Issues in measuring young people’s citizenship: age-related citizenship practices and social desirability
Young people’s citizenship competences

- Citizenship competences:
  - knowledge, skills, attitudes and reflection (cf. ICCS)

- Situating these components in students daily lives

- What do young people need to adequately fulfill social tasks that are representative and meaningful for actual citizenship practices of young people?
Young people’s citizenship competences

- Four social tasks
  - acting democratically
  - acting in a social responsible manner
  - dealing with conflicts
  - dealing with differences

- Citizenship Competences Questionnaire
  - age 11-16
  - N=16,000
Item examples

■ Knowledge (test)

- *All children have a right to:* a) an allowance, b) choose who they want to live with or c) education.

- *Your teacher is looking for five pupils to organize a school party. What is a democratic manner for choosing these pupils?* a) The teacher chooses five pupils who are good at organizing, b) The teacher closes his or her eyes and points to five pupils or c) The teacher has the class vote on who will be allowed to do this.
Item examples

- Attitudes, skills, reflection (survey)
  - attitude items: *How well does this statement apply to you?* Sample statement: *I like knowing something about different religious beliefs.*
  
  - skill items: *How good are you at...* and then, for instance: *finding a solution which everyone is satisfied with for a disagreement?*

  - reflection items: *How often do you think about, for instance, whether students are listened to at your school?*
Different measurement, different results?

- ICCS data: girls outperform boys with regard to citizenship knowledge except in the Netherlands

- CCQ data: girls in the Netherlands score higher than boys with regard to citizenship knowledge

- Interpretation: in our conceptualization of ‘democratic citizenship’ greater emphasis on the social domain; a domain where girls are more familiar with and competent in
Social desirability and citizenship

- Social desirability always plays a role in self-reporting

- Two views:
  - students judge themselves more positively than they are; presenting oneself as ‘good-looking’
    \[\Rightarrow \text{socially desirable answers should be filtered out}\]
  - social desirability is conceptually inherent to a specific topic
    \[\Rightarrow \text{filtering out social desirability bias can reduce construct validity}\]
Social desirability and citizenship

- The relationship between social desirability and citizenship is multi-interpretable

Research question:

To what extent is the role of social desirability for citizenship of students to be understood as misleading in the sense of presenting yourself as more democratic and prosocial than you are; or as expedient in the sense of applying the same set of social norms?
Four assumptions

1. Correlation exists between SD and citizenship knowledge

2. Correlation between SD and citizenship knowledge is less strong than that with the self-reported citizenship attitudes, skills and reflection

3. Correlation of SD with the self-report components is less strong than the correlations between the self-report components themselves

4. Correlation between citizenship and SD is relatively higher for the prosocial aspects of citizenship than for the critical aspects
Measuring social desirability

- Domain specific:
  - 5 items
  - interspersed between the CCQ attitude items
  - example: “I always carefully consider the opinions of others”

- Domain independent:
  - existing scale (6 items)
  - content not specifically related to citizenship
  - example: “I always work hard in class”
Main results

■ Strong correlation between SD and citizenship kills and attitudes, and reflection to a lesser extent
■ Small positive correlation for SD with citizenship knowledge
■ Correlations with SD are larger and stronger for the prosocial aspects of student citizenship than for the more critical aspects
Conclusion

- Social desirability and student citizenship competences ‘live apart together’: the concepts do not coincide but they are associated to a certain degree

- Therefore self-reports of student citizenship should not simply be corrected for social desirability

- Publications: email G.T.M.tenDam@uva.nl