

Findings Related to Student Identity Using the Large-Scale Civic Education Datasets

Ryan T. Knowles*

Utah State University, USA

*Corresponding Author Email: Ryan.knowles@usu.edu

ABSTRACT

This presentation reveals the results of a content analysis of 101 secondary analysis publications that utilized either the IEA CIVED or IEA ICCS datasets. The analysis was conducted in three steps: deciding inclusion criteria, conducting a literature search, and synthesizing research specific aims. Utilizing these criteria, a table was created including the author and year, keywords, independent variables, dependent variables, mediator/moderator/group comparisons, how the study incorporated country comparisons, and a brief statement of the articles focus. The results of this analysis yielded a large amount of work considering student identity, which has received less attention in comparison to studies exploring aspects of democratic education or student dispositions. Thus, this study focuses primarily on how student identity, such as race, gender, immigrant status, and SES, relates to their educational experiences and development of civic engagement.

Keywords: *Student identity, large scale, civic education, datasets.*

1. INTRODUCTION

During the Fall of 2015, the Spencer Foundation supported a gathering of researchers interested in secondary analysis of the two IEA civic education studies. Through deliberations, the attendees came to two key conclusions. First, research using these datasets exists across various disciplines and publication venues, limiting the exposure of important work across disciplines. A subset of the original researchers worked to remedy this dilemma by publishing an annotated bibliography of research and scholarship directly related to secondary analysis of the IEA civic education studies Knowles & Di Stefano [1] and also to develop a conceptual research review. The second issue identified that not enough research had considered the connection between student identity and the development of notions of civic engagement. Indeed, many studies used areas such as gender, race, and immigrant status as control measures, but an insufficient number of studies considered how the educational experiences and development of civic engagement varied across identities. The central research aims of this project addresses the identified limitation by considering aspects of student identity such as gender,

socioeconomic status, and cultural contexts in relation to students' educational experiences.

This review takes part in a larger systematic analysis or secondary research using data from the IEA civic education studies. First, some important issues regarding identity within open classroom climates are reviewed within the literature review. Secondly, important studies that identify aspects of student identity in relation to civic development are discussed. Finally, implications for future research and scholarships are identified.

International large scale research on civic engagement in youth consistently demonstrates the importance of students' perceived levels of an *open classroom climate*, which is a model of democratic deliberation where students are encouraged to bring up relevant issues in the class, express their opinions, and explore diverse perspectives Torney-Purta, Wilkenfeld, & Barber [2]. Research demonstrates the relationship between an open classroom climate for discussion and positive civic outcomes, especially among less advantaged students Torney-Purta [3]; Torney-Purta & Barber [4]; Torney-Purta [2]; Campbell [5]. The relationship between an open classroom climate and a host of positive civic outcomes across contexts,

countries, and time, may well be the most consistent and well-researched finding in civic education.

While research on open classroom climates has produced strong results, some scholars have questioned the efficacy of a model of democratic discussion and open classroom climates within education. These authors contend that attitudes and beliefs among teachers, students, and larger societal contexts may hinder the free flow of ideas, perspectives, and dissent necessary for democratic education Levinson [6]. For example, Apple [7] argued that classroom discussions are often rooted in unacknowledged gendered and racial assumptions that limit their efficacy in addressing issues of power within society. In addition, Schutz [8] proposed that a middle class bias towards citizenship education dominates public schools. This bias favors notions Schultz refers to as discursive democracy, in which citizens are entitled to express their opinions and have their voices heard, believing that a rational, well-supported argument can affect governmental decisions. In contrast, democratic solidarity focuses on pragmatic needs within tight communities, which stress collective identity as a means of survival and self-preservation. Other authors make similar assertions in regards to race and gender Junn, [9] ; Chandler & Branscombe [10]; Shear, Knowles, Soden & Castro [11]. Thus, schools tend to support individualized notions of discursive citizenship focusing on expressing individual opinions and behaviors while discounting other notions of citizenship. Rubin's [12] study on civic engagement among marginalized youth led her to claim "What has previously been described as 'disengagement' in the civic education literature may actually, for marginalized students, be a rational response to the dis junctures [between ideal and real democracy] they experience in society that purports equality but delivers injustice". This finding demonstrates that the attitudes of the teachers and staff, and likely more privileged students, may play a key role of the perceptions of classroom climate of marginalized students Castro & Knowles [13].

This challenge to a deliberative model of education assumes that the attitudes of students within a classroom influence other students' learning, attitudes, and perceptions of classroom climate. A number of studies explore the composition of students within the same classroom.

Janmaat [14] tested notions of contact theory, which posits that as positive inter group contact increases the in-group becomes less prejudiced and develops more favorable attitudes toward the out-group Tropp & Pettigrew [15] . Two studies considered this theory with respect to immigrant populations; both demonstrated that native-born students in classes with a high proportion of immigrant students have more positive attitudes regarding immigrant rights than native-born

students with fewer immigrant classmates Janmaat [14]; Isac, Maslowski, & van der Werf [16]. In similar analysis focusing on race, Janmaat [17] and Campbell [18] found that ethnically diverse classrooms were associated with support for ethnic rights. With a slightly different focus, Collado, Lomos, and Nicaise [19] explored the role of socioeconomic composition of the classroom, and concluded that having schools segregated economically widens the gap in civic knowledge between high and low socioeconomic students. Taken together the results of these studies demonstrate support for the proposition that diversity within the classroom across immigrant, race, or economic status can promote favorable achievement and attitudes on the part of members of the in-group and can close academic gaps. The findings relating to this theory support Ekman and Zetterberg's [20] assertion that the diversity of the school has as much, if not more, influence on students' civic development than the actual curriculum or instructional strategies.

The scholarship highlighted above demonstrates the importance of understanding student identity within the classroom. Due to this limitation, various scholars have called for enhanced research and theory to address differences in student identity Castro & Knowles [17]; Hahn [21]. For example, Crocco [22] called for a "newer consideration of citizenship" that addresses three goals, an analysis of differences based on gender, race, class, and sexual orientation; consideration of how theories and practices address these differences; and enhanced attention to gender, sexuality and other identities among scholars and teacher educators. In addition, Castro and Knowles [17] reviewed scholarship on democratic citizenship and clearly demonstrated examples of student identity becoming salient through research trends relating to gaps in civic knowledge, generational shifts in attitudes, individualistic notions of democracy, and the salience of identities such as those related to immigrant status, gender, ethnicity, race, and class. By avoiding identity civic education can promote what Castro and Knowles [17] refer to as an instrumentalist view of citizenship which can "impose a dangerous deficit-oriented, top-down, vision of middle-class citizenry on marginalized communities". In sum, data from the IEA civic education studies can serve as useful place to interrogate student identity within classroom spaces. The review below demonstrates important research in this regard, but certainly more work is needed.

2. METHOD

When developing the method for review several examples were considered to develop and analyze research studies that have utilized CIVED and ICCS data. Kennedy [23] distinguished between conceptual reviews and systematic reviews that focus on a specific

empirical question. After consideration we decided that a conceptual review, which include historical, integrative, theoretical, and methodological aspects, was most closely aligned with the objectives of this project. With this in mind, I explored recent and relevant review articles that used various approaches, and found some common criteria for article inclusion, literature search, and synthesis Geboers, Geijsel, Admiraal, ten Dam [24]; Lenkeit, Chan, Hopfenbeck, Baird [25]; Van Ginkel, Gulikers, Biemans, Mulder [26]. The analysis was conducted in three steps: deciding inclusion criteria, literature search, and synthesizing research around the aims stated above. Utilizing these criteria, we created a table including the author and year, keywords, independent variables, dependent variables, mediator/moderator/group comparisons, how the study incorporated country comparisons, and a brief statement of the articles focus. Within this table, 101 articles using secondary analysis of CIVED or ICCS were read, coded, and included.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Attitudes and knowledge of students across identities While reviewing the 99 articles as a part of a content analysis of CIVED and ICCS publications, a theme relating to how student identity manifest within the classroom emerged. Applying the theoretical model put forth by Torney-Purta and her colleagues [27], particular focus was paid attention to *Person* variables (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, immigrant status, family background, and educational expectations). The review considered how student's experiences varied based on their identity and those of their peers. A few key findings are listed below, however, the overarching findings extend beyond what is stated.

This trend puts particular emphasis on the *person* variables. These include age, gender, ethnicity, immigrant status, family background, and educational expectations. While nearly every study mentioned conducts analysis using these variables, some have considered identity as more than a control variable. These studies assume that school and community experiences may vary in their importance depending on aspects of the students' identity. For example, female students and male students may perceive classroom practices attempting to promote civic knowledge and engagement differently. Such studies address the considerations regarding influences of societal norms on identity.

Gender, exploring differences across gender allows for powerful research within and across countries (Barber & Torney-Purta [28]; Hooghe & Stolle [29]; Campbell & Wolbrecht [30]). Exploring gender differences, Barber and Torney-Purta [28] evaluated levels of political efficacy and attitudes toward women's rights using CIVED data. Their study also considered

national contexts such as level of development, national expectations for further education, and percent perceiving employment inequality. They found gender gaps, with female students being more supportive of women's rights and male students having higher levels of internal political efficacy. The opportunities structure within society partially explain the gaps in support for women's rights and internal political efficacy see also Wolbrecht & Campbell [31]. In additional studies focused on intended behavior, Hooghe and Stolle [29]; also Hooghe & Dassonneville [32]), explored gender differences in intended political participation and found that girls indicated that more likelihood to vote and support social movement activism, where boys were more likely to be a candidate, joining a political party and engage in more radical political behaviors. Gilleece and Cosgrove [33] considered civic participation at schools and found that boys have lower levels than girls, but among boys' civic participation at school varies with the perceived influence on decision making. Finally, Husfeldt [34] found that boys had negative view of immigrants in comparison to girl students. The results of this analysis were eye opening, of the students identified as having negative attitudes toward immigrants in the United States 76.5% were male and 23.5% were female.

Race. Another group of studies considered variations based on racial or ethnic identity. Torney-Purta, Barber, and Wilkenfeld [35] found that Latino students, in comparison with non-Latino students, demonstrate lower civic knowledge and expected civic participation.

However, experience with an open classroom climate, discussion of political topics, and democratic ideals explain, in part, this gap. Based on these findings the authors suggest the creation of an open classroom climate that explicitly includes the study of political topics could close this gap. Using CIVED data, Diemer and Rapa [36] explore poor and working class African-American and Latino-American students' perceptions of societal inequality and beliefs that society should be more egalitarian, which they refer to as critical consciousness. They find that critical consciousness predicted expected voting, conventional political action, and social action. This study pays special attention to *external political efficacy*, or belief in the responsiveness of government. By acknowledging that some communities may perceive the government as more or less responsive in comparison, this study provides a useful model to consider the lived experiences of students within large-scale analysis.

Immigrant Status. Given the number of countries involved in the CIVED and ICCS studies, it becomes key to look at contextual factors for particular countries and regions. Focusing on the United States and Sweden, Barber, Torney-Purta, Wilkenfeld, and Ross [37] compared differences in civic knowledge and attitudes

between native-born and immigrant students. Their analysis demonstrated that immigrant students scored lower on civic knowledge and support for women's rights. Their analysis found few differences between immigrant and native-born students' perceptions of school contexts (such as classroom climates), and when differences do exist, they likely fail to expose students to activities likely to influence beliefs about gender equality. In addition, Janmaat finds that immigrant youth are more likely to show ethnic tolerance and solidarity in social action but less likely to support women's rights, to show national pride, and to have institutional trust. Finally, Rutkowski, Rutkowski, and Engel [38] analyzed immigrant students in 24 countries and found that an atmosphere of inclusion in school such as demonstrate positive student teacher relations, providing student voice, encouraging participation in schools and communities are associated with trust, positive attitudes toward the country, and valuing conventional citizenship norms.

4. CONCLUSION

The major findings from review indicate that students' experiences with civic and democratic education vary tremendously depending on their identity and that of their peers. Future research should explore this idea to increase our understanding of how identity relates to the development of students' civic engagement. The accomplishments have been substantial, but tremendous opportunities remain for future research. Such endeavors can continue to enhance our understanding of civic engagement in youth. These opportunities will further expand with the release of the data from the 2016 IEA International Civic and Citizenship Study. The following section discusses the implications of this review.

First, the findings from analyses of CIVED:99 and ICCS:09 data consistently demonstrate the importance of classroom context in relation to student learning and development. Particularly, the value of an open and respectful classroom climate was a frequent theme across studies. Researchers could work to strengthen these findings through smaller-scale quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods studies as well as through additional secondary analysis. For example, scholars could consider the nature of classroom composition within their research studies and curriculum development projects. There is considerable space for studies relating class composition to perceptions of open classroom climate, interest in politics, level of civic knowledge, and expected political participation. One promising avenue for future exploration at the contextual level is to identify classrooms and/or schools with particular climate profiles. Then the research question would be whether a particular type of school/classroom climate that combines certain

characteristics is more or less effective in promoting civic knowledge and engagement—particularly among students with marginalized identities. Analyses such as these could provide more powerful guidance than looking at classroom features one at a time.

Second, this review identified the need for additional research focusing on contextualized notions of citizenship. This review addresses Hahn's [39] call for additional research to consider both students' and teachers' understandings of civic engagement in different cultural and national contexts. Although secondary analyses of nationally-representative survey data tends to provide generalize able results, they sometimes pay inadequate attention to complex understandings of civic identity development in specific contexts Heafner, Fitchett, & Knowles [40]. However, these datasets, along with the regional modules and national options, have the potential to provide important findings in this regard. Indeed, data from CIVED:99 and ICCS:09 also provide an international context for interpreting the implications of student identity called for by social studies scholars Avery & Barton, 2017; Hahn, 2017; Ho [41]. This allows scholars to draw from diverse research perspectives and test theories within and across countries. This review identified studies exploring differences by gender, as well as membership in groups marginalized by racial, ethnic, or immigrant status, and SES. Reviewing the studies on student identities suggested that individual articles are strong; however, these survey data still present rich and untapped resources for understanding the implications of several dimensions of students' identity for civic development. To phrase the problem in a different way, future research should consider student identity as more than a control variable. For example, researchers could explore whether students from different groups experience a particular classroom climate differently, and how such differences relate to connections between class participation and future political engagement. This has the potential to address intersections of student identities based on gender, race, and class. It would also be important to develop theoretical approaches to conceptualize these differences.

We conclude by calling for rigorous secondary analysis of existing datasets to inform social studies research and practice. Such efforts address issues of identity and the theoretical positions used to explore how intersecting identities contribute to civic development, which has been called for among civic education scholars Castro & Knowles, 2017; Crocco [22].

Clearly, there has been progress in understanding the connections between education and students' civic engagement based on both primary and secondary analysis of these international studies. There are substantial opportunities within the existing data sets for

further analysis by social studies researchers. The release of data from the 2016 ICCS study will provide new opportunities for analysis. Indeed, this is an exciting time to be working in the field of international and comparative civic engagement research, and it holds many opportunities for social studies researchers.

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