The effect of classroom diversity on tolerance and participation in England, Sweden and Germany

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Abstract

The belief in educational circles is widespread that ethnically mixed schools contribute to inter-ethnic tolerance and community cohesion. Some political science studies, however, have found that trust and participation are lower in ethnically diverse neighborhoods. This paper explores the relation between classroom ethno-racial diversity, ethnic tolerance and participation in England, Sweden and Germany using data from the IEA Civic Education Study among 14-year olds. Controlling for various conditions at the individual and classroom level, it finds a positive effect of classroom diversity on ethnic tolerance in Sweden and Germany, which is in agreement with the contact perspective on inter-ethnic relations. However, it does not find an effect on tolerance in England. Moreover, classroom diversity only shows a positive relation with participation in Sweden. The effect of diversity thus varies substantially across the two outcomes of interest and the three countries examined. It is therefore tentatively concluded that country-specific factors shape this effect to a significant degree.

Key words: classroom diversity, ethnic tolerance, participation, majority-minority relations, contact and conflict perspectives

Introduction

The belief in educational circles that ethno-racially mixed schools contribute to ethnic tolerance is widespread, and many studies have indeed found evidence for this assumption. However, as we will discuss below, most of these studies concern desegregated schools in the United States and focus exclusively on the effect of inter-racial contact on ethnic tolerance or racial prejudice as the outcomes of interest. Studies examining the effect of diversity on civic attitudes other than, or in addition to, ethnic tolerance in contexts outside the United States are rare.

The lack of such studies would not be a problem if the findings for the American studies on tolerance could be generalized to other national contexts and other civic attitudes, but we cannot assume from the onset that this is possible. On the one hand, most of the immigrant minorities in Western Europe are in much the same socially disadvantaged position as African Americans. The same patterns on inter-ethnic/racial relationships could thus apply in this region. On the other hand, the century-old history of subordination and exclusion of African Americans in the United States is unique and has no parallel in the majority-minority relations in West European states, most of which have become immigration societies only from the 1950s. What helps to combat ethno-racial prejudice in America may therefore not be effective in Western Europe. Indeed, reviewing studies on the effect of inter-racial contact, Ray (1983) found remarkable differences across English-speaking countries. While studies conducted in America and Canada produced evidence supporting the notion that inter-racial contact helps to break down stereotypes, the evidence from Britain and Australia pointed in the reverse direction (contact with blacks leading to more prejudice among whites). Similarly, it cannot be assumed that the effect of diversity extends to other civic attitudes because these attitudes have been shown to constitute a highly diverse set of dispositions, some of which are entirely unrelated, or worse negatively related, to one another (Green, Preston and Janmaat, 2006; Janmaat, 2008).

In view of these considerations this paper will examine the effect of ethno-racial diversity on two civic attitudes (ethnic tolerance and intended political participation) in three West European immigration societies (England, Germany and Sweden). There is

good reason to extend our analysis to the last-named attitude as a high rate of political participation among all groups in society is indispensible for an effective and responsive democracy (APSA Task Force, 2004). I will use survey data on the civic attitudes of students aged fourteen and construct a measure of ethno-racial diversity at the classroom level to explore the relationships between diversity and the two aforementioned outcomes. As explained below, the impact of diversity at such a micro level of analysis is likely to be quite different from that of diversity at the neighbourhood, city or national level.

The next section reviews the theory and existing research on diversity and civic attitudes. Subsequently, various contextual features of the three countries are discussed. The third section explains the database, the indicators and the methods used. The fourth section presents the results of the analyses and discusses these in relation to the theory reviewed. The conclusion sums up.

Classroom diversity and civic attitudes

Putnam (2007) has observed that two contrasting theories apply when investigating the impact of ethno-racial diversity on civic attitudes: the conflict and the contact perspective. In the conflict perspective, the relative size of the minority group(s) is crucial. The larger this size, the more members of the dominant group will feel threatened, the tighter will be their in-group bonding and the more prejudiced they will become vis-à-vis the minority group(s) (Blalock, 1967; Quinlan, 1995). By implication, hostility to out-groups should be minimal in homogenous settings. According to Blalock (1967), this regularity applies because a growing share of minority groups in the population increases the competition over scarce resources between groups and gives minority groups more opportunities to mobilize politically and challenge the privileges of the dominant group.

By contrast, the contact perspective postulates that isolation breeds stereotypes. Prejudice can be overcome and intercultural understanding can be enhanced if groups mingle and interact. However, inter-group interaction only yields such positive outcomes if it occurs (1) on the basis of equality, (2) in settings of common experiences and common objectives, and (3) on a frequent, lasting and intensive basis (Allport, 1954;

Gurin et al, 2004). If these conditions are met, contact not only contributes to more positive opinions about members of an out-group with whom people are in direct contact but also to more positive views on the entire out-group and on out-groups not at all participating in the contact (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). However, if these conditions are not met, inter-racial contact can produce the very opposite of tolerance and racial equality, as is illustrated by the system of Apartheid in post war South Africa.

It could be argued that these conditions apply above all in the micro environment of the classroom. In a diverse class pupils of different ethnic groups cannot avoid interaction on a daily basis, are equal in status (at least nominally) and share the same school experience (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006; Kokkonen et al 2010). Thus, we would expect the contact perspective to receive much support from micro-level studies in educational settings. A brief review of such studies confirms this proposition. Recent studies in the US by Frankenberg et al (2003) and Holme et al (2005), for instance, found that the experience of racially mixed schools left graduates with a better understanding of different cultures and an "increased sense of comfort in interracial settings" (*ibid*, p. 14). Research by Ellison and Powers (1994), moreover, shows that the tolerant attitudes and interracial friendships developed in racially integrated schools persist into adulthood.

Studies in the United Kingdom have also found support for the contact perspective. Billings and Holden (2007), for instance, found ethnic prejudice and ideas of racial superiority among white 15 year olds in Burnley to be particularly strong in homogenously white schools. Other research in the UK focusing on community relations in Northern Ireland has argued that integrated (i.e. mixed faith) schools "impact positively on identity, out-group attitudes, forgiveness and reconciliation" (McGlynn et al, 2004, p.1). However, these UK studies are all based on samples of a mere handful of schools, which limits the generalizability of their findings.

Moreover, educational research has largely turned a blind eye to the effects of diversity on civic attitudes other than tolerance and intercultural understanding. Particularly the link of diversity with participation has been poorly investigated, which is remarkable as there are good reasons to assume such a link. Campbell (2007) proposes two contrasting causal mechanisms. Firstly, ethnically diverse surroundings are likely to reflect a greater variety of political opinions which in turn will enhance political

awareness and interest and by doing so foster a sense of efficacy and motivation to participate in debate-oriented politics. He calls this the conflict hypothesis[1]: diversity will promote conflict-oriented engagement. The consensus hypothesis, in contrast, expects the very opposite: political engagement should be highest in homogenous settings because strong norms of participation can only develop in such environments. Campbell further notes that it may depend on the kind of setting which of the two hypotheses applies. In micro-environments characterized by frequent and intense interaction diversity may well depress debating-style participation as people seek to prevent clashes with people close to them (see also Mutz 2002). In larger units such as neighborhoods, cities and regions where interaction is more sporadic and shallow, people are not likely to have this inhibition and the mechanism postulated by the conflict hypothesis may thus well apply. Campbell (2007) indeed provides support for the first part of this conjecture. He found classroom racial diversity to be negatively related to classroom political discussion in the United States, a result he attributed to the propensity of teachers in diverse classes to avoid topics that could lead to open conflict between students of different ethno groups. Thus, while diversity at the micro-level may have favorable effects on tolerance it may well at the same time undermine engagement and participation.

England, Germany and Sweden

Exploring the relation between classroom diversity and civic attitudes in England, Germany and Sweden is interesting because each of these countries can be said to represent a distinct cultural and political tradition. With regard to issues of national identity and ethnic minority cultures, England has often been associated with a civic sense of nationhood and multicultural policies recognizing and fostering ethnic minority cultures. By contract, ethno-cultural conceptions of nationhood and exclusionist policies towards ethnic minorities are said to be typical of Germany. Sweden, lastly, is associated with inclusive policies ensuring a high degree of civic equality for immigrant groups (Brubaker 1992; Kohn 1994; Koopmans 2010). In terms of socio-economic policies, England exemplifies the typical liberal laissez faire model with minimal state

[1] Not to be confused with the conflict perspective on tolerance.

involvement in the economy, Sweden the egalitarian, social-democratic model with high state involvement and Germany the conservative-catholic welfare regime aimed at the retention of traditional family relations and status differences in the labor market (Esping Andersen 1990; Green, Janmaat and Han 2009).

Theoretically, it is difficult to think of an immediate link between these traditions and the effect of classroom diversity on civic attitudes. Yet, it could be argued that assessing this effect in such different national contexts represents the ultimate test of the contact (or the conflict) perspective: if classroom diversity is found to be positively related to tolerance and participation in all three countries, then clearly the effect postulated by contact theory is very strong and has the potential to override country-specific factors. If, on the other hand, the effect of diversity differs across both civic attitudes and national contexts, then we can conclude that the generalizability of this effect is severely constrained and is likely to depend on other influences including nationally unique configurations of conditions.

Apart from representing distinct traditions, the three countries show conspicuous similarities and differences in their education systems, their demographics and their policies on integration, i.e. in social domains of obvious relevance to the theme of this paper. These similarities and differences can all potentially affect the relation between classroom diversity and civic attitudes. The similarities concern the size of ethnic minority groups and their socio-economic position. Definitional differences concerning the identification of ethnic minorities aside, it can be said that all three countries have fairly sizable ethnic minority populations: the British census of 2001 classifies 8.9% of the population in England as non-white (including mixed) (Office for National Statistics, 2009); according to Statistics Sweden (2009) first and second generation immigrants made up 14.5% of the Swedish population in 2000; the July 2000 estimate of the German population classifies 8.5% of the population as ethnic minorities (Abacci Atlas, 2009). In all three countries most ethnic minorities are at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder, having the poorest educational credentials, working in low-status jobs and showing the highest unemployment rates (Heath and Cheung, 2007).

The differences concern the origin of immigrant groups, the reception by the receiving society and the nature of the education system. England differs from Germany

and Sweden regarding the origin of ethnic minorities and the history of their immigration. As a legacy of its days as an imperial power, the United Kingdom experienced a large inflow of immigrants from its ex-colonies, most notably from the Indian subcontinent and the Caribbean, starting as early as the 1950s. Due to this early immigration, many of the descendents of these groups are now third generation migrants. Moreover, as people from the British Commonwealth, the immigrants were accustomed to expressing themselves in English, the lingua franca in their countries of origin. This proficiency in English helped them and their offspring to navigate the opportunities in British society. By contrast, immigration to Germany and Sweden started a good decade later (later still in Sweden) and originated from countries (Turkey, ex-Yugoslavia, Italy, more recently from Somalia, Iran and Iraq) that historically had no specific cultural or linguistic links with the receiving countries. As a result, immigrants and their descendents in these countries have more difficulty than their British counterparts in gaining a refined command of the dominant language.

With regard to the reception of immigrants by the receiving society, Germany clearly set itself apart from the other two countries until quite recently. Until well into the 1990s Germany refused to consider itself as an immigration society committed to the integration of immigrants and their offspring. The immigration from the late 1960s was seen as a temporary phenomenon and it was expected that the immigrants concerned (*Gastarbeiter*) would eventually return to their countries of origin. This attitude was reflected in policy: immigrants and their children *born in Germany* were barred from adopting German citizenship and the native language education provided for immigrant children was designed to facilitate their eventual return to and re-integration in their countries of origin. This posture changed dramatically however following the assumption of power by the Red-Green coalition government in 1999. Naturalization policy was brought in line with that of other West-European states and immigrants and their offspring were finally accepted as full members of German society (Koopmans et al 2005). By contrast, Britain and Sweden have from the onset been more accepting of immigrants and have consequently sought to promote their integration and participation in the receiving society from early on. This historical difference is important as the survey data used for this study was collected in 1999, i.e. before the reforms of the new

government in Germany took effect. Consequently, at that time ethnic minorities in Germany may have still felt excluded by the receiving society.

A final remarkable difference concerns the education system. Sweden's full comprehensive system, characterized by mixed ability classes from primary all the way up to and including upper secondary education, contrasts markedly with Germany's early selection system which assigns children to different tracks (high status academic and low status pre-vocational) on the basis of ability from as early as the age of ten. England falls somewhere in between these extremes with a formally comprehensive system that has nonetheless retained some selective schools and that permits grouping by ability practices inside schools (Green et al, 2006). These large system differences between the three countries have important consequences for degrees of ethnic segregation. As ethnic minority children often fall behind the ethnic majority in achievement levels, they tend to be assigned to the low-ability schools or tracks in Germany and England. As a result they are overrepresented in these tracks and will have fewer opportunities to come into contact with children of the ethnic majority than their equivalents in countries with comprehensive systems such as Sweden (Crul and Vermeulen, 2003).

Data, indicators and method

I utilized the IEA Civic Education Study (Cived) to explore the relation between classroom diversity and civic attitudes. This study consisted of a large scale survey conducted in April 1999 among a sample of 90,000 14-year-olds in 28 countries worldwide. One of the advantages of this dataset is that ethnic minority respondents are represented to a sufficient degree. Given the nested character of the national samples, with one class being selected in each of the 120-200 sampled schools in each participating country, the Cived study further allows researchers to explore both contextual effects (such as diversity) and individual-level factors. I selected the national samples of England, Sweden and Germany, composed, respectively, of 3043, 3073 and 3700 students selected in 128, 138 and 169 schools (i.e. classrooms).

Independent variables

I used six control variables to assess whether the effect of classroom diversity is not spurious. I first discuss the individual-level control variables as the classroom-level conditions, including diversity, are based on these variables. The individual-level variables are: (1) *gender* [0 – girl; 1 – boy]; (2) *social background* (scale with six values based on the item 'number of books at home'); (3) *civic competence* (a ready-made composite measure based on the results of a civic knowledge and skills test); (4) *ethnoracial identity* [0 – ethnic majority; 1 – ethnic minority] (based on the "which best describes you" item). The importance of each of these conditions in shaping different civic outcomes has been amply demonstrated in the literature and need not be repeated here.

Regrettably, the item on which the last-named variable is based was worded differently in the three states. While it tapped subjective identification in England and Sweden, it queried an objective marker of identity in Germany. In England the question was indeed "which best describes you?" with the answer categories 'White' (N=2593); 'Black Caribbean', 'Black African', 'Black Other' (100); 'Indian', 'Pakistani', 'Bangladeshi', 'Chinese' (156) and 'Other' (123). In Sweden the item was phrased as "Do you most often feel you are …" with the categories 'Swedish' (2386); 'Finnish' (54); 'Arab', 'Iranian', 'Kurdish' and 'Turkish' (178); 'Bosnian', 'Croatian', 'Serb', 'Albanian', 'Polish' (62); 'Something else, which is…' (43). In contrast, youngsters in Germany were asked "What is your state citizenship (Staatsangehoerigkeit)?" and could choose from 'German' (3383); 'Italian' (25); 'Turkish' (94) and 'Other' (117). I created the *ethnoracial identity* variable by labelling those who reported belonging to the dominant group (White, German, Swedish) as the 'ethnic majority' and those who affiliated with other groups as the 'ethnic minority'.

Nonetheless, the "which best describes you" item is the only item that can be used to create a measure of classroom ethnic diversity – the well-known *ethnic fractionalization index* (EFI). This index takes both the number of ethnic affiliations and the size of each group into account. It has values ranging from zero (total homogeneity) to one (all students in the classroom belong to different ethnic groups). Higher values

thus represent greater diversity. I used the answer categories of the identity item and the Herfindahl concentration formula to calculate the index for each classroom.[2] The EFI however has the drawback of being 'colour blind' in that it cannot distinguish a situation of an 80% native majority and a 20% ethnic minority from its mirror image (80 % ethnic minority and 20 % native majority). Being able to distinguish between the two situations is crucial for this study as it needs to assess the effect of diversity for both all students and for ethnic majority students in order to test the claims of both the contact and conflict perspective. Obviously, to test the latter it is important to know what the proportion of ethnic minority students in the classroom is. I therefore calculated this measure (henceforth called *ethnic proportion*) alongside the EFI (henceforth *heterogeneity*). In addition, a third measure of diversity was created: the proportion of students born abroad (henceforth *immigrants' share*). Although this measure captures first generation immigrant children only and can therefore be said to underestimate diversity, it is based on an item which was phrased in a similar way across countries ("where were you born?") which enhances comparability.

I used two class-level conditions as control variables. The first of these – *classroom climate* – is the class average of a ready-made index in the database labeled as 'an open climate for classroom discussion'. Previous research by Torney-Purta (2002) on the same dataset has shown that this variable is strongly correlated to various civic attitudes. The second is *classroom status*, which is the classroom average of social background. Many studies, particularly those examining neighborhood characteristics, have pointed to the importance of this contextual condition for a range of civic outcomes (e.g. Letki, 2008; Oliver and Mandelberg, 2000).

Dependent variables

The two entries in the Cived database that we selected to tap ethnic tolerance and participation, our outcomes of interest, are both composite indices comprising several

[2] This formula is $1 - \sum^{n}_{i=1} s^2_{ic}$ (where s^2_i is the share (s) of group i (i = 1, …., n) in classroom c. For a more elaborate explanation of the EFI and illustration with examples, see Green et al (2006: 204, 205).

items each. The indices have been created by the Cived methodological experts and represent internally coherent scales which are conceptually equivalent across the three countries (see Schultz 2004, pp.105-119). Both indices have an international mean value of ten. The index tapping participation has alpha reliabilities of .77 for England, .72 for Germany and .76 for Sweden and combines items asking respondents about their future political participation:

When you are an adult, what do you expect that you will do?'
1. 'Join a political party'
2. 'Write letters to a newspaper about social or political concerns'
3. 'Be a candidate for a local or city office'
Categories: 'I will certainly not do this', 'I will probably not do this', 'I will probably do this', 'I will certainly do this'.

The higher the value on this index the higher the stated willingness of the respondent to participate later in life. Although participatory intentions are not the same as action, many studies suggest that they are at least indicative of subsequent behavior (Campbell 2007).

The index tapping ethnic tolerance has alpha reliabilities of .90 for England, .89 for Germany and .90 for Sweden and consists of the following five items:

(1) 'Immigrants should have the opportunity to keep their own language'
(2) 'Immigrants' children should have the same opportunities for education that other children in the country have'
(3) 'Immigrants who live in a country for several years should have the opportunity to vote in elections'
(4) 'Immigrants should have the opportunity to keep their own customs and lifestyle'
(5) 'Immigrants should have all the same rights that everyone else in a country has'
Categories: 'strongly disagree', 'disagree', 'agree', 'strongly agree'.

The first and the fourth item clearly tap into the notion of respect for and positive acceptance of out-group cultures, which is what ethnic tolerance is essentially about for

many scholars (e.g Heyd, 1996, Walzer, 1997). The other items can also be said to represent ethnic tolerance to the extent that the latter is understood as including the principle of civic equality - i.e. accepting cultural others as fundamentally equal and entitled to the same rights and opportunities. Theoretically it seems plausible to assume an intimate connection between notions of acceptance and civic equality. After all, expressing disagreement with the items on civic equality implies privileging the native majority over immigrants, a mindset which intuitively goes together with racism, ethnocentrism and prejudice – the very antonyms of ethnic tolerance. I thus assume the five-item index to be a good proxy of ethnic tolerance. The higher the values on this index, the more the respondent agrees with the five statements and the more tolerant I consider him/her to be.

I further note that our measure of tolerance is likely to have tapped ethnic tolerance among *native majority* respondents only since the object of the five items (immigrants) clearly represents the out-group for this group of respondents. More specifically, immigrants can be understood as the *generalized* out-group for ethnic majority respondents: in line with the contact hypothesis we would assume that inter-ethnic contact not only fosters positive out-group feelings of ethnic majority respondents towards their ethnic minority classmates (i.e. individual members of the out-group) but also towards immigrants more generally (i.e. the *entire* out-group). It is important to distinguish between the two forms of out-groups, as one may assume that societal-level conditions, including those rooted in distinct political traditions, have a stronger impact on generalized out-group feelings than on the attitudes towards members of out-groups with whom people are in direct contact. In a sense, therefore, using this generalized out-group measure of tolerance makes the test of the contact perspective even more demanding.

Descriptive statistics

Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics of all variables. If we compare the minority to the majority group a remarkable consistent pattern emerges across the three countries. In all countries minority students appear quite a lot more tolerant and more willing to

participate than majority students. As the ethnic tolerance measure reflects attitudes on immigrants it is not surprising to find minority respondents showing higher levels of tolerance. These higher levels are likely to be connected to an awareness among minority students that they are themselves (descendents of) migrants and are seen as such by the dominant group. They may in other words have identified with immigrants. Having restrictive opinions on immigrants as a minority student would thus entail agreeing to be placed in a subordinate position with respect to the ethnic majority, which, understandably, few minority students would find appealing. Thus, as noted above, 'immigrants' are likely to be the in-group for ethnic minority students while they clearly constitute the out-group for the native majority. I further note that the two outcome measures are strikingly uncorrelated to one another in all three countries (England r = .059; Germany r = .055; Sweden r = .026). This confirms the observation of the aforementioned studies that civic attitudes do not form a coherent set of dispositions. Consequently, I will analyze the outcomes separately.

Table 1 about here

With regard to the independent variables the cross-country pattern is also fairly uniform. In all three countries minority students have a lower score on civic competence, are from more modest social backgrounds, and are enrolled in lower status classes than majority students. Nonetheless, the difference between the minority and majority varies between the countries. In England minority students have almost the same score on civic competence as majority students, while in Sweden minority students lag on average as much as 14 points behind majority students. This undoubtedly reflects the better command of the dominant language by the minority groups in England in comparison to their Swedish and German counterparts. Also on social background and class status the differences between minority and majority students are smaller in England.

With mean values close to zero, the three diversity measures are all skewed towards the homogenous ethnic majority end in the three countries. Because there are few classrooms where one single ethnic minority makes up the majority, heterogeneity and ethnic proportion are unlikely to diverge strongly. Indeed, the two measures are strongly

correlated in all three countries (England r = .89*** ; Germany r = .98***; Sweden r = .92***). Similarly, immigrants' share is closely related to ethnic proportion (England r = .47*** ; Germany r = .51***; Sweden r = .82***). Because of these strong interrelations I do not expect the three diversity measures to differ much in their effect on tolerance and participation.

Method of analysis

Since the independent variables are pitched at two levels (classroom and individual) and the dependent variables are at the individual level, the appropriate method to explore the relationships between diversity and social capital is a multi-level analysis. This is all the more required given the nested structure of the data. A structure of this kind, with students being nested in classes, classes in schools, and schools in countries, precludes the use of more conventional multiple regression techniques since these require that observations are independent. Using such techniques to analyze nested data would result in an overestimation of the effects of contextual variables (Snijders and Bosker, 1999).

I used the mixed methods option in SPSS to build a two-level random intercept model consisting of classrooms (level 2) and students (level 1) with the three measures of diversity, classroom status and classroom climate entered as classroom-level variables and gender, social status, civic competence and ethnoracial identity entered as individual-level variables.

Results and discussion

I start by presenting the results of the so-called zero model, which displays the distribution of the variance in our outcome measures across the two levels (see Table 2). More than 10 per cent of the variance in ethnic tolerance is located at the classroom level in all three countries. By contrast, the between-classroom variance in participation is much smaller, representing no more than 1.9 to 4.4 percent of the total variance everywhere. According to Duncan and Raudenbusch's (1999) rule of thumb on the

distribution of variance across levels of analysis, the former (i.e. more than 10%) represents a large effect size and the latter a small to medium effect size. A small effect size implies that classroom-level factors, such as the three diversity measures, are unlikely to be strong determinants of the outcomes of interest. Thus, the zero model provides a preliminary indication that the classroom-level variables are likely to be quite insignificant drivers of participation but quite important ones for ethnic tolerance.

Table 2 about here

Table 3 present the results of the multilevel analyses. Models I-III represent respectively (I) an analysis including only classroom-level variables, (II) an analysis with all the explanatory variables, (III) an analysis with all variables based on ethnic majority respondents only.

To begin with ethnic tolerance (top half of Table 3), heterogeneity appears to be positively related to tolerance in all three countries controlling only for the two other classroom-level variables (see Model I; in England the relation is almost significant). In other words, it exerts an independent effect on ethnic tolerance irrespective of classroom status and classroom climate. However, to assess whether heterogeneity constitutes a true contextual effect or whether it merely represents the sum of individual differences in ethnic tolerance, individual-level controls need to be included (Model II). We see that heterogeneity retains its significant and positive relation to tolerance in Sweden and Germany. In other words, the more ethnically diverse the classroom is, the more tolerant the students are, taking into account their ethnic and social background, gender, and civic competence levels. This effect, moreover, is quite substantial for Germany: as heterogeneity moves from minimum to maximum (0 to .71), so ethnic tolerance levels increase by 1.4 points (.71 x 1.92) on a scale ranging from 4.0 to 14.2. This finding is clearly in full agreement with the contact perspective, particularly so since the positive effect of heterogeneity also applies when investigating only the ethnic majority in Germany and Sweden (Model III). In fact, the other two measures of diversity in this model show at least as strong positive effects on tolerance (see footnote below Table 3), making the finding more robust in terms of its support for the contact hypothesis and

refutation of the conflict hypothesis (remember that that latter expects tolerance levels among dominant group members to fall as the proportion of minorities increases). As noted earlier, since the items composing the ethnic tolerance index all refer to immigrants I believe that the index essentially captures the tolerance levels of the ethnic majority only. To then find that ethnic majority respondents are indeed more tolerant the more diverse their classroom is all the more supports the contact argument.

Table 3 about here

In England, however, the relation between heterogeneity and tolerance changes from a positive to a not-significant negative one for all respondents (Model II) and for the ethnic majority (Model III) once individual factors are included in the analysis. A possible explanation for the different results of the white British students compared to the ethnic German and Swedish students is the longer history of immigration in Britain. It could well be that this longer history has made white British youth, also those in mono-ethnic schools, become more accustomed to ethnic minorities than their counterparts in Sweden and Germany. In other words, the longer presence of ethnic minorities in Britain may have had the effect of leveling out attitudinal differences between students in diverse and homogenous classes. If this is indeed the causal mechanism then we should expect to see the diversity effect dissipate in Sweden and Germany as well with the passing of time. Unfortunately, this hypothesis cannot be tested with the data at hand.

Another possibility is that the political tradition of liberalism and multiculturalism in England imposes such strong norms of tolerance that the ethnic composition of classrooms essentially has little to add. In other words, white British students in all-white classrooms feel the same pressure to give socially desirable responses on the tolerance items as white British students in mixed classrooms. If this conjecture is true one would expect the overall levels of tolerance to be higher in England than in the other countries. The descriptive statistics of Table 1, however, show that the tolerance levels of white British students are *below* the international mean of ten while those of their Swedish counterparts are above this mean. Thus this hypothesis is unlikely to have much

explanatory power either. The varying effect of diversity on ethnic tolerance across the three countries thus remains a mystery.

The results for participation also present a remarkable pattern of cross-country variation (see bottom half of Table 3; Model III was omitted because the theory does not make specific claims about the ethnic majority). This time it is only in Sweden that heterogeneity shows a distinct link to the outcome of interest: while heterogeneity is unrelated to participation in Germany and England, even in Model I, it shows a positive and significant relation in Sweden in Models I and II. Ethnic proportion shows an even stronger relationship in Sweden with a coefficient more than three times as large as its standard error (see footnote in Table 3). In other words, taking into account all controls at the individual and classroom level, students in Sweden express a greater willingness to participate later in life, the more diverse their classrooms are. Evidently, the aforementioned causal mechanisms proposed by Mutz – that of conflict avoidance in diverse micro-level settings dampening participation – and Campbell – homogenous settings being conducive to participation because they enable strong shared norms of civic engagement to develop – do not apply in the Swedish case. The Swedish result, moreover, is in complete contrast to Campbell's (2007) finding on the effect of classroom racial composition on voting intentions among American students. Using the same Cived data he found that the larger the proportion of white students is (i.e. the more homogenous the class) the higher will be the stated intention to vote, controlling for a range of individual and contextual level variables including classroom climate. The unique results for Sweden, by comparison to both the United States and the two other countries of this study, only reinforce the impression that country-specific factors prevent diversity from showing a uniform effect across western immigration countries.

Conclusion

The findings lead me to formulate two broad conclusions. First, advocates of desegregation will be pleased to hear that on balance I found more support for the contact than for the conflict perspective. Ethnic majority students in Germany and Sweden turned

out to have significantly more tolerant views on immigrants the more diverse their classrooms were, controlling for all relevant individual and classroom conditions. This is broadly in line with American research showing that desegregation helps to combat racial prejudice among whites.

However, classroom diversity was not found to be related to ethnic tolerance in England. Clearly, despite the micro-environment of the classroom meeting all the conditions that contact theory assumes crucial for diversity to enhance tolerance, this positive effect need not occur in all national contexts. From this point of view the degree of support for the contact perspective is perhaps disappointing.

Diversity did not show a consistent link with intended participation across the three countries either. While it had a significant positive effect in Sweden, it had no impact in Germany and England. This brings us to the second overall conclusion: the effect of diversity differs markedly not only across countries but also across civic outcomes. In other words, any relationship found between diversity and some civic outcome in – say - America need not apply in other western states, nor can it be assumed that diversity is related in the same way across different civic outcomes within one country. Thus, any generic effect of diversity postulated by some theory is not so strong that it overrules the effect of country-specific factors or can be generalized to other desirable social outcomes.

An important task for future research is to assess whether one or several common factors can account for the country variations in the effect of diversity or whether we have to come to terms with the idea that irreducible, nationally unique configurations of conditions fundamentally shape the impact of diversity at the school or classroom level. This results of this study suggest that the latter may well be the case. Obviously, the policy implication is that policy makers have to be very cautious in borrowing and implementing a straight copy of a successful education policy on – say - community cohesion from a different state, however close to one's own country this state is in political tradition and culture.

I have to end with one important limitation. I have essentially performed a cross-sectional analysis using a single point in time database. This raises the issue of direction of causality and selection effects. In theory it is possible that more tolerant ethnic

majority children self-selected in diverse classes. This would have the effect of reversing the causal order between diversity and ethnic tolerance: parents who are more tolerant from the beginning "create" diverse classrooms by sending their children to schools with a mixed ethnic intake (or vice versa, intolerant parents sending their children to all-white schools – which would have the same effect). Although a selection effect can partly be neutralized by controlling for individual background variables (as I have done) and is likely to be small in societies with limited school choice such as Sweden (Kokkonen et al 2010), it cannot rule out that some self-selection has occurred. To eliminate this bias and establish the "value added" effect of diversity, it is indispensible that future survey studies adopt a longitudinal panel design with repeated measures of the outcomes of interest.

Literature

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Table 1. Descriptive statistics

	England		
	All mean (SD)	Ethnic majority mean (SD)	Ethnic minority mean (SD)
Dependent variables			
Ethnic tolerance	9.75 (2.23)	9.60 (2.12)	10.81 (2.69)
Participation	9.66 (1.89)	9.62 (1.86)	9.96 (2.06)
Independent variables			
Heterogeneity (EFI)	.17 (.18)	.14 (.15)	.40 (.18)
Ethnic proportion	.13 (.18)	.09 (.12)	.39 (.28)
Immigrants' share	.06 (.06)	.05 (.06)	.10 (.08)
Classroom status	4.40 (.53)	4.41 (.52)	4.36 (.59)
Classroom climate	9.98 (.83)	9.96 (.82)	10.13 (.86)
Social background	4.40 (1.32)	4.44 (1.31)	4.14 (1.33)
Civic competence	99.41 (18.81)	99.72 (18.81)	98.28 (18.72)
Gender (% girl)	50	50	52
Identity (% ethnic minority)	12.8	0	100
N (%)	2972 (100)	2593 (87.2)	379 (12.8)
	Germany		
	All mean (SD)	Ethnic majority mean (SD)	Ethnic minority mean (SD)
Dependent variables			
Ethnic tolerance	9.18 (2.20)	9.04 (2.12)	11.29 (2.29)
Participation	9.63 (1.88)	9.61 (1.86)	9.87 (2.14)
Independent variables			
Heterogeneity (EFI)	.12 (.17)	.10 (.14)	.34 (.19)
Ethnic proportion	.07 (.11)	.06 (.09)	.23 (.16)
Immigrants' share	.19 (.16)	.18 (.15)	.31 (.19)
Classroom status	4.42 (.63)	4.44 (.62)	4.09 (.70)
Classroom climate	10.34 (.74)	10.35 (.74)	10.25 (.81)
Social background	4.42 (1.30)	4.48 (1.27)	3.47 (1.39)
Civic competence	99.03 (18.64)	99.97 (18.48)	91.63 (17.30)
Gender (% girl)	50	50	53
Identity (% ethnic minority)	5.9	0	100
N (%)	3594 (100)	3383 (94.1)	211 (5.9)
	Sweden		
	All mean (SD)	Ethnic majority mean (SD)	Ethnic minority mean (SD)
Dependent variables			
Ethnic tolerance	11.00 (2.45)	10.67 (2.39)	12.50 (2.07)
Participation	9.82 (1.96)	9.80 (1.92)	9.95 (2.19)
Independent variables			
Heterogeneity (EFI)	.19 (.20)	.13 (.17)	.43 (.18)
Ethnic proportion	.14 (.20)	.09 (.13)	.39 (.25)
Immigrants' share	.12 (.15)	.09 (.10)	.28 (.22)
Class status	4.61 (.60)	4.72 (.50)	4.07 (.74)
Classroom climate	10.37 (.86)	10.37 (.83)	10.36 (.88)
Social background	4.61 (1.29)	4.80 (1.18)	3.62 (1.34)
Civic competence	99.55 (20.32)	101.89 (20.22)	87.69 (16.56)
Gender (% girl)	52	50	51
Identity (% ethnic minority)	10.6	0	100
N (%)	2669 (100)	2386 (89.4)	283 (10.6)

Table 2. Distribution of variance in outcome measures across classes and individuals (%)

		Ethnic tolerance	Participation
England	Individual level (L1)	88.5	95.6
	Class level (L2)	11.5	4.4
	N	2752	2651
Germany	Individual level (L1)	84.2	98.1
	Class level (L2)	15.8	1.9
	N	3649	3506
Sweden	Individual level (L1)	81.1	98.3
	Class level (L2)	18.9	2.9
	N	2984	2778

Table 3. Determinants of ethnic tolerance and participation (coefficients significant at a 5% level are given in bold)

	Ethnic tolerance																	
	England						Germany						Sweden					
	I		II		III		I		II		III		I		II		III	
	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE
Heterogeneity*	.79	.45	-.75	.47	-.73	.47	**3.31**	.39	**1.92**	.39	**1.68**	.41	**2.04**	.46	**.90**	.44	**.96**	.48
Class status	-.17	.15	-.31	.16	-.26	.16	**.31**	.10	.10	.10	.09	.12	.09	.15	-.06	.16	-.09	.17
Class climate	-.21	.11	**-.29**	.11	**-.22**	.11	**.40**	.09	**.30**	.09	**.31**	.09	**.45**	.08	**.34**	.08	**.34**	.09
Gender (girl = 0)			**-.60**	.09	**-.67**	.09			**-.49**	.07	**-.50**	.07			**-1.04**	.08	**-1.11**	.09
Identity (maj = 0)			**1.53**	.14	**-**	**-**			**2.06**	.14					**1.60**	.15		
Social background			**.08**	.03	**.10**	.04			-.02	.03	-.02	.03			.02	.04	.04	.04
Civic competence			**.01**	.003	**.01**	.003			**.02**	.002	**.02**	.002			**.02**	.002	**.02**	.002
Expl var L1 (%)	0		6.3				0		7.7				0		10.5			
Expl var L2 (%)	9.8		2.4				43.7		43.7				45.3		61.7			
N	2752		2688		2348		3649		3564		3361		2984		2624		2353	
	Participation																	
Heterogeneity*	.31	.29	.04	.31			.47	.25	.39	.27			**.66**	.26	**.79**	.30		
Class status	.15	.10	.06	.11			.08	.06	-.04	.08			.07	.10	.09	.11		
Class climate	.09	.07	.09	.07			.09	.05	.08	.05			.06	.05	.04	.06		
Gender (girl = 0)			-.03	.08					.09	.07					-.05	.08		
Identity (maj = 0)			**.29**	.13					.19	.14					.20	.15		
Social background			**.09**	.03					**.12**	.03					.05	.04		
Civic competence			.001	.002					.000	.002					**.005**	.002		
Expl var L1 (%)	0		1.4				0		1.4				0		2.2			
Expl var L2 (%)	16.5		12.7				15.2		1.5				18.7		40.2			
N	2651		2591				3506		3425				2778		2457			

* I conducted separate analyses for ethnic proportion and immigrants' share using the same control variables. The effects of ethnic proportion on tolerance are (shown only for Model III): England -.88 (.53); Germany **2.44** (.60); Sweden **1.64** (.59). The effects of immigrants' share on ethnic tolerance are (Model III): England .86 (1.35); Germany **1.23** (.44); Sweden **3.24** (.69). The effects of ethnic proportion on participation are (Model II): England .14 (.32); Germany .69 (.39); Sweden **1.16** (.35). The effects of immigrants' share on participation are (Model II): England .55 (.39); Germany **.70** (.27); Sweden .55 (.39).