

## **Differences in Gender and Civic Education in Ukraine**

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## INTRODUCTION

In the US Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson penned, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.” While Jefferson and his colleagues may have had different opinions on the rights of ethnic minorities and women than is commonly held today, the theoretical and practical connotations of his phrase continues to guide policy, to some degree, in all democracies of the world. This is because inherent in Jefferson’s lofty phrase is the classical liberal democratic idea that all adults in a society should have equal rights and responsibilities in public life. What follows as a corollary to this idea is the belief that equality of citizens allows a state to capitalize on the range of talents and abilities present and in the process creates more stable government by better representation of all interests.

While this idea of equality is well regarded, it is seldom, if ever, achieved. In both established democracies, like the US, and newer consolidating democracies, like those in Central and Eastern Europe, equality for all citizens is a goal not easily attained. Like all great socio-political ideas, if it is to take root it must do so in multiple facets of the society. It is not sufficient to simply open elections or political offices to all, there also must be a concerted effort to ensure that all understand the worth and ability of every individual in a society to bring about the attitudinal as well as procedural changes necessary to achieve the desired equality. Such a change must also be reflected in the preparation of new citizens of a democracy. For the idea of equality to become a political reality, young students must come to appreciate the abilities of each other regardless of ethnicity, class, gender or other distinction as they learn the content, skills and attitudes of democratic citizenship. While all of the elements which inform young peoples’ understanding of democracy cannot be controlled (peers, media, family, etc), the one element that can be directly affected is the formal curriculum in the schools. Within a school

curriculum, stereotypes, biases and factual errors concerning equality of citizens can be corrected. At the same time, groups who are traditionally marginalized, such as ethnic minorities or females, can also become encouraged to assert their rights and assume their role as full citizens.

Unfortunately, civic education curriculums do not have the best record in achieving these goals. Numerous studies have found females at a disadvantage in their political knowledge and in their responses to civic education curriculum. Among those that have found females to be less knowledgeable about or interested in politics over the past three decades include the national Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) researchers (Education Commission, 1971, 1973, 1974), Owen and Dennis (1988) and Hahn & Tocci (1989) in various nations.

During the same time, confounding findings regarding gender differences and political knowledge and attitudes also have come to light. Orum, Cohen, Grasmuck and Orum (1977) found no gender differences in terms of participation and Blankenship (1990), Hahn and Tocci (1989) and Owen and Dennis (1988) found no gender differences in terms of political efficacy. Moreover, in the most recent incarnation of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement research of 28 countries, Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald and Schulz (2001) found “no significant difference in mean performance between boys and girls in 27 of the 28 countries” in civic knowledge although gender differences were found in participation and classroom climate. Elsewhere, Torney-Purta (2002) notes that “Students in the post-Communist countries and especially countries with high levels of unemployment on average had less positive attitudes of support for women’s rights...” Furthermore, she finds that “Support for women’s rights among adolescents tends to be stronger in countries where many women hold positions in the national legislature...”

While all of these studies assist researchers in understanding the factors influencing individual choice, they do not address that factor that can be most directly impacted by educational policymakers. Knowing the effect of school curriculum on civic knowledge and attitudes would be much more useful for those attempting to promote democracy through education. Without understanding the effects of curriculum on gender differences in civic knowledge and attitudes, educators are left hopeless in promoting the type of equality envisioned in classical democratic thought.

A few studies have been conducted with an explicit focus on examining the effects of curriculum on gender differences in civic knowledge and attitudes. In his examination of adult civic education programs in the Dominican Republic and South Africa, Finkel (2000) found in the case of the Dominican Republic that, “civic education serves to mobilize those with fewer social resources (women) to some degree, but greater effects are seen for those whose resources facilitate the translation of mobilization messages into actual behavior.” Niemi and Junn (1998) found significant effects from civic course work with differences between boys and girls being small, although boys were found to be more strongly affected by their classroom experiences. Soule (2000) found in her analysis of Project Citizen in Bosnia-Herzegovina that, “young males report greater knowledge about local government” and “boys who participate in the program are more likely to have contacted public officials than are girls” while “Girls who participate are more likely than boys to have conducted research”. Lastly, Vontz, Metcalf and Patick (2000) assessment of the effects of Project Citizen in Indiana, Latvia and Lithuania found gender to be significantly correlated with civic development in Lithuania.

It is in the spirit of these latter studies that this research hopes to contribute. This paper reports the findings of research conducted as part of an assessment of a civic education

curriculum developed through an international partnership for promoting democracy in Ukraine. This analysis follows from the responses of more than 1,000 students to a survey designed to assess student democratic knowledge, attitudes and skills. Since we seek to find the effect of the curriculum, “We Are Citizens of Ukraine” on the learning of boys and girls in Ukraine, it builds on an earlier analysis that examined the overall effects of the curriculum on treatment and control groups and hopes to better elaborate those findings by focusing on gender differences.

To accomplish this goal, the paper first outlines the international project. For the purpose of grounding the findings, the second and third sections are on the development of the curriculum and the conduct of the data collection. After reporting the prior research findings as the starting point of understanding the effects of the curriculum, we then launch into an analysis of gender differences. Lastly, we conclude with some implications from these findings and suggestions for further research.

### **An International Civic Education Partnership**

The *Education for Democracy in Ukraine* project was part of the Transatlantic Civil Society Support Program for Ukrainian Civic Education. This was the first joint effort of the European Union and the United States to support civic education in a third country. The activities were planned in accordance with CIVITAS International and drew upon prior collaboration with the Center for Citizenship Education, Warsaw (CCEW), and the success that the latter has achieved in promoting civic education in Poland.

The project consisted of a variety of activities and components to promote the advancement of civic education within the educational system in Ukraine. The principal goal of the project was the development of curriculum and materials for teaching civic education in the

9/10th grade of Ukrainian schools. Five key components of the project were designed to reinforce the assumptions listed above. These included: (1) a U.S. study tour by Ukrainian government officials; (2) an eight-week residential workshop attended by six Ukrainian educators at the Mershon Center; (3) a teacher training workshop in Ukraine, with the draft lesson book developed by the Ukrainian educators as the focal point; (4) editing and review of the draft course materials for content validity by prominent Ukrainian scholars; and (5) development of a civic education resource center. While each component was important to the overall success of the project, the ultimate goal was to assist the Ukrainian partners in the development of new, sophisticated curriculum for teaching democracy in Ukraine.

#### **“We are Citizens of Ukraine”**

The focus of the *Education for Democracy in Ukraine* project was the development of Ukrainian classroom materials for teaching democracy. The materials were designed to reflect the Ukrainian context in factual content with an eye towards using pedagogy and design based on our current understanding of effectiveness in civic education.

The lessons utilize active teaching-learning methodology to both counter the past practice of passive, didactic lecture and to teach skills necessary for democratic citizenship such as group cooperation, compromise, decision-making and leadership. The developers also recognized that democratic education must take place in both the formal and informal curriculum of the schools to be effective. Thus, the course uses an expanding horizons model that focuses on student self-awareness of the skills for democratic citizenship and their application in a societal role. The end result of the course leads the students in applying this information to a real-life problem to extend the lesson through experiential learning. Since the Ukrainian-developed textbook was designed to use active methods and culminates in a problem-based, social action learning

activity, both novel developments in Ukraine, the Ukrainian partner in the project devoted the past two years in conducting in-service workshops to retrain teachers in their use.

The bulk of the curriculum development took place during a residential workshop in the United States. During this workshop, the Ukrainian team of teachers/curriculum writers were engaged in an intensive seminar that consisted of focused sessions by US and international experts, practical experiences with US Master Teachers in and outside of schools and work sessions focused on drafting the materials. The materials were wholly developed by the Ukrainian team with the US partners serving in the role of resource providers. By the end of the seminar, the Ukrainian team had completed the first draft of the materials based on their selection of experiences and ideas gained from the seminar.

Upon returning to Ukraine, the materials were put through several editions of expert review, pilot teaching and round table discussion. In addition to the material reviews, the Ukrainian and American partners began a series of in-service teacher training workshops to prepare Ukrainian teachers in the use of the new materials. Since active teaching/learning methods were still new to Ukraine, we determined that this professional development was essential for the effectiveness of the materials as well as their long term usage. Ultimately, the Ukrainian partner assumed full control and responsibility for the material development and teacher training once they had developed the professional capacity to do so.

The success of this project can be gauged in many ways. One of the most important is the adoption and effectiveness of the materials. More than 2,000 teachers have formally received training from Nova Doba and are implementing the curriculum and nearly 40,000 students have already participated in it. The excellence of the curriculum has been recognized in Ukraine as well. “We Are Citizens of Ukraine” was ranked first in “Educational Publications” at the

Ukrainian Publisher's Forum in 2003 and has received the designation of “Recommended by the Ministry of Education.” However, we consider these pyrrhic victories if student learning was not found to be improved by the course. For that reason, the partners initiated a research project to assess the effectiveness of the course in student knowledge, attitudes and skills of democracy.

### **The Research Design**

To assess the impact of the Ukrainian course, we conducted an empirical inquiry of student knowledge and beliefs. At the core of this research is the instrument developed and publicly released by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) and serve as the assessment tool for this study.

This survey instrument uses a variety of items grouped roughly into three parts: student knowledge of democracy, demographic background items and attitudinal sections. While the publicly released survey contains the same items as the original IEA research project, it does not include all items. IEA researchers have only released a portion of their survey so that they can reserve some questions for other use at a latter date. Therefore, the student knowledge section includes a total of 16 of the original 38 items from the IEA research. These 16 questions ask students to answer factually-based questions in a multiple-choice format. The questions require students to make judgments about law, political rights, justice and democratic practice. It also includes items that require students to interpret political cartoons and pamphlets.

The second section of the survey includes a battery of 17 items that seeks background information useful for checking sampling bias and non-educational determinants of student responses. These items ask students to identify a variety of factors from language use, age, gender, parents’ educational level, books in the home, and expectations for future education.

The last section of the survey includes all of the original survey's attitudinal and behavior items used to judge students' beliefs about the concepts and everyday practice of democracy as it affects their lives. Using Likert-scaled questions, these items probe student biases, concepts of citizenship, beliefs about justice and equality and reflections on school and classroom practice.

The results of the original 28 country study by the IEA have been widely received as the best and most rigorous international research conducted on civic education. The comprehensive and highly-developed nature of the survey instrument and the ability to compare findings to the original study make using the publicly-released items an inviting opportunity to gauge student knowledge and attitudes in non-studied countries. Equally as important was the fact that Ukraine had not been one of the original IEA countries and thus data did not exist for student responses. For these reasons, the IEA survey was identified as the instrument of choice in our research on the effects of the jointly-developed course "We Are Citizens of Ukraine." By using the IEA survey, we hoped to discover if our course had any effect on student knowledge and attitudes on democracy, and how well our students compared to others previously surveyed in 28 other countries. The research project designed by the partners had two goals:

- 1) discover whether students who participated in the "We Are Citizens of Ukraine" course demonstrated any statistical and substantive differences from students who did not have the course for the three domains of the IEA survey; and
- 2) compare the Ukrainian students' responses to those who participated in the original IEA study.

Once the instrument was prepared for use, the partners set out to identify treatment and control samples. Random sampling from the 674 schools determined the treatment group and the control sample was drawn in the same manner from the schools who have not yet implemented the curriculum. Ultimately, we were able to identify forty-six classrooms to

participate in the study, with 23 in the treatment group and the same number in the control group. With 509 students in the treatment group and 506 in the control group, we were able to involve 1,015 students as participants in the study, representing all geographic regions, and thus bolstering our confidence in our results. The Ministry of Education of Ukraine fully supported this research and approval of its implementation greatly assisted our access to survey in schools across Ukraine.

Once sampling groups were identified, the project leaders from Nova Doba, Polina Verbytska and Alexander Voitenko, conducted a training session with the teachers to insure that they understood the written protocol of implementation of the survey. This protocol involved both limiting the amount of time for each section, pacing the students through the sections of the survey, and collating and returning the completed surveys and results to Nova Doba. On the assigned days for implementing the survey, Voitenko and his associates also randomly selected and visited several classrooms to observe the survey implementation. Once all of the surveys were returned to Nova Doba, the results were compiled and the data sent to the U.S. researchers for analysis.

Ultimately, the samples drawn, while quite similar to each other, were substantially different from those in the original IEA study. During the latter study, the IEA researchers implemented their survey with only 14-year olds. Unfortunately, this was not possible for us since many of the students who are currently using the “We Are Citizens of Ukraine” vary in age. Because the primary focus of our study is to discern any possible effect of the course, we had to insure that our samples included this variety of age groups and could not limit the samples to only 14-year olds.

Student responses were considered by classrooms instead of by individuals to insure

against over-inflating findings that may result from a biased sample of high-achieving students in either the control or treatment samples. Analyzing the data by classroom also intuitively fits the principal question of the research, which is to discover what effect a curriculum has on a class of students rather than on individual students. Differences in the means of the classes were analyzed to determine statistical significance across samples, using ANCOVA.

### **The Effect of “We Are Citizens of Ukraine”**

Applying ANCOVA analysis to the data reveals several statistical and substantively significant results.<sup>1</sup> This research found statistical evidence that students who participated in the “We are Citizens of Ukraine” course were more likely to:

- 1) correctly answer democracy knowledge questions better than Ukrainian students who had not participated in the course.
- 2) outperform their peers in eight out of eleven other countries of Central and Eastern Europe in knowledge of democracy. Ukrainian students who did not participate in the course outperformed only four of eleven other countries.
- 3) be more understanding of other’s differences, more empowered to make change in society and more active and patriotic as citizens.
- 4) have been taught with methods that encourage meaningful political discussion and with course materials that valued informed citizenship.
- 5) be supportive of the idea that healthy democracies should have multiple sources of information, opportunities for assembly and political differences among parties.
- 6) be optimistic about opportunities, confident in their educational system and tolerant of other ethnic and linguistic groups.
- 7) to identify a “Good Citizen” as a person who was lawful, a regular voter, a hard worker, informed on political issues and participatory in beneficial community activities.
- 8) demonstrate a stronger belief in the sovereignty of their nation.

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<sup>1</sup> Full results of this original analysis can be found in *Education for Democracy in Ukraine: Student learning through a US-Ukraine civic education partnership*, currently under review for publication.

These findings were the result of the first analysis of survey responses of Ukrainian students gained from a quasi-experimental research project. While these findings are important to our understanding of the effect of the course on student learning, we also desire to understand the course impact on students of different gender. By revealing the effect of the curriculum on boys and girls we hope to better tailor the next editions to promote the benefits of Ukraine's emerging democracy for all of its citizens.

### **Differences in Gender?**

In keeping with the prior analysis to discern the effects of the curriculum on students, we have once again considered the student responses by class average instead of individual choice.

In this analysis we sought to answer the question:

Do the male and female students who participated in the "We Are Citizens of Ukraine" course demonstrate any statistical and substantive differences from their respective counterparts who did not have the course?

By answering these questions we hope to better understand differences in democratic knowledge, skills and attitudes of boys and girls in Ukraine and whether the developed curriculum has any effect on their thinking.

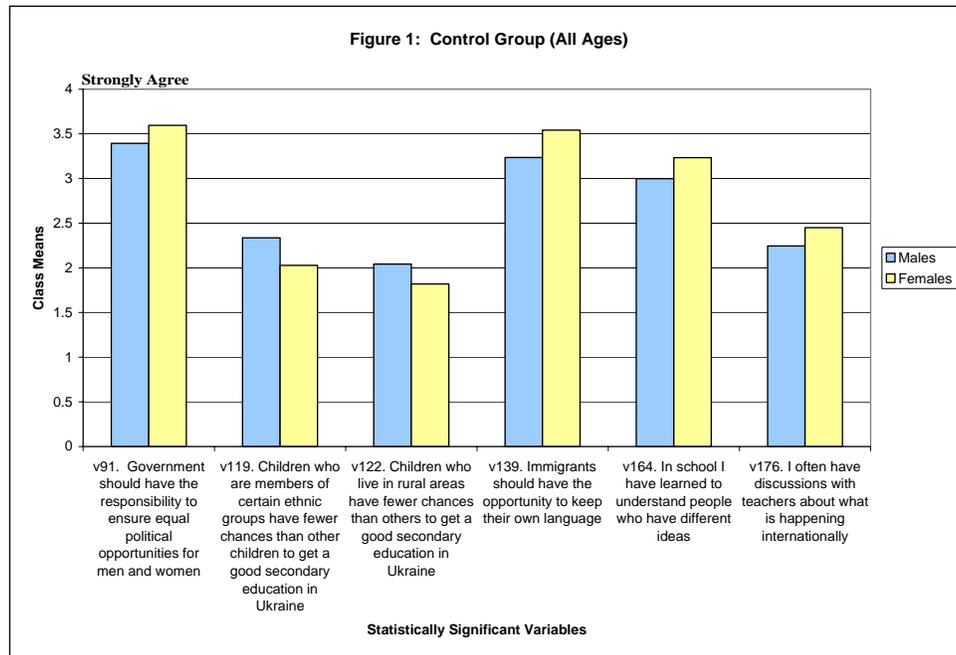
We began this analysis where the last one left off: that being with the list of variables where the treatment and control groups demonstrated statistical significant differences in their answers. From this pool of thirty-two questions, we compared the class averages for males and females for statistically significant differences. From this comparison we truncated the list of significant questions to only seven items where male and female responses demonstrated statistically differences (Table 1). Thus only 22%, or less than a quarter of the questions that were statistically different between the control and treatment groups also demonstrated a gender

significance as well.

<b>Table 1. Items with significant differences between boys and girls responses</b>	<b>DF</b>	<b>Pr &gt;  t </b>	<b>Std Dev</b>
v91. Government should have the responsibility to ensure equal political opportunities for men and women	45	.002	.4025
v119. Children who are members of certain ethnic groups have fewer chances than other children to get a good secondary education in Ukraine	45	.0194	.4531
v122. Children who live in rural areas have fewer chances than others to get a good secondary education in Ukraine	45	.0393	.4414
v139. Immigrants should have the opportunity to keep their own language	45	.0020	.3985
v161. Students acting together can have more influence on what happens in this school than students acting alone	45	.0261	.3905
v164. In school I have learned to understand people who have different ideas	45	.0049	.4543
v176. I often have discussions with teachers about what is happening internationally	45	.0024	.4585

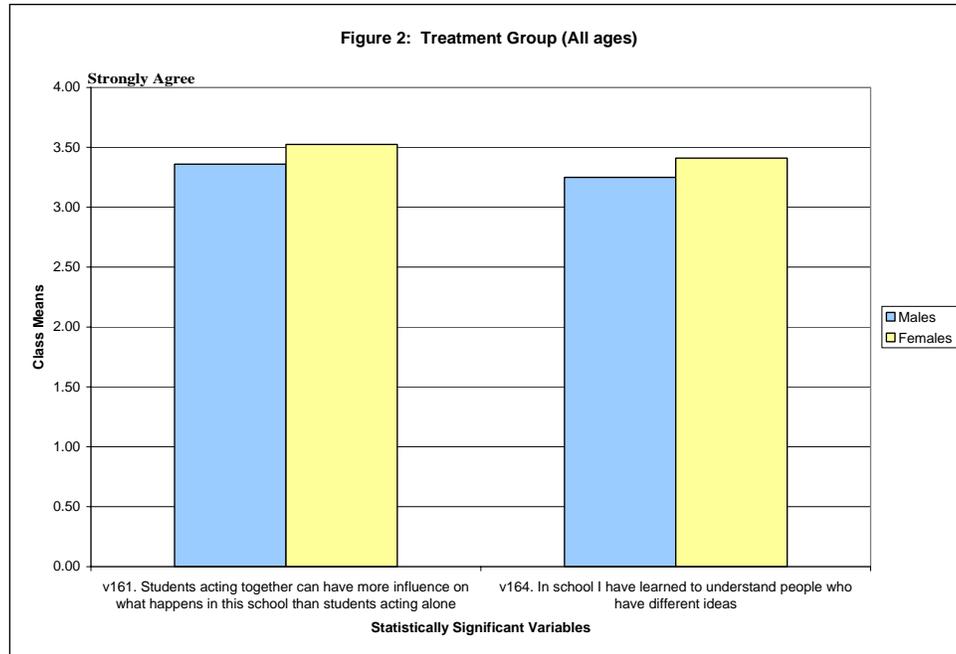
In addition, all of these items were in the attitudes and skills sections of the survey. Like the IEA researchers, we found no statistical differences in the correct responses of boys and girls to the knowledge section of the survey. While the treatment group did outperform the control group in democratic knowledge, there was no statistically significant differences in the responses of boys and girls. In both the treatment and control groups, boys and girls correct response rates were nearly identical to each other.

Once we established the set of items that are both different for treatment and control as well as boys and girls, we then identified to what extent, if any, that these differences can be traced to the treatment curriculum. The most intuitively obvious method of discerning this change is by tracking the differences within each sample group by gender. To do so we began with the control group that represents our general population and examined how boys and girls responded to these significant items. Figure 1 shows these relationships.



We find that six of the seven treatment and gender significant variables can be found to demonstrate statistically significant differences between boys and girls in the control group. In the control group, boys were particularly sensitive to the plight of ethnic and rural groups ability to get a good education in Ukraine. Females on the other hand, were sensitive to the responsibility of government to ensure political equality which likely reflects their concern about gender equality in the county. The female students also showed sensitivity to immigrant rights to keep their own language, a highly contentious issue in Ukraine where a significant percentage of the population speaks Russian as their first language even though the official language is Ukrainian. Lastly, girls were more likely to recognize school as a place where they learn to understand diversity of ideas and discuss international events with teachers.

When we consider the boy versus girl responses for the treatment group we find an immediate difference (see Figure 2).



Only two of the treatment and gender significant variables demonstrate statistically significant differences in responses between boys and girls in the treatment group and both of these items are ones where females responded in greater agreement than the males. In the first of these questions, the girls from the treatment group evidenced a greater belief in the efficacy of group action in school. The second question is one that was also identified in the control group as being significant. On this item, the difference between the boys' and girls' responses were smaller in the treatment group than they were in the control group. Although, both boys and girls had higher scores on this item in the treatment group, the boys increase exceeded the girls by .07 thereby closing the gap.

In fact, we find this trend across all seven treatment and gender items. In every case we find that the gap between boys' and girls' scores narrows, and in every instance, boys exhibit the greatest change in position. Table 2 below reveals these changes.

<b>Table 2: Difference in scores for males and females on gender and treatment variables</b>						
	<b>v91.</b>	<b>v119.</b>	<b>v122.</b>	<b>v139.</b>	<b>v164.</b>	<b>v176.</b>
Control Males	3.39	2.34	2.04	3.23	3.00	2.25
Control Females	3.59	2.03	1.82	3.54	3.23	2.45
<b>Difference</b>	<b>-0.20</b>	<b>0.31</b>	<b>0.22</b>	<b>-0.31</b>	<b>-0.23</b>	<b>-0.20</b>
Treatment Males	3.51	1.80	1.77	3.51	3.25	2.46
Treatment Females	3.69	1.79	1.72	3.58	3.41	2.65
<b>Difference</b>	<b>-0.18</b>	<b>0.01</b>	<b>0.05</b>	<b>-0.08</b>	<b>-0.16</b>	<b>-0.19</b>
cmales-tmales	0.12	-0.53	-0.27	0.27	0.25	0.21
cfemales - tmales	0.10	-0.24	-0.10	0.04	0.18	0.20

From this analysis, it becomes clear that while both boys and girls benefited from participating in the course, boys found it the most beneficial. Moreover, a close examination of these differences in gender highlights an important finding from the initial analysis. Two questions, (v119 and 122) specifically ask the students their degree of agreement with statements about the decreased opportunity for children from certain ethnic and rural areas to get a good secondary education. In all cases, the control group responded in greater agreement with these statements than the treatment group. We have interpreted this relationship as evidence that the students who have participated in the curriculum gain an increased confidence in their educational system (perhaps because they do not recognize that the “We Are Citizens of Ukraine” curriculum is not in universal use yet) and a heightened sense of individual empowerment that would allow them to overcome social and economic circumstances. In effect, participating in the course seems to increase the students’ sense of personal efficacy and their corresponding belief that this empowerment is available to all. We are preparing a qualitative study to further consider this issue. We especially find support for this effect of the curriculum in the movement of boys’ scores on these items. Not only does the difference between boys and girls narrow but the scores actually drop in both genders (demonstrating less agreement with the

items) and the boys once again exhibit more change.

From this full examination of the data, we find that there are few differences between boys' and girls' responses that can be attributed to participating in the curriculum. Of the six responses where the control group showed differences between the genders, these differences were narrower in the treatment group. Moreover, in all of these items, boys' scores demonstrated greater change than girls' even in questions where the students showed less agreement with the statements made in the questions.

## **Conclusions**

As a second foray into the data we initially collected in 2003, this review has brought some new understanding and reinforced some old questions concerning student learning of democracy and the effects of the "We Are Citizens of Ukraine" curriculum. While the difference between male and female learning is small, it is revealed in some of the attitudinal sections of the survey but not on the knowledge section. What differences do occur seem to be greatest in males who participate in the course. This trend is in keeping with much of the literature on class-based civic learning and presents an area for further research. Why do boys exhibit more change from participating in the course? Is it because they almost always begin at more conservative viewpoint and with exposure to new ideas and methods, they have more to gain? Is it possible that this difference is attributable to predilection of boys to guess more often on questions and thus simply reflecting a more aggressive response pattern as some would suggest? (Mondak and Anderson, 2004) Understanding this effect on both males and females is important to the planned revisions of the curriculum and will require further consideration.

More perplexing is the finding that participation in the course increases the likelihood of

the students to be optimistic about their school system and the ability of individuals to rise above their condition. This gender-focused analysis once again turned up such a phenomenon and further revealed that in this area as well, boys exhibited the most change from participating in the curriculum. If it is evidence, as we posit, of an increased sense of well-being, empowerment and optimism, then the curriculum might be considered to be a positive asset in encouraging self-confidence and political efficacy. However, if the students are responding in this way because they lack an understanding of daily realities in Ukraine or are becoming blinded to the real hardships faced by minority and rural students then the curriculum may need adjusted to further highlight these realities. We hope to undertake some qualitative case studies of students in the spring to better understand this issue.

While this analysis discerns that boys seem to benefit more from the curriculum than girls, it also found these differences to be minor. More importantly, the study verified that while both boys and girls improved their knowledge of democratic content they showed no statistically significant difference in their improvement. Even though the curriculum did seem to benefit boys more, girls also improved their scores after participating in the curriculum. It should not be forgotten that only two questions of thirty-two, or 6% of the questions, ultimately showed gender differences in the treatment group and in both instances, the girls outscored the boys. In contrast, the control group had seven questions with significant gender differences, or 22% of the possible questions. Thus, the curriculum seems to have had a positive effect on democratic attitudes that lifted all students and in particular those of the male students.

Understanding the effects of particular curricula is important for the ongoing development of civic education. As many have found, curriculum can make a difference in the democratic knowledge, attitudes and skills of both youths and adults. Understanding what this

effect is and how it operates on different students can help civic educators better tailor their curriculum to fit the needs and context of their students and schools. Clearly, this approach assumes that a curriculum should be a changing, adapting creation – just like democracy itself. And just like democracy, it requires constant assessment and adjustment to ensure that it serves all of its citizens.

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