

3. What is education's impact on civic and social engagement?

By David E. Campbell*

Introduction

While policy makers widely recognise the fact that education serves as an engine for economic growth through the accumulation of *human* capital, education is also strongly associated with boosting levels of *social* capital. Indeed, an important justification for the large expenditures on education within many democratic nations is its social, and not just economic, impact – the benefits an educated electorate brings to civil society. At a time when many civic indicators show a decline across OECD nations, it is thus imperative that we better understand the connections between education and civic and social engagement (hereafter, CSE). This report thus has the narrow objective of taking a step toward sorting through the possible mechanisms linking education and CSE, both through a review of the extant literature and original data analysis. Its broader objective is to consider whether it is worthwhile for the OECD to pursue the development of indicators pertaining to education's impact on CSE.

Anyone with even a cursory familiarity with the literature on civic and social engagement may assume that linking education and CSE is an easy task, and can be summarised tidily: education has a universally positive effect on all forms of engagement. The research literature on civic and social engagement, both old and new, is replete with references to the impact of education. Writing over thirty years ago, Converse (1972) memorably phrased his description of the tight link between education and engagement:

“Whether one is dealing with cognitive matters such as level of factual information about politics or conceptual sophistication in its assessment; or such motivational matters as degree of attention paid to politics and emotional involvement in political affairs; or questions of actual behavior, such as engagement in any of a variety of political activities from party work to vote turnout itself: education is everywhere the universal solvent, and the relationship is always in the same direction. The higher the education, the greater the ‘good’ values of the variable. The educated citizen is attentive, knowledgeable, and participatory and the uneducated citizen is not.” (p. 324)

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While Converse's description of the "universal solvent" is oft-quoted, he was hardly the first to note the breadth of education's empirical relationship to myriad forms of engagement. He was simply articulating the conventional wisdom among social scientists of his time. In their seminal book *The Civic Culture*, published a decade prior to Converse's words, Almond and Verba (1989 [1963]) wrote very similar words:

"As in most other studies of political attitudes, our data show that educational attainment appears to have the most important demographic effect on political attitudes. Among the demographic variables usually investigated – sex, place of residence, occupation, income, age, and so on – none compares with the educational variable in the extent to which it seems to determine political attitudes. The uneducated man or the man with the limited education is a different political actor from the man who has achieved a higher level of education."
(pp. 315-316)

Writing in the 1970s, Marsh and Kaase (1979) again noted the striking empirical regularity linking education and engagement. And, again, the same conclusion is echoed in contemporary scholarship; the conventional wisdom of the past remains so in the present. For example, in his exhaustive analysis of trends in social capital within the United States, *Bowling Alone*, Putnam (2000) reiterates the tight link between education and almost any imaginable type of CES.

"Education is one of the most important predictors – usually, in fact, the most important predictor – of many forms of social participation – from voting to associational membership, to chairing a local committee to hosting a dinner party to giving blood. The same basic pattern applies to both men and women and to all races and generations. Education, in short, is an extremely powerful predictor of civic engagement." (p. 186)

In light of the fact that education has for so long been recognised as so significant a predictor of CSE, it is ironic that the precise nature of that link remains largely in the proverbial black box. We know that people attend school, and then they experience a boost in their level of engagement. What precisely happens to them while in school (if anything) to lead to an increase in engagement is not well understood. In spite of – or perhaps because of – the widespread consensus on the universal, strong, and positive relationship between education and CSE, the causal mechanism(s) underlying that relationship have been subjected to relatively scant scrutiny. Indeed, one school of thought holds that, for at least some types of engagement, the content of education does not matter at all. Education only serves to enhance an individual's socioeconomic status, which in turn increases engagement.

As a reflection of how much has yet to be learned about the connection between education and engagement, it is not difficult to identify puzzling trends that would seem to fly in the face of the claim that "education is the universal solvent". Perhaps the best known puzzle is that the individual-level relationship does not appear to hold up when we examine trends in the aggregate. Across much of the industrialised world, education levels have been rising while political engagement of all sorts has been falling. Voter turnout provides an illuminating case in point. Wattenberg (2002, p. 28) compares voter turnout rates for 16 OECD member nations from the 1960s to the present and finds that, on average, turnout has fallen by 13.2%. This ranges from Switzerland, which has seen turnout fall by 34 percentage points, to Germany (12 points) to Sweden (1.5 points).

The apparent contradiction between a positive individual-level relationship and one that, over time and in the aggregate, is apparently negative has long been noted in the United States, which was the first of the industrialised democracies to experience a decline in voter turnout – a trend that is now widely observed across many nations (Franklin, 2004). Almost thirty years ago, Brody (1978) labelled the phenomenon of falling political engagement in the face of rising education, the “paradox of participation”. Even more puzzling is the fact that the decline in voter turnout, and other civic indicators, is concentrated among the youngest age cohort of the population – who generally also have the highest average level of education.

I mention the paradox of participation not because I can offer a simple explanation for it, but simply to make the point that there is much to be learned about the intricacies of the links between education and CSE. (We will, however, see evidence that does speak to the paradox of participation.) While virtually every empirical model designed to predict CSE includes a measure of education, few analysts stop to consider just what that variable is capturing. Is it cognitive sophistication? Social status? Adherence to democratic norms? Civic skills? Or, as is most likely, is it some combination of these, and still other, factors? Furthermore, which aspects of education shape which forms of civic and social engagement? Even more elementally, can we speak of education having an effect, in a causal sense, on engagement? Could it not be that the relationship between education and at least some forms of CSE is spurious? That is, perhaps the impact attributed to education is really owing to other characteristics that are themselves correlated with education.

In short, this report scratches below the surface of the well-known positive relationship between education and CES, in an effort to determine whether there is reasonable evidence to characterise that relationship as causal and, if so, the specific nature of those causal links.

Executive summary

Section 3.1

Education is widely recognised as having a strong correlation with multiple forms of civic and social engagement (CSE). In spite of – or perhaps because of – the widespread consensus on the universal, strong, and positive relationship between education and CSE, the causal mechanism(s) underlying that relationship have been subjected to relatively scant scrutiny.

Understanding the relationship between education and civic and social engagement requires delineating multiple dimensions of engagement, namely: political engagement, civic engagement, voting, trust, tolerance, and political knowledge.

Section 3.2

Two independent studies have shown that the introduction of compulsory education laws in the United States and the United Kingdom provides evidence that education has a causal relationship to multiple forms of engagement, including voter turnout, group memberships, tolerance, and the acquisition of political knowledge (newspaper reading). Similarly, using a young person’s proximity to a community college as an instrument for

college attendance reveals that a post-secondary education has a positive impact on voter turnout.

Section 3.3

Previous research has proposed three different models whereby education could have an impact on each of the dimensions of engagement. One is the *absolute education model*, which states that an individual's own level of education is the driving mechanism. Another is the *sorting model*, which is premised on the assumption that education serves as a marker of social status. According to the sorting model, it is individuals' level of education relative to their social environment that facilitates engagement. Finally, there is the *cumulative model*, under which engagement rises in accordance with the average education level of one's compatriots. Using data from the European Social Survey (supplemented by the European Values Survey), the absolute education model is found to best explain expressive political activity, voting, membership in voluntary associations, and institutional trust. The sorting model applies to conflict-centered political engagement, while the cumulative model explains interpersonal trust.

Section 3.4

The extant literature has proposed multiple aspects of formal education that could conceivably have an impact on civic and social engagement. These include: development of bureaucratic competence, civic skills, cognitive capacity, curriculum (including the opportunity to discuss social and political issues in the classroom, or what is labeled classroom climate), student government, habits of associational involvement, and volunteering in the community (service learning).

The 1999 IEA Civic Education Study is the most comprehensive source of data on the civic education received by adolescents. Comprising data collected in twenty-eight nations, it measures many (although not all) aspects of education that have been hypothesised to affect civic and social engagement. One in particular that stands out is the openness of the classroom climate, or the degree to which students are able to discuss political and social issues in class. Classroom climate has a positive impact on every dimension of engagement included in the analysis: knowledge, skills, intention of being an informed voter, intention of being civically engaged, intention of being politically engaged, institutional trust, and tolerance.

Section 3.5

While much about the links between education and engagement has yet to be learned, the preponderance of the existing evidence recommends moving forward with more analysis, including the development of indicators pertaining to the links between education and engagement. Such indicators might include individual-level measures of young people's civic and social engagement and extra-curricular involvement, as well as aggregated measures of the "ethos" or culture within a school. School ethos can incorporate the openness of the classroom climate, the degree to which students' opinions are respected by teachers and administrators, and the overall sense of community within the school.

3.1. Dimensions of engagement

This chapter outlines the seven dimensions of engagement that will be discussed throughout this report: political engagement, civic engagement, voting, trust, tolerance, and political knowledge. It then turns to a brief discussion of lifelong learning – education undertaken in the adult years – an undoubtedly important but understudied type of education shaping civic and social engagement. Future research on engagement should prioritise the study of adult learning.

Before proceeding, it is necessary to pause for a definitional note in order to clarify just what is under investigation. The term “civic and social engagement” is broad – deliberately so – and thus requires further precision. Unfortunately, the literature on CSE is complicated by the lack of consensus on just what it entails and how it should be measured. Sometimes, the same concepts are described using different terms by various authors. Other times, different concepts are given the same labels across studies.

Some analysts group many different forms of engagement together into a composite measure (Putnam, 1993), while some draw careful distinctions between various types (Nie, Junn and Stehlik-Berry, 1996; Zukin *et al.*, 2006). The precise distinctions vary from study to study, even those that employ the very same sources of data.

Within this report, reference will be made to seven different types of engagement, all of which find support within the existing literature. I do not claim that this list is exhaustive, but it does cover the most commonly-discussed forms of engagement. The reader is reminded that other authors may use different terms to refer to these same concepts, or similar terms to refer to different forms of engagement.

I begin by distinguishing between two terms that are, regrettably, often used interchangeably. An important distinction can be drawn between engagement that is **political** and that which is **civic**. Loosely speaking, the difference is that the former involves efforts to influence public policy, while the latter does not. The best evidence for the civic/political divide among types of participation comes from a classic study by Verba and Nie (1972), and an equally ambitious new one by Zukin *et al.* (2006). Verba and Nie draw a distinction between activity that is conflictual and non-conflictual, contrasting activities like political campaigning with intrinsically cooperative activities like membership in (most) voluntary associations. Using data collected over thirty years later, Zukin *et al.* similarly differentiate between cooperative and conflictual activity. In the terminology to be used here, cooperative/non-conflictual activity is equated with civic engagement, while conflictual acts are characterised as political in nature.

Based on this body of research, the operational definition of political participation is borrowed directly from Verba and Nie, and has been repeated in its essentials by Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995):

“Political participation refers to those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take.” [This includes working on political campaigns, contacting public officials, etc.]

The key to the definition is the *end* to which the activity is directed – actions taken or policies enacted by public officials. Similarly, then, *civic participation* is also defined by its end:

“Civic participation refers to non-remunerative, publicly spirited collective action that is not motivated by the desire to affect public policy.” [Belonging to voluntary associations, volunteering in the community, etc.]

There is an interesting ambiguity in one of the most frequently studied forms of engagement, namely **voter turnout**. It is treated as unique form of engagement, owing to a long line of research that has demonstrated that for analytical purposes, voting should be analysed on its own. It is not properly grouped with either civic or political engagement, as it shares the motivations of both (Blais, 2000; Butler and Stokes, 1974; Campbell *et al.*, 1960; Campbell, Gurin and Miller, 1954; Campbell, 2006; Downs, 1957; Fiorina, 1976; Riker and Ordeshook, 1968; Schlozman, Verba and Brady, 1995; Shachar and Nalebuff, 1999). In the words of Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995):

“[V]oting is fundamentally different from other acts... [T]he origins of voting are different. Compared with those who engage in various other political acts, voters report a different mix of gratifications and a different bundle of issue concerns as being behind their activity. Finally, the configuration of participatory factors – that is, the mix of resources and motivations – required for voting is unique. To repeat, on every dimension along which we consider participatory acts, voting is sui generis. For this reason, it is a mistake to generalise from our extensive knowledge about voting to all forms of participation.” (pp. 23-24)

The fourth and fifth types of engagement relate to **trust**, which is the subject of a voluminous literature (Fukuyama, 1995; Hardin, 2002; Inglehart, 1990, 1997; Putnam, 1993, 2000; Uslaner, 2002). Trust in other people, termed interpersonal trust is central to the concept of social capital, as it serves as the “lubricant” for reciprocity, both generalised and specific. Furthermore, a healthy democracy is presumed to require at least a modicum of trust in the institutions of government, termed institutional trust. The optimal degree of such trust remains a matter of debate, as too much trust is antithetical to the concept of a responsive citizenry keeping its elected leaders in check. Inglehart wisely notes that while we cannot be sure of the precise causal connection, the preponderance of the evidence shows that “trust and stable democracy [are] closely linked” (1997, p. 174).

Sixth, this report will refer to **tolerance**. As with trust, there is a long-standing literature on the significance of tolerance to a healthy democracy. Perhaps no one has articulated its significance better than Sullivan, Piereson and Marcus (1982):

“Though liberal societies may be divided by intense conflicts, they can remain stable if there is a general adherence to the rules of democratic or constitutional procedure. Tolerance in this sense implies a commitment to the ‘rules of the game’ and a willingness to apply them equally.” (p. 2)

Because the term tolerance is widely used in the discourse of the general public, it is important that its definition in this context be made clear. As the term is used here, it specifically refers to whether someone is willing to extend free speech rights and similar

civil liberties to minorities that are generally unpopular and/or viewed with widespread suspicion.

The seventh form of engagement is the one that perhaps – *prima facie* – has the strongest association with education, namely **political knowledge**. A growing literature makes the case that, independent of other related factors, more knowledge about politics improves both the quality and the quantity of participation in a democratic system (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Milner, 2002). While people with more education usually have more political knowledge, education and knowledge are not merely substitutes for one another, as there are empirically-tractable differences between one’s level of educational attainment and what is sometimes called political sophistication (Luskin, 1987, 1990; Zaller, 1992).

To recap, then, for the purposes of this report, the term civic and social engagement (CSE) consists of a general rubric under which seven specific types of engagement are found: political engagement, civic engagement, voting, interpersonal and institutional trust, tolerance, and political knowledge. Table 3.1.1 provides a synopsis.

Table 3.1.1. Seven dimensions of engagement

Political engagement Activity aimed at influencing public policy
Civic engagement Publicly-spirited activity that is not primarily motivated by a desire to influence public policy
Voter turnout Voting in public elections
Interpersonal trust Trust in other people
Institutional trust Trust in public institutions, such as the government and political parties
Tolerance A willingness to extend civil liberties to unpopular groups
Political knowledge Knowledge about democratic institutions and processes

Notwithstanding the subdivision of CSE into these seven dimensions, for the sake of parsimony there will be points in the general discussion when all forms of CSE will be grouped together, as the extant literature has observed a positive relationship between education and virtually all forms of engagement. As the discussion proceeds, however, distinctions will be drawn among different types of CSE, as we will see that there are both theoretical and empirical reasons to conclude that education does not have a single, universal impact on all forms of CSE.

Lifelong learning

This report focuses on primary, secondary, and post-secondary education – the three levels of education commonly meant by *schooling*. However, education needs not end upon the completion of a secondary or post-secondary degree. Many people continue their education by taking adult education courses, the motivations for which vary. Some people engage in adult education sponsored by their employer, receiving training relevant to their job. Others pursue academic coursework on their own, perhaps to receive accreditation or to acquire skills and knowledge to better their employment options. Still others take classes purely out of interest in the subject matter.

Unfortunately, little is known about the consequences of adult, or lifelong, learning for civic and social engagement. Survey data collected to measure CSE outcomes always include a measure of formal educational attainment, but rarely do such surveys inquire about lifelong learning. Yet there are good reasons to think that adult education would have effects on CSE; most, perhaps all, of the factors thought to link secondary and post-secondary education and higher levels of CSE also apply to adult learning.

Milner (2002) laments the absence of systematic research on the civic implications of adult learning, but points to suggestive evidence that this form of education contributes to what he labels “civic literacy”. In particular, he highlights the well-known study circles of Sweden as an especially effective method of adult education. Given the high level of participation in study circles among Swedish adults, and the emphasis placed on public affairs in this type of education it seems highly likely that they do serve to enhance political knowledge and interest, which in turn are precursors to greater political engagement. Given the unique nature of the Swedish emphasis on adult education, though, one probably can not generalise the study-circle experience to other nations, which have other forms of adult education.

A notable exception to the lacuna of research on adult learning is a recent study conducted by Feinstein, Hammond, and their associates at the Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning (Feinstein and Hammond, 2004; Feinstein *et al.*, 2003). They have analysed data from the British National Child Development Study, a panel survey that began in 1958, in order to test the impact of adult learning between the ages of 33 and 42. While the Feinstein *et al.* research is limited to Britain, the nature of the adult education under investigation is not idiosyncratic to the British experience. Their study included both health and social capital outcomes, but here our attention is on CSE. In general, they find that adult learning leads to increases in voter turnout, membership in voluntary associations, and racial tolerance, while participation in such courses leads to decreases in authoritarianism and political cynicism. The one exception is vocational accredited courses, which do not have an observable impact on either civic or political engagement. Among the types of courses that do have an effect, academic accredited courses have the biggest effect on attitudes, tolerance in particular. Leisure courses (those with no accreditation component and which are not sponsored by one’s employer) also lead to an increase in racial tolerance, as well as membership in civic organisations.

The research by Feinstein *et al.* is an important contribution to our understanding of adult learning. While the observed effects are modest in magnitude, the fact that any change can be found in civic-related measures during this period of the life course is remarkable, as this is the stretch of life in which such attitudes and behavior are most stable. The authors are careful to account for both reverse causality and selection bias and, while the data do not meet the “gold standard” of randomised experimentation, the analysis is nonetheless rigorous and convincing.

The rigor of the Feinstein *et al.* research suggests strongly that, as Milner suggests, adult education has substantial consequences for CSE. But for all its virtues, it is still only a single study in a single nation. Clearly, much more can be learned about the effect of adult learning on many different outcomes, including civic and social engagement. In addition to indicators tied to secondary education, as described above, fruitful research could be conducted if data were collected on adults’ participation in educational programmes. The US National Child Development Study provides a useful template, as it demonstrates the utility of differentiating among the many different types of adult

learning: accredited academic courses, accredited vocational courses, work-related courses, and leisure courses.

Because there is so little research on civic and social effects of lifelong learning, this report will forgo a more detailed discussion of the subject. Hopefully, this gap in our knowledge about the consequences of this under-appreciated form of education will be filled by future research. Until that time, I simply note that there is more work to be done.

3.2. Evidence for causation

In the absence of large-scale randomised experiments, it is difficult to determine whether the observed relationship between education and CSE is causal in nature. Two recent studies have tackled the causation question by exploiting natural experiments, namely the introduction of compulsory education laws in the United States and the United Kingdom. Both find evidence that education and multiple forms of engagement are in fact causally related. Likewise, using a young person's proximity to a community college as an instrument for college attendance reveals that a post-secondary education has a positive impact on voter turnout.

Untangling causation

Before plunging into the question of how education might affect CSE or any of its constituent dimensions, it is important to consider the evidence for whether the positive relationship between education and CSE can be considered *causal* in nature. The paradox of participation – increasing education levels in the face of decreasing political engagement – gives some grounds to think that perhaps the relationship is not causal. Dee (2004) notes that the link could be spurious:

“since both schooling and civic outcomes are simultaneously influenced by a wide variety of inherently observable traits specific to individuals and the families and communities in which they were reared. For example, individuals who grew up in cohesive families and communities that stressed civic responsibility may also be more likely to remain in school. The plausible existence of such unobservables implies that conventionally estimated correlations may spuriously overstate the true civic returns to education.” (p. 1698)

In other words, it might not be education per se that increases civic and social engagement, but rather a common motivation that spurs both CSE *and* educational attainment. Obviously, if this were the case it would call into question whether changes in a nation's education system would actually lead to widespread civic and social benefits. Put bluntly, if there is no reason to think that education is causally related to engagement, there is no reason to take this discussion any further.

Determining causation, however, is not an easy proposition, as the most convincing evidence for any causal relationship is derived from controlled experiments. At the risk of vast understatement, it is difficult to conceive of a randomised experiment that would permit the definitive determination of whether there is truly a causal relationship between education and CSE. In the absence of controlled experiments, therefore, analysts interested in probing causation have turned their attention to natural experiments.

Specifically, two recent studies have exploited similar analytical strategies to test whether education and CSE share a causal connection.

Proximity to college and compulsory education laws

One such study is by the aforementioned Dee (2004), who employs two different instrumental variables to predict educational attainment, both in the American context. First, he uses respondents' geographic proximity to junior and community colleges¹ while they were adolescents as an instrument to predict entrance into college, on the assumption that distance to a junior and community college is not related to civic engagement as an adult. (Note that for this analysis, civic engagement is operationalised as voting and community volunteering.) Using a two-stage regression model, he finds that college entrance has a significant, substantial, and positive effect on voter turnout. College entrance increases the probability of both registering to vote (roughly 22 percentage points) and actually turning out at the polls (17 points). It does not, however, enhance the probability of community volunteering, as that relationship is negative but statistically insignificant.

Dee's second analysis exploits variation in the adoption of child-labor laws across American states, which other research has shown to be a viable instrument for predicting educational attainment (Acemoglu and Angrist, 2000; Angrist and Krueger, 1991; Lleras-Muney, 2002). Using the US General Social Survey, Dee concludes that graduating from high school has a positive but weak effect on newspaper reading (which is related to political knowledge) and group memberships (a form of civic engagement as defined here). The evidence is more conclusive for both voter turnout and support for the free speech rights of anti-religionists, communists, and homosexuals. In sum, more schooling increases both turnout and tolerance.²

Dee's analysis parallels a similar one by Milligan, Moretti, and Oreopoulos (2003), although the two studies were apparently done independently of one another. Within the United States, Milligan and his colleagues use both compulsory education and child labor laws as instruments for educational attainment, and find that both have an almost identical impact on voter turnout. Strengthening the generalised application of their findings, Milligan, Moretti and Oreopoulos also turn to data from Britain. Within the United Kingdom, comparisons can be made across age cohorts, as compulsory education laws changed twice in Britain between 1920 and 1995. As well, Milligan *et al.* gain analytical leverage from comparing differences between people who spent their adolescence in Northern Ireland and other Britons, since the compulsory schooling law changed at a different time in Northern Ireland than in the remainder of the nation. As in the United States, they find that more years of schooling boost voter turnout, although the effect is not as strong as in the United States.³ Milligan *et al.* also present evidence that

¹ These are post-secondary institutions with non-competitive admission practices and low tuition, which generally offer two-year degrees. They are often the first step toward attending a four-year college, especially for students who are the first in their family to attend any college.

² One more year of secondary school boosts turnout by about 7 percentage points, and increases support for the free speech of anti-religionists, communists, and homosexuals from 8 to 12.5 percentage points. The effects on tolerance for people who believe blacks are inferior and those who advocate a military-led government are also positive, but fall short of statistical significance.

³ They further allude to an analysis of Canadian data, which is consistent with what they find in the United States and the United Kingdom, but do not present their results.

the “education effect” in the United States is largely owing to the fact that more education increases the probability of voter registration, rather than turnout itself among the registered.⁴

Milligan *et al.* do not stop with voter turnout, as they extend their analysis to other measures of engagement that straddle the political engagement and knowledge dimensions described above, such as following political campaigns in the news, attending political meetings (both in the United States) and various measures of political attentiveness and discussion (United Kingdom). Education is shown to have a positive effect on each form of engagement.

Education and voter registration

The conclusions of Dee and Milligan *et al.* speak to a disagreement within the research literature on whether the peculiar system of voter registration within the United States, in which the responsibility for registration falls on the individual and not the state, is an especially strong deterrent for people with less education. Beginning at least with Wolfinger and Rosenstone’s seminal *Who Votes?* (1980) (about which we will learn more below), many scholars have thought that registration barriers unduly affect people with less education (Piven and Cloward, 1988). Nagler (1991), however, has argued that this conclusion is merely a statistical artifact. Dee finds college entrance to have an especially large impact on voter registration, which when coupled with Milligan *et al.*’s conclusion, suggests that Wolfinger and Rosenstone were correct in the first place. It is easy to dismiss this debate as applying only within the United States, but it has the potential for a broader application. Contrary to conventional wisdom in the literature on cross-national trends in voter turnout, the United States is not alone in imposing barriers to voter registration. Pierce (1995), for example, estimates that almost 20% of the voter-eligible population in France does not appear on the voter rolls, roughly the same as in the United States. Similarly, Wattenberg (2002) details how Canada, New Zealand, and Britain have also recently experienced declines in the percentage of the population on the electoral list. The Canadian example is particularly telling, as the Canadian government introduced a new voter registration system that mirrors what is used in the United States, and voter registration rates have fallen accordingly (to only 85%). It seems likely that the observed declines in voter registration rates are concentrated among people with limited education, although, admittedly, at this point such a claim remains only an hypothesis.

Conclusions about causation

Because they employ innovative strategies to “crack the causation nut”, both the Dee and Milligan *et al.* papers make a significant contribution to the literature on CSE. Employing similar methodology, but using different sources of data, these two complementary studies present a strong case that the long-observed relationship between education and CSE *cannot* simply be dismissed as spurious.

These plaudits aside, both studies still leave many questions unanswered. As with any models employing two-stage regression models, the plausibility of the instrument is

⁴ In the United States, voter registration is defined as the responsibility of the individual, as there is no automatic registration for the voter rolls. The registration process varies from state to state, although reforms of the last decade have generally made it easier to register.

critical. Do these particular instruments stand up to close scrutiny? In this case, there is other evidence to suggest that proximity to junior and community colleges is a reasonably reliable predictor of college entrance, and compulsory attendance/child labor laws are robust predictors of educational attainment (but only up to the point of high school graduation and thus not college attendance). In both cases, though, the use of the instrument requires a trade-off. Proximity to junior and community colleges can only be used to predict attendance at institutions of this particular type. Furthermore, Dee's study is limited to predicting whether someone attends, not graduates from, such a school. What about earning a four-year degree or completing graduate school? Similarly, the use of compulsory attendance/child labor laws imposes strict limitations on any inferences to be drawn. In this case, we only know the impact of time spent in secondary education, and not in higher education. When our attention is on the United States and the United Kingdom, where compulsory education laws are unlikely to change dramatically, this analytical strategy will likely have limited utility in future research, as it is only viable when analysing data from people who are old enough to have come of age before the law changed. These studies do underscore, though, that analysts should be aware of the research possibilities that arise from a change in a nation's compulsory education laws. Should such changes be enacted, it opens up the potential for a study of education's effects on numerous outcomes, including civic and social engagement.

The rigor of their methodology notwithstanding, the conclusions of these two studies – that, in general, more education enhances multiple dimensions of CSE – still leave many issues unresolved. Whether the focus is on secondary or post-secondary education, it remains unclear *why* education has the effect it does. Is it simply owing to a “credential effect” – more education boosts one's earnings and/or social status, providing a lift to civic involvement? Or does education have an effect on CSE because of the *content* of what one learns in school? The distinction has huge policy implications. For reasons that will be elaborated upon below, if education is simply an indicator of socioeconomic stratification, then more education in the aggregate is not likely to result in higher levels of CSE (or at least those forms of CSE driven by relative socioeconomic status). Policy makers would not need to be concerned with the *civic* education provided within their nation's schools. On the other hand, if educational content does shape CSE, it behooves policy makers to pay careful attention to the civic implications of the design and implementation of their nation's education system.

3.3. Relative vs. absolute education

This chapter details and then tests three different models whereby education could have an impact on each of the dimensions of engagement. One is the absolute education model, which states that an individual's own level of education is what boosts engagement. Another is the sorting model, which is premised on the assumption that education serves as a marker of social status. According to the sorting model, it is individuals' level of education relative to their social environment that facilitates engagement. Finally, there is the cumulative model, under which engagement rises in accordance with the average education level of one's compatriots. Using data from the European Social Survey, the absolute education model is found to best explain expressive political activity, voting, membership in voluntary associations, and institutional trust. The sorting model applies to political, or conflict-centered, engagement, while the cumulative model explains interpersonal trust.

Is education merely an indicator of socioeconomic status?

There are many possible explanations for the impact of education on civic and social engagement. Perhaps it is because education shapes what you know – that the content of education provides knowledge and experience that facilitate civic and social engagement. In addition, education can also help one apply knowledge by developing skills and competencies, which might also foster CSE. Education might also cultivate attitudes, motivations, and values which encourage engagement.

The above explanations need not be viewed as competitors, as they might all be true. Indeed, they all share a common assumption, namely that education has a direct impact on engagement. However, there is a contrarian point of view which argues that education's impact is entirely indirect, mediated wholly through the increase in social status that accompanies a higher level of education. If this claim is correct, our understanding of education's impact on CSE needs go no further than understanding the link between SES and engagement (Verba, Nie and Kim, 1978). Any further analysis of educational content would be rendered moot. Consequently, this chapter tackles the question with original data analysis, in order to sort out whether education has an impact on education beyond its positive correlation with social status.

Nie, Junn and Stehlik-Berry

The most thorough discussion of the link between education and different dimensions of CSE can be found in *Education and Democratic Citizenship in America*, by Nie, Junn

and Stehlik-Berry, hereafter NJS-B (1996).¹ Despite the fact that the title of their book centers specifically on the United States, NJS-B's theoretical framework is more generally applicable and the book itself ventures into cross-national comparisons. NJS-B address the paradox of participation, and offer a compelling explanation for why rising levels of education have not led to rising levels of political engagement. At its core, their argument is that political engagement is driven by social status. The higher your placement in a social hierarchy, the more likely you are to be engaged in political activity. And your place in the social hierarchy is largely a function of education.

At first blush, NJS-B's statement that political engagement is a function of socioeconomic status may simply seem to be a restatement of at least fifty years of conventional wisdom. However, there is more there than might first meet the eye, as three important assumptions underlie the NJS-B analysis. When taken together, these three assumptions lead to concrete, observable implications.

First, they assume that political activity is inherently conflictual. Because this point is critical for understanding the logic of their argument, I quote them verbatim:

“We argue that certain aspects of democratic citizenship are in fact bounded, or limited, by their essentially competitive nature. The instrumental behaviors and cognitions of political engagement can be seen as a more of a zero-sum game, bounded by finite resources and conflict, where one's gain will necessarily be another's loss. Elected representatives can vote only one way on a proposed piece of legislation, and bureaucrats cannot regulate to everyone's satisfaction.”
(p. 101)

Second, because political engagement is unavoidably competitive and thus zero-sum in nature, it is spurred by one's social status. Even as the potential contact points between government and the electorate expand, and the repertoire of potential participatory activities enlarges, the number of government officials is finite. NJS-B invoke the image of a crowded beach to underscore the point – the more sunbathers on the beach, the less desirable sunbathing becomes. The more voices speaking to government, the less sway each individual voice carries.

These two assumptions lead to the question of how it is that some voices come to have more sway. The answer, according to NJS-B, is that those people with greater standing, or higher status, are more likely to get involved in socially competitive, zero-sum activities simply because they are more likely to “win” the competition. It is the voices of high-status individuals that get heard. And, as the linchpin of NJS-B's theoretical framework, they premise their analysis on the assumption that education is an especially significant indicator of social status, apart from income. The higher your level of formal education – *relative to others within your social environment* – the higher your social status. The higher your social status, the more likely you are to conclude that your voice will be heard above the din. The costs – in time and treasure – you incur in political engagement are outweighed by the likelihood of your receiving benefits from the effort expended.

Let me underscore that, according to NJS-B, it is your level of education in comparison to others around you that determines your social status. For example, in an environment where graduation from secondary school is rare, a secondary diploma would

¹ I am not alone in my positive assessment of this book, as it received the Woodrow Wilson Foundation Book Award from the American Political Science Association for the best book published in political science in 1996.

be expected to confer considerable social status and thus spur political engagement. But should secondary diplomas become common, it would take a post-secondary (university) degree to achieve the same relative social position. Empirically, then, it is not your *absolute* level of education that predicts whether you are politically engaged, but your *relative* level of education. For now, we will forgo a precise statement of “relative to whom”, as it turns out this is a matter of some controversy and is thus taken up in some detail below. Regardless of the precise comparison group, the essential idea behind the theory is that relative education levels serve to sort people by social status. This will be referred to as the *sorting model*.

NJS-B do not argue that *all* forms of engagement are a function of relative education. Rather, they see relative education as explaining “democratic engagement”, which is largely consistent with what here has been defined as political engagement. In contrast, what they label “democratic enlightenment” is driven by an entirely different causal mechanism. By enlightenment, they mean what most analysts label political tolerance, or the willingness to grant freedom of speech to unpopular minorities. Enlightenment, unlike engagement, is not zero-sum. My being more tolerant does not make you less so, and so tolerance is not a function of a person’s social status and, thus, relative education level. Instead, tolerance (respect for civil liberties) is shaped by one’s absolute level of education. NJS-B further argue, convincingly, that formal education directly fosters enlightenment because it leads people to see the connections between their own fate and that of others, especially those from different social strata, within their society (Nie, Junn and Stehlik-Berry, 1996, p. 18). Education also deepens citizens’ ability to harness their own self-interest in the service of the greater good, which in turn serves as the underpinning for a healthy democracy.

Using cross-sectional and longitudinal data from within the United States, NJS-B find evidence for both of their main hypotheses: democratic engagement is driven by relative levels of education (sorting model) while enlightenment is a function of an individual’s own educational attainment and is not affected by the educational environment (absolute education model).

NJS-B’s sorting model offers at least a partial solution to the paradox of participation. Political engagement would not be expected to climb in a period of increasing education levels, because a “rising tide lifts all boats”. An across-the-board increase in education attainment leaves intact the stratification by education level. Moving to data from other nations, they also find tentative evidence in favor of the absolute education model as an explanation for levels of political tolerance. Across seven nations,² they find that younger generational cohorts have higher levels of tolerance, which they attribute to increasing educational attainment among the young. They are unable, though, to test whether the sorting model applies to political engagement in nations beyond the United States. To my knowledge, this report contains the first such analysis.

Critiques of Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Berry

NJS-B have written the most complete treatment of how and why education shapes CSE, provocatively digging deeper than the frequent, and often facile, observation that education positively affects engagement. They deserve much credit for building an extensive theoretical apparatus, buttressed by a sophisticated empirical analysis. Yet

² Australia, Britain, Norway, United States, West Germany, Ireland, Israel.

while there is much to admire in their work, aspects of their argument are fodder for debate. The following criticisms serve to refine rather than refute their conclusions.

The first criticism of NJS-B is strictly on empirical grounds. Recall that central to their analysis is the concept of relative education level. In practice, calculating such a measure means answering the critical question: “relative to whom?” The answer is far from arcane, as different comparison groups apparently lead to very different empirical conclusions. The measure of relative education employed by NJS-B is to compare a respondent’s level of education to the mean level of education within the national population of 25- to 50-year-olds when the respondent was 25. Tenn (2005) mildly criticises this definition as too imprecise, and offers an alternative measure: educational attainment relative to one’s birth cohort – that is, in comparison to people born in the same year. The specificity with which he measures relative education, however, comes at the expense of his dependent variable, which is limited to the single measure of voter turnout. This is because the only source of data available which permits such a fine-grained measure of education levels within a birth cohort is the United States Current Population Survey, which only measures voter turnout. Tenn’s refined measure of relative education produces results that are consistent with those of NJS-B, as he finds evidence for the sorting model.

Helliwell and Putnam (1999) offer a more critical assessment of NJS-B, critiquing their measure of relative education as an unnecessarily “static, backward-looking metric of educational externalities” (p. 2). In their words:

“[T]his operational measure of relative education means that the participation rate of a 55-year-old is influenced not at all by the educational credentials of her/his 54-year-old neighbors, but is influenced instead by the educational credentials of people long dead. In other words, in NSJ-B’s oddly asymmetric world of civic competition, no one ever competes against anyone younger, but everyone always competes against everyone older (including the dead).” (pp. 2-3)

In light of their criticism, Helliwell and Putnam employ a different measure of relative educational attainment. They compare respondents’ own level of education to the mean education level within the same US census region.³ They then employ their measure in models of interpersonal trust, tolerance, and civic and social engagement. Using their measure of relative education Helliwell and Putnam arrive at conclusions that contrast sharply with those of NJS-B: according to them, the sorting model does not apply to most measures of civic and social engagement, although they do find that the absolute education model applies to tolerance. Helliwell and Putnam are careful to note that they do not assume the census region is the ideal geographic unit for their analysis, but mean

³ There are four census regions, each comprising a large swath of the United States:

West: Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, New Mexico, Montana, Utah, Nevada, Wyoming, Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington.

South: Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas.

Midwest: Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota.

Northeast: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania.

only to emphasise that shifting the parameters of NJS-B's definition even a little produces different results.

Helliwell and Putnam can be read as offering a critique of NJS-B's empirics. Underpinning their empirically-oriented criticism, however, is a broader theoretical point. While they do not object to characterising purely political engagement (as defined here) as conflictual, competitive, and thus zero-sum in nature, they do suggest that NJS-B have over-reached by mischaracterising civic engagement in the same terms. Helliwell and Putnam go so far as to suggest that theory could plausibly lead us to conclude that education has a *cumulative* effect on at least some forms of engagement. For example, we might expect that the higher the level of education within one's environment, the greater the degree of trust. "If individuals know that higher education levels make others more likely to be trusting (and perhaps also more trustworthy), then they are in turn more likely to trust others. Hence the returns to trusting behavior are increased where there are increases in average levels of education, so that it should be expected that people of any level of education are in fact more trusting of others in an environment marked by higher average education levels." (p. 5).

I would add that NJS-B also seem to go too far in extending their view of engagement as competitive and zero-sum beyond the political realm – where it is compelling – to the civic sphere, where it is far less convincing. Consider why they hypothesise that the sorting model applies to membership in voluntary associations, a quintessentially civic form of engagement:

"[M]embership in voluntary associations is, we expect, the result of relative, rather than absolute, educational attainment. Members of associations obtain substantial psychic and social rewards for their organisational involvements. Moreover, voluntary membership requires time, energy, and often money, and those who are relatively near the center of the social network can better afford to pay the costs and are more likely to reap the benefits." (p. 162)

NJS-B thus assert that civic engagement is driven by the same conflict over rewards as political engagement, a puzzling claim. While membership in voluntary associations does require time and energy, it is not clear that money is necessary at all (a point essentially conceded by NJS-B by their qualification that money is "often" – and thus not "always" – required). Social status does not necessarily give people more free time (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995) and it is not clear why one income group would have more "energy" to devote to civic activity than another. Note also that NJS-B make the point that the rewards for civic participation are "psychic" and "social" and not material. While it is clear that material rewards are scarce resources, why should psychic and social rewards be considered zero-sum? These objections underscore why it is difficult to see the reasoning behind the claim that civic, as opposed to political, engagement should be considered inherently competitive in nature, and thus driven by the sorting model.

While NJS-B draw a bright line between enlightenment (tolerance) and engagement, there are theoretical reasons, backed by extant empirical evidence, to think that engagement should be further subdivided – that absolute and relative education affect various forms of engagement in different ways. Furthermore, the debate over NJS-B's argument has centered largely on data from the United States only, raising the question of whether the same relationships can be generalised beyond the American context. (Recall that NJS-B include some cross-national analysis, but it is limited in scope to only seven nations and deals only with tolerance.) The following analysis, therefore, expands upon

the NJS-B framework by incorporating Helliwell and Putnam’s objections, and including nations other than the United States.

Testing the causal mechanisms

From the literature on how CSE is affected by one’s educational environment, we can distill three potential causal mechanisms (Table 3.3.1):

- **Absolute education model:** This has been the standard view of how education affects the many dimensions of CSE: individuals with more education are more engaged, without regard for their educational environment.
- **Sorting model:** Engagement is a function of one’s educational environment. In this model, engagement is driven by an individual’s level of formal education relative to her social environment – more education drives engagement only to the extent that educational attainment results in a higher position within the social hierarchy.
- **Cumulative:** Again, educational environment matters, but in the opposite way than predicted by the sorting model. Living in an environment with a higher average level of education increases an individual’s level of engagement.

Table 3.3.1. Three causal mechanisms linking education and engagement

	What leads to more engagement?
Absolute education model	The more education you have
Sorting model	The more education you have vs. the average education your peers have
Cumulative model	The more education your peers have

The dataset employed to test these three models must meet two criteria. First, it must include a wide range of nations, to ensure sufficient variation in educational environments. Second, it must include measures of multiple dimensions of CSE. Fortunately, the European Social Survey (ESS) meets both requirements. The ESS was conducted in multiple European nations, from all parts of the continent.⁴ Also, its questionnaire includes numerous items pertaining to a wide array of civic and social engagement. While it does not cover every dimension discussed earlier, it does include most of them. No other publicly-available source of cross-national data includes as many.

The sheer variety of nations within the ESS is a double-edged sword for the analyst. On the one hand, the array of countries included in the sample makes it possible to test hypotheses in widely varying environments – to look for consistency amidst the variety. But on the other hand, that same variety only raises questions about the idiosyncrasies of the individual nations. Regrettably, space constraints mean that for the purposes at hand the analysis will be limited to cross-national analysis only and not a detailed discussion of results for each country. Therefore, this analysis should be considered preliminary at best, as there is much more to be learned about the nation-specific results.

⁴ This analysis includes the seventeen nations in the first release of the ESS data. The nations are: Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Spain, Finland, the United Kingdom, Greece, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Slovenia.

As we have seen, the critical issue in determining the impact of education is the measurement of the educational environment. Far from an abstruse question to be relegated to technical appendices, the question of who is being compared to whom is central to the debate over the claims made by NJS-B. Helliwell and Putnam criticise NJS-B for relying on a measure of the educational environment that was (a) too large in scope; (b) backward-looking (individuals' educational attainment compared to the mean education level of people who were 25-50, at the time the respondent was 25). In response to these criticisms, this analysis uses a measure of the educational environment that varies by both nation and cohort. In each nation, the mean educational level was calculated for the following four cohorts: 25 to 39 years of age; 40 to 54; 55 to 69; 70 and up. Thus, in addition to her/his own level of education, each respondent has a corresponding variable reflecting the mean level of education for people of the same birth cohort (both older and younger) within the same nation. Note that respondents under the age of 25 have been omitted from the model, since the early twenties is generally the period of life when young people are most likely to be in the process of acquiring a post-secondary educational education.

Owing to the varying educational systems across the nations included in the ESS, there is no uniform measure of educational attainment by, say, degree or diploma earned. Instead, the most comparable measure of educational attainment is simply the number of years of formal schooling the respondent has completed. Each model thus includes two measures of education: the number of years of education completed by the individual respondent (*education level*), and the mean level of education completed by members of the same age cohort within that nation (*education environment*).

Understanding the relationship between educational attainment, educational environment, and the various dimensions of CSE requires not only attention to how education is operationalised, but also the measurement of civic and social engagement.

We thus turn next to the dimensions of CSE that can be tested using the ESS: competitive political activity, expressive political activity, voluntary associations, voting, institutional trust, and interpersonal trust. Below is a description of each dimension, how it is operationalised, and the a priori hypothesis of whether it is better explained by the absolute education, sorting, or cumulative models.

Note that while the ESS includes most dimensions of CSE in which we are interested, there are two notable omissions: tolerance and knowledge. While it would be preferred to have measures of these dimensions in addition to those that are included, this is a case where the best (or ideal) ought not to be the enemy of the good. The positive relationship between absolute educational attainment and both tolerance and political knowledge is well established, although future research could profitably examine the precise nature of education's relationship to both.

Dimensions of engagement measured in the European Social Survey⁵

Political engagement: competitive and expressive

The sorting model rests on conceptualising political engagement as inherently zero-sum, with winners and losers. The more likely that a form of engagement is constrained

⁵ For more details on these measures, consult the annex.

by its competitive, finite nature, the more likely it is to be explained by the sorting model. A good test of the sorting model, therefore, is to compare two types of engagement that are both political, namely with the objective of influencing public policy, but do and do not involve activities that are inherently zero-sum in their nature:

“The ESS is ideal for this purpose, as it includes questions about a wide array of activities. Accordingly, the myriad forms of political engagement included in the ESS have been divided into those activities that are most likely to be zero-sum in nature, namely contacting political leaders and working for a political party or ‘action group’”. (Competitive Political Activity).

These two activities are examples of where, at least according to NJS-B, the zero-sum logic applies best. The more people who contact a political leader, the less the impact made by each individual contact; the more people who volunteer for a party, the less the relative value of each individual volunteer. This is the sort of activity where we should have the strongest expectation for the sorting model.

In contrast to the set of competitive political activity, the same battery also includes a set of expressive activities, where participation is more likely to be cooperative than competitive. In contrast to contacting political leaders and working for a political party, these activities do not have an obviously instrumental motivation. Such activities include boycotting consumer products, marching in demonstrations, and signing petitions (*Expressive Political Activity*). Rather than inherently zero-sum activities, with multiple participants scrambling to have their individual influence felt or voice heard, these are activities whose effectiveness rests on mass involvement. I gain more from a boycott, petition, or demonstration when others join me – the more, the better. In this case, the hypothesis is clearly that the sorting model does not apply, since these are not inherently competitive activities, but that the absolute education model does. These are activities identified with social movement-oriented politics, which in turn are often spurred by post-materialist motivations – and post-materialism is largely the province of the highly-educated (Abramson and Inglehart, 1995).

It is also possible that participation in these expressive activities becomes more likely as the average level of education within the environment increases, or what Helliwell and Putnam have labeled the cumulative model. Because their effectiveness requires a cascade of participation, we might expect a “contagion effect”, whereby living amongst people with a higher level of education legitimises such activity. Since the cumulative model has not been discussed as thoroughly as the sorting and absolute education models in the extant literature, it is more difficult to generate expectations for it. Therefore, it is mentioned here as a plausible, though tenuous, possibility only.

Voluntary associations

Above, I argued that it is not clear why we should expect participation in voluntary associations – to many, the quintessential example of a civically-oriented activity – to have a zero-sum, inherently competitive nature. Unlike political engagement, people do not generally get involved in voluntary organisations in order to advance or protect their interests. Instead, they presumably have an intrinsic interest in the activities of the group, and enjoy the camaraderie of their fellow group-members. If this is an accurate characterisation of what we might call associationalism, then there is no reason to expect the sorting model to explain why people get involved in groups, clubs, and associations. Instead, we should hypothesise that the absolute education model pertains, simply on the

grounds of the almost universal relationship between educational attainment and CSE generally.

Notwithstanding my objections to NJS-B's reasoning, their belief that the sorting model applies to participation in voluntary associations is not totally unwarranted. It is a reasonable possibility that relative social status is a factor explaining engagement in membership organisations, in which case relative education would be relevant. Supporting this perspective, NJS-B do, in fact, find empirical evidence that the sorting model – at least as they operationalise it – explains organisational involvement (recall, however, that Helliwell and Putnam find by shifting the measure of educational environment, it does not).

In the ESS, involvement in a voluntary association is measured with an item that asks whether respondents have worked for an organisation or association. Unfortunately, the placement of this item may prime the respondent to think of political organisations, rather than a wider array of groups, since it immediately follows the competitive political activities, and immediately precedes the expressive activities. As a robustness check, therefore, a parallel analysis has been conducted with the European Values Survey.

Voting

As discussed above, voting has been placed into a category all its own. Just as light has properties of both a wave and a particle, voting has the properties of both civic and political engagement. Therefore, it is difficult to predict a priori whether the sorting model applies to voting or not. We might expect that, just as contacting political leaders is a zero-sum activity, so is voting. Conversely, however, voting is clearly not driven entirely by the advancement of one's self-interested political objectives, but instead has an expressive component to it. People vote, at least in part, because they receive civic gratification from doing so.

In the ESS, voter turnout is measured in reference to the most recent national election, with a lead-in to the question designed to minimise the social desirability bias associated with the measurement of voter turnout (whereby more people claim to vote in surveys than indicated by the actual turnout rate as tabulated by election officials).

To the extent that voting has a political motivation, the sorting model is hypothesised to apply as an explanation for voter turnout; to the degree that it is grounded in civically-oriented sensibilities, the absolute education model gets the nod. Indeed, it is even conceivable that the cumulative model applies, as the expressive aspect of voting may be greater in environments where people have a higher level of education and thus a stronger sense that voting is a civic obligation or duty.

Trust: interpersonal and institutional

To this point, the forms of engagement under consideration consist of activities, things one *does*. Trust, however, consists of an attitude or a mindset – what one *thinks* – albeit with likely behavioral consequences. For interpersonal trust, these consequences are comparable to what we observe for educational attainment. If education is the “universal solvent”, interpersonal trust's universality ranks a strong second, as trusting people are more engaged in a whole host of activities than their less-trusting counterparts. While the behavioral implications of trust in government institutions are not as clear-cut,

this form of trust has long been theorised to be an important ingredient for political stability (Easton, 1965; Hetherington, 2005).

The ESS measures interpersonal trust with three related questions: whether most people can be trusted, whether most people would try to take advantage of you, and whether most of the time people try to be helpful. The index of institutional trust includes seven institutions: your country's Parliament, the legal system, the police, politicians, political parties, the European Parliament, and the United Nations. For both interpersonal and institutional trust, an index has been constructed by simply adding the individual responses together.⁶

There are competing expectations regarding the relationship of education to trust, both interpersonal and institutional. One perspective is that trust has largely social origins, and is thus driven by socioeconomic status. If so, the sorting model would apply. The nearer you are to the top of the social hierarchy, the more reason you have to be trusting. Conversely, if trust is primarily a psychological predisposition immune to one's position on the social ladder, then an individual's absolute level of education is most likely to matter.

A third perspective, which seems most compelling, is that trust is driven by both individual attainment and the educational environment (and, by implication, has both a sociological and a psychological flavor). Rather than the sorting model, though, the environment affects trust through a cumulative mechanism – trust begets trust. Under this scenario, a higher educational level within the environment triggers a positive feedback process, leading to a higher level of both interpersonal and institutional trust.

Findings of data analysis

Correctly testing the impact of education not only requires attention to the measurement of educational environment, but also the method of estimation. Because these data are cross-national, a standard regression model would be flawed. A key assumption of linear regression is that the units of analysis are independent of one another – information about one does not provide information about another. Data that are clustered by nation, however, clearly violate this assumption, as intra-national variation is going to be smaller than the variation between nations. In more intuitive terms, this means that two respondents from, say, Spain are likely to have more in common with one another than a respondent from Spain and one from Sweden. This problem is likely to be especially acute in a study of a nation's educational environment, where we would expect wide variation in the relationships between education, educational environment, and CSE.

There are a number of econometric strategies of handling such a violation of this fundamental assumption underpinning linear regression. One is to run separate models for each nation, but with 17 nations (32 in the European Values Survey, discussed below) this can quickly become cumbersome, and makes generalisations across nations difficult. Instead, an alternative estimator is employed, namely a random coefficient (mixed-effects model) in which the slopes for the relationships in which we are interested are allowed to

⁶ For both interpersonal and institutional trust, the items correlate highly and load cleanly on a single factor. Nonetheless, the correlations are not perfect, especially for institutional trust, suggesting the possibility of separate analyses for trust in different institutions. This is likely to be a fruitful avenue for future research, but is beyond the scope of the present analysis.

vary for each nation. Specifically, the relationships between the dependent variable and both education level and educational environment are permitted to vary cross-nationally.⁷

In order to keep the focus on the education variables, the models only include a small number of controls. Since education is often taken to be a proxy for socioeconomic status, the model includes household income. By including both, we can be sure that we are not conflating the impact of education and income. The model also controls for gender, given that there are gender-related differences in civic and social engagement (Burns, Schlozman and Verba, 2001; Christy, 1987; Norris, Lovenduski and Campbell, 2004). And, because educational environment is measured in relation to a respondent's age cohort, the models also account for a respondent's age (specifically, generational cohort). To facilitate comparisons across the different forms of engagement, each continuous dependent variable has been standardised to have both a mean and standard deviation of 1.0. Since voting and voluntary association are both dichotomous measures, they have not been standardised in this way.

In interpreting the models, it is important to keep in mind that education can have multiple effects. Thus, rather than declaring an hypothesis supported or not, I instead characterise the evidence favoring an hypothesis as strong or weak. More specifically, the interpretation of the models is as follows:

- A positive, significant coefficient for education level and a non-significant coefficient for educational environment is strong evidence for the absolute education model.
- A negative coefficient for educational environment is evidence for the sorting model. If it is greater in magnitude than education level, that is strong evidence favoring the sorting model. If it is smaller in magnitude, then the evidence can only be characterised as weak, and the absolute education model can also be said to have received support.
- A positive coefficient for educational environment is evidence for the cumulative model. As with the evaluation of the sorting model, a coefficient greater than education level is strong evidence, and one smaller than education level is weak evidence.

Tables 3.3.2 and 3.3.3 present the numerical results of all seven models, while Figure 3.3.1 shows the overall conclusions to be drawn from across all the models; the results are summarised verbally below.

⁷ These are estimated using the “xtmixed” command in STATA 9.0 (Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal, 2005).

Table 3.3.2. Testing the absolute education, sorting, and cumulative models
Results from mixed-effects maximum likelihood regression

	Competitive political activity	Expressive political activity	Voting	Voluntary associations	Interpersonal trust	Institutional trust
Education level	0.038 *** (0.004)	0.052 *** (0.006)	0.013 *** (0.002)	0.013 *** (0.002)	0.031 *** (0.003)	0.026 *** (0.004)
Educational environment	-0.043 *** (0.015)	-0.040 ** (0.020)	-0.020 (0.013)	-0.011 ** (0.006)	0.042 ** (0.021)	0.010 (0.017)
Cohort	0.002 (0.013)	-0.077 *** (0.013)	0.056 *** (0.006)	0.009 ** (0.005)	0.109 *** (0.014)	0.056 *** (0.014)
Gender	-0.148 *** (0.014)	0.081 *** (0.012)	-0.008 (0.005)	-0.043 *** (0.005)	0.074 *** (0.012)	-0.009 (0.013)
Household income	0.028 *** (0.004)	0.018 *** (0.003)	0.021 *** (0.001)	0.012 *** (0.001)	0.038 *** (0.003)	0.031 *** (0.004)
Constant	1.166 *** (0.204)	0.801 *** (0.249)	0.622 *** (0.137)	0.123 * (0.076)	-0.413 (0.301)	0.275 (0.237)
Nations	17	17	17	17	17	17
Observations	22,428	22,294	21,562	22,432	22,241	18,701
prob > chi²	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.10

Source: European Social Survey.

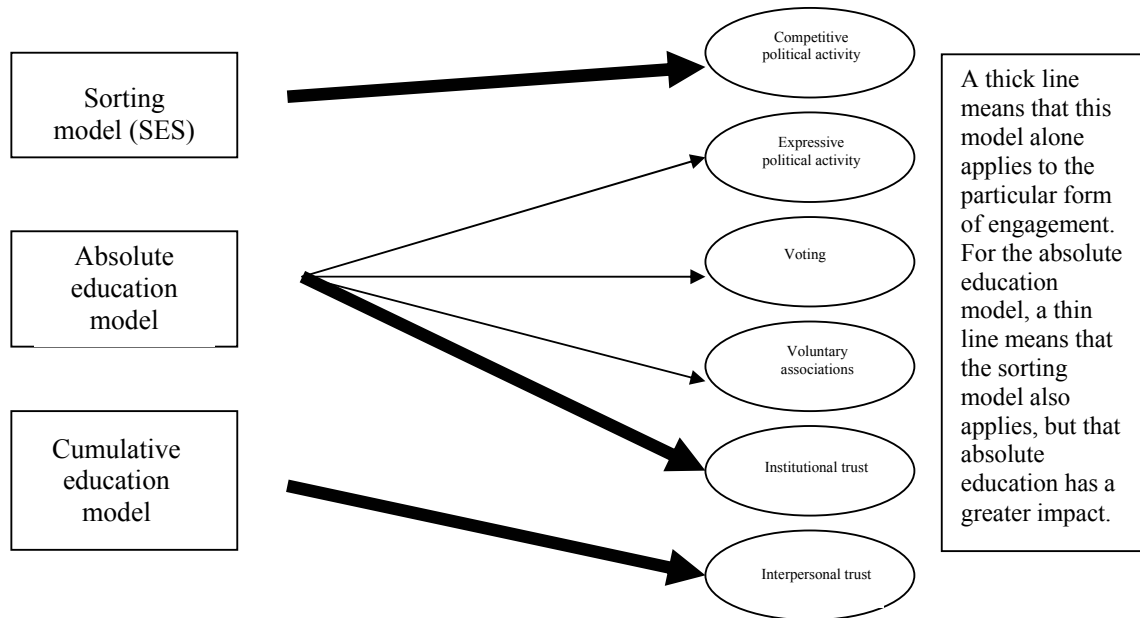
Table 3.3.3. The absolute education, sorting, and cumulative models as applied to voluntary organisations
Results from mixed-effects maximum likelihood regression

	Organisational memberships	Voluntary activity
Education level	0.079 *** (0.009)	0.062 *** (0.007)
Educational environment	-0.056 ** (0.028)	-0.037 * (0.022)
Cohort	0.002 (0.011)	0.018 (0.011)
Gender	-0.017* (0.010)	-0.036 *** (0.011)
Household income	0.032 *** (0.002)	0.020 *** (0.003)
Constant	0.808 *** (0.179)	0.834 *** (0.125)
Nations	32	31
Observations	29,698	29,136
prob > chi²	0.000	0.000

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.10

Source: European Values Survey.

Figure 3.3.1. Is education simply a measure of relative social status?
Summary of three models for education's impact on engagement



Competitive political activity: strong evidence for sorting

As expected, the competitive political activity index is best explained by the sorting model. This constitutes evidence that education is a mechanism by which individuals' place in the social hierarchy is established, and that the model proposed by NJS-B applies beyond the United States.

Expressive political activity: weak evidence for sorting, strong evidence for absolute education

The fact that there is only weak evidence for the sorting mechanism when applied to expressive forms of political engagement suggests that relative education as an indicator of social status is most suitable as an explanation for those forms of engagement that best approximate a zero-sum competition.

Voting: weak evidence for sorting, strong evidence for absolute education

Interpreting the evidence regarding voting is a little tricky. The coefficient for educational environment is negative and greater in magnitude than the positive coefficient for education level, which would suggest strong evidence for the sorting model (as with the political index). However, the coefficient for education level falls just short of statistical significance at a conventional level ($p=0.11$). Because the coefficient misses the usual cut-off for significance (in a dataset with 22 000 cases, where achieving significance is not difficult) I have classified the evidence as weak in favor of the sorting model. Perhaps a more accurate characterisation would be that it straddles the line between weak and strong which, given the Janus-faced nature of the motivations underpinning voting, is perhaps not surprising.

Voluntary associations: weak evidence for sorting, strong evidence for absolute education

There is weak evidence that involvement in a voluntary association is driven by the sorting model, suggesting that social status may play a role in spurring involvement in such organisations. Note, however, that this measure of organisational involvement is less than ideal for teasing out any differences between civically- and politically-oriented engagement, since it is included in a battery that likely primes the respondent to think of organisations that have a political side to them. Recall that the question about involvement in a group is embedded amidst other items that ask whether the respondent has worked for a political party, marched in a demonstration, participated in a boycott, etc.

Further evidence regarding organisational involvement and membership is provided by the European Values Survey (EVS), which includes a wider array of nations (31 instead of 17) and a more extensive set of questions about the respondent's involvement in voluntary associations.⁸ The models using data from the EVS use an identical method of estimation, including a random coefficient model, and educational environment is again coded in relation to each respondent's age cohort. In this case, however, educational environment must be calculated using educational level rather than the number of years spent in formal education. The two dependent variables are organisational memberships and volunteering. Respondents were first asked whether they belong to any in a long list of association types, including everything from social welfare groups to religious organisations to sports groups. Then they were asked whether they do any unpaid volunteer work for each type of association.

The EVS results are comparable to those derived from the ESS.⁹ For both organisational memberships and volunteering, the coefficient for education level is positive (and significant), while the coefficient for educational environment is negative. However, in both cases the magnitude of educational environment is less than education level, leading again to the conclusion that there is only weak evidence for the sorting model when applied to organisational involvement. It is remarkable that these two sources of data produce consistent results, notwithstanding that they cover different nations and use different measures of organisational involvement.

Interpersonal trust: strong evidence for cumulative

As hypothesised, interpersonal trust is driven by the cumulative model. The higher the average level of education in one's environment, the higher is that individual's trust in others. The evidence in favor of the cumulative model can be characterised as strong, as the magnitude for educational environment exceeds that for education level.

⁸ Thirty-three nations are actually included in the EVS, but two do not have all the necessary variables (Portugal and Britain). The nations in the analysis include the following: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Belarus, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, and Northern Ireland.

⁹ Complete details are found in the annex.

Institutional trust: strong evidence for absolute education

Institutional trust is driven only by absolute education, as the educational environment has neither a negative nor a positive effect.

Conclusions and policy implications

We entered into this comparison of absolute education versus the educational environment in response to NJS-B's provocative claim that educational attainment is correlated with numerous dimensions of CSE simply because education serves as a marker of social status. If this is true, then any efforts to increase civic and social engagement through encouraging more education would be futile. Higher levels of education for everyone would not change the underlying distribution of engagement, as those with more education *relative to their environment* would still be expected to be more engaged.

By testing the impact of the educational environment on multiple forms of engagement across European nations, we see that the sorting model proposed by NJS-B does hold up for the most clearly instrumental forms of political engagement. Therefore, these data suggest that efforts to boost political engagement (narrowly defined) by simply increasing the education level of the population would likely not succeed.

This evidence for the sorting model also sheds partial light on the paradox of participation, as it explains why rising levels of education do not automatically translate into rising levels of political engagement. Indeed, if rising education levels produce an inequitable distribution of the opportunities for educational advancement – thus boosting education levels for some groups within a population but not others – it could actually produce a growing engagement gap. These results offer only partial illumination on the paradox of participation, however, because the sorting model cannot explain why political engagement has fallen in the wake of a more educated populace. A drop in engagement must be explained by factors other than education.

Ceteris paribus, what forms of engagement would be expected to increase as education levels rise? NJS-B have already argued, persuasively, that political tolerance increases across the board in the wake of increased educational attainment. The above analysis also indicates that interpersonal trust increases as education levels climb. In fact, trust accelerates as the overall level of education within one's environment rises – rather than sorting, the cumulative model applies. Institutional trust also increases along with an individual's level of educational attainment, although without the educational environment as an accelerator.

Expressive activities, voting, and involvement in a voluntary association are all forms of engagement that have been shown to rise with increasing individual-level education, but with the educational environment serving as a decelerator. That is, a higher average level of education within one's age cohort pulls engagement down, but not enough to outweigh the impact of an individual's own level of educational attainment. Perhaps a concrete example clarifies. Imagine two people, each with a college degree. Both will have a higher level of engagement than someone with a high school diploma. But the "engagement gap" between a college and high school education will be greater for the person whose age cohort has a lower average level of college education.

Caveats

It is important to note that the forgoing analysis cannot be said to have uncovered causal relationships between education and engagement. Our confidence that the links are not merely spurious should be bolstered, however, by the earlier discussion of the work by Dee (2004) and Milligan *et al.* (2003). Their work suggests that education does have a causal effect on various forms of engagement, while the analysis done here begins to specify *how* education shapes different forms of engagement.

There has admittedly been a glaring omission in the discussion thus far, as virtually nothing has been said about the content of education – *what people actually learn*. To speak of education strictly by referring to the attainment level or years in school is to remain at a level of abstraction that conceals much, presumably most, of what is important about the educational process. This level of abstraction is largely due to the nature of the existing data, which invariably asks respondents to report only the level of education they have received, or the number of years they have spent pursuing a formal education. Far more informative would be detailed measures of their education, like their civically-relevant experiences, the type of educational institution(s) they have attended, their courses of study, etc. The problem is that the existing literature gives us little guidance on what these measures ought to be. The next section of this report, therefore, takes up the question of what we know (and do not know) about the civic consequences of different educational experiences.

3.4. Content of education

There are a variety of educational factors – that is, what happens in school – which the literature suggests might have an impact on civic and social engagement. This chapter reviews those factors and then puts a number of them to the empirical test using the 1999 IEA Civic Education Study. One in particular that stands out is the openness of the classroom climate, or the degree to which students are able to discuss political and social issues in class. When viewed cross-nationally, classroom climate has a positive impact on every dimension of engagement included in the analysis: knowledge, skills, intention of being an informed voter, intention of being civically engaged, intention of being politically engaged, institutional trust, and tolerance. Nation-by-nation results, however, show that classroom climate does not have a consistent effect in every country.

Research on schools and civic education

The subject of how it is that schools might increase engagement opens up a wide field of inquiry – one that is largely untilled. The study of civic education¹ within schools has long suffered from neglect and has only recently attracted the attention of scholars, which means that there are large gaps in our knowledge regarding the processes by which young people become engaged, or not, in politics and the role that schools play within that process. Perhaps one reason that democratic education has not enjoyed sustained scholarly attention is that determining if and how schools affect CSE is complex, all the more so when the analysis involves cross-national comparisons. The wide variety in both political cultures and educational systems across nations has made international comparisons difficult and, thus, rare. In the words of Hochschild: “As Mark Twain reportedly observed about the weather, everyone complains about the lack of comparative educational research but no one does much about it” (Wolf and Macedo, 2004). What is true for educational research generally is even more so for the study of democratic education specifically.

Someone familiar only with the political science literature from thirty to forty years ago would likely be surprised to find that attitudes and opinions of young people faded away as a primary topic of research. In the 1960s and 1970s, the study of young people was a thriving area of research among political scientists, especially those with a behavioralist bent (Easton and Dennis, 1969; Greenstein, 1965; Hess and Torney, 1967;

¹ Within the literature on young people’s engagement, different labels are applied to the process of learning about political life. It is often referred to as civic education, which is the term I will use most often, even though it refers to engagement beyond the purely civic as the term has been employed above. For variety’s sake, I sometimes opt for the term democratic education, by which is meant all means of preparation for active citizenship. The term is synonymous with civic education as it is generally used.

Jennings and Niemi, 1968, 1974). During this period, many political scientists were interested in exploring, and perhaps explaining, a nation's democratic character, and the inter-generational transmission of democratic values was seen as a critical component of that character. While much of this literature was focused on the United States, there were nonetheless efforts to study political socialisation cross-nationally. And while the study of democratic education within the schools was not the only objective of this early literature on political socialisation, schools did figure prominently as a primary "agent" of socialisation. Almond and Verba, for example, devoted considerable attention to cross-national variation in socialisation, including people's educational experiences, in *The Civic Culture*. Notably, in 1971 the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) conducted a cross-national, school-based study of democratic education among young people, a dataset more rigorous than anything that had been done before (Torney, Oppenheim and Farnen, 1975).

After this strong start, for a variety of reasons the study of political socialisation, including research on democratic education within schools, lost its momentum and the study of young people largely disappeared from empirical political science by roughly the mid-to-late 1970s. One reason was a paucity of theory to guide researchers (Cook, 1985) but another was the sheer empirical challenge inherent in trying to study the complex processes by which young people learn to be engaged in a democratic society.

Following a period of desuetude, however, political socialisation – and thus the study of democratic education in schools – has reappeared on the research agenda of political science and related disciplines (Campbell, 2002; Conover and Searing, 2000; Plutzer, 2002; Rahn and Transue, 1998; Sears and Valentino, 1997). This resurgence has been driven, at least in part, by the declining rates of political engagement (notably voter turnout) in many industrialised nations, and the fact that these declines are concentrated mainly among young people. It is ironic that as engagement levels among young people have dropped in many industrialised nations, there is relatively little contemporary scholarship to explain why.

The return of socialisation as a subject of serious study has been helped by the emergence of the social capital literature, which has given impetus to the study of how norms are transmitted across generations. In *Making Democracy Work*, Putnam (1993) argues that the degree of civic involvement in Italian regions today is largely owing to their civic character in the past. While childhood socialisation is not an explicit theme in his study, socialisation is certainly the implied process by which a region's "civic-ness" endures over centuries. More recently, Putnam (2000) has highlighted the variation in social capital among generational cohorts within the United States; a leading explanation for that variation is their different collective socialisation experiences.

Given the intellectual heritage of social capital as a concept, it is appropriately invoked in discussions of young people's socialisation. While the term apparently has multiple progenitors (Portes, 1998), it first gained prominence when Coleman (Coleman and Hoffer, 1987; Coleman, 1988, 1990) developed it in his work on schools and, thus, young people. While schools are by no means the only organisations in which social capital accrues, they are certainly an important source of the norms and networks that constitute social capital.

Even if, as is likely, there are numerous factors responsible for downward trends in engagement, schools are a promising lever to reverse the decline and spur greater engagement among young people. While there are undoubtedly other influences on the democratic education of young people, like families and mass media, they are farther

removed from public policy. Policy makers have a direct hand in the design and implementation of a nation's system of education, and so it is logical to look to schools as a means to enhance the political and civic engagement of young people.

The fact that research on democratic education withered for a spell has meant that empirical social scientists are returning to many of the same questions that occupied the earlier generation of scholarship on education and engagement. Saying that schools matter as a provider of democratic education, or at least that this is a worthy subject of study, is not the same as saying that we have strong theoretical expectations regarding what it is about schools that matters. Because this body of research has not undergone a continuous process of intellectual evolution, the current generation of researchers interested in the democratic education of young people has the challenge of building a new theoretical framework. As mentioned above and detailed below the social capital literature provides a start, but more needs to be done.

How schools might matter

My comments about the relative lack of theoretical development in the study of democratic education should not be taken to mean that there has been an absolute dearth on the subject. To the contrary, reading through the disparate literature on democratic education reveals a number of possible theoretical explanations for how schools can serve as a source of democratic education, some of which are more amenable to empirical testing than others. Many, perhaps all, of them are complementary. In other words, there is no reason to think that there is only a single reason why schools affect engagement. Education is a complex process, influenced by many factors. The next section distills a series of explanations for why the content of education – what actually happens in school – might affect engagement. I will refer to these as educational factors, by which is meant the potential mechanisms through which formal education might affect levels of engagement. This discussion is prefatory to the empirical analysis that follows, which incorporates many, although regrettably not all, of these factors.

Bureaucratic competence

One intriguing explanation for how education enhances engagement comes from Wolfinger and Rosenstone's (1980) succinct yet seminal book *Who Votes?* They were among the first to develop a full-fledged model of voter turnout. Drawing on data from the Current Population Survey, a large-N survey conducted jointly by the US Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, they highlighted the heavy burden of voter registration requirements across the United States, and identified barriers to registration as a leading reason that voter turnout in the United States is so low by international standards. They found that a higher level of education facilitates voter registration, and offer many of the usual explanations for the impact of education: it increases cognitive capacity, interest in politics, and even a sense of civic duty. Amidst these more standard explanations, however, is one more novel and, therefore, intriguing. "Schooling also imparts experience with bureaucratic relationships and such simple information-seeking skills as looking up necessary items in a book." (p. 79). In other words, learning to function in a school environment provides experience in dealing with government bureaucracies, or what we might call bureaucratic competence. Such competence facilitates interaction with government, whether voter registration or other, more intensive ways of expressing preferences to political leaders.

As mentioned above, it is a misnomer that barriers to voter registration are only relevant in the United States. And so while this was a study focused on the United States, it likely has application more generally. After all, governments and bureaucracy go hand-in-hand everywhere.

I do not mean to suggest, and neither do Wolfinger and Rosenstone, that acquiring bureaucratic competence is the primary reason that schooling facilitates engagement, even when we focus narrowly on voter turnout. Indeed, it is hard to see how it could apply at all to some dimensions of engagement such as, say, tolerance. Nonetheless, it is one among many ways that formal education can increase individuals' comfort level with public engagement of different types. Indeed, bureaucratic competence is only acquired as a byproduct of one's experience in school. I mention it as a reminder that education can facilitate engagement in subtle ways.

Summary: One subtle way formal education enhances engagement is through the development of competence in dealing with bureaucratic procedures.

Civic skills

While lists of precursors to civic and political engagement often include abstract notions like efficacy, an easy-to-overlook facilitator is simply the ability to handle the quotidian tasks that many types of engagement require, like running meetings, giving speeches, and writing letters. In their book *Voice and Equality*, Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) underscore the significance of these abilities, which they label civic skills. For many people with high-status, white-collar occupations, skills such as these may seem mundane. But for someone for whom these are not regular activities, they can be intimidating. If you have never had the experience of running a meeting, imagine trying to organise a gathering of people to, say, plan a protest. Verba and his colleagues find that civic skills acquired through non-political channels, including on the job and in voluntary associations, are an important predictor of whether someone is politically engaged. Civic skills are of particular interest precisely because they are acquired through activities that have no political content, and thus are not simply the *effect* of a predisposition toward political engagement. With their innovative measures of civic skills, Verba, Schlozman and Brady demonstrate that one reason people of high SES engage in politics is simply that they know how, and that when people with low SES become engaged it is often because they have acquired the necessary skills to do so.

Verba, Schlozman and Brady trace the acquisition of these skills through the workplace and participation in voluntary associations, but another important path is through formal education. School can be an ideal setting to acquire civic skills. Sometimes this experience can come through a curriculum centered on democratic education specifically, as when students are given opportunities to engage in debates over political issues with their classmates. Sometimes this experience can come as a byproduct of instruction in other subjects, as when students give an oral report in a literature class. And sometimes this experience does not come through formal classroom activities at all, but rather through extra-curricular activities. Many student organisations provide opportunities for young people to develop skills that are well suited for civic and political engagement. Intriguingly, Verba, Schlozman and Brady find that people who report having been involved in organisations during high school are more likely to have acquired civic skills in adulthood. The cross-sectional nature of their data preclude inferring that the relationship is causal – as it could be that those who are joiners in high

school continue in the same path through adulthood – but is nonetheless suggestive that experiences gained through formal education have a bearing later in life.

The ability to perform tasks like those described by Verba, Schlozman and Brady is only one definition of civic skills, as the term has other, related meanings. A recent report on the measurement of democratic education, for example, includes two types of skills that are quite different than those discussed by Verba, Schlozman and Brady, “collective decision-making skills, and critical thinking skills” (de Weerd, Gemmeke, Rigter and van Rij, 2005, p. 25). These are more difficult to measure than the skills discussed by Verba and his colleagues, since they require data on outcomes rather than just inputs. Verba, Schlozman and Brady measure skills by asking respondents whether they have ever used any of the skills in question – given a speech, or attended, planned, or run a meeting, – on the assumption that these are things best learned by doing. Measurement is also simplified by the fact that respondents can be straightforwardly asked about their use, and thus acquisition, of the skills in question. On the other hand, determining whether people have decision-making and/or critical-thinking skills is far more difficult. It makes little sense to ask people whether they can think critically or make decisions democratically. Measuring outcome-based skills is difficult and, thus, rare, although one example is the IEA Civic Education Study, to be described in greater detail below.

Summary: Schools are an important institution in which to learn civic skills: the ability to communicate and carry out organisational tasks.

Cognitive capacity

To this point the focus has been on the implications for what we might describe as second-order effects, or even by-products, of formal education. At the core of the educative process, however, is the development of mental acuity, or cognitive capacity. More colloquially, education is designed to make people “smarter”.

Formal education has a dramatic impact on the ability of individuals to gather information on a variety of subjects, organise facts meaningfully, and efficiently process additional and related knowledge. In short, education enhances cognitive proficiency and analytic ability. This argument is, in fact, one of the main justifications for general education. Becker and economic theorists studying human capital have argued that education is a capital investment essential to increasing earnings and productivity, for example (Nie, Junn and Stehlik-Berry 1996, p. 41).

Economic theorists point to how education increases earnings and productivity, while political theorists see education as enhancing democracy. An educated population is more likely to produce an informed electorate, as voters are able to obtain, process, and act upon information pertaining to the performance of their elected leaders. As public policies address increasingly complex topics, the information required to evaluate those policies becomes increasingly sophisticated – only underscoring the importance of education.

As discussed above, theory explicitly links cognitive capacity and tolerance. Nie, Junn and Stehlik-Berry see absolute education as enhancing cognitive capacity and, therefore, boosting democratic enlightenment (tolerance). Tolerance, especially when operationalised as respect for the civil liberties of unpopular groups, requires a relatively high level of abstract thinking, precisely what is ideally learned through formal education.

Cognitive capacity also has an indirect impact on other, perhaps all, dimensions of engagement. For example, psychological engagement with politics is likely facilitated by a greater capacity for absorbing and organising political information – which often requires a mixture of knowledge about government, history, geography, the law, economics and even science. More education expands a person’s ability to acquire such information, and thus presumably strengthens one’s self-perceived sense of personal political efficacy. A strong sense of internal efficacy, in turn, is an enabling condition for other forms of engagement, especially political activity meant to influence public policy.

Note that this discussion of cognitive capacity has not focused solely on what is learned through formal education about the political world. Instead, the expansion of cognitive capacity is far more general in nature, and refers to the totality of one’s educational experience. In this context, the capacity referred to is not simply the sheer amount of information a student absorbs, but experience in synthesising information – the process of learning. Thus, while efforts at democratic education are certainly relevant to enhancing a student’s cognitive capacity for CSE, engagement is also boosted by spill-over from other aspects of education.

Summary: Formal education enhances mental acuity, which in turn has an impact on all dimensions of engagement.

Curriculum

The immediately preceding section referred to how formal education *in general* can expand cognitive capacities, which then facilitates at least some dimensions of civic and social engagement. Equally important, however, is the content of the democratic education that schools provide – that is, classroom instruction with the specific objective of preparing students for active citizenship. To the casual observer, it may seem that this is the primary means through which schools prepare young people for engagement in the public sphere. After all, if we wanted to determine how schools teach a subject like chemistry, we would presumably look at what is taught in chemistry classrooms.

Perhaps ironically, then, for roughly a generation the consensus was that high school courses in civics² had little or no effect on political knowledge, a conclusion based largely on research done by Langton and Jennings (1968) on American high school students in the mid-1960s. Drawing on an array of measures, they concluded that civics courses were an imperceptible signal amidst the noise of the myriad influences on adolescents’ political development. Because it was based on a nationwide study and published in the *American Political Science Review*, the flagship journal of the American Political Science Association, the Langton-Jennings conclusions remained the conventional wisdom among political scientists, or at least those studying the United States, until recently.

The conclusion that classroom instruction in democratic education, or civics, had virtually no impact on political and civic outcomes (see below for an exception) was especially ironic within the United States. This is because the *raison d’être* of America’s public schools has historically been to provide a common democratic education within a heterogeneous, immigrant nation. How could it be that the schools’ civic purposes were not being fulfilled? There are different possible explanations, which are not necessarily contradictory.

² Such courses often go by different names (government, social studies, etc.); the single label “civics” is meant to cover all such courses.

The first explanation is that civics is pointedly unlike other academic subjects, in that it is not confined to a single course of study, or to school at all. Unlike politics, you are not going to learn much chemistry from reading the newspaper or watching television. Students, however, can absorb a lot of political information from the “ether” around them, making classroom instruction redundant. In particular, young people are likely to absorb a lot of political information at home.

Another explanation for the absence of a “civics effect” is simply that democratic education is largely uniform. If every student receives essentially the same instruction in civics, then civics instruction is logically unable to predict differences in engagement. A constant cannot explain a variable. This explanation, it should be noted, leaves open the possibility that education is actually of an equally high caliber across the board.

The second proffered explanation for the absence of a “civics effect”, however, is that civic education is of low quality. Langton and Jennings, and many others since, have suggested that civics classes have little impact on engagement not only because they are uniform, but because they are uniformly bad. Many observers of American education have been critical of the methods used to teach civics, which often constitute rote learning, as well as the teachers’ lack of expertise in the subject matter.

Even though the Langton and Jennings study led to the widespread opinion that civics courses had little independent impact on the engagement of young people, this is actually a mischaracterisation of their conclusions. Langton and Jennings did not conclude that civics classes had no impact whatsoever. They noted one exception to their generalisation, which turns out to be very revealing. Based on their 1965 data, they suggested that while *white* students of the time did not benefit from civics instruction, *black* students did. Recall that in the mid-1960s, racial segregation was still common in the United States. Specifically, in the Southern states African Americans were largely denied the right to vote and otherwise closed off from the political process. Langton and Jennings suggested that for many black students in what was then an overtly segregated nation, exposure to civics at school did not simply repeat what they were learning at home, as was the case for white students (p. 866).

There are two ways to interpret the finding that civics courses had an impact on civic outcomes for black students. On the one hand, this *is* evidence that civics courses matter after all. But on the other hand, the evidence suggests that civics courses only matter for those people within the population who have been totally shut out from the political process – that is, civics instruction only matters in the most extreme case.

In the years following publication of the Langton and Jennings study other evidence beyond the United States began to accumulate, suggesting that the positive impact of civics courses is not limited to black adolescents in the American South. An experimental study in Argentina found that a programme designed to have adolescents read newspapers and discuss current events within their classrooms led to small but statistically significant increases in political knowledge and tolerance (Morduchowicz *et al.*, 1996). The theoretical explanation for this positive impact is similar in kind to the hypothesised reason for the impact of civics on African Americans – the civics courses compensate for the absence of democratic education at home or through other channels in Argentine society. Even in more established democracies, though, civics courses have been shown to affect civic outcomes. In Sweden, obviously a nation with deep democratic roots, social studies courses have been found to have an impact on adolescents’ political knowledge (Westholm, Lindquist and Niemi, 1990). The Swedish study is especially compelling because it draws on longitudinal data (the same individuals interviewed at

multiple points in time), a research design which is rare. Similarly, a study in the United Kingdom in 1986-1987 (Denver and Hands, 1990) concluded that A-level courses in British politics have a positive effect on multiple dimensions of engagement: knowledge, media consumption, political discussion, participation, and efficacy. While the study was not experimental, the authors still get some purchase on causation by noting that students in their second year of a politics course have higher levels of engagement than students in their first year, suggesting that students learn more the longer they take the course. In contrast to the study in Argentina, civics instruction in Britain did not have an effect on tolerance, nor on political cynicism. The fact that civics instruction appears to affect tolerance in Argentina but not Britain could, of course, simply be due to differences in the instruction that was offered. Alternatively, it could be that tolerance is such a widely-held value in a longstanding democracy like the United Kingdom that a civics course can do little to boost it higher.

More recently, other evidence from the United Kingdom supports the conclusion that civics instruction can have a positive impact on engagement. Unlike the earlier study by Denver and Hands, John and Morris (2004) have conducted a panel study of 15- to 17-year-olds in 24 schools in which they administered two surveys one year apart. They find that civic education, measured as the students' reports of what they have studied, predicts volunteering in the community, an example of civic engagement

Even in the United States, where there had been the greatest skepticism about the impact of civics courses, more recent research has concluded that classroom instruction can indeed increase at least one dimension of CSE, namely political knowledge. Based on their analysis of the civics exam included in the 1988 National Assessment of Educational Progress (US NAEP), a far more thorough evaluation than the broad but shallow set of civic measures used by Langton and Jennings a generation prior, Niemi and Junn (1998) concluded that students who have taken civics courses perform better on the exam.

The studies that find a positive impact on engagement for civics courses are obviously important, as they demonstrate that what happens in the classroom does have an impact on young people's preparation for active citizenship. However, their results really only demonstrate how much more we need to learn about civic education, as we have essentially missed a generation of research on the subject. Take, for example, the study by Niemi and Junn (1998). Their main finding is that taking a civics course leads, on average, to an increase on the US NAEP Civics Evaluation of roughly four percentage points. But in a re-analysis of their data, Greene (2000) demonstrates that the effect is limited to students currently enrolled in a civics course, and is really only a gain of two percentage points. In other words, from the research of Niemi and Junn we know that taking a civics course matters – at least a little and for at least a little while. But the small size of the effect raises the question of how much is really learned through formal instruction. If the subject in question were anything but civics, we would almost certainly be inclined to ask why the effect is so minimal. Nor is the concern about small effect sizes unique to the Niemi and Junn study. None of the studies across this body of research shows effects that are large in magnitude.

Summary: Until recently, the conventional wisdom was that civics classes had little effect. New evidence indicates that they do, but that the effect is nonetheless small in magnitude.

Pedagogical method

Based on these studies, it is difficult to generalise for the purpose of designing an effective civics curriculum. The specifics of what is taught varies widely across nations, and appropriately so, as a civics curriculum should presumably include instruction regarding the political system of a student's own country and culture. Given this unavoidable variation across nations, is it possible to develop some general guidelines for effective civics instruction? Fortunately, the answer is yes. Rather than focus on curriculum – what is taught – the best available evidence indicates that civic educators should worry more about *how* the content is taught. Woven throughout the research literature on civic curriculum is one consistent conclusion: the most effective civics instruction involves the free and open discussion of current political events within the classroom, or what is often called an *open classroom climate*.

The conclusion that an open classroom climate fosters civic and political engagement is not new, as it dates back to Almond and Verba's *Civic Culture*. Similarly, the 1971 IEA study of civic education also found that a classroom climate which fosters debate and discussion leads to better performance on a civics evaluation (Torney, Oppenheim and Farnen, 1975). Upon a close reading, in fact, many of the existing studies on civic courses support the claim that an open classroom climate is the causal mechanism behind any observed effect for a civics curriculum. The Argentine experiment described above, for instance, used newspapers as a way to introduce the *discussion* of current events within the classroom. Similarly, Niemi and Junn also find that adolescents' performance on a test of objective civics knowledge is related to the discussion of political issues within their classrooms. More recently, cross-national analysis drawing on the IEA Civic Education Study (described in greater detail below), has also found that an open classroom climate enhances political knowledge (Torney-Purta, 2001-2002, 2002; Torney-Purta and Richardson, 2005).

Empiricists are not alone in highlighting the virtues of political discussion as an educative process, as normative political theorists have also advocated discourse and debate. In describing what she considers to be the basis of a democratic education, Gutmann (1999, p. 51) stresses the need for young people to develop "the capacity for rational deliberation". In other words, young people need to experience the open discussion of political issues to prepare them for engagement in a pluralistic, participatory democracy. Gutmann makes an explicitly normative case for deliberation, but embedded in her argument is an implicit empirical claim. While she centers her argument on the democratic virtues cultivated by rational discussion of political issues in the classroom, underpinning her reasoning is the assumption that as a pedagogical technique, students who experience open classroom discourse learn more about politics than their peers in classrooms without the same level of discussion, and are thus better primed for engagement in the public sphere.

Interestingly, even critics of deliberative theory accept the empirically-grounded premise that exposure to the discussion of public issues best equips people, especially adolescents, for political engagement. Notably, two of the deliberative school's harshest detractors, namely Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (1996, 2002), advocate an educational system in which young people come face-to-face with the difficulties of resolving conflict-ridden political issues, including exposure to the discussion of contentious subjects. Like Gutmann, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse are making an explicitly normative claim that stems from the implicitly empirical proposition that adolescents' exposure to,

and participation in, the discussion of public issues trains them for the cognitive demands of active engagement in a pluralistic, participatory democracy.

Why might we expect discussion of political and social issues in a school setting to enhance civic education? The answer lies in the virtues of such discussion as an educative process. In classrooms where students are exposed to the real world of political issues, they are introduced to the lifeblood of participatory democracy – discourse and debate. Rather than dry, abstract lessons on the institutional mechanisms of the political system, students are provided with opportunities to wrestle with political and social issues. From such discussions, they glean knowledge about the political process. Furthermore, in classrooms where they feel welcome to venture their views, they gain experience in reasoning through positions on public policy issues, essential preparation for informed participation in the democratic process. Thus, it is not just that discussion is more *interesting* for students – although it almost certainly is – but also that it is more *effective* as a means to equip young people for informed political engagement (Carnegie Corporation and CIRCLE, 2003).

While the evidence that an open classroom climate spurs students' engagement is widespread and certainly plausible, the causal claims in the extant research on classroom effects are tainted by the high likelihood of endogeneity, because each of these studies relies on respondents to report on the degree to which social and political issues are discussed in their classes. Perhaps it is being politically engaged or having greater political knowledge that leads adolescents to perceive a greater degree of political discussion in their schools, rather than the other way around. Even if the relationship is not causal per se, it could simply be that politically-engaged students project their own interest into their recall of political discussions in the classroom. In a recent paper, Campbell (2006b) works around the problems of endogeneity and/or projection by not relying solely on an individual's self-report regarding the level of openness within the classroom. Instead, the analysis relies on a sample of a student's classmates, and estimates the degree of classroom openness by averaging the perceptions of multiple respondents in the same school. Using this measure of classroom climate, Campbell finds that, in the United States, an open classroom climate leads to a notable increase in "civic proficiency" – an objective evaluation of how much a person understands about the fundamental workings of democracy. And, in a finding that echoes – but does not fully replicate – the original Langton and Jennings study, exposure to an open classroom climate at school compensates for an absence of political discussion in the home. That is, those students who experience the least political discussion in the home get the biggest boost from discussion in the classroom. Unlike in the Langton-Jennings (1968) study, this effect is not defined by race – students of all races who experience little political discussion at home benefit equally from an open climate in their schools. Campbell also finds that an open classroom climate has a positive impact on whether American adolescents report that they anticipate being informed voters, as well as on their anticipated level of civic and political engagement. Furthermore, it has a negative impact on whether they envision themselves participating in illegal protest activities like spray-painting slogans, blocking traffic, and occupying buildings in protest. One possible explanation for this negative relationship is that political discussion teaches young people that conflicts can be resolved in ways other than protest activities.

In short, the best available evidence suggests that the most promising avenue for an effective democratic education is not to focus on a specific curriculum, but rather to encourage educators to engage in open discussion with their students about real-world events. In many nations, this is easier said than done, owing to teachers' reasonable fears

that they will face criticism from parents and school administrators for injecting controversy into their classrooms. Democracy, however, is about managing controversy; experience with lively discussion of topical issues is a critically important feature of preparation for engaged citizenship in a pluralistic democracy.

The significance of an open classroom climate for the civic and social engagement of young people leads naturally to the question of what conditions facilitate the free and open exchange of views within a classroom. In a follow-up paper, Campbell (2006c) examines the conditions under which one finds an open classroom climate. Specifically, the paper tests whether racial diversity in a classroom ignites or extinguishes political discussion. Support for both hypotheses can be found in the burgeoning literature on the civic consequences of social diversity. Some research has concluded that a diverse environment dampens engagement (Costa and Kahn, 2003; Uslaner and Brown, 2005) while other studies have found that diversity, at least along a few dimensions, stimulates political interest, involvement, and efficacy (Oliver, 2001). Significantly, Gimpel, Lay and Schuknecht (2003) have found that, among adolescents (in the United States), living in a racially diverse community corresponds to greater political efficacy. Based on the existing studies that show a positive link between diversity and conflictually-oriented political engagement, we might expect that political discussion abounds in racially diverse classrooms. Call this the conflict hypothesis: in heterogeneous environments students have a lot to talk about because their political opinions differ. Although race is certainly not a perfect proxy for political opinions – even when it comes to racial issues – in contemporary America blacks and whites often have sharply divergent political attitudes (Kinder and Sanders, 1996). So while it is an oversimplification to suggest that members of different racial groups have systematically varying opinions on every issue, race nonetheless shapes opinions on many issues. Racial diversity in the classroom, therefore, almost certainly means opinion diversity, which might be expected to spark discussion among members of a high school social studies class.

However, there is another line of reasoning that might lead us to expect exactly the opposite relationship between diversity and classroom political discussion. Within social networks on a small scale, diversity dampens political engagement (Mutz, 2002). It could be, then, that political discussion is dampened in heterogeneous classrooms because students, teachers, or both wish to avoid conflict and embrace consensus, which is more likely when everyone is of the same race. This can be referred to as the consensus hypothesis: homogeneity fosters commonality, which creates an environment in which both teachers and students feel comfortable talking about social and political issues. Strengthening the plausibility of the consensus hypothesis is the fact that classrooms are not rudderless vessels. They are led by a teacher who has considerable (although presumably not total) control over the nature of discussion in the class. Teachers in a racially diverse class may wish to avoid addressing contentious issues that could trigger conflict among students and perhaps raise the ire of administrators and/or parents.

The evidence supports the consensus hypothesis: political discussion is most common in racially homogeneous classrooms. Unfortunately, the limitations of the available data mean that we do not know whether it is students or teachers who limit discussion in racially diverse classrooms, or where the balance lies between them. Nor is it possible to determine whether the race of the teacher matters. Are teachers who are themselves members of racial minority groups more likely to foster political discussion among minority students? In a similar vein, the existing data do not permit us to examine the *content* of the political discussion within these classrooms. Perhaps the discussion in diverse classrooms is lower in quantity but nonetheless higher in quality. Further analysis

does provide a clue, however, regarding what it is about diversity that inhibits discussion of social and political issues, and young people's anticipation of being an informed voter. Racial diversity drives down trust in one's school, suggesting that a more trusting environment would smooth the way for classroom discussions of potentially controversial topics.

This research in the United States clearly leads to the question of whether diversity dampens discussion in other nations, or whether it is due to the unique racial environment within the United States. Campbell's work draws on the multi-nation IEA Civic Education Study (described in more detail below) which, regrettably, does not allow for a cross-national analysis of diversity's effects on classroom discussion, as ethnic and racial measures were not included in the general questionnaire administered in all countries (they were added to the items asked in the United States). This is a ripe area for more research, as current events repeatedly remind us all of the civic challenges that accompany rising ethnic, racial, linguistic, and racial diversity within a nation. Beyond diversity, fruitful research can, and should, also be conducted on other factors which foster an open classroom climate: teachers' attitudes and training, class size, externally-imposed examinations, etc.

It is important to stress that the research on formal instruction in civics is only in its beginning stages. With only rare exceptions, the existing data are cross-sectional, making it impossible to trace the impact of civic education over time. For example, Campbell finds that an open classroom climate correlates with whether adolescents say they anticipate being an informed voter and becoming civically engaged as adults. But do these intentions actually translate into behavior? Without longitudinal data, we do not know. Even the John and Morris (2004) study cited above, which has a panel component, only tracked adolescents for a single year, and the Westholm, Lindquist and Niemi (1990) study only did so for a year and a half. Far more informative would be panels that extend for much longer periods of time. Because the existing data provide solid hypotheses to test with panel data, any such exercise could be guided by strong theoretical expectations.

Summary: The openness with which political issues are discussed is an especially important factor in civic education.

Student parliament

The conclusion that an open classroom climate is an especially potent form of civic education leads to the question of whether student governments also enhance engagement among young people by providing experience in governance. Does the existence of a student government or parliament within a school foster a student's sense of political efficacy, or ignite an interest in being politically engaged within the wider community? Similarly, does participating in student government have a positive impact on young people?

Analysis of the 1999 IEA Civic Education Study suggests that student voice in the governance of a school can have an impact on adolescents' political engagement. In roughly half of the European nations within the study, young people who are involved in a student government or parliament display higher levels of political knowledge (Torney-Purta and Richardson, 2003). The fact that this relationship does not hold in all nations, however, suggests that other factors condition whether student governments have an impact on engagement. Future research should be directed at understanding the differences in how student governments are run, both within and across nations. One

especially promising avenue to pursue is not whether the individual has participated in a student government – which is subject to the usual concerns about self-selection – but whether a school fosters a democratic climate, in which students feel that their opinions are heard. Just as a classroom climate that encourages debate and discussion fosters civic and political engagement among young people, so apparently does a school’s openness to the opinions of its students. However, there is admittedly reluctance on the part of some teachers and administrators to cede too much control over school policies to the students. Discipline and order are necessary for a sound learning environment. Nevertheless, there is an equilibrium between permitting voice and maintaining order.

Using data in which respondents recalled their own participation in student government, Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) find that having participated in student government while a high school student predicts political engagement in adulthood. Admittedly, retrospective reports of this sort are always potentially subject to backward projection, where respondents’ memories inadvertently calibrate their current level of involvement with their remembered experiences in adolescence. Verba, Schlozman and Brady suggest that this finding is not totally tainted by misremembering, though, as they do not find that participation in all high school activities predicts political engagement in adulthood. In apparent contrast to the cross-sectional IEA data, Verba and his colleagues also find that having attended a high school which “encouraged students to debate current events or permitted them to complain” (p. 425) has no relationship to political engagement as an adult. Can we conclude, therefore, that “voice in school” has no long-term effect on engagement? Given that these are retrospective reports, I would say not. Longitudinal data would provide far more convincing evidence.

Summary: Participation in student parliaments appears to have a positive impact on political engagement.

Extracurricular activities

The preceding discussion of formal instruction in democratic education began by noting the conventional wisdom that civics courses actually have little impact on civic outcomes, and concluded by lamenting the dearth of longitudinal data on the subject. The literature on participation in school-based groups stands in sharp contrast. Based on longitudinal data, many studies have consistently concluded that people who belong to groups and clubs as adolescents are more civically and politically engaged as adults.

The most convincing evidence showing this relationship comes from the US Youth-Parent Socialisation Study (US YPSS). In its first wave, the US YPSS included interviews with secondary-school students near graduation and their parents. The next two waves, in 1971 and 1982, included follow-up interviews with those same parent-child pairs. In the 1997 wave, a third generation was added to the study, as the original “students” in the panel (who by this time were in their late 40s) were paired with their own children. Based on the first three waves of the US YPSS, Beck and Jennings memorably wrote that group involvement in adolescence is a “pathway to participation”, by which they meant political participation, in adulthood (1982).

Other longitudinal studies support the general conclusions drawn from the US YPSS. For example, Smith (1999) has used more recent data from the US National Education Longitudinal Study (US NELS) to demonstrate that extracurricular activities in the eighth, tenth, and twelfth grades correlate with political participation two years after high school. She also finds that high school involvement in community service correlates with subsequent political engagement.

Smith's analysis echoes a similar study based on data from the US National Longitudinal Study (Hanks, 1981), which also found that participation in voluntary associations during adolescence correlates with civic activity in the years immediately following high school.

Youniss, McLellan and Yates (1997) review three disparate studies, each based on longitudinal data of varying quality, and from them conclude that adolescent participation in groups “differentiates civic engagement in adults several years later” (p. 621). These include a longitudinal study of the impact of adolescent participation in a planning study for their town government thirty years later (with a small sample size of 82), a study that followed up on the high school graduating class of 1957 in 1972 (with a medium sample size of 327), and a study of high school students that stretched from 1955 to 1970 (with a large sample size of 1 827). In each case, participation as a youth predicts participation as an adult. While none of these studies is particularly convincing on its own, their consistency with one another and more rigorous research suggest that there is something to their common conclusions. Youniss, McLellan and Yates cite another study based on adults' recall of involvement in youth organisations, the results of which concur with the longitudinal studies. Similarly, Campbell (2000) finds that in the United States retrospective measures of volunteering in one's youth predict voluntarism in adulthood, while Reed and Selbee (2000) show the same in Canada.

Underscoring the value of longitudinal research, the fourth and most recent wave of the US YPSS has demonstrated that high school activities can have a long reach into the future. Jennings and Stoker (2004) report that the correlation between engagement in high school activities and civic engagement grows significantly over time. When they were in their mid-twenties, the organisational involvement of participants in the panel survey bore little relationship to their associationalism in high school:

“However, the connection grew stronger as the generation aged through their thirties and forties. By the time they had reached mid-life, their involvement levels were strongly linked to their high school profiles... Significantly, this holds true after controlling for personal characteristics that influence civic engagement and after taking into account the initial socialisation boost (or lack thereof) in engagement provided by the parent's level of organisational involvement... Those involved in high school organisations show higher rates of voluntary activity by 1997 as well.” (Jennings and Stoker, 2004, p. 363)

Jennings and Stoker refer to this delayed emergence of participatory orientations as a “sleeper effect.”

There are a variety of mutually reinforcing explanations for the empirically robust connection between involvement in high school activities and engagement later in life. Social capital theory would suggest that adolescents have a norm of associational involvement inculcated within them. Beck and Jennings suggest that high school activities lead to political engagement because youth groups may have a “role in implanting activist orientations toward one's environment” (1982, p. 101). Similarly, participation in high school groups might also instill a “habit” of associational involvement, which is imprinted during adolescence and manifests itself over a lifetime. A counter-explanation, however, calls into question whether there is a causal relationship at all. It is plausible that people who, for whatever reason, are inclined to be joiners in high school retain that “joinerism” in adulthood. That is, participation in activities in both adolescence and adulthood could be driven by the same underlying predisposition, which remains unobserved and thus unexplained.

Summary: Extracurricular involvement in high school corresponds with greater associational involvement in adulthood.

Community voluntarism/service learning

While extracurricular high school groups have long had the attention of researchers, another form of civic activity has more recently attracted considerable scholarly and public attention: community voluntarism, or what is often called “community service” in the United States and “solidarity” or “social cause” in Europe. In this context, the voluntarism in question refers to charitable activities, and is thus distinct from group membership. Not all young people who serve as volunteers do so under the auspices of a group to which they belong, and not all group members serve as volunteers.

There is an important distinction to be made between voluntarism that is part of a curriculum – often called “service learning” – and that which is not:

“[S]ervice learning typically refers to activities incorporated into a course or the formal curriculum where the volunteer experience is typically preceded with conceptually oriented information about politics or social problems and followed by classroom discussions and written reflections.” (Torney-Purta, Amadeo and Richardson, forthcoming, p. 3)

Indeed, the term “voluntarism” does not accurately describe service learning, since it is often mandatory. Whatever the normative implications of mandatory voluntarism might be, from a methodological perspective compulsory service learning provides potential insight into the causal effects of participation in charitable activities. Its mandatory status lessens the self-selection bias that otherwise plagues the study of volunteering (or other forms of engagement). Even mandatory programmes do not entirely eliminate the prospects for self-selection, however, as parents and students may choose to attend or avoid schools that require community service. Similarly, if within a school service learning is required by some instructors and not others, the students who opt to enroll in classes with a service requirement likely have a predisposition toward voluntarism, calling into question any causal claims.

There is a large and growing literature on community voluntarism, although the quality of the research varies widely. And for all the research that has been done, there has yet to be a definitive study that combines the two critical features to gauge causality. First, the research design must involve randomisation, such that a group of students selected by chance engage in community voluntarism while a control group does not. The current literature is rife with studies of programmes in which young people themselves decide whether to participate in community service, which share the same inability to tease out causal effects as studies of other extra-curricular activities.

Second, the ideal research design would test whether involvement in community service has long-term consequences, and not merely fleeting effects for a few months after participation in the community service. Recall that Jennings and Stoker found a “sleeper effect” for participation in high school groups; perhaps the same is true for community service. It is unfortunate that service learning has never been subjected to a full-blown randomised field trial since, as part of the curriculum, it would lend itself to this type of study in a way that extra-curricular activities would not.

The findings of the existing literature on community voluntarism, both classroom-based and not, are mixed, but generally find positive, if modest, impacts on various dimensions of engagement. For example, drawing on the US National Household Education Study, a large and nationally representative survey of American adolescents, Niemi, Hepburn and Chapman (2000) find that *sustained* participation in community service correlates with “greater political knowledge, more political discussions with

parents, enhanced participation skills, and higher political efficacy, but not more tolerance of diversity” (p. 45). While they do not employ a randomised experiment, they do take advantage of the fact that some students in their national sample were required to participate in community service, while others were not. Again, the assumption is that selection bias among students who are compelled to participate in community service is less acute than among who do so entirely of their own accord. Significantly, Niemi, Hepburn and Chapman find no differences between students who were required to participate in community service and those who were not. Drawing on the IEA Civic Education Study, Torney-Purta, Amadeo and Richardson also find that community voluntarism among adolescents in Chile, Denmark, England, and the United States leads them to “have higher levels of trust in government, efficacy, political identity, pro-social attitudes, and tolerance” (forthcoming, p. 2).

Perhaps the most comprehensive discussion of research on youth voluntarism is Perry and Katula’s (2001) review of 37 different studies of community service and service-learning.³ The collection of studies is broad and methodologically diverse, examining different types of service programmes and different outcomes. Generalising from this disparate set of studies is difficult, but they nonetheless conclude that service learning – that is, community service incorporated into a curriculum – fosters what they call “cognitive understanding of society”, which is similar to political knowledge as it has been defined here. Recall that Niemi, Hepburn and Chapman also found that community service correlates with a higher level of political knowledge. “The relationship between community service and knowledge was also comparable to the difference made by moving up two grades in school” (2000, p. 60). They further note that the knowledge items in question were not directly related to the particular service activities in which the students engaged, making the finding all the more notable.

Perry and Katula also conclude that there is a relationship between engaging in community service as a youth, and giving and volunteering as an adult. While they caution that the precise causal relationship remains obscure, Campbell (2006a) offers a possible explanation. Using the panel component of a nationally representative survey in the United States, he finds that high school students who participate in community service are more likely to be both volunteers and voters ten years following high school. Importantly, however, they are not more likely to participate in forms of expressly *political* engagement, whether it be electoral⁴ or expressive in nature. The explanation is that, as time passes, volunteering fosters a sense of civic obligation, which manifests itself in civically-oriented behavior but not political activity.

Campbell’s distinction between civic and political engagement, and the antecedents for each, speaks directly to a controversy within the literature on service learning. While

³ The studies they reference include Aguirre International, 1999; Astin and Sax, 1998; Astin, Sax and Avalos, 1999; Batchelder and Root, 1994; Berger, 1991; Blyth, Saito and Berkas, 1997; Brehm and Rahn, 1997; Chavis and Wandersman, 1990; Eyler, Giles and Braxton, 1997; Eyler et al., 1997; Fenzel and Leary, 1997; Ferguson, 1993; Flanagan et al., 1998; Flanagan et al., 1999; Ford, 1994, 1995; Giles and Eyler, 1994; Gray et al., 1996; Hajdo, 1998; Hettman and Jenkins, 1990; Jastrzab et al., 1996; Kaplan, 1997; Koliba, 1998; Marks, 1994; Markus, Howard and King, 1993; Melchior, 1998; Morgan and Streb, 2001; Ridgell, 1994; Rosenthal, Feiring and Lewis, 1998; Sandler and Vandergrift, 1994; Smith, 1994; Thomson and Perry, 1998; Williams, 1993; Yates and Youniss, 1996, 1998.

⁴ Electoral activism is measured as having worked as a volunteer for a political campaign or given money to a political candidate or party, while the expressive activities include participating in a lawful demonstration, writing to public officials, and boycotting certain products or stores.

Perry and Katula note that political engagement “has largely been neglected in studies of service” (p. 360), other observers have suggested that community service fosters a withdrawal from political activity (Niemi, Hepburn and Chapman, 2000; Raskoff and Sundeen, 1998; Rutter and Newman, 1989). The reasoning for the “withdrawal from politics hypothesis” is that community service teaches young people to avoid collective, public policy solutions to social problems, and instead focus on individualistic action only. Community service is thus thought to be an alternative to what Galston calls “official politics” (2001). Aggregate trends certainly suggest a negative link between voluntarism and political activity, as at least within the United States the former has risen among young people during precisely the same period that the latter has fallen. At the individual level, though, we see a different story, as there is a relatively strong correlation between voluntarism and political activity (Macedo *et al.*, 2005). Furthermore, the studies of Niemi, Hepburn and Chapman and Torney-Purta *et al.* both provide evidence that community voluntarism correlates with greater political efficacy. Similarly, by employing a pre/post-test design, Riedel (2002) finds that service-learning programmes in four Minneapolis high schools lead to an increase in sense of civic obligation. Morgan and Streb (2001) use an analogous design to study the impact of participating in service learning, finding modest but statistically significant increases in political efficacy, attentiveness, and a desire to become more politically active. In a finding that dovetails with the literature on classroom climate, they also note that the more involved students were involved in the design and implementation of their service projects, the greater the increase in their politically-oriented engagement.

While not all studies of community service and/or service learning find a positive correlation with engagement (measured in many different ways), those that do generally conclude that service learning is most effective when incorporated into classroom instruction, and specifically when accompanied by reflection on the service that has been performed. In the words of Battistoni:

“Beyond the good intentions of school administrators and national commissions, a growing body of evidence – from political scientists practicing community-based learning – strongly suggests that when accompanied by proper preparation and adequate reflection, service learning can be a potent civic educator.” (2000, p. 31)

Torney-Purta *et al.* concur. Their cross-national study of voluntarism finds that it is not merely participation in community-based volunteering that results in positive civic outcomes. Rather, that participation must be coupled with the discussion of community problems within the classroom. Similarly, in surveying the literature on community voluntarism, Hepburn (2000) notes that successfully incorporating reflection into the curriculum can take the form of discussion or writing.

Summarising the literature on community voluntarism is difficult. For one thing, its multi-disciplinary nature means that the studies have different research objectives, use different terminology, employ different theoretical frameworks, and include different measures. Furthermore, the bulk of the existing research has been conducted within the United States, where service learning has become increasingly common, and where rates of volunteering are generally high. I am aware of only one rigorous cross-national study of service learning, namely the Torney-Purta *et al.* piece cited above (see the analysis below for another, using the same data but a wider range of nations). Nonetheless, even with its limitations, it is noteworthy that the current literature suggests participation in community voluntarism, especially as a curriculum-based initiative, correlates with

numerous dimensions of engagement. But whether that relationship is causal remains unclear.

Summary: Community service, whether done through a school setting or not, appears to foster civic engagement. Service learning appears to be most effective when it is accompanied by reflection in the classroom on the service that students have performed.

Norms

As noted above, the return of political socialisation and democratic education to prominence as topics of research is due in part to the interest in social capital. This is fitting because Coleman originally wrote of social capital in the context of explaining the behavior of young people and, specifically, their experience in schools. In Coleman's original formulation, social capital consisted of behavioral norms reinforced through social networks. As used here, the term "norm" is defined as "a regularity such that members of [a population] expect that nonconformity will (with positive probability) be punished with (negative) sanctions" (Voss, 2001, p. 109). In a memorable turn of phrase, some authors refer to a norm's "oughtness" – it is something members of a community feel they ought to do, even if they do not always do it (Hechter and Opp, 2001). Essentially, Coleman sought to explain the conditions under which people, and especially young people, come to act in accordance with social norms. The key facilitating condition for norm-induced behavior is the social networks in which people are enmeshed. Coleman suggested that norms are "enforced" within social networks through the use of social sanctions. In other words, conformity to a social norm is shaped by individuals' desire to avoid the opprobrium, even if only expressed subtly, of their friends, neighbors, and acquaintances. Putnam then exported the concept of social capital to, first, explain regional governmental performance in Italy and then a larger array of social indicators within the United States, spawning a much larger body of research on social capital. While Putnam himself was careful to retain Coleman's insight that social capital consists of both norms and networks (the latter reinforcing the former), the bulk of the social capital literature has largely ignored the importance of norms and focused instead on networks. Most measures of social capital revolve around organisations and activities through which networks are built and strengthened, perhaps because these are thought to be more easily measured than norms.

The fact that norms have not received much attention in the scholarly literature is unfortunate, as they are central to understanding individuals' motivations for civic and social engagement. According to a strict cost-benefit analysis, no one should ever engage in any form of behavioral engagement. Voting illustrates the dilemma well. Why incur the costs – time and energy – to vote, when the probability of casting the deciding vote is infinitesimal? The fact that so many people apparently defy irrationality and turn out to vote has long puzzled economists and economically-oriented political scientists alike (Aldrich, 1993; Downs, 1957; Ferejohn and Fiorina, 1974; Fiorina, 1976; Green and Shapiro, 1994; Riker and Ordeshook, 1968). The answer to the puzzle is simply that most people do not employ a narrow view of rationality when deciding whether to turn out, or participate in many forms of civic and social engagement. Instead, many vote and/or participate in other ways because they feel it is their civic duty. For example, Verba, Schlozman and Brady find that civic gratifications are a leading reason for both voter turnout and other forms of engagement (Schlozman, Verba and Brady, 1995; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). Andre Blais (2000) finds the same in Canada. These recent findings, in turn, are consistent with the observations of some of the earliest empirical

investigations of why people vote (Almond and Verba, 1989 [1963]; Campbell *et al.*, 1960).

Saying that people have a strong sense of civic duty, in turn, is really another way of saying that they adhere to a norm which encourages voting. The problem with such an explanation for any form of CSE is its circularity: people vote (or engage in other activities) because they feel they ought to. A social science skeptic might point to this as an example of confirming the obvious. Would people admit to engaging in activity that they feel is wrong? Similarly, upon having engaged in an activity, are people not more likely to say it is something they ought to do? However, upon closer analysis, relying on norms to explain why people are civically, politically, and socially engaged is not unavoidably tautological, if only for the reason that not everyone endorses the same norms, nor to the same degree. The challenge is explaining why some people are more likely to follow a norm – whether it be one encouraging engagement or anything else – than others. The social capital literature emphasises the *social* nature of norms. They are learned and enforced through inter-personal connections. Putnam (1993) uses the somewhat whimsical example of leaf-raking in his neighborhood to illustrate the point:

“The norm of keeping lawns leaf-free is powerful in my neighborhood... and it constrains my decision as to whether to spend Saturday afternoon watching TV. This norm is not actually taught in local schools, but neighbors mention it when newcomers move in, and they reinforce it in frequent autumnal chats, as well as by obsessive raking of their own yards. Non-rakers risk being shunned at neighborhood events, and non-raking is rare.” (p. 171)

Knack (1992) applies and extends the same logic to voter turnout, stressing the collective aspect of social capital as a mechanism for norm-enforcement. Because of the subtle social sanctions which guide behavior, even people with a low sense of duty have a higher likelihood of voting in a place populated with duty-bound compatriots. “Social sanctions... permit a certain amount of ‘substitutability’ of feelings of duty, as someone with a low sense of civic obligation may nonetheless vote to avoid displeasing a friend or relative with a stronger sense of duty” (pp. 137-138).

Explaining norm-driven behavior narrowly in terms of social sanctions, using a crude “stimulus-response” model, is too simple however. People often behave in accordance with norms even when they need not be concerned about immediate social sanctions, or anyone finding out about their behavior at all. Many norms are internalised, through habituation. The internalisation of a norm means “that an individual comes to have an internal sanctioning system which provides punishment when he carries out an action proscribed by the norm or fails to carry out an action proscribed by the norm” (Coleman, 1990, p. 293). We might say that a norm has been internalised when you act in accordance with it even when no one else is looking. The term “socialisation” aptly refers to the process by which a norm is internalised – one learns what is socially desirable. As young people undergo socialisation, they are imprinted with norms that have the potential to guide their behavior throughout their lives.

It is the link between socialisation and norms that makes schools – and thus formal education – relevant to this discussion of education and CSE. Coleman, in fact, originally developed his conceptualisation of social capital while studying schools within the United States. Coleman found that, in the American context, Catholic schools were rich in social capital – social networks of students, parents, teachers, and members of the community surrounding the school overlapped. Norms were widely shared and broadly enforced,

specifically norms pertaining to academic achievement. As private⁵ religious institutions, Catholic schools foster group solidarity, or what the social capital literature has come to call bonding social capital. A later study by Bryk, Lee and Holland (1993) elaborated on the argument that this particular type of school fosters a strong sense of community, using a series of quantitative and qualitative indicators to confirm Coleman’s basic insight. They also show that this bonding social capital (a term that had not been coined when they were writing) does not come at the expense of a commitment to the good of the wider community. Still further studies have specifically linked the social capital found in these schools to higher levels of civic and social engagement among their students (Campbell, 2001; Dee, 2005).

If the literature on how schools foster civic norms left us only with the conclusion that Catholic schools in the United States are rich in social capital, the policy implications would admittedly be rather limited, especially in a cross-national context. From this body of literature, however, comes a more fundamental insight: the ethos of a school, or its normative climate, plays an important role in shaping the civic and social engagement of its students – both in adolescence and, looking forward, in adulthood. Schools are communities, in which norms are taught and enforced. Since they involve regular face-to-face interaction and a need for cooperation, they are a prime environment for the development of social capital. Campbell (2005; 2006a) presents evidence that a school’s level of social capital – specifically, the norms shared within the school’s population – has civic as well as academic implications. Using panel data, whereby high school students interviewed in 1965 were reinterviewed in 1973 and 1982, Campbell shows that the normative climate of a school has a long-term impact on voter turnout and volunteering, but not on political engagement. “Normative climate” is operationalised as the percentage of students within one’s high school who indicate that to be a “good citizen”, one must vote. Even when controlling for individual students’ own adherence to this norm, the normative climate predicts – *ceteris paribus* – that they will be more likely to vote and volunteer 15 years after high school. And, in a finding that parallels what Jennings and Stoker found for extra-curricular involvement, a school’s normative climate exhibits a sleeper effect, increasing in magnitude over time. This same effect, it should be emphasised, was not found for other norms regarding good citizenship. It is also significant that the normative climate only appears to foster civically-oriented engagement: volunteering and voting. Volunteering, you will recall, is the prototypical form of civic engagement, while voting has both a civic as well as a political component. Politically-oriented activity, like working on electoral campaigns, is not related to the civic norms of one’s high school, suggesting that civic norms only foster civic engagement, and do not spill over to more conflictual, interest-driven activity.

In sum, the existing evidence suggests that any discussion of education and engagement would be remiss to omit the norms that are learned in the course of one’s education, specifically within the environment of a school. Far from being hopelessly circular, the study of norms is a fruitful avenue for explaining engagement and schools are a significant venue in which norms are learned. The literature on norms, and specifically norms in schools, also underscores the significance of data that are:

- Contextual, and thus include interviews with clusters of students.
- Longitudinal, and thus include follow-up interviews years later.

Summary: Much civic and social engagement is the product of social norms encouraging collective action. Schools are an important institution where such norms are inculcated.

⁵ Private refers to the fact that these schools do not receive financial support from the state.

Description of the 1999 IEA Civic Education Study

The discussion thus far has covered a lot of ground, highlighting a number of ways in which the existing literature suggests formal education, particularly within secondary schools, affects civic and social engagement. The following section subjects most of these potential explanatory factors to empirical testing, to determine which educational factors affect which dimensions of engagement among adolescents (Table 3.4.1).

Table 3.4.1. Educational factors affecting civic and social engagement

Bureaucratic competence
Civic skills
Cognitive capacity
Curriculum
Pedagogical method
Student parliament
Extracurricular activities
Service learning
Norms

Much of the existing literature has unavoidably been limited to individual nations, primarily the United States, if only because of the limited data available to study civic education across nations. The 1971 IEA data are dated, and only include ten nations. More recently, Hahn (1998) published a book comparing civic education across five nations, but she did not have randomly-selected and thus representative samples of adolescents in each country. To fill this lacuna in our understanding of civic education across nations, in 1999 the IEA completed a second civics evaluation, the Civic Education Study (CivEd). With representative samples in 28 nations, it is far and away the single most significant source of data on civic education. The analysis to follow, therefore, relies on CivEd.

Under the direction of Judith Torney-Purta, CivEd took considerable time to develop and implement. Evaluating civic education presents far different challenges than developing tests in areas like mathematics and science, since agreeing on the “right answers” to a civics exam is fraught with more ambiguity than in many other subjects. Indeed, it is not hard to think of civics questions for which the right answer in one nation would be wrong in another. The evaluation, therefore, could not be tied to the political system or culture of any given nation. Furthermore, it had to be valid across a wide array of nations, and not simply long-standing industrialised democracies. In addition, early on in the process, the architects of CivEd decided that it should include a series of attitudinal and behavioral questions in addition to the scored examination (Schulz and Sibbers, 2004; Torney-Purta *et al.*, 2001).

The first phase of the project consisted of qualitative case studies of 24 nations, mostly written by the national research coordinator appointed within each nation by the IEA. Phase two was the quantitative component of the study, and involved the administration of the common exam and survey instrument to a representative sample of roughly 3 000 14-year-olds in 28 nations. A second evaluation involved older (ages 16-18) students in 16 nations, who were given the same instrument as the 14-year-olds. Because these data involve a smaller number of nations and greater inconsistency in the ages of the students surveyed, I focus here on the sample of 14-year-olds.

Within each nation, schools were selected randomly, using a two-stage stratified sampling design. Within each school, one whole class was selected. Wherever possible, it was a class in what the CivEd documentation describes as “a civic-related subject” (Schulz and Sibberns, 2004, p. 33). The class was also not to have students who were selected on the basis of academic ability, to ensure that the data included the widest possible cross-section of adolescents within each nation.

The 28 nations are an interesting combination of industrialised and newly-emerging democracies. While most are in Europe, North and Latin America are also represented, as are Hong Kong and Australia. The full list of nations includes: Australia, Belgium (French), Bulgaria, Chile, Colombia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region of China), Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Russian Federation, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States.⁶ Not all of these nations were represented among the 24 in Phase 1 (case studies); likewise, not all of the case-study nations participated in Phase 2 (exam/survey). While we would always prefer to have more nations represented in this and any other cross-national study, CivEd’s particular combination of countries is an analytically useful mixture. For example, although few of the nations are abjectly poor, neither are they homogeneously wealthy. Their educational systems also differ substantially, as do their experiences with democracy.

The CivEd instrument was designed to be as broadly applicable as possible. The attitudinal and behavioral questions – that is, those items that were not scored as right or wrong – thus went through a lengthy development process. Many of the items resemble questions asked of adults in such cross-national surveys as the Eurobarometer, World Values Survey, and European Social Survey. Similarly, the exam portion of the instrument had to be equally valid across multiple nations. Consequently, the exam does not comprise “top of the head” factual questions of the sort often found in public opinion surveys. It does include items meant to tap into the test-taker’s knowledge, but these deal with how democracies function, and not the specific institutions, practices, or personalities of any given nation or political system.

Recalling the above discussion of civic skills, the CivEd instrument also included right-or-wrong questions that gauge one’s skill in interpreting political information. It should be noted that with such an exam it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to sort out the differences between students’ general academic proficiency and their civic proficiency – if, indeed, there is actually a difference. That is, it could simply be that young people with high levels of literacy proficiency also do well on questions such as those asked on the CivEd instrument, not because they pertain to the way democracies function but simply owing to the interpretive nature of the items. Any conclusions drawn about adolescents’ civic proficiency must be tempered by the fact that CivEd contains no interpretive questions on a subject other than civics, which would permit the analyst to control for a general level of academic prowess.

Like all omnibus datasets, CivEd cannot please every analyst equally – some researchers will undoubtedly disagree with the decision to include some measures and exclude others. Nonetheless, the sheer breadth of the instrument combined with the wide

⁶ The analysis below does not include data from Belgium, as the item about television viewing (used as a control variable, as explained below) is not available for Belgian respondents. Belgium is thus also omitted from the presentation of national-level descriptive data.

array of nations in which it was administered made it an extremely rich source of information on civic education around the world. Already, analysis of CivEd has produced a number of notable findings, as evidenced by the citations to work using CivEd in the literature review above. As more and more scholars continue to use these data, they will undoubtedly prove to be even more valuable, especially since the principal investigator has worked to establish an infrastructure for scholars interested in analysing the data. To that end, the University of Maryland hosts the Civic Education Data and Research Services (CEDARS), which serves to make the CivEd data, documentation, as well as research employing CivEd, widely available. Similarly, the 2005 general meeting of the European Consortium for Political Research featured an entire section on civic education, comprised largely of papers drawing upon CivEd data in one form or another.

CivEd permits analysis of how numerous educational factors affect multiple dimensions of engagement, across an array of nations. This is not the first analysis of CivEd, nor will it be the last. It differs from most of the existing CivEd research in that it examines commonalities across all the nations in the data, which means that it sacrifices depth for the sake of breadth. Other analysis can profitably go deeper by examining whether the general relationships reported here hold up in individual nations. In addition, further analysis should more deeply analyse the predictors of the particular dimensions of engagement measured in CivEd.

For the sake of consistency across the engagement dimensions, the models all follow the same analytic strategy. Each one contains a series of independent variables measuring the array of educational factors discussed above, all standardised on the same scale as to be comparable. In this way, the reader can make two types of comparisons, both within and between models. Within each model, one can compare both the magnitude and direction of each educational factor on the dimension of engagement in question. Between models, the common specifications and standardisation of variables mean that the reader can compare the relative impact of an educational factor on one form of engagement versus another. Owing to the large number of models and variables, the discussion below does not highlight every variable in every model. However, all of the results are presented herein, in both tabular and graphical format, so that readers can look up any relationships – which factors predict which dimensions of engagement – of interest to them. I first describe the variables and how they have been coded, next move to a discussion of the model itself, and then conclude this section with the results themselves. The results, in turn, are divided into two parts: the cross-national analysis (in which all nations are combined in a single model) and the nation-by-nation models (which break out results for each country individually).

Description of independent variables in CivEd

School ethos variables

The design of the CivEd study – students sampled within schools – enables the analyst to measure the *ethos* of the school. We need not rely solely on an individual's own report of what the school environment is like, which opens up many analytical possibilities.

Classroom climate

Previous analysis of both the recent (1999) and previous (1971) IEA studies of civic education, in addition to growing evidence from other sources, indicates that the critical factor in classroom instruction is what was described above as the openness of the classroom climate. The analysis therefore includes a measure of classroom climate, specifically an index that asks students to evaluate the discussion of social and political issues within their classroom.⁷

The classroom climate scale is a valid indicator of a young person's own perception of the classroom environment, and whether political discussion is encouraged. However, our understanding of whether the classroom really has an effect is clouded by the high likelihood that students who report more discussion are themselves more civically and politically engaged. Perhaps it is being politically engaged or having greater political knowledge that leads adolescents to perceive a greater degree of political discussion in their schools, rather than the other way around. Similarly, it could simply be that politically-engaged students project their own interest into their recall of political discussions in the classroom. Needed, therefore, is a means to gauge the general environment within the classroom, rather than just an individual's own perception of that environment. To guard against confounding the impact of a student's own proclivity toward politics with the general perception of the classroom environment, I calculate the mean value of the classroom climate index for *all* of the respondent students within a given classroom. In this way, we are not relying on students' own perceptions, but the aggregated perceptions of all the students in the same classroom. Measuring collective perceptions in this way smoothes out any unusually high or low individual scores on the classroom climate index. This variable is labeled *Classroom Climate: Aggregate*.

While the aggregate measure of classroom environment is of central interest, an individual student's own perception of the openness of a school is nonetheless relevant also. Some students are going to perceive a different level of openness than others, which could plausibly affect their preparation for political engagement. However, interpreting the impact of an individual's own perception is difficult, given that it naturally has a strong correlation with the aggregate mean. To separate an individual's own perception from the aggregate value, I have "purged" the two of any correlation. This has been done by regressing the individual's own classroom climate score on the class mean, and saving the residuals. Since the residuals reflect the degree to which an individual's own score deviates from the aggregate value, the two are by definition uncorrelated. In the models that follow, therefore, the individual-level classroom environment score represents the impact of individuals' perceptions *over and above* what their fellow students indicate the classroom environment is like. Comparable variables have been calculated for all of the school ethos measures. This variable is labeled *Classroom Climate: Individual* to distinguish it from the classroom mean. All pairs of ethos measures (individual and aggregate) use the same nomenclature.

Confidence in school participation

In addition to the openness of the classroom, students were also asked to indicate the extent to which students' voices are heard in the governance of the school. The key difference between this index and the one measuring classroom climate is that these

⁷ For details regarding this and all other CivEd measures, see the annex.

questions deal with whether the students have a say in the policies that directly affect their school. A representative item asks whether “students acting together can have more influence on what happens in this school than students acting alone”? The classroom climate index, in contrast, only deals with discussion – not action – and emphasises the public nature of the issues in question (“political and social issues”).

Good citizenship norms

Owing to Campbell’s (2006a) finding that the collective norms within a school shape the engagement of young people, even as they move into adulthood, the analysis also includes two measures of “engagement norms”. Students were asked about the activities of a “good citizen”, which permits the construction of two indices. One index centers on conventional citizenship, and includes voting and similar forms of forms of political engagement. The other is labeled the social movement index, and contains activities that characterise the “elite-challenging” style of political activity that has become increasingly common in industrialised democracies (Barnes and Kaase, 1979; Inglehart, 1990, 1997).

School experiences

CivEd includes many measures of the experiences students have within their schools. While the self-selected nature of these activities makes discerning a strictly causal effect tenuous, the correlations with the various dimensions of engagement are nonetheless informative. At the least, they point to avenues for future research that can more successfully untangle causal relationships.

Student parliament

Participation in student government is measured as whether the student has ever been a part of a student government or parliament.

Service learning

I follow the example of Torney-Purta, Amadeo and Richardson (forthcoming) and measure service learning not simply as whether the student participated in volunteer activity, but also whether the student reports discussing community problems in class. The resulting measure is dichotomous. A 1 indicates that a student has “participated in a group conducting voluntary activities to help the community”, (the phrasing of the questionnaire) and either agrees or strongly agrees that “in school I have learned to contribute to solving problems in the community”. Everyone else is coded 0. Note that this is an extremely limited test of service learning. Of all the school experiences under investigation, this one is most tentative.

Extracurricular activities

In addition to student government and charitable organisations, students were asked whether they have ever participated in a host of extra-curricular activities, including a school newspaper, environmental organisation, sports organisation, and many others. The

number of organisations in which each student reports participating have been added together to create the variable *Group Participation*.⁸

The phrasing of the question about group participation leaves ambiguous the level of involvement in each organisation; reporting that one has participated in an organisation may not mean that the involvement is sustained. In order to measure the degree of activity, the models also include the frequency of these organisations' meetings and activities, labeled *Meetings*.

Home experiences

While the primary interest of the analysis is on the impact of school variables, experiences at home are obviously also important in explaining the engagement levels of adolescents. The models thus include a series of indicators that measure the political exposure a young person receives at home, as well as some general measures of the home environment.

Political conversations and news index

Students were asked to report the frequency which they hold conversations on political topics with members of their family. Two questions were asked, one about domestic politics and another about international affairs. Both have been combined into the Political Conversations Index. In addition to conversations with family members, students can also be exposed to politics through their consumption of news media that cover politics and current affairs. The News Index tallies the extent to which the CivEd respondents read the newspaper, listen to news on television, and listen to news on the radio.

Left unclear in the measures of both political conversations and the news index is the degree to which either one reflects political exposure independent of the young person's own intrinsic interest in public affairs. For many young people, these are simply measures of psychological engagement in politics. So while they are not so good for determining whether political exposure at home has a causal effect on engagement, they are excellent control variables for an intrinsic motivation to learn about politics, and thus help to isolate the impact of the experiences at school.

TV watching

Television viewing has been fingered as a uniquely strong deflator of engagement, as it "privatises" leisure time and thus prevents the development of social ties (Putnam, 1995). It also has a negative impact on academic performance, presumably because it steals time from academic pursuits. Consequently, the models include the amount of time young people spend viewing television: *TV Time*.

⁸ I opted to include both student government and community voluntarism in this index, even though these particular student activities are also reflected in other variables (and thus correlate with this index). There is no substantive difference in the results if student government and community voluntarism are left out of the group membership index.

Books in home

The final item regarding the home is a standard measure of general intellectual stimulation provided by the home environment, which also serves as a partial proxy for socioeconomic status, namely the number of books in the home. The number of books has been found to correlate with opportunities for learning provided within the home, and is a measure that can be used across cultures. Note that this item does not pertain specifically to politics or public affairs, as it simply asks about books in general.

Demographics

The models control for two standard demographic measures, gender and socioeconomic status, both of which have a long pedigree in the study of civic and social engagement, and are standard controls.

Gender

Measuring gender is straightforward, as students are simply asked to identify themselves as male or female (with female coded as 1).

Expected education

Measuring socioeconomic status is complicated, as indicators of high SES vary across nations and, at any rate, 14-year-olds are not necessarily the best judge of their own family's relative social status. As a proxy for SES, I include the student's expected education level – how many more years he or she expects to complete. This is not a “pure” measure of SES as it also gauges the student's own level of ambition, but it also reflects the emphasis placed on education within the home, which is highly correlated with class.

Description of dependent variables in CivEd

The above measures will be entered into a series of models, each of which will have a different measure of engagement as a dependent variable. While not all the dimensions of engagement introduced in Section 3.1 are available in CivEd, most of them are. Those dimensions for which CivEd includes measures are as follows. Note that a scale has been created for each one.⁹

Knowledge and skills

Recall that the primary rationale for the CivEd study is to do for civics what similar cross-national evaluations have done for other subjects like math and science, namely provide an objective measure of what adolescents in each nation know. As described above, CivEd contains a civics exam that was scored. The results of that exam have been divided into two parts, knowledge and skills. The following is an example of a knowledge question (the correct answer is in bold):

⁹ An explanation of all the scales available in the Civic Education Study can be found in a recent working paper from the Civic Education Data and Researcher Services (CEDARS) at the University of Maryland-College Park (Husfeldt, Barber and Torney-Purta, 2005).

Which of the following is most likely to cause a government to be called non-democratic?

- ***People are prevented from criticising the government***
- *The political parties criticise each other often*
- *People must pay very high taxes*
- *Every citizen has the right to a job*

Of the 38 total questions on the civics exam, 25 are knowledge items, while the remaining 13 pertain to “skills.”

In this context, “skills” has a very specific meaning, referring to the interpretation of politically-relevant information. (And therefore does not incorporate other definitions of skills, such as experience in running meetings, writing letters, giving speeches, etc.)

One such example is:

We citizens have had enough!

A vote for the Silver Party means a vote for higher taxes.

It means an end to economic growth and a waste of our nation’s resources.

Vote instead for economic growth and free enterprise.

Vote for more money left in everyone’s wallet!

Let’s not waste another 4 years!

VOTE FOR THE GOLD PARTY.

This is an election leaflet which has probably been issued by

- *the Silver Party*
- ***a party or group in opposition to the Silver Party***
- *a group which tries to be sure elections are fair*
- *the Silver Party and the Gold Party together*

The knowledge and skills items have been combined into two scales.¹⁰

Voting, civic engagement, political engagement

In surveys administered to adults, these dimensions of engagement are measured by asking about their current or recent behavior. For adolescents, such questions do not always apply, at least to some forms of engagement which given their age are either impossible (voting, running for office) or extremely unlikely (writing letters to a newspaper). Instead, respondents are asked whether, as an adult, they expect to do any number of activities. Voting is measured with an index of two items: whether respondents will vote upon becoming an adult, and whether they will get information about the candidates before voting. The Political Engagement Index consists of questions about joining a political party, writing letters to newspapers, and running for office, while the Civic Engagement Index asks about volunteering in the community, collecting money for

¹⁰ These are scales developed using Item Response Theory.

charitable causes, and collecting signatures for a petition. Since these questions ask adolescents to project into the future, their responses should not be taken as iron-clad predictors of future behavior. Rather, they are windows into how they currently perceive the desirability of each form of engagement. That said, it should be noted that longitudinal data from other sources do indicate that stated intentions in adolescence correlate highly with engagement in adulthood (Campbell, 2006a).

Institutional trust

Regrettably, CivEd does not include the standard items about interpersonal trust regularly asked in such studies as the World Values Survey. Nor does it have any clear measures of trust in other people. However, it does include a battery of items about the respondent's level of trust in government institutions, namely the national government, the local government, the courts, the police, political parties, and the national parliament.

Tolerance

As discussed above, the literature has typically defined tolerance as respect for the civil liberties, particularly free speech rights, of unpopular groups. CivEd includes a series of questions along these lines. Note, however, that these questions entail an especially stringent test of political tolerance because they focus specifically on *anti-democratic* groups. Respondents are asked whether “members of groups that are against democracy” should be allowed host television shows, hold demonstrations, run for office, or making public speeches.

Findings of data analysis

The method of model estimation parallels the above models of absolute vs. relative education, in that it employs a “mixed model” to account for cross-national variation. More technically, again the intercept is allowed to vary randomly for each nation.

With such a large number of cases in the dataset, statistical significance is a low hurdle to clear. The evaluation of variables' relative impacts, therefore, rests on weighing their substantive significance. That is, it is not enough to know whether a coefficient's magnitude is significantly different than zero, as the more meaningful test is whether the impact is of an appreciable magnitude. To facilitate the comparison of relative impacts, all of the non-dichotomous variables (on both the right and left-hand sides of the equation) have been coded to have a standard deviation of 1.0. A coefficient of 1.0, therefore, is interpreted to mean that a one standard deviation increase in that independent variable leads to a one standard deviation increase in the dependent variable. A dichotomous variable has no standard deviation per se, and so its coefficient is simply interpreted as the impact on the dependent variable of moving from 0 to 1.

Results are presented in two formats, both tabular and graphically. Both contain essentially the same information, but facilitate different types of comparisons. Table 3.4.2 presents the full statistical results, which makes it easy to compare coefficients *across* models – the relative magnitude and direction of impacts on different forms of engagement – while Figures 3.4.1-3.4.7 are more intuitive, and simplify the comparison of impacts *within* a model. The ensuing discussion has been organised around the independent variables, the educational factors hypothesised to have an impact on the various dimensions of engagement.

Table 3.4.2. Testing the impact of education factors on dimensions of engagement
Results from mixed-effects maximum likelihood regression

	Knowledge	Skills	Voting (anticipated)	Civic engagement (anticipated)	Political engagement (anticipated)	Institutional trust	Tolerance
School ethos							
Classroom climate: aggregate	0.068 *** (0.004)	0.060 *** (0.004)	0.051 *** (0.004)	0.030 *** (0.004)	0.018 *** (0.004)	0.043 *** (0.004)	0.008 * (0.004)
Classroom climate: individual	0.070 *** (0.004)	0.063 *** (0.004)	0.089 *** (0.004)	0.079 *** (0.004)	0.042 *** (0.004)	0.108 *** (0.004)	0.010 ** (0.004)
Confidence in school participation: aggregate	0.028 *** (0.005)	0.041 *** (0.005)	0.010 ** (0.005)	-0.012 *** (0.005)	-0.019 *** (0.005)	-0.006 (0.005)	0.023 *** (0.006)
Confidence in school participation: individual	0.063 *** (0.004)	0.062 *** (0.004)	0.119 *** (0.004)	0.085 *** (0.004)	-0.023 *** (0.004)	0.069 *** (0.006)	0.012 *** (0.004)
Conventional citizenship norms: aggregate	-0.029 *** (0.005)	-0.042 *** (0.005)	0.047 *** (0.005)	0.024 *** (0.005)	0.070 *** (0.006)	0.068 *** (0.006)	-0.051 *** (0.006)
Conventional citizenship norms: individual	-0.082 *** (0.004)	-0.080 *** (0.004)	0.131 *** (0.004)	0.048 *** (0.004)	0.167 *** (0.004)	0.211 *** (0.004)	-0.106 *** (0.005)
Social movement norms: aggregate	0.007 (0.004)	0.012 *** (0.005)	0.016 *** (0.005)	0.047 *** (0.005)	0.005 (0.005)	-0.0001 (0.005)	0.005 (0.006)
Social movement norms: individual	0.053 *** (0.004)	0.037 *** (0.004)	0.030 *** (0.004)	0.143 *** (0.004)	-0.003 (0.004)	-0.018 *** (0.004)	0.031 *** (0.005)
School experiences							
Student parliament	0.172 *** (0.009)	0.145 *** (0.009)	0.035 *** (0.009)	-0.050 *** (0.009)	0.024 *** (0.009)	-0.017 * (0.009)	0.024 * (0.010)

	Knowledge	Skills	Voting (anticipated)	Civic engagement (anticipated)	Political engagement (anticipated)	Institutional trust	Tolerance
Service learning	-0.036 *** (0.011)	-0.030 *** (0.011)	0.026 *** (0.011)	0.147 *** (0.011)	0.046 *** (0.012)	0.039 *** (0.012)	-0.024 * (0.013)
Group memberships	-0.079 *** (0.005)	-0.059 *** (0.005)	-0.007 (0.005)	0.108 *** (0.005)	0.079 *** (0.005)	0.005 (0.005)	-0.001 (0.006)
Meetings	0.042 *** (0.005)	0.047 *** (0.004)	0.029 *** (0.004)	0.010 *** (0.004)	0.012 *** (0.004)	0.025 *** (0.004)	0.006 (0.004)
Home experiences							
Political conversations	0.088 *** (0.004)	0.064 *** (0.004)	0.135 *** (0.004)	0.073 *** (0.004)	0.188 *** (0.004)	0.025 *** (0.004)	0.024 *** (0.005)
Political news index	0.062 *** (0.004)	0.042 *** (0.004)	0.122 *** (0.004)	0.118 *** (0.004)	0.106 *** (0.004)	0.057 *** (0.004)	0.004 (0.005)
TV watching	-0.006 (0.004)	-0.008 ** (0.004)	-0.012 *** (0.004)	-0.024 *** (0.004)	-0.018 *** (0.004)	-0.016 *** (0.004)	0.003 (0.004)
Books in home	0.142 *** (0.004)	0.145 *** (0.004)	0.065 *** (0.004)	-0.041 *** (0.004)	-0.002 (0.004)	-0.030 *** (0.004)	0.038 *** (0.005)
Other control variables							
Expected education	0.267 *** (0.004)	0.239 *** (0.004)	0.114 *** (0.004)	-0.031 *** (0.004)	0.016 *** (0.004)	-0.006 (0.004)	0.037 *** (0.005)

	Knowledge	Skills	Voting (anticipated)	Civic engagement (anticipated)	Political engagement (anticipated)	Institutional trust	Tolerance
Gender (female)	-0.134 *** (0.007)	-0.014 ** (0.007)	-0.013* (0.007)	0.254 *** (0.007)	-0.104 *** (0.007)	-0.057 *** (0.007)	0.129 *** (0.008)
Intercept	0.120** (0.051)	0.072 (0.061)	0.008 (0.049)	-0.194 *** (0.045)	0.007 *** (0.032)	0.040 (0.052)	0.056 (0.028)
Nations	27	27	27	27	27	27	27
Observations	62 589	62 589	61 625	61 176	61 051	62 320	59 641
prob > chi ²	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.10

Source: IEA Civic Education Study.

Figure 3.4.1. Knowledge

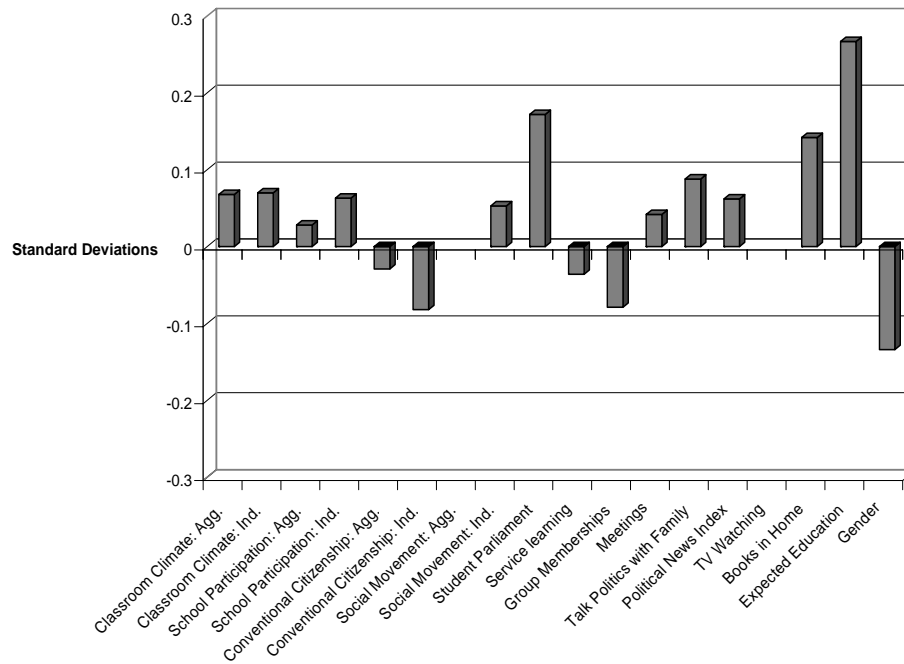


Figure 3.4.2. Skills

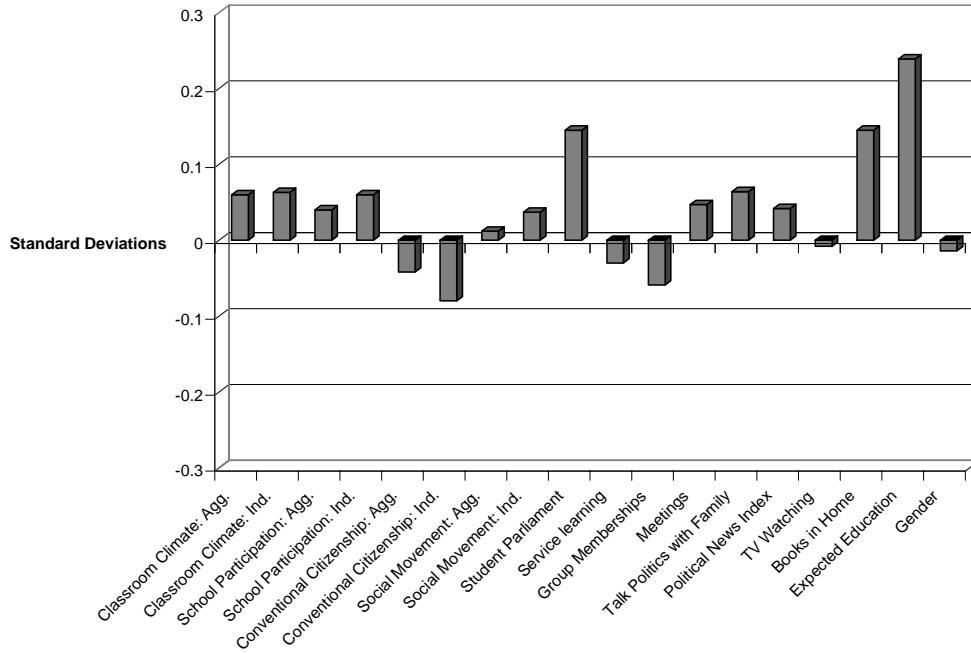


Figure 3.4.3. Voting

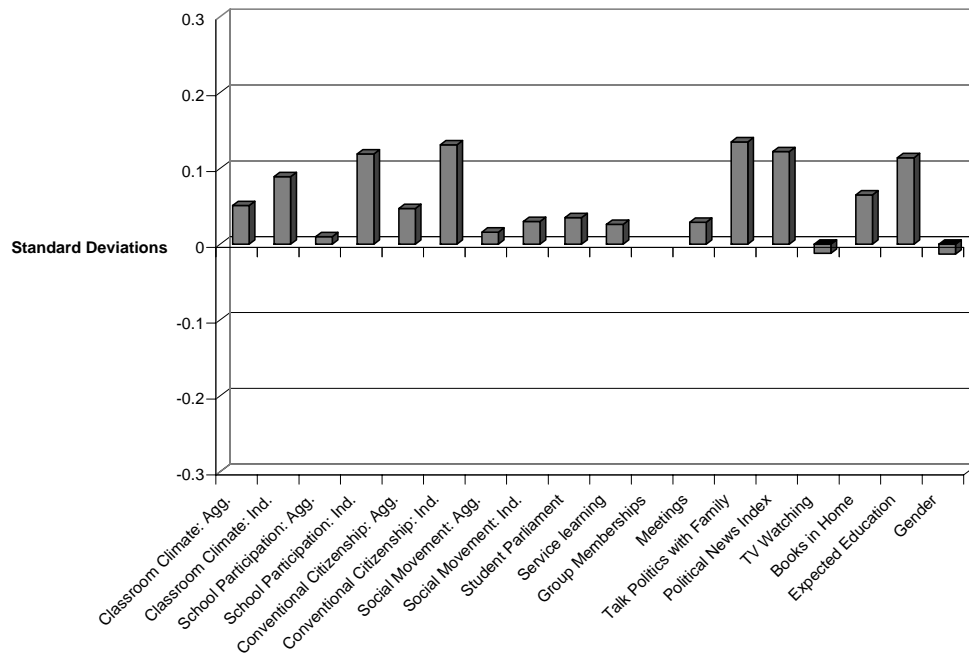


Figure 3.4.4. Civic engagement

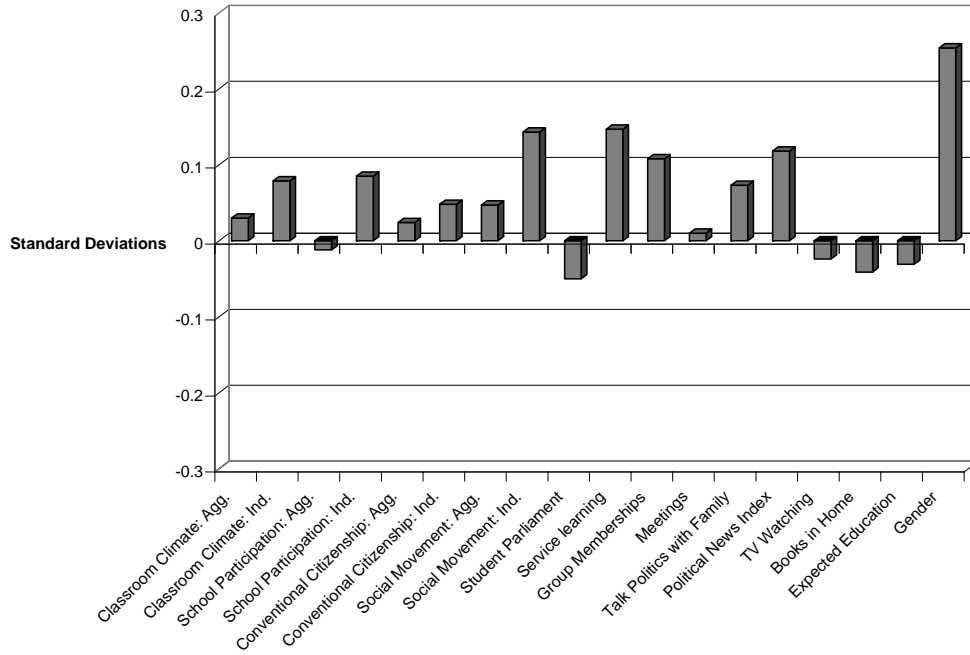


Figure 3.4.5. Political engagement

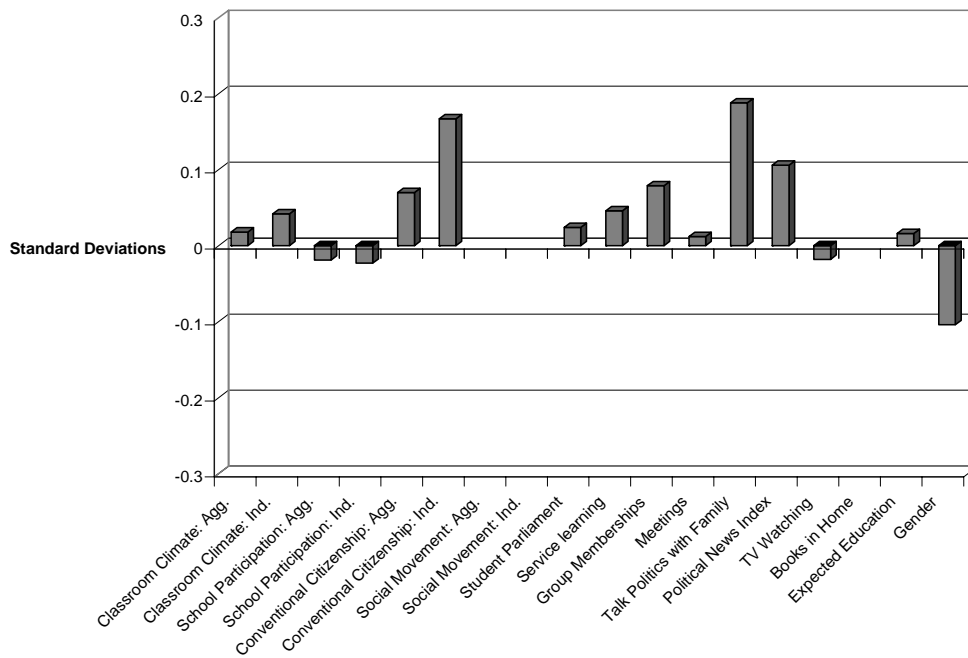


Figure 3.4.6. Institutional trust

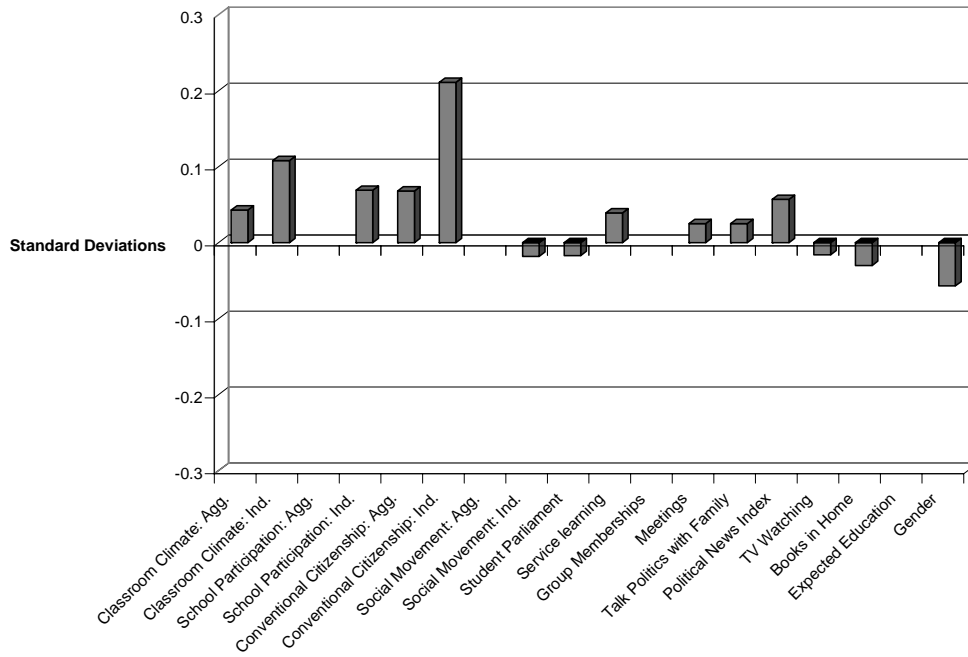
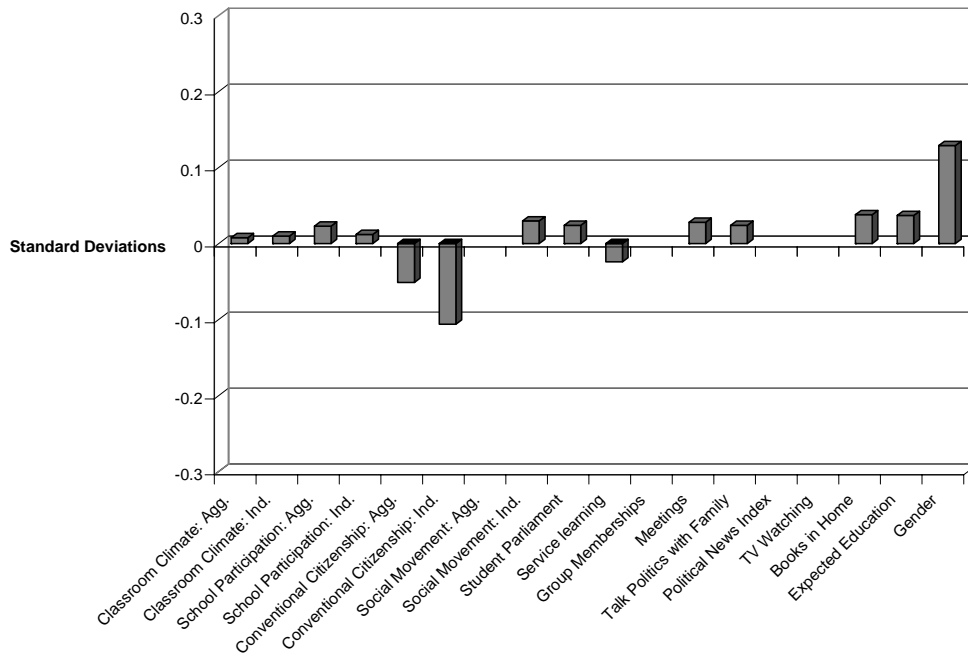


Figure 3.4.7. Tolerance



School ethos

Classroom climate

The aggregate measure of classroom climate – the one, that is, least tainted by concerns over endogeneity – has a consistently positive relationship with all forms of engagement. In terms of magnitude, it ranges from 0.068 for knowledge (with skills right behind at 0.06) to 0.018 for political engagement. This is the most consistent impact across all the engagement dimensions, and confirms the growing consensus that an open classroom climate is a promising pedagogical strategy for civic education. Indeed, the consistency of its impact across the myriad types of engagement is remarkable.

The individual-level measure of classroom climate also has a positive impact across all the forms of engagement, although recall that the interpretation of this variable is clouded by the likely possibility that students who perceive an open classroom (over and above the mean) have an unusually high level of civic and political engagement. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that both ways of measuring classroom climate reveal a strong relationship between the openness of the climate and numerous indicators of civic and political engagement.

Confidence in school participation

The classroom mean of the Confidence in School Participation Index has a positive and relatively large impact on knowledge, skills, voting, and tolerance, while it has a negative impact on both anticipated civic and political engagement (and is not significantly related to trust). It ranks among the larger impacts and is fairly consistent in size across the models. The potential causal connections are perhaps clearest for the indices that ask about future engagement, specifically voting. It seems plausible that attending a school in which students' voices are perceived to play a meaningful role in school governance would lead adolescents to envision themselves as voters upon becoming adults. The negative relationship with both civic and political engagement is, admittedly, puzzling. A democratic ethos within the school – which is distinct from the openness of the classroom climate – appears to constitute a trade-off. Knowledge, skills, tolerance and the intention to vote are all positively related to a school culture that fosters student voice and cooperation in the affairs of the school. However, student voice and a cooperative ethos have a negative relationship to political and civic engagement.

The individual-level measure of Confidence in School Participation is often greater in magnitude than the classroom mean. It also differs from the aggregate score in that it is positively related to anticipated civic engagement (although it, like the classroom mean, is negatively related to political engagement).

Conventional citizenship norms

The classroom mean of the Conventional Citizenship Index is a positive predictor of voting, civic engagement, political engagement, and institutional trust. In those models in which it is statistically significant, it is among the largest impacts, even running ahead of classroom climate in two cases (political engagement and trust). In other words, young people who are immersed in a normative culture that encourages conventional citizenship are likely to indicate a high level of engagement in the four measures that most clearly tap

into behaviour. (While trust is an attitude and not a behavior, it is a precursor to behaviour.)

There are a few negative relationships observed as well. One of these is not surprising; conventional citizenship norms drive down tolerance for anti-democratic groups. Schools where conventional expressions of active citizenship are widely endorsed are also where anti-democratic ideas are viewed with suspicion. The other two negative relationships, however, are puzzling, as conventional citizenship norms deflate scores on both the knowledge and skills portions of the civics evaluation. It is not clear why this would be the case, although it is worth noting that the common thread across all three is academic proficiency (remember Nie, Junn and Stehlik-Berry's argument that tolerance is a function of such aptitude). Does this mean that a normative environment approving of political activity *causes* a lower level of academic achievement? That seems unlikely, but the precise causal link remains unknown and thus a ripe subject for future research.

The individual-level measure of the conventional citizenship index contains few surprises (again remembering that this is over and above the classroom mean). In particular, we are reminded of the utility of using the classroom mean when we observe the extremely large impact Conventional Citizenship: Individual has on voting, political engagement and institutional trust (0.131, 0.167, and 0.211 respectively). It is not surprising that young people who say a good citizen should do things like join a political party and engage in political discussions also report that they expect to join a political party or write letters to newspapers as an adult, or report a high level of trust in political institutions.

Social movement norms

The classroom mean of the Social Movement Index has a far more variable impact than does the Conventional Citizenship Index. It has a positive and moderately large relationship to civic engagement (0.047) and a smaller effect on voting (0.016), which suggests some commonality between elite-challenging activity and more conventional forms of engagement. Its only other impact is a relatively modest one on the skills evaluation, perhaps suggesting that in school environments where students are more amenable to social movement activity, they are also better able to interpret political information. Perhaps their interpretive skill is either a cause or an effect of skepticism regarding government authority.

At the individual-level, the Social Movement Index shows some intriguing relationships. First, it has a relatively large and positive impact on both knowledge and skills – students who subscribe to social movement-oriented political objectives perform better on the civics evaluation, which is probably a reflection of their psychological engagement with politics. Interestingly, the index is not related to political engagement, suggesting that a social movement orientation does not move hand-in-hand with conventional political engagement (neither are they negatively related, however). Not surprisingly, it is negatively related to institutional trust, again a reflection that a social movement works outside of conventional political institutions. It also correlates positively with tolerance for anti-democratic groups, suggesting an appreciation for an expansive conception of civil liberties.

School experiences

Student parliament

Students who report that they have participated in a student parliament have a much higher score on both the knowledge and skills dimensions of the exam (0.172 and 0.145 respectively), but a much smaller impact on voting, political engagement, tolerance, and civic engagement (the first three are positive, while civic engagement is negative). Surprisingly, participation in student government corresponds to a *lower* level of institutional trust (although only at $p=0.06$). Could this mean that student governments lead young people to become disenchanted with political institutions? The thought is provocative but, at this point, only speculative.

Service learning

Community voluntarism (service learning) has a variegated relationship to the various forms of engagement. For knowledge, skills, and tolerance the relationship is negative. For civic engagement, the one dimension that seems most closely tied to service learning, there is a strong and positive relationship (0.147). It also has a positive, if weaker, impact on voting, political engagement, and trust.

These conclusions are tentative, however, owing to the limitations of the analysis. First and most obviously, there is no experimental component to the measure – students likely have selected themselves to be involved in community service. To the degree that this selection is correlated with other factors in the model, the impact of service learning is attenuated. Second, the measure of service learning is rather loose, as it does not actually determine whether students are involved in a curriculum-based service learning programme; remember that the measure is a post-hoc combination of whether the respondent has participated in charitable service and whether community problems are discussed in the classroom. There is no way of knowing whether these two activities are linked together, or fall under a formal service learning initiative. Third, classroom-based service learning is far more common in some nations than others, suggesting that the observed effect is really a proxy for a student's nationality. In other words, better evidence is needed to render a verdict on the efficacy of service learning.

Organisational involvement

The story for organisational involvement is interesting. The total number of organisations in which a young person has participated has a negative impact on both knowledge and skills (-0.079 and -0.059), suggesting that the relationships observed for service learning are indicative of a general relationship between extra-curricular activity and civic proficiency. Perhaps this measure is picking up a general level of sociability that draws a student away from academics. As expected from the literature on extra-curricular activities, organisational involvement has a positive relationship with both civic and political engagement –cross-nationally, we again see evidence that involvement in groups is a “pathway to participation”. It has no relationship to voting, tolerance, or trust.

Meetings

In contrast to the number of group memberships, the frequency of attending meetings has a largely consistent positive, if modest, impact on engagement (although it does not

reach statistical significance for civic engagement or tolerance). The largest impacts are on knowledge and skills (0.042 and 0.047), while it has a small impact on voting, civic and political engagement, as well as institutional trust. It is not clear why attendance at meetings would have a relationship to knowledge and skills that is the reverse of the number of organisations in which a young person is involved. A possible explanation comes from the literature on civic skills, as meetings are an important venue for developing organisational skills as defined by Verba, Schlozman and Brady. Perhaps participation in meetings builds skill capacity, which in turn facilitates other dimensions of engagement, in a way that other forms of organisational involvement do not.

Political conversations and TV watching

The control variables all behave more or less as expected, and many serve as a useful benchmark for comparing magnitudes with the school factors. For example, Political Conversations (at home) has a strong, positive impact on every form of engagement, similar to the findings for classroom climate. Note that TV watching generally has a negative, but small, impact (tolerance being the sole exception, as TV watching and tolerance are not related to one another).

Expected education

The one control variable of note is the measure of expected education, which combines the student's ambition, academic ability, and socioeconomic status, in the same manner that educational attainment does for adults. As would probably be expected, expected education has a sizable, positive impact on knowledge and skills; it also has a positive impact on voting, political engagement, and tolerance. Interestingly, it is negatively related to civic engagement and has no bearing on institutional trust.

I highlight expected education to underscore that the relationships observed are not simply a function of an individual's socioeconomic status. If they were, we would anticipate expected education to soak up a large portion of the observed variance, leaving the other factors with minimal impacts at best.

Synthesis of results

The volume of results generated from the above analysis of the IEA Civic Education Study admittedly risk losing sight of the forest for the trees. As a guide through the forest, Table 3.4.3 provides a graphical summary of the most significant conclusions to be drawn from the analysis of the IEA CivEd data.

Table 3.4.3. Highlights from analysis of IEA CivEd

	Knowledge	Skills	Voting (anticipated)	Civic engagement (anticipated)	Political engagement (anticipated)	Institutional trust	Tolerance
Classroom climate: aggregate	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Confidence in school participation: aggregate	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓	--	↑
Conventional citizenship norms: aggregate	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓
Number of group memberships	↓	↓	--	↑	↑	--	--
Frequency of meetings	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	--

↑ Statistically significant, positive relationship.

↓ Statistically significant, negative relationship.

-- No statistically significant relationship.

When the specific findings are taken together, some common patterns emerge from which general conclusions can be drawn. One is that, of all the dimensions of engagement, tolerance is the most difficult to predict. When compared to the other dimensions, a smaller number of factors have a statistically discernable impact on tolerance, and none of those impacts are comparatively large in magnitude. This is surprising in light of Nie, Junn and Stehlik-Berry's argument that the clearest effect for education is on political tolerance. One possible explanation for the apparent inconsistency is that the IEA data do not gauge the school-based factors that best explain the development of tolerance (although what those other factors might be is not clear). Another is that the CivEd tolerance measures constitute an especially stringent test of tolerance, namely questions revolving around granting free speech rights to anti-democratic groups. Typically, tolerance items reference such groups as racists, atheists, and homosexuals, or even allow respondents to select their own unpopular group. Some might argue that pro-democratic attitudes need not include tolerance for avowedly anti-democratic organisations, since tolerance for the intolerant may prove to be self-defeating. That is, the spread of anti-democratic values would destroy the foundations of a political system which preserves minority rights. This is obviously not the place to settle the normative question of the nature of tolerance, but only to raise the possibility that the particular tolerance questions employed in the IEA data do not necessarily coincide with

the tolerance items employed in other studies. Perhaps school-based factors would explain more variance of other, more conventional measures of tolerance.

One of the most significant conclusions to arise from the IEA analysis is the simple fact that the civic and social engagement of young people is not simply a function of their socioeconomic status. Indicators of social status certainly have an impact on many – although significantly not all – dimensions of engagement, but they do not crowd out the impact of indicators that measure civic education. Another, related, general conclusion is that civic education does not take place entirely at home. While the home is an important environment for democratic education, what happens at home also complements what happens at school. Students who report more political conversations at home score more highly on all measures of engagement, but for only two does home-based discussion vastly exceed the impact of the classroom climate. The two exceptions are voting and political engagement, where the home has an impact that is roughly three and ten times, respectively, that of the classroom. Why might these be the forms of engagement most affected by political stimulation at home? Recall that in the above discussion of the absolute, sorting, and cumulative models of education and engagement, the one dimension of engagement for which the sorting model received the strongest evidence is political engagement. In other words, political engagement – defined as conflictually-oriented, zero-sum, interest-driven activity – is activity for which there is the weakest evidence that schooling matters. If high-status parents are themselves politically engaged, they are modeling that behavior for their children, and in the process likely spurring conversation about politics within the home.¹¹ Voting is partially motivated by political motivations and so its results resemble those for political engagement, although the impact of political discussion at home is muted.

Having established that school-based civic education does have a measurable impact on engagement, what is it about a school that appears to matter most? The answer depends on the dimension of engagement under scrutiny. For example, the evidence supports the longstanding conclusion that involvement in extra-curricular organisations is a “pathway to participation”. But it does not appear to affect other forms of engagement. In other words, associational involvement, at least as measured by participation in groups, has a positive impact on two behavioral measures – the anticipation of civic and political engagement – but either a non-existent or negligible impact on trust and tolerance, and a negative relationship to both knowledge and skills. Frequent attendance at these organisations’ meetings has a positive and statistically significant correlation, albeit of a modest magnitude, with every dimension of engagement but tolerance. While the reasons for the different impacts for the number of groups versus the frequency of meetings remain speculative, it may be that meetings are the one form of group involvement that build organisational civic skills, which in turn have other attendant consequences on engagement.

What of the ethos measures, those that gauge the students’ conception of “good citizenship”? Here the results are equivocal. On the one hand, wide endorsement of conventional citizenship norms has a positive impact on intended voting, civic engagement, political engagement, and institutional trust. In other words, in schools where activities associated with conventional citizenship are broadly embraced, young

¹¹ Both of these conclusions about the impact of family status and experiences in the home must carry with them the caveat that they are based only on the reports of adolescent respondents. Superior data would be derived from their parents.

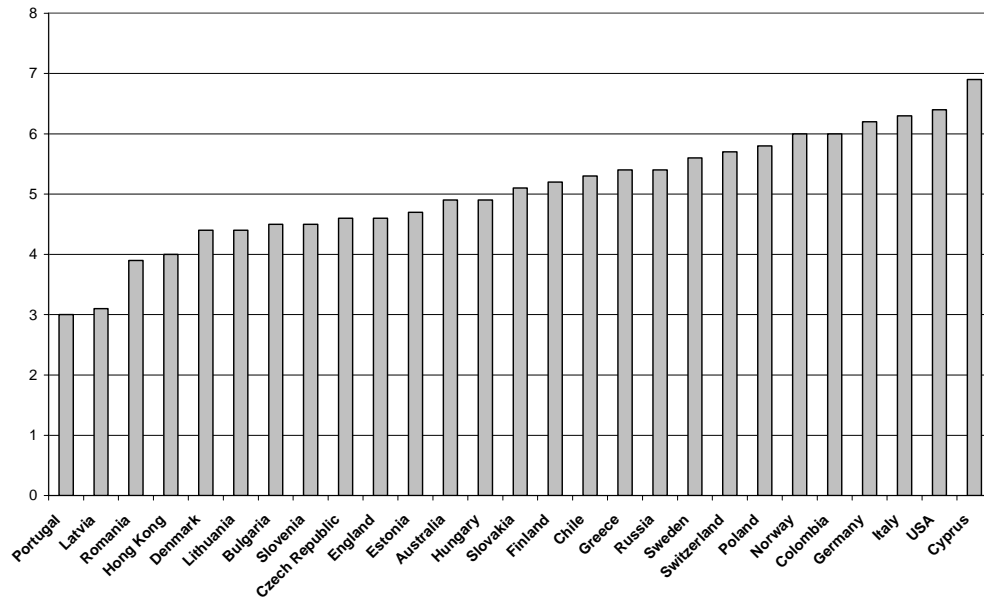
people are likely to envision themselves as both civically and politically engaged. This is broadly consistent with Campbell's (2006a) earlier finding that the normative climate of a school has a long-term impact on civic engagement. The fact that conventional citizenship norms correlate negatively with tolerance, as well as both knowledge and skills, suggests that there may be trade-offs between strong norms and other civic outcomes, although with only cross-sectional data such a conclusion must remain speculative. Furthermore, it is difficult to arrive at a concrete policy recommendation regarding the encouragement of these norms, as we know little about how they might be fostered. Campbell finds that school populations with broadly shared identities have stronger civic norms, but just how a school can build a sense of commonality remains an open question – although a question well worth asking.

The one aspect of civic education in the school that receives the strongest endorsement is the openness of the classroom climate. An open classroom climate has the most consistent positive impact across all dimensions of engagement, even more consistent than socioeconomic status. Further adding to the evidence in its favor is that the measure of classroom climate does not rely solely on the individual students' personal perceptions of the discussion within their classrooms, but instead incorporates information from the entire class.

Nation-by-nation models

Because of its consistent impact across multiple forms of engagement, classroom climate warrants a closer look. Figure 3.4.8 thus displays the average openness of the classroom climate for each nation (averaged by class, not individual, in order to account for the fact that class sizes vary widely). The classroom climate measure has been coded to have a standard deviation of 1.0 (and a mean of 5.0). In comparing classroom climate across nations, note that there is not an obvious pattern to the levels of openness. There is a modest correlation with the affluence of a nation, as per capita GDP has a correlation of 0.43 ($p > 0.05$) with classroom climate. Visual inspection of Figure 3.4.8 reveals the many counter-examples, however. Denmark, for example, has a relatively low level of openness, even though it has one of the highest levels of per capita GDP, while Colombia (with a low per capita GDP) ranks near the top for openness. Neither is there a clear geographic pattern, as neither the Scandinavian countries nor the former Soviet states clustered together. In short, explaining the factors that lead to classroom openness is a matter for further exploration.

Figure 3.4.8. Classroom climate by nation
Standard deviation of 1.0



To further explore the impact of an open classroom climate, Figures 3.4.9-3.4.15 display the coefficients for the aggregated measure of classroom climate broken out by each individual nation in the CES sample.¹² These models include precisely the same set of independent variables as in the cross-national models, with the standard errors clustered by classroom. Both the independent and dependent variables are coded so that they have a standard deviation of 1.0. The figures display all coefficients that achieve a significance level of 0.10 or less.

The results reveal that even though an open classroom climate has a consistently positive and statistically significant effect across each form of engagement when all nations are combined into one model, that relationship is far more variable when we examine nations individually. For no form of engagement does classroom climate have a significantly positive impact in all nations. Classroom climate displays the most consistent effect for skills and voting, and even in these two cases the relationship only appears for 14 nations. Classroom climate has an especially weak impact on civic engagement (five nations). It is similarly weak for political engagement (seven nations), with a negative relationship registered in one nation (Greece). For tolerance, there is only a positive relationship in four nations, and a negative one in three more. Once again, we see the difficulty in matching school experiences to tolerance (although also recall, once again, that the measure of tolerance is non-standard and thus difficult to compare with other such measures in other sources of data).

Volumes could be written explaining the idiosyncrasies of each nation. Some of the non-effects could be explained by a relative lack of variation within a particular country's educational system, but in other cases the curriculum may limit the impact of the

¹² The sheer number of nations and variables precludes doing this for every independent variable. This presentation is meant to be suggestive of all that is yet to be learned from the in-depth analysis of the IEA data.

classroom climate. This is not the place to delve deeply into these national differences. The point here is simply that there is much yet to be explained regarding an open classroom climate.

Figure 3.4.9. Knowledge

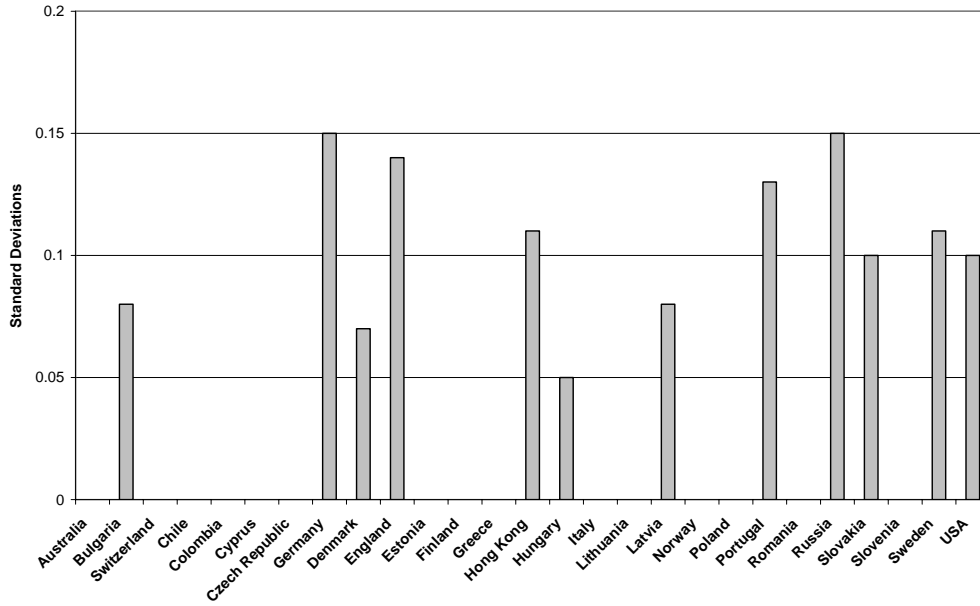


Figure 3.4.10. Skills

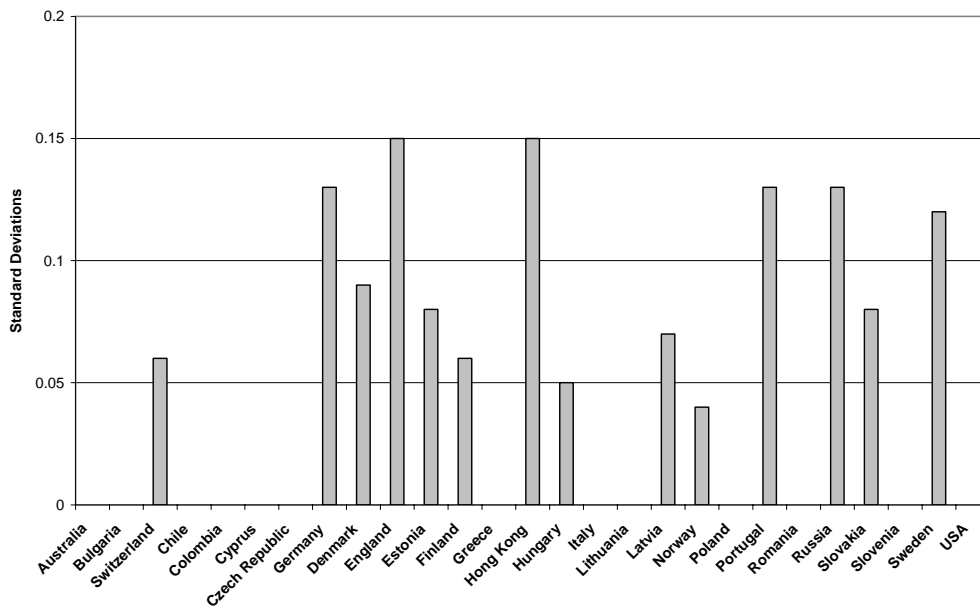


Figure 3.4.11. Voting

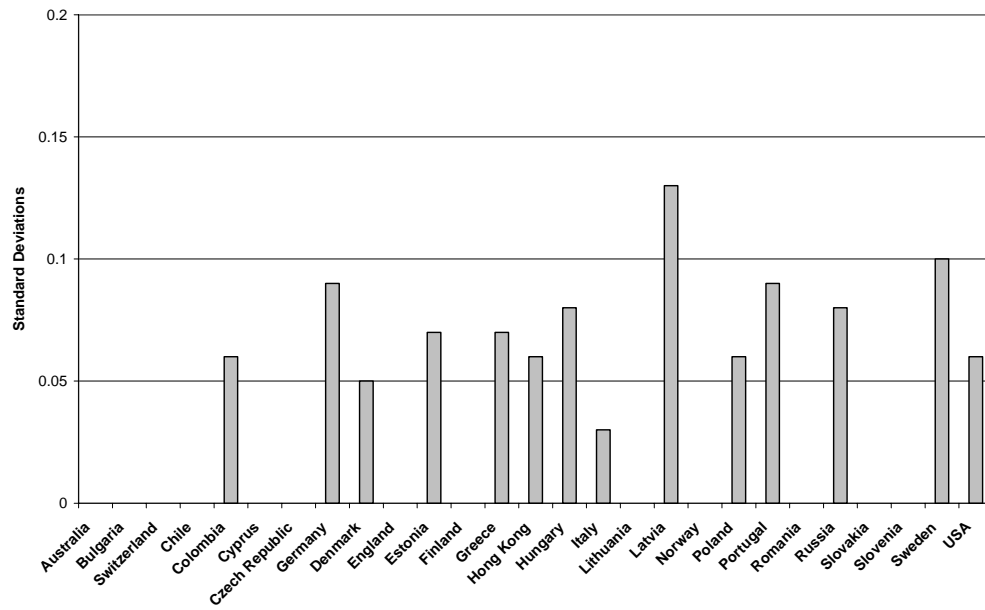


Figure 3.4.12. Civic engagement

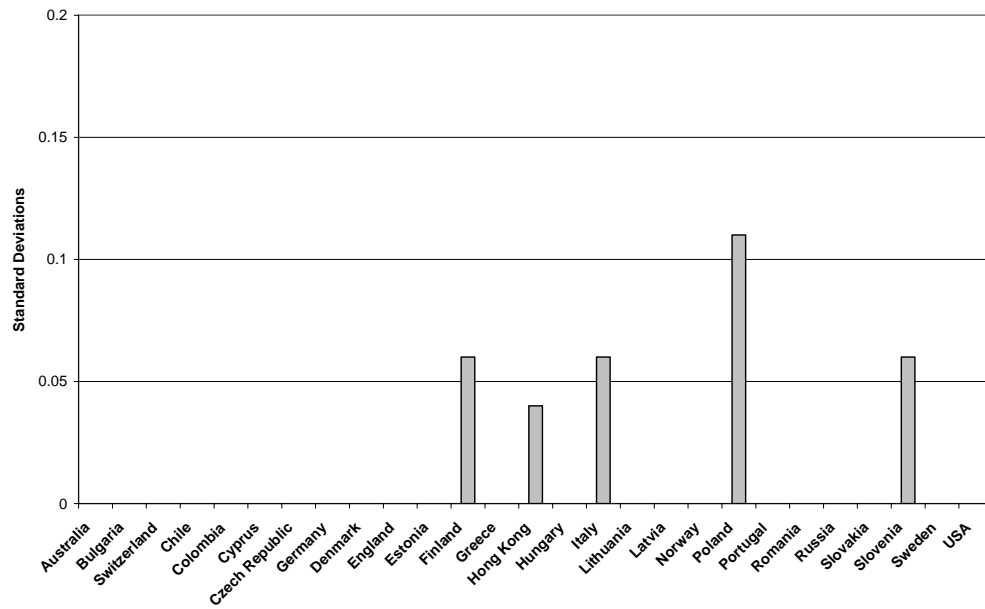


Figure 3.4.13. Political engagement

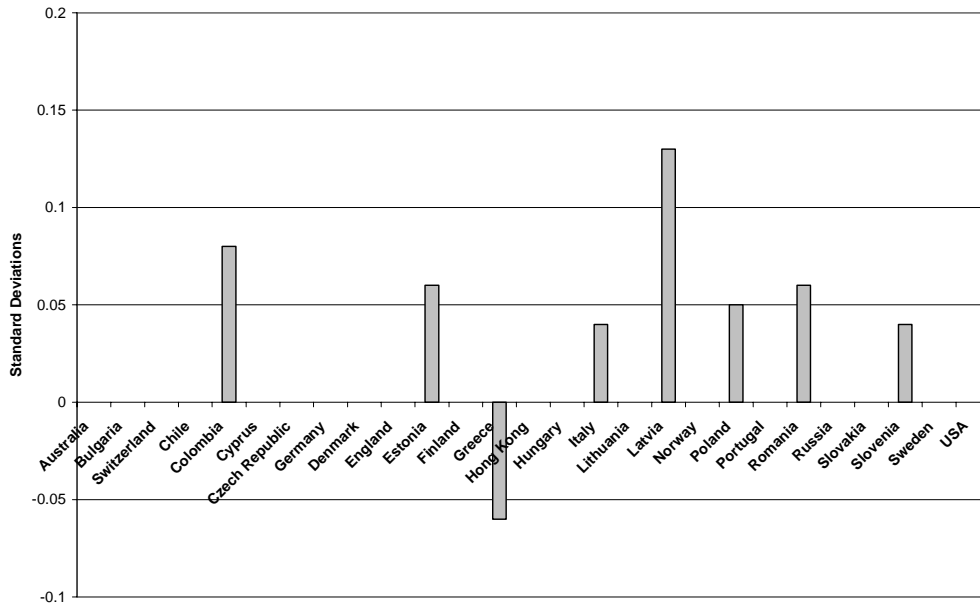


Figure 3.4.14. Institutional trust

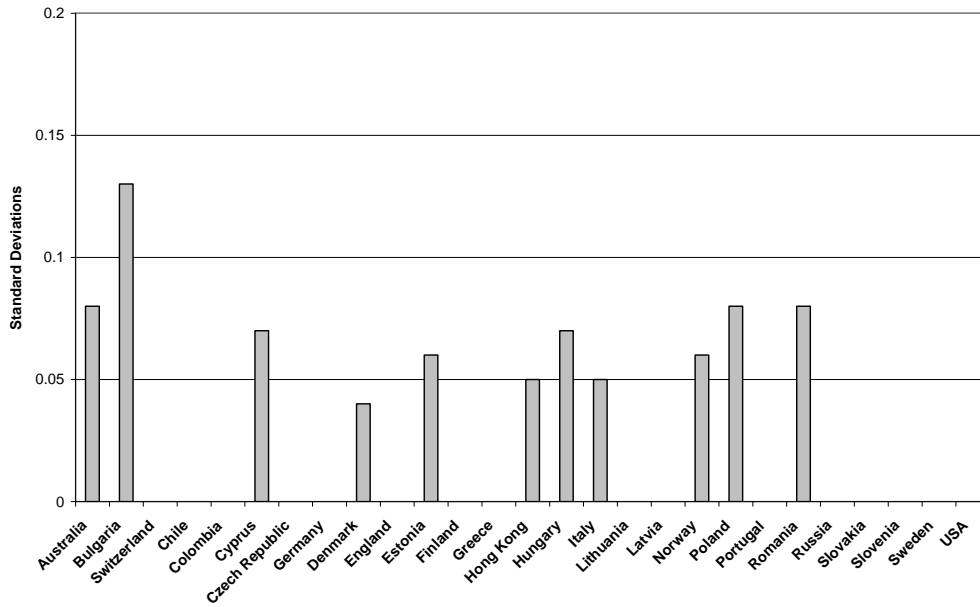
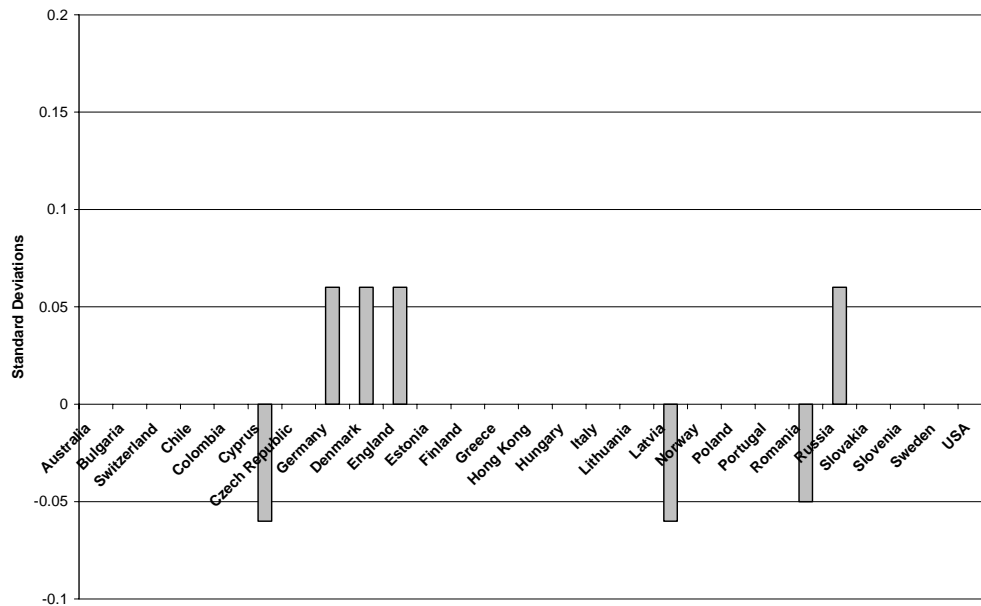


Figure 3.4.15. Tolerance



Conclusion

While the bulk of the evidence suggests that promoting an open classroom climate is a propitious means to foster engagement among young people, we do not quite have the evidence to cinch the case. For one, it is still possible that the link between classroom climate and engagement is endogenous. Perhaps classrooms where students are more likely to be engaged – for reasons out of the school’s control – are also classrooms where teachers feel that they can promote discussion of political issues. If this is the case, though, whatever leads the students to be more engaged and thus engage in classroom discussion would have to be something other than what is gauged with the many measures already in the model.

How could we determine whether classroom climate has a truly causal effect on engagement? The cleanest causal inference could be accomplished with a randomised experiment, whereby chance determines that some adolescents are randomly assigned to classrooms with open discussion while others are not. Barring that, analysts would need to find an instrumental variable to predict classroom climate that is not itself correlated with individuals’ level of engagement.

Even if it could be shown that an open classroom climate does have a causal effect, it would leave open the critical question of whether it has a sustained impact on engagement as adolescents age into adulthood. While there is good reason to suspect that predilections toward participation developed in adolescence continue to manifest themselves over the lifespan, whether classroom climate in particular has such a long-term impact remains unknowable without the appropriate longitudinal data.

3.5. Conclusion

This concluding chapter first summarises the preceding chapters. Converse’s “universal solvent” of education has been the subject of a burgeoning literature which, while still developing, nonetheless illuminates the education-engagement link. Gaps in the research remain, but there are reasonable grounds to proceed with further study, including the development of indicators pertaining to education and engagement.

Summary of report

This report has unfolded as follows. First we saw that there is overwhelming empirical evidence linking education and engagement. The empirics, however, have raced far ahead of theory. We know that education is a potent predictor of virtually every type of civic and social engagement; we do not necessarily know why. Most scholars of civic and political participation have been content to control for education without examining in depth why education has the apparent effects it does.

The link between education and engagement has been well known for so long that few scholars have ever bothered to consider whether the relationship is actually causal in nature. Perhaps education only appears to have an effect, when the real causal mechanism lies elsewhere. If this were the case, then there would be no point in pursuing the study of education and engagement. Accordingly, Section 3.2 considers the evidence in favor of a causal relationship. Two independent studies have examined natural experiments, namely the introduction of compulsory education laws, and found that formal education does appear to have a truly causal relationship on civic and social engagement, particularly voter turnout, political tolerance, and political attentiveness (which is closely related to political knowledge).

The blunt conclusion that obtaining more education causes an increase in engagement is a valuable first step to understanding the theoretical connection between the two, as it justifies further exploration of the subject. Yet it is only a first step, as it leaves the precise nature of that causal relationship inside the proverbial black box. Section 3.3 thus scratches below the surface to explore that causal relationship. In particular, it takes up the question of whether education is simply a proxy for social status. One compelling explanation for the link between education and political engagement is that education sorts people according to their relative social status. More education – relative to others in the same social environment – means more status, which leads to more political involvement (the sorting model). However, more education means a higher level of political tolerance, regardless of one’s educational environment, because education increases “democratic enlightenment” – better known as political tolerance (the absolute education model). That is the theory, the evidence for which has largely been amassed in the United States, although even there doubts have been raised. Section 3.3 subjects the

sorting and absolute models to their first full-blown cross-national test. The results reveal evidence favoring the sorting model, but only for one particular type of engagement – conflictual, competitive political engagement that is most likely to be zero-sum in nature. Expressive political engagement (boycotting and the like), voting, membership in voluntary associations are all a function more of one’s absolute education level than the educational environment, although in all these cases the educational environment matters too (just not as much as absolute education). For institutional trust, though, only absolute education has an impact. Furthermore, still a different mechanism predicts interpersonal trust, namely the cumulative model of education. Not only does more absolute education foster greater interpersonal trust, but so does a higher level of education in one’s social environment.

Based on the results of Section 3.3, the policy implications of increasing education levels within a nation, holding everything else constant, would appear to be the following:

- An increase in voter turnout. As has been noted, voter turnout has not risen in the wake of increasing education and, in fact, has decreased in most industrialised democracies. What these results suggest is that turnout would be even lower if education levels had not increased. That is, in the face of other factors which have been driving turnout down, rising education has served to prop it up.
- An increase in civic engagement, expressive political engagement and, especially, institutional trust.
- A multiplicative increase in interpersonal trust, owing to the positive impact of both individual and environmental increases in education.
- No increase in political engagement, as rising levels of education would preserve the social hierarchy that leads people at or near the top to participate in zero-sum activities. It would merely take more education to climb to the top of the social ladder.

Obviously, such conclusions about the social consequences of rising education levels are tentative at best. They could only be expected to the extent that everything else in the political, social, and cultural milieu is held constant.

Based on their analysis, including cross-national models, Nie, Junn and Stehlik-Berry also conclude that political tolerance increases across the board as education levels rise. While the data used in Section 3.3 were unable to attempt a replication of that claim, the robustness of the connection between education and tolerance suggests that it continues to hold.

Section 3.4 then took up the question of how it is that schools, the primary vehicle of formal education, have the impact that they do. If schools catalyse civic and social engagement through a mechanism other than their impact on an individual’s socioeconomic status, this implies that the content of education actually matters. The discussion covers a number of possible *educational factors* – that is, the specifics of what is learned in school – that have been discussed in the extant research literature. These include:

- ***Bureaucratic competence:*** familiarity with administrative procedures.
- ***Civic skills:*** development of the capacity to perform the tasks necessary for organisational involvement. It also refers to the ability to interpret political information.

- **General cognitive capacity:** the expansion of general abilities like assimilating and articulating information eases one's way into civic and political engagement, which often has a high information threshold.
- **Curriculum:** apart from the general cognitive capacity developed through formal education, the civic orientation of a curriculum could spur CSE.
- **Pedagogical method:** research into the methods of civic education suggests that an especially effective classroom technique is the open discussion of social and political issues.
- **Student government:** perhaps participation in the governance of the school prepares young people for participation in the governance of their community and nation.
- **Habits:** youth groups, also known as extra-curricular activities, can inculcate habits of associational involvement and engagement.
- **Service-learning:** programmes whereby young people perform charitable volunteering connected to their classroom work, have arisen as a possible strategy for deepening their commitment to civic and, in some cases, political engagement.
- **Norms:** schools are communities with the potential to inculcate social norms, such as the norm of engagement in collective action like civic and political activity.

Fortunately, the 1999 IEA Civic Education Study (CivEd) makes it possible to test whether any of these factors are, indeed, related to the various dimensions of engagement. Section 3.4 thus contains a new analysis of the CivEd data examining those empirical relationships. While there are many findings detailed in Section 3.4, the most consistent pertains to the openness of the classroom climate, which is shown to have a positive impact on all forms of engagement included in CivEd: knowledge, interpretive skills, intention to be an informed voter, intention to be civically engaged, intention to be politically engaged, institutional trust, and tolerance for anti-democratic groups. These findings are the more notable in light of the fact that the measure is not only an individual's personal perception of the discussion within the classroom, but the mean perceptions of an entire class.

The openness of the classroom measure is one measure of the ethos within a school. While it has the strongest and most consistent impact, it nonetheless is not alone among measures of school culture. The perception of the school's openness to students' involvement in governance also has a positive impact on some dimensions of engagement (knowledge, skills, civic engagement, and tolerance), although a negative impact on the intention to be involved in political engagement. This negative relationship may be because a school that fosters student involvement has a cooperative culture, which is anathema to the conflictual orientation of political engagement.

Some educators may be wary that the widespread adoption of an open classroom climate and student participation in school governance would, at best, divert schools from their core educational mission and, at worst, invite disorder by subverting the authority of teachers and school administrators. A closer look, however, suggests that educators need not worry. An open classroom climate simply refers to a style of instruction. Instead of rote learning, students are given the opportunity to discuss and debate compelling issues with a teacher's guidance. Similarly, the confidence in school participation index makes

reference to students' opinions being treated respectfully by teachers and administrators, hardly a recipe for anarchy.

Results from CivEd also suggest, consistent with previous research, that participation in extracurricular activities has a positive impact on every dimension of engagement but the intention to be engaged in explicitly civic activities, at least when participation is measured as attending organisational meetings. The breadth of a student's involvement in extra-curriculars only has a substantively meaningful positive impact on intended civic and political engagement, and a negative relationship to knowledge and skills. Too many extracurricular activities may distract young people from more academic pursuits.

Possible indicators

A judicious reading of all the evidence presented here suggests that it is reasonable to conclude that education affects engagement in measurable ways, and that we have some purchase on the mechanisms underpinning that relationship. Clearly, however, questions remain, as there is much we do not yet know about the links between education and engagement. The bottom line is that we know enough to conclude that further study, particularly with richer data, would teach us much more.

One weakness in the state of current research on education and engagement is simply the absence of cross-national descriptive data on the subject. Unfortunately, as of this writing, there is no single comprehensive source of data on democratic education requirements within school systems around the world, let alone the manner in which those requirements are fulfilled. Currently, there are a few volumes that discuss school-based democratic education in a selected number of nations, but none that approach comprehensiveness. Two notable examples of such volumes include *Civic Education Across Countries: Twenty-Four National Case Studies from the IEA Civic Education Project* (Torney-Purta, Schwille and Amadeo, 1999), which was written in preparation for the 1999 Civic Education Study. It consists of case studies from many of the nations that participated in the second, quantitative, phase of the IEA study. These case studies provide rich detail regarding the practices of democratic education within this wide range of nations. A second example of a cross-national study of democratic education is a recent book published by the Brookings Institution, *Educating Citizens: International Perspectives on Civic Values and School Choice* (Wolf and Macedo, 2004). This book is the product of a conference sponsored by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Brookings Institution which brought together scholars from many different nations (all of which, incidentally, are OECD members) to compare and contrast the approaches to democratic education taken in the United Kingdom (England and Wales), Canada, Germany, France, Belgium, and Italy.

Such volumes are informative and vital for understanding the nuances of individual nations' systems of education. However, as case studies they do not provide comparative data that can be incorporated into a systematic and/or quantitative cross-national study. They thus draw our attention to a gaping hole in the research community's ability to delve deeply into the cross-national study of democratic education, namely the absence of a single, comprehensive source of data on the democratic education provided in different nations. Admittedly, collecting such data is not a simple task. In some nations, democratic education is an explicit component of the nationally-mandated curriculum, while in others the curriculum does not mention it at all. In still others, the education system is so decentralised that the appropriate unit of study is not the national curriculum, but the

requirements imposed by individual states, regions, or provinces. Notwithstanding the complexities – which are presumably no greater than collecting data on any other aspect of education across nations – there is a need for the creation of a database that systematically records how (or if) democratic education figures into a nation’s curriculum. Such a database should also take into account that the very institutional design of a nation’s education system can have civic consequences. In addition to whether or not there is a nationally-mandated curriculum, other relevant features of the education system likely include the prevalence of religious vs. secular schools, whether the nation has a private (non-state supported) educational sector, and whether the education system facilitates the mixing of students from different ethnic, racial, religious, and linguistic groups. At this point, it is largely unknown whether these, or any other, features of an educational system actually do have measurable implications for democratic education, but the research literature suggests that it is at least plausible that they do.¹

Even the compilation of such a database, however, is only a first step to understanding cross-national variation in democratic education, as it would only indicate what the curriculum technically requires. Equally important is understanding what actually happens in classrooms, and measuring educational outcomes. While unquestionably valuable, CivEd is the beginning, not the end, of what can be learned about education and engagement. Virtually nothing is known about cross-national comparisons of post-secondary education and how it affects civic and social engagement. Even in secondary schools, the focus of CivEd, there is still much to be learned. In particular, the constraints on the IEA mean that its studies of civic education have only been done sporadically. Twenty-eight years passed between the two IEA studies of civic education, and it has already been seven years since the last one.

The best possible data would come from a longitudinal, individual-level study – information collected from the same individuals in repeated interviews over time. Ideally, it would include interviews with both young people and their parents. Panel data of this sort can provide greater analytical leverage on causal relationships than is possible with cross-sectional data. Yet even barring the collection of panel data, there is much to be gained from repeated collection of cross-sectional data. As demonstrated with the CivEd study, an especially informative research design consists of data gathered from students clustered in schools, so that it is possible to compare the individual against others within the same school environment. If such indicators were developed, the existing evidence recommends the following, roughly in order of priority.

Dimensions of engagement

Essential to any analysis of education and engagement is rigorous measurement of CSE’s many dimensions. These could include items about young people’s anticipated levels of engagement in adulthood, as well as questions about their current engagement. Conceivably, all the dimensions of engagement could be included. Good engagement measures of this type already exist, in the CivEd study and elsewhere, and thus would not need to be developed. Indeed, there are analytical advantages to using measures that

¹ Recognising the need for just such a comprehensive accounting, at a recent meeting held in conjunction with the general conference of the European Consortium for Political Research, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) explored the feasibility of compiling the necessary data, as a first step toward making it publicly available. Under the direction of Henry Milner, an exploratory project to collect these data has begun (but, as of this writing, is only in its infancy).

appear elsewhere, to compare both levels and trends, as well as to serve as a validity check.

School ethos

There are at least three aspects of a school's ethos that are promising analytical avenues.

Classroom climate

An index asking about the free and open discussion of social and political issues. The index used in the IEA CivEd is a good measure, although it could probably be abridged into fewer items, as determined by pilot testing.

Confidence in school participation

Again, the CivEd index is a starting point, although a shorter version could almost certainly be developed.

Sense of community in school

In addition to asking young people about whether their opinions are valued in their schools, it would likely be fruitful to ask about the general sense of community within the school. In other contexts, researchers have tapped into this concept with questions about whether respondents feel a missing wallet would be returned, or whether other members of the community would be willing to sacrifice for the good of the whole (*e.g.* would they be willing to ration water in the case of a shortage?). My point is not that these are the specific questions that should be asked but rather only to make the suggestion that comparable items could easily be developed. For example, while a missing wallet question could be adapted to apply to adolescents, one about the willingness of other community members to sacrifice for the good of the whole would need further refinement.

Extra-curricular involvement

An item that asks about the specific groups in which a young person is involved, as well as the frequency of meetings – both of which are found in CivEd. In addition, adolescents could be asked whether they hold a leadership position, and the responsibilities that entails. Such items about extra-curricular involvement could include measures of community voluntarism and/or service-learning, as well as participation in student government.

Concluding thoughts

In closing, the study of education and engagement is caught in a catch-22. We are far from a complete understanding of how education and engagement are linked, owing to the lack of systematic data. We lack more thorough data, however, at least partly because there has been a lack of knowledge about the ways in which education and engagement are connected. Hopefully, this report has demonstrated that the existing data justify developing cross-national indicators that pertain to those aspects of education which have

a connection to civic and social engagement. The precise nature of those indicators is yet to be determined, but simply the recognition of their value is an important step forward.

Finally, little is known about the consequences of adult learning for civic and social engagement. Survey data collected to measure CSE outcomes always include a measure of formal educational attainment, but rarely do such surveys inquire about adult learning. Yet there are good reasons to think that adult education would have effects on CSE; most, perhaps all, of the factors thought to link secondary and post-secondary education and higher levels of CSE also apply to adult learning. Among the dearth of studies which explore the adult learning-CSE relationship, a few rigorous findings stand out which suggest that adult education does have substantial consequences for CSE. But much more needs to be learned about these relationships.

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Annex Question wordings

European Social Survey

Competitive Political Activity, Expressive Political Activity, and Voluntary Associations

There are different ways of trying to improve things in [country] or help prevent things from going wrong. During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following?

Have you:

[Competitive Political Activity]

Contacted a politician, government, or local government official?

Worked in a political party or action group?

[Voluntary Associations]

Worked in another organisation or association?

[Expressive Political Activity]

Signed a petition?

Taken part in a lawful demonstration?

Boycotted certain products?

Voting

Some people don't vote nowadays for one reason or another. Did you vote in the last [country] national election in [month/year]?

Interpersonal Trust

Using this card, generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? Please tell me on a score of 0 to 10, where 0 means you can't be too careful and 10 means that most people can be trusted.

Do you think most people would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance, or would they try to be fair?

Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful or that they are mostly looking out for themselves?

Institutional Trust

Using this card, please tell me on a score of 0-10 how much you personally trust each of the institutions I read out. 0 means you do not trust an institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust.

[country's] Parliament

The legal system

The police

Politicians

Political Parties

The European Parliament

The United Nations

European Values Survey

Education Level

The specific form of the question gauging education level varies from nation to nation but is transformed into this common measure:

Inadequately completed elementary education

Completed (compulsory) elementary education

(Compulsory) elementary education and basic vocational qualification

Secondary, intermediate vocational qualification

Secondary, intermediate general qualification

Full secondary, maturity level certificate

Higher education – lower-level tertiary certificate

Higher education – upper-level tertiary certificate

Organisational Memberships and Voluntary Activity

Please look carefully at the following list of voluntary organisations and activities and say which, if any, do you belong to?¹

And for which, if any, are you currently doing unpaid voluntary work?

Social welfare services for elderly, handicapped, or deprived people

Religious or church organisations

Education, arts, music, or cultural activities

Labor unions

Local community action on issues like poverty, employment, housing, racial equality

Third world development or human rights

Conservation, environmental, animal rights groups

Professional associations

Youth work (scouts, guides, youth clubs, etc.)

Sports or recreation

Women's groups

Peace movement

Voluntary organisations concerned with health

IEA Civic Education Study

Classroom Climate Index

The next part of the questionnaire includes some statements about things that happen in your school. When answering these questions think especially about classes in history, civics/citizenship, or social studies.

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

¹ In the interview, respondents were also asked about their membership and involvement in political parties, which has been omitted so as not to conflate civic and political engagement as they have been defined. Since relatively few people belong to or volunteer for a political party, results are substantively unchanged whether this form of engagement is included in the index or not.

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 an issue when explaining it in class

Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often

Confidence in School Participation Index

Listed below you will find some statements on students' participation in school life.

Electing student representatives to suggest changes in how the school is run makes schools better

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

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

Students acting together can have more influence on what happens in this school than students acting alone

Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree

Conventional Citizenship and Social Movement Indices

In this section, there are some statements that could be used to describe what a good adult citizen is or what a good adult citizen does. There are no right and wrong answers to these questions.

An adult who is a good citizen . . .

[Conventional Citizenship Index]

Votes in every election

Joins a political party

Knows about the country's history

Follows political issues in the newspaper, on the radio, or on TV

Shows respect for government representatives

Engages in political discussions

[Social Movement Index]

Would participate in a peaceful protest against a law believed to be unjust

Participates in activities to benefit people in the community

Takes part in activities promoting human rights

Takes part in activities to protect the environment

Not Important, Somewhat Unimportant, Somewhat Important, Very Important

Group Memberships and Meetings

Have you participated in the following organisations?

A youth organisation affiliated with a political party or union

A group which prepares a school newspaper

An environmental organisation

A United Nations or UNESCO Club

A student exchange or school partnership programme

A human rights organisation

A charity collecting money for a social cause

Boy or Girl Scouts

A cultural organisation based on ethnicity

A computer club

An art, music or drama organisation

A sports organisation or team

An organisation sponsored by a religious group

Think about all the organisations listed above. How often do you attend meetings or activities for any or all of these organisations?

Almost every day (4 or more days a week)

Several days (1 to 3 days a week)

A few times each month

Never or almost never

Political Conversations Index

How often do you have discussions of what is happening in the [name of country] government with parents or other adult family members?

How often do you have discussions of what is happening in international politics with parents or other adult family members?

Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often

News Index

How often do you:

Read articles in the newspaper about what is happening in this country?

Read articles in the newspaper about what is happening in other countries?

Listen to news broadcasts on television?

Listen to news broadcasts on the radio?

Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often

TV Watching

How much time do you spend watching television or videos on school days?

No Time

Less than 1 hour

1-2 hours

3-5 hours

More than 5 hours

Books in Home

About how many books are there in your home?

None

1-10

11-50

51-100

101-200

More than 200

Expected Education

How many years of further education do you expect to complete after this year?

Please include vocational education and/or higher education.

0 years

1 or 2 years

3 or 4 years

5 or 6 years

7 or 8 years

9 or 10 years

More than 10 years

Voting, Political Engagement, and Civic Engagement

When you are an adult, what do you expect you will do

[Voting Index]

Vote in national elections

Get information about candidates before voting in an election

[Political Engagement Index]

Join a political party

Write letters to a newspaper about social or political concerns

Be a candidate for a local or city office

[Civic Engagement Index]

What do you expect you will do over the next few years?

Volunteer time to help people in the community

Collect money for a cause

Collect signatures for a petition

Certainly Not Do This, Probably Not Do This, Probably Do This, Certainly Do This

Institutional Trust

How much of the time do you trust:

The national government

The local council or government of your town or city

Courts

The police

Political parties

Congress

Never, Only Some of the Time, Most of the Time, Always

Interpersonal Trust

In this section there are some statements about the opportunities which members of certain groups should have in [name of country]. Please read each statement and select the box in the column which corresponds to the way you feel about the statement.

Members of groups that are against democracy should be prohibited from hosting a television show talking about their ideas

Members of groups that are against democracy should be prohibited from organising peaceful demonstrations or rallies

Members of groups that are against democracy should be prohibited from running in an election for political office

Members of groups that are against democracy should be prohibited from making public speeches about their ideas

Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree