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Citizenship in young people's daily lives: differences in citizenship competences of adolescents in the Netherlands

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The results of a nationwide study of the citizenship competences of adolescents in the Netherlands are presented from the perspective of democratic citizenship in this article. Citizenship competences are defined as the knowledge, skills, attitudes and reflection needed by young people in a democratic and multicultural society to adequately fulfil social tasks that are part of their daily lives. The Citizenship Competences Questionnaire was administered to 16,000 adolescents in either sixth or ninth grade. With the help of analyses of variance and partial correlations, background factors related to the students and the environment were analysed in conjunction with each other. The results showed significant differences in citizenship competences to depend upon the gender, age, cognitive level, socio-economic status and ethnic backgrounds of the adolescents in addition to the degree of urbanisation characteristic of their school environments. The findings are discussed in light of research previously conducted on the citizenship of young people.

Keywords: citizenship; ethnicity; gender; social class

1. Introduction

In many Western countries, the formal introduction of citizenship education at the beginning of the twenty-first century took place in a politically and socially tense situation. Strong individualisation has occurred and the emergence of a multicultural society has reinforced an already ongoing process of fragmentation in the sense that more and more subcultures with different meaning systems now coexist. In the public discourse, negative manifestations of the gradual erosion of a widely shared system of values and norms – such as apathy towards politics and civil society, violence in public life and calculating behaviour – have been overexposed (Veugelers 2011). In the Netherlands, in particular, this so-called 'multicultural drama'[1] has dominated renewed interest in the school as a socialising agent.

At the turn of the century, the Dutch 'moral majority' and some of the main political parties in the Netherlands increasingly called for assimilation and adaptation by immigrants to Dutch standards and values at the cost of an orientation to one's own group and culture (Rijkschroeff *et al.* 2005). The murder

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of Pim Fortuyn who was a politician rebelling against the former liberal Dutch immigration policy and the murder of film producer Theo van Gogh by a Muslim fundamentalist only widened and polarised the debate in the Netherlands with regard to non-western immigrants. In this political and social context, a call was made for citizenship education as a legal obligation, on the one hand, and government integration policy, on the other hand. The legislative act entitled 'Promotion of active citizenship and social integration' aims to promote 'a communal and shared perspective on the part of young people with regard to the contribution that they can make as citizens to society irrespective of ethnic or cultural background' (Dutch Ministry of Education and Science 2005). As part of this act schools are free to determine the concrete form to be given to the task of instilling basic democratic values and a democratic vision of citizenship and integration – provided this is done systematically.

With our study into the citizenship of adolescents in the Netherlands, we aim to provide greater insight into the question of what competences young people already have to participate as a citizen in society; which elements of 'good citizenship' are already present to a greater or lesser degree; and how young people differ with respect to their citizenship competences. In such a manner, it is attempted to provide a stronger empirical basis for the debates on the citizenship of young people to build upon. The focus in our study is on the *capacity* of young people to act as citizens or – in other words – their citizenship *competences*, which consist of the knowledge, skills, attitudes and reflection needed to adequately function in daily social situations (cf. Rychen and Salganik 2003). The central question in this empirical study was thus: *To what extent do the citizenship competences of adolescents relate to their individual characteristics and characteristics of the environment?* In the next section, we will first elaborate on the concept of citizenship and our interpretation of 'good citizenship'. We will then consider the empirical data available on young people's citizenship.

2. Conceptualisations of citizenship and citizenship competences

The concept of citizenship that emerged from the discourse on integration is aimed at the coincidence of political-legal citizenship with social-cultural citizenship. From a communitarian perspective (Taylor 1989, Etzioni 1993, 1996), 'bonding moral values' are strived for in response to a fragmented and atomic modern society. The political philosopher Van Gunsteren (2008) points to the rise of two types of citizens from the Dutch debate on integration: normal citizens or those who adapt to traditional national citizenship and citizens at-risk or those who must still be 'normalized'. At the same time, the Dutch dual education system, which entails a constitutional distinction between public education and confessional education, prescribes a neutral role for the state with regard to moral values. This tension between the adoption of white middle-class norms and values versus the integration of immigrants via shared values, on the one hand, and strict neutrality with respect to the content of 'good citizenship', on the other hand (cf. Rawls 1993), characterises the freedom of schools to interpret their citizenship task as they see fit. And indeed in educational practice, pedagogical objectives are found to vary from 'adapting and discipline' to 'autonomy and critical thinking' to 'awareness' (Veugelers and De Kat 2003).

Although citizenship is an essentially contested concept, it is primarily linked to the notion of democracy (Torney-Purta 2004, Westheimer and Kahne 2004, Thayer-Bacon 2008). Barber (1984) distinguishes between 'thin' and 'strong' democracies. A thin democracy stems from a perspective of individualistic rights and actually diminishes the role of citizens in democratic governance. A strong democracy focuses on the participation of all people in all forms of social and political life. It aims at social justice and offers strong resistance to the excesses of liberalism such as cynicism, apathy, self-interest, privatisation and alienation. Following Barber, we interpret democracy as 'in the making' and as put forward by Dewey (1966): 'a mode of associated living'. Among the characteristics of a democratic way of living are a willingness to accept democratic authority, social justice, a capacity to empathise with others, recognition of the right of individuals to differ from each other, a willingness to accept others as they are, avoidance of discrimination and a willingness to resolve conflicts by peaceful means (De Winter 2004). This way of living expects citizens to be able to engage in contexts with varying degrees of heterogeneity such as the class, the playground, the home, the street, the sport club and so on.

In keeping with this conceptualisation of democratic citizenship, the importance of 'civil society' is increasingly being emphasised (e.g., Oser and Veugelers 2008). Citizenship in civil society refers to not only the agency of individuals within the domain of politics but also within the social domain or the interconnections between citizens outside the domain of government via which values and cultural meanings can be exchanged and institutionalised at some point (cf. Alexander 2006). This social domain is important for our conceptualisation of citizenship as it addresses social cohesion, the coexistence of individuals and the development of social identities. The characteristics of such a democracy is that people give meaning to the notion of citizenship themselves and thus within their own personal/social spheres and the political power relations which these entail. Far from being defined in a one-sided, top-down manner, citizenship is thus rooted in the daily lives of people and constructed in a dynamic, bottom-up manner. Nonetheless, the general contours of 'good citizenship' and the prerequisites for this can be stipulated. And our interpretation of citizenship thus concerns first and foremost the competences which people generally need to participate in a – by definition – 'hybrid' culture and show respect for all people's access to citizenship. This implies more than simply 'being nice', 'consideration for others', 'the helping of others' or 'caring for each other' (Westheimer and Kahne 2004). A democratic, pluriform society requires citizens to be prepared to make their own critical contributions to society (cf. Wardekker 2001, Ten Dam and Volman 2004). 'Good citizenship' thus implies that citizens are willing and able to critically evaluate different perspectives, explore strategies for change and reflect upon issues of justice, (in)equality and democratic engagement in addition to a capacity to function in a socially accepted and responsible manner within a community (Westheimer 2008). The resilience of a democracy, moreover, stems from the combination of diversity and its multiple representations as well as the value-laden choices which citizens make from these representations (Van Gunsteren 2008). Citizenship education does not need to focus on the augmentation of shared values but, rather, on learning to 'agree to disagree', dealing with different perspectives on critical moral/social issues and looking for peaceful ways to coexist (cf. Banks 2004).

For the present study of the citizenship competences of young people, the social domain of citizenship is relevant in particular. In a classical political interpretation of citizenship, young people are viewed as future citizens. As a consequence, the focus in studies of adolescents' citizenship is on the competences which they need to later – as adults – participate in society and thus, for example, the civic knowledge required for political participation, voting and the development of democratic attitudes (e.g., McDevitt and Kiousis 2006, McFarland and Thomas 2006, Schmidt *et al.* 2007). We presuppose, however, that young people are already citizens because they already participate in a wide variety of social practices which constitute their everyday lives and require them to interact with others (e.g., family, leisure time, school) (Lawy and Biesta 2006, Biesta 2007). Via such participation and citizenship in these authentic social practices, moreover, young people develop a picture of themselves in relation to the world, their potential and their own preferences (cf. Lave and Wenger 1991, Sfard 1998). This calls for a focus on the competences adolescents to adequately fulfil the *social tasks* which are representative and meaningful for actual citizenship practices of young people.

2.1. Differences in adolescents' citizenship competences

Previous research into the citizenship of adolescents has been mostly carried out within the context of education as schools are the only institution in our society where almost all youngsters can be reached directly. These studies stem in part from the aforementioned increase in policy interest in citizenship education as an instrument to create social cohesion. And while the studies rely on different – often only implicit – notions of citizenship, we could nevertheless use them to formulate a number of expectations with regard to the similarities and differences in the citizenship competences of adolescents.

On the basis of the findings of the *IEA Civic Education Study* (CIVED) conducted in 1999 (Torney-Purta *et al.* 2001, Amadeo *et al.* 2002) and the *Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study* (CELS) conducted by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) (Cleaver *et al.* 2005, Ireland *et al.* 2006, Kerr *et al.* 2007), girls were expected to score higher than boys with respect to attitudes and skills within the political domain of citizenship. This was hypothesised to hold even more for those attitudes and skills which relate to the social as opposed to political domain of citizenship practices as girls generally display more adapted behaviour, are socially more skilled and are more oriented towards good social relations than boys (e.g., Rose and Rudolph 2006). There was as yet no theoretical or empirical basis for expecting gender differences with regard to the knowledge and reflection elements of citizenship competences.

With respect to age differences, those young people in secondary education were expected to score higher on citizenship than those in primary education. This was based on the assumption that older adolescents have accumulated more relevant learning experiences with regard to participation in both democratic and societal practices than younger adolescents (cf. Lawy and Biesta 2006). In addition, Torney-Purta (2002) presupposes that older students have more coherent knowledge structures pertaining to democratic concepts than younger students. However, the NFER results point in the direction of non-linear development with a dip in

citizenship competences when adolescents are 14–15 years of age (Cleaver *et al.* 2005).

With respect to socio-economic status (SES), CIVED results show a positive relation between the level of parental education and both civic knowledge and an inclination to vote (Amadeo *et al.* 2002, see also Cleaver *et al.* 2005). We therefore expected children of higher educated parents to score higher than children of lower educated parents on citizenship knowledge and attitudes. We also expected similarly higher scores for reflection because discussion, negotiation and the offering of educational stimuli are known to relate to the intellectual climate in the home. There was not enough evidence to formulate specific expectations with respect to the role of SES in the actual citizenship skills of adolescents.

For ethnic background, non-immigrant adolescents were expected to have greater citizenship knowledge than immigrant adolescents (cf. CIVED). For citizenship attitudes, skills and reflection, no clear expectations could be formulated on the basis of earlier research. As suggested by Cleaver *et al.* (2005), certain differences may arise from certain culture-specific values, but there is just too little known to formulate detailed expectations. Nevertheless, more generally, differences with regard to immigrant background could be expected on the basis of the assumption that immigrant adolescents encounter more situations in the street and at school in which diversity is contested; they may also experience such situations more consciously than non-minority adolescents due to their minority perspective. Higher scores on such aspects as listening to others and interest in differences could thus be expected and – in cases of discrimination – lower scores which reflect the turning of one's back on core citizenship values.

Neither the CELS nor the CIVED paid attention to the influences of cognitive ability of adolescents on their citizenship competences. Nevertheless, for cognitive ability, a positive relation to citizenship knowledge and reflection could be expected as higher achieving students typically have greater knowledge of the world than lower achieving students. For citizenship attitudes and skills, such a positive association was less self-evident.

Very little empirical attention has been paid to the influences of characteristics of the (school) environment on citizenship competences. Our date will allow us to consider two general school characteristics which influence the environment in which young people acquire citizenship experiences: the value system of the school and the degree of urbanisation. With regard to the school's value system, the degree of homogeneity was expected to relate to the citizenship competences of adolescents. For example, students in schools with a more heterogeneous value system due to a heterogeneous student population could be hypothesised to be more competent citizens than students in schools with a more homogenous value system due to a homogeneous student population (Veugelers and De Kat 2003). On the basis of Putnam's work (2000), however, the opposite could also be hypothesised: The development of bonding social capital can be seen as a prerequisite for being able to bridge between various cultural groups. According to this hypothesis, more favourable conditions exist for the development of citizenship competences in a community with a relatively homogeneous value system due to shared values and mutual acceptance, which can lead to a greater sense of belonging (Dijkstra and Miedema 2003) and bridging social capital. In the pillarised Dutch society of today, shared religious orientation (i.e., denomination) can foster homogeneity of values at

the school. In Islamic schools, for example, the correspondence between the school's denomination and the students' religion is relatively large, followed by protestant schools and then by Roman Catholic schools. Non-denominational public schools are the most heterogeneous schools with respect to religion. Schools can thus be *rank ordered* by denomination indicating homogeneity of values, which allows us to explore the relations between homogeneity of values and citizenship competences.

With respect to the degree of urbanisation, the question is whether or not students from schools in more urban areas show different citizenship competences than students from schools in less urban areas. Again, opposing hypotheses are conceivable. On the one hand, it can be argued that the citizenship of adolescents will be greater in urban areas. The 'city' generally requires young people to deal with cultural differences and social tensions, and this may foster increased insight into social processes (Gordon 2003, Zhou 2003). On the other hand, it is plausible that citizenship competences develop better in a more homogeneous geographic area where relatively strong social cohesion facilitates social capital (Putnam 2000, Zwaans *et al.* 2008).

3. Method

3.1. Respondents

The present study of the citizenship competences of young people is part of a large-scale cohort study of students from primary and secondary education in the Netherlands (*Cohort Onderzoek Onderwijsloopbanen, COOL*). The initial measurement for this study was in 2008.[2] The sample reported on here is a representative sample of the population of students in sixth grade ($N \approx 12,000$) and students in ninth grade ($N \approx 4000$). The students come from about 550 primary schools and 80 secondary schools. Table 1 presents an overview of the characteristics of the sample.

3.2. Instruments

Citizenship competences were measured using the Citizenship Competences Questionnaire (for an extensive description, see Ten Dam *et al.* 2011). In this questionnaire, young people's citizenship is operationalised into citizenship competences for four social tasks which are needed during daily practice: acting democratically, acting in a social responsible manner, dealing with conflicts and dealing with differences. The questionnaire consists of 94 items distributed across four scales reflecting the (1) knowledge, (2) attitudes, (3) skills and (4) reflection components of citizenship competences. The items composing these scales refer in turn to subscales which situate the specific component within the context of the four social tasks (17 in total).[3]

The knowledge items involved a multiple-choice test with three response options for each question (dichotomous level of measurement) and the instruction to indicate *which option best answers the question*. Example: *All children have a right to*: (a) *an allowance*, (b) *choose who they want to live with* or (c) *education* (correct answer is 'c.')

Attitudes, skill and reflection were assessed using survey items rated along four-point Likert scales. The general question accompanying the attitude items is

Table 1. Distribution of students from the COOL sample ($N = 16,000$) according to student and school characteristics.

	N	%
Gender		
Boys	7984	50
Girls	7899	50
Educational level		
Primary	12,105	76
Secondary	3845	24
Cognitive level (recommended by the teacher (primary education students) or actual school level (secondary education students))[a]		
Pre-vocational (lower)	4201	33
Pre-vocational (upper)	2885	23
Pre-professional	3005	24
Pre-university	2514	20
Social-economic status (maximum level of education parents)		
Vocational (lower level)	2948	20
Vocational (upper level)	6417	44
Professional/university	5097	35
Ethnic origin		
Student with a Dutch mother	10,160	73
Student with a non-Dutch mother	3709	27
Maternal country of birth		
Netherlands	10,160	73
Turkey	982	7
Morocco	888	6
Suriname	396	3
Dutch Antilles	151	1
East Europe and other Western countries	423	3
Remaining non-Western countries	869	6
Degree of urbanisation		
Very strongly urban	3414	21
Strongly urban	4145	26
Moderately urban	3321	21
Little urban	5055	32
Homogeneity of values (denomination)[b]		
Public	5285	38
Catholic	4990	35
Protestant	3518	25
Islamic	312	2

[a]Secondary education in the Netherlands consists of four different levels: Pre-vocational secondary education, junior general secondary education, senior general secondary education and pre-university education. The data for those primary school students who received a mixed secondary school recommendation was not included in the construction of the variable cognitive level.
[b]The data from schools with other denominations – such as Jewish or mixed – have not been included in the construction of this variable.

How well does this statement apply to you? Sample statement: *I like knowing something about different religious beliefs.* The basic form of the skill (i.e., self-efficacy) questions is: *How good are you at...* and then, for instance: *finding a solution which everyone is satisfied with for a disagreement?* The basic form of the reflection questions is: *How often do you think about*, for instance, *whether students are listened to at your school?*

Table 2 presents the reliability coefficients, mean scores and standard deviations for the components and subscales.

3.3. Analyses

To determine whether multiple levels of variation should be considered, intraclass correlation coefficients[4] and design effects were calculated (ANOVA, clustered at school level) for the dependent variables (Snijder and Bosker 1999). For 611 schools

Table 2. Reliability coefficients (Cronbach's α), mean scores and standard deviations for the components and subscales from the Citizenship Competences Questionnaire for adolescents 11 to 16 years from the COOL sample ($N = 15{,}965$).

	Number of items	Cronbach's α	Mean score	Standard deviation
Knowledge component	27	0.83	0.77	0.18
Acting democratically	8	0.67	0.80	0.22
Acting in socially responsible manner	6	0.54	0.80	0.22
Dealing with conflicts	7	0.62	0.71	0.25
Dealing with differences	6	0.63	0.77	0.24
Attitude component	24	0.90	2.96	0.43
Acting democratically 1: Desire to hear others	3	0.69	3.30	0.50
Acting democratically 2: Critical contribution	3	0.65	2.75	0.65
Acting in socially responsible manner	6	0.68	3.10	0.47
Dealing with conflicts	6	0.79	2.84	0.54
Dealing with differences	6	0.85	2.84	0.62
Skill component	15	0.85	3.04	0.39
Acting democratically 1: Own opinion	3	0.72	3.14	0.55
Acting democratically 2: Opinions of others	3	0.68	3.01	0.54
Acting socially responsible, dealing w/conflict	5	0.76	2.98	0.50
Dealing with differences	4	0.67	3.04	0.48
Reflection component	28	0.94	2.27	0.56
Acting democratically	6	0.80	2.34	0.63
Acting in socially responsible manner	6	0.84	2.20	0.69
Dealing with conflicts	8	0.89	2.49	0.67
Dealing with differences	8	0.85	2.02	0.67

with each a participating class with an average group size of 26, an intraclass correlation coefficient of 0.03 was found and a design effect of 1.75 was found for each component. Given these values, it was not necessary to conduct multilevel analyses.

Analyses of variance were conducted on the differences per category for the scores of the students on the background variables and post hoc comparisons were undertaken (Bonferroni for equal variances, Dunnet's T for unequal variances). Knowing that the background variables are interrelated, partial correlation analyses were conducted for the dichotomous nominal variables and ordinal variables. To gain insight into the magnitude of the existing correlations, the effect sizes for the different results were calculated. For the differences between two groups, Cohen's d was used. The rule of thumb to interpret the effect sizes accompanying the (partial) correlations (r) is: 0.10 small, 0.30 medium and 0.50 large effect.

4. Results

In Table 3, the means, standard deviations and effect sizes for the four components of citizenship (knowledge, attitude, skill, and reflection) are presented according to the various background variables.

The average scores on the component scales frequently differed significantly from each other for different groups of students. In Table 4, the partial correlations in which the interrelations between the background variables have thus been controlled for are presented.

With respect to gender, the girls scored higher than the boys across the board on knowledge, attitudes, skills and reflection. Examining the results per component per social task (i.e., per subscale; not presented), the girls consistently scored higher than the boys on all of the subscales with the exception of three: 'Attitude acting democratically 2', 'Skill acting democratically 1' and 'Reflection acting democratically'. Adolescent boys and girls in the Netherlands thus consider themselves equally willing to make a critical contribution, almost equally capable of putting forth their own opinions and think almost just as often about subjects concerned with acting democratically. The effects of gender on the other subscales were medium to small. The significant difference found for the subscale 'Knowledge acting democratically' ($r = 0.11$; mean girls 0.81, mean boys 0.78) was the smallest. The greatest differences occurred for 'Knowledge dealing with conflicts' ($r = 0.25$; mean girls 0.77, mean boys 0.66) and 'Attitude acting in a socially responsible manner' ($r = 0.29$; mean girls 3.22, mean boys 2.97).

Students in secondary education are found to score higher on the knowledge test than those in primary education. From the analyses of the subscales (not presented here), this effect appeared to concentrate itself on 'Knowledge acting democratically' ($d = 0.28$, $r = 0.16$) and 'Knowledge dealing with differences' ($d = 0.31$, $r = 0.18$). Students in secondary education scored an average of 0.11 and 0.14 higher on these knowledge subscales than students in primary education. The average scores for the attitude and reflection components were significantly lower in secondary education than in primary education. This was also the case for the subscales except for 'Attitude acting democratically 1': The students in primary and secondary education appeared to equally value hearing everyone's voice.

Table 3. Means (standard deviations) and effect sizes (d) for components of citizenship competence per background variable ($N = 16,000$).

	Knowledge component	Attitude component	Skill component	Reflection component
Total group	0.77 (0.18)	2.96 (0.43)	3.04 (0.39)	2.27 (0.56)
Gender				
Boys*	0.74 (0.19)	2.86 (0.43)	2.97 (0.40)	2.19 (0.56)
Girls	0.80 (0.16) $d = 0.17$	3.06 (0.40) $d = 0.24$	3.10 (0.37) $d = 0.17$	2.36 (0.56) $d = 0.15$
Educational level				
Primary*	0.75 (0.18)	3.00 (0.42)	3.04 (0.40)	2.32 (0.57)
Secondary	0.82 (0.17) $d = 0.20$	2.81 (0.41) $d = -0.23$	3.01 (0.35) $d = -0.04$	2.12 (0.51) $d = -0.19$
Cognitive level				
Pre-vocational (lower)*	0.68 (0.18)	2.91 (0.44)	3.02 (0.42)	2.25 (0.56)
Pro-vocational (upper)	0.74 (0.17) $d = 0.17$	2.94 (0.43) $d = 0.03$	3.01 (0.40) $\boldsymbol{d = -0.01}$	2.27 (0.58) $\boldsymbol{d = 0.02}$
Pre-professional	0.82 (0.14) $d = 0.42$	2.96 (0.42) $d = 0.06$	3.04 (0.38) $\boldsymbol{d = 0.03}$	2.26 (0.56) $\boldsymbol{d = 0.01}$
Pre-university	0.88 (0.12) $d = 0.67$	3.02 (0.39) $d = 0.13$	3.08 (0.34) $d = 0.08$	2.30 (0.53) $d = 0.04$
SES				
Maximum vocational (lower)*	0.69 (0.18)	3.00 (0.44)	3.05 (0.42)	2.35 (0.58)
Maximum vocational (upper)	0.76 (0.17) $d = 0.17$	2.94 (0.42) $d = -0.07$	3.02 (0.39) $d = -0.04$	2.25 (0.57) $d = -0.09$
Professional/university	0.82 (0.16) $d = 0.32$	2.99 (0.41) $\boldsymbol{d = -0.01}$	3.05 (0.37) $\boldsymbol{d = 0.00}$	2.29 (0.54) $d = -0.05$
Ethnic origin				
Dutch mother	0.78 (0.17)	2.93 (0.41)	3.01 (0.38)	2.23 (0.55)
Non-Dutch mother	0.71 (0.18) $d = -0.17$	3.10 (0.42) $d = 0.21$	3.12 (0.41) $d = 0.14$	2.44 (0.57) $d = 0.19$
Country of birth mother				
Netherlands*	0.78 (0.17)	2.93 (0.41)	3.01 (0.38)	2.23 (0.55)
Turkey	0.68 (0.17) $d = -0.29$	3.09 (0.41) $d = 0.20$	3.12 (0.41) $d = 0.14$	2.46 (0.57) $d = 0.21$
Morocco	0.70 (0.18) $d = -0.23$	3.19 (0.42) $d = 0.31$	3.19 (0.42) $d = 0.23$	2.53 (0.59) $d = 0.26$
Suriname	0.73 (0.17) $d = -0.15$	3.07 (0.41) $d = 0.17$	3.09 (0.42) $d = 0.10$	2.44 (0.56) $d = 0.19$
Dutch Antilles	0.71 (0.19) $d = -0.19$	3.04 (0.40) $d = 14$	3.05 (0.40) $\boldsymbol{d = 0.05}$	2.37 (0.55) $d = 0.13$

Table 3 (*Continued*)

	Knowledge component	Attitude component	Skill component	Reflection component
East and West Europe	0.75 (0.19) $d = -0.08$	3.02 (0.42) $d = 0.11$	3.10 (0.40) $d = 0.12$	2.40 (0.56) $d = 0.15$
Other non-West Europe	0.74 (0.18) $d = -0.11$	3.07 (0.41) $d = 0.17$	3.10 (0.41) $d = 0.11$	2.38 (0.55) $d = 0.14$
Degree of urbanisation				
Very strongly urban*	0.75 (0.18)	3.06 (0.43)	3.11 (0.41)	2.42 (0.58)
Strongly urban	0.77 (0.17) $d = 0.06$	2.95 (0.43) $d = -0.13$	3.05 (0.39) $d = -0.05$	2.27 (0.56) $d = -0.13$
Moderately urban	0.77 (0.19) $d = 0.05$	2.91 (0.42) $d = -0.18$	2.99 (0.38) $d = -0.15$	2.22 (0.56) $d = -0.18$
Little/non-urban	0.78 (0.17) $d = 0.09$	2.92 (0.41) $d = -0.25$	3.00 (0.38) $d = -0.14$	2.21 (0.54) $d = -0.19$
Homogeneity of values				
Public*	0.75 (0.18)	2.99 (0.43)	3.05 (0.41)	2.32 (0.58)
Catholic	0.77 (0.18) $d = 0.06$	2.95 (0.42) $d = -0.05$	3.04 (0.39) $\boldsymbol{d = -0.01}$	2.26 (0.56) $d = -0.05$
Protestant	0.78 (0.17) $d = 0.09$	2.91 (0.42) $d = -0.09$	2.98 (0.39) $d = -0.09$	2.21 (0.54) $d = -0.10$
Islamic	0.70 (0.18) $d = -0.14$	3.17 (0.42) $d = 0.21$	3.20 (0.42) $d = 0.18$	2.58 (0.60) $d = 0.22$

Note: Significant differences in the means per background variable; non-significant values in bold.
*Comparison group.

Table 4. Partial correlations of citizenship components with background variables of (1) gender, (2) educational level, (3) cognitive level, (4) SES, (5) ethnic origin, (6) degree of urbanisation, and (7) homogeneity of values (correction per variable in row 1 for the other variables in row 1) ($N = 16,000$).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Knowledge	0.21	0.13	0.41	0.06	−0.05	0.03	**−0.00**
Attitudes	0.26	−0.14	0.12	0.03	0.16	−0.04	**−0.02**
Skills	0.16	**−0.01**	0.08	**0.03**	0.12	−0.05	**−0.03**
Reflection	0.16	−0.12	0.06	**0.01**	0.11	−0.07	**−0.02**

Note: All significant values significant at the level of $p < 0.005$; non-significant values in bold.

The cognitive level of the students related to all four components of citizenship. The higher the cognitive level of the student, the higher the student's score on the knowledge component and – although to a lesser extent – the higher his or her attitude, skill and reflection scores. Exceptions were the subscales of 'Skill acting in a socially responsible manner and dealing with conflicts' and 'Reflection acting democratically'.

The variable SES only exerted a very small but positive partial effect on citizenship knowledge and attitudes.

With regard to ethnic origin, the results showed the students with non-Dutch (immigrant) mothers to have slightly less citizenship knowledge than the students with Dutch mothers; the subscale correlations (not presented here) showed this to only concern 'Knowledge dealing with differences' ($r = -0.05$). In contrast, immigrant students generally estimated their attitudes, skills and reflection within the domain of citizenship higher than non-immigrant students. The effects of ethnic origin on the attitude, skill and reflection subscales can thus be seen to be small but positive (about 0.10) with 'Attitude acting democratically 2' (Desire to make a critical contribution) ($d = 0.20$, $r = 0.15$) and 'Attitude dealing with differences' ($d = 0.28$, $r = 0.20$) showing higher scores: Immigrant students reported being somewhat *more* willing on average to make a critical contribution to society and were somewhat *more* positive on average about handling cultural and religious differences than non-immigrant students. The subscale analyses (not presented here) showed higher scores on 'Attitude dealing with differences' for all groups of immigrant students. The group of students with Antillean mothers stood out in particular because this group *only* scores relatively higher on 'Attitude dealing with differences', 'Reflection acting democratically' and 'Reflection dealing with differences'. The remainder of the immigrant students scored relatively higher on virtually all of the attitude, skill and reflection subscales than non-immigrant students.

For degree of urbanisation, frequency analyses (not reported here) showed relatively more of the immigrant students to be living in urban areas than in rural areas. The degree of urbanisation had only a small effect on citizenship competences – even after ethnic origin was controlled for. The average scores for knowledge were somewhat higher and the average scores for attitudes, skills and reflection were somewhat lower to the extent that the school was located in a more rural area.

Homogeneity of values did not affect the students' citizenship competences significantly. The relevant differences in Table 3 can thus be attributed to correlations

with other background variables. For example, the category of Islamic schools encompassed predominantly immigrant students in primary education while the category of Protestant schools encompassed a relatively high percentage of non-immigrant students in secondary education. It is nevertheless striking that a small but positive partial effect manifested itself for the subscale 'Attitude dealing with differences' ($r = 0.06$, results not presented here): To the extent that the value system of the school is more homogenous, students tend to be more positive about dealing with cultural and religious differences.

5. Conclusions

'Strong democracies' (Barber 1984) ask their citizens to participate in society. In a multicultural and plural society, citizenship education should therefore not be aimed so much at monocultural citizenship but at the competences needed to participate in social and political life with respect for the participation of other people. For democracy 'in the making', one should be able to put forth one's own opinion and to hear other voices; to raise fundamental questions about the political order and explore strategies for change; and to coexist with others in a socially accepted and responsible way. In the present research, we examined the democratic citizenship of young people when situated daily social practice and operationalised in terms of the competences which students need to adequately fulfil specific social tasks. While recent studies are paying greater attention to the social aspects of young people's citizenship than has previously been the case (e.g., Torney-Purta *et al.* 2001, Schulz *et al.* 2010), the social domain has been given very little empirical study. In the present article, the citizenship of adolescents was studied within the context of education. The influences of the students' cognitive level, the homogeneity of the school's value system (i.e., religious homogeneity) and the degree of urbanisation for the school in addition to the gender, age, SES and ethnic backgrounds if the students on their citizenship were examined.

As we expected, girls scored higher than boys on almost all attitudes and skills within the political domain of citizenship (cf. Torney-Purta *et al.* 2001, Amadeo *et al.* 2002, Cleaver *et al.* 2005, Ireland *et al.* 2006, Kerr *et al.* 2007, Schulz *et al.* 2010) but also on most of the attitudes and skills within the social domain of citizen. Given that girls have been shown to generally function in a socially more acceptable manner than boys (Rose and Rudolph 2006), it did not come as a surprise that a relatively large gender difference presented itself for particularly the subscale 'Attitude acting in a socially responsible manner' with such items as apologizsng when mistaken and taking an interest in someone who is sick. The boys and girls in our study nevertheless did not differ with regard to the capacity to articulate one's own opinion ('Skill acting democratically') or a desire to make a critical contribution to society ('Attitude acting democratically').

The present findings regarding the citizenship knowledge of Dutch boys and girls differ in some remarkable ways from the findings of the later International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS, Schulz *et al.* 2010). The ICCS data show girls to outperform boys with regard to citizenship knowledge *except* in the Netherlands while we found the girls we studied in the Netherlands to score *higher* than boys with regard to citizenship knowledge. We *also* found girls to contemplate issues related to citizenship more often than boys, and know better how to act best in particular social

situations. This is not simply related to the fact that girls generally achieve better than boys as the gender difference is even stronger after control for the cognitive level of the students. The higher level of citizenship knowledge found among the Dutch girls compared to the Dutch boys in our study might be explained by our conceptualisation of 'democratic citizenship' with a greater emphasis on the social domain than in other studies. The finding of the largest difference between the girls and boys on the knowledge subscale 'Knowledge dealing with conflicts' (with the girls performing better than the boys) provides support for this explanation. In keeping with this, the effects of gender were less strong and sometimes non-significant for the subscales concerned with acting democratically (i.e., the most politically oriented items in our study). All of this raises the question of whether our findings might indicate that students have gender specific orientations towards democratic citizenship. In future research, it is worthwhile to investigate girls' and boys' interpretations of 'good citizenship', and both their motives, capacities and opportunities to act as a citizen in both the more *socially* and *politically* oriented parts of their daily school lives. This might even lead to differential strategies for empowering students towards active and participative citizenship (cf. Biesta 2011).

Pertaining to age differences, the adolescents in secondary education were only found to score higher than the adolescents in primary education on citizenship knowledge in the present study. This is consistent with the findings of CIVED and CELS, but the effect in our study was not particularly large. For attitude and reflection, moreover, small *negative* effects of age were found, which is in keeping with the results of the NFER study which showed a dip for various aspects of citizenship around the age of 14–15 years. For citizenship skills, no significant age differences were found. From a developmental psychological point of view, this pattern of findings can be interpreted as reflecting puberty effects (e.g., rebellion against social conventions, rebellion against a community orientation, Eisenberg and Morris 2004). From a critical pedagogical point of view, the issues of social injustice and the power relations within society also stand out (McLaren 1994, Giroux 2001). Societal relations structure the participation of individuals in society. Having to follow rules without explanation, discussion or a voice in things can – particularly among older adolescents – prompt disengagement (Lawy and Biesta 2006). In fact, the disengaging power relations in schools and the psychological development of the adolescent might reinforce one another, thus resulting in the secondary school as an environment where it actually is rather difficult to learn about and practice citizenship. There may also frequently be a conflict of values. For citizenship education, these dilemmas must be recognised and means sought to guide the citizenship practices of adolescents within the school context and help them agree or disagree and thus deal with the different voices (Banks 2004) while not losing the spirit for active and constructive engagement in society throughout their school career (Barber 1984).

The relation between the students' cognitive level and citizenship knowledge was the largest relation found in our study. Only a small effect of cognitive level on the reflection component of citizenship was found. Higher achieving adolescents therefore know more about citizenship than lower achieving adolescents but do not necessarily think more about it. Cognitive level also showed small positive effects on citizenship attitudes and, to a lesser extent, citizenship skills. It appears, thus, that

cognitive level coincides with a broader interest in social issues concerned with citizenship and a desire to know more about the mechanisms at work there. One must nevertheless keep in mind that the Dutch educational system is characterised by an *immense* degree of differentiation. After primary school, students are selected for admission to different types of schools (i.e., educational tracks). Several studies have shown that the knowledge component of citizenship – including critical thinking skills – is emphasised in the higher tracks while the elementary rules for social interaction and adaptation are emphasised in the lower tracks (Ten Dam and Volman 2003, Leenders*et al*. 2008, Netjes *et al*. 2011). On the basis of the present study, however, it is not possible to distinguish cognitive level as a proxy for intelligence from the role of education. But future research should certainly try to do this.

The educational level of the parents (i.e., SES) only showed a small effect on citizenship knowledge. This result contradicts the findings of the CIVED and NFER studies but is in line with the recent Dutch ICCS results regarding the socio-economic backgrounds of students operationalised in terms of parental occupational status. Compared to other ICCS countries, thus, the effect of SES on civic knowledge in the Netherlands is relatively weak (Schulz *et al*. 2010, p. 78). This finding calls for further research on the extent to which and how differences in students' civic knowledge relate to the social structure and (in)equality of the society in which they live (Wilkinson and Pickett 2010) and/or the characteristics of the educational system they grow up in (Van de Werfhorst and Mijs 2010).

The immigrant adolescents scored somewhat lower on citizenship knowledge than the other adolescents in our study. The ICCS showed a similar result after control for SES, including the Netherlands with a slightly greater difference. Our study further showed the immigrant adolescents and particularly the Turkish/Moroccan adolescents to score higher on the attitude, skill and reflection components of citizenship. If a cultural factor plays a role, then it appears to concern something that all Dutch immigrant groups have in common. In an ongoing Dutch Cohort Study, in which the task motivation and academic self-confidence of students is being examined, it has been found that immigrant students are generally less self-critical and more optimistic about their capacities than non-immigrant Dutch students (cf. Huynh and Fuligni 2008, Driessen *et al.* 2009). However, it is *also* possible that immigrant students accumulate relatively more experiences with at least some of the social tasks examined in these studies. Their relatively high scores on the subscales 'Attitude dealing with differences' and 'Attitude desire to make a critical contribution' support this interpretation. The question which then arises is whether the contemporary political climate in the Netherlands – in which the Islam is strongly criticised by some – affects the citizenship beliefs and actions of immigrant and non-immigrant adolescents. In forthcoming longitudinal analyses of the development of citizenship competences, this question will thus be answered: How do political and societal developments affects the attitudes of different cohorts of students over time?

Adolescents from highly urban areas – even after control for the influences of ethnic origin – score higher than adolescents from less urban areas on citizenship attitudes, skills and reflection. This again suggests that young people in an environment where diversity is clearly present perceive their skills and attitudes in the areas of acting democratically, acting in a socially responsible manner, dealing

with conflict and dealing with differences more positively than others. They appear to have more experiences with these areas of citizenship and thus be required to think about these areas of citizenship more than other students – presumably as a result of the environment in which they are living (cf. Gordon 2003, Zhou 2003). The results pertaining to the value systems of the schools, however, do *not* support the presupposition that a heterogeneous living environment necessarily fosters greater citizenship. The question, then, is whether this lack of an effect stems from social tensions within a particular heterogeneous environment and the feelings of insecurity/danger that these tensions bring with them ... or not (cf. Putnam 2000). The results of our study thus call for more empirical research on the sometimes conflicting and obviously complex influences of relatively more or less heterogeneous living environments on citizenship and the development of citizenship competences among adolescents.

All in all, it can be concluded that the citizenship competences of adolescents relate to the individual characteristics of the adolescents and the characteristics of the environments in which they live to a small but significant extent. In further empirical research, some of the limitations on the present study should be addressed. While citizenship competence was operationalised in terms of knowledge, attitudes, skills and reflection, the interrelations between these components need to be examined in greater detail in future research. The present study was also based upon students' self-assessment of their attitudes, skills and reflections. Information about the perceptions of others – such as teachers and peers – is needed to complete this picture. Finally, the cross-sectional nature of the present study does not provide insight into the development of citizenship competence over time.

The implications of the present findings are, in our opinion, that we need more systematic empirical research on democratic citizenship from not only a political but also a social perspective and more large-scale quantitative but also in-depth qualitative studies. Moreover, more research into the development of the citizenship competences of young people is needed as well as more detailed study of how teachers and schools can deal with the challenges of creating an environment which promotes the development of citizenship competences. Our findings raise several issues to be addressed in future research more specifically. First, it is unlikely that a general pattern holds for the citizenship development of all adolescents. The discernment of qualitatively and/or quantitatively distinct developmental patterns is therefore an important research endeavour. The interplay between personal and environmental factors should also be further examined in order to elucidate their influence on the development of citizenship among adolescents. Does the appearance of power relations in schools affect the citizenship competences of students? Does an environment of many equals foster relatively greater citizenship development or is it the case that a more ethnically and socially mixed population does this? Finally, it should be asked if we can even expect education to influence the citizenship competences of adolescents without taking critical cultural differences into account. For now and on the basis of the results of the present study, it can be concluded that the social domain of democratic citizenship can be fruitfully and empirically studied among adolescents. Additional empirical research is nevertheless needed along the lines of the present research in order to understand the development of citizenship in not only theory but also the daily school learning environment.

Notes

1. *The multicultural drama* is the title of an article by Paul Scheffer. It was published in a Dutch newspaper in 2000 and sparked the start of the public debate.
2. The COOL study is funded by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (*NWO*) and runs until 2016.
3. One would expect 16 subscales. However, the *attitude* items concerned with 'acting democratically' consist of two clearly interpretable factors, namely: 'desire to hear what everyone has to say' and 'desire to make a critical contribution'. The *skill* items concerning 'acting democratically' also consist of two factors: 'able to assert own opinion' and 'able to listen to the standpoints of others'. Alternatively, a high correlation was found between the items aimed at measuring 'skill – acting in a socially responsible manner' and 'skill – dealing with conflicts'. These two tasks thus concern substantively similar skills and were therefore combined into a single subscale: 'skills – acting in a socially responsible manner and dealing with conflicts' (Ten Dam *et al.* 2011).
4. Intraclass correlation coefficient, ρ_I = (between groups variance – within groups variance)/ (between groups variance + $[n' - 1]$ within groups variance) where n' stands for the harmonic mean group size. The design effect takes into consideration sample composition = $1 + (n - 1)\rho_I$. Rule of thumb: The effects of clustering in the data should be controlled for with an intraclass correlation coefficient of ≥ 0.4 or a design effect of > 2.

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