

Bruch, Sarah. (2012). *Discipline, School Community, and Racial Dynamics: Understanding How Authority Relations Affect Student Experiences of School and Citizenship Outcomes*.

Abstract

Beginning with the first proponents of common schools in the United States, schools have been seen as a site for the creation of citizens. Although political socialization was one of the key motivations for schools, the empirical study of this process has focused on specific aspects of the schooling experience. This dissertation examines how applying insights from the policy feedback effects and social institutions literature to the study of political socialization in schools leads to new questions and findings that inform our understanding of how citizenship is constructed within schools. Specifically, I examine how specific personal experiences of school and school organizational features are related to later citizenship outcomes.

In the first empirical chapter, I focus on how experiences of specific authority relations and community dynamics in school settings affect later citizen participation and attitudes toward government. Although there are a number of pathways through which education and schooling affect citizenship, this chapter explored four of these: potentially marginalizing experiences of school, potentially socially integrating experiences of school, basic skills acquisition for participation, and educational attainment. I find evidence suggesting that all four of these channels are associated with later citizenship outcomes. The findings from this chapter highlight that the political learning that occurs with the personal experiences that students have in schools can lead to positive as well as negative citizenship outcomes. Together these findings highlight that school-based experiences in a young person's formative years shape later citizenship.

In the second empirical chapter, I examine three ways that schools could affect citizenship: (1) by affecting the likelihood of having particular experiences of school that are associated with citizenship outcomes; (2) by affecting citizenship outcomes directly; and (3) by conditioning the associations between particular experiences and citizenship. To examine each of the possible ways that schools may affect citizenship, I focus on the authority relations, community features, and racial dynamics in the school. I find that there is some evidence that schools play an indirect role in fostering citizenship by affecting the likelihood that students have experiences in school that are associated with later political outcomes, but there is little evidence that schools affect citizenship by affecting citizenship outcomes directly. I also find some support for schools acting as a moderating force for individual student characteristics.

In the third empirical chapter, I explore whether students of different racial or socioeconomic status backgrounds are more likely to experience the disciplinary environments that may be better or worse for citizenship outcomes. I also examine how the authority relations and racial dynamics of schools are related and how they are distributed across schools focusing in particular on three dimensions of racial dynamics: racial group presence, the average socioeconomic position of racial groups, and racial conflict in school. I find that students with different socioeconomic and racial backgrounds on average attend schools that organize their discipline in more punitive and restrictive ways. I also find that all three of the racial dynamics are related to discipline policies. The weakest relationship is between racial presence and the discipline policies, while the strongest is between racial conflict and the discipline policies of schools. The strength of these associations suggest that one way schools deal with or manage racial conflict is by implementing more restrictive rules and harsher discipline policies.