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Private Schooling and Political Tolerance

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Political tolerance, defined as the willingness to extend constitutionally protected rights and legal protections to groups and individuals whom one personally dislikes, has been an important civic value in the United States since its founding.[1] Although the country has not always lived up to its aspiration to operate as a fully tolerant society, political tolerance has remained a central aspect of the American creed. Scholars in the fields of political ideology, public opinion, and political psychology have carefully studied the causes and consequences of political tolerance levels. Much is already understood about the factors that influence the levels of political tolerance in mature adults, yet little is known about the factors that affect political tolerance in the formative years of adolescence and young adulthood.

In particular, it has not been determined if students' tolerance levels vary based on the school sector in which they receive their elementary and secondary education. This gap in understanding of political tolerance is an oddity, because the effects of private education on educational outcomes have been thoroughly studied and the earliest public school systems in the United States were established for the express purpose of molding children into responsible citizens. Whether or not public schools do a better job than private

schools of inculcating civic values such as political tolerance in their students is an important and unresolved question.

In this chapter we present the results of an empirical test of the commonly held assumption that public schools outperform private schools in promoting the civic values of their students.[2] Using data from a survey of 1,212 college students in Texas, most of whom were fresh from their various K–12 educational experiences, and standard regression analysis techniques, we demonstrate that the levels of political tolerance of students who were educated in private schools tend to be higher than the tolerance levels of comparable students who were educated in public schools.[3] Surprisingly, the positive effect of private schooling on political tolerance is roughly similar for both secular and religious private schools. Although more extensive research will be required to establish conclusively that private schooling has a positive effect on political tolerance, at a minimum these results call into question the assumption that public schools are necessarily more effective at instilling civic values in young Americans.

Political Tolerance as an Important Civic Value

What values need to be embraced by a broad swath of the citizenry for a democratic republic such as the United States to function properly? A complete treatment of that momentous and disputatious question cannot be undertaken here. However, political tolerance is clearly a civic value vital to an effective democracy. To ensure that patriotism or nationalism does not engender repressiveness toward other people and their political ideas, tolerance for diverse and even extreme opinions is an essential characteristic of democratic citizenship.[4] The importance of political tolerance is manifested by the prominence of the First Amendment freedoms of speech and demonstration in U.S. political, social, and judicial history. This crucial civic value is best captured by Voltaire's declaration: "I disapprove of what you say, but I'll defend to the death your right to say it."[5]

Political tolerance is not the only important civic value in a democratic republic. Patriotism, political participation, support for majority rule (within limits), due process protections, and voluntarism are also central civic values worthy of study. We are examining tolerance because it is a vital civic value that we can measure using a single survey research instrument with well-established reliability. The extent to which, and the conditions under which, students from different types of educational backgrounds support majority rule and due process and participate in both politics and community service are similarly important concerns. However, they are not the focus of this study.

The Importance of Schools for Inculcating Civic Values

While schools are not the only source of citizenship education—they compete with homes, churches, workplaces, and media outlets—they have long been a primary institution for shaping the values of future citizens.[6] Given the current obsession with using standardized test scores to evaluate how well America's schools are performing, it may seem surprising that, from the nation's founding through World War II, the most important function of elementary and secondary schools was to prepare students for their responsibilities as citizens. Many founders of the American republic recognized that their revolutionary experiment with representative government required a citizenry that was sufficiently educated and informed to make responsible decisions in elections. Shortly after authoring the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson directed his attention to creating a publicly financed education system that would help to ensure the development of individuals capable of protecting liberty and responsibly managing self-government.[7] Jefferson's contemporary, Benjamin Rush of Pennsylvania, undertook a similar project manifested in his "Plan for the Establishment of Public Schools."[8]

This drive to impart civic values to American youth continued and intensified throughout the nineteenth century. Although political disagreements arose regarding which civic values were most important, a strong consensus existed that schools bore the fundamental responsibilities for preparing their charges for citizenship. Rogers M. Smith writes that, during the early part of that century, "education came to be so identified with preparation for citizenship that noncitizens [*sic*] were often denied it."[9] Horace Mann, founder of the first truly public school system in the United States during the 1830s, justified his proposal that government establish and operate "common schools" by claiming that it would enhance civic values, particularly in the children of Catholic immigrants.[10]

The emphasis on teaching civic values and transforming immigrants into true "Americans" (and Catholics into Protestants) was disconcertingly dramatic and Anglo-centric during the first 150 years of the republic. Nevertheless, the importance placed on the role of elementary and secondary schools in producing responsible democratic citizens throughout U.S. history is undeniable. The dawn of the information age during the latter half of the twentieth century has led to a greater emphasis on the duty of schools to impart educational skills and scholastic knowledge to their students. Yet many contemporary education researchers maintain that the role of schools in imparting values, including civic values, should and does remain important.[11] However, the question is: What sort of schools—public, private secular, or private religious—best instill civic values in their students?

Civic Values and Public Versus Private Schools

At first blush it might seem obvious that public schools are better positioned than their private counterparts to instill civic values such as political tolerance in their students. After all, they are public—fully financed and operated by the government. As state-run institutions, insulated from the consumer mentality of markets, public schools should be particularly adept at inculcating civic values in their students.[12] The melting-pot function of mixing children from diverse economic, social, racial, and religious backgrounds, central to the common school vision in theory though not always in practice, should be particularly conducive to promoting the tolerance of diverse lifestyles and political ideas.[13] From the establishment of the first public school systems in America, "public education was to be republican civic education."[14] In theory and based on popular notions of the public school as the diverse melting pot for forging American citizens, public schools should outperform private schools in imparting civic values to their students.

To date few empirical studies have been published of the relative effectiveness of public versus private schools in promoting civic values.[15] Several champions of public schooling warn that an expansion of voucher programs to permit more public school students to attend private schools would precipitate a decline in racial integration and the civic values of students.[16] Yet their warnings are based on the unproven assumptions that public schools are more diverse than private schools and are more effective in imparting civic values to their students. Exactly which educational sector does a better job in promoting civic values remains an open question. Whatever hopes may be harbored for public schools, firm evidence is needed about the reality of how they compare with private schools in promoting civic values such as political tolerance. This study is an initial effort to provide an empirical description of the effect of private versus public schooling on political tolerance.

Methodology

To analyze the impact of private schooling on political tolerance, the tools of survey research and multivariate regression were employed. Such techniques possess certain shortcomings when applied to questions of educational impacts. Yet we think that they provide a solid initial glimpse at the general

effect that private schools have on the willingness of students to tolerate distasteful political groups.

Data

A survey was administered to 1,212 students in the fall of 1997 at four universities in Texas. The survey was completed in required introductory courses on American government at the University of Texas—Austin, the University of North Texas, the University of Houston, and Texas Christian University.

While the institutions were not selected at random and while Texas college students do not constitute a representative sample of young people, good reasons exist to accept the reliability of this research approach. First, by using required introductory courses as the target population, we almost certainly obtained a representative sample of students at these colleges and universities who are little removed from the impact of their public or private elementary and secondary school experiences. Second, by restricting our analysis to Texas colleges, we have stacked the deck in favor of confirming a public school advantage in promoting political tolerance. Texas private schools, especially those affiliated with a particular religion, are reputed to be places of intolerance, whereas we would expect Texas public schools to fit closely the ideal of the common school as a melting pot of ethnically diverse children to be forged into responsible citizens. If the reputations of Texas private and public schools are to be believed, our focus on college students in the Lone Star State biases our study in favor of public schools.[17]

The anonymous survey (available from the authors by request) consisted of a series of questions regarding the students' tolerance of extremist political groups, educational experiences, and attitudinal and demographic characteristics that previous research has indicated predicts levels of political tolerance.[18] Following the approach pioneered by John L. Sullivan and his colleagues, our conceptualization of political tolerance requires that individuals be willing to extend "the full legal rights of citizenship to groups they themselves dislike" and convey "a willingness to permit the expression of ideas or interests" that they oppose.[19]

First, respondents selected the political group that they least liked from a list of groups from across the political ideology spectrum. The results of their choices appear in table 13-1. The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) was the most commonly selected least-liked group, chosen by nearly 60 percent of respondents. Almost 20 percent of the sample said that American Nazis were their least-liked group. The Religious Right was cited as the least-liked group of nearly 6 percent of respondents. None of the other nine political groups was selected as the least-liked group by more than 3 percent of the students in the sample.

Table 13-1. *Least-Liked Group Selections*

Group	*Percentage*
Ku Klux Klan	59.2
American Nazis	18.7
Religious Right	5.7
Gay activists	3.0
Pro-life on abortion	2.8
Pro-choice on abortion	2.7
Atheists	2.4
Feminists	1.3
Militia groups	1.2
Nation of Islam	1.2
American Communists	1.2
Environmentalists	0.3

The selections of least-liked groups by the respondents gave us confidence in the appropriateness of our sample. George E. Marcus and his colleagues' recent study of political tolerance in adults similarly found that a majority of respondents consider the KKK or "American racists" to be their least-liked political group, followed by American Nazis.[20] In addition, we expected few college students, ripe with social idealism, to select liberal political groups such as environmentalists, feminists, or gay activists as prime targets of their abhorrence. The choices of our respondents confirmed those expectations.

After they had selected their least-liked group, respondents then answered a series of questions regarding their willingness to permit legal or constitutionally guaranteed activities by their least-liked group (see table 13-2). The students were least likely to allow the government to tap the phones of their least-liked group (possibly because they would not want their parents to get any similar ideas), as over 60 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that a prohibition against government wiretapping was proper. Clear majorities of students also were willing to permit members of their least-liked group to make a public speech or hold a public rally. Near majorities of respondents said that their least-liked group should not be outlawed and should be allowed to run for public office. The students were least tolerant of permitting members of their least-liked group to teach in the public schools, as only 17 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with that proposition. The answers to all six hypothetical questions were averaged to produce a tolerance scale score for each respondent. The scale demonstrated a high level of reliability, with a Cronbach's α of .83. The distribution of tolerance

Table 13-2. *The Tolerance Scale*[a]
Percent

Statement	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	No opinion (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
	Response (value assigned to each answer)				
1. The government should not be able to tap the phones of members of your least-liked group.	7.1	13.8	17.3	23.6	38.2
2. Members of your least-liked group should be allowed to teach in public schools.	56.1	17.5	9.4	9.0	8.0
3. The group you least like should not be outlawed.	27.7	13.2	11.0	21.2	26.9
4. Members of your least-liked group should be allowed to make a public speech.	13.5	12.5	12.8	29.3	31.9
5. Members of your least-liked group should be able to run for president or other elected office.	31.3	12.7	10.4	16.5	29.1
6. Members of the group you like least should be allowed to hold public demonstrations or rallies.	21.0	13.3	11.3	27.7	26.8

a. Figures reported represent the percentages of valid responses within each category. Cronbach's α = .83; valid N = 1,212; mean = 3.09; standard deviation = 1.07; minimum = 1.00; and maximum = 5.00.

scale scores was approximately continuous and approximately normal, which allowed us to use ordinary least squares (OLS) estimation in the subsequent analysis.

The primary independent variable of interest in the analysis was the sector in which the student received his or her elementary and secondary school education. Respondents were asked what type of school they attended (public, private nonaffiliated, private religiously affiliated) most of the time during three distinct periods: kindergarten through fifth grade (elementary school), sixth through eighth grade (junior high school), and ninth through twelfth grade (high school). Based on those responses, the educational experiences of the students were categorized as described in the appendix. First, scale scores for extent of private education and extent of private secular and private religious education were calculated for each respondent. Second, to

test whether or not the effect of the treatment of private education was smooth—that is, consistent across values on the scale—we disaggregated the scale scores into a series of distinct dummy variables to measure the relative effect of each amount of treatment on levels of political tolerance. Because subsequent analysis revealed similar effects for the treatments "all private" and "mostly private," and their secular and religious corollaries, those categories were combined to form the variables "majority private," "majority secular," and "majority religious."

Missing data among the variables were a minor problem. The deletion of observations lacking data for one or more variables in the regression estimations excluded about 20 percent of the data. A secondary analysis of the observations that contained missing data indicated that they were similar to the included data in all relevant respects. After excluding the observations with missing data, a representative sample of nearly 1,000 student responses remained—a sufficient sample to reach preliminary conclusions about the effects of schools on civic values such as political tolerance.

The Models

Our goal is to determine the independent effect that different amounts and types of private schooling have on the civic values of young adults. Thus we estimate the effects of the treatment variables on the political tolerance dependent variable while simultaneously controlling for the effects of demographic and attitudinal variables that otherwise might confound the analysis. The operational definition of the treatment variables was varied to measure the following effects on political tolerance: (1) the overall effect of private schooling, (2) the separate effects of different amounts of private schooling, (3) the effects of a majority of private schooling versus only some private schooling, (4) the effects of private secular schooling versus private religious schooling, (5) the effects of different amounts of private secular and private religious schooling, and (6) the effects of a majority and some private secular schooling compared with a majority and some private religious schooling. The control variables for the models consist of demographic and attitudinal variables that previous research and theory indicate are likely to influence the levels of political tolerance of young adults, including race, gender, age, citizenship, family income, parental education, geography, religion, and political ideology.[21] The models also control for the extent to which each respondent felt personally threatened by their least-liked group and the extent to which average tolerance levels differed among the various campuses.

We seek to determine if the effects of private schooling on civic values vary based on the extent of exposure to the treatment and the distinct form

that the treatment takes—that is, secular versus religious private education. Based on the conventional view that public schools possess an advantage relative to private schools regarding the inculcation of civic values such as tolerance, our working hypotheses are:

HYPOTHESIS 1. Exposure to the treatment of private education has a negative effect on tolerance.

HYPOTHESIS 2. More extensive exposure to the treatment of private education has a greater negative effect on tolerance than less extensive exposure.

HYPOTHESIS 3. Exposure to the treatment of private religious education has a greater negative effect on tolerance than exposure to private secular education.[22]

Results

The three hypotheses were tested by estimating statistical models using OLS regression. First, we consider the effects of various amounts of private schooling on levels of political tolerance. Hypothesis 1 predicts that private schooling will have a significant negative effect on the willingness of students to grant civil liberties to distasteful political groups. Model 1 in table 13-3 provides an initial test of that hypothesis. The results of the Model 1 estimation are not consistent with the hypothesis of a public school advantage regarding political tolerance. The treatment variable "extent of private education" has a positive coefficient of .096. Although this effect is substantively small, amounting to less than one-tenth of a standard deviation on the tolerance scale, it is statistically significant beyond even the highest commonly used threshold of $p < .01$. The data speak clearly here: Students with more private education are more politically tolerant, all else being equal. Hypothesis 1, that private education will be associated with lower levels of political tolerance, is disconfirmed.

Models 2 and 3 in table 13-3 test Hypothesis 2, that more extensive exposure to the treatment of private schooling will be associated with lower levels of tolerance. We find that the opposite is true: More extensive exposure to private education is associated with even higher levels of tolerance. Students who received all of their prior education in private schools, on average, exhibit tolerance levels nearly four-tenths of a point higher than comparable public school students. The positive effect of an all-private education on political tolerance amounts to an increase of more than one-third of a standard deviation on the tolerance scale and is statistically significant beyond the $p < .01$ confidence level. Students who received most but not all of their education in private schools exhibit a tolerance advantage of almost one-sixth of a standard deviation, although the effect is statistically indistinguishable from zero. The effect of some private education on tolerance also is not statistically significant. In Model 3, by combining the "all private" and "mostly private" categories into the "majority private" classification, we generate an estimate of the private school tolerance advantage of .278, which is statistically significant beyond the $p < .01$ level. The data indicate the opposite of Hypothesis 2: Higher amounts of private schooling are associated with higher levels of political tolerance, all else being equal.

Do private religious schools in particular foster intolerance, as is predicted by Hypothesis 3? The data in table 13-4 describe the results of the statistical tests of the assumption of religious school intolerance. The Model 1 estimation compares the effect of the extent of secular private education with the effect of the extent of religious education on levels of tolerance. Both types of schools tend to have a positive effect on tolerance, although the religious schooling effect is not statistically significant. The coefficient for the effect of the extent of private secular education on tolerance of .109 is larger and more precise than, but not statistically distinguishable from, the coefficient for the positive effect of private religious education on tolerance of .079. These results do not confirm the hypothesis that private religious schools promote greater intolerance than private secular schools. Exposure to either type of private schooling appears to produce greater tolerance than public schooling, although we can only be confident of the general positive effect of secular schooling on political tolerance.

Models 2 and 3 in table 13-4 provide a more fine-grained test of the hypothesis that religious schools are a source of political intolerance. With the exception of "some secular private education," all of the treatment variables indicate a positive association between the various types and extent of private schooling and political tolerance. However, only the coefficients measuring the positive effects of "all secular private," "majority secular private," and "all religious private" education on political tolerance are statistically significant. Students whose previous education took place exclusively in private secular schools exhibited levels of political tolerance nearly half a point higher than comparable students whose schooling took place exclusively in public schools. This positive effect of all private secular schooling amounts to an average gain of more than one-third of a standard deviation on the tolerance scale. The positive effect of experiencing a majority of one's education in private secular schools was only slightly smaller, amounting to one-third of a standard deviation on the tolerance scale. Education exclusively in private religious schools contributed one-third of a point to students' tolerance scores, an effect of nearly one-third of a standard deviation.

Table 13-3. *Effect of Private Schooling on Political Tolerance*[a]

Variable (range)	*Model 1*	*Model 2*	*Model 3*
Treatment			
Extent of private education (0–3)	.096***		
	(.01)		
All private education (0,1)		.372***	
		(.01)	
Mostly private education (0,1)		.164	
		(.25)	
Majority private education (0,1)			.278***
			(.01)
Some private education (0,1)		–.041	–.041
		(.65)	(.65)
Demographic controls			
Age (17–64)	.027***	.027***	.027***
	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)
Freshman (0,1)	–.260***	–.262***	–.258***
	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)
U.S. citizen (0,1)	.288	.272	.281
	(.17)	(.19)	(.18)
Female (0,1)	–.339***	–.339***	–.334***
	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)
African American (0,1)	–.514***	–.526***	–.520***
	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)
Asian (0,1)	–.419***	–.422***	–.428***
	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)
Hispanic (0,1)	–.149	–.148	–.149
	(.15)	(.16)	(.15)
Native American (0,1)	.411*	.399*	.414*
	(.07)	(.08)	(.06)
Father's education (1–6)	.146***	.149***	.147***
	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)
Mother's education (1–6)	.017	.016	.016
	(.61)	(.63)	(.62)
Income (1–8)	–.043**	–.043**	–.042**
	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)
Intact family (0,1)	.080	.075	.075
	(.29)	(.32)	(.32)
Siblings (0–10)	.039	.040	.040
	(.12)	(.11)	(.11)
Suburban high school (0,1)	.133**	.129**	.131**
	(.04)	(.05)	(.05)
Southern high school (0,1)	–.008	–.009	–.004
	(.91)	(.90)	(.96)

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Table 13-3. *Effect of Private Schooling on Political Tolerance*[a] *(continued)*

Variable (range)	*Model 1*	*Model 2*	*Model 3*
Attitudinal and ideological controls			
Jewish (0,1)	–.739***	–.732***	–.723***
	(.00)	(.00)	(.01)
Catholic or Orthodox (0,1)	–.512***	–.524***	–.516***
	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)
Mainline Protestant (0,1)	–.438***	–.443***	–.442***
	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)
Evangelical or fundamentalist (0,1)	–.410***	–.416***	–.416***
	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)
Other religion (0,1)	.015	.007	.017
	(.94)	(.97)	(.93)
Religion unimportant (0,1)	–.040	–.043	–.039
	(.70)	(.67)	(.70)
Liberal political ideology (1–10)	.051***	.051***	.052***
	(.01)	(.01)	(.00)
Identify or lean Democratic (0,1)	.140*	.139*	.134*
	(.07)	(.07)	(.09)
Registered to vote (0,1)	.161*	.152*	.148
	(.08)	(.10)	(.11)
Seriousness of threat (1–7)	–.315***	–.313***	–.313***
	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)
Fixed effects and constant			
University of Texas (0,1)	.285**	.299**	.288**
	(.02)	(.01)	(.01)
University of Houston (0,1)	.228	.249*	.236*
	(.11)	(.08)	(.10)
University of North Texas (0,1)	.137	.153	.141
	(.25)	(.20)	(.23)
Constant	3.460***	3.478***	3.466***
	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)
R^2	.31	.31	.31
F-statistic	14.16***	13.36***	13.76***
	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)
N	962	962	962

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01.

a. Figures are unstandardized regression coefficients with p values (in parentheses) based on a two-tailed test. For the estimation of fixed effects due to college attended, Texas Christian University was the omitted reference category.

Table 13-4. *Effect of Secular and Religious Private Schooling on Political Tolerance*[a]

Variables (range)	*Model 1*	*Model 2*	*Model 3*
Extent of private secular education (0–3)	.109**		
	(.03)		
Extent of private religious education (0–3)	.079		
	(.13)		
All secular private education (0,1)		.452**	
		(.02)	
Mostly secular private education (0,1)		.269	
		(.13)	
Majority secular private education (0,1)			.351***
			(.01)
Some secular private education (0,1)		–.080	–.092
		(.47)	(.41)
All religious private education (0,1)		.333*	
		(.09)	
Mostly religious private education (0,1)		.051	
		(.80)	
Majority religious private education (0,1)			.196
			(.17)
Some religious private education (0,1)		.048	.044
		(.71)	(.73)
R^2	.31	.31	.31
F-statistic	13.59***	12.13***	12.85***
	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)
N	958	958	958

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01.

a. Control variables included were the same as in the table 13-3 models, with identical effects. Figures are unstandardized regression coefficients with p values (in parentheses) based on a two-tailed test.

All three of these effects are substantively large by the standards of education research.

Hypothesis 3 is largely disconfirmed by the data. The effect of religious schooling on political tolerance is positive and statistically significant at least at the modest threshold of $p < .10$ for the students who received all of their education in religious schools. And the size of the effect is not markedly different from the size of the effect for students who received all of their education in private secular schools. A significant amount of exposure to either private secular or private religious schools appears to increase the political tolerance of college students in Texas.

Discussion

How reliable are these surprising results regarding the effects of private schooling on political tolerance? When we examine the regression models in toto, we find reasons to suspect that these school sector effects are accurate. The control variables used in the model are drawn primarily from the richly developed empirical literature on political tolerance. As a result, the statistical models are well specified. About 30 percent of the variance in tolerance levels is explained by the models, and nearly all of the control variables are statistically significant with the expected signs. Those students who are older, nonfreshmen, male, white, offspring of well-educated fathers, graduates of suburban high schools, not affiliated with one of the major religions in the United States, liberal in their political ideology, Democrats, registered to vote, and less threatened by their least-liked group tend to be more politically tolerant than students who are differently situated. These results are consistent with previous studies of tolerance in adults.[23]

The major surprises in the results are the negative effect of family income and the positive effect of private schooling, both secular and religious, on political tolerance. The small negative effect of family income on political tolerance may signal that young adults from more prosperous families are somewhat less likely to tolerate extremist groups and the social disruptions that such groups can cause. We uncover such an effect for the first time possibly because our eight-point income scale is more fine-grained than the three-point scale used by previous researchers.[24]

But why would college students who were educated in private schools be more politically tolerant than similarly situated undergraduates with public school backgrounds? First, we must rule out sample selection bias as the reason for the apparent private school tolerance advantage. There are at least three reasons to doubt that selection bias explains the private school advantage in promoting political tolerance identified by our analysis. First, our models control for elite background characteristics, such as income, parental education, and suburban schooling that might otherwise confound our analysis of the effect of private schooling itself on political tolerance. In building our statistical model, we found that the positive effect of private schooling on political tolerance grew in size and statistical significance as we controlled for more background factors. This development strongly suggests that the private schooling variables are capturing an actual positive effect of the private school experience on political tolerance, net of the background characteristics of the students.

Second, our respondents are all college students. Enrollment in college

vels the playing field, at least somewhat, in the sense that it requires a cer-
in amount of academic achievement and at least some financial sacrifice
om all students and their families, whether their previous schooling was
ublic or private. Unmeasured parental educational values, the most com-
only cited source of selection bias in educational achievement studies, are
kely to be more similar in the public and private school students in our col-
ge sample then they would be in a sample of current public and private ele-
entary or secondary school students. Granted, students from families that
not view education as valuable are far less likely to attend private school.
owever, students from such families also are less likely to attend college and
us be in a position to drag down the numbers of the publicly schooled
oup in our sample. Because the overwhelming majority of privately
hooled students go on to college, our sampling method most likely com-
ares a group of more successful public school students with a group of aver-
ge private school students, thus mitigating at least somewhat the problem of
lection bias that might explain the private school advantage over public
hools in elementary and high school academic achievement studies.

Third, surveys of parents in various school choice experiments indicate
at civic values are not even a consideration, much less an important one, in
arental decisions to enroll students in private schools. In surveys of choice
arents in Cleveland, Ohio; New York City; Massachusetts; Dayton, Ohio;
nd Washington, D.C., academic concerns dominated the list of important
ctors in choosing a private or public school that was not the family's neigh-
orhood school. Considerations of values such as political tolerance or civic
esponsibility were not among the thirteen most common reasons for school
lection given by parents.[25] The evidence argues against the dubious claim
at the private school advantage in producing tolerant young adults is
erely because parents who strongly value political tolerance are more moti-
ated to send their children to private schools than parents who only weakly
alue political tolerance. Moreover, scholars who criticize voucher programs
y warning that private schools are magnates for intolerance cannot then
rgue that graduates of private schools are more politically tolerant because
egions of civic minded students are drawn to such private schools.[26]

If the positive effect of private schooling on political tolerance is not an
rtifact of statistical bias, then what might explain such an unexpected result?
n spite of the commonly held assumption that public schools are the ideal
lace to foster civic values, there are reasons to expect that private schools
ight be as good as or even better than public schools at inculcating values
uch as political tolerance. First, many public school systems have not lived
p to their aspirations to be bastions of social and racial diversity. Efforts at

mixing students of different races and social classes in public schools have been confounded by white and wealthier families migrating to suburban school districts.[27] Even within public school districts, the prevalence of assignment to schools based on segregated housing patterns and then the further segregating effect of academic tracking and race-based social cliques have hindered integration in public schools.[28] A recent Harvard study determined that 69 percent of black students and 75 percent of Hispanic students in public school systems attend schools that are "predominantly minority."[29] In New York City, supposedly the greatest melting pot in America, over two-thirds of the 235 public junior high schools are racially segregated, with racial minorities constituting over 90 percent of the student body. Twenty-seven percent of the junior high schools consist of greater than 98 percent racial minorities and nearly 5 percent do not have a single white student enrolled.[30] The empirical research that addresses the question of race and modern American schools suggests that privately operated schools, perhaps because their students freely choose to attend them and the schools are not bound by racially segregated housing patterns, are better able to promote positive race relations and integration than are publicly operated schools.[31] This environment of better racial integration and less racial tension may explain the private school advantage in producing tolerant citizens.

Second, private schools may exceed public schools in imparting civic values because of a greater overall emphasis on values. Studies of the effect of social science curricula on students' levels of political tolerance indicate that civic values are difficult to impart in the classroom.[32] A curriculum must be specifically tailored to address questions of intolerance toward particular disliked groups to generate an appreciable increase in political tolerance.[33] Quentin L. Quade argues that the legal and political restrictions commonly placed on public schools because of their publicness tend to diminish the extent to which values of any kind are discussed openly there.[34] Denis P. Doyle claims that the stress on character formation at private religious schools naturally brings with it an emphasis on civic values such as tolerance and respect for others.[35] With clear advantages over public schools in promoting moral and religious values, many—though certainly not all—private schools may also be particularly well suited to instill civic values in their students.

Third, characteristics of private schools that increase the academic performance of their students relative to comparable public school students might also enhance the civic values of their charges. Elements of the school environment including interactive teaching, the free exchange of student opinions, and student involvement in decisionmaking have been linked to higher levels of civic values.[36] The dearth of these practices in many public

schools might explain the private school advantage in promoting civic values.[37] Our data provide some support for this explanation, as the tolerance scale question "Should members of your least-liked group be allowed to teach in the public schools?" provoked the least tolerant response, with more than 73 percent of the students surveyed opposing such a policy, 56 percent of them "strongly." An overwhelming majority of our respondents took the position that public schools are no place for teachers who might freely exchange their controversial political views.

Finally, the bureaucratic structure common to public schools—cited by researchers such as John E. Chubb and Terry M. Moe as the reason that private schools outperform public schools in imparting academic skills to their students—might explain the private school advantage in instilling political tolerance in its graduates.[38] Abraham K. Korman, in a review of workplace studies, found that adults who work in environments that stress hierarchical control tend to be less politically tolerant than adults who work in organizations that acknowledge ambiguity and encourage self-control.[39] Although we hesitate to infer that the effects of workplace characteristics on tolerance necessarily hold for students in educational environments, Korman's findings do offer a possible theoretical explanation for our unexpected empirical results.

While the finding that private schools promote tolerance is at odds with conventional wisdom, it is consistent with the limited amount of empirical work that has examined this issue. For example, Jay P. Greene and his colleagues examined a national survey of adult Latinos and found that, even after controlling for a variety of background characteristics, those Latinos who had received more private schooling were more tolerant of the political activities of their least-liked group.[40] Ken Godwin and his colleagues found a similar higher level of political tolerance among New York and Texas students currently enrolled in private junior high schools relative to their comparable peers currently enrolled in public junior high schools.[41] The finding that private education is associated with greater political tolerance may be surprising to many, but the few researchers who have examined this issue empirically have all identified this same result.

Our results reflect surprisingly well on the performance of private schools in promoting the essential civic value of political tolerance. College students in Texas who received a majority of their elementary and secondary education in secular or religious private schools produced an average tolerance score more than one-fourth of a standard deviation higher than comparable students of public schooling, an effect size that education researchers commonly describe as "considerable" or "large."[42] A stronger values component, less racial tension, a greater feeling of belonging, the more frequent use of

interactive teaching methods, the freer exchange of ideas, and less hierarchy in private schools all are viable explanations for private schools' apparent tolerance advantage over public schools. A panel data study, preferably with random assignment of students to the various types of schools, would be required to identify the exact causal mechanism and definitively prove the tolerance advantage of private schools. Nevertheless, our results are highly suggestive that policymakers need not fear that private schooling—whether secular or religious—threatens civic values. Moreover, the assumption should not be made that public schooling necessarily promotes such values.

Conclusion

Much research has been conducted regarding the civic values of adults, especially their willingness to tolerate the legal activities of unpopular political groups. Even more scholarship has focused on whether or not private schools do a better job than public schools in preparing students to perform well academically. However, to date, few empirical studies have considered the effects of private versus public education on civic values such as political tolerance. A long tradition of educational and political thinkers, from Horace Mann to Benjamin Barber, has claimed that public schools ought to be a superior forum for preparing young people to assume their citizenship duties. Their assumptions about a public school advantage in inculcating civic values have been challenged, most recently by advocates of education vouchers, but have yet to be thoroughly tested empirically.

This initial study of the effects of schooling in different sectors on the political tolerance of Texas college students suggests that the assumption of a public school advantage in this area is undeserved. College students who received most of their prior education in private schools demonstrate higher levels of political tolerance than comparable publicly educated students exhibit. The precise source of the private school advantage regarding tolerance is uncertain. However, given the outcome under study (political tolerance) and the many study controls, the private school tolerance advantage is unlikely to be merely a selection effect. Apparently, something about the environment, curriculum, or pedagogy of private schools leads them to outperform public schools in promoting political tolerance in their graduates.

Our surprising results regarding the positive effect of private schooling on the political tolerance of college students may have been presaged by none other than Dr. Frank Macchiarola, former chancellor of New York City Public Schools. Macchiarola has been quoted as saying of private schools: "They promote tolerance in their curricula; they lead children to understand the

mportance of moral codes; and they contribute to the great diversity in this ıation that has made it great."[43] As a result of our analysis, we agree with Macchiarola that, while more should be expected from public schools, soci-:ty should be less fearful of private schools when it comes to instilling civic 'alues in the next generation of American citizens.

Notes

1. The authors are especially grateful to Sandra Wood, who collaborated with us n the development of our research design and survey instrument and administered he survey at the University of North Texas. We thank Valerie Martinez for adminis-ering the survey at Texas Christian University and Kevin Hula for advising us regard-ng the coding of the religion variables. This paper was markedly improved based on :omments on a previous draft made by Jeffrey Berry, John E. Brandl, Frederick Hess, 'aul E. Peterson, and Kay Schlozman. We claim ownership of the remaining flaws.

2. Horace Mann, *The Republic and the School*, ed. Lawrence A. Cremin (New 'ork: Teachers College Press, 1957 [1837]); John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* Macmillan, 1963 [1916]); Amy Gutmann, *Democratic Education* (Princeton Univer-ity Press, 1987); Benjamin Barber, *An Aristocracy for Everyone* (Ballantine Books, 992); Peter W. Cookson, *School Choice* (Yale University Press, 1994); and Henry M. .evin, "Educational Vouchers: Effectiveness, Choice, and Costs," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, vol. 17 (1998), pp. 373–92.

3. Our preliminary analysis indicated that when we limited the observations to ust freshmen and sophomores, or just respondents under the age of twenty, the posi-ive effects of private schooling on political tolerance are even stronger than the esults that we report here. However, in the interest of scholarly conservatism and the lesire to learn from as much evidence as possible, we decided not to restrict our nalysis to the respondents for whom the treatment is most fresh in their minds.

4. Gutmann, *Democratic Education*, pp. 5, 14; Dewey, *Democracy and Education*,). 93; and Levin, "Educational Vouchers," pp. 373–92.

5. As quoted in Evelyn Beatrice Hall, "The Friends of Voltaire," in Jay Antony, :d., *Oxford Dictionary of Political Quotations* (Oxford, England: Oxford University 'ress, 1996), p. 76.

6. Bernard Bailyn, *Education in the Forming of American Society: Needs and Oppor-unities for Study* (University of North Carolina Press, 1960); and Carl F. Kaestle, *Lit-racy in the United States: Readers and Reading since 1880* (Yale University Press, 991).

7. Richard Hofstadter and Wilson Smith, *American Higher Education: A Docu-nentary History* (University of Chicago Press, 1968).

8. Frederick Rudolph, ed., *Essays on Education in the Early Republic* (Harvard Uni-ersity Press, 1965).

9. Rogers M. Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* Yale University Press, 1997), p. 189.

10. Paul E. Peterson, *The Politics of School Reform, 1870–1940* (University of Chicago Press, 1985); Charles Leslie Glenn, *The Myth of the Common School* (University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), p. 83; and Smith, *Civil Ideals*, p. 217.

11. See, for example, John Meyer, "Citizenship Development and Education: An Imperative," *International Journal of Social Education*, vol. 11 (1996–97): p. 1; Denis P. Doyle, "School Vouchers Provide Justice for the Poor," *Center for Urban Policy Research Report*, vol. 8 (1997), pp. 3, 5; and Levin, "Educational Vouchers," p. 374.

12. Gutmann, *Democratic Education*, pp. 117–18; and Benjamin R. Barber, *A Place for Us* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), pp. 72–73.

13. Mann, *The Republic and the School*, p. 33; Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, p. 21; Cookson, *School Choice*; and Levin, "Educational Vouchers."

14. Smith, *Civil Ideals*, p. 217.

15. An exception is Jay P. Greene, Joseph Giammo, and Nicole Mellow, "The Effect of Private Education on Political Participation, Social Capital, and Tolerance: An Examination of the Latino National Political Survey," *Georgetown Public Policy Review*, vol. 5 (1999), pp. 53–71.

16. Cookson, *School Choice*; and Levin, "Educational Vouchers."

17. We administered mail surveys at two colleges outside of Texas, because their introductory courses were too small to serve as venues for administering the survey in the classroom. Given that the response rates for the mail surveys were unacceptably low, around 20 percent, and the different survey protocol correlated perfectly with the factor "student at a college outside of Texas," we decided to exclude those non-Texas observations from the analysis. However, their inclusion did not alter our results significantly, suggesting, though not demonstrating conclusively, that a nationally representative sample of college students would generate similar results to those that we uncover in Texas.

18. John L. Sullivan, James Piereson, and George Marcus, *Political Tolerance and American Democracy* (University of Chicago Press, 1982); and George E. Marcus, John L. Sullivan, Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, and Sandra L. Wood, *With Malice toward Some* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

19. Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus, *Political Tolerance and American Democracy*, pp. 2, 76.

20. Marcus and others, *With Malice toward Some*, p. 68.

21. Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus, *Political Tolerance and American Democracy*; and Marcus and others, *With Malice toward Some*.

22. Barber, *An Aristocracy for Everyone*; Cookson, *School Choice*; and Levin, "Educational Vouchers."

23. Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus, *Political Tolerance and American Democracy*; and Marcus and others, *With Malice toward Some*.

24. Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus, *Political Tolerance and American Democracy*; and Marcus and others, *With Malice toward Some*.

25. See the chapters in this volume on the evaluations of private voucher programs in Washington, D.C., and Dayton, Ohio: Jay P. Greene, "The Hidden

Research Consensus for School Choice"; and William G. Howell, Patrick J. Wolf, Paul E. Peterson, and David E. Campbell, "Effects of School Vouchers on Student Test Scores."

26. Barber, *A Place for Us*; Levin, "Educational Vouchers"; and Gutmann, *Democratic Education.*

27. James S. Kunen, "The End of Integration," *Time*, April 29, 1996, pp. 39–45.

28. John E. Chubb and Terry M. Moe, "Politics, Markets, and Equality in Schools," in Michael R. Darby, ed., *Reducing Poverty in America* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1996), pp. 121–53; Kunen, "The End of Integration"; and Jay P. Greene and Nicole Mellow, "Integration Where It Counts: A Study of Racial Integration in Public and Private School Lunchrooms," paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, September 3–6, 1998.

29. "Resegregation of Schools Grows," *Washington Post*, June 12, 1999, p. A12.

30. New York City Board of Education, *Annual School Report Data Base* (1996).

31. James S. Coleman, Thomas Hoffer, and Sally Kilgore, *High School Achievement* (Basic Books, 1982); and Jay P. Greene, "Civic Values in Public and Private Schools," in Paul E. Peterson and Bryan C. Hassel, eds., *Learning from School Choice* (Brookings, 1998), pp. 83–106.

32. Kenneth P. Langton and M. Kent Jennings, "Political Socialization and the High School Civics Curriculum in the United States," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 62 (1968), pp. 852–67.

33. Karen Bird, John L. Sullivan, Patricia G. Avery, Kristina Thalhammer, and Sandra Wood, "Not Just Lip-Synching Any More: Education and Tolerance Revisited," *Review of Education/Pedagogy/Cultural Studies*, vol. 16 (1994), pp. 373–86.

34. Quentin L. Quade, *Financing Education: The Struggle between Governmental Monopoly and Parental Control* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1996).

35. Doyle, "School Vouchers Provide Justice for the Poor," p. 5.

36. Lee H. Ehman, "The American School in the Political Socialization Process," *Review of Educational Research*, vol. 50 (1980), pp. 99–119; and Patrick J. Wolf, Rebecca Blackmon, Christopher Caruso, John Craig, Laura Dupuis, Carlos Fernandez, Jesus Moa, Elizabeth Menendez, Bernard Moon, Ya Ya Mousa, Masane Odaka, Kazuhiko Shigetoku, Ron Sokolov, and Toshihiro Tamura, *Democratic Values in New York City Schools*, Report of the Workshop in Applied Policy Analysis (Columbia University, School of International and Public Affairs, 1998).

37. Gutmann, *Democratic Education*, p. 65.

38. John E. Chubb and Terry M. Moe, *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools* (Brookings, 1990).

39. Abraham K. Korman, *Industrial and Organizational Psychology* (Prentice-Hall, 1971).

40. Greene, Giammo, and Mellow, "The Effect of Private Education on Political Participation, Social Capital, and Tolerance."

41. Ken Godwin, Carrie Ausbrooks, and Valerie Martinez, "Teaching Tolerance in Public and Private Schools," *Phi Delta Kappan* 82 (2001), pp. 543–46. Patrick J. Wolf participated in the design, data collection, and analysis that is the basis for this article, although he was not listed as a coauthor.

42. Frederick Mosteller, "The Tennessee Study of Class Size in the Early School Grades," *Future of Children*, vol. 5 (1995), pp. 113–27; and John R. Lott Jr., "Public Schooling, Indoctrination, and Totalitarianism," John M. Olin Law and Economics Working Paper Series, 2d, no. 64 (University of Chicago, December 1998).

43. Comments of Dr. Frank Macchiarola at the twenty-sixth annual conference of the New York Collaborative of Public and Nonprofit Schools, as reported in the newsletter of the Council for American Private Education, *CAPE Outlook*, no. 253 (March 2000), p. 2.