

## Ties that bind: correlates of adolescents' civic commitments in seven countries.

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**The relationship of voluntary work, school climates, and family values to public interest as a life goal of adolescents is presented for a sample of 5,579 12-18 year olds in three stable and four transitional democracies. In five of the seven countries, females were more likely than males to be engaged in voluntary work, and in all seven countries girls were more likely than boys to report that their families encouraged an ethic of social responsibility. Regardless of gender or country, adolescents were more likely to consider public interest an important life goal when their families emphasized an ethic of social responsibility. In addition, engagement in volunteer work and a sense of student solidarity at school were formative components of public interest as a life goal for youth in some but not all countries.**

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A citizen is, most simply, a member of a political community, entitled to whatever prerogatives and encumbered with whatever responsibilities are attached to membership. The word comes to us from the Latin *civis*; the Greek equivalent is *polites*, member of the polis, from which comes our political.

- (Walzer, 1989, p. 211)

In this article we employ Walzer's definition to advance two theses about the developmental processes that undergird citizenship: first, that family values inform children's developing concepts of a political community and of their responsibilities to the public interest; second, that experiences of membership in institutions beyond the family are necessary for the social integration of young people into a political community and for their identification with a common good. We pay particular attention to the role of volunteer work and the institution of the school in this regard. Because the work focuses on young people, our framing of citizenship goes beyond state-sanctioned adult rights and obligations (such as voting and military service). Instead, we are interested in the developmental processes whereby concepts of self, a political community, and the ties that bind them evolve.

### Adolescents' Interpretations of the "Social Contract"

The empirical basis for our work is drawn from a large survey of adolescents conducted in 1995 in middle and secondary schools in seven countries. The choice of countries for this study was based on two criteria: the length of their experience as democracies and the role of the state in the provision of social welfare. The former criterion is more germane to this article. Four countries in the study (Russia, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, and Hungary) could be considered fledgling democracies. Because these nations have had only a short period when

democratic institutions or infrastructure could develop, we have labeled them transitional democracies. In contrast, the other three countries in the study (Australia, Sweden, and the United States) have enjoyed longer histories as democratic polities. In these societies practices in schools, families, and youth organizations have evolved over time with the goal of developing democratic dispositions in young people. Children, especially those from middle-class backgrounds, are encouraged to form their own opinions and to voice them, even if that means disagreeing with adult authorities. Underlying such practices is the belief that the foundation of a democratic system is a citizenry that can think independently and disagree in a civil fashion.

We refer to this project as "Adolescents' Interpretations of the Social Contract," by which we mean their views of the bargain that binds members of a polity together. We contend that political ideologies and understandings, like other aspects of social cognition, are rooted in social relations. In other work we have employed this metaphor to show that, in countries with a strong social welfare contract, adolescents are more likely to hold the state accountable for the welfare of citizens (Flanagan, Macek et al., 1998). We have also applied the social contract metaphor at a more proximal level to look at ways in which practices in developmental settings communicate the ethos of the social order. For example, the form and function of such mundane activities as household chores appear to vary in ways that are consistent with the principles of the social order. Although children in all seven countries in the study are expected to do chores at home, according to the adolescents, these jobs are more likely to be linked to wages in the capitalist nations, with the payment of an allowance considered normative. Self-reliance is considered the primary lesson learned in such work. In contrast, in nations with a strong social welfare contract, adolescents are more likely to appose payment for the chores they perform and responsibility to the group is considered the primary lesson children learn

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from engaging in such work (Bowes, Chalmers, & Flanagan, 1997; Bowes, Flanagan, & Taylor, 1998).

### Youths' Civic Commitment

In the present article, we apply the "social contract" metaphor to an examination of factors related to the development of civic commitment in adolescents. By civic commitment we refer to the importance adolescents attach to public interest as a personal life goal (i.e., when considering their life and future, how important it is that they do something to help their country and to improve their society).

We regard this as a political issue in adolescent development for several reasons. First, identity is focal during adolescence (Erikson, 1968). Thus, future goals that adolescents consider important are core aspects of their evolving sense of self. In this study, future goals are indicators of the extent to which the adolescent identifies with the public interest or common good. Democratic systems depend on a citizenry that invests in the common good. As national studies of Americans point out, contributing to the common good is overwhelmingly the reason why citizens become active in civic and political affairs (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995).

Second, concerns have been raised that self-interest has eclipsed the public interest in the goals of young people. From the early 1970s through 1986, trend studies of high school seniors (Bachman, Johnson, & O'Malley, 1986) and first-year college students (Astin, Green, & Korn, 1987) in the United States point to a decline in commitment to the welfare of the broader community and an increase in materialist aspirations. During that period young people retreated from politics and civic concerns and chose occupations for financial remuneration rather than public service or self-fulfillment (Easterlin & Crimmins, 1991).

Finally, a vibrant and strong civil society can stabilize political regimes by instilling in their members a sense of belonging and of identification with the public interest. Although youth have been neglected in most discussions of civil society, it is the very properties of a strong civil society (trust, reciprocity, a dense network of community institutions, and caring adults) that keep young people out of trouble and promote their integration into the broader polity (Blyth & Leffert, 1995; Sampson, 1992). Thus, understanding the correlates of youths' identification with public interest goals should shed light both on political development as an aspect of human development and on the role of developmental environments in promoting a strong civil society as well.

In summary, to return to Walzer's definition, we focus on the responsibilities of citizenship and ask, What factors may be related to the development of a civic ethic? Why would youth identify with a common good? What developmental experiences might serve as ties that bind youth to the broader polity? We examine voluntary work in the community as well as the culture of schools and the values espoused by families as possible formative influences. Although we present comparisons among countries, we also adopt what Kohn (1989) has referred to as a "nation as context" approach and look for similar patterns in the correlates of youths' civic commitments across different national settings.

### Eastern/Central Europe

The question of how a civic ethic develops is of particular consequence to the fledgling democracies of Eastern/Central Europe. The stability of democratic regimes rests on broad support in the population for the principles of those regimes. Globalization presents threats to the traditional mechanisms by which diffuse support for politics develops. Thus, it is especially important to identify the "ties that bind" members of these new and evolving democracies together. Not only have the social contracts of these nations undergone radical change, but the institutions and settings of youth development such as schools or youth organizations have had little time to evolve.

The development of democratic dispositions was not high on the agendas of the old regimes in Central and Eastern Europe. During the Communist period, one of the major tasks of schools, media, and youth organizations was to achieve political homogenization by minimizing differences between individuals (Karpati, 1996; Pastuovic, 1993). Thus, the current generation of young people grew up with relatively few opportunities to practice open public debate (Csepeli, German, Keri, & Stumpf, 1994; Karpati). At the same time there were strong norms of patriotism and civic involvement. For young people this meant that membership in groups such as the Young Pioneer and Comsomol Organizations was the norm (Csapo, 1994). Although these groups provided opportunities for the social integration of young people and for their identification with the nation, they did not seek to inculcate democratic values.

However, there were differences between these nations in the exercise of political autonomy. Hungary led all others in its market and cultural experiments, whereas the Czech Republic had the longest history of democratic institutions. Even now there are differences in the more "Western" religious and cultural customs of the Czech Republic and

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Hungary compared to the Eastern Orthodox traditions of Bulgaria and Russia. In the latter nations the relationship between citizens and state is more paternalistic, which should be reflected in a greater allegiance of youth to their country. In summary, the Eastern/Central European nations in our study provide an ideal opportunity to investigate the developmental correlates of youths' civic commitments in nations that are themselves charting new democratic futures.

### Youth Engagement in Volunteer Work

Youth engagement in voluntary work has been promoted as an antidote to the decline in public interest goals reported in Western societies over the past two decades. Youth groups from the Scouts to 4-H to the Young Pioneers include public service as a core activity, considering it a mark of a good citizen. In fact, such organizations often provide the only opportunity for young people to engage in civic activities.

The question of whether the work is voluntary or mandated is not the concern of our study. Nor do we consider the source of the young person's motivation. Volunteerism may serve very different functions for individuals and self-oriented motivations rather than altruistic ones may be related to a longer length of service (Omoto & Snyder, 1995). Although the motivation for volunteering is an important question, we are interested in volunteer work because it is one of the rare occasions when young people can link with other citizens they would normally not meet, understand the concept of public work, and conceive of themselves as civic actors. For these reasons engaging in such activity should be positively related to the adolescent's identification with public goals. In other work we have found that environmental projects are typical of the kind of work in which youth in Eastern/Central Europe engage and that environmental goals are at the top of their list of civic commitments (Flanagan, Jonsson et al., 1998). In summary, not only does the voluntary sector provide the social integuments of civil society, it provides an outlet for adolescents to identify with public goals.

### Family Values and Youths' Civic Commitments

Values are core beliefs about how one ought to behave (Rokeach, 1972) as well as a basis for political views (Jennings, 1991; Kinder & Sears, 1985) and civic action (Verba et al., 1995). Erikson (1968) considered values or ideological guides "a psychological necessity" (p. 133) for adolescents, enabling them to parse what could be a confusing world into meaningful choices. In this study our interest was in family values, conceived as the principles that parents instruct their children to live by. In other work

we have argued that parents interpret the world and the relationship with others in the world in the values they emphasize with their children and have found that family values are related to adolescents' political views on poverty, unemployment, and homelessness (Flanagan & Tucker, 1998). Likewise, in this study we expected that family values would be related to adolescents' identification with public interest as an important life goal.

Other work has shown that children develop empathy and altruism when compassion and social responsibility are emphasized as core values in their families (Clary & Miller, 1986; Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989; Hart & Fegley, 1995; Rosenhan, 1970). In addition, retrospective studies of adults who were active in political movements or in acts of political resistance suggest that values of compassion, empathy, and social responsibility learned in their families were instrumental in their decisions to act (Dunham & Bengston, 1992; Franz & McClelland, 1994; Oliner & Oliner, 1988; Rosenhan; Wood & Ng, 1980). Hoffman (1989) has theorized that empathy felt for disenfranchised groups may provide a motive base for prosocial activism as well as the foundations for a political ideology. A logical extension of this thesis is tested in the present study, that is, that a family ethic emphasizing social responsibility would be positively related to adolescents' endorsement of public interest as a life goal.

### Role of Schools as Institutions in Democracies

As the earliest formal public institutions children encounter, schools are like mini polities where children can explore what it means to be a member of a community beyond their families, where they learn that they are the equal of other citizens, and where they can learn how to negotiate their differences in a civil fashion. In contrast to the religious and voluntary organizations with which youth might choose to affiliate, the school is an institution they are obliged to attend. In these public settings, students can disagree with or even dislike one another, yet they have to learn to work together.

For these reasons schools are settings where children develop ideas about the rights and obligations of citizenship. By the kind of public space they provide, schools are a place where children can develop an understanding of what it means to live in a civil society and how members of such a society treat one another. The role of schools as preparatory institutions in democracies is especially salient in fledgling democracies. Prior to 1989 in the nations of Central and Eastern Europe pedagogical practices typically discouraged debate. Teachers themselves had relatively little autonomy in instructional decisions (Jordanova, 1994; Long, 1990; Rust, Knost, &

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Wichmann, 1994). Despite these ideological constraints, local schools were one of the institutions of civil society where citizens could exercise some level of autonomy and decision making. Since 1990 building democratic institutions has become a high priority of these nations (Csepeli et al., 1994), with changes in curricular content and instructional styles in schools recommended as a primary means for achieving that goal (Rust et al.).

In this study we focus on two dimensions of school climates: students' right to an autonomous opinion and their sense of membership in and identification with the institution of the school. The first concerns how authority is negotiated in the classroom, an aspect of school climates that has received some attention in the literature. The evidence suggests that in classrooms where students are free to dissent and are also expected to listen to different perspectives, they are more aware of and able to think critically about civic issues (Newmann, 1990), know more about international affairs (Torney-Purta & Lansdale, 1986), tolerate conflicting views and are aware and critical of simplistic appeals to patriotism as a motivator of action (Torney-Purta, 1991). However, students' interest in political participation may be responsive to other aspects of classroom practice. In a study of 10 democratic nations, Torney, Oppenheim, and Farnen (1975) found that an emphasis on patriotism, ritual, and rote learning at school was related to less support among students for democratic values but to high interest in political participation.

The second aspect of school climates has received less attention in the literature. This dimension, alluded to in Walzer's definition of a citizen, taps students' sense of membership, pride, and identification with the institution of the school. Political goals are typically achieved through collective action. But a sense of solidarity with others and identification with group goals are prerequisites for collective action. Thus, the second question about school climates addressed in this article is, If students perceive their schools as settings where identification with the institution and a commitment to the common good are widely shared, do such school climates generalize to the young person's commitments to the broader polity?

### Gender

The literature provides little basis for positing gender differences in adolescents' civic commitment as we have defined it in this article. However, there is evidence for gender differences in the factors that we posit may play a role in the development of civic commitment. For example, studies of community service in the United States suggest that females are more likely than males to participate (Hart, Atkins, & Ford, this issue; Independent Sector,

1996). Likewise, the salience of social responsibility as an ethic in families may vary for male and female adolescents. Studies of altruism (Berndt, 1981; Fabes, Eisenberg, & Miller, 1990) and empathy (Eisenberg, 1985; Radke-Yarrow, Zahn-Waxler, Richardson, Susman, & Martinez, 1994; Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, Wagner, & Chapman, 1992) have shown that girls are more likely than boys to exhibit these characteristics and to feel guilty when they have not been compassionate (Williams & Bybee, 1994). National surveys of American high school students from the mid- 1970s through the early 1990s revealed that females were more likely than males to feel compassion or concern for the well-being of others. And this gender difference held regardless of social class or how religious the youth were (Beutel & Marini, 1995).

With few exceptions (Carlo, Koller, Eisenberg, DaSilva, & Frohlich, 1996) these studies have been conducted in the United States. It remains an open question to what extent gender differences in volunteering and social responsibility might be consistent across countries. Helping others can be consonant with the social roles of both men and women, and gender differences in helping others may depend on factors such as the definition of helping and other and the duration of the act (Eagly & Crowley, 1986). Although political interest inventories typically find that women are less interested in politics than men, this gender gap may well be a function of the narrow ways in which the issues have been framed. For example, Anderson and Johnston (1993) discovered interesting gender differences in the knowledge retained by American high school students who watched the current events broadcast by Channel One in their schools. Whereas girls were more likely to remember health-related issues including information about AIDS, boys tended to remember stories covering state or international affairs. In a similar vein, gender differences in political attitudes may reflect the responsibilities and the socialization pressures of males and females. For example, in other analyses of the data set that is the basis of this article we found that girls were more likely than boys to feel that the state should provide social welfare benefits for needy individuals and families (Flanagan, Macek et al., 1998).

The concern of the present study was with the correlates of youths' civic commitment, which was operationalized as the importance they attached to helping their country and to doing something to improve their society. We did not expect to find gender differences in this outcome nor in its correlates. However, as outlined below, we did expect that levels of those correlates would differ for males and females.

### Hypotheses

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The following hypotheses were tested in this study. With respect to country level analyses, we had no predictions regarding differences in youths' civic commitments, family values, or the sense of membership they felt at school. However, we did expect that youth in the transitional societies would report lower mean levels of democratic climates in their schools. This was expected to be especially marked in Bulgaria and Russia, where there is a stronger cultural ethos of respect for authority. In terms of gender differences, we expected that females would be more likely than their male compatriots to report that their families emphasized an ethic of social responsibility in their upbringing. In addition, consistent with trends reported in other studies, we expected to find a consistent gender difference in youth volunteering, with girls more likely than boys to be engaged in such work. In terms of models predicting youths' civic commitment, we expected that family values and a sense of membership at school would play a strong role for males and females in all countries.

### Methods

#### Participants

Data were gathered via surveys administered in schools in a large urban area of each country between March and May 1995. An effort was made to recruit youth from high- and low-status backgrounds based on parental education and the school type (e.g., vocational, gymnasium) that the youth attended. A minimum of 500 adolescents from each country, ranging in age from 12 to 18, with a mean age of 15.5, participated.

#### Procedures and Measures

During a designated class period, research assistants described the project as a study of young people's opinions about issues in society. It was made clear both verbally and in written form that there were no right or wrong answers and that the information was being collected anonymously. Although the survey tapped a wide range of topics, we focus in this article on those described in the following sections.

#### Dependent Measure: Civic Commitment

Adolescents' civic commitment was based on the personal importance they attached to two indicators similar to those used to measure public interest in studies of youth in the United States (Astin et al, 1987; Bachman, Johnston, & O'Malley, 1987). Students were asked, "When you think about your life and your future, how important is it to you personally to (a) contribute to your country and (b) do

something to improve your society?" Respondents rated the importance of these public interest goals on a Likert-type scale (1 = not at all important to 5 = very important). The mean of these two goals was used as the measure of civic commitment, and alphas were above .68 in all countries.

#### Independent Measures

**Voluntary work.** As part of the survey, adolescents were asked, "Do you ever do volunteer work in the community?" This dichotomous (yes/no) item was used to measure an adolescent's engagement in voluntary work.

**Family ethic of social responsibility.** Our measure of family values was based on adolescents' reports of how much emphasis their parents placed on a set of four items that tapped the need to be attentive to others, especially to less fortunate members of society. Items were adapted from Katz and Hass's (1988) Humanitarianism-Egalitarianism scale. We have labeled this construct a family ethic of social responsibility. Cronbach's alpha was .74 in the stable and .70 in the transitional democracies.

**School climates.** Adolescents' perceptions of two dimensions of school climate were assessed. The first, democratic climates at school, concerns the extent to which the teacher involves students in shared governance and the attitude toward authority that the teacher conveys. Items, adapted from Maehr & Midgley (1990), assess the degree to which students are encouraged to assume leadership in the school and are invited by the teacher to express their opinions, even if they might disagree with the teacher. Responses to all items were based on a Likert-type (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) format. Cronbach's alpha was .65 and .72 for this three-item measure in the transitional and stable democracies, respectively.

A second dimension of the school's culture is alluded to in Walzer's definition. A sense of membership at school taps a student's perceptions of their fellow students and of the collective properties of the student body. The three items measure the extent to which students in general are proud to identify with the institution of the school, feel like members who count, and move beyond the boundaries of individual friendships out of concern for the well-being of all members of the student body. Again responses to all items were based on a Likert-type (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) format. Cronbach's alphas were .59 and .61 for this measure in the transitional and stable democracies, respectively.

#### Analyses

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We conducted a series of analyses to assess the correlates of youths' civic commitment across countries. First, chi-square tests of independence were run to determine whether there were gender differences in the likelihood of adolescents' being involved in voluntary work in the community. Next, analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted to test for country (7) and gender (2) differences in the importance of public interest goals, in adolescents' perceptions of their school climates, and in the extent to which social responsibility was a value they felt was emphasized in their families. Finally, separate multiple regressions were performed for girls and boys in each country. Youths' civic commitment was the dependent variable, and volunteer work, the two school climate measures, and the family's emphasis on social responsibility were the independent variables.

### Results

#### Bivariate Analyses

Table 1 summarizes the results of the chi-square tests of independence. The results indicate that, in five of the seven nations, females were more likely than [TABULAR DATA FOR TABLE 1 OMITTED] males to report that they had engaged in volunteer work in their communities. In the Czech Republic and Sweden, there were no gender differences on this variable. The results also point to the normative nature of youth volunteering across countries. In Hungary, the United States, the Czech Republic, and Bulgaria between 40 and 50% of the adolescents reported that they had done voluntary work. In contrast, the practice appears to be less normative in Australia, Sweden, and Russia, where approximately 20-25% of the youth reported that they had done such work.

Table 2 provides a summary of the means and standard deviations on the key constructs for adolescents in each country. There was a main effect of country,  $F(6, 5416) = 23.88$ ,  $p$  [less than] .001, on the importance that adolescents attached to doing something to help their society and country. Post hoc Scheffe tests indicated that Bulgarian youth were more likely than all others to endorse this goal whereas Swedish and Hungarian youth were less likely than others to consider this an important life goal.

[TABULAR DATA FOR TABLE 2 OMITTED]

A comparison of adolescents' perceptions of democratic climates in their schools also revealed significant main effects of country,  $F(6, 5437) = 72.35$ ,  $p$  [less than] .001, and a gender by country interaction,  $F(6, 5437) = 5.32$ ,  $p$  [less than] .001. As expected, students in the stable democracies, especially Australia and the United States,

were more likely than their peers in the transitional democracies to report that their teachers encouraged them to voice their opinions, even if this entailed a challenge to the teacher's view. What was not expected was that Hungarian youth were as likely as their peers in Sweden and the United States to report this democratic climate in their schools. In contrast, students in Bulgaria, Russia, and the Czech Republic were less likely to feel that such democratic climates characterized their schools. (All gender by country interactions are presented in Table 3 and are discussed below.)

There was a main effect of country,  $F(6, 5430) = 47.24$ ,  $p$  [less than] .001, and a gender by country interaction,  $F(1, 5430) = 3.50$ ,  $p$  [less than] .001, on students' sense of membership in and identification with the institution of the school. Whereas Russian youth were less likely than their peers in any other country to hold this view, Australians were more likely than all others to endorse this dimension of their schools. Swedish and Czech youth were more likely than their Russian peers but less likely than all others to report that their schools were characterized by a general sense of pride and membership. Finally, there were main effects of country,  $F(6, 5491) = 31.82$ ,  $p$  [less than] .001, and gender,  $F(1, 5491) = 91.42$ ,  $p$  [less than] .001, on adolescents' reports that social responsibility was a value strongly endorsed in their families. Post hoc Scheffe tests revealed that adolescents from the United States, Australia, and Russia were more likely than those in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, and Sweden to report that this value was emphasized in their families. The significant main effect of gender reflected the fact that in all countries, girls were more likely than boys to say that an ethic of social responsibility was a value that their families emphasized in their upbringing.

Table 3 provides a summary across countries of male and female perceptions of each of the constructs in the study. There was only one gender difference in adolescents' civic commitments, with Hungarian males more likely than their female peers to consider the public interest an important life goal. In contrast, in every country, females were more likely than males to report that an ethic of social responsibility was a value emphasized in their families. This result was significant at  $p$  [less than] .01 in every country except Hungary, where the difference was marginal,  $p$  [less than] .10. There were no consistent differences in either dimension of classroom climate. Whereas girls in Sweden and Russia reported more democratic classroom practices when compared to their male compatriots, boys in Bulgaria were more likely than their female peers to report that teachers encouraged democracy in the classroom. In terms of students' sense of membership at school, girls in three countries (Sweden,

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the United States, and the Czech Republic) reported higher levels than boys. However, as in the perceptions of democratic classroom climates, Bulgarian boys perceived a stronger sense of inclusion in their classrooms when compared to their female peers.

[TABULAR DATA FOR TABLE 3 OMITTED]

### Multivariate Analyses

The results of the multiple regressions predicting boys' and girls' civic commitments in each of the seven countries are presented in Tables 4 and 5, respectively. The most robust finding is the consistent and significant effect that a family ethic of social responsibility has on adolescents' civic commitment. In every country and for both girls and boys, those who heard this ethic emphasized in their families were more likely than their compatriots to consider helping their country and doing something to improve their society an important life goal. Next in importance was the adolescents' report that a sense of membership and caring characterized the student body at their school. This aspect of the school climate was significantly related to the civic commitments of boys in Australia, Hungary, and Russia and marginally in Bulgaria and of girls in the United States, Sweden, Hungary, and Russia, and marginally in Australia. In contrast, democratic climates at school (i.e., the extent to which adolescents felt that their teachers encouraged student autonomy) predicted boys' and girls' civic commitments in the Czech Republic and was marginally related for boys in the United States. Finally, adolescents' engagement in volunteer work was significantly related to boys' civic commitment in the United States, Sweden, and the Czech Republic and to girls' civic commitment in the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, and Russia.

[TABULAR DATA FOR TABLE 4 OMITTED]

[TABULAR DATA FOR TABLE 5 OMITTED]

### Discussion

Interest in questions of citizenship and its developmental antecedents tends to increase during periods of social change. It is then that we wonder, What happens as children are growing up that engenders a sense of loyalty to the polity and identification with a common good? Globalization presents threats to the traditional mechanisms by which diffuse support for politics develops. Global economic reorganization is already redefining the political communities to which people will have allegiances. In fact, there are concerns that those who are marginalized by this reorganization will be ignored as members of political communities (Rifkin, 1995; Wolfe,

1989). Such outcomes are not inevitable, however. But if we are to avoid them it will be important for future generations to appreciate that their fate is linked with others who are not like them. And in a global context it will be increasingly important to understand how the choices we make reverberate in the lives of people we may never meet.

Toward that end we have argued that young people need opportunities to identify with individuals, groups, and institutions beyond the borders of their families and friends. In this regard the results of our study provide at least marginal support for the idea that engagement in voluntary work and student solidarity at school are factors related to an adolescent's identification with the public interest. A number of years ago Erikson (1968) observed that the formation of social cliques was a natural outcome of the adolescent's search for identity and a social niche. However, he also warned that cliques pose dangers for democracy if youth have no opportunities to link to the broader polity. Without meaningful institutional affiliations and connections to the community, adolescents may experience what he termed "identity-vacua," a lack of direction and purpose and disaffection from the polity.

Teaching practices that encouraged student participation in shared governance were not as strongly related to the importance youth attached to public interest goals. These results should not be taken to mean that such teaching practices have no bearing on other civic competencies, such as the development of democratic dispositions in young people. However, our results do point to an understudied aspect of the school as an institution where young people develop their ideas about the prerogatives and obligations of citizenship. They suggest that a sense of membership and solidarity among peers that cuts across cliques in a school can be a factor in adolescents' identification with a common good.

Globalization can also cause us to reflect on the future we envision for our children and the values we want them to live by. The results of this study point to the powerful role that a family ethic of social responsibility might have in this process. In all seven nations and for both girls and boys this ethic was significantly related to the importance that adolescents attached to improving their society and helping their country. It was an ethic that girls in all countries were more likely to hear. This gender difference deserves more attention in future research if, as Hoffman (1989) has suggested, such empathic concerns may form the basis of political ideologies. Elsewhere, Václav Havel (1992) has observed that values are an essential foundation for democratic states:

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I am convinced that we will never build a democratic state based on the rule of law if we do not at the same time build a state that is - regardless of how unscientific this may sound to the ears of a political scientist - humane, moral, intellectual and spiritual, and cultural. The best laws and the best-conceived democratic mechanisms will not in themselves guarantee legality or freedom or human rights - anything, in short, for which they were intended - if they are not underpinned by certain human and social values. (Havel, 1992, p. 7)

We have adopted the metaphor of a social contract or covenant to emphasize the idea of reciprocity in the concept of citizenship. We contend that young people will endorse this covenant to the extent that they feel a sense of membership in the broader political community. Developmental opportunities for identifying with the we and not just the/include the sense of solidarity that the student culture of a school may provide. Likewise, voluntary work in the community can link young people to other citizens who are unlike them and can provide the grounds for identifying with public concerns. The social contract metaphor also implies that, in the course of growing up, children come to understand the principles that make their society work. A democratic polity works when people are committed to public, not merely self-interest goals. In this regard, the results of this study point to the fundamental role that families play across societies in emphasizing social responsibility as a norm of citizenship.

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