

Ethnic Diversity in Schools and Work Places – Its Effects on Tolerance and Trust

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Overall purpose of the project

Due to continuous international migration ethnic diversity is increasing in many European countries. As a result of this process there has been a drastic increase in the number of personal contacts between members of different ethnic groups. This project asks how such interethnic personal contacts affect the functioning of democracies.

Two of the central arenas in which this issue will be decided are schools and work places. Schools and work places encourage personal interaction between ethnic groups to a higher degree than most other social arenas. In classrooms and work places, whether they want it or not, individuals of different ethnic backgrounds are “forced” to interact on a daily basis. And it is to a large extent in schools and work-places people meet their friends and partners. Successful school and work

place strategies for promoting tolerance and trust will therefore impact upon the level of tolerance and trust in society as a whole.

While success in integrating individuals with native and immigrant backgrounds is of enormous importance, research on how ethnic diversity affects inter-ethnic tolerance and trust in schools and work places is still at an early stage. To the extent that the research has focused on the contextual effects of diversity on tolerance and trust it has almost exclusively focused on arenas such as countries and neighborhoods, in which interpersonal meetings between members of different ethnic groups are not assured. Given that most, if not all, theories in the field agree that personal contacts between members of different ethnic groups are of fundamental importance this focus is surprising. To the extent that the research has focused on the effects of ethnic diversity in schools and work places the focus has for most parts been on students’ educational achievement (e.g. OECD 2006) and the economic performance of firms (e.g. Richard 2001; Page 2007). Missing from the previous research, thus, is empirical studies on how ethnic diversity affects tolerance and trust in arenas in which individuals from different ethnic groups actually have contact with each other on daily basis: i.e. schools and work places.

To reach a better understanding of the processes at play, we need to learn more about the consequences of ethnic diversity as a contextual phenomenon in arenas in which people actually meet each other in daily life. The questions that inform this research project can thus be formulated in the following way: How are individuals of both native-born and foreign origin affected by attending schools and work at work places that are ethnically diverse?

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And through which mechanisms does ethnic diversity affect trust and tolerance? And, how can schools and work places with different degrees of ethnic diversity make it work (even) better in terms of fostering tolerance and trust? We will contribute to knowledge in the field by comparing how the effect of ethnic diversity in schools and work places varies between countries, and between schools and work-places in Sweden. We will also test if theories in political science are able to explain the found variation between countries, and between schools and work-places within Sweden.

In contrast to the dominant and largely pessimistic characterization of ethnic diversity in the research literature, the proposed project is based on the hypothesis that ethnic diversity at the school/work place level actually is positive for tolerance and trust. Moreover, it is hypothesized that the effects of ethnic diversity will vary both in accordance with country and school/work-place factors, and that some countries, schools and work-places are more conducive than others for fostering relations between natives and immigrants. The proposed project will set out to identify such well-functioning milieus and to learn from their experience.

The project will be a constituting part of the recently founded Multidisciplinary Opinion and Democracy research group (henceforth: MOD-research group), that has received a major grant for strengthening the research in the field Opinion and Democracy at the University of Gothenburg.

Specific aims of the project

In *a first stage*, the project will estimate what general effects various manifesta-

tions of ethnic diversity have on individuals' levels of tolerance and trust in i) 3000 schools from 28 countries, including Sweden, and ii) 150 work places from Sweden. For this part of the project we will rely on secondary analyses of two pre-existing cross-national data-sets, but we also need to generate primary data for the Swedish work places. We will start with investigating the effects of a simple measurement of diversity, which builds on a dichotomy between foreign born and native born individuals. We will then go on to explore what effects more refined measurements of ethnic diversity have, by taking subjective feelings and perceptions of ethnicity into account.

Put differently, the questions to which we seek answers are: How much of the variation between individuals in terms of tolerance and trust depends on the features of specific countries, schools and work-places, and how much is due to the characteristics of the individuals themselves? After having answered these questions we are situated to identify countries, schools and work-places which perform better and worse than can be predicted from their levels of ethnic diversity with regard to tolerance and trust.

In *the second stage*, the project will address questions that focus on why some milieus (schools, work-places and countries) are more beneficial than others. Drawing on theoretical work in political science the project will identify potential causal mechanisms that link ethnic diversity to positive and negative outcomes. We will then evaluate empirically to what extent these hypotheses are able to explain the found variation at stage 1. The focus will be on three types of factors that, in previous research, have been argued to mediate the effect of ethnic diversity on trust and tolerance:

- i First we will focus on resource scarcity: Does ethnic diversity have a more positive effect on trust and tolerance in countries, schools and work-places in which individuals and groups do not need to fight over scarce resources (jobs, teacher resources etc.)?
- ii Second we will focus on deliberative climate: Does ethnic diversity have a more positive effect in schools and work-places that have a good deliberative climate that allows for students and workers to freely say their mind on various issues?
- iii Third we will focus on descriptive representation and multicultural policies: Does ethnic diversity have a more positive effect in countries, schools and work-places that have minority representatives in leading positions (for example as politicians, teachers, and managers) and that consciously work to integrate native and foreign born individuals.

To answer these questions we will construct variables which are able to measure the mechanisms and statistically test how they increase and reduce the effects of ethnic diversity on trust and tolerance. The data and methods we will use to achieve our aims are described below.

Previous research

Current research provides three alternative predictions as to the overall consequences of the increasing ethnic diversity for democratic societies. According to the Conflict hypothesis, increasing ethnic diversity will result in malfunctioning societies since it breeds interethnic conflicts with detrimental consequences for crucial social functions. According to the Contact hypothesis, however, increasing eth-

nic diversity will in fact strengthen democratic societies since it increases social and political tolerance and interethnic trust. Finally, according to the more nuanced "Mixed blessings hypothesis" increasing ethnic diversity will affect varying aspects of society in different ways.

Focusing first on the Conflict hypothesis, research in political science, psychology, sociology and economics argues that ethnic diversity is largely detrimental to the functioning of both national and local societies since it breeds interethnic intolerance and conflict, lowers interethnic trust and endangers communication between ethnic groups (Scholz 1998; Alesina et al. 2003; Lijphart 2004; Alesina & Ferrara 2005; Putnam 2007). According to realistic group-threat theory, this is so because ethnic groups tend to engage in a rational competition for scarce resources, which during periods of economic hardship leads to intolerant out-group attitudes (Quillan 1995). Alternatively, while making similar predictions about the likely long-term consequences of ethnic diversity, symbolic racism theories stress that the main causal mechanism is the majority populations' views of what minority groups deserve and how they should properly act (Sears & Henry 2003).

Turning to the Contact hypothesis, scholars suggest that ethnic diversity will have a positive effect on society provided that quality personal meetings between members of ethnic groups are assured since such contacts increase interethnic trust and tolerance and strengthen political interest and activity (Antonio 2001; Oliver & Mendelberg 2000; Oliver & Wong 2003; Marschall & Stolle 2004). Research based on this hypothesis suggests that ethnic diversity works as a means of strengthening society in contexts that promote frequent interethnic contacts, such

as specific local neighborhoods, because interethnic contacts promote understanding and puncture negative stereotypes with real life experiences (Ibid.). Interethnic contacts *per se* have also been found to be associated with interethnic tolerance (Stolle, Soroka & Johnston 2008).

Moving on, finally, to the more recent “Mixed blessings hypothesis”, research findings indicate that whilst ethnic and language diversity increases political interest, political discussion and participation in voluntary organizations, it reduces interpersonal trust (Anderson & Paskeviciute 2006). In accordance with these findings, proponents of this hypothesis stress the need to allow for ethnic diversity to affect various aspects of social life differently. According to our reading of the research literature, this call for nuances is, as yet, not established as the mainstream approach to the topic.

For the purpose of the proposed research project it is important to note that research based on all three hypotheses, but especially the most optimistic (i.e. the Contact hypothesis), is in agreement as regards the fundamental importance of personal contacts between members of different ethnic groups. With this in mind, we find it rather remarkable that most research focuses on ethnic diversity in contexts such as nations, cities and neighborhoods where there are no guarantees that interethnic contact actually takes place. Moreover, the few studies which explicitly take the issue of interethnic contact into account mostly rely on measurements of interethnic friendships (Nannestad 2008), and thus neglect the existence of negative contacts. To the extent that the research question is directed towards the consequences of interethnic personal contacts *per se*, and not towards other unspecified aspects of ethnically diversified societies,

it would seem that the correspondence between theoretically defined concepts and the operational criteria used in much previous empirical research is less than optimal. This may lead researchers and policy-makers to draw biased conclusions from the existing empirical evidence. In line with this suspicion, recent empirical studies conclude differently about the consequences of ethnic diversity depending on the choice of operational criteria (e.g. Antonio 2001; Oliver & Mendelberg 2000; Oliver & Wong 2003; Marschall & Stolle 2004).

The proposed project is therefore based on the hypothesis that this validity problem can be effectively addressed by exploring arenas in which daily interethnic contacts are unavoidable. The most obvious arenas which fulfill this criterion are schools and work-places. In classrooms and work places, whether they want it or not, individuals of different ethnic backgrounds are “forced” to interact on a daily basis.

To date, research on ethnic diversity in school has predominantly focused on educational achievement. This line of research has consistently found negative effects of ethnic diversity on students’ achievement in terms of grades, test scores and drop-out rates (Grogger 1996; Cutler & Glaeser 1997; Hanushek et al. 2002; Van der Silk et al. 2006). In addition, several studies have also shown that migrant students perform worse than native born students in most OECD-countries (see for example OECD 2006). Both the negative contextual effect of ethnic diversity and the negative individual effect of being an immigrant are assumed to depend on difficulties in communication, especially in contexts with language diversity and large cultural differences.

Moving from educational achievement to issues of tolerance and trust within school systems, we find that these topics are understudied. The few studies that specifically take school contexts into consideration deal primarily with the U.S. case with its unique ethnic history (see for example van Laar et al. 2005; Gurin et al. 2004).

Research on the consequences of ethnic diversity in work places has mainly focused on the economic performance of firms and countries. This strand of literature is more optimistic what regards the effects of diversity for individual firms (Richard 2001; Page 2007). However, what regards countries' economic performance the picture is as gloomy as that which is provided by the research on the effects of ethnic diversity in school: Ethnic diversity on the national level has been found to lead to lower levels of investments in public goods (Alesina et al. 2003), lower economic growth (Alesina & Ferrara 2005) and to threaten cooperation (Glaeser et al. 2000).

Moving from economic performance to the issue of how ethnic diversity in work places affect tolerance and trust no statistical, large-N, studies that we know about have touched on the topic.

Lacking in most previous empirical research is the issue of how other contextual factors interact with ethnic diversity in shaping trust and tolerance among individuals. This is rather strange given that there exist several theories in political science that explicitly address how to bridge ethnic conflicts and prejudices. The only real exception is *realistic group threat theory*, that stresses that bad economic conditions, such as high unemployment rates, interact with ethnic diversity in lowering tolerance and interethnic trust (see above). However, there are also two more

positive suggestions in the literature that do not have been empirically investigated to the same extent. The first of these is *the politics of presence*-literature that underlines the importance of having minority representatives within governing bodies and as role models in various leading positions for producing good outcomes in ethnically diverse societies (Phillips 1995; Griffin & Newman 2005; Schwindt Beyer et al. 2005). The other is the literature on *deliberative climate* that points at the importance of having an open and tolerant climate of debate and exchange of ideas in order to battle intolerance and prejudices between different groups (e.g. Gutmann & Thompson 1996; Almgren 2006; Luskin et al. 2007). Although previously untested in work places and schools we believe that these theories could be helpful in explaining the variation in the effect of ethnic diversity on trust and tolerance in countries, schools and work places.

Project description

In designing the current project proposal, we have identified two specific oversights in previous research that need to be addressed. First, while schools and work places, to a substantially greater extent than other social arenas, encourage and facilitate contacts between individuals from different ethnic groups, few attempts have been made to evaluate the effects of ethnic diversity on trust and tolerance in schools and work places. Moreover, the limited knowledge available on the topic is primarily informed by experiences gained from the United States. Little is known about whether the effect varies between countries and schools and work-places within countries. *In the proposed project, we aim to address these oversights by i) studying what effects ethnic diversity has on trust*

and tolerance in schools from 28 countries, and by ii) studying what effects ethnic diversity has on trust and tolerance in work places in Sweden. In doing so we will both be studying what general effects diversity has and how the effects vary between countries and between schools and work-place within countries.

Second, the few existing studies that have focused on the general effects of ethnic diversity almost always abstain from trying to explain why ethnic diversity seems to function better in some countries, schools and work-places than in others. *In the proposed project, we, by drawing on theoretical work in political science, address this oversight by identifying country characteristics, and school and work-place characteristics, that mediate the effects of ethnic diversity on tolerance and trust.*

To address these oversights, a two-stage approach has been adopted. As stated above, the objectives of *the first stage* will be: i) secondary analysis of cross-national and primary analysis of Swedish national data-sets to establish what general effects ethnic diversity in schools and work-places has on tolerance and trust; ii) identification of countries, schools and work-places in which ethnic diversity has a better, worse and on average effect on tolerance and trust.

Two existing data sets and one primary data set to of our own origin (to be collected) are crucial for this stage: *The 1999 Civic Education Study* (CIVED), *The 2009 International Civic and Citizenship Study* (ICCS), and a unique data set to be collected by us in collaboration with the MOD research group at the University of Gothenburg. CIVED and ICCS are international collaborative surveys (see Torney-Purta et al. 2001) uniformly constructed and carried out in 28 countries in order to measure, among other things, democratic knowledge, democratic values

and attitudes, political interest and trust among fourteen year old students and upper secondary students (presently CIVED only). The multilevel structure of these data sources makes it possible to isolate between country variations as well as between school variations and between classroom variations in student outcomes, as the data nests individual students within classrooms, which are nested within schools nested within countries.

The data set to be collected by the project group in collaboration with the MOD research group will contain data on 7500 workers nested within 150 work-places (on average 50 workers from each work-place) situated in Gothenburg and the surrounding area. First we will randomly select 150 work-places from a statistical frame (register) that contains all work-places with between 50 and 500 employees in Gothenburg and the surrounding area. We will then go on to randomly select 50 individuals from each work-place to answer a 4-page long questionnaire (answering time approximately 15 minutes) with questions regarding ethnic relationships at the work-place, tolerance, trust and various background variables. The questionnaire will primarily be web-based. Only in a third of the working places (those in which workers do not have access to the internet) will we use paper questionnaires handed out by working assistants. The idea is to construct a questionnaire with questions that are similar to those used in the CIVED and ICCS. The questions will of course be reformulated to suit work-place conditions. The data collection will be carried out by LORE (Laboratory of Opinion Research), which is a part of the MOD research group.

All data-sets will be analyzed with the help of multilevel statistical techniques (e.g. Raudenbusch & Bryk 2002).

The identification of how individual countries, schools and classrooms perform in relation to each other at the first stage will allow for us to proceed with the second stage of the project. The focus of *the second stage* will be to try to explain the between-country and the between-school and between work-place variations found at the first stage in line with theoretical suggestions in the political science literature (see above). We will start by collecting secondary data on two levels. First, we will collect national data on politics-of-presence-related variables, resource-related variables (i.e. socioeconomic conditions) and other factors (for example school and integration policies) that can be hypothesized to affect the effect of ethnic diversity in school on trust and tolerance. Second, we will collect school and work-place data on politics-of-presence related, deliberative climate-related, and resource related factors that can be hypothesized to affect the effect of ethnic diversity in school on trust and tolerance for all Swedish schools and work-places in the data-sets. Some of this data is already provided by the CIVED, ICCS and the MOD-survey. The rest will be collected from OECD, Eurostat and the Quality of Government Institute (QoG) situated at the University of Gothenburg (national policies), Skolverket and from the schools and work-places themselves (the Swedish school and work-place data). We will then use this data to test the hypotheses that we derive from the political science literature on the topic with the help of the same multilevel statistical techniques that are used at stage one. For example, we will use the survey data to test how the deliberative classroom/work-place climate and teachers/managers with immigrant background mediate the effect of ethnic diversity on trust and tolerance. Stage two is

important for testing ideas about how to make ethnic diversity in school and work-places work better.

Timeline and publications

The project will continually be reported both in articles in international journals (five in total – see below) and presentations on mainly international conferences. To contribute to public debate we will also report our findings in debate-articles in leading newspapers. Below we provide the time-frame, responsibilities and planned journal articles for the different parts of the project:

During the spring of 2011 we will statistically analyze the CIVED and ICCS datasets in order to fulfill the part of *stage one* of the project that concerns schools. The findings will be summed up in an article in an international political science journal.

During the spring 2011 we will also construct the questionnaire that we will use for the part of stage one that involves work-places.

During the autumn of 2011 we will collect the data for *stage two* of the project that concerns schools.

During the autumn of 2011 we will also in collaboration with LORE and a private company *carry out the MOD-survey on work-places* in Gothenburg and the surrounding area.

During the spring and autumn of 2012 we will proceed to analyze the collected school data and *finish the part of stage two that concerns schools*. This will involve testing our theoretical hypotheses derived from the previous research literature. The findings will be summed up in two articles (one on national strategies to enhance the positive effects of ethnic diversity on tolerance and trust and one on school strategies in doing the same).

During the autumn of 2012 we will *collect data for the part of stage two that concerns work-places*.

During the spring and autumn of 2013 we will proceed to analyze the MOD-survey and *finish the part of stage one and two that concerns work-places*. The findings will be summed up in two articles. One that explores the effects of ethnic diversity in work-places and one that explores work-place strategies for how to make it work better.

During the autumn of 2013 we will summarize the findings of the project.

Preliminary results

In preparing the project our research group has received a grant from the University of Gothenburg to finance a pilot study for the research project as well as to establish contacts with scientist in educational science concerned with ethnic relations. The grant and the pilot studies and contacts it has given rise to have helped us tremendously in the preparations. The research group has conducted two pilot studies relating to stage 1 in the research strategy outlined above. Results from the pilot studies are reported in two conference papers (Kokkonen, Esaiasson & Gilljam 2008; 2009) and an article (Kokkonen, Esaiasson & Gilljam forthcoming 2010) that has been accepted for publication in *Scandinavian Political Studies*. These studies indicate that ethnic diversity in schools under beneficial circumstances has a positive effect on students' tolerance, but that the strength of the effect varies considerably between countries and schools. The most positive effect can be found in Sweden and other Nordic Countries. The effect of ethnic diversity on

trust is more ambiguous and varies much between countries. In some countries the effect is negative whereas it is positive in others (among them Sweden). In short, the design and methods used in our pilot studies have been shown successful in laying the ground for further research

Importance for the Research Field

The issue of how ethnic diversity affects tolerance and trust has resulted in numerous publications. Despite this it is still debated what the effects really are. This project will contribute to the debate in several ways. First, it explores, the hitherto almost unexplored topic, of how ethnic diversity affects tolerance and trust in arenas in which individuals from different ethnic group meet on a daily basis (i.e. schools and work-places).

Second, it contributes to the research field by exploring the effects of ethnic diversity in such arenas in not less than 28 countries. Previous studies on how ethnic diversity affects trust and tolerance at the sub-national level have almost exclusively focused on one country at a time and then mostly on the U.S.

Third, the project explores mechanisms that potentially could explain why the effects of ethnic diversity on trust and tolerance vary between countries and arenas in which members from different ethnic groups meet. Very few previous studies have done so.

The project will also contribute to the field by collecting a unique data-set that allows for testing a range of hypotheses of how ethnic diversity affects tolerance and trust.

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