

Student civic participation in school: What makes a difference in Ireland?

Abstract

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child provides for the views of the child to be given due weight in accordance with the child's age and maturity. Legislation in Ireland recognises the rights of children to have a voice in educational matters. Based on a sample of 2838 14-year olds in Ireland and using questionnaire data from the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study, the present study uses a multilevel model to examine the student and school characteristics associated with the civic participation at school. Results indicated that boys have lower levels of civic participation at school than girls, but among boys only, civic participation at school varies in accordance with levels of perceived influence on decision-making. Findings are discussed in the context of the rights of children to participate in decisions that affect them and with reference to Bandura's social cognitive theory.

Keywords

ICCS, civic participation, Ireland, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, education

The early years of secondary education should be a time when the increasing maturity of young people would confer on them additional rights to express their views on matters affecting them, in line with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) which states that

Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

In Ireland specifically, the rights of children and young people to have a voice in educational matters are recognised in the Education Act (Government of Ireland, 1998) which asserts that schools "shall facilitate the involvement of students in the operation of the school, having regard to the age and experience of the students, in association with their parents and teachers" (Section 27, 2). Furthermore, "students of a post-primary [second-level] school may establish a student council" (Section 27, 3) and the principal is required "under the direction of the board and, in consultation with the teachers, the parents and, to the extent appropriate to their age and experience, the students, [to] set objectives for the school and monitor the achievement of those objectives" (Section 23, 2d).

The rights afforded to children under the Education Act might be termed 'Participation Rights', following Lansdown (1994: p. 36) who classified the articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into three categories, i.e., rights pertaining to provision, those related to protection and those concerned with participation. According to Lansdown (1994), participation rights are those which incorporate civil and political rights, including for example

the right of the child to be consulted and to be taken account of, and the right to challenge decisions made on his/her behalf. This paper focuses on young people's opportunities in Ireland to exercise their rights of participation at school.

In practice in educational and other contexts, children and young people often experience fewer opportunities to exercise their rights than might be expected given the provisions outlined above. Even when opportunities are provided, these may be considered tokenistic (see e.g. Keogh and Whyte's (2005) work on the low status of student councils in Ireland). Furthermore, the mismatch between the typical school curriculum and the opportunities for students to participate in decision-making about the running of the school has been linked to a fall in student motivation in the early years of secondary education (see e.g. Demetriou et al., 2000). This dip in motivation has been documented in Ireland and internationally; e.g. in Ireland, a longitudinal study of lower secondary students (Smyth, 2009) found that the second year of second-level education (Grade 8) is sometimes viewed as a 'drift' year as students have completed the settling in period of the first year but do not yet have the examination pressures of third year. Evidence of a fall in student motivation in the early years of second-level education has also been documented in the United States (e.g. Anderman et al., 1994) and elsewhere in Europe (e.g. Hirsch, 1998). While of course, some students remain actively engaged in their schoolwork, evidence from Ireland indicates that others, in particular boys, students from working class backgrounds and those allocated to lower stream classes, become increasingly disengaged from the education system (Smyth, 2009).

Extra-curricular involvement at school, including activities such as participation in student councils or prefect systems, may offer one way of counteracting the fall in motivation of the early post-primary years. Civic participation of this kind has been associated with improved academic performance and a decreased likelihood of school drop-out (Smyth, 1999). Extra-curricular involvement has also been associated with the development of political and citizenship self-efficacy during adolescence (Bandura, 1997). Bandura's work (e.g. Bandura, 1993, 1995, 1997) emphasises the reciprocal determinism of behaviour, environmental influences and internal personal factors such as beliefs, thoughts, preferences, expectations and self-perceptions. This reciprocity allows for motivation to be regulated by the expectation that a given course of behaviour will produce certain outcomes. The motivating influence of outcome expectancies is partly governed by efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1995). Thus, we might expect that students' motivation to participate in civic activities will be associated with (1) their expectations that their actions will produce certain outcomes and (2) their beliefs about what they can do. Even in the context of a strong rights agenda, students might not be expected to demonstrate high levels of civic participation unless they expect that their actions will have outcomes of the sort which they value. Furthermore, it is likely that self-efficacy is important.

The International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) offers an opportunity to examine the extent to which young people have opportunities to participate in decision-making structures in school. In addition, given the extensive background information elicited in the student questionnaire, ICCS provides an excellent opportunity to explore the student and

school characteristics associated with participation; i.e. are some groups of students more likely to participate than others? This paper builds on earlier descriptive analyses of Irish data which examined students' civic participation in school, students' perceived influence on decision-making at school and the value students place on participation at school (see Cosgrove and Gilleece, in press). Given the small amount of previous research on characteristics in Ireland that are associated with student civic participation in school, the analyses presented in this paper are exploratory in nature. However, we have included variables we deem relevant based on the literature review, i.e., socioeconomic status, gender, self-efficacy and civic knowledge, and perceived value of participation. Broadly speaking, the current analysis asks:

- What are the student and school background characteristics associated with student civic participation at school in Ireland?
- To what extent are the characteristics associated with civic participation similar to, or different from, those associated with civic knowledge?

Method

2.1 Study design, sampling and instruments

The International Civic and Citizenship Education Study, conducted in 38 countries in 2008-2009, aimed to examine the ways in which countries prepare their 14-year olds to undertake their roles as citizens (Schulz et al., 2010). The ICCS framework (Schulz et al., 2008), which consisted of a civic and citizenship framework and a contextual framework, provided a conceptual basis for the assessment instruments.

A two-stage sampling process was employed whereby schools were sampled using probability proportional to enrolment size. Within each sampled and participating school, an intact class from the target grade (Grade 8, unless the average age of students in Grade 8 was below 13.5 years in which case the target grade was Grade 9) was randomly selected. In Ireland, two intact classes were sampled in very large schools. The total achieved sample size in Ireland was 3355 students from 144 schools. A sample of teachers was also selected at random from all teachers teaching target grade students in the sampled schools. In schools with 20 or fewer teachers, all teachers were invited to participate and in schools with greater numbers of teachers, 15 were selected at random (Schulz et al., 2010). In Ireland, 1861 teachers from 137 schools participated.

The ICCS student instruments were as follows: a 45-minute assessment of students' civic knowledge; a 40-minute questionnaire which gathered information on students' social and demographic backgrounds, attitudes towards, and beliefs about a number of civic and citizenship issues; a test on the European Union; and a questionnaire on Europe-related issues. The teacher questionnaire was directed at subject teachers of all subjects, with a specific section for teachers teaching Civic and Citizenship Education at lower secondary level (Civic, Social and Political Education [CSPE] in Ireland). The principal questionnaire gathered information on various topics including the teaching of CSPE in the school. General information on participating countries' education systems and the context in which Civic and Citizenship Education takes place was provided by national policy experts.

Student, teacher and principal responses to individual questionnaire items were used to form overall measures of constructs relevant to civic and citizenship education. These overall measures, which have an international mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10, were derived using the Rasch Partial Credit Model (for technical detail, see Schulz et al., 2011).

2.2 Description of variables

The outcome measure used in this paper was derived from the responses of participating students to items asking whether or not they had engaged in six participatory activities in school (i.e. voluntary participation in school-based music or drama activities outside of regular lessons; active participation in a debate; voting for student council representatives; taking part in decision-making about how the school is run; taking part in discussions at school assembly; or becoming a candidate for the student council; $\alpha = .61$ in Ireland). Students were asked if they had participated in these activities *within the last year, more than a year ago or never* and told to select only one of the response options. Students were advised to consider all schools they had attended since they began primary school. The outcome measure (civic participation at school) was standardised to have a mean of zero and standard deviation of one in Ireland.

In selecting predictor variables, those with low rates of missing data were preferred over those with higher levels of missing data in order to avoid listwise deletion of cases. Where a variable was of particular policy relevance, a missing indicator was included in order to conserve cases. For cases with missing categorical variables, the original variable was recoded to zero, and for cases with missing continuous variables, the original variable was recoded to

the mean. A missing indicator was assigned one if the original value was missing and zero otherwise. Predictor variables were organised into conceptually related blocks. Predictor variables are described in Tables 1 and 2. In the case of teacher characteristics, these were aggregated to the level of the school since direct linkages between individual teachers and students were not possible.

[Insert Table 1 and Table 2 about here]

2.3 Analytical Approach

Given that students within schools are not independent (see e.g. Goldstein, 1995) a multilevel model was fitted using HLM 6.0 (Raudenbush et al., 2004). The model was weighted by the school and student sampling weights at the school and student levels, respectively (see Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal, 2006). After listwise deletion of cases missing one or more student variables, a total of 2838 students in 144 schools remained, representing 84.6% of the initial dataset. The reduced dataset was balanced by gender (49.5% female).

Initially, each explanatory variable was tested separately. Non-significant variables were removed. Each block of remaining variables was then evaluated simultaneously. Finally, all blocks were entered simultaneously and non-significant variables were removed until all variables retained significance at the .05 level. The significance of interactions between gender and other characteristics were then tested, as were cross-level interactions, curvilinear terms, and the slope variation of student characteristics across schools. It is important to note that while some variables may be of statistical significance, their association with civic participation

may be of little substantive relevance if parameter estimates are small. In the discussion which follows, we emphasise results which appear to be of substantive importance.

3. Results and Discussion

The mean score of students in Ireland on the measure of civic participation in school was not significantly different to the international mean across countries participating in ICCS (see Cosgrove et al., 2011). Table 3 presents the percentages of students in Ireland and on average internationally who had done each of the activities which comprised the civic participation at school scale (see also Cosgrove and Gilleece, in press). In Ireland, one-quarter of students had never voted for student council representatives, one third had never taken part in a class or school debate and two-fifths had never participated in school-based music or drama outside regular lessons. Between three-fifths and three-quarters had never taken part in decision-making about how the school is run, taken part in discussions at a student assembly or become a candidate to represent their class on the student council. Of students who had done each of the activities, substantial percentages had done each of them more than a year ago. It must be assumed that had students done the activities within the last year that they would have selected the '*Yes, I have done this within the last twelve months*' option as they were advised to select only one response option. Given the issues outlined in the introduction relating to the decline in student motivation and engagement with the education system at lower second level, and also the observation that students' increasing maturity should lead to greater involvement as students get older, the substantial percentages of students who never did the

various activities or did them more than a year prior to ICCS and not within the last year is of concern.

[Insert Table 3 about here]

A comparatively small amount of the variance in civic participation at school in Ireland was accounted for by differences between schools (14.4%). This may relate to the fact that students were asked to consider all schools that they had ever attended when responding to items on participation at school. Alternatively, it may be the case that across all schools, some students are more actively involved than others so variation occurs within schools rather than between schools.

Table 4 shows that after controlling for various school- and student-level variables, girls had a significantly higher score on the civic participation at school scale than boys. Table 4 presents the model without interaction terms; Table 5 presents the model including interaction terms. The higher levels of civic participation among girls is not surprising given the findings cited in the literature review about the greater disengagement of boys from the education system. However, student gender interacts significantly with perception of student influence on decision-making; this interaction is discussed below.

[Insert Table 4 about here]

Also as suggested in the literature review, socioeconomic status was significantly associated with civic participation at school, although the association was weak (Table 4). A one standard deviation increase in socioeconomic status corresponded to an increase in the average civic participation score of just 0.04 (recall that the outcome measure was

standardised to have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one in Ireland) and the association was less strong at higher levels of socioeconomic status (as evidenced by the significant negative squared term). It should be noted that socioeconomic status had a stronger association with student participation before other variables were included in the model (with an expected increase in civic participation at school of 0.14 standard deviations per one standard deviation increase in socioeconomic status). This implies that socioeconomic status covaries with other explanatory variables in the model.

Other family or home background characteristics associated with civic participation at school were the number of books in a student's home and the frequency of discussing political or social issues with parents. Those who never discussed political or social issues with parents scored about one-eighth of a standard deviation lower than students who discussed these issues on a monthly basis. A very small difference was found between those who discussed political and social issues on a weekly or daily basis compared to those who discussed them on a monthly basis. Students with more than 200 books at home scored on average one-seventh of a standard deviation higher on the civic participation at school scale than those with fewer books (Table 4).

Books in the home interacted significantly with student participation in class activities (Table 5). At all levels of student participation in class activities (i.e. low, medium or high), students with higher numbers of books at home reported greater civic participation at school than students with fewer books. However, when participation in class activities was high (as

reported by teachers), the gap in civic participation was largest between students with high numbers of books and those with low numbers of books (illustrated in Figure 1).

[Table 5 about here]

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

Providing support for Bandura's work, it was found that students who had higher levels of internal political efficacy tended to have higher levels of civic participation at school, *ceteris paribus*; i.e. a one standard deviation increase on the internal political efficacy score was associated with one-eighth of a standard deviation increase on the scale measuring civic participation at school (Table 4, Table 5). A similar effect size was found for the value of participation at school scale (a one-standard deviation increase on this scale corresponded to a one-seventh of a standard deviation increase on the civic participation at school scale) and the openness in classroom discussion scale (a one-standard deviation increase on this scale corresponded to one-ninth of a standard deviation increase on the civic participation at school scale). The significant negative curvilinear term for perception of value of participation at school demonstrates that the association between value of participation and actual participation was weaker as students placed higher value on participation. A positive association was found between the length of time that students reported spending on leisure reading and civic participation at school; note that leisure reading was statistically significant in the model prior to adding interaction terms (Table 4) but once these were added, leisure reading was no longer statistically significant (see Table 5).

As noted above, a significant interaction was found between gender and perception of student influence on decision-making at school (Table 5). Figure 2 shows that when boys perceived that they had low influence on decision-making, their average civic participation was substantially lower than if they perceived that they had medium or high levels of influence at school. No such difference was evident for girls; i.e., girls had similar levels of average civic participation, whether they perceived their levels of influence at school to be low, medium or high.

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

At school level, just two significant variables (of fourteen) remained in the final model (Table 4, Table 5). These were teachers' reports on CCE activities in class and teachers' reports of student participation in class activities. Both were positively associated with civic participation at school generally. The first scale measured the extent to which students in civic and citizenship classes engaged in project work; group work; individual work on preparing presentations; participated in role plays; discussed controversial issues; and analysed information from different sources. The second of these scales related to classes generally, not specifically civic and citizenship classes. It measured the extent to which students engaged in activities such as suggesting class activities; negotiating learning objectives; proposing topics for discussion; and freely stating their views. As noted above, student participation in class activities interacted significantly with books at home (Table 5).

The final model contained significant random slope variation for perceived student influence on decision-making at school, students' internal political efficacy, and perception of

openness in classroom discussion. The significance of a random slope for perceived student influence on decision-making highlights the complexity of the association between participation and influence as this term was statistically significant even with the inclusion of the interaction between gender and perceived student influence. A 95% confidence interval for the slope for perceived student influence is [-0.08, 0.32], indicating that in most schools, greater perceived student influence was associated with greater participation although the strength of this association varied significantly across schools. A 95% confidence interval for internal political efficacy is [-0.52, 0.76] indicating that greater efficacy can be associated with more or less civic participation, depending on the school. A 95% confidence interval for openness in classroom discussion is [-0.05, 0.28], indicating that in general, a more open classroom climate was associated with greater civic participation at school.

In order to consider the variance explained, the model was examined without gender interactions, cross-level interactions, and random slopes (i.e. the model in Table 4). This model was compared to the null model and found to explain 22.5% of total variance, and more of the between-school variance (51.1%) than within-school variance (17.7%). Table 6 shows the variance explained by each block added separately to the null model. Student perceptions of the school environment (i.e. perceived influence on decision-making, perceived value of participation and perceived openness in classroom discussion) explained 26% of the between-school variance in civic participation, similar to the percentage explained by student demographics (23%). Table 6 does not take shared variance into account.

[Insert Table 6 about here]

This model can be compared to a model of civic achievement in Ireland, also based on ICCS data (Cosgrove et al., 2011). Some notable differences between the models are evident, though this is perhaps expected, given that the correlation between knowledge and participation is weak ($r=.17$, $p<.05$). Firstly, school average socioeconomic status was significantly associated with civic knowledge but not with civic participation at school. In other words, there is evidence of a social context effect for knowledge, but not for participation. Secondly, although gender was significantly associated with civic participation in the final model, gender was not significant in the final model of civic knowledge. Thirdly, migrant status/home language was not statistically significant in the model of civic participation. Similarities between the models include: positive associations between the outcome variables and the following predictor variables – books at home; frequency of discussing political and social issues with parents; students' internal political efficacy; perception of value of participation at school; openness in classroom discussion; and, hours spent reading for fun on a normal school day.

Conclusions

Social cognitive theory suggests that having opportunities to participate in decision-making structures at school may help develop students' political and citizenship self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Children in Ireland and internationally are being afforded increasing rights in decision-making processes, although there is evidence that young people in Ireland may not have sufficient opportunities to exercise these rights. The International Civic and Citizenship Education Study offered an opportunity to examine the civic participation of young people in

post-primary schools in Ireland. Descriptive analyses (Cosgrove and Gilleece, in press) indicated that just one-fifth of second-year (Grade 8) students in Ireland had participated in decision-making about the running of their school in the year prior to ICCS. Fewer students had taken part in discussions at assembly or been a candidate to represent their class or year on the student council. This is despite the provisions of the Education Act (Government of Ireland, 1998) which require schools to facilitate the involvement of students in the operation of the school.

Findings from the analyses in this paper show that even after controlling for student-level characteristics, when there is greater student participation in class activities and in CCE activities in class, students have greater civic participation at school generally. Thus it would appear that fostering engagement at a class level might be one way to improve overall participation in the school. (Of course, greater opportunities for participation in class may reflect a greater commitment on the part of teachers to the participation of students generally.) It is noteworthy that civic participation is highest when students come from favourable home backgrounds (i.e. those with large numbers of books) *and* have more opportunities to participate in class, pointing towards the importance of both home and school factors in contributing to a high level of student participation.

The interaction between student gender and students' perceptions of influence on decision making at school is of interest as it suggests that boys are less likely to participate in civic activities at school if they perceive that they have little influence. This is not surprising given the reciprocal relationship between motivation and action discussed in the introduction,

and highlights the need for meaningful opportunities for student engagement, particularly in the case of boys who appear to be less likely to participate unless participation is associated with the capacity to bring about change. It was noted in the introduction to this paper that the dip in motivation found among some students in lower secondary education is typically greater among boys than girls, so it may be the case that boys suffer more than girls from the mismatch between the environment of learning in the school and their developing sense of autonomy. Previous research has shown that student councils in Ireland are often viewed by school principals as serving as a consultative group whereas students themselves wish to take a more active role (Keogh and Whyte, 2005). This perceived role or function mismatch merits attention since the current analyses emphasise the importance of students, particularly boys, having an influence if their civic participation is to be fostered.

Chung and Probert (2011) used Bandura's social cognitive theory to frame their work on civic engagement and outcome expectations (OEs) among African American young adults. They distinguished between two types of OE: individual and community. Individual OEs related to expected positive outcomes for the individual, while community OEs related to expectations of positive outcomes for the community. Although the focus was on community participation (rather than on school participation as in the current study), Chung and Probert's results are relevant to the findings of current study, as they state that many of their participants "expressed pessimism about their community's ability to improve neighbourhood-level problems...as a reason for not wanting to get involved in political activism in the future" (Chung and Probert, 2011: 232-233). It would be useful for future research to examine

participation in school from the outcome expectation perspective in order to see if there are gender differences in outcome expectations. We hypothesise on the basis of the current study that boys would be more oriented towards community outcome expectations; i.e. that they would show higher levels of participation when this is expected to lead to community benefits. On the other hand, in the current study girls' participation did not vary in accordance with perceived influence, therefore girls might be more oriented towards individual outcome expectations, i.e., emphasising benefits for the individual, such as participation bringing personal satisfaction. Chung and Probert did not report gender differences in outcome expectations.

The current analysis also shows a positive association between students' sense of internal political efficacy, students' interest in political and social issues, and civic participation. The influence of self-efficacy and motivation on the participatory process have been well established in the literature. As noted in the introduction, Bandura discusses the significant contribution of self-efficacy to motivation and attainment. Further, Chung and Probert (2011: 228) note that "people who believe that they have the capacity to make a meaningful difference are often motivated to act" while Verba et al. (1995) indicate that their conception of the participatory process rests on motivation and capacity. It seems reasonable to infer from the results of the model that if a student is not interested in political and social issues, it is unlikely that he/she will be motivated to participate. Schools may have a role to play both in ensuring that students feel equipped to participate, i.e. in developing self-efficacy, and in

developing students' interest in civic participation, which may lead to greater motivation to participate.

While primarily exploratory in nature, the results of the current analysis provide confirmation of the association between students' participation in school and gender, socioeconomic status, and political efficacy. However, some of these associations appear to be mediated in potentially complex ways by other characteristics considered (e.g. the interaction between gender and perceived influence on decision-making). Further research could usefully 'unpack' some of these issues through the application of alternative analytic approaches such as structural equation modelling (SEM; e.g. Muthén and Muthén, 2010).

In conclusion, we note that while there is a strong legislative framework recognising the rights of children and young people in Ireland, in practice, there can be limited opportunities to realise these rights and some students, in particular boys and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds can have fewer opportunities to exercise their rights of participation. Rudduck and Flutter (2004: 2) argue that we need to "take seriously what pupils can tell us about their experience of being a learner in school" and "find ways of involving pupils more closely in decisions that affect their lives in school, whether at the level of the classroom or the institution". It has been shown that when young people are consulted about their education and given the opportunity to air their views that they comment "almost without exception – in polite, serious, thoughtful and constructive ways" (McIntyre et al., 2005: 166). Increasing the active participation of young people may also have long term implications for community participation as it has been shown that a strong predictor of civic

participation in adulthood is previous involvement in such activities (Obradovic and Masten, 2007; see also Verba et al., 1995).

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TABLES

Table 1: *Student-level variables considered in the model of civic participation at school*

Variable name	Description	Block ^a
Gender	0=male, 1=female	A
Age in years	Mean=14.3; SD=0.43	A
Migrant/language status ^b	Two dummy variables - migrant speaks English/Irish; migrant speaks another language, with native as reference category	A
Family structure ^b	Two dummy variables - single parent family; mixed family, with nuclear family as reference category	A
Number of siblings	Two dummy variables - none; four or more, with one, two or three as reference category	A
Socioeconomic status	Combined parental education and occupation; Mean = 0.0; SD=1.00	A
Parental interest in social and political issues ^b	0=not interested, 1=quite or very interested	B
Books in the home	Two dummy variables - less than 25 books and more than 200 books, with 26-200 books as reference group	B
Frequency of discussion of political and social issues with parents	Two dummy variables - never and weekly, with monthly as reference group	B
Internal political efficacy ^c	Mean=0.00; SD=1.00	C
Student interest in politics	Mean=0.00; SD=1.00	C
Student perceptions of influence in decision-making in school ^c	Mean=0.00; SD=1.00	D
Student perceptions of the value of participation in school ^c	Mean=0.00; SD=1.00	D
Student perceptions of openness in classroom discussion	Mean=0.00; SD=1.00	D
Civic knowledge	Mean=533.6; SD=101.6	E
Time spent on homework in a typical day (hours)	Mean=1.11; SD=0.66	E
Time spent on leisure reading in a typical day (hours)	Mean=0.41; SD=0.61	E

^aBlock A=demographic and socioeconomic variables; B=home climate variables; C=Self-concept/self-efficacy and interest; D=engagement in school; E=civic knowledge and engagement in homework and reading; ^bVariable has a missing indicator to preserve more cases in the dataset; ^cVariable has been re-scaled for the Irish sample.

Table 2: School-level variables considered in the model of civic participation at school

Variable name	Description	Block ^a
School average SES	School average of combined parental education and occupation; Mean = 0.0; SD=1.00	F
Participation in the School Support Programme (SSP) under DEIS (Educational Disadvantage Initiative)	0=not in SSP, 1=in SSP	F
School type	Two dummies – community/comprehensive and vocational, with secondary as the reference group	F
Percent female enrolment ^c	Mean=0; SD=1	F
School location	Two dummies - rural community (<3,000 people) and large town or city (>100,000) with town as the reference group	F
School size	Two dummies - small (<40 second years) and large (more than 80 second years) with medium (41-80 second years) as the reference group	F
Principals' perceptions of parental participation in school ^{b,c}	Mean=0.00; SD=1.00	G
Principals' perceptions of resources in the local community ^{b,c}	Mean=0.00; SD=1.00	G
Principals' perceptions of social tension in the local community ^{b,c}	Mean=0.00; SD=1.00	G
Students' sense of belonging ^{b,c}	Mean=0.00; SD=1.00	G
Teachers' perceptions of student behaviour ^{b,c}	Mean=0.00; SD=1.00	G
Teachers' participation of school governance ^{b,c}	Mean=0.00; SD=1.00	G
Teachers' reports on CCE activities in class ^{b,c}	Mean=0.00; SD=1.00	G
Teachers' reports of student participation in class activities ^{b,c}	Mean=0.00; SD=1.00	G

^aBlock F=Structural and socioeconomic features; G=school climate; ^bVariable has a missing indicator to

preserve more cases in the dataset; ^cVariable has been re-scaled for the Irish sample.

Table 3. *Students' responses to questions on civic participation in school – Ireland and international averages*

At school, have you ever done any of the following activities?						
Item	Ireland			International Average		
	Yes, I have done this within the last twelve months	Yes, I have done this but more than a year ago	No, I have never done this	Yes, I have done this within the last twelve months	Yes, I have done this but more than a year ago	No, I have never done this
Voluntary participation in school-based music or drama activities outside of regular lessons	26.3	31.2	42.5	27.3	33.5	39.3
Active participation in a class or school debate	40.7	25.7	33.6	22.7	21.7	55.6
Voting for student council representatives	59.8	16.2	24.0	51.7	24.1	24.2
Taking part in decision-making about how the school is run	21.7	16.4	61.9	19.1	21.3	59.6
Taking part in discussions at a student assembly	14.7	13.5	71.7	22.5	20.8	56.7
Becoming a candidate to represent your class or year on the student council	15.2	9.8	75.0	21.2	20.9	57.9

Table 4. *Model of students' civic participation at school (without interactions)*

Variable	PE	SE	Test stat	df	p
Intercept	-0.03	0.053			
School-level					
Missing teacher questionnaire	-0.16	0.125	t=-1.281	140	.203
Teachers' reports on CCE activities in class (zscore)	0.07	0.030	t=2.411	140	.017
Teachers' reports of student participation in class activities (zscore)	0.07	0.031	t=2.381	140	.019
Student-level					
Gender (female – male)	0.20	0.052	t=3.904	2820	<.001
Socioeconomic status (zscore)	0.04	0.021			
Socioeconomic status squared	-0.04	0.018	t=-2.404	2820	.016
Books at home					
0 to 25 books – 26 to 200 books	-0.07	0.055	Ddiff=16.613	2	<.001
201 or more books – 26 to 200 books	0.15	0.042			
Frequency of discussing political or social issues with parents					
Never – monthly	-0.12	0.042	Ddiff=12.522	2	<.01
Weekly or daily – monthly	0.03	0.054			
Sense of internal political efficacy (zscore)	0.12	0.026	t=4.591	2820	<.001
Interest in political and social issues (zscore)	0.06	0.023	t=2.656	2820	.008
Perception of student influence on decision-making at school (zscore)	0.07	0.022	t=3.144	2820	.002
Perception of the value of participation at school (zscore)	0.15	0.018			
Perception of value of participation at school squared	-0.05	0.019	t=-2.678	2820	.008
Perception of openness in classroom discussion (zscore)	0.11	0.022	t=4.998	2820	<.001
Hours reading for fun on normal school day	0.06	0.030	t=2.167	2820	.030

Table 5. *Model of students' civic participation at school (with cross-level interactions, gender interaction and random slopes)*

Variable	PE	SE	Test stat	df	p
Intercept	-0.04	0.052			
School-level					
Missing teacher questionnaire	-0.16	0.127	t=-1.284	140	.202
Teachers' reports on CCE activities in class (zscore)	0.07	0.029	t=2.343	140	.021
Teachers' reports – student participation – class activities (zscore)	0.10	0.036	a	a	a
Student-level					
Gender (female – male)	0.21	0.05	a	a	a
Socioeconomic status (zscore)	0.04	0.020			
Socioeconomic status squared	-0.04	0.018	t=-2.241	2817	.025
Books at home					
0 to 25 books – 26 to 200 books	-0.06	0.053			
0 to 25 books X student participation in class activities	-0.11	0.050	Ddiff=6.936	2	<.05
201 or more books – 26 to 200 books	0.15	0.04			
201 or more books X student participation in class activities	-0.01	0.035			
Frequency of discussing political or social issues with parents					
Never – monthly	-0.13	0.042	Ddiff=13.422	2	<.01
Weekly or daily – monthly	0.03	0.053			
Sense of internal political efficacy (zscore)	0.12	0.026	t=4.590	143	<.001
Interest in political and social issues (zscore)	0.06	0.023	2.550	2817	.011
Student influence on decision-making at school (zscore)	0.12	0.029	a	a	a
Perception of the value of participation at school (zscore)	0.15	0.018			
Perception of value of participation at school squared	-0.05	0.017	t=-2.806	2817	.005
Perception of openness in classroom discussion (zscore)	0.12	0.022	t=5.273	143	<.001
Hours spent reading for fun on a normal school day	0.06	0.029	t=1.930	2817	.053
Gender X perception of influence on decision-making at school	-0.13	0.041	t=-3.285	2817	.001

^aVariable is involved in an interaction or curvilinear term so significance test is given for interaction or curvilinear term only.

Table 6: *Percentage of variance in civic participation in school explained by variable blocks added one by one to the null model*

	Between schools	Within schools	Total
Block A. Student demographics ^a	22.79	2.97	5.83
Block B. Home environment ^b	9.44	6.70	7.10
Block C. Student interest and efficacy ^c	17.50	8.29	9.62
Block D. Student perceptions of school environment ^d	26.27	10.73	12.97
Block E. Student leisure activities ^e	9.22	2.02	3.06
Block F. School demographics ^f	–	–	–
Block G. Participation in school ^g	18.32	0.00	2.64

^aStudent gender, socioeconomic status, socioeconomic status squared; ^bBooks at home, frequency of discussing political or social issues with parents; ^cInternal political efficacy, student interest in politics; ^dPerception of student influence on decision-making at school, perception of value of participation at school, value of participation squared, perception of openness in classroom discussion; ^eHours spent on leisure reading in a typical day; ^fNo variables from this block retained in model; ^gTeachers' reports on CCE activities in class, teachers' reports on student participation in class activities, missing indicator for teacher scales.

FIGURE CAPTIONS

Figure 1. Illustration of interaction between student participation in class activities and the numbers of books in a student's home: association with civic participation at school

Figure 2. Interaction between students' perceived influence on decision-making at school and student gender



