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ABSTRACT

In 1993, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) decided to mount a 2-phase study of civic education, the first phase being more qualitative and the second more quantitative, to complete testing before the end of the 20th century and to be released early in the 21st century. Countries participating in phase 1 or phase 2 included the United States, Canada, England, Hong Kong, Australia, Chile, Colombia, and many European countries. The study's international chair, a developmental psychologist, was concerned about the meaning of civic engagement for young people in both newer and older contexts. The qualitative phase elaborated national case studies, which suggested that there is a common core of content topics across countries in civic education and that civic education should be based on important content that crosses disciplines. These case studies contributed to the design of phase 2 in which approximately 110,000 students age 14 and 16-18 from nationally representative samples were tested. The Phase 2 Release Report is due to be published in early 2001. Findings suggest that interdisciplinary collaboration and international cooperation can be very productive; there are ways to effectively engage students in area community service programs; qualitative research can make contributions; racism is pervasive and resistant to change; and there is a persistent gap in representation of women in political office. (Contains 18 references.) (BT)

Some Reflections on the Past and Future of Research concerning the Civic Engagement of Youth within the Context of the IEA International Civic Education Study

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For myself, as for many of you, the last six months have been a time for reviewing the past and looking into the future. This has meant looking back into the history and context of research on political socialization and civic engagement. There was great interest in this topic in the late sixties and early seventies, especially among political scientists. Much of this research assumed a transmission model and hoped to ascertain which socialization agent was most effective in this process. In 1971, IEA the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement[1], conducted a study of civic education in nine countries including the U.S., Finland, Israel, Italy, and Germany (Torney, Oppenheim, and Farnen 1975). In the next decade and a half, interest in this research declined. The early 1990s, however, saw several attempts to revive interest in political socialization among both political scientists (Niemi & Hepburn 1995) and psychologists (Haste & Torney-Purta, 1992; Flanagan & Sherrod, 1998). A National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) took place in 1998, and at the end of the decade a reanalysis of the 1988 NAEP data appeared (Niemi and Junn, 1998). A conference at Stanford University in 1999 explored the role of youth organizations in this process, and produced a consensus paper (Torney-Purta, Damon, and others, 1999).

In 1993, the General Assembly of IEA decided to mount an ambitious two-phase study of civic education, the first phase more qualitative and the second more quantitative, to complete its testing before the end of the 20th century and to be released early in the 21st century. I am the International Steering Committee Chair for this study (1999b).

The countries participating in Phase 1 or Phase 2 of the IEA Civic Education Study (or both) include several with long histories of democratic government (including the U.S., Canada, England, and Switzerland). All the Nordic democracies (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden) have participated. Greece, often called the birthplace of democracy, has participated, as well as Belgium, Cyprus, Israel, Netherlands and Portugal. Countries which experienced democratic transitions fifty years ago (Germany and Italy) have collected data, as well as countries in Central and Eastern Europe where it has been ten years since the changes toward democratization (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania). Hong Kong and Australia are the Pacific Rim countries in the study; Chile and Colombia are the Latin American nations.

If one focuses on the present situation of adults as citizens and workers, numerous recent changes in the world are obvious: globalization, new concerns about civil society and social capital, post-modern trends, moves toward democratization in many countries, declining trust in public officials. But I am a developmental psychologist, and so my concern is about the meaning of civic engagement for young people in both newer and older contexts. Much of what the IEA study has learned about what adults intend for young people to learn is in the book of national case studies for the IEA Civic Education Study published in mid-1999, the result of the first more qualitative phase of the IEA Study in which documentary evidence and interviews were used (Torney-Purta, Schwille, and Amadeo, 1999a). There we drew several conclusions:

- There is a common core of content topics across countries in civic education. Around this common core, each country inserts its special perspectives.
- There is unanimity among the authors of the national case studies that civic education should be

[1]The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement has been conducting comparative studies of civic education since the 1960's. Their most recent completed study is TIMSS (the Third International Math and Science Study), which has done a great deal to increase interest in science and mathematics education in the U.S.

based on important content that crosses disciplines, and that it should be "participative, interactive, related to life, conducted in a non-authoritarian environment, cognizant of the challenges of societal diversity, and co-constructed with parents, the community, and non-governmental organizations, as well as the school" (Torney-Purta, Schwille, and Amadeo 1999a, 30). No country, however, reports achieving these goals.

- Although educators often try to convey the excitement of the political process and the importance of participation, students frequently show a general disdain for politics.

- Social diversity is an area where there is tremendous concern in nearly all of these nations, without much sense of the best direction for taking action.

These national case studies contributed to the design of instruments for Phase 2 of the study, in which approximately 110,000 students age 14 and 16-18 from nationally representative samples were tested during 1999 or will be tested in the next few months. The International Coordinating Center for Phase 2 is at the Humboldt University of Berlin.

The instruments are not limited to the cognitive domain. It was nevertheless a priority to build a keyable test that was strong psychometrically and represented content those participating countries thought important. Over a two-year period, 38 multiple choice items measuring knowledge and skills (for 14-year-olds tested in 28 countries) and 42 items for an upper secondary population (tested in 10 countries) were chosen from a pool of about 200 items matched to the expectations for learning about democratic principles and issues cross-nationally. The test includes items measuring the understanding of concepts like democracy or citizenship and skills in understanding political communication (such as newspaper articles and cartoons). For both age groups there are also measures of students' concepts of democracy and citizenship and scales assessing attitudes that do not have correct answers. Perhaps most important, items measuring political engagement and reported behaviors -- actions and community service which the adolescent could perform--were included. Students were asked to which organizations they belonged and what political actions they expected to undertake as adults. Finally, the study examines the influences of both factually-based instruction and the climate for expressing opinions in the classroom, as well as opportunities for participation in student government and in other organizations. In addition, it takes account of out-of-school influences such as the family or the media which may either reinforce or compete with what is presented in school. Teacher and School Questionnaires were also administered.

The Phase 2 Release Report, including basic tables and comparative analysis, will be made available to the press and the public in late February 2001. Funds for a substantial dissemination effort are being sought. A report of further analysis entitled *Youth as Contributors to Civil Society* is also planned. The national data will be available for publication by each National Research Coordinator starting in March 2001, and the international data will be released to the general research community in late 2002.

At this point IEA study is on the threshold of data analysis -- looking at the meaning of civic engagement and successful contexts for civic education for this generation of adolescents. In one sense, we are seeking to energize and problematize the concept of civic engagement without assuming a single meaning for it. Our preliminary use of Confirmatory Factor Analysis suggests that two dimensional models are appropriate for most subsections of our survey. Using these two dimensions will allow us to make distinctions between country achievements. For example, we expect to be able to compare relative achievement on civic knowledge and on civic skills; on conventional and on social movement-based concepts of citizenship; on

trust in political institutions and on trust in the mass media. We will look at beliefs that the government should be responsible for the economic well-being as compared with the social well-being of its citizens.

We will examine assumptions which have been held for many years (or in some cases for decades). We have the data to empirically investigate questions about civic engagement arising from the Phase 1 case studies, from the political socialization literature, from the current professional discourse on civic engagement and civil society, and from youth studies. This is a selection of the questions the IEA Study will examine:

Question 1: Is a high level of knowledge of the meaning of democratic processes related to civic engagement (in its many forms)?

Many programs of civic education across the world are based on the assumption that such knowledge is essential, though the kind of knowledge and the level of detail are open to question. This usually means understanding the principles of democracy and also facts about current governmental structures and processes in one's own country (or about the history of the country's political system). A focus on transmitting knowledge was found in most of the Phase 1 case studies, in many cases accompanied by concern that current texts and materials were of poor quality. The IEA knowledge/skills tests together with the other measures included, will allow us to examine the association between knowledge and other facets of engagement (at the student level within country). Although we will not be able to examine how knowledge scores relate to actual voting behavior, we have asked questions about the intent to vote and engage in other political activities, as well as the extent to which the student believes that his or her school teaches the importance of voting.

Question 2: Is it appropriate to make a distinction, as many have, between "minimal" citizen engagement (exercising the right to vote or form political parties) and "maximal" engagement (adding active participation in protest activities for human rights or working for community improvement projects such as environmental protection)?

The irony at the turn of this century is that minimal and maximal citizenship activities seem to have shifted position. Young people express little interest in voting and apathy about political parties, at the same time they are increasingly likely to join groups furthering human rights and the environment. Instead of seeing the process as one in which the citizen adds maximalist activities to minimalist rights and responsibilities of citizenship, young people are looking for participation in community or social movement-based activities without more conventional political engagements. In other words, maximal citizenship today is not based on minimal citizenship. The IEA data will allow us to examine how widespread a phenomenon this is across the world and the extent to which there are differences between groups within countries on these concepts of citizenship and their enactment. The distinction here may not be between minimal versus maximal as much as between actions related to distant and universalistic institutions such as the state or government in contrast to particularistic or face-to-face engagement found in social movement groups (Isin & Wood, 1999).

Question 3: Are young people as cynical and untrusting of political institutions as their elders, and is this related to the declining levels of investment in conventional political participation?

In investigating this question we want to understand the type of experience that would lead to trust, or to social capital. What role does trust in media organizations play? Do schools matter in this process (in their formal educational programs, in providing opportunities for discussion in the classroom or in providing a site or encouragement for informal educational experiences)? Does participation in group activities in the

community at large foster social capital as expressed in greater institutional trust, higher political skills, heightened participation, and a sense of political efficacy? We have a wealth of measures to examine such issues. These include specific items concerning community service, which is thought to have enormous promise in the U.S. and some other countries (but is not as positively viewed in others).

Question 4: Does long-term governmental stability within democracies enhance the likelihood that students will be knowledgeable and trusting, or is it likely to lead to complacency and inattention? Is there a sense of realism about the threats to democracy?

This is not a simple question of comparing countries with long and short histories of democracy, as there is enormous variation within the post-Communist nations in our study. It may be that experience with social movements connected with the establishment of democracy may enter the public discourse in a way which energizes civic engagement among youth.

Question 5: To what extent is there a gap between the democratic atmosphere and civic education available in richer schools and that in less advantaged socioeconomic areas? How is this reflected in student outcomes, either knowledge, attitudes, or actions? What about the gap between immigrant and native-born students?

The country case studies of Phase 1 differed considerably in the extent to which they presented socioeconomic gaps as an issue. In spite of increasing global similarity in aspirations (and even in youth culture), when countries as a whole are examined across the world the question remains as to the divisions and gaps that exist within countries. We have only been able to ask the students about their parents' educational levels and the number of books in the home (not about occupation). We do have information about whether the student was born in the country and, if not, at what age they immigrated. In IEA analyses, every attempt is made to sort out the effects of home background in a way that allows the examination independent school or community effects. This differs from many other studies.

Question 6: What progress has been made in assuring that female students have the same opportunities for important input into the political and civic process as male students?

The IEA study of 1971 showed considerable gender gaps, especially in attitudes of support for women's rights, but also in knowledge and participation scores. Other studies have shown the difficulty of changing the norms relating to women's participation in government. Some identical items from the 1971 study (and other similar ones) have been included in this instrument and will allow an evaluation of this issue over nearly thirty years.

Question 7: To what extent is the low status of civic education and concern about negative community reaction hampering teachers' efforts to make civic education more involving for students?

In most countries civic education is a low status subject in the school curriculum. This came through clearly in nearly all of the case studies in Phase 1. In some countries there was also a great deal of concern about community pressure leading teachers to present the most bland and often uninvolving topics. The teacher questionnaires being administered will allow us to address some of these issues.

Question 8: What role is played by experience with peers -- in classroom discussions, in organized youth settings, and in informal get togethers?

In addition to its focus on schools as formal educational institutions, this study has taken as one of its aims to explore the role of youth as contributors to civil society and how groups of peers serve to construct the meaning of this involvement. This is an arena which is not under the control of adults, but many arrangements in the school and community can contribute to positive peer relations in the context of civil society.

In the remainder of this paper I will summarize what I believe we have learned in this research area by taking a perspective from 1971 to 2001 and beyond 2001 for the future. Why these boundary dates? The year 1971 was before Watergate, to which many trace the beginning of the decline of trust and voting participation In 2001, we will have the release of the first report from Phase 2 of the IEA Civic Education Study, not an ending but a beginning of a period in which a variety of hypotheses about youth and their political knowledge, concepts, attitudes and action can be examined empirically across countries. This data set, enormous as it is, requires other types of data collection for full understanding, however. What have we learned and how should we look to the future?

We have learned that interdisciplinary collaboration and international cooperation can be very productive. We have also learned that this is extraordinarily difficult. Scholars in many nations are wary about those from other countries (especially the U.S. and Western Europe) lecturing them about their political educational processes. Only processes that take every opportunity to establish a cooperative partnership in research are likely to be accepted. There are places in this effort for psychologists from several specializations, sociologists, political scientists, and education. Differences in status, in theories, and in methodology and level of analysis often interfere with this collaborative work. There are problems in funding this area. In the U.S., at least, private foundations will continue to be the mainstay, since it is clear the U.S. government is unlikely to fill this funding gap.

We have learned that with careful documentation and pilot testing it is possible to find a multifaceted core of civic engagement expectations for youth that are common across countries (democracies and those striving for democracy) and to produce a psychometrically strong set of measures for them.

We have learned that there are ways to effectively engage students in areas community service programs (Youniss & Yates, 1997). We have also learned that we should not look at such programs as a simple answer to the current problems of civic engagement. Many thoughtful observers point to the importance of improving students' knowledge of civic institutions (and propose more rigorous classes designed to transmit this knowledge). Others give priority to reversing the decline in the proportion of young adults who actually vote (and would be interested in efforts that connected students more to conventional politics or got to the root of their cynicism). Still others conceive that progress will be made primarily when studies focus on community participation and on the diverse places where young people interact with authority figures and with their peers (and would propose service learning programs in the community).

I agree with some of the concerns of each group, and I think we have learned that the role of community is central but not the only focus. The community includes the home neighborhood but also, increasing, those neighborhoods from which friends come or in which service sites are located. There should be more study of communities settings which youth themselves form and to which they are committed. France (1998), based on interviews with individuals (aged 14 to 25 years) in a working class community in England, argues that community life is important to citizenship identity because it can provide the young person with safety and familiarity at a time when the adult world may seem risky. This research teams found this to be problematic in areas of high poverty where young people may resist identification with the community. I

have been encouraged by Wenger's *Communities of Practice* (1998) and hope that we will soon have studies which look at youth participating in communities according to a situative perspective. I also remain convinced by studies such as that of Janowski (1992), who found differences in political socialization processes and the impact of different institutions in three U.S. cities. Micro studies in a number of well selected communities are necessary before generalizing broadly even within a single country.

We have learned about the contributions of qualitative research. The qualitative study in which the IEA Study engaged as Phase 1, was not really a field study; its strength was its place in the process before the formulation of the test and survey for Phase 2. When the IEA national research coordinators talk about their next or third phase, it nearly always includes a school- or community-based qualitative data collection. There are some existing models for this. For example, Bhavnani (1991) interviewed adolescents in England in community settings including a shopping mall on a wide-range of topics including (but not limited to) school, employment/unemployment, voting, racism, and police. Other possible models include ethnographies of the lives of urban adolescents (Way, 1998); gender and adolescent culture in a Midwestern middle school (Eder, Evans, & Parker, 1995); and the ways in which religion and ethnicity interact in forming identities in Southall (a multi-ethnic area of London studied by Baumann, 1997).

We have learned about the value of a number of psychological approaches, but a systematic application of mid-range psychological theories in social, developmental or educational psychology is largely missing. For example, what are the implications of the burgeoning research on peer relations in adolescents or of attempts to parse the social world into issues of attachment, social identity, hierarchical relations, and reciprocity relations (Bugenthal & Goodnow, 1998)?

What is the role of studies by educational psychologists of differing types of curriculum and classroom experience in this field? For example, which components of excellent education (in the form of expert teaching skills and principles of thinking) across curricular areas have special usefulness for this area? How can we move beyond the current focus on performance on multiple choice tests to look at what makes a school and its student body civically competent? So much of the political socialization literature is based on the transmission model -- socialization agents passing down attitudes and values to the next generation. Where is the literature on the role of resistance -- the young person either temporarily or on a long term basis deciding that adult messages should be reexamined or even resisted in forming a political identity just as in choosing music or clothing?

We have learned that racism is pervasive and resistant to change. How can we thoughtfully approach this problem in line with research findings? What are the implications of the research on peer relations with diverse groups of adolescents?

We have learned that there is a persistent gap in representation of women in political office. Some countries nurture "small democracy settings" in which women are more participative, and now formulate the problem as getting more recognition for female involvement in those areas. What can research say about this issue?

Finally, those who study this area seem remarkably unconcerned about two trends in the recent past -- the rapid expansion of the new media and the globalization of the market and associated economic forces. These are both aspects of the lived experience of youth where research is needed

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