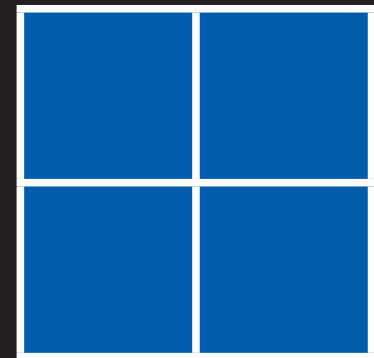


School Systems, Segregation and Civic Competences among Adolescents

Jan Germen Janmaat

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Abstract

This paper investigates whether civic competences among youngsters are linked to the social and ethnic composition of classrooms and whether these links are influenced by national education systems. Use is made of the IEA Civic Education Study among 14-year olds to investigate these relationships. We find that social segregation across classrooms is most pronounced in systems characterised by early selection and large school differentiation. Moreover, inequalities of civic competences across classes are also relatively large in such systems. The paper further finds that the social composition of the classroom primarily affects the cognitive component of civic competences (knowledge and skills). This relationship is influenced by national education systems: the less a system groups pupils on the basis of ability and the more its schools are homogenous, the weaker the link between classroom social status and civic knowledge and skills will be. However, similar regularities are not found for the attitudinal and behavioural components of civic competences. Both the social and the ethnic composition of classrooms are related in different ways to attitudes and behaviours depending on the outcome under investigation. Furthermore, these relations show no consistent pattern across education systems. I did find a positive relation between ethnic diversity and ethnic tolerance in three of the four systems, supporting the contact perspective on inter-ethnic relations. This link, however, could not be observed in the system characterizing the Mediterranean countries. In view of these inconsistent relations with regard to civic attitudes and behaviours, it is recommendable that future research remains critical of any scholars assuming that these attitudes and behaviours form a coherent syndrome of civic culture.

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Introduction

A concern among policy makers and social scientists that young people have become increasingly disengaged from society and democratic politics has sparked a renewed scholarly interest in the formation of civic attitudes. Today there is a rapidly developing body of literature highlighting a multitude of conditions, across various levels, influencing civic competences. Some studies focus on individual-level determinants of civic attitudes (on educational attainment, see, for instance, Nie, Junn and Stehlik-Barry, 2004 and Hagendoorn, 1999; on gender, see Verba, Brady and Schlozman, 1995 and Hooghe and Stolle, 2004; on ethnic background, see Rice and Feldman, 1997). Other studies are primarily interested in political socialization and in the ways civic education and other characteristics of the education process in schools can foster civic values and behaviour (for the effects of the formal curriculum, see Langton and Jennings, 1968; Niemi and Junn, 1998; for the effect of a participatory classroom climate and other non-conventional ways of promoting civic engagement, see Morgan and Streb, 2001 and Torney-Purta, 2004).

Invariably, however, these studies focus on *levels* of civic competence. Few have investigated *dispersions* of attitudes and behaviours such as tolerance, participation, trust and solidarity. This is surprising as policy makers seem to be at least as interested in the distributions of civic attitudes as in their levels. There is for instance growing concern about the alleged development of pockets of alienation, inter-group hostility and disorder in large urban centres in western countries. Typically, these pockets are associated with ethnically diverse low status areas where the native majority and various immigrant communities live separate lives, and school and community life in general is strongly segregated along social and ethnic lines (see, for instance, the main observations and recommendations of Cattle Report (2001), which was commissioned by the British government following the racial disturbances in the Northern English towns of Bradford, Oldham and Burnley). In short, social and ethnic segregation is seen as an important driver of prejudice, distrust, and a sense of exclusion.

Interestingly, various OECD studies on student performance have found large differences between countries in degrees of school social segregation (OECD, 2001; OECD, 2002). These differences, moreover, appear to be related to characteristics of national education systems: countries in which schools select students on the basis of ability and countries with a great

variety of schools in terms of status and profile showed much larger disparities between schools in social composition (i.e. a higher level of social segregation) than countries with single-type, mixed ability schools. Obviously, if it can be shown that some education systems are more successful than others in minimizing social and ethnic segregation, and that the social and ethnic composition of schools in these systems only have a marginal impact on civic competences, policy makers can come to grips with the problem. As they wield considerable power over the education system, they could reform it in ways that roll back segregation and, consequently, diminish the effect of school contextual conditions on civic competences.

In this paper, I therefore seek to explore the interrelations between education systems, social and ethnic segregation, and civic competences (understood here as referring to attitudes and behaviours as well as knowledge and skills). I will examine whether levels of social and ethnic segregation vary by education system, whether the distribution of civic competences across classrooms differs by education system, and whether the effect of the social and ethnic mix of schools on civic competences varies by education system. I use the IEA Civic Education Study on the civic knowledge, skills and attitudes of 14- and 15- year olds (i.e. the same age group that the aforementioned OECD studies examined) as data source and I perform a variety of statistical analyses (including multilevel analysis) to explore the main research questions.

I begin by reviewing the literature on the dependent variable of this study: civic competences. Subsequently, I elaborate on the relation between education systems and segregation and discuss several studies investigating the links between school characteristics, segregation and the formation of civic attitudes. The third section presents the used data source, the indicators selected to measure the variables of interest and the methods of analysis. Subsequently, I present the results of the analyses: education systems that do not allow grouping by ability show the lowest levels of social and ethnic segregation and the smallest disparities of civic competences between classrooms; the effect of social composition on civic knowledge and skills is absent in such education systems while it is very strong in other systems. However, the effect of social and ethnic composition on civic *attitudes* and *behaviours* does not vary in any predictable way across education systems. The conclusion sums up the main findings.

Section One: Civic Competences

What do we mean by civic competences? Put simply, civic competences refer to those skills, values, attitudes and behaviours which citizens must have to function well in a liberal democratic society. In fact, democracy itself is often said to depend on a citizenry displaying these qualities. In this view, democracy would not be sustainable if it had to rely on a disengaged and politically alienated population. This is a definition and point of view that few scholars would object to. As soon as we try to specify these competences, the disagreement starts. Some scholars attach great value to conventional ways of political and civic participation, such as voting and membership of a political party, a union or a denomination. In their view, these forms of participation act as a kind of training ground for democracy, fostering qualities like trust, moderation, solidarity, cooperation and engagement with public affairs (e.g. Putnam, 1993). From the 1960s, they argue, these traditional forms of participation have declined dramatically, primarily as a result of individualization, secularization and the privatization of forms of entertainment such as watching television (Bellah et al, 1985; Putnam, 2000), and this had negative consequences for democracy (Crozier, Huntington and Watanuki, 1975). Others, however, have argued that this decline has been compensated by the rise of new, more informal and egalitarian forms of collective action, which, as an alternative to voting and party membership, rely on strategies like petitions, demonstrations, boycotts and occupations (Lichterman, 1996). The new social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, advocating gender and racial equality, the protection of the environment and global peace, are seen as the typical representatives of these new forms of civic associations, making democratic systems more responsive to their electorates, not less (Inglehart, 1990). Yet again others see critical engagement as a key civic virtue, as that enables citizens to scrutinize public policy and to hold politicians accountable (Kymlicka, 2002). In this regard, Gamson (1968) noted that not trust but a healthy dose of scepticism towards politicians contributes to the quality of democracy.

Given the profound disagreement over the kind of competences that matter, one would expect scholars in the field of political culture to focus on a wide range of behaviours and attitudes. This, however, is not the case. Many studies exclusively focus on conventional ways of political participation and vertical (political) or horizontal (interpersonal) trust. Of course there is good reason to focus on these qualities. If people stop going to the ballot box and turn

away from politics, how can politicians come to know the policy preferences of the people and act as their true representatives? Equally, it would be difficult to envisage an effective democracy supported by a vibrant civic society of organised interest groups if people profoundly distrust both institutions and their fellow citizens.

Yet, this should not be an excuse for completely ignoring the other qualities considered to be supportive of democracy. Even scholars who are often put in the traditionalist camp, such as Putnam or Almond and Verba, acknowledge the value of these other qualities. Thus, Almond and Verba (1963) not only consider political trust and deference to authority as vital characteristics of a democratic citizenry, but also political efficacy. In other words, democracy also depends on a body of citizens who believe they have a voice in public matters. Similarly, Putnam (1993, 87-89) mentions civic equality, tolerance and solidarity, alongside participation and trust, as traits that characterize “the civic community”. Indeed, there does not seem to be a good reason to assume beforehand that participation and trust are more important than equality, tolerance and solidarity. For instance, a strong belief in the equality of all citizens regardless of race, ethnicity and religion can be a powerful incentive for citizens to engage in collective contentious action if they think that this principle is violated. It could well be argued that a democracy needs a citizenry with such strong convictions to prevent it from degenerating into a system privileging a certain ethnic or religious group. Equally, it is difficult to see how conflicts can be resolved peacefully if citizens cannot tolerate people with different ideas, lifestyles, interests and/or ethnic backgrounds. For this reason we will focus on *all* civic competences, both conventional and alternative forms of participation, both well-explored and more obscure attitudes, even if this makes the paper look rather expansive. In fact, a comprehensive approach towards civic competences has also characterized recent attempts by the European Commission to arrive at indicators of active citizenship and civic competence (see the reports by Hoskins et al, 2006; 2008).

The multidimensional nature of civic competences, moreover, provides an additional argument to adopt a comprehensive approach. There is now sufficient evidence showing that civic competences constitute a highly diverse set of qualities (Green et al, 2006; Jackman and Miller, 2005; Janmaat, 2006). Not only has this research shown that some competences are quite unrelated to each other, e.g. social trust and ethnic tolerance, other attitudes actually rule each other out, e.g. national pride and ethnic tolerance in some national contexts (Janmaat, 2008). Civic competences, moreover, vary in stability and cohere in different ways cross-

nationally and cross-regionally. All this makes the notion of a single enduring syndrome of civic culture prevailing in the western world questionable.

Section Two: Education Systems, Segregation and Civic Competences

Issues of social, ethnic and racial segregation in school systems have primarily been discussed with regard to student performance. Many studies have shown that school social and/or ethnic composition has an independent effect on student achievement in addition to that of the social or ethnic background of the individual student (for social composition, see Orfield, 1978, Coleman and Hoffer, 1987, Mostafa, 2009; for ethnic/racial composition, see Coleman, 1966 and Schofield, 2001). As noted in the introduction, recent OECD studies, based on the PISA 2000 (Program for International Student Assessment) test of literacy and numerical skills among 15-year olds, have found that countries differ considerably in degrees of school social segregation. Countries with the largest between school differences in social composition (i.e. with the highest degrees of social segregation) also showed the largest effects of social composition on student performance. In countries with minimal compositional differences between schools, by contrast, social composition was not significantly related to student outcomes. (OECD, 2001, 199).

Green et al (2006) note that these cross-country differences in social segregation are likely to be the product of variations in education systems. Systems which practice early selection on the basis of ability, they argue, are likely to show higher social segregation because of the close connection between academic ability and social background. Grouping by ability in this sense amounts to grouping by social background. Reviewing the education systems of OECD states, they distinguish four models: (1) the *full comprehensive model*, characterized by strict mixed-ability classes in nine-ten year all-through comprehensive schools combining primary and lower secondary education, (2) the *centralized model*, which is marked by strong central control, curricula encyclopaedism, strict achievement standards, grade repetition and some grouping by ability within otherwise comprehensive schools, (3) the *incomplete comprehensive model*, which has ability grouping, a large private sector, school choice and diversification policies as distinct features, and (4) the *early selection model*, in which pupils upon leaving primary education are assigned to different kinds of lower secondary schools

varying in status and orientation (vocational or academic) on the basis of ability. The first model can be found in the Nordic states and in Japan and South Korea, the centralized model in Southern Europe, the incomplete comprehensive model in the English-speaking countries and the early selection model in the German-speaking and Benelux countries. It turns out that countries with full comprehensive systems have substantially lower levels of social segregation than other countries (Green et al, 2006, 124; see also OECD, 2001, 199, 311). Thus, systems that minimize grouping by ability and differentiation between schools would indeed seem to do the best job in combating social segregation while systems that allow for greater school diversification and early tracking practices would seem to (unintentionally) exacerbate it.

This is not to say that the social composition of schools is solely brought about by system characteristics. As the OECD report points out, residential segregation is likely to be another important factor. It is thus conceivable that comprehensive systems with mixed ability classes still show relatively large between school differences in social composition because of high levels of residential segregation. School segregation could also be a reflection of (in)equalities in the wider society. In societies with relatively narrow distributions of qualifications, income and assets, the type of education system may well be less important in yielding varying degrees of school segregation than in more unequal societies.

Green et al (2006) further observe that the between-school variation in student performance found in PISA 2000 is smallest in countries with full comprehensive systems and largest in countries with early selection systems. Moreover, the effect of school social composition on student performance is largest in the last group of countries and smallest in the group with full comprehensive systems. Thus, a country's education system seems to affect both social segregation and inequalities of performance across schools directly and indirectly by influencing the relation between social composition and student performance. Green et al. (2006) caution, however, that their typology hides important differences within each category both in terms of system characteristics and in terms of performance outcomes. Thus, the allocation of pupils to different types of lower secondary schools starts already at age 10 in Germany while this occurs one or two years later in the other countries with an early selection system. Similarly, Italy's tracked upper secondary system begins as early as Grade 9, which puts the country somewhat halfway between the early selection countries and the Mediterranean states with their nominally comprehensive systems. Italy also displays the

highest social segregation, the largest between school differences in student performance and the strongest effect of social segregation on student performance of all the Mediterranean countries. Aside from these limitations, we consider the typology by Green et al to offer an informative and theoretically relevant description of education systems. In the results section we will assess how segregation, inequalities in civic competences across classrooms and the effect of social and ethnic composition on civic competences vary across the four different models identified by Green et al.

Given the importance attached to education systems and their effects on segregation and inequalities of student performance in the stratification literature, one would expect scholars exploring the formation of civic *attitudes* to address issues related to system characteristics and segregation as well. However, to our knowledge, research investigating simultaneously the interrelations between system characteristics, segregation and (inequalities of) civic competences is non-existent. Studies either focus on the link between some form of segregation and some civic attitude, or explore the link between education systems and/or types of schools and civic values directly, disregarding the impact of segregation.

Examples of the former include the many American studies suggesting a positive effect of desegregation on inter-racial tolerance and understanding (e.g. Ellison and Powers, 1994; Sigelman et al, 1996; Frankenberg et al, 2003; Holme et al, 2005). These studies are thus in line with the idea originally proposed by Allport (1954) that interethnic contact helps to overcome stereotypes and break down boundaries. However, in an extensive review study, Schofield (2001) observes that while many studies indeed point to the positive effects of ethnic mixing for out-group attitudes, others suggest the opposite or claim there is no effect, and again others argue that the effects are different for majority and minority groups. Further, the positive effect of desegregation may not extend to other civic attitudes. Indeed, a surge of recent political science studies on neighbourhood levels of social capital have found negative effects of ethnic diversity on trust, cooperation, solidarity and participation (e.g. Luttmer, 2001; Soroka, Johnston and Banting, 2004; Putnam, 2007), although others have not observed such effects once neighbourhood social background is taken into account (Letki, 2008; Tolsma et al, 2008).

Examples of studies exploring the link between systems/school type and civic competences include Stevens (2002) and van der Werfhorst (2007). Examining the socio-political attitudes

and lifestyles of pupils in Flanders, a region with an early selection system, Stevens found that students enrolled in vocational secondary schools displayed much higher levels of ethnocentrism, more negative attitudes towards democracy and a tougher stance on crime than those enrolled in general academic secondary schools. This suggests that disparities of civic attitudes could be particularly pronounced in systems that assign the lower achieving pupils to vocational tracks and the higher achieving ones to academic tracks at an early age. However, since Stevens restricted his study to Flanders he could not assess a possible system effect. Van der Werfhorst can be credited for being one of the few researchers – if not the only one so far – to look into the relationship between education systems and civic engagement. Using IALS data (International Adult Literacy Survey) he discovered that the difference in civic participation rates between vocationally trained people and people schooled in more general/academic tracks was larger in early selection systems than in comprehensive systems. In other words, early selection systems seem to widen civic disparities between people who followed different educational tracks. Yet, his study is also incomplete as it is confined to active civic participation and political interest as two among the many relevant civic competences.

In short, we are exploring a largely barren field. Particularly the link between education systems and ethnic segregation and the possibility that the effect of ethnic segregation on civic competences varies according to system characteristics seem not to have been addressed at all by existing research. This omission is remarkable in view of the close link between social and ethnic segregation. Particularly in large urban areas the two often go hand in hand, with low status schools enrolling disproportionately high numbers of ethnic minority children. It is thus reasonable to expect that system characteristics impacting on social segregation also leave their imprint on ethnic segregation. Moreover, theoretically it seems plausible that education systems shape the effect of both forms of segregation on civic orientations. It could, for instance, be argued that much of the segregation produced by systems allowing for grouping by ability is *involuntary*, in a sense that the less able pupils have never given their consent to be enrolled in low status schools in which they find themselves surrounded by equally socially and/or culturally disadvantaged children. As a result, these pupils are likely to experience a sense of exclusion and abandonment by the rest of society, culminating in feelings of alienation, distrust, hostility to out-groups and the development of counter-cultures. Inequalities of civic attitudes across schools could thus be expected to be much larger in states allowing schools to select on the basis of ability. In view of these

considerations and Green's classification of education systems, I arrive at the following hypotheses guiding subsequent analyses:

1. The more and the earlier a system selects on the basis of ability and the more diversified the school landscape is, the more pronounced the social and ethnic segregation across classrooms¹ in a country is;
2. The more and the earlier a system selects on the basis of ability and the more diversified the school landscape is, the wider the disparities of civic competences across classrooms in a country are;
3. The more and the earlier a system selects on the basis of ability and the more diversified the school landscape is, the larger the effect of the social and ethnic composition of classrooms on civic competences is.

Section Three: Data, Selection of Indicators and Methods of Analysis

I explore the relationships between education systems, segregation and civic competences by analyzing data of the IEA Civic Education Study (Torney-Purta et al, 2001). This study consists of a large scale test and survey conducted in April 1999 among a sample of 90,000 14-year old students and 4500 school principles in 28 countries worldwide. To this day, the Civic Education Study (henceforth Cived) has not enjoyed the same level of popularity as other large international surveys addressing civic values, such as the World Values Survey, the European Social Survey, the ISSP and the Eurobarometer. This is somewhat surprising given the quality of the data. Not only are the national samples much larger in the Cived study (around 3000 students in each country), the non-response is also significantly lower than in the other surveys. One of the advantages is that respondents of immigrant origin are represented to a sufficient degree. Given the nested nature of the national samples, with one class being selected in each of the 150-200 sampled schools, the Cived study further allows researchers to explore both contextual effects (such as social and ethnic composition and other properties of the class or school) and individual-level factors. The selected OECD states for the study are: Norway, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, French Belgium, Italy, Portugal, Greece, England, United States, Australia. By the end of the 1990s

¹ My measures of social and ethnic composition relate to the classroom and I adjusted the hypotheses accordingly (see ensuing section).

all of these states had become immigration countries, making issues of social and ethnic segregation in large urban areas particularly salient there.

Dependent Variables

I made use of both individual items and ready-made scales from the student database to measure a variety of civic competences as the dependent variables of this study. The Cived methodological experts who created these scales made sure that all scales are robust in terms of cross-country internal consistency and conceptual equivalence (Schultz and Sibberns, 2004). As we intend to cover as broad a range of civic competences as possible, we selected no less than two items and eight scales. The items concern trust in fellow citizens and voting intention. The scales concern the following attitudes, skills and behaviours: civic knowledge and skills; conventional citizenship; social movement citizenship; expected political participation; trust in government related institutions; gender equality; ethnic tolerance; cooperation/efficacy. In addition, a civic participation index composed of 15 items asking about participation in a range of clubs and organizations was devised. Separate analyses are conducted on all these 11 measures. Appendix 1 presents the composition and answer categories for all measures. Table 1 provides their descriptive statistics using the pooled data of all 13 countries. It shows that the distribution of values on most of the scales has a slight positive skew (i.e. tail to the right). The distribution of values on the social trust item is more evenly spread with the mean almost exactly in the middle of the 1-4 Likert scale.

Independent Variables

We draw on the aforementioned typology developed by Green et al (2006) to construct a measure of national education systems. This system variable has the values (1) full comprehensive systems, (2) centralized systems, (3) incomplete comprehensive systems, and (4) early selection systems. Although full comprehensive systems do not practice any grouping by ability and early selection systems do this more than any other system, we consider the systems variable to be categorical with qualitatively different values. Proceeding from the aforementioned hypotheses, we thus expect countries with full comprehensive systems to show the lowest levels of segregation, the smallest disparities of civic competences across classes and the smallest effect of compositional conditions on civic competences. Early

selection systems should exhibit the largest inequalities and effects. Countries with centralized and incomplete comprehensive systems are expected to fall in the middle.

As the Cived sample has a one class per school structure, we aggregated student data to the class level to create measures for our contextual variables of interest. Thus, we used the class average of the number of books at home as reported by the students as a proxy for social composition (henceforth *class status*).² Similarly, we employed the percentage of students in the class saying they always or almost always speak the language of the test (i.e. the language of the participating country) at home as a proxy for ethnic composition (henceforth *ethnic composition*).³ Finally, we calculated the class mean of a ready made scale reflecting opinions on whether there is an open climate for classroom discussion (henceforth *class climate*), which we will use as a control variable. Previous research by Torney-Purta (2004) on the same dataset has shown that an open climate of discussion is strongly correlated with civic attitudes. In her view, practices which encourage students to take part in debate and in decision-making, in other words ‘learning by doing’, are much more important in fostering civic-democratic competences than the formal curriculum.

We further included several individual level control variables in the analyses. In addition to the number of books at home (henceforth *social background*) and language spoken at home (henceforth *use of state language*), which may be seen as the individual-level counterparts of the class status and ethnic composition, these are gender and civic knowledge and skills. Other research has highlighted the importance of civic knowledge and skills for the attitudinal and behavioural component of civic competences (Galston, 2001; Delli, Carpi and Keeter, 1996). Civic knowledge and skills are thus understood as both a dependent and an independent variable in our analyses. Appendix 1 provides the full details of the independent variables. The descriptive statistics in Table 1 show that the distribution of values on ethnic composition is highly skewed towards the state language end. In other words, overwhelming

² We considered the number of books at home to be a more reliable indicator of social background than parental educational attainment as reported by students since previous research has shown that many youngsters do not know their parents educational background. Indeed, the Cived data showed a lot of missing values on the education level of mother and father.

³ Relying on language as an indicator of ethnic identity of course has its drawbacks (second generation migrant children who already assimilated to the language of the host country will not be captured for instance), but given the alternatives available (the “which best describes you” item on ethno-racial identity that was asked in just a handful of countries and the item on place of birth which only captures first generation migrants) we considered it the best option.

majorities report speaking the language of the country in most classes (the mean is 91%). Class status has a more balanced distribution of values.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum	N
<i>Dependent variables</i>					
Civic knowledge and skills	101.97	20.13	9.47	165.19	40782
Conventional citizenship	9.72	1.94	1.78	14.24	40174
Social movement citizenship	9.90	1.98	2.91	14.24	40059
Institutional trust	10.30	1.92	2.77	17.24	39855
Gender equality	10.45	2.10	2.81	13.51	39919
Ethnic tolerance	10.01	2.18	4.04	14.17	39623
Cooperation/efficacy	10.01	2.04	3.51	14.05	39244
Civic participation	18.29	2.40	15	30	34739
Social trust	2.61	.83	1	4	36998
Expected political participation	9.82	1.96	7.0	15.86	37584
Intention to vote	3.08	.92	1	4	36189
<i>Independent variables</i>					
Classroom status	4.31	.65	2.23	6	40977
Linguistic composition	.91	.13	.11	1	40972
Classroom climate	10.19	.87	6.02	16.78	40931
Social status	4.32	1.32	1	6	40435
Use of state language	2.89	.36	1	3	36508
Gender (51% girl)					40559

Methods of Analysis

The Intra-class Correlation Coefficients (ICCs) of social background and use of state language are utilised to assess levels of social and ethnic segregation. An ICC of some individual-level measure represents the outcome of the between classroom variance divided by the sum of the between-classroom and within-classroom variance. Its values range between 0 and 1 with 1 meaning that all the variation is between classrooms and not within classrooms (i.e. all students have the same score within classrooms) and 0 indicating that all classrooms have the same score and students vary maximally within classrooms. This measure, I believe, is ideal for measuring classroom segregation as it captures the differences both *between* and *within* classrooms. Obviously, the closer the ICC is to 1 on social background and use of state language, the more socially and ethnically segregated an

education system is considered to be. Moreover, measuring social segregation by means of ICCs enables one to use *continuous* variables as input measures (such as, in our case, social background and use of state language). By contrast, the Index of Dissimilarity, another widely used measure of segregation, has to rely on *binary* variables (see, e.g., Jenkins et al, 2008) as input measures to calculate segregation levels, and this obviously has the drawback of information loss. Especially with regard to social background, using a continuous variable is preferable since this input variable typically needs many values to capture the diversity of status differentials in the population. We will also use ICCs to explore the between-classroom variation in the eleven measures of civic competences.

To assess relations between the contextual conditions and civic competences I perform multilevel analysis (MLA), using Mlwin software. MLA is necessary because of the nested structure of the data. A structure of this kind, with students being nested in classes, classes in schools, and schools in countries, precludes the use of more conventional multiple regression techniques since these require that observations are independent. Using such techniques to analyze nested data would result in an underestimation of the standard errors of the contextual variables (and therefore an overestimation of the effects of these variables). Aggregating the dependent variables to the level of the independent contextual variables and performing a conventional regression analysis at that level is not a solution either as this makes it impossible among the independent variables to distinguish contextual effects from effects resulting from the aggregation of individual characteristics (Hooghe et al, 2007; Snijders and Bosker, 1999). Translated to the current study, this means that it is essential to assess whether class status and ethnic composition have an effect over and above that of the social and linguistic background of the individual student.

Because of the small number of observations at the national level (only 13 countries) we do not incorporate education systems as a national level property in our multilevel model. Instead, we construct a two level model consisting of individuals (L1) and classes (L2), and will perform analyses for each system separately. By comparing the effect of class status and ethnic composition on civic competences across education systems, we can address the third hypothesis.

Results and Discussion

We start by analyzing the relation between education systems and classroom segregation. Table 2 shows that the countries with full comprehensive systems have much lower social segregation levels than countries with other education systems. Social segregation, moreover, is most pronounced in the countries with early selection systems. There is considerable variation among countries within the full comprehensive, incomplete comprehensive and centralized systems (note, for instance the surprisingly high segregation level of Sweden⁴), but generally these findings are fully in line with the first hypothesis. Our findings, moreover, correspond closely to those of Jenkins et al (2008, 27). Using data of the 2000 and 2003 rounds of PISA and measuring segregation with the Dissimilarity Index, they also found countries with early selection systems (Hungary, Belgium, Germany and Austria) to have the highest levels of social segregation and countries with full-comprehensive systems (Norway, Scotland, Sweden, Japan, Denmark) to have the lowest. Cross-system patterns of *ethnic* segregation are quite different, however. The centralized systems group turns out to have the highest degree of ethnic segregation and the full comprehensive group comes in second. The groups of countries with early selection and incomplete comprehensive systems record the lowest segregation levels. This time, I only find substantial variation between countries within the full comprehensive group and again it is Sweden which shows a remarkably high level of segregation. Obviously, these patterns are not in agreement with the first hypothesis. Evidently mechanisms are at work that overwhelm the impact of ability grouping on ethnic segregation. Possibly, a pronounced residential segregation in combination with rigid school catchment areas constitutes such a mechanism.

Let us now see if inequalities between classes in civic competences are in line with hypothesis two. In other words, is there less between-class variation in the countries with full comprehensive systems than in those with early selection systems? Table 3 provides a resounding affirmative answer to this question with regard to civic knowledge and skills. Disparities across classes on this measure are by far the lowest in the full comprehensive group and the highest in the early selection group. As civic knowledge and skills obviously

⁴ Possibly, Sweden's remarkably high segregation levels are a legacy of the recent past when internal tracking practices were common in the country's schools. Sund (2006), for instance, reports that the Swedish government prohibited grouping by ability only in 1995. Schools may have continued these practices for several years after the ban.

Table 2. Social and Ethnic Segregation across Countries and Education Systems

	Social segregation: Between classroom variance in social background as proportion of total variance (ICC)	Ethnic segregation: Between classroom variance in use of state language as proportion of total variance (ICC)
Denmark	.05	.05
Finland	.06	.11
Norway	.07	.06
Sweden	.18	.17
<i>Full comprehensive</i>	.11	.14
Australia	.07	.10
England	.13	.09
United States	.16	.12
<i>Incomplete comprehensive</i>	.15	.11
Greece	.10	.*
Italy	.18	.12
Portugal	.20	.*
<i>Centralized</i>	.18	.19
Belgium (French)	.18	.09
Germany	.21	.10
Switzerland	.16	.10
<i>Early selection</i>	.19	.11

* The ICC could not be calculated for these countries because the between classroom variation was not significant.

depend a lot on general language skills, it is no surprise that the between-class variation in civic knowledge and skills corresponds almost exactly to the between-school variation in student literacy performance found in PISA 2000 (for the country scores of the latter, see OECD, 2002 and Green et al, 2006, 124). With regard to the other civic competences, i.e. civic attitudes and behaviours, the patterns are slightly less straightforward, in part because the between class variation is generally lower on these measures. On some measures the full comprehensive group actually shows quite high cross-class inequalities (e.g. on social movement citizenship, institutional trust and ethnic tolerance) relative to the countries with other systems. Yet, this group also shows the smallest between class inequalities on as many as six civic attitudes and behaviours. Thus, although the patterns on civic attitudes and

behaviours are not as clear as on civic knowledge and skills, they are also broadly in agreement with the second hypothesis: the school class matters less for civic skills and attitudes in systems with no grouping by ability.

Table 3. Between-Classroom Variation in Civic Competences (ICCs) by Education System

	Full compre- hensive	Incomplete compre- hensive	Centralized	Early selection
Civic knowledge and skills	.12	.36	.30	.41
Conventional citizenship	.02	.09	.09	.05
Social movement citizenship	.09	.07	.11	.09
Institutional trust	.11	.04	.08	.10
Gender equality	.04	.08	.09	.14
Ethnic tolerance	.11	.11	.08	.15
Cooperation/efficacy	.04	.05	.12	.07
Civic participation	.12	.10	.28	.14
Social trust	.04	.07	.12	.04
Expected political participation	.02	.07	.06	.06
Intention to vote	.08	.10	.11	.17

Finally, let us assess how education systems shape the relation between classroom composition and civic competences (hypothesis 3). Due to space constraints we cannot present multilevel analyses of all eleven civic outcomes. We selected those outcomes which have been shown by the studies reviewed earlier to be related to contextual conditions. This means that I continue the analysis with (1) civic knowledge and skills, (2) social trust, (3) civic participation, and (4) ethnic tolerance.

Table 4 presents the results of the multilevel analyses in a step-by-step manner, with columns 0-II providing respectively (0) the distribution of the variance across classes and individuals (i.e. the ICCs of Table 3), (I) a model including only the estimates of the compositional measures, and (II) the same model but this time with individual-level controls. The ICCs of Column 0 (also called the empty model) allow us to assess whether the variation at higher levels of analysis is large enough to warrant MLA. Considering Duncan and Raudenbusch’ (1999) rule of thumb that an ICC of .01, .04, .08, and .14 are commonly viewed as small, medium, large and very large, respectively, we can conclude that the between-class variations

on all four outcomes are indeed of a sufficient magnitude to justify MLA (with the possible exception of social trust in the full comprehensive and early selection group of countries).

Turning now to the model including only the compositional variables, we see that class status and ethnic composition are linked in quite different ways to the four civic outcomes. Not only do these relationships vary by civic outcome, they also differ across education systems. Ethnic composition, for instance, is positively linked to social trust but negatively linked to civic participation in the full comprehensive group (that is, the higher the proportion of speakers of the state language in a class, the more trusting the pupils are, but the less they participate). However, it is positively related to civic participation in the centralized group. The relations with civic knowledge and skills are an exception to this pattern: class status and ethnic composition show consistent positive relations with this outcome across education systems. Most importantly, however, it cannot be said that the effect of the two compositional measures on civic outcomes is any weaker in the full comprehensive group. Particularly, the effect of ethnic composition appears to be at least as strong if not stronger (in either a positive or negative way) in the full comprehensive group relative to the other groups. This obviously is not in accordance with the third hypothesis.

Do these relationships hold however once we start controlling for individual-level conditions (Column II)? We see that most relations remain unchanged. However, there are a few significant changes with respect to the impact of class status. Crucially, class status no longer has a significant effect on civic knowledge and skills in the full comprehensive group while it retains its positive effect in the other groups. Thus, the effect of class status on this outcome in the full comprehensive group is spurious, reflecting nothing more than the sum of the individual-level conditions. As this effect is thus weakest (or better non-existent) in the system with minimal grouping by ability, the cross-system pattern of relations is fully in line with the third hypothesis.

Table 4. Effects of Classroom Status and Ethnic Composition on Civic Competence Outcomes across Education Systems (coefficients of MLA)

	Civic knowledge and skills			Social trust			
	M 0	M I	M II	M 0	M I	M II	
Full comprehensive system	Classroom status	3.31 ***	-.544		-.049 *	-.052 *	
	Linguistic composition	25.21 ***	19.46 ***		.317 **	.307 **	
	Classroom climate	2.1 ***	2.31 ***		-.012	-.016	
	Gender (ref cat girl)		1.20 **			.06 **	
	Social status		3.61 ***			.003	
	Use of state language		6.35 ***			.045	
	Civic knowledge skills					.001	
	ICC classroom (L2)	.12			.04		
	Explained variance L2		31%	30.7%		0%	18.6%
	Explained variance L1		0%	5.5%		.7%	1.5%
N L1 (individuals)	12384	12334	10033	12384	11162	9126	
Incomplete comprehensive system	Classroom status	9.33 ***	6.17 ***		.08 **	.084 **	
	Linguistic composition	6.40	-1.41		.199	.15	
	Classroom climate	4.15 ***	3.98 ***		-.075 **	-.067 **	
	Gender (ref cat girl)		-1.06			.036	
	Social status		3.32 ***			.004	
	Use of state language		5.90 ***			.051	
	Civic knowledge skills					-.001	
	ICC classroom (L2)	.36			.07		
	Explained variance L2		48.4%	47.7%		18.7%	12.5%
	Explained variance L1		0.4%	6.5%		0%	0.5%
N L1 (individuals)	9185	9074	8518	9185	7966	7457	
Centralized system	Classroom status	11.26 ***	9.05 ***		-.009	-.008	
	Linguistic composition	7.51 **	2.66		1.11 ***	1.07 ***	
	Classroom climate	4.69 ***	4.64 ***		.037	.048 *	
	Gender (ref cat girl)		-.07			.10 ***	
	Social status		2.31 ***			.004	
	Use of state language		4.69 ***			1.07 ***	
	Civic knowledge skills					.00	
	ICC classroom (L2)	.30			.12		
	Explained variance L2		66.8%	65.9%		29.7%	25.9%
	Explained variance L1		0%	2.1%		5.9%	5.9%
N L1 (individuals)	10528	10489	9682	10528	9708	8939	
Early selection system	Classroom status	10.67 ***	8.76 ***		-.112 ***	-.132 ***	
	Linguistic composition	8.95 **	5.59		.215 *	.125	
	Classroom climate	4.33 ***	4.38 ***		.04 **	.039 **	
	Gender (ref cat girl)		2.18 ***			.000	
	Social status		1.93 ***			.009	
	Use of state language		3.45 ***			.088 **	
	Civic knowledge skills		-			.000	
	ICC classroom (L2)	.41			.04		
	Explained variance L2		69.5%	67.5%		12.5%	12.5%
	Explained variance L1		0%	4.3%		0%	0%
N L1 (individuals)	8880	8833	7928	8880	8157	7320	

(continued)

		Civic participation			Ethnic tolerance		
		M 0	M I	M II	M 0	M I	M II
Full comprehensive	Classroom status		.876 ***	.619 ***		.208 *	.148
	Linguistic composition		-1.38 ***	-1.43 ***		-2.54 ***	-2.90 ***
	Classroom climate		.140 **	.143 **		.318 ***	.266 ***
	Gender (ref cat girl)			-.428 ***			-1.15 **
	Social status			.192 ***			-.015
	Use of state language			-.07			-.628 ***
	Civic knowledge skills			.006 ***			.021 ***
	ICC classroom (L2)	.12			.11		
	Explained variance L2		35.7%	33.1%		28.9%	28.9%
	Explained variance L1		0%	6.1%		0%	12.9%
N L1 (individuals)	12384	10063	8285	12384	12085	9837	
Incomplete comprehensive	Classroom status		.301 **	-.085		-.152	-.320 **
	Linguistic composition		-.24	.018		-1.89 ***	-1.49 **
	Classroom climate		.361 ***	.285 ***		.205 **	.095
	Gender (ref cat girl)			-.635 ***			-.666 ***
	Social status			.305 ***			.043
	Use of state language			-.30 *			-.476 **
	Civic knowledge skills			.01 ***			.015 ***
	ICC classroom (L2)	.10			.11		
	Explained variance L2		21.8%	35.8%		15.8%	21.1%
	Explained variance L1		0%	3.5%		0%	4%
N L1 (individuals)	9185	8323	7901	9185	8469	7930	
Centralized systems	Classroom status		.203	-.035		-.035	-.254 ***
	Linguistic composition		4.511 ***	4.739 ***		1.892 ***	1.810 ***
	Classroom climate		.095	.122		.264 ***	.151 ***
	Gender (ref cat girl)			.015			-.409 ***
	Social status			.241 ***			.021
	Use of state language			-.202 **			-.129 *
	Civic knowledge skills			.00			.018 ***
	ICC classroom (L2)	.28			.08		
	Explained variance L2		28.1%	27.1%		50%	45.9%
	Explained variance L1		0%	1.5%		0%	4%
N L1 (individuals)	10528	9360	8688	10528	10376	9548	
Early selection	Classroom status		.687 ***	.360 **		.379 ***	.213 *
	Linguistic composition		-.389	-.303		-2.62 ***	-1.80 ***
	Classroom climate		-.111 *	-.119 *		-.143 *	-.243 ***
	Gender (ref cat girl)			-.311 ***			-.665 ***
	Social status			.280 ***			-.051
	Use of state language			-.023			-.99 ***
	Civic knowledge skills			.002			.019 ***
	ICC classroom (L2)	.14			.15		
	Explained variance L2		32.5%	39.6%		18.6%	28.9%
	Explained variance L1		0.7%	2.9%		0%	4.9%
N L1 (individuals)	8880	6951	6335	8880	7788	8687	

NB1: P < .05; ** P < .01; *** P < .001

NB2: The data were weighted by SENATE WEIGHT to ensure that each country contributes equally to the education system group it is part of.

NB3: The classroom level N is 569, 370, 462 and 431 for the four education system groups, respectively.

Class status also loses its significant positive link with *ethnic tolerance* in the full comprehensive group. At the same time the non-relation between class status and ethnic tolerance becomes a significant negative relation in the centralized and incomplete comprehensive groups, while class status maintains its positive link with this civic outcome in the early selection group (but at a reduced level of significance). Thus, the pattern of relations on ethnic tolerance also supports the hypothesis, although the contrasting ways in which class status is linked to this outcome across the three last named systems complicates the picture. Possibly, the negative link between class status and ethnic tolerance in the centralized and incomplete comprehensive groups is explained by a sense of competitive anxiety that pupils in high status classes experience to a stronger degree than those in low status classes, resulting in feelings of insecurity and hostility to outsiders. However, this begs the question why we do not also find a negative effect in the early selection states. Finally, it can be seen that the pattern of relations of class status with civic participation and social trust is *not* in agreement with the hypothesis since the effects remain unchanged and class status is thus at least as powerful an explanatory factor in the full comprehensive group as in the other groups.

In sum, class status shows the expected effect on civic knowledge and skills, but is related in quite different ways to each of the other civic outcomes across the four systems. This suggests that we need to distinguish between the cognitive (knowledge and skills), the behavioural (participation) and the affective aspects (attitudes) when investigating civic competences. The results thus provide additional evidence to my earlier claim that civic competences constitute a highly diverse set of qualities.

Remarkably, adding the individual level controls does not change any of the effects of ethnic composition. Ethnic composition, for instance, retains its strong tie with the four civic outcomes in the full comprehensive group. In fact, it is a more important condition in the full comprehensive group than in the other education system groups. As noted before, this is not at all in agreement with the third hypothesis. Possibly, the relative weakness of social divisions brings the ethnic cleavage more to the foreground in the Scandinavian countries (i.e. the full comprehensive group), accentuating differences between the native majority and immigrant minorities.

As it taps the ethno-cultural dimension, it is no surprise to find ethnic composition to be strongly correlated to ethnic tolerance across all systems. In three of the four systems the link

is negative, meaning that ethnically more diverse classes show higher ethnic tolerance scores everything else being equal. In other words, interaction with peers of a different ethnic background contributes to ethnic tolerance. This is an important finding which is in agreement with the aforementioned contact perspective. However, the centralized group ‘spoils’ the picture by showing a positive link between ethnic composition and ethnic tolerance. Furthermore, we find evidence of a reverse direction with regard to social trust. In the full comprehensive and centralized group, pupils are less trusting in more diverse classes. This is in agreement with the aforementioned political science studies arguing that diversity undermines trust and solidarity. Yet, this link can only be found in two groups. In the incomplete comprehensive and early selection group, ethnic composition is unrelated to social trust. To complete the puzzle, we find that ethnic homogeneity enhances civic participation in the centralized group but diminishes participation in the full comprehensive one. Possibly, it is the different mix of ethnic groups within each country that explains the irregular pattern of relationships of this classroom condition. If these groups do not only differ by ethnicity but also by social background across countries and education systems, it is likely that some of this variance is reflected in the effect of ethnic composition. Thus, the pattern of relations of ethnic composition with the four outcomes only reinforces earlier observations: civic competences respond in quite different ways to classroom conditions; these relations vary across competences, across classroom conditions and across education systems. This suggests that country or system-specific factors modulate the effect of classroom conditions to a significant degree.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that knowledge on the formation of civic competences among youngsters can be enhanced by drawing upon stratification literature concerned with the role education system characteristics play in (re)producing inequalities in human capital. I found a distinct regularity between the degree to which a system allows for grouping by ability and differentiation across schools on the one hand and levels of classroom segregation and inequalities of civic competences on the other. In states with full comprehensive systems (i.e. with no grouping by ability and little variation across schools), levels of social segregation were low and disparities of civic competences across classes were comparatively small. In

contrast, countries with early selection systems showed marked degrees of social segregation and displayed relatively large cross-class differences in civic competences. Ethnic segregation levels, however, did not show a meaningful link with ability grouping since the full comprehensive group actually showed relatively high, and the early selection group relatively low, levels of ethnic segregation.

We also found education systems to influence the effect of classroom social status on civic knowledge and skills. In the full comprehensive group (i.e. the Scandinavian countries) this effect disappeared after controlling for individual background variables, while it retained its strong positive effect in countries with systems allowing for grouping by ability and for school differentiation. This finding is in agreement with my proposition that in systems which minimize grouping by ability the effect of class compositional features, such as social status, on civic competences is likely to be small. The OECD PISA studies have found a very similar pattern of cross-country variation in the effect of school status on literacy and numeracy skills, which suggests that civic knowledge and skills reflect general linguistic competence.

In sum, for policy makers interested in reducing social segregation, combating pockets of disengagement, intolerance and distrust, and neutralizing the effect of school status on the cognitive dimension of civic competences, reforms aimed at maximizing mixed ability classes and minimizing cross-school differentiation would certainly be worth considering.

However, the analyses also showed that the effects of social and ethnic composition on civic *attitudes* and *behaviours* are not related to system characteristics. Particularly the strong effect of ethnic composition on trust, tolerance and civic participation in the full comprehensive group was not expected. More generally, the effects of the two compositional conditions appeared to vary across these outcomes and across education systems. Thus, as straightforward the pattern of effects was with regard to civic knowledge and skills, as unpredictable it was with regard to attitudes and behaviours. The pattern further suggests that a relation found between a contextual condition and a certain civic outcome in one education system can neither be generalized to other civic outcomes nor to other educational or regional contexts. Apparently region-specific factors play an important role in shaping such relations. Even more importantly, the unpredictable pattern of effects suggest that civic competencies do not “travel as a package”, as Rice and Feldman (1997, 1150) believe. If some of them do, the ‘syndrome’ of civic culture they constitute is likely to be regionally unique and subject to

local conditions. This means that policy interventions that are effective in one context in fostering civic attitudes and behaviours among youngsters may well fail in another.

Appendix 1. Composition of Dependent and Independent Variables

Dependent Variables

Items:

Social trust

‘How much of the time can you trust each of the following institutions?’

‘the people who live in this country’

Categories: never – only some of the time – most of the time - always

Intention to vote

‘When you are an adult, what do you expect that you will do?’

‘Vote in national elections’

Categories: I will certainly not do this – probably not do this – probably do this – certainly do this

Scales:

Civic knowledge and skills – This scale consists of a 38 items civic knowledge and skills test

Conventional citizenship (‘Importance of Conventional Citizenship’)

‘An adult who is a good citizen...

- (1) votes in every election
- (2) joins a political party
- (3) knows about the country’s history
- (4) follows political issues in the newspaper, radio or TV
- (5) shows respect for government representatives
- (6) engages in political discussions

Categories: not important – somewhat unimportant – somewhat important – very important

Social Movement Citizenship (‘Importance of Social Movement Citizenship’)

‘An adult who is a good citizen...

- (1) would participate in a peaceful protest against a law believed to be unjust
- (2) participates in activities to benefit people in the community
- (3) takes part in activities promoting human rights

(4) takes part in activities to protect the environment

Categories: not important – somewhat unimportant – somewhat important – very important

Expected political participation ('expected participation in political activities')

'When you are an adult, what do you expect that you will do?'

(1) Join a political party

(2) Write letters to a newspaper about social or political concerns

(3) Be a candidate for a local or city office

Categories: I will certainly not do this – probably not do this – probably do this – certainly do this

Gender equality ('attitudes towards women's political and economic rights')

(1) Women should run for public office and take part in the government just as men do

(2) Women should have the same rights as men in every way

(3) Women should stay out of politics (negative)

(4) When jobs are scarce, men have more right to a job than women (negative)

(5) Men and women should get equal pay when they are in the same jobs

(6) Men are better qualified to be political leaders than women (negative)

Categories: strongly disagree – disagree – agree – strongly agree

Institutional trust ('trust in government-related institutions')

'How much of the time can you trust each of the following institutions?'

(1) national government, (2) local government, (3) courts, (4) the police, (5) political parties, (6) national parliament.

Categories: never – only some of the time – most of the time – always

Ethnic tolerance ('positive attitudes toward immigrants')

(1) Immigrants should have the opportunity to keep their own language

(2) Immigrants' children should have the same opportunities for education that other children in the country have

(3) Immigrants who live in a country for several years should have the opportunity to vote in elections

(4) Immigrants should have the opportunity to keep their own customs and lifestyle

(5) Immigrants should have all the same rights that everyone else in a country has

Categories: strongly disagree – disagree – agree – strongly agree

Cooperation/efficacy ('Confidence in participation at school')

'Electing student representatives to suggest changes in how the school is run makes schools better'

'Lots of positive changes happen in this school when students work together'

'Organising groups of students to state their opinions could help solve problems in this school'

'Students acting together can have more influence on what happens in this school than students acting alone'

Categories: strongly disagree – disagree – agree – strongly agree

Note: we struggled somewhat with the interpretation of this scale as the items composing it capture notions of efficacy, cooperation and solidarity simultaneously.

Civic participation

'Have you participated in the following organizations?'

1 a student council / student government [classroom or school parliament]

2 a youth organisation affiliated with a political party or union

3 a group which prepares a school newspaper

4 an environmental organisation

5 a U.N. or UNESCO Club

6 a student exchange or school partnership program

7 a human rights organisation

8 a group conducting [voluntary] activities to help the community

9 a charity collecting money for a social cause

10 Boy or Girl Scouts [Guides]

11 a cultural association [organisation] based on ethnicity

12 a computer club

13 an art, music or drama organisation

14 a sports organisation or team

15 an organisation sponsored by a religious group

Categories: no – yes

Independent variables

Social background

‘About how many books are there in your home?’

Categories: 1 <none> --- 6 <more than 200>

Use of state language

‘How often do you speak [language of test] at home?’

Categories: never – sometimes – always or almost always

Classroom climate

Classroom average of a scale comprising the following items:

1. ‘Students feel free to disagree openly with their teachers about political and social issues during classroom’
2. ‘Students are encouraged to make up their own minds about issues’
3. ‘Teachers respect our opinion and encourage us to express them during classroom’
4. ‘ Students feel free to express opinions in classroom even when their opinions are different from most of the other students’
5. ‘Teachers encourage us to discuss political or social issues about which people have different opinions’

Categories: never – rarely – sometimes -- often

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