the influence of civic knowledge versus democratic school experiences. By means of a multilevel analysis with individual, school and country variables we try to extend the knowledge on the impact of schools on ethnic tolerance of their students, after controlling for relevant background characteristics.

An open classroom climate and a general confidence in school participation are important assets to promote ethnic tolerance. Civic knowledge, however, also remains an important predictor of a positive attitude towards ethnic minorities. This means that both knowledge and a democratic class and school climate seem to foster ethnic tolerance. Participation in the student council has no meaningful impact on tolerance towards ethnic minorities. However, schools with high levels of students participating in the student council do have students with more tolerant attitudes. Other civic studies-related school variables have no impact on ethnic tolerance.

Keywords: *multilevel analysis, civic knowledge, open classroom climate, active participation, ethnic tolerance*

Introduction

The expectations of society with regard to its citizens are constantly growing. More and more emphasis is placed on personal responsibility and the individual's self-monitoring. In this sense, the demand for adapted skills and attitudes is increasing. Citizens must be made competent to be able to participate in this complex society. Furthermore, there has been a growing concern about the loss of social cohesion. A number of authors emphasize the fact that citizens no longer feel involved in the way in which society operates, and argue for re-emphasizing the value of community and, related to this, increasing the attention devoted to values such as citizenship and social commitment. This focus on necessary competencies to participate in life on the one hand, the growing concern about an alleged decline in civic engagement and political participation on the other hand, has led to a renewed interest in citizenship education since the 1990s (Bîrzéa, Kerr, Mikkelsen, Froumin, Losito et al., 2004; Osler & Starkey, 2006; Torney-Purta, Schwille & Amadeo, 1999). The success of populist parties propagating messages of intolerance and distrust has certainly contributed to this trend in Europe (Bîrzéa et al., 2004). Schools are expected to bring about a change in the mentality of the next generations concerning matters of racism, tolerance, distrust or apathy (Maes, 2005; van der Wal, 2004).

In spite of the large consensus regarding schools' "duty" to foster democratic citizenship in their students, there has been disagreement about the best ways to implement democratic citizenship education (Biedermann, Shavelson & Oser, 2008; Galston, 2001; Kavadias & De Maeyer, 2007; Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald & Schulz, 2001). Some authors consider "traditional" civic education programs, or learning politics by means of traditional school methods that try to transmit political knowledge, as the most appropriate way to teach students the necessary skills, values and behaviors. Others, working in the tradition of John Dewey, argue for a political education via the so-called "hidden curriculum", and believe processes in which students experience democracy in the classroom and the school to be more effective.

This paper seeks to disentangle these different school effects and hopes to gain a more thorough understanding of the influence of schools on the democratic attitudes of their students. More specifically, we would like to examine the influence of "learning politics" versus the effect of "experiencing democracy" on ethnic tolerance of 14 year olds, using the CivEd 1999 data. By means of multilevel models with individual, school and country variables we try to extend the knowledge on the impact of schools on ethnic tolerance of their students, after controlling for relevant background characteristics.

In the following paragraphs, a brief review of previous research on political socialization of

adolescents, more precisely on the supposed influence of schools, will be given. The IEA CivEd data and the method of analysis, i.e. multivariate three-level models, will then be presented, after which the results of our analyses will be discussed.

Political socialization and schools

Previous research on political socialization examined the impact of different actors on children and adolescents. The socializing agents or institutions that were generally discussed are the family, the peer-group, the media, organizations and schools (Dawson & Prewitt, 1969; Dudley & Gitelson, 2001; Hooghe, 2004; Siongers, 2008). Unlike the family, peers, the media or the membership of organizations, schools are institutions specifically designed to inculcate social desirable knowledge, skills and values (Durkheim, 1938; Gimpel, Lay & Schuknecht 2003; Klaassen, 1996; Merelman, 1971). As a consequence fostering civic knowledge, participatory skills and democratic values are explicitly stated as their policy goals (Bîrzéa et al., 2004; Maes, 2005; Veldhuis, 1997).

There has been some controversy, however, as to the specific impact of civic education programs in schools. A track in political socialization studies stressed the importance of civic courses. It was believed that civic education, as a separate subject in the curriculum, provided the necessary cognitive skills in order to fulfill the duty of citizen (Cuban, 2004; Galston, 2001, 2004; Hess & Torney, 1967; Torney, Oppenheim & Farnen, 1975; Torney-Purta et al., 2001).

In many school systems “civic education”, “political education”, “civics classes” explicitly try to influence political attitudes and civic engagement by the use of information (Bîrzéa et al. 2004; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). “Civic literacy” – knowledge about democracy or about politics – is assumed to influence democratic attitudes (Milner, 2002, 2007). In this line of reasoning, more knowledge implies a broader outlook on the world, which in turn leads to an affinity with democracy, and hence more democratic, tolerant and trustful attitudes. After all, knowledge enhances the competence to understand the contingent nature of our society (Gabennesh 1972; Galston 2001, 2004). Or to put it in the words of Galston (2001: 224): *“Ignorance is the father of fear, and knowledge is the mother of trust.”*

This “spill-over” assumption is at the very least incomplete. Recent studies about the interrelationship between political information and attitudes tend to dismiss a simple causal explanation. Most correlations between the two tend to dilute when controlled for the social background of the students (Denver & Hands, 1990; Kavadias, 2004). This does not however, have to mean that political education is trivial. It is more plausible that any “spill-over” effect is mediated or preceded, by other characteristics or conditions (Stember, 1961)

The reached conclusions, however, can differ significantly in function of what we might consider the result of socialization processes. Following the work of Niemi and Junn (1998), a consensus can be found regarding the positive impact of civics courses on political knowledge (Denver & Hands, 1990; Finkel & Ernst, 2005; Perliger, et al., 2006). The influence from these courses on political attitudes, however, has proven to be much weaker or even non-existent (Denver & Hands, 1990; Finkel & Ernst, 2005; Kavadias, 2004; Perliger, Canetti-Nisim & Pedahzur, 2006; van der Wal, 2004).

The “spill-over” approach can be contrasted with an approach in which a democratic school culture is explicitly seen as a means to influence the “Weltanschauung” of children. Some scholars describe schools as micro-societies. They also expect that pupils will unconsciously adopt aspects of this micro-cosmos into their lives in “the bigger society”. At the beginning of the 20th century, Dewey already noted that a democratic school climate was of paramount importance if young people are to be educated to become democratic citizens and participate actively in our society (Dewey 2000 [orig. 1916]). His notion on education puts the individual experience in the forefront. Education consists of “[...] *that reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience.*” (Dewey, 2000 [1916]: 76). It is an ongoing process where individuals learn to see the connections between an activity and the consequences of that activity.

Dewey warned his readers (in 1916) for more “abstract” and de-contextualized forms of knowledge. The use of written language as a medium to transmit experiences bears the risk of being too disconnected from the experiences of children. For Dewey the value of knowledge is subordinate to its use in the thinking process. And thinking becomes secondary if too much emphasis is placed on passive knowledge. The result will be that instruction becomes sterile and will not have any practical consequence (or persistent effect) (Dewey, 2000 [1916]: 151). If “civics” is not woven into the fabric of everyday school life, but instead becomes a separate subject matter in the formal curriculum, politics run the risk to become too “bookish”. If political education emphasizes the transmission of factual information on the functioning of the government (elections, the parliament / congress, the constitution...), on important events in the history of a nation (independence, wars), or on striking personalities or exceptional political events, the transmitted information runs the risk of bearing no practical consequences (Kavadias, 2004).

Dewey conceived the school as a simplified context, specifically designed to induce learning experiences. Schools can indeed be seen as “controlled” environments. If we follow his line of reasoning, classrooms can be compared to a laboratory experiment. The surroundings are kept

constant and pupils get the stimuli of a simplified scale model of the surrounding world. The goal of this educational experiment is to stimulate mental and moral dispositions (Durkheim, 1925; Dewey, 1976 [1938], 2000 [1916], 2001 [1912]). In order to obtain a democratic outlook on the world, this scale model should be democratically organized and as such incorporate the possibilities to discuss relevant social matters. Students should be enabled to make up their mind and even disagree with the moral authority in the classroom, the teacher. As a consequence they should also feel confident to participate in that experimental scale model. In short, from this perspective, an open and democratic classroom and school climate should be helpful to stimulate the transmission of democratic attitudes. It is a meaningful educational experience for children: it adds meaning and sense to their day-to-day experiences.

This corresponds with more recent studies which demonstrated that citizenship was not so much achieved as a result of what pupils are taught, but by the way in which the school is organised (e.g., Hepburn, 1984; Niemi & Junn, 1998; Owen, 1996). Schools with an open democratic climate can produce pupils with a greater sense of solidarity (Ehman, 1980), with greater confidence in politics and democracy (Ehman, 1980; Hahn, 1998; Harwood, 1992; Hepburn, 1984), with more tolerant and respectful attitudes towards others (Harber & Trafford, 1999; Osler & Starkey, 1998), i.e. with more democratic values (Finkel & Ernst, 2005; Perliger, et al., 2006). Teaching democratic citizenship is most successful in a democratic setting where participation is encouraged, where opinions can be openly expressed and discussed and where there is freedom of expression for pupils and teachers (Birzea, 1996; Campbell, 2005; Osler, 1997). The existence of more formal possibilities for pupils to participate and express their views (e.g. a student council) also appear to be important in the context of young people's education for citizenship (Emler & Frazer, 1999; Harwood, 1992; Webb, 1979).

In this paper we will try to compare these two tracks within political socialization studies: those who consider "teaching politics" versus those who see "experiencing democracy" as the most efficient tools in citizenship education. Since we do not have information on the participation in civics courses on the level of the student,² we will test the impact of political knowledge (as a proxy for formal civic education) versus the openness of the classroom environment/(confidence in) school participation. We expect the impact of experienced democracy in the classroom and school environment to be more important than the influence of political knowledge.

Data and methodology

The current analysis draws on the data from the Civic Education Study (CivEd), compiled by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) in 1999.³ At this stage the IEA CivEd data is the most extensive database on civic education. The researchers gathered data of nearly 90,000 students (approximately 14 years of age), 9,600 teachers and 4,200 school principals from 4,136 schools in 28 countries or regions (Torney-Purta et al. 2001). The study includes a wide set of instruments, like a validated measure for civic knowledge and skills, but also a large number of political attitude scales, as well as social background measures (Schulz & Sibberns, 2004).

In order to assess the impact of knowledge and experience on attitudes we restrict ourselves to 'attitudes towards ethnic minorities'. The literature distinguishes different forms of attitudes towards immigrants, among other things racism as the belief in the innate superiority of one's race, new racism (Barker, 1981; Pettigrew, 1979), symbolic racism (Kinder & Sears, 1981), and ethnocentrism (Felling, Peters & Scheepers, 1986). Kleinpenning and Hagendoorn (1993) and Verberk (1999) found such concepts to be distinct, but quite strongly related. Symbolic racism, new racism as well as ethnocentrism, all entail belief in the cultural superiority of the ethnic majority and measure the extent people feel threatened by minorities (Elchardus & Siongers, 2007). Ethnocentrism and racism might be seen as attitudes which are antipodal to the democratic ideal of emancipation and civic engagement (Angvik & Von Borries, 1997; Hahn, 1998; Levinson, 1969). Since CivEd does not have measures depicting the level of ethnocentrism or racism, we chose a measure reflecting a positive attitude towards (the rights) of ethnic minorities as our dependent variable (Schulz & Sibberns, 2004). Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the dependent variable.

[Take in Table 1 about here]

In order to assess the influence of student variables measured on different levels of analysis (individual information, school variables and country measures) we have to tackle two problems. The first problem has to do with the composition of the pupils in each school and country. Schools are seldom a random sample of the population at large. Often they exhibit an over- or under-representation in terms of social categories. Some schools recruit pupils from higher social strata, while others, e.g. as a consequence of their regional setting, reputation or even mission statement recruit more students from lower status groups. If the relevant individual characteristics are left out of the equation, we would not be able to differentiate between country, school or compositional effects.

One must not only take into account the influence of background characteristics, but also the

way in which the data were collected, clustered by school and by country. In order to deal with the problem of clustered data we use multilevel models (Snijders & Bosker, 1999). We fit multivariate models in which we try to account for possible clustering effects on the level of the schools and, on the highest level, the nation.

At the individual level, we test the influence of civic knowledge/skills, open class climate, general confidence in school participation and actual participation in the student council, after which we control for the social background of the pupils. More precisely we control for gender, cultural capital, media use, language spoken at home, and time spent outside the home. All these measures were based on the individual responses of students. Cultural capital is a standardized measure consisting of the education level of the parents, the number of books at home and the educational aspirations of the student. The continuous measures were transformed into standardized scores (z-scores).

At the school level we introduce two kinds of variables. Firstly, aggregated student predictors are used to test the impact of the concentration of pupils with certain knowledge, perception and practices. We used the average degree of knowledge, the average degree of confidence in participation, the average perception of an open classroom climate and the percentage of students participating in the school council as school related predictors. It is important to distinguish between effects on the student and the classroom/school level because otherwise it will not be possible to deduce from the results whether possible effects of these measures are related only through the individual perception, knowledge or participation of students or whether the common perception, knowledge or participation of students has an effect. Secondly, we include information obtained from the school principals to evaluate the impact of possible specific approaches to civic education: school participation in special civics programs, teachers specialized in civic education, teachers' coverage of civic education subjects in their lessons, and the existence of a student council.

In order to answer our main research question (whether “teaching” or “experiencing” is crucial) we tend to focus on the individual and the school level. The IEA-dataset however consists of different political systems. We do not have explicit hypotheses about the influence of regional/national characteristics on ethnic tolerance. These are discussed elsewhere (e.g. Hooghe, Kavadias & Reeskens, 2006; Kavadias & De Maeyer, 2007). However, as we're interested in the impact of schools on ethnic tolerance, we also try to control for the composition of each political system in terms of ethnic groups. Countries can vary greatly in the number of immigrants and ethnic population, which might have its effect on attitudes towards ethnic minorities. To this end we control for the number of immigrants (UN, 2000) and the degree of ethnic, religious or linguistic fractionalization (Alesina, Devleeschauwer,

Easterly, Kurlat & Wacziarg, 2003), of each country/region in the dataset.

The different independent variables are summarized in table 2.

[Take in Table 2 about here]

The used “three level” analysis consists of a number of steps. First of all, a “null model” is estimated. This model is “empty” because it does not incorporate any explanatory variables. However, it enables us to distinguish between the variances in the dependent variable at different analytical levels (in our case pupils, schools and countries). On the basis of the distinct variances for each level, we can estimate the Variance Partitioning Coefficients. This coefficient gives an indication of the total “school” and “country” effects.

We would like to assess the impact of civic knowledge and democratic school experiences on the attitudes towards immigrants. We therefore introduce, in a next step (model 1), our main variables: civic knowledge, openness of the classroom climate, general confidence in school participation and the participation in the school council. This first model gives an approximation of the uncontrolled impact of these variables.

The association between our core variables could, however, be biased by crucial background characteristics. We are not only interested in the crude association between these variables, but also in the net impact of knowledge or experience. We should be able to point out if schools vary in their degree of tolerance, when the input of schools (in terms of their social composition) is taken into account. The second model therefore controls for the social background of the pupils.

In the third and fourth model we test the school related characteristics. The third model introduces some crucial variables gathered by the school questionnaires. It assesses the impact of the degree of coverage of civic related topics, the presence of specialized teachers (for civic related subjects), the participation of the school in civic related projects, and the existence of a student council. This model is strictly speaking not valid for the whole dataset, as we are confronted with enormous amounts of missing cases in some countries.

The fourth model again uses the information gathered by the individual student questionnaires. It tests the impact of the school average scores on knowledge, confidence in participation, open classroom climate and participation in the school council. In this model we also control for the degree of ethnic fractionalization, as well as for the presence/absence of immigrants (measured as a percentage of the total population) in the political system.

Up to now, we were only concerned with the overall impact of knowledge and experience. We

assumed the relation between these characteristics and our dependent variable to be the same in all political systems. In a last model, we test this assumption. The last model, a random slopes model, will give us an indication whether the degree of knowledge, classroom climate and participation has the same influence on ethnic tolerance, in the different countries of this dataset, or not.

Findings and Discussion

The results of the analyses are summarized in table 3. The null model in this table gives an indication of the variances associated with the level of the country and the level of the school. The Variance Partitioning Coefficient (VPC) provides estimates of the proportion of variance associated with the level of the country or the level of the schools.

[Take in Table 3 about here]

The VPC on the level of the countries varies between 3,5% and 3,7%. We can assume that about 3,5% of the total variance in the answers on the rating scale for a positive attitude towards immigrants can be attributed to country features. The magnitude of these VPC's are very modest in contrast to VPC's on outcomes for e.g. mathematics or reading skills, which can amount up to one third of the total variance (in PISA 2003 the country level variation in math-skills amounted up to 28%). The “school effects” as measured by the VPC's for the school level, are even smaller (between 2,5% and 2,9%). The analysis of repartition of variance suggests that countries and schools do not differ that much in our dependent variable. The “supra individual” variation (expressed as the sum of the 2 VPC's) amounts up to about 7% of the total variation.⁴ For math skills in the PISA database roughly half of the variation (47%) could be attributed to systematic variation on the level of the country or the school (OECD 2004).

The last column of table 3 provides us with a clue on the goodness of fit, expressed as an R square, of the estimated models. Remark that models I to III provide negative R-square values. These negative “explained variances” indicate a misspecification of the model (Snijders & Bosker, 1994, 1999).

Table 4 summarizes the effect parameters for the models I to IV. The first model provides rough information on the association between the core explanatory variables and the dependent variable. We assumed civic knowledge would not influence tolerance as much as the other variables.

[Take in Table 4 about here]

The influence of knowledge on tolerance is not what we would have expected. An increase in knowledge is associated with a small but significant increase in positive attitudes towards immigrants ($\beta=0.09$). This finding is in line with the Galston-conclusion and contradicts a radical interpretation of the Dewey-hypothesis: civic knowledge partially affects democratic attitudes. The impact of the presence of an open classroom climate is from the same magnitude. Both students displaying a high political knowledge and experiencing an open classroom climate appear to have more positive attitudes towards immigrants. The strongest impact, however, comes from the degree of confidence in school participation ($\beta=0.28$). Students who believe school life and policy can be efficiently influenced by student participation and students acting together, have a much higher ethnic tolerance. Surprisingly the degree of participation in student councils has a negative impact on our dependent variable: students that participate more are less likely to be positive towards immigrants. However, we have to be cautious: although significant (on $p<0,05$), this effect is very weak.

The next models confirm the found associations. Model II controls for background characteristics, but does not alter our conclusions regarding the influence of knowledge and class/school climate. Even after controlling for the background of the students, we notice a significant effect of knowledge, classroom climate and especially confidence in school participation on ethnic tolerance. We notice that girls are more positive towards immigrants and that the language spoken at home is strongly associated with tolerance (or the absence of tolerance). The other background variables have no or a negligible impact on our dependent variable. Considering the large amount of publications pointing at the impact of education on ethnic tolerance, the absence of an effect of cultural capital can be considered surprising.

The third model gauges the influence of efforts of the schools to work on civics education. However, none of the tested variables proved to be significant (see similar results for the intention to vote in Hooghe et al., 2006). This does not have to imply that schools do not have any effect. Our first model has shown that school experiences of the pupils have a considerate effect on their attitudes towards minorities, whether it is through knowledge, an open classroom climate or attitudes towards school participation. Apparently these variables are more important than the way schools actually organize civics activities, lessons or projects. However, we have to mention that this model has a large amount of missing values, resulting from the unwillingness of some school principals to fill out their school questionnaire. This means we have to be careful with the interpretation of these results.

Looking at the impact of the aggregated measures of knowledge and classroom environment

in model IV (table 4) we cannot but notice the limited impact of the school average variables. The school average scores on civic knowledge and open classroom climate are negatively associated with a positive attitude towards immigrants, but these results are statistically not significant (on $p < 0,05$). Only the percentage of pupils participating in the student council has a positive effect. Students tend to be more tolerant of immigrants in schools with a high percentage of students participating in the student council (regardless of their own participation in the student council). This means a high participation culture in schools could be a possible way to foster ethnic tolerance in students. However, on the whole, the individual knowledge and perceptions of students are much more important than the aggregated variables.

Model IV also provides a control on some relevant country level variables. Interestingly, only the used measure for ethnic fractionalization is positively associated with a positive attitude towards immigrants. Although fractionalization, measured as the probability that two randomly selected individuals from a population belong to different ethnic groups, has been found to be negatively associated with economic success, welfare & policy quality and the quality of institutions (Alesina et al., 2003), we find students to be more tolerant in ethnically fractionalized countries.

An interesting feature of multilevel models is the possibility to explore patterns in covariance of the random-terms on different levels. Put differently: we can look at the degree to which the general pattern holds in different countries. Model V (table 5) builds on model IV with this difference that we allowed the variances on the country level to differ for our three core variables, i.e. knowledge, classroom climate and confidence in participation. The participation in the student council is left out due to its small effect.

[Take in Table 5 about here]

The fixed parameters (the general model) do not change dramatically. The only difference is the waning of the effect of ethnic fractionalization. The most interesting features of random slopes models, however, are the variance components (table 6).

[Take in Table 6 about here]

According to Model V the association between knowledge and ethnocentrism is not constant for all countries (correlation of 0,39). The same holds for the association between ethnocentrism on the one hand, knowledge and an open classroom climate between countries on the other hand.

[Take in Figure 1 about here]

While in some countries, like in Latvia, the association between knowledge and tolerance seems to be absent (general parameter 0,09 minus residual of 0,07=0,02), other countries like Italy exhibit a stronger association (0,09+0,09=0,18). Similarly, in some countries there is no effect of an open classroom climate on the attitudes towards immigrants (e.g. Switzerland – 0,09-0,09=0,0), whereas in other countries like in Sweden we notice a quite strong effect (0,09+0,11=0,20). This means that we should in part try to look at country-specific characteristics for those countries in which there are strong effects of “learning politics” and/or “experiencing democracy”, in comparison to their “underachieving” counterparts.

Conclusion

The higher the perceived importance of civic education, the more we need to understand the processes which make this kind of education effective. In this paper we tried to analyze the impact of several individual, school related and country specific variables on one politically relevant attitude: the attitudes towards immigrants. Our starting point was a doubt about the impact of civic knowledge on attitudes. Although the didactics of civic education have changed thoroughly, classroom-based teaching of political knowledge and history is still largely abstract. At the same time we thought the informal organization of the classroom and school environment to be more important. The possibility to discuss and to disagree within the classroom environment was seen as a more powerful way to pursue civic educational experiences.

We analyzed the impact of knowledge together with indicators for the classroom and school climate, using the IEA CivEd data in 28 countries or regions. CivEd represents the most extensive database on civic education so far; although we have to mention that the attitudinal scales exhibit a very low degree of variance (as compared to other political attitude scales). Broadly speaking, the impact of schools operates mainly like Dewey supposed at the beginning of the 20th century. By means of subtle unconscious mechanisms, role models and participatory practices pupils are subject to a hidden curriculum. It is important that schools offer their pupils at least the opportunity to participate in the democratic formation of some aspects of school life. An open classroom climate is an important asset if a school wants to promote civic engagement. Not only does the opportunity to participate matter, students should also feel confident that student participation can be influential. Nevertheless, there remains an important association between civic knowledge and ethnic tolerance. Students who

know more about political institutions, history, and so on, are also more positive towards immigrant populations. One might say that civic knowledge partially ‘spills over’ into attitudes, albeit not overwhelmingly. Anyhow, the results seem to support a more thoughtful approach in the discussion between knowledge and democratic experience; both seem to matter.

The analysis also indicates that the aggregated school variables have a much more modest impact on our dependent variable than what we could have expected from a school culture perspective (Reynolds & Teddlie, 2001). The school average scores on knowledge, confidence in participation and open class climate tend to be statistically and intrinsically insignificant. Only the percentage of students participating in the student council seems to have a positive effect on ethnic tolerance in a school.

Finally, although we “only” have a set of 28 countries, we tried to look at the stability of the overall pattern between the different countries. The findings of the random slopes models point out for the need for a more differentiated and country-specific analysis. The relationship between knowledge and attitudes towards immigrants for example is completely absent in some political systems, while it is prominent in others. A systematic comparison of these “over-” and “underachievers” might shed some light on the conditions under which civic knowledge tends to become ‘relevant’ for adolescents, as far as their attitudes are concerned. Our current analysis is but a step in our search for conditions or factors in classroom and school environments which promote a more democratic outlook on the world.

Notes

1. Work in progress.
2. We do have information from the school principals as to possible specific approaches to civic education in the target grade, but do not know to what degree the students have been in contact with these approaches. However, we will control for these approaches in our models.
3. The data can be accessed at http://www.iea.nl/cived_datasets.html (last access on July the 2nd 2008).
4. Similar results were found for other scales of CivEd, like “trust in government-related institutions” and “attitudes towards women’s political and economic rights” (Kavadias & De Mayer, 2007).

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Appendices

Confidence in school participation

Electing student representatives to suggest changes in how the school is run [how to solve school problems] makes schools better
--

Lots of positive changes happen in this school when students work together
--

Organizing groups of students to state their opinions could help solve problems in this school
--

Students acting together [in groups] can have more influence on what happens in this school than students acting alone [by themselves]
--

Cronbach's alpha: 0,69

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Categories: strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree

Classroom climate

Students feel free to disagree openly with their teachers about political and social issues during class
Students are encouraged to make up their own minds about issues
Teachers respect our opinions and encourage us to express them during class
Students feel free to express opinions in class even when their opinions are different from most of the other students
Teachers encourage us to discuss political or social issues about which people have different opinions
Teachers present several sides of [positions on] an issue when explaining it in class

Cronbach's alpha: 0,77

Categories: strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree

Table 1: Scale characteristics of the Dependent Variable, 'Positive attitude towards immigrants' (n=91.080 unweighted cases)

1. Immigrants should have the opportunity [option] to keep [continue speaking] their own language
 2. Immigrants' children should have the same opportunities for education than other children in the country have
 3. Immigrants who live in a country for several years should have the opportunity to vote in elections
 4. Immigrants should have the opportunity [option] to keep [continue] their own customs of lifestyle
 5. Immigrants should have all the same rights that everyone else in a country has
-

Cronbach's Alpha: $a = 0,82$

n missing = 2.485

Table 2: Independent Variables (n=93.564)

		n missing
Individual level		
Core variables	Civic knowledge and skills (Z-score Rasch Scale)	0
	Openness of classroom climate (Z-score rating scale)	3.595
	Confidence in (positive influence) of school participation (Z-score rating scale)	3.009
	Participation in school council (dummy, 0=no)	0
<hr/>		
Background	Gender (dummy, 0=Boy)	469
Variabels	Language at home (dummy, 0= other than test language)	638
	Cultural capital (standardized - Optimal Scaling Variable)	0
	Newspaper subscription (dummy, 0= no subscription)	892
	TV watching (dummy, 0=less than 3h/day)	3.718
	Time spent outside house (dummy, 0= less than few times each month)	1.645
<hr/>		
School level	Home-room teacher covering civic related topics	15.568
	Specialized teacher for civic subjects	15.447
	School participating in civic-related projects	8.496
	Existence of school council	8.068
	Average degree of civic knowledge	0
	Average degree of open classroom climate	0
	Average degree of confidence in school participation	0
	Percentage of pupils participating in student council	0
<hr/>		
Country level	Degree of ethnic fractionalization (broad measure of ethnicity taking language and racial characteristics into account - based on different sources, mainly the Encyclopedia Britannica (2001), CIA, and other data sources; Alesina et al., 2003)	0
	Degree of religious fractionalization (measure strictly based on religion -based on data from the Encyclopedia Britannica (2001); Alesina et al., 2003)	0
	Degree of linguistic fractionalization (measure strictly based on language - based on data from the Encyclopedia Britannica (2001), which reports the shares of languages spoken as "mother tongues", generally based on national census data; Alesina et al., 2003)	0
	% of immigrants (of population): people born outside country or non-citizens (depending on source) (including refugees) (UN, 2000)	0

Table 3. Variance components models 0 to IV, Positive attitude towards migrants – 3 levels

Model	Level	Variance Comp.	S.E.	R ²
0	Country	0,037	0,000	
	School	0,029	0,000	
	Individual Student	0,935	0,000	
	VPC Country	3,7%		
	VPC School	2,9%		
I	Country	0,021	0,056	43,2%
	School	0,031	0,002	-6,9%
	Individual Student	0,823	0,000	12,0%
	VPC Country	2,4%		
	VPC School	3,5%		
II	Country	0,024	0,016	35,1%
	School	0,031	0,005	-6,9%
	Individual Student	0,806	0,000	13,8%
	VPC Country	2,8%		
	VPC School	3,6%		
III*	Country	0,024	0,046	35,1%
	School	0,037	0,021	-27,6%
	Individual Student	0,795	0,000	15,0%
	VPC Country	2,8%		
	VPC School	4,3%		
IV	Country	0,030	0,012	18,2%
	School	0,022	0,006	25,3%
	Individual Student	0,806	0,035	13,8%
	VPC Country	3,5%		
	VPC School	2,5%		

* Model III is not nested into the previous models due to the high amounts of missings on the school questionnaire variables.

Tabel 4 Models I to IV: Standardized Fixed Effect Parameters (betas) & Standard Errors on 3 levels (28 countries, 4028 schools, 77.228 pupils except for model III n=64.190)

	Model I	Model II	Model III	Model IV
Intercept	-0,002	0,189	0,185	0,189
Knowledge (Z-score)	0,090***	0,098***	0,095***	0,099***
Open Class (Z-score)	0,102***	0,090***	0,087***	0,091***
Conf. in participation (Z-score)	0,281***	0,274***	0,278***	0,274***
Participation in student council (Z-score)	-0,020*	-0,030**	-0,030**	-0,032**
Gender (0=Male)		0,215***	0,195***	0,215***
Language (0= Other than test language)		-0,289***	-0,306***	-0,290***
Cultural Capital (standardized)		0,013	0,005	0,014
Newspaper subscription (0= no subscription)		-0,041*	-0,030*	-0,040*
TV watching (0=less than 3h/day)		0,018	0,018	0,018
Time spent outside house (0= less than few times each month)		-0,035**	-0,035*	-0,035**
Home-room teacher covering civic related topics			-0,015	
Specialized teacher for civic subjects			0,003	
School participating in civic-related projects			0,005	
Existence of school council			0,035	
Average degree of civic knowledge (Z-score)				-0,038
Average degree of open classr. Climate (Z-score)				-0,074
Average degree of confidence in school participation (Z-score)				0,054
Percentage of pupils participating in student council (Z-score)				0,064**
Ethnic fractionalization				0,098*
Religious fractionalization				(-0,021)
Linguistic fractionalization				(0,066)
% Immigrants				0,00

* p<0,05; ** p<0,01; *** p<0,001

Table 5. Models IV & V: Standardized Fixed Effect Parameters (betas) & Standard Errors on 3 levels (28 countries, 4028 schools, 77.228 pupils)

	Model IV	Model V
Intercept	0,189	0,180
Knowledge (Z-score)	0,099***	0,090***
Open class (Z-score)	0,091***	0,091***
Conf. in participation (Z-score)	0,274***	0,268***
Participation in student council (Z-score)	-0,032**	-0,031**
Gender (0=Male)	0,215***	0,216***
Language (0= Other than test language)	-0,290***	-0,294***
Cultural Capital (standardized)	0,014	0,018*
Newspaper subscription (0= no subscription)	-0,040*	-0,042*
TV watching (0=less than 3h/day)	0,018	0,019
Time spend outside house (0= less than few times each month)	-0,035**	-0,033*
Average degree of civic knowledge (Z-score)	-0,038	-0,040
Average degree of open classr. climate (Z-score)	-0,074	-0,070
Average degree of confidence in participation at school (Z-score)	0,054	0,055
Percentage of pupils participating in student council (Z-score)	0,064**	0,055**
Ethnic fractionalization	0,098*	0,082

Table 6. Variance components for Model V: Random slopes on level 3 for 3 variables (28 countries, 4028 schools, 77.228 pupils)

Level	Covariance	Estimate	SE	Wald	Correlation
3	cons/cons	0,03247	0,01172	2,770	1
3	ZKNOW/cons	0,003414	0,001679	2,033	0,388
3	ZKNOW/ZKNOW	0,002389	0,0004473	5,341	1
3	ZCCLIM/cons	0,0008661	0,001203	0,720	0,134
3	ZCCLIM/ZKNOW	0,0009065	0,0003829	2,367	0,516
3	ZCCLIM/ZCCLIM	0,00129	0,0004407	2,927	1
3	ZConfP/cons	0,004341	0,003055	1,421	0,407
3	ZConfP/ZKNOW	0,0004287	0,0006492	0,660	0,148
3	ZConfP/ZCCLIM	0,0001237	0,0003645	0,339	0,058
3	ZConfP/ZConfP	0,003496	0,001881	1,859	1
2	cons/cons	0,0194	0,004701	4,127	1
1	cons/cons	0,7988	0,03487	22,908	

Figure 1: Countries ranked according to the magnitude of the association on level 3

