

The Political Socialization of Adolescents in Canada: Differential Effects of Civic Education on Visible Minorities

ELLEN CLAES *Catholic University of Leuven*
MARC HOOGHE *Catholic University of Leuven*
DIETLIND STOLLE *McGill University Montreal*

1. Introduction

Two parallel phenomena have recently led to a renewed interest in the topic of civic education. First, a growing concern has emerged about the alleged decline of political knowledge and civic engagement among young citizens (Milner, 2001). According to Elections Canada, only 37 per cent of young people aged 18 to 24 voted in the federal election of 2004, compared with 61 per cent among the general population. Research in other democracies, too, has demonstrated a decline in young people's willingness to take part in conventional political participation (Putnam, 2000; Van Deth et al., 1999). Civic education programs at schools are often called upon as a solution for this emerging social problem.

Second, the increasing diversity in Western societies has opened up an intense debate about effective ways to integrate newcomers and to facilitate equal opportunities for visible minorities. Here, too, it is often expected that civic education in schools will serve as a vehicle to promote social integration. It is assumed that schools can promote equal opportunities for immigrants and minority groups by

Ellen Claes, Department of Political Science, Catholic University of Leuven, Parkstraat 45, B-3000 Leuven, Belgium, Ellen.Claes@soc.kuleuven.be.

Marc Hooghe, Department of Political Science, Catholic University of Leuven, Parkstraat 45, B-3000 Leuven, Belgium, Marc.Hooghe@soc.kuleuven.be.

Dietlind Stolle, Department of Political Science, McGill University, 855 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, Quebec H3A 2T7, Canada, Dietlind.Stolle@mcgill.ca.

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offering them resources and skills to become acquainted with the dominant culture and the prevalent norms of the host society (Downey et al., 2004). Some of the older studies suggest that children from minority groups profit disproportionately from civic education initiatives compared to children with a majority background, partly because they start from a less privileged position and will have less knowledge about the political institutions of their host country (Jennings and Niemi, 1974).

It remains to be investigated, however, whether the findings of these older studies are still valid in a contemporary society that is characterized by a sharp rise in ethnic and cultural diversity compared to the society studied by Jennings and Niemi in the 1960s. More recent studies tend to be more sceptical about the alleged positive effects of civic education on ethnic minorities (Walsh, 1987; Brayboy et al., 2007; Campbell, 2007). More specifically, it is feared that minority and school cultures can become polarized and antagonistic, thus hampering the educational outcomes of minority youth (Downey, 2008). The question has become all the more salient, since recent research suggests that ethnic minorities still face an uphill challenge in their struggle for political integration in Canada (Bloemraad, 2006; Anderson and Black, 2008). It has been shown that members of visible minorities participate less frequently in political life and that they are structurally underrepresented in political decision-making procedures (Black and Erickson, 2006). If civic education in the school environment has a stronger effect on visible minorities than on the rest of the population, this would suggest that civic education could be used as a mechanism to address this persistent gap between minorities and the majority groups within the population.

In this article we therefore investigate, first, whether civic education has an effect on students in general and, second, whether there is a differential effect for ethnic minority youth. For these analyses we rely on an encompassing Canadian youth survey, which includes detailed information on school experiences, such as citizenship and education and classroom climate, as well as individual indicators of political participation and political knowledge, family background, such as language at home, place of birth, place of birth of parents, and socio-economic background of parents.

In the first part of this article we lay out our theoretical framework on the alleged effects of civic education, with a special emphasis on effects for minority youth. Second, we present data, methods, and results of the analysis, both for political knowledge and for the intention to participate in politics as dependent variables. We close with some observations on what these findings might imply for the future of civic education in a diverse society like Canada.

Abstract. It is assumed that civic education has persistent effects on political attitudes and behaviours of young citizens. There is no consensus, however, on what kind of efforts have the strongest effects on specific outcomes, like political knowledge and intended political participation. In some of the older literature, it has been shown that effects of civic education are stronger for children from a visible minority background. This article takes up these questions using a dataset with a sample of 15–17-year olds from Canada ($n = 3,334$). The results show that active efforts for civic education can make a difference. Especially community service, a rather new form of civic education, fosters political knowledge and conventional future participation. However, in Canada, adolescents from a visible minority background do not benefit disproportionately from civic education efforts.

Résumé. On soutient que l'éducation à la citoyenneté amène des effets positifs durables sur les attitudes et les comportements politiques des jeunes. Toutefois, il n'existe pas de consensus concernant les efforts spécifiques les plus fructueux pour stimuler les connaissances et la participation politiques. Dans cet article nous examinons premièrement l'ampleur des effets de l'éducation à la citoyenneté. Deuxièmement, nous examinons la thèse selon laquelle ce sont les minorités visibles qui bénéficient le plus de ces efforts – position défendue dans une partie de la littérature plus ancienne sur le sujet. Ces deux questions sont étudiées quantitativement en utilisant un groupe témoin de jeunes Canadiens de 15 à 17 ans ($n = 3334$). Les résultats révèlent que les efforts actifs dans le domaine de l'éducation à la citoyenneté ont un effet sur les attitudes et les comportements politiques. Le service communautaire, entre autres, une nouvelle forme d'éducation à la citoyenneté, sensibilise les jeunes à la politique et favorise leur participation conventionnelle future. Nous ne trouvons pas, en revanche, d'effet différentiel notable chez les adolescents des minorités visibles.

2. Review of the Literature

2.1. *The Founding Theories and Classic Research*

The alleged decline of civic values and political participation habits among younger age groups has become a major reason for concern, both in academic research and among political decision makers (Rubenson et al., 2004; Wattenberg, 2007). Political apathy, lower rates of participatory action, especially voting and party membership, and lower levels of knowledge of the political system have been noted, especially among adolescents and ethnic and cultural minorities (OECD, 2006). The awareness of these social problems has put political socialization high on the agenda of governments and education agencies (Dudley and Gitelson, 2002; Galston, 2007). In contrast to the rather pessimistic mood of the 1970s, some recent studies have suggested that civic education efforts actually have positive significant effects on the levels of political engagement among adolescents and young adults (Niemi and Junn, 1998; Kerr, 2003).

The expectation that the education system influences attitudes and behaviours of students is of course well founded in classical educational theory. Already a century ago, John Dewey suggested that schools play an important role in the moral development of young people. In his studies on *Democracy and Education* (1916) and *School and Society* (1936), Dewey claimed that schools offer an ideal setting for children and young

adolescents to get acquainted with the ethos of democratic decision-making procedures. In the 1960s various authors investigated the role of school-related experiences with regard to political socialization. While a routine finding in these studies was the occurrence of a strong effect of parental background, it also became clear that schools had an important role to play in students' social and political development (Hess and Torney, 1967; Langton and Jennings, 1968; Jennings and Niemi, 1974). Based on a comparison of citizenship concepts of teachers and children, Hess and Torney (1967) concluded that children developed strong emotional ties with their nation already at an early age (elementary school). Subsequently, in a later developmental phase, this emotional form of attachment is replaced by, or supplement with a more cognitive understanding of democratic principles.

Some studies, however, were quite doubtful about the ability of schools to influence the attitudes of their pupils: the famous Langton and Jennings (1968) study found no significant effects of civic education experiences on political participation or political knowledge. Only among a specific subsample of children from an ethnic minority background could significant effects of civic education be documented. While these children started from very low levels of political knowledge, experiences with civic education resulted in reducing the initial gap with students from a majority background (Hess and Torney, 1967; Jennings and Niemi, 1974). The overall conclusion from the Langton and Jennings study, therefore, was that civic education in the US at least had more socialization potential for children from an Afro-American background: "When White and Negro [sic] students were observed separately, it became clear that the curriculum exerted considerably more influence on the latter. On several measures the effect was to move the Negro youths—especially those from less-educated families—to a position more congruent with the White youths and more in consonance with the usual goals of civic education in the United States" (Langton and Jennings, 1968: 866).

In a later study, Jennings and Niemi (1974) were equally sceptical about the possibility of civic education efforts having a lasting impact on the political attitudes of adolescents. Their main argument was that most political attitudes are already well established before children make it to high school. The result is that civic education courses for adolescents will have few discernible results on the further development of political values. In their study, too, there were no significant effects for the entire sample, but the authors again found a significant impact for the Afro-American respondents. "Because of cultural and social status differences, the black students are more likely to encounter new or conflicting perspectives and content. The more usual case for whites is a further layering of familiar material which, by and large,

repeats the message from other past and contemporary sources. Even though the political behaviour of black youths has changed dramatically in the last five years, there are still strong grounds for suspecting greater curriculum effects among blacks” (Jennings and Niemi, 1974: 206)

It has to be remembered, however, that these studies were conducted during the 1960s in the US, at a time when social and economic discrepancies between the various communities in the US were larger than in the current era. In addition, the number of recent immigrants in these studies was very low, so that no reliable separate analyses could be conducted for this group. These classical findings, therefore, certainly cannot be generalized for contemporary Canadian society. Nevertheless, the underlying assumption remains valid: for those who start from initially low levels of political participation or political knowledge, because of specific characteristics of the family background, schools can function as a “great equalizer,” by introducing them to the dominant political culture of a society (White et al., 2008). It is a general assumption within contemporary liberal democracies that school will function as an equalizer, which means that children from a disadvantaged background (in whatever respect) should profit more strongly from education than children from a privileged background (Downey et al., 2004). If all children profit equally, this means the pre-existing inequalities are simply transmitted across generations. Basically, this would imply that children from an ethnic minority background should profit more strongly from civic education efforts than children who are already well integrated into the dominant social culture. Some recent studies indeed report that immigrant populations are remarkably successful in picking up participation habits (Chui et al., 1991) and political attitudes patterns (White et al., 2008) within Canadian society. Therefore, we also want to investigate whether civic education efforts can have differential effects for minority and majority adolescents in contemporary Canadian society.

2.2. Recent Research on Civic Education

The current research on civic education and political socialization has a broader scope than its classical counterpart (Sapiro, 2004). Not only social, economic, family and school factors are taken into account, but also the impact of youth culture, peer groups, and mass media. Another innovative aspect is that more attention is given to non-conventional forms of political patterns not related to the electoral process. Young age cohorts are not interested in just practising politics in the same way as their parents did, they also develop new forms of civic engagement (Gauthier, 2003). The Niemi and Junn (1998) study, demonstrating positive, signif-

icant, and persistent effects of civic education on political knowledge, has had a major impact on this field.

Research in other countries, too, has confirmed the notion that civic education efforts have significant and persistent effects on civic attitudes among young people. A major international and comparative research effort in this respect has been conducted by the IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement). The Civic Education Study (Cived) was conducted in 28 countries, among some 94,000 14-year-old respondents. Results from this major comparative data gathering effort suggests that the formal curriculum and the general classroom climate both have an effect on the civic outcomes among adolescents (Campbell, 2001; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). Furthermore, Westheimer and Kahne (2004a) examined various studies on civic education programs, and concluded that the justice-oriented citizen model, emphasizing collective action and collective empowerment, is most successful in increasing pupils' interest in politics.

The outlook of the more recent research is clearly more optimistic than that of the earlier studies of the 1970s. We can distinguish two possible reasons for this change. First, the use of longitudinal research designs, controlled experiments, and sophisticated statistical techniques might explain the diverging results of the analysis by picking up effects that remained undetected by the cruder methods of analysis that were available 30 years ago. Second, the education system itself has changed in a dramatic manner. Cognitive goals receive less emphasis as various school systems have adopted a hands-on approach on learning what democracy and democratic participation is all about. This trend is expressed most clearly in various experiments with service learning or other forms of volunteering programs among students. Some evaluation studies on service learning have been quite positive, as participants are more inclined to continue the habit of volunteering in their later life (Metz et al., 2003).

2.3. Civic Education and Visible Minorities

In recent years, various authors have suggested that civic education efforts might have differential effects according to the ethnic and cultural background of students (OECD, 2006; Bas and Casper, 1999; White et al., 2008). Amadeo and others (2002) have demonstrated that children from an immigrant background score significantly lower on knowledge and participation than the general sample, controlling for any school-related experience they have had. Torney-Purta and others (2007) conclude in their research on the civic development of Latino adolescents in the United States that levels of political knowledge in this group are significantly lower than the ones of non-Latino peers. It

is hoped therefore, that exactly because of these initially low levels, Latino youngsters stand to benefit more strongly of civic education experiences.

Some authors, however, have also claimed that the opposite effect might occur: differential effects might also mean that ethnic minority students will profit less from their school experiences than children with a background in the culturally dominant group. Walsh (1987), among others, has expressed concern that schools actually strengthen patterns of educational and civic exclusion. Educational research also documents the existence of an “oppositional culture” among ethnic minority youth that stands in sharp contrasts with the dominant values in the school process and thus limits the effectiveness of the educational process (Downey, 2008). It can be assumed that, in general, ethnic minorities enjoy fewer opportunities for the development of civic skills because of a lack of sufficient training in school programs (Reimers, 2002). Taking into account that ethnic diversity in the classroom may have a negative effect on the intensity of political discussion (Campbell, 2007), the school might actually discourage the development of civic skills among minority youth. On average, it was also shown that schools with a predominantly Latino population score much lower on indicators for an open classroom discussion climate than schools with a limited percentage of Latino pupils (Torney-Purta et al., 2007).

Two issues emerge from this review of the literature. First, we can conclude that there is some consensus on the importance of civic education, but there is more debate on the precise methods in civic education that might be most effective. While some authors stress the cognitive aspects of civic education, others highlight the discussion culture within a school or the experience with hands-on participation projects (Smith, 1999; Morgan and Streb, 2001; Flanagan, 2003; Westheimer and Kahne, 2004b). Therefore, we will try to disentangle various civic education experiences in order to determine what kind of experience can be considered most effective. Second, since earlier studies demonstrated a stronger effect of civic education on minority youth than on other pupils; our second research question is to determine whether this differential impact can still be found today. Although it can be argued that the situation in the US three decades ago is not comparable to any findings from contemporary Canadian society, we still can assume that visible minorities, too, are challenged with patterns of inequality and exclusion (Frenette and Morissette, 2005; Reitz and Banerjee, 2007). Furthermore, we also know that members of visible minorities more often feel discriminated than others within Canadian society (Bloemraad, 2006; Matthews, 2006). As such, the general question still remains whether minorities starting from initially low levels of civic involvement are able to benefit more from education experiences than other groups within society. If that would be the

case, civic education indeed could serve as a vehicle to alleviate patterns of discrimination within Canadian society.

3. Data and Methods

Our analysis is based on a survey the Department of Political Science of McGill University (Montreal) conducted in 2006 (Stolle et al., 2006). The survey includes 3,334 16- or 17-year-olds (grades 10 and 11) in 81 schools in two of the most populated provinces in Canada, Quebec and Ontario. Seven cities were sampled, which varied in terms of size and were matched across provinces.¹ Of all the schools that were successfully contacted, 54 per cent participated in the study. Within the schools, 97 per cent of all pupils participated in the study. Schools with a higher proportion of minority students were oversampled in order to allow for a robust comparison among various groups in the Canadian population. The questionnaire was designed specifically to tap issues of political participation, civic engagement and social capital, as well as a variety of school characteristics.

Since the students were sampled within the schools, the data set consists of nested data that have to be analysed using the appropriate multilevel methods (Hox, 2002; Snijders and Bosker, 1999). Multilevel techniques allow us to take into account the fact that pupils resemble one another for the simple reason that they were sampled within the same class. The technique allows us to distinguish in a clear and straightforward manner the effects on the individual level (that is, the pupil/respondent) and the effects on the secondary level (that is, the class that was sampled).

As dependent variables in the analysis, we opted for political knowledge and the intention for future participation. With regard to participation, we make a further distinction between conventional and social movement-oriented forms of political participation (Torney-Purta et al., 2001).

Several studies have highlighted the importance of political knowledge. Political sophistication can be considered as a prerequisite for an effective integration into the political system (Galston, 2001; Milner, 2001; Howe, 2006). Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) conclude that people with higher levels of political knowledge are more successful in linking their own personal interest with matching public issues. Furthermore, citizens with a high level of political knowledge are more successful in identifying the correct public official to contact if they want to draw attention to a specific policy issue. This “enlightened self-interest” is an important characteristic in a democratic society, as it allows citizens to feel more efficacious. Political knowledge not only plays a role in people’s atti-

tudes and judgments towards officials and institutions, it also affects citizen's views on public issues. Popkin and Dimock (2000) found that the level of hostility towards immigrants is negatively related to the level of political knowledge. In general, we can also assume a positive relation between political knowledge or political sophistication and the values of tolerance and democratic participation (Baker et al., 2001). Given these considerations, we include a political knowledge scale as a dependent variable. More specifically, we included three political knowledge questions about the Canadian political system (including questions on the Governor General, the prime minister of the province and the role of the Supreme Court). The scale is a simple sum scale, ranging from 0 to 3 correct answers (see appendix B).

Beyond political knowledge, the intention of adolescents to participate politically was included in the questionnaire (appendix A). We focus on intention to participate and not on actual participating behaviour because obviously 16-year-olds are excluded from various formal forms of political activity. Political participation is generally seen as a valued characteristic of democratic citizens. Most civic education programs in effect are aimed at promoting various forms of political participation among future citizens. In line with earlier research, the intention of adolescents of participating in the future was included as the main dependent variable (Campbell and Wolbrecht, 2006). Nine activities were listed, ranging from joining a political party and running for office to taking part in illegal forms of protest. Again, confirming earlier findings (Torney-Purta et al., 2001; Zukin et al., 2006), a factor analysis suggested two distinct forms of intended political participation. The first factor corresponds mainly to electoral participation and membership in political parties, while the second is closely related to social movement-oriented forms of citizenship (Torney-Purta et al. 2001; Gauthier, 2003). Both factors are therefore included separately as dependent variables in the analysis.

With regard to the independent variables, we have to make a distinction between individual level variables and school level variables. Because there is hardly variation among the respondents regarding age (all respondents were approximately age 16), the first explanatory variable is gender. In previous research it has been shown that boys perform better on political knowledge tests than girls. With regard to political participation there have been some reports of a clear gender bias in (intended) political participation (Verba et al., 1995; Hooghe and Stolle, 2004). Self-evidently, we also expect that the socio-economic status (SES) of the individual has an effect on his/her propensity to acquire political information or to participate in political life. While in surveys among adults, questions about the family income can be used to assess the socio-economic status of the family, this is not the case in research among adolescents. In this survey, too, 38 per cent of all respondents could or would

not indicate their family's income. This implies that we were unable to use this indicator. Since a question about the education level of the parents also showed a great deal of (non-random) missing values, an estimation of the number of books at home was included as a proxy variable for SES of the home environment. We realize that including this variable might raise some eyebrows in mainstream political science. However, in research on the political socialization of adolescents, questions about the number of books at home are the most often used method to get an understanding of the socio-economic status of the family. In practice, it proves that the number of books at home is very closely related to education and income level of the parents. At some point in the future, maybe this variable will become obsolete as other media become more important, but for the time being this is generally considered as the most reliable method to acquire information on the socio-economic status of parents (Torney-Purta et al., 2001; Wößmann and Peterson, 2007; Hahn, 2003).

For the second hypothesis in this article, our main independent variable is to determine whether the respondent belongs to a visible minority. This variable was developed following the definition of the Employment Equity Act, implying that respondents who are non-Caucasian with regard to race or non-white with regard to colour are seen as a member of a visible minority.² In this sample, 38 per cent of all respondents belonged to a visible minority. This relatively high number is caused by the fact that the survey was conducted mainly in metropolitan areas; moreover, it is a result of the oversampling of schools with a distinct presence of visible minorities.³

Given the fact that the study was conducted in both Quebec and in Ontario, it is possible to introduce a distinction between English and French language groups in Canada. Each language group received a questionnaire in the appropriate language. We introduce this distinction because some earlier studies suggest that political participation levels tend to be lower in Quebec than in the rest of Canada (Curtis et al., 2003; Gauthier and Gravel, 2003; Hwang et al., 2007). It also has to be noted that Ontario and Quebec have implemented different forms of civic education, and this, too, might have an effect on the outcomes in this study. The Quebec province curricula include an emphasis on historical reflection and political knowledge, while the curricula in Ontario tend to focus more strongly on the importance of service learning (Ministère de L'éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, 2007; Ministry of Education, 2005). We also include three variables intended to measure the most important parental and peer influences. If parents regularly discuss politics with their children, this will most likely have a positive effect on the political knowledge level of their children. Similarly, it can be assumed that parents who are volunteering themselves might serve as role models, thus boosting levels of participation among the young respondents. And finally, the fact that respondents

regularly discuss politics with their friends and peers might also strengthen their levels of political knowledge and participation (Niemi and Junn, 1998; Hillygus, 2005).

We also include various variables that have been shown to affect political knowledge and/or political participation. Adolescents who regularly watch television news in general will have higher levels of political knowledge than those who do not pick up this habit (Hooghe, 2002). The level of political interest of the pupil is self-evidently expected to have a strong effect on political knowledge (Verba et al., 1995), as it is more likely that respondents with a high level of political interest will actively seek out information on politics.

At the school level six variables are included. These variables measure various aspects of civic education and school context information. Experiences with civic education at the school were included by questioning the number of political topics that were discussed during civic education classes. The questionnaire also included questions about whether the pupils had been taught about other religions or other cultures than their own. Experiences with community service were also included. Furthermore we also asked about the perceived fairness of the teacher as an indicator of an open school climate (Holland, 2006). It has to be noted, however, that this variable was measured at the individual level and therefore it reflects an individual perception of teacher fairness. The final independent variable on the classroom level is the average income of the parents in a specific school. This variable intends to measure the social and economical background of the entire school based on aggregated individual responses. Again, we are confronted with missing answers on these items, but since this variable is an aggregate measurement (that is, the combination of all income reports in the school), we assume that this still offers us an indication of the average social status of the school (Coleman and Hoffer, 1987). All the independent variables are listed in Table 1, while further information is included in the appendix A.

4. Results

Since we are interested in three distinct dependent variables (political knowledge, conventional and social movement participation), we developed three different models. The structure of the models, however, is identical: we include the individual level variables and the school/class level variables in one comprehensive multilevel model. Subsequently we report the same models for the visible minority sub sample in order to assess whether we observe a differential effect for visible minorities.

The results for political knowledge (Table 2) indicate that watching television news and discussing politics with parents and friends consid-

TABLE 1
Independent Variables Used in the Analysis

Variable Names	Min	Max	Mean	Missing	N
<i>Level 1: Individual level (1)</i>					
Gender	0 (girl)	1 (boy)	.44265	56	3278
Socio-economic status (SES)	0	1	.60336	190	3144
Visible minority	0	1	.38531	12	3322
Speaking French	0	1	.36771	57	3277
Watching TV news	0	1	.29157	38	3296
Parents discussing politics	0	1	.46916	194	3140
Parents volunteering	0	1	.26154	388	2946
Peers discussing politics	0	1	.29820	36	3298
<i>Level 2: School level (2)</i>					
Classes about politics	0	1	.44249	142	3192
Classes about other cultures	0	1	.57866	114	3220
Classes about other religions	0	1	.48158	142	3192
Community service	0	1	.23589	107	3227
Fairness of teacher	0	1	.72402	102	3232
Average parental income	0.06	1	.24058	12	3332

Variables derived from the youth survey (n = 3,334). All variables standardized to a 0–1 range. More information about the original answering categories: see appendix C.

erably heighten levels of political knowledge. While boys seem more knowledgeable about politics than girls, we also find that the number of books at home has a positive effect on the level of political knowledge. The French-speaking respondents in this survey on average score significantly higher than their English-speaking counterparts. This might be due to the fact that the Quebec curriculum pays more attention to factual knowledge than the Ontario curriculum. Belonging to a visible minority, however, does not seem to have a significant effect on political knowledge.

The school-level variables perform as expected. Classes about politics, experiences with community service and a positive perception of teacher fairness all contribute to political knowledge levels. These effects hold even when controlling for the average income level of the parents in a school, which also affects political knowledge. While these effects might not be overwhelming, it is clear from the regression coefficients that they are substantial and they are certainly significant in this sample. Therefore, our first conclusion is that civic education efforts indeed seem to have a positive effect on political knowledge levels of all pupils. Traditional classes about politics do promote political knowledge among students.

Turning to our second hypothesis about the differential impact of civic education on visible minorities, we can observe that this hypothesis is not supported. In the first model, membership of a visible minority

TABLE 2
Explaining Political Knowledge (Multi-Level Models)

	Model I Entire Group N = 2724		Model II Visible Minorities only N = 976	
	Parameter Estimate	Wald Statistic	Parameter Estimate	Wald Statistic
Intercept	.103*** (.034)	3.02	.189*** (.050)	3.78
Gender (Male = 1)	.055** (.012)	4.58	.037 (.021)	1.76
Books at home	.083* (.024)	3.46	.060 (.042)	1.43
Visible minority	.013 (.014)	.93		
Speaking French	.079** (.017)	4.65	.077 (.029)	2.66
Watching TV news	.089*** (.013)	6.85	.082 (.022)	.91
Parents discussing politics	.142** (.024)	5.92	.118* (.040)	2.95
Parents volunteering	-.026 (.012)	-2.12	-.052 (.021)	-2.48
Peer discussing politics	.140** (.026)	5.38	.134* (.044)	3.05
Classes about politics	.091* (.026)	3.23	.078 (.043)	1.81
Classes about other religions	.004 (.022)	.18	-.050 (.037)	-1.35
Classes about other cultures	-.008 (.022)	-.36	.050 (.037)	1.35
Community service	.052* (.018)	2.89	.072 (.032)	2.25
Fairness of teacher	.058* (.019)	3.11	.028 (.033)	.085
Average parental income	.221* (.075)	2.95	.178 (.096)	1.85
Intra-class correlation school		.13		.13
Intra-class correlation zero model		.17		.17

Results of a multilevel regression analysis, using MLWin. N = 3,334. Sign.: * = p < 0.10; ** = p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01.

Wald statistic: Parameter estimate/(standard error).

does not have an impact on political knowledge. If we analyze only the subsample of visible minorities, we do not observe any strong differences with the general sample. In separate models, we also included interaction effects between classroom variables and visible minority status, but none of these interaction models proved to be significant (available from the authors).

TABLE 3
 Explaining Conventional Participation Intention (Multi-Level Models)

	Model I Entire Group		Model II Visible Minorities Only	
	Parameter Estimate	Wald Statistic	Parameter Estimate	Wald Statistic
Intercept	-.807*** (.087)	-9.28	-.670** (.130)	-5.15
Gender (Male = 1)	.218** (.036)	6.06	.180* (.060)	3
Books at home	.152 (.073)	2.08	.032 (.121)	.26
Visible minority	-.122* (.041)	-2.96		
Speaking French	.237** (.046)	5.15	.231* (.079)	2.92
Watching TV news	.259*** (.039)	6.64	.115 (.066)	1.74
Parents discussing politics	.258* (.074)	3.49	.158 (.120)	1.58
Parents volunteering	-.024 (.036)	-.67	.023 (.062)	.37
Peer discussing politics	1.155*** (.080)	14.44	.943*** (.132)	7.14
Classes about politics	.167 (.076)	2.20	.286 (.124)	2.31
Classes about other religions	.016 (.066)	.24	-.011 (.108)	-.10
Classes about other cultures	-.021 (.067)	-.31	-.050 (.109)	-.46
Community service	.180* (.053)	3.40	.311* (.089)	3.49
Fairness of teacher	-.192* (.060)	-3.2	-.121 (.098)	-1.23
Average parental income	.269 (.134)	2.00	-.300 (.187)	-1.60
Intra-class correlation school		.03		.01
Intra-class correlation zero model		.07		.07

Results of a multilevel regression analysis, using MLWin. N = 3,334. Sign.: * = $p < 0.10$; ** = $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

Wald statistic: Parameter estimate/(standard error).

Assessing the effects on future conventional political participation of young people at the individual level (Table 3), we are in line with earlier research: boys have a higher propensity to engage in this kind of political participation (Verba et al., 1995). Watching television news and discussing politics with parents and especially peers also appear to be effective stimuli for intention to future political participation. A rather

unexpected observation appears at the school level with a negative effect of the perceived fairness of the teacher. Although we cannot precisely point to the cause of this negative relation, we expect that traditional schools (with less emphasis on good relations between pupil and teacher) do succeed in promoting conventional participation among their pupils. The social and economic background of the pupils does not seem to matter for this dependent variable. Visible minorities, however, are substantially less likely to engage in future conventional politics. This might be due to the fact that those pupils (or their parents) are often also recent immigrants to Canada. This would imply that a number of participation acts (voting, running for office, and so forth) are not accessible to this group. When we assess the model for visible minorities only, we can see that community service remains an important method to encourage pupils to go to the polling booth. These positive effects of community service are in line with earlier research in the United States (Metz et al., 2003), but as far as we know this is the first time the effects are also demonstrated in a Canadian context. As such, the result can be seen as supporting a hands-on approach toward civic education in Canadian schools. If one aims to raise participation levels among young Canadians, it is clear that traditional, and cognitively oriented civic education classes are less effective than forms of community service within the school environment.

Turning to social movement-oriented forms of participation (Table 4), we find that girls are more inclined to participate in this manner. Again, watching television news and discussing politics stand out as powerful determinants of the intention to participate. Teacher fairness here has the expected positive effect, while learning about other cultures at school also seems to enhance one's likelihood of becoming engaged in this form of participation, again as expected, whereas other aspects of school do not matter. These differential findings imply that if one wants to evaluate civic education efforts, a careful selection of the dependent variables is of crucial importance. The perceived teacher fairness in school, for example, seems to have different effects on the various outcomes we selected in this study. A straightforward answer to the question which kind of civic education "works" best, is therefore only possible if one first defines the desired outcomes of civic education. We do not observe any differences between the general sample and the visible minorities, while a separate analysis does not lead to the detection of any interaction effects. In this regard, all groups of pupils seem to profit equally from civic education efforts.

The general conclusion from these analyses therefore is clearly in line with the literature. For the general sample, we can observe that civic education efforts have an impact on adolescents and can motivate them to become more strongly engaged with politics. This is especially the case for civic knowledge, where we arrive at the same conclusion as the

TABLE 4
Explaining Social Movement Participation (Multi-Level Models)

	Model I Entire Group		Model II Visible Minorities Only	
	Parameter Estimate	Wald Statistic	Parameter Estimate	Wald Statistic
Intercept	-.871*** (.085)	-10.25	-.886*** (.132)	-6.71
Gender (Male = 1)	-.600*** (.035)	-17.14	-.542*** (.058)	-9.34
Books at home	.307** (.071)	4.32	.369* (.117)	3.15
Visible minority	.052 (.138)	.38		
Speaking French	-.063 (.045)	-1.40	-.087 (.080)	-1.09
Watching TV news	.094 (.038)	2.47	.034 (.063)	.54
Parents discussing politics	.193* (.071)	2.72	.228 (.115)	1.98
Parents volunteering	.371*** (.035)	10.60	.334** (.059)	5.66
Peer discussing politics	.559*** (.078)	7.17	.390* (.126)	3.10
Classes about politics	.158 (.074)	2.14	.120 (.121)	.83
Classes about other religions	.077 (.064)	1.20	.017 (.104)	.16
Classes about other cultures	.279** (.065)	4.29	.322* (.105)	3.0
Community service	.134 (.052)	2.58	.105 (.088)	1.19
Fairness of teacher	.305** (.058)	5.26	.370** (.094)	3.94
Average parental income	.053 (.138)	.38	.262 (.271)	.967
Intra-class correlation school		.04		.06
Intra-class correlation zero model		.07		.07

Results of a multilevel regression analysis, using MLWin. N = 3,334. Sign.: * = $p < 0.10$; ** = $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

Wald statistic: Parameter estimate/(standard error).

Niemi and Junn (1998) study. The regression coefficients are clearly significant in this sample, and they can be regarded as substantial. We did not observe, however, any differential effects for visible minorities. On a positive note, one could conclude that the Ontario and Quebec education system are equally successful in reaching members of the dominant groups and members of visible minorities. If one was to look at it more in a

negative or sceptical manner, the conclusion would be that education does not succeed in narrowing down the initial gap between majority youth and visible minorities. In this respect, too, schools seem to fail to function as the great equalizer.

5. Discussion

In this article we have tested a number of hypotheses with regard to civic education with a special emphasis on its effect on minority students. The multilevel analysis confirmed the hypothesis that civic education positively influences political knowledge and the intention to participate among adolescents. Not all forms had the same effect, however, and we see quite some variation between the different civic education approaches. For the models that look at political knowledge and conventional future political participation, we conclude that community service has the most consistent positive effect. Community service seems to be a more effective manner to promote political knowledge and participation than more traditional and cognitively oriented forms of civic education. For the model that looks into social movement-oriented participation classes about other cultures make a significant difference, but this might be due to the specific nature of participation we questioned. The perceived fairness of the teacher in a classroom has a positive effect on knowledge and social movement-oriented participation (Holland, 2006), but it does stimulate pupils to participate in conventional political channels. In general, our findings seem to support the idea put forward by authors like Youniss et al. (1999) that hands-on experiences with civic education have a stronger impact than traditional forms of civic education. Across the board, forms of community service in schools seem to be more successful in promoting a concept of active citizenship than a one-sided cognitive approach toward civics classes.

Assessing the effects of civic education on visible minorities (hypothesis 2) we must conclude that none of the civic education efforts really have a differential impact on visible minorities. The strategies of civic education tested in this article thus do not help to overcome the gap between visible minorities and majorities for (intended) political participation. The findings from the classical research in the US, therefore, could not be confirmed for the current Canadian context. Part of the explanation for this divergent result might be that patterns of inequality and exclusion clearly are less pronounced in current Canadian society than they were in the US three decades ago. It also has to be noted that the demographic and economic characteristics of visible minorities in the contemporary Canadian society are different from the characteristics of the minority population in the United States 30 years ago. While US research

highlights the impact of a negative counter culture among US adolescents, specifically among certain ethnic groups (Downey 2008), this counterculture seems to be less strongly present, or even absent, among visible minorities in Canadian society.

Only for forms of electoral participation, visible minorities clearly obtain lower scores than the general sample, but this can at least partially be explained by legal barriers, that is, the fact that non-citizens do not have the right to take part in elections. The fact, however, that we do not observe a difference between electoral participation, on the one hand, and the other two dependent variables, on the other hand, indicates that this is not the only explanation. In general, it can be assumed that patterns of exclusion and discrimination are less powerful in Canadian society than they used to be in US society. Or to put it differently: the Quebec and Ontario education systems seem to be quite successful in reaching out to adolescents, both those from a visible minority and others. In practice, however, they do not serve as great equalizers, since all groups seem to profit in a comparable manner from civic education efforts. The conflict between school and minority cultures, that has been documented in the US context does not seem to occur in contemporary Canadian society, either. However, if we know from other research that there is a persistent gap in the political participation levels of visible minorities and majority groups within the Canadian population, it is clear that the school system will not help to close this gap, since all groups within the population seem to profit more or less equally from civic education experiences.

Notes

- 1 More specifically, the two largest cities were selected in each province (that is, Toronto and Montreal), along with two medium-sized cities of approximately 150,000 inhabitants, and three small towns with approximately 15,000 inhabitants. Two small towns were selected in Ontario that varied in their linguistic composition (one almost entirely English speaking, while the other had a significant French-speaking minority) and one small town in Quebec that was almost exclusively French speaking.
- 2 We have to note here that, because of the sample, no native Canadian respondents were included in this study.
- 3 Especially with regard to electoral participation, one could argue that citizenship status also is an important variable. Including additional controls on the citizenship status of the respondent, however, did not lead to substantially different results in the analysis.

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APPENDIX A:
Factor Analysis Future Political Participation

	Factor	
	1 Conventional	2 Social Movement
Will run for office	.670	-.017
Will join party	.768	.131
Will raise/donate money	-.011	.832
Will boycott/buycott	.436	.509
Will volunteer	.077	.835
Will follow campaign	.572	.370
Will protest legally	.621	.409
Will assume leadership community	.378	.437
Will protest illegally	.593	.048
Eigen value	3.30	1.20
Explained variance	37.1	14.1

Results of an exploratory factor analysis on the nine participation items. Varimax rotation. N = 3,218. Numbers in bold indicate high loadings of the variable on the factor.

APPENDIX B:
Dependent Variables

Variables	Questions Questionnaire	Coding
Political Knowledge	3 questions: 1. Who is the new Governor General of Canada? 2. Who is the provincial premier of this province? 3. The Supreme Court has the authority to...	Cumulative Scale 0-3
Future Conventional/Social Movement Participation	In the future would you ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • run as a candidate for a public office • join a political organization or party • raise or donate money for a cause • boycott or buy products for political, ethical or environmental reasons • volunteer for a cause you believe in • actively follow an election campaign • take part in legal protest activities • take on a leadership role in your community • take part in illegal protest activities 	Factor scores

APPENDIX C:
Independent Variables

Variables	Questions Questionnaire	Coding
Gender	Are you: female male	Male = 1 Female = 0
SES	About how many books are in your family's home (excluding newspapers, magazines and books for school)? (range 1–more than 500)	Scale 0–1
Visible minority	To what racial group do you belong to? Non-Caucasian and non-white = 1; all others = 0.	No = 0 Yes = 1
Speaking French	Which is your first language at home? English French Other	All others = 0 French = 1
Watching TV news	What/which programs do you prefer watching on television? “News” mentioned as one of the most-often watched programs.	Scale 0–1
Parents discussing politics	How often do your parents discuss public issues and politics? never once in a while fairly often all the time	Scale 1–4
Parents volunteering	Do your parents regularly volunteer their time Yes No	Scale 0–1
Peers discussing politics	When you are with your close friends, how often do you discuss public issues and politics? never once in a while fairly often all the time	Scale 1–4
Classes about politics	Last school year, how often did you talk about the following topics in your classes: 1) the way Parliament works 2) the United Nations, 3) federalism 4) voting never once or twice several times many times	Scale 4–16

(continued)

APPENDIX C
(Continued)

Variables	Questions Questionnaire	Coding
Classes about religions	Last school year, how often did you talk about religions other than Christianity? never once or twice several times many times	Scale 1–4
Classes about cultures	Last school year, how often did you talk about Cultures other than cultures of North America or Western Europe? never once or twice several times many times	Scale 1–4
Community service	Were you required to do a community service project through your school? yes no	Scale 0–1
Fairness of teacher	I feel treated fairly by my teachers Totally not agree Not agree Agree Totally agree	Scale 1–4
Average parental income	What is your family's annual income? less than \$20,000 (low income) \$20,000–\$40,000 (relatively low income) \$40,000–\$60,000 (average income) \$60,000–\$80,000 (relatively high income) more than \$80,000 (high income) not sure = missing	Scale 1–5