

**The impact of social desirability in the International Civics and Citizenship  
Education Study ICCS 2009 Student Questionnaires**

**Author: Catalina Covacevich, Ministry of Education, Chile**

**Email: [Catalina.covacevich@mineduc.cl](mailto:Catalina.covacevich@mineduc.cl)**

## **Abstract**

Questions in questionnaires are rarely neutral, and the impact of social desirability is among the most mentioned possible validity problems. However this is a very difficult element to measure, and it's impact has not been as widely studied as could be expected.

This exploratory study aims at identifying the impact of social desirability (SD) in the answers given by Chilean students to the ICCS 2009 International Student Questionnaire and the Latin-American Questionnaire.

Both questionnaires were administered to a sample of students, together with the Marlowe Crowne Social Desirability Scale (that was used to obtain an individual score of social desirability). For each item of the questionnaires, the students were grouped according to the answer given to the item, and the average scores obtained by each of these groups in the SD scale were compared using one factor analysis of variance (ANOVA). If there was a significant difference among the averages, it was assumed that there is a relationship between SD and the answers to the item.

The findings are that approximately 30% of the Latin American items and 20% of the international ones appear to be related to social desirability in a way that could affect their validity, but it does not seem to overall affect the whole instruments. The international questionnaire topics strongly related to social desirability are: students' trust in civic institutions, their perceptions of student- teacher relations at school, their interest in politics and social issues, and their sense of internal political efficacy. In the Latin-American instrument they are student attitudes towards the use of violence, student feelings of empathy towards classmates, and students' personal experience of physical and verbal abuse at school.

*Key words: Questionnaire validity - social desirability*

## INTRODUCTION

### *ICCS 2009 student questionnaires*

Chile is one of the 38 countries that participated in the IEA's<sup>1</sup> International Civics and Citizenship Education Study ICCS 2009. The purpose of this study is to research in various countries the ways that young people are prepared to assume their roles as citizens in the XXI century. In most countries the target population is eighth grade.

It gathers information through different instruments:

- an international student test
- an international student questionnaire
- an international teacher questionnaire
- an international school questionnaire (answered by headmasters)

These instruments are compulsory for all participating countries. There are also regional modules, which in the case of the Latin-American module included an extra test and an extra questionnaire for students of participating Latin American countries.

ICCS puts a special emphasis on assessing not only civic knowledge, but also student's attitudes and dispositions related to civic and citizenship, information that is obtained through the student questionnaires. These questionnaires also gather information about student's activities and background.

Both the International and the Latin-American student questionnaires are formed by questions composed by a battery of items. The items are Lickert scales, with 3 to 5 answer categories. The Latin American questionnaire has 12 questions about attitudes, formed by 4 to 9 items each, with a total of 83 items. The international questionnaire has 36 questions, of which 11 are about student background and the rest about opinion, attitudes and activities, these last ones with a total of 158 items. For the reporting of

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<sup>1</sup> International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement

results the items were grouped in scales according to the dimensions they cover. There are 24 scales in the International Questionnaire and 9 in the Latin-American one. Some few items were not included in any scale but can be reported individually.

Many different countries with different cultural backgrounds participate in the study. This justifies researching more deeply into how the students interpret the questions and what cognitive and emotional mechanisms operate when answering them. It must be noted that both the interpretations and the mechanisms might vary from country to country.

### *Social desirability as a validity issue*

One of the factors that most affect the validity in any self administered questionnaires is the simulation or distortion of who answers them. Most questionnaire items have an answer easily recognizable as more socially acceptable or socially desirable than the others, referred to behaviors perceived as culturally acceptable, so some subjects might choose these answers independently of what he/she thinks the item is trying to measure (De las Cuevas & Gonzalez de Rivera, 1992).

Social desirability is to present a distorted image of who one is, or of what one thinks or believes, due to the need of social approval. Although this need is inherent to all human beings, some people have higher social desirability than others (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960). People also seek for more or less social approval depending on the situation: people might distort their image to align with what he /she perceives that the situation or the examiner wants or needs (Cabañeros, García Cueto, Lozano, 2003).

A classic example of adapting to the situation is that when individuals are being assessed for a job they really want or need, their need of social approval is high, so they distort their answers to fit with what they recognize as socially desirable (Seisdedos, 1985; Nunally, 1987, De las Cuevas & Gonzalez de Rivera, 1992). Another example of adjusting the answers according to the situation is that the same teenager that might present himself as against alcohol consumption in front of his teachers, parents or especially of his girlfriend's parents, can present a totally different attitude in front of his peers (Cabañeros, García Cueto, Lozano, 2003).

Not only does the content of social desirability vary from culture to culture, it's strength also varies. For example, Shultz y Chávez (1994) describe that Latin-Americans have higher social desirability than other groups.

It also seems to be influenced by age. Since the image presented to oneself is particularly important for teenagers, social desirability is likely to become more important to them than for adults (Lemos, 2005).

Social desirability has been little studied in Chile: there are no national assessments of it, no published measures of it's impact on questionnaires about civic and citizenship related issues, and no official adaptations of the most used social desirability scales. However, unpublished adaptations of these scales have been used in some studies to validate the answers of questionnaires that are suspected of being sensitive to social desirability (for example, Mladinic et al, 1998).

The literature review that was conducted found no studies about the impact of social desirability on the results of CIVED, IEA's previous study on civic education. And there is no official information about this topic in regards to ICCS. However, it is recognized as a possible influence by the technical staff in charge of the study when referring to the analysis conducted on the items: *“Review of percentages across categories will be computed by the IEA DPC and will provide information about the possible skew of items. For example, certain Likert type items may attract an overwhelming majority of agreeing responses and hardly any disagreement. This may be due to social desirability or to a “common sense nature” of an item with which it is hard to disagree”* (Schulz, 2008, p.18).

### *Research problem*

From the above information it can be concluded that ICCS 2009 questionnaires are not exempt from possible bias due to social desirability. In this study the context is that students know that they are representing their countries, so they might be guided by the motivation to make their countries look good when answering. The students assessed by the study are teenagers, so according to Lemos (2005) they are particularly sensitive to issues related social desirability and the construction of self image. So it is not clear to

what extent the questionnaires assess what students actually think and believe, or rather what they identify as culturally correct and thus as socially desirable. This leads to validity issues, since it is not clear what construct is really being assessed.

We must also take into account that there are different countries participating, and that the relevance given to social desirability and the definition of what is considered socially desirable varies among countries according to their cultures. So in the worst scenario, the comparability among countries could be affected, since in some cases in certain topics we might be assessing what students believe, and in others what they think is socially desirable to answer. These differences might also happen inside countries, if they have cultural variety.

This exploratory study investigates the possible impact of social desirability on the answers given by Chilean students to the International and the Latin-American ICCS Questionnaires. It is based on the questions: Is the validity of these questionnaires affected by social desirability? To what extent are we measuring what our students really think, or rather what they identify as socially adequate? The study's hypotheses are that social desirability has an impact on some answers, not on all, and that this impact varies according to the topic. The study's general objective is to identify which items and scales are related with social desirability and to what extent this may impact the overall validity of the answers. Its specific objectives are to:

- identify and describe which items are related to social desirability and which ones are not
- identify which answers are socially desirable in each case
- based on each scales' items' relationship with social desirability, describe which questionnaire scales show a relationship with social desirability and which ones do not.
- identify how many questionnaire items and scales have a relationship with social desirability and how this might affect the total validity of each questionnaire

This study has a double purpose: At a local level, it aims at having more information to adequately interpret the results of our country in ICCS 2009, in reference to the validity of the answers given to the questionnaires. At a more global level, it is an exploratory

study that aims at investigating the little researched but undeniably relevant topic of the influence of social desirability in self administered questionnaires.

## **METHOD**

### *Analyses*

If a questionnaire item is related to social desirability, it can be expected that students who give different answers to that item differ in their level of social desirability. For example, those who answer “totally agree” would have a higher social desirability than those who answer “totally disagree”. On the other hand, in items that have no relationship with social desirability, there should be no differences among the social desirability of students who give different answers.

In order to be able to relate the answers to the questionnaires with social desirability, it is necessary to have a social desirability measure. The instrument used was the Marlowe-Crowne Scale of Social Desirability.

The ICCS 2009 International Student Questionnaire, the ICCS 2009 Latin-American Questionnaire and the Marlowe-Crowne Scale of Social Desirability were administered to a sample of students. The score obtained from the Marlowe-Crowne Scale was used as a measure of each student’s social desirability.

For each item the students were classified according to the answer they had given to that item, and the average social desirability score of each group was calculated. Then these averages were compared to see if they were statistically different. In other words, the

average social desirability score of students who answered “strongly agree” in a certain item were compared with the average scores of the students that answered “agree”, “strongly disagree”, etc. The comparison was done with a one factor analysis of variance ANOVA (significance at 95%)<sup>2</sup>. Response categories that had less than 30 cases were not included in the analysis.

This analysis allows to discriminate if each item has or not a relationship with social desirability, by identifying if there are differences between any of the averages, but it does not give any information about what answers were socially desirable in each case. To answer this question, the social desirability averages of each group were compared in the items where a relationship with social desirability was identified. Larger numbers indicate more social desirability, and smaller numbers, less<sup>3</sup>.

The unit of analysis used for the analysis was each item, because the goal was to identify with as much precision as possible specific topics that could be related to social desirability. However, for the presentation of results the items are grouped according to the scales they belong to, and both items and scales are considered for the discussion.

### *Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale*

The chosen instrument was the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale. This is one of the most widely used social desirability scales, it has been quoted in over 3.600 research papers and even though it was developed in 1960 it is still popular (Barger, 2002; Twenge & Im, 2007, in Cosentino & Castro, 2008). It has abbreviated versions, and has been officially translated and validated in many countries, among them several Spanish speaking countries. Though designed for adults, it has been successfully used with older children and teenagers (for example, Watkins, 1996, used an abbreviated version for 12-13 year olds). A description of the scale and of its reference values for different populations is available in the appendix.

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<sup>2</sup> Note: This analysis allows identifying which items have a relationship with social desirability, by comparing all groups, and indicating if there are significant differences between any of them. It does not identify how many groups have significant differences nor which groups they are. This research is the first step of a larger validation study that also identifies which groups are the ones who have significant differences, and what is the socially desirable answer in every item.

<sup>3</sup> This was checked with Tukey’s multiple comparison analysis, that compares the averages of pairs, to see between what pairs of answers were the significant differences.

Since there are no published adaptations for Chile, a translation was done based on the Argentinean version and an unpublished Chilean version. It was piloted with an eight grade class before administering it to the study's sample.

When applied to the study's sample, the mean was 19, and the Standard deviation 4.9, values similar to those obtained with other populations (see appendix). There were no significant differences between the averages of girls and boys, or between student from private and subsidized schools. All 33 items were used<sup>4</sup>.

### *Sample*

The sample was 437 students from 16 schools of the commune of Recoleta in Santiago. In each school one whole eighth grade class was sampled. Half of the schools were public and the other half subsidized.

-----*Insert table 1 here*-----

Due to practical limitations and to the exploratory nature of the study, the sample was not a representative sample of the country. Eighth grade was chosen because this was the target population for Chile for ICCS. Recoleta was chosen because it is big commune and its social- economic distribution is similar to the national distribution<sup>5</sup>. Only public and subsidized schools were selected, because these are over 90% of all schools in the country. The sampling of schools was stratified and random. One class was randomly selected when there was more than one eighth grade class per school.

The tests were administered between May and June of 2009 by an external examiner. The ICCS questionnaires were administered first, following ICCS administration guidelines.

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<sup>4</sup> Some confiability checks (item-test correlation, Cronbach's Alpha, factorial analysis) were done before deciding to keep all 33 items.

<sup>5</sup> In Chile samples are usually stratified according to social economic level, because we have many social economic differences and this variable usually helps to explains results in school settings

## RESULTS

In appendixes 1 and 2 there are two tables that present all the questionnaires' items, grouped by the scales they belong to. They also include the items that were not included in any scales. For each item it is indicated if the item has a relationship with social desirability or not (it was considered that there was when there were significant differences between the average social desirability of students who gave different answers).

If a relationship was found, it is also indicated what is the socially desirable answer in each case, either to agree with what the item is saying or to disagree with it. The tendency was that the more students agreed with the answer, the larger the average social desirability of the group that chose that answer. In general the desirable thing was to agree with the item, and. In a few cases the social desirable thing was to disagree with the answer.

A way of making the information easier to analyze is considering the scales as the unit of analysis, and categorizing them according to their relationship with social desirability. The categories were: strongly related, if at least half of their items are; slightly related if less than half of their items are, and not related at all; if none of their items are. The following table shows how many items each scale has, how many of them are related with social desirability, and to what of the previous categories every scale falls into. It also specifies how many scales of each instrument fall into each category.

-----*Insert tables 2 and 3 here*-----

Another way summarizing the information is considering only the items, and not the scales. According to this analysis, 34 out of the 158 international items and 24 out of the 83 Latin-American ones are related with social desirability.

The results are briefly described in the following paragraphs. It is recommended to consider tables 1 and 2 of the appendix when reading them, to be able to look at the scales, items and questions that are being mentioned.

#### *Scales unrelated to social desirability*

As can be observed in the tables, there are scales that seem to present no relationship with social desirability, since none of their items present significant differences between the social desirability average of students who gave different answers. In these cases it can be concluded that the validity of these items is not affected by social desirability.

In the Latin American Module this is the case for three of the nine scales: student's sense of Latin-American identity, student attitudes towards corrupt practices in government and student attitudes towards disobeying the law.

Thirteen of the 24 scales of the International Questionnaire present no relationship with social desirability, and the topics of these scales are very versatile, such as students' civic participation at school, students' attitudes towards the influence of religion on society and students' attitudes towards equal rights for all ethnic/racial groups.

#### *Scales where some items are related with social desirability*

There are other scales where though most of the items present no significant differences between the average social desirability of students who gave different answers, one or two of them do. This shows that even though scales measure one dimension, different items belonging to the same scale can present differences in their relationship with social desirability. This is the case for 3 of the Latin American Module scales and for six international ones.

In some of these scales, the items that behave differently seem to be measuring something slightly different. For example, in the Latin American scale about student attitudes towards authoritarianism in government, in 7 of the 9 items no relationship with social desirability was found. However, in two of them there are, and what

distinguishes these from the rest is that they refer specifically to *presidential* authoritarianism, whereas the other items refer to government authoritarianism in general. So while it cannot be concluded that social desirability is related with the general topic of authoritarian government, it does seem to be related specifically with the support towards authoritarian presidents.

Another example of this is the Latin American scale about student's attitudes toward neighborhood diversity. This was asked as how much would students enjoy having people with different characteristics as neighbors. Out of the 10 items that form the scale, only two present significant differences between the social desirability of students who gave different answers. These two refer to people from another nationality or from an indigenous background. So in this case it can be concluded that even though social desirability does not seem to be related in general with statements of who students would like having as neighbors, it does make a difference when talking specifically about people from another nationality or people with an indigenous background, and what is perceived as desirable is to accept them as neighbors. Thus it could be inferred that immigration and integration of people with indigenous background are currently sensitive issues for this generation of students.

In other cases it is not evident what distinguishes items with and without relationship with social desirability. In the International Questionnaire, in the scale about student's perception of the importance of conventional citizenship, 2 out of the 6 items are related with social desirability. The items about *following political issues in the newspaper, on the radio, on TV or on the internet, and showing respect for government representatives*, are related with social desirability: the students with higher social desirability tend to agree more with these statements. However other topics covered by the same scale, such as *engaging in political discussions, learning about the country's history, joining a political party, and voting in every national election*, show no relationship with social desirability.

#### *Scales with a strong relationship with social desirability*

There are some scales that seem strongly related with social desirability, since most of their items (and in many cases all of them) show a relationship with social desirability.

In these cases it can be concluded that social desirability is very likely to be affecting the validity of the answers. Three of the Latin American Module scales and five from the International Questionnaire fall into this category.

In the Latin American Module these stand out from the others in that they are much more personal, they are about personal experiences and not about general statements, like many of the other scales are. Thus they could be described as more emotional than cognitive. These scales are *student attitudes towards the use of violence* (the socially desirable thing is to be against violence) , *student feelings of empathy towards classmates* (the socially desirable thing is to be emphatic), and *students' personal experience of physical and verbal abuse at school* (the socially desirable thing is to not recognize abuse). This last one is a bit different from all the others, because it is not about what a student thinks but a self report of how often the student has been physically or verbally abused at school. When designing the instrument there were long discussions about what was the best way of measuring this. It was thought best to ask the victim and not the potential abuser. However these results show that the answers are very related to social desirability, that victims do want to describe themselves as victims, so it might not be the best way to measure this aspect of school climate.

In the International Questionnaire, not all the scales related to social desirability are related to emotional aspects described above. It is however the case for the scale *student perceptions of student- teacher relations at school*. All the items of this scale show a relationship with social desirability: the socially desirable answer is to describe that students are treated fairly by teachers, they get along well with teachers, teachers are interested in students' well-being, listen to them and are willing to help them if they need it. This scale is also similar to the one *student feelings of empathy towards classmates* in the Latin American Questionnaire, in that they are both statements about school climate.

Other two international scales that show a strong relationship with social desirability (though not in all of their items) are *students' interest in politics and social issues* and *students' sense of internal political efficacy*. Most of these scales' items, such as understanding social and political issues in their countries, and knowing and

understanding about politics, are related with social desirability, and in these cases the socially desirable answer is to declare interest.

Another international scale closely related with social desirability is students' trust in civic institutions. Social desirability is related to all the items of this scale, which refer to the national government, policemen, national congress, and even with all the institutions that did not become part of the scale, such as schools, United Nations and even people in general. In all cases the socially desirable answer is to trust.

The fifth and last international scale that shows a relationship with social desirability is student perceptions of openness in classroom discussions. Half of its items have a relationship with social desirability. What these items seem to have in common is that they are all about students having and expressing opinions (the socially desirable answer is to agree with these statements), whilst the other items have to do with the discussion of current issues or having different angles on a subject.

#### *Questions not included in scales*

As was mentioned above there are several items and even whole questions that were not included in any scale. In most of the cases where a whole question was not included in a scale there is no relationship of the questions with social desirability.

An exception is question 35 from the International Questionnaire, which asks about student's report of how often they assist to religious services. This question does show a relationship with social desirability, and stands out because in this case the students with higher social desirability are not the ones who most agree, but who said they do "at least once a month". Whilst the students with less social desirability say either that they assist every week or never. So it can be concluded that the desirable answer is to express a moderate amount of interest in religious activities, but not too much nor too little.

Question 11 of the Latin-American Module refers to attitudes towards homosexuals. Only the item "homosexuals and lesbians deserve the same rights as the other citizens"

seems sensitive to social desirability, and the socially desirable answer is to agree with statement. Therefore, to recognize homosexuals' citizen rights is related to social desirability, but moral opinions about them, or concrete examples of having equal rights, such as being accepted in the student's school, are not. This is very similar to what occurs in the international scale students' attitudes towards equal rights for immigrants: the only item that is related with social desirability is "Immigrants should have all the same rights that everyone else in the country has", and other items that describe specific rights, such as "Immigrants who live in a country for several years should have the opportunity to vote in elections", are not. So it could be inferred that general declarations of minority's rights is related to social desirability, but this doesn't happen with specific rights.

Questions 1 to 11 of the International Questionnaire are about student background. We had hypothesized that some of these questions might be sensitive to social desirability, because they are about ethnic background or socio economic status, that are sensitive topics where students might want to present themselves differently to how they really are. However, the analysis found no significant differences in the social desirability of students who gave different answers. This might be because the ICCS questionnaires are anonymous. A limitation for this analysis is that some answer categories had very few answers.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

This study reached its objective of identifying and describing which of the questionnaires' items and scales are related with social desirability and which ones are not, in a sample of Chilean students. It also describes for each item what the socially desirable answer is. And it also identified which scales are the most related to social desirability, this warns against possible validity issues that these scales might have for the Chilean population.

The hypotheses of this study, that social desirability would have an impact on some answers, not on all, and that this impact would vary according to the topic that was being treated, were confirmed.

The general questions that guided this study were: Is the validity of the ICCS student questionnaires affected by social desirability? To what extent are we measuring what our students really think, or rather what they identify as socially adequate? The answers would be yes, the questionnaires do seem to be affected by social desirability in some specific items and scales, and in these cases we are likely measuring what they are identifying as a culturally acceptable answer over what they actually believe.

More specifically, in approximately 25% of the items of each questionnaire show a relationship with social desirability. If this is analyzed at the scale level, three out of the nine Latin-American scales show a strong relationship with social desirability, and their results should be considered with precaution. In the case of the international questionnaire, only 5 out of the 25 scales are in this situation.

This study is a first approach towards measuring the impact of SD in the ICCS 2009 questionnaires, which suggests that though overall SD's impact does not seem so strong as to affect the validity of the whole instrument, some topics are strongly affected in the case of a Chilean sample. However this is just one step towards trying to determine to what extent this affects the instruments overall validity and further studies with other methodologies and samples from other countries would be recommendable.

Even though the sample was not national, this study also gives useful information to interpret the data obtained by Chile in the ICCS 2009 questionnaires. It must be noted that if we identify that an item is related with social desirability, this gives a lot of information apart from the fact that the item might have validity issues. For example, if an item about racial discrimination shows no relationship with social desirability, and many students in the country show themselves as pro-discrimination, this is very worrying. Not only do they discriminate, they don't even know it shouldn't be done, this means that society does not condemn discrimination. On the other hand, if in this same item most student's declare that discriminating is bad, but we know these answers are strongly influence by social desirability, it can be seen as a step further. These students are not being totally honest, and they probably do discriminate in everyday life, but at least this means they identify that their society defines that this is not an acceptable behavior.

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## Tables and appendixes

### TABLES

*Table 1. Description of the sample*

**Participating students**

Student from public schools	199	Boys	185
Student from subsidized schools	238	Girls	252
Total	437	Total	437

*Table 2. Results for the Latin-American Questionnaire scales*

Relationship between the scale and social desirability	Scale	Total items in the scale	Items related with social desirability
No relationship (3 of the 9 scales)	<b>Students' sense of Latin American Identify</b>	5	0
	<b>Student attitudes towards disobeying the law</b>	11	0
	<b>Student attitudes towards corrupt practices in government</b>	6	0
Slightly related (3 of the 9 scales)	<b>Student attitudes towards authoritarianism in government</b>	9	1
	<b>Student attitudes towards neighborhood diversity</b>	10	2
	<b>Student reports on frequencies of discussions about civic issues at school</b>	9	2
Strongly related (3 of the 9 scales)	<b>Student attitudes towards the use of violence</b>	4	4
	<b>Student feelings of empathy towards classmates</b>	10	10
	<b>Students' personal experience of physical and verbal abuse at school</b>	6	5

*Table 3. Results for the International Questionnaire scales*

Relationship between the scale and social desirability	Scale	Total items in the scale	Items related with social desirability
No relationship (13 of the 24 scales)	<b>Students' discussion of political and social issues outside of school</b>	4	0
	<b>Students' civic participation in the wider community</b>		0

		7	
	<b>Students' civic participation at school</b>	6	0
	<b>Students' perceptions of the value of participation at school</b>	5	0
	<b>Students' support for democratic values</b>	5	0
	<b>Student perceptions of the importance of social movement related citizenship</b>	4	0
	<b>Student perceptions of influence on decisions about school</b>	6	0
	<b>Students' attitudes towards gender equality</b>	6	1
	<b>Students' attitudes towards equal rights for all ethnic/racial groups</b>	5	0
	<b>Students' expected participation in future legal protest</b>	6	0
	<b>Students' expected participation in future illegal protest</b>	3	0
	<b>Students' expected adult participation in political activities</b>	4	0
	<b>Students' attitudes towards the influence of religion on society</b>	5	0
	<b>Students' expected future informal political participation</b>	4	1
	<b>Student perceptions of the importance of conventional citizenship</b>	6	2
	<b>Students' attitudes towards equal rights for immigrants</b>	5	1
	<b>Students' attitudes towards their country</b>	7	1
<b>Slightly related</b> (6 of the 24 scales)	<b>Students' citizenship self-efficacy</b>	7	3
	<b>Students' expected adult electoral participation</b>	3	1
	<b>Students' sense of internal political efficacy</b>	6	5
	<b>Student perceptions of student- teacher relations at school</b>	5	5
	<b>Students' trust in civic institutions</b>	6	6
<b>Strongly related</b> (5 of the 24 scales)	<b>Student perceptions of openness in classroom discussions</b>	6	3
	<b>Students' Interest in politics and social issues</b>	5	4

## APPENDIXES

### *Appendix I. Description of Marlowe-Crowne's social desirability scale*

Marlowe-Crowne's social desirability scale is formed by 33 true-false items. These items describe unlikely desirable behaviors, and common undesirable behaviors. In items 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 13, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 31 and 33 every "true" answer gets the score of one point, and every "false" gets 0. The rest of the items are scored the other way round. The total score is obtained by the sum of the scores of all items. A higher score indicates higher social desirability.

Some of the scale's most recognized translations and adaptations to Spanish are Spain's (Ferrando & Chico, 2000), Mexico's (Castro, Maya, Orozco, 1986) and Argentina's (Cosentino, Castro, 2008). All these versions have validated the 33 original items.

In regard to expectable scores, Crowne and Marlowe (1960), report  $M=13.72$  and  $SD=5.78$ , and Reynolds (1992)  $M=15.00$  and  $SD=5.91$ . However, studies done in Mexico have obtained higher means. Lara-Cantú reports a mean of 19.76 and  $SD=5.17$  in the 1988 study and of  $M=19.10$  and  $SD=5.57$  in the 1990 study. These results support the empirical evidence that Latin-American tend to score higher than Europeans or north Americans (Shultz y Chávez, 1994).

In the Argentinean validation the mean was 14.13, staying within the range of 14 to 17.2 recently informed in studies with American students (Barger, 2002) and Canadian ones (Helmes & Holden, 2003; Loo & Loewen, 2004; Loo & Thorpe, 2000; Risko, Quilty & Oakman, 2006). This is also inside the range from 13.6 to 19.76 informed by research with Iber American samples: Porto Rican, Spanish, Mexican and Brazilian (Collazo, 2005; Ferrando & Chico, 2000; Lara-Cantú & Suzan-Reed, 1988; Scagliusi et al., 2004).

The SD of 4.99 is also within the range of the previously cited (from 4.2 to 5.19 in Americans and Canadians, and from 4.4 to 5.49 in Iberamericans).

### *Appendix II Marlowe-Crowne version that was used (translation and adaptation made specially for this study)*

#### ESCALA DS MC

##### **Instrucciones**

A continuación se presenta una lista de frases acerca de características y rasgos de las personas. Lee cada frase y decide si en tu caso es verdadera o falsa. Marca tu respuesta con una equis (X).

No hay respuestas correctas o incorrectas.

Todas tus respuestas serán confidenciales.

Por favor marca tu sexo:

Hombre \_\_\_\_

Mujer \_\_\_\_

1	Antes de votar me informo detalladamente sobre cada uno de los candidatos	V	F
2	Siempre he ayudado a las personas en problemas, aunque tenga que hacer un esfuerzo extra	V	F
3	A veces, cuando no tengo motivación, me cuesta seguir trabajando	V	F
4	Nunca alguien me ha caído extremadamente mal	V	F
5	En ocasiones he tenido dudas acerca de mi habilidad para triunfar en la vida	V	F
6	A veces me enojo cuando no logro lo que quiero	V	F
7	Siempre soy cuidadoso respecto a mi forma de vestir	V	F
8	Cuando como en mi casa, mis modales son tan buenos como en un restaurant	V	F
9	Probablemente entraría al cine sin pagar si nadie me viera	V	F
10	En algunas ocasiones dejé de hacer cosas porque no confiaba en mi propia capacidad	V	F
11	Algunas veces me gusta “pelar”	V	F
12	A veces me han dado ganas de rebelarme contra las autoridades, aunque sabía que ellos tenían razón	V	F
13	Siempre escucho atentamente a las personas cuando me hablan	V	F
14	A veces me he “hecho el enfermo” para evitar algún compromiso	V	F
15	En ocasiones me he aprovechado de alguien	V	F
16	Cuando cometo algún error siempre estoy dispuesto a admitirlo	V	F
17	Siempre trato de que mis acciones sean consecuentes con mis opiniones	V	F
18	No me parece tan difícil llevarme bien con gente desagradable	V	F
19	Algunas veces trato de vengarme, en vez de perdonar	V	F
20	Cuando no sé algo, realmente no me importa admitirlo	V	F
21	Siempre soy educado, incluso con la gente que me cae mal	V	F
22	Algunas veces realmente he insistido en hacer las cosas a mi manera	V	F

23	Hay algunas situaciones en las que me han dado ganas de golpear cosas	V	F
24	Yo nunca dejaría que castiguen a otro en vez de a mí, por algo que yo hice.	V	F
25	Nunca me molesto cuando me piden que devuelva un favor	V	F
26	Nunca me ha molestado escuchar a alguien decir cosas muy distintas de las que yo pienso	V	F
27	Nunca haría un viaje largo sin chequear la seguridad de mi vehículo (bicicleta, skate, moto, auto)	V	F
28	En algunas ocasiones la buena suerte de otras personas me ha causado mucha envidia	V	F
29	Casi nunca me dan ganas de retar a otra persona	V	F
30	A veces me molesta la gente que me pide favores	V	F
31	Nunca he sentido que fui castigado sin motivo	V	F
32	A veces, cuando le ha pasado algo malo a alguien, he pensado que se lo merecía	V	F
33	Nunca he dicho algo a propósito para herir los sentimientos de alguien	V	F

Ahora que terminaste de responder, revisa detenidamente si marcaste sólo una respuesta para cada pregunta.

¡Muchas gracias!

### Appendix 3. Detailed results by item

Appendix Table A. Results for the Latin-American questionnaire

Item number	Relationship of the item with SD	Scales/Items	What is socially desirable
<b>LAIDENT</b> Students' sense of Latin American Identify			
01A	NO	We Latin Americans have a lot in common even if we come from different countries.	
01B	NO	In Latin America more things unite us than separate us.	
01C	NO	I feel I have a lot in common with other Latin American youths.	
01D	NO	Sometimes I support teams from other Latin American countries during international competitions.	
01E	NO	I often support teams from other Latin American countries when my country has been eliminated from a competition.	
<b>AUTGOV</b> Student attitudes towards authoritarianism in government			
02A	NO	It is better for government leaders to make decisions without consulting anybody.	
02B	NO	People in government must enforce their authority even if it means violating the rights of some citizens.	
02C	NO	People in government lose part of their authority when they admit their mistakes.	
02D	NO	People whose opinions are different than those of the government must be considered its enemies.	
02E	NO	The most important opinion of a country should be that of the president.	
02F	NO	It is fair that the government does not comply with the law when it thinks it is not necessary.	
03A	NO	Concentration of power in one person guarantees order.	
03B	NO	The government should close communication media that are critical.	
03C	YES	If the president does not agree with <Congress>, he/she should dissolve it.	To agree
<i>Items not included in the scale</i>			
03D	NO	Dictatorships are justified when they bring order and security	
03E	YES	Dictatorships are justified when they bring economic benefits	To agree
<b>ATTCORR</b> Student attitudes towards corrupt practices in government			
04A	NO	It is acceptable for a civil servant to accept bribes if his salary is too low.	
04B	NO	It is acceptable for a civil servant to use the resources of the institution in which he/she works for personal benefit	
04C	NO	Good candidates grant personal benefits to voters in return for their votes.	
04D	NO	Paying an additional amount to a civil servant in order to obtain a personal benefit is acceptable.	
04E	NO	It is acceptable that a civil servant helps his/her friends by giving them employment in his/her office.	
04F	NO	Since public resources belong to everyone, it is acceptable that those who can keep part of them.	
<i>Items not included in the scale</i>			
04G	YES	The government must ensure transparent use of resources	To agree
04H	NO	The government must have accountability towards society	

Item number	Relationship of the item with SD	Scales/Items	What is socially desirable
<b>DISLAW</b>		<b>Student attitudes towards disobeying the law</b>	
05A	NO	When it is the only alternative left for achieving important objectives.	
05B	NO	When it is the only way one has to help one's family.	
05C	NO	When others who disobeyed it were not punished.	
05D	NO	When others do it.	
05E	NO	When one distrusts the enacting body.	
05F	NO	When one is sure nobody will realize.	
05H	NO	When nobody gets hurt.	
05I	NO	When it is not done with bad intentions.	
05J	NO	When one is not familiar with the law.	
05K	NO	When one distrusts the authority executing the law.	
05L	NO	When one can obtain economic benefits.	
<i>Items not included in the scale</i>			
05G	NO	Cuando es la única manera de luchar públicamente con una ley injusta	
<b>ATTDIFF</b>		<b>Student attitudes towards neighborhood diversity</b>	
06A	NO	People with different skin color than yours.	
06B	NO	People of a different social class than yours.	
06C	NO	People of a different religion than yours.	
06D	NO	Homosexuals or lesbians.	
06E	NO	People who come from another region of the country.	
06F	NO	People with physical disabilities.	
06G	NO	People with mental disorders.	
06H	YES	People of a different nationality than yours.	To agree
06I	NO	People with AIDS.	
06J	YES	People of indigenous origin.	
<b>ATTVIOL</b>		<b>Student attitudes towards the use of violence</b>	
08A	YES	He who does me harm will have to pay for it.	To disagree
08B	YES	Watching fights between classmates is fun.	To disagree
08C	YES	If you cannot do it the easy way, do it the hard way.	To disagree
08D	YES	You have to fight so people do not think you are a coward.	To disagree

Item number	Relationship of the item with SD	Scales/Items	What is socially desirable
<b>EMPATH</b> Student feelings of empathy towards classmates			
09A	YES	A classmate falls and gets hurt.	To disagree
09B	YES	A classmate gets beaten up.	To disagree
09C	YES	A classmate gets unfairly reprimanded.	To disagree
09D	YES	A classmate gets unfairly punished.	To disagree
09E	YES	A classmate gets something stolen from him/her.	To disagree
09F	YES	A classmate gets ridiculed.	To disagree
09G	YES	A classmate gets insulted.	To disagree
09H	YES	A classmate looks very sad.	To disagree
09I	YES	A classmate gets bad grades.	To disagree
09J	YES	A classmate has nobody to play with.	To disagree
<b>ABUSE</b> Students' personal experience of physical and verbal abuse at school			
10A	YES	Someone in your school hit, slapped, kicked, pushed or pinched you.	To disagree
10B	YES	Someone in your school insulted you.	To disagree
10C	YES	Someone threatened to hit you.	To disagree
10D	YES	Someone rejected you and did not allow you to join their group.	To disagree
10E	YES	A classmate called you an offensive nickname.	To disagree
<b>SCHDISC</b> Student reports on frequencies of discussions about civic issues at school			
12A	YES	Rights and duties you assume as a citizen when you become an adult.	To agree
12B	YES	Consequences of consuming illegal drugs.	To agree
12C	NO	Integration of people with different sexual tendencies and orientations in the community.	
12D	NO	Discrimination against people with different sexual orientation.	
12E	NO	Advantages and disadvantages of non governmental organizations operating in a democratic country.	
12F	NO	Integration of people with different cultural backgrounds in the school, neighborhood or community.	
12G	NO	Respect for different religious rites.	
12H	NO	Facilities that people with physical and mental disabilities should have in different environments (school, street,	
12I	NO	Difficulties encountered by people with AIDS in being accepted by society.	
<b>Question</b> Attitudes towards homosexuals			
11A	NO	People of the same sex should have the right to marry	
11B	NO	The moral of the country suffers because of the presence oh homosexuals and lesbians	
11C	YES	Homosexuals and lesbians deserve the same rights as the other citizens	To agree
11D	NO	My school shouldn't accept homosexuals nor lesbians	
11E	NO	Homosexuality should be treated as a mental illness	
<b>Question 7</b> Attitudes toward violence			
7A	NO	Peace can only be reached through dialogue and negotiation	
7B	NO	To obtain peace, the end justifies the means	
7C	NO	If authorities don't act, citizens must organize themselves to punish criminals	
7D	YES	It is justified to hit someone that commits a fault against my family	To disagree

**Appendix Table B. Results for the International Questionnaire**

Item number	Relationship of the item with SD	Scales/Items	What is socially desirable
<b>POLDISC</b> Students' discussion of political and social issues outside of school			
13A	NO	Talking with your parent(s) about political or social issues	
13D	NO	Talking with friends about political and social issues	
13F	NO	Talking with your parent(s) about what is happening in other countries	
13G	NO	Talking with friends about what is happening in other countries	
<i>Items not included in the scale</i>			
13B	NO	Watching television to inform yourself about national and international news	
13C	YES	Reading the newspaper to inform yourself about national and international news	To agree
13E	YES	Using the internet to inform yourself about national and international news	To agree
13G	NO	Talking with friends about what is happening in other countries	
13H	NO	Participating in a youth group (such as <boys/girls scouts>, <YMCA>, <computer club> or <chess club>)	
<b>PARTCOM</b> Students' civic participation in the wider community			
14A	NO	Youth organization affiliated with a political party or union	
14B	NO	Environmental organisation	
14C	NO	Human Rights organisation	
14D	NO	A voluntary group doing something to help the community	
14E	NO	An organisation collecting money for a social cause	
14F	NO	A cultural organisation based on ethnicity	
14H	NO	A group of young people campaigning for an issue	
<i>Items not included in the scale</i>			
14G	NO		
<b>PARTSCHL</b> Students' civic participation at school			
15A	NO	Voluntary participation in school-based music or drama activities outside of regular lessons	
15B	NO	Active participation in a debate	
15C	NO	Voting for <class representative> or <school parliament>	
15D	NO	Taking part in decision-making about how the school is run	
15E	NO	Taking part in discussions at a <student assembly>	
15F	NO	Becoming a candidate for <class representative> or <school parliament>	
<b>OPDISC</b> Student perceptions of openness in classroom discussions			
16B	YES	Teachers encourage students to make up their own minds	To agree
16C	YES	Teachers encourage students to express their opinions	To agree
16D	NO	Students bring up current political events for discussion in class	
16E	YES	Students express opinions in class even when their opinions are different from most of the other students	To agree
16F	NO	Teachers encourage students to discuss the issues with people having different opinions	
16G	NO	Teachers present several sides of the issues when explaining them in class	
<i>Items not included in the scale</i>			
16A	NO	Students are able to disagree openly with their teachers	

Item number	Relationship of the item with SD	Scales/Items	What is socially desirable
<b>STUDINF</b> Student perceptions of influence on decisions about school			
17A	NO	The way classes are taught	
17B	NO	What is taught in classes	
17C	NO	Teaching and learning materials	
17D	NO	The timetable	
17E	NO	Classroom rules	
17F	NO	School rules	
<i>Items not included in the scale</i>			
17G	NO	<Extra-curricular activities>	
<b>STUTREL</b> Student perceptions of student-teacher relations at school			
18A	YES	Most of my teachers treat me fairly	To agree
18B	YES	Students get along well with most teachers	To agree
18C	YES	Most teachers are interested in students' well-being	To agree
18E	YES	Most of my teachers really listen to what I have to say	To agree
18F	YES	If I need extra help, I will receive it from my teachers	To agree
<i>Items not included in the scale</i>			
18D	YES	I feel like an outsider at my school	To disagree
18G	NO	I am afraid of being bullied by other students	
<b>VALPARTS</b> Students' perceptions of the value of participation at school			
P19A	NO*	Student participation in how schools are run can make schools better	
P19B	NO	Lots of positive changes can happen in schools when students work together	
P19C	NO	Organising groups of students to express their opinions could help solve problems in schools	
P19D	NO	All schools should have a <school parliament>	
P19E	NO	Students can have more influence on what happens in schools if they act together rather than alone	
<b>DEMVAL</b> Students' support for democratic values			
20A	NO	Everyone should always have the right to express their opinions freely	
20E	NO	All people should have their social and political rights respected	
20F	NO	People should always be free to criticise the government publicly	
20H	NO	All citizens should have the right to elect their leaders freely	
20I	NO	People should be able to protest if they believe a law is unfair	
<i>Items not included in the scale</i>			
20B	NO	Political leaders should not be allowed to give government jobs to their family members	
20C	NO	No company or government should be allowed to own all newspapers in a country	
20D	NO	The police should have the right to hold people suspected of threatening national security in jail without trial	
20G	NO	Security agencies should be allowed to check letters, phone calls and emails of anyone suspected of threatening national security	
20J	NO	Political protest should never be violent	
20K	NO	Differences in income between poor and rich people should be small	

20L	NO	When faced with violent threats to national security, the government should have the power to control what appears in the media	
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Item number	Relationship of the item with SD	Scales/Items	What is socially desirable
<b>CITCON</b> Student perceptions of the importance of conventional citizenship			
21A	NO	Voting in every national election	
21B	NO	Joining a political party	
21C	NO	Learning about the country's history	
21D	YES	Following political issues in the newspaper, on the radio, on TV or on the internet	
21E	YES	Showing respect for government representatives	
21F	NO	Engaging in political discussions	
<b>CITSOC</b> Student perceptions of the importance of social movement related citizenship			
21G	NO	Participating in peaceful protests against laws believed to be unjust	
21H	NO	Participating in activities to benefit people in the <local community>	
21I	NO	Taking part in activities promoting human rights	
21J	NO	Taking part in activities to protect the environment	
<i>Items not included in the scale</i>			
21K	YES	Working hard	To agree
21L	NO*	Always obeying the law	
<b>INTPOLS</b> Students' Interest in politics and social issues			
22A	YES	Political issues within your <local community>	To agree
22B	YES	Political issues in your country	To agree
22C	YES	Social issues in your country	To agree
22D	NO	Politics in other countries	
22E	YES	International politics	To agree
<i>Items not included in the scale</i>			
22F	NO	Environmental issues	
<b>INPOLEF</b> Students' sense of internal political efficacy			
23A	YES	I know more about politics than most people my age	To agree
23B	YES	When political issues or problems are being discussed, I usually have something to say	To agree
23C	YES	I am able to understand most political issues easily	To agree
23D	NO	I have political opinions worth listening to	
23E	YES	As an adult I will be able to take part in politics	To agree
23F	YES	I have a good understanding of the political issues facing this country	To agree
<b>GENEQL</b> Students' attitudes towards gender equality			
24A	YES	Men and women should have equal opportunities to take part in government	To agree
24B	NO	Men and women should have the same rights in every way	
24C	NO	Women should stay out of politics	
24D	NO	When there are not many jobs available, men should have more right to a job than women	
24E	NO	Men and women should get equal pay when they are doing the same jobs	

24F	NO	Men are better qualified to be political leaders than women	
<i>Items not included in the scale</i>			
24G	NO	Women's first priority should be raising children	

Item number	Relationship of the item with SD	Scales/Items	What is socially desirable
<b>ETHRGHT</b> Students' attitudes towards equal rights for all ethnic/racial groups			
25A	NO	All <ethnic/racial groups> should have an equal chance to get a good education in <country of test>	
25B	NO	All <ethnic/racial groups> should have an equal chance to get good jobs in <country of test>	
25C	NO	Schools should teach students to respect members of all <ethnic/racial groups>	
25D	NO	<Members of all ethnic/racial groups> should be encouraged to run in elections for political office	
25E	NO	<Members of all ethnic/racial groups> should have the same rights and responsibilities	
<b>IMMRGHT</b>			
26A	NO	<Immigrants> should have the opportunity to continue speaking their own language	
26B	NO	<Immigrant> children should have the same opportunities for education that other children in the country have	
26C	NO	<Immigrants> who live in a country for several years should have the opportunity to vote in elections	
26D	NO	<Immigrants> should have the opportunity to continue their own customs and lifestyle	
26E	YES	<Immigrants> should have all the same rights that everyone else in the country has	To agree
<i>Items not included in the scale</i>			
26F	NO	When there are not many jobs available, <immigration> should be restricted	
<b>INTRUST</b> Students' trust in civic institutions			
27A	YES	The <national government> of <country of test>	To agree
27B	YES	The <local government> of your town or city	To agree
27C	YES	Courts of justice	To agree
27D	YES	The police	To agree
27E	YES	Political parties	To agree
27F	YES	<National Parliament	To agree
<i>Items not included in the scale</i>			
27G	NO*	The media (television, newspapers, radio)	
27H	YES	<The Armed Forces>	To agree
27I	YES	Schools	To agree
27J	YES	The United Nations	To agree
27K	YES	People in general	To agree
27L	YES	Provincial government	To agree
<b>ATTCNT</b> Students' attitudes towards their country			
28A	NO*	The <flag of country of test> is important to me	
28B	YES	The political system in <country of test> works well	To agree
28C	NO*	I have great respect for <country of test>	
28D	NO*	In <country of test> we should be proud of what we have achieved	
28F	NO	I am proud to live in <country of test>	

28G	NO	<Country of test> shows a lot of respect for the environment	
28H	NO	Generally speaking, <country of test> is a better country to live in than most other countries	

Item number	Relationship of the item with SD	Scales/Items	What is socially desirable
<b>CITEFF</b> Students' citizenship self-efficacy			
30A	YES	Discuss a newspaper article about a conflict between countries	To agree
30B	NO	Argue your point of view about a controversial political or social issue	
30C	YES	Stand as a candidate in a <school election>	To agree
30D	NO	Organise a group of students in order to achieve changes at school	
30E	NO	Follow a television debate about a controversial issue	
30F	YES	Write a letter to a newspaper giving your view on a current issue	To agree
30G	NO	Speak in front of your class about a social or political issue	
<b>LEGPROT</b> Students' expected participation in future legal protest			
31A	NO	Writing a letter to a newspaper	
31B	NO	Wearing a badge or t-shirt expressing your opinion	
31C	NO	Contacting an <elected representative>	
31D	NO	Taking part in a peaceful march or rally	
31E	NO	Collecting signatures for a petition	
31F	NO	Choosing not to buy certain products	
<b>ILLPROT</b> Students' expected participation in future illegal protest			
31G	NO	Spray-painting protest slogans on walls	
31H	NO	Blocking traffic	
31I	NO	Occupying public buildings	
<b>ELECPART</b> Students' expected adult electoral participation			
32A	NO	Vote in <local elections>	
32B	NO	Vote in <national elections>	
32C	YES	Get information about candidates before voting in an election	To agree
<b>POLPART</b> Students' expected adult participation in political activities			
32D	NO	Help a candidate or party during an election campaign	
32E	NO	Join a political party	
32F	NO	Join a trade union	
32G	NO	Stand as a candidate in <local elections>	
<i>Items not included in the scale</i>			
32H	YES	Vote in <state, province elections>	To agree
32I	NO	Vote in European elections	
<b>INFPART</b> Students' expected future informal political participation			
33B	YES	Talk to others about your views on political and social issues	To agree
33C	NO	Write to a newspaper about political and social issues	
33D	NO	Contribute to an online discussion forum about social and political issues	

33E	NO	Join an organisation for a political or social cause	
<i>Items not included in the scale</i>			
33A	YES	Volunteer time to help people in the <local community>	To agree

Item number	Relationship of the item with SD	Scales/Items	What is socially desirable
<b>RELINF</b>		<b>Students' attitudes towards the influence of religion on society</b>	
36A	NO	Religion is more important to me than what is happening in national politics	
36B	NO	Religion helps me to decide what is right and what is wrong	
36C	NO	Religious leaders should have more power in society	
36D	NO	Religion should influence people's behaviour towards others	
36E	NO	Rules of life based on religion are more important than civil laws	
<i>Items not included in the scale</i>			
36F	NO	Religion should no longer be relevant in the modern world	
<i>Questions not included in any scale</i>			
<b>1</b>	NO	Date of birth	
<b>2</b>	NO	Boy/girl	
<b>2.b</b>	NO	Ethnic background	
<b>3</b>	NO	Educational expectations	
<b>4</b>	NO	Immigrant background	
<b>5</b>	NO	Language spoken at home	
<b>6</b>	NO	Mother's job	
<b>7</b>	NO	Mother's education	
<b>8</b>	NO	Father's job	
<b>9</b>	NO	Father's education	
<b>10</b>	NO	Parent's interest in social affairs	
<b>11</b>	NO	Amount of books at home	
<b>11.b</b>	NO	People who live at home	
<b>12a</b>	NO	Watching television, videos or DVDs for enjoyment	
<b>12b</b>	YES	Doing homework or study for school	To agree
<b>12c</b>	YES	Using a computer or the internet for enjoyment	To disagree
<b>12d</b>	YES	Reading for enjoyment	To agree
<b>12e</b>	NO	<Chatting> with friends over the phone or internet (including sending text messages or <instant messages>)	
<b>12f</b>	NO	Spending time with friends	
<b>P35</b>	YES	How often do you assist to religious services	Moderate agreement

\* there seems to be a relationship, but the amount of cases in the category was too small