

SIGNIFICANT CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIORS: CHILDRENS' PERCEPTIONS COMPARED WITH ADULTS'

Morris G. Sica *
State University Teachers College
New Paltz, New York

The school setting is expected to be conducive to education for democratic citizenship. The degree to which it actually functions as such may be estimated by the extent to which children identify incidents of good and of poor school related citizenship behavior that correspond with broad principles of democratic citizenship. In an attempt to get some objective evidence on this point, incidents of school citizenship behavior reported by pupils in six school centers of Florida and South Georgia were classified as nearly as possible under twenty-four such broad principles. The results give a clue as to the breadth of the citizenship experiences which the schools afford these children.

The broad principles basically were those prepared by the Working Committee on Citizenship of the National Council for the Social Studies (1). The incidents reported by pupils were obtained by asking a sampling of pupils in grades seven through twelve in six school centers to describe important incidents of good and of poor citizenship behavior which they had observed in school or school related activities (2). Four thousand, one hundred, twenty-six usable incidents were acquired from 1,014 pupils. One thousand, nine hundred, twenty-four good behaviors and 2,202 poor behaviors were reported. The incidents were classified, inductively, within twelve categories of good and of poor behavior.

After the incidents reported by the pupils were classified into broad categories of good and of poor behavior, sub-groups were created. The incidents reported within each category of good and of poor behavior were classified into sub-categories. A total of ninety-four sub-categories were developed.

For purposes of this discussion, the behavior itself is important, rather than its good or poor aspects; therefore, the statements of behavior are phrased in positive terms. Assuming that if pupils report a given behavior as poor they are sensitive to what a good behavior in that category should be, this approach is reasonable.

Within each category, the sub-categories were ranked according to frequency of response. To identify the behaviors to which pupils indicate their greater sensitivity, the sub-categories of good and poor behavior, taken together, which appeared at the median or above were accepted as the principal sub-categories of good and poor behavior (3). An operational account including a list of factors of good school citizenship, as perceived by the pupils sampled, is reported in the February, 1958 issue of *The Social Studies* (4).

To what extent are the school citizenship behaviors identified by the pupils in this study substantially equivalent to those identified by the Working Committee on Citizenship of the National Council for the Social Studies? To facilitate this comparison an outline of the twenty-four major categories of good citizenship behavior identified by the Working Committee on Citizenship is presented below. Each category is numbered. In two instances, the writer modified the phraseology of the behaviors submitted by the Committee but attempted to leave the ideas unchanged.

The good school citizenship behaviors reported by the pupils are placed under each behavior identified by the Working Committee on Citizenship. The behaviors are arranged to correspond as closely as possible to each of the broad categories of behavior identified by the adult group.

CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIORS IDENTIFIED BY THE WORKING
COMMITTEE ON CITIZENSHIP OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL
FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES AND THE BEHAVIORS REPORTED
BY STUDENTS

THE GOOD CITIZEN:

1. BELIEVES IN EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL PEOPLE
2. VALUES, RESPECTS, AND DEFENDS BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS GUARANTEED BY THE U. S. CONSTITUTION

allows others to participate in activities

avoids or prevents others from fighting, hitting, and kicking

avoids or prevents students from throwing objects at others

avoids playing dangerous pranks on people and prevents others from doing so

renders assistance to students that prevents their becoming injured

avoids or prevents rowdy behavior

3. RESPECTS AND UPHOLDS THE LAW AND ITS AGENCIES

obeys traffic regulations within the school

obeys traffic regulations outside of school

obeys the instructions of persons who have authority

does not break into the lunch line or allow others to do so

does not smoke in the school building or on the school grounds

4. UNDERSTANDS AND ACCEPTS DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES AS GUIDES IN EVALUATING HIS OWN BEHAVIOR, THE POLICIES, AND THE PRACTICES OF OTHER INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS

avoids or prevents the bullying of younger pupils

accepts the decisions of officials graciously

5. UNDERSTANDS THAT IN THE LONG RUN, PEOPLE WILL GOVERN THEMSELVES BETTER THAN ANY SELF-APPOINTED GROUP WOULD GOVERN THEM

6. PUTS THE GENERAL WELFARE ABOVE HIS OWN WHENEVER A CHOICE BETWEEN THEM IS NECESSARY

assists sick or injured students

assists handicapped students

helps students rise to their feet when they fall

helps students pick up books and other items that fall

assists students who are without food or drink

makes donations for charitable purposes

helps others repair equipment that is not functioning properly

shares his outer clothing with others

shares his equipment with others

7. FEELS THAT HE HAS INHERITED AN UNFINISHED EXPERIMENT IN SELF-GOVERNMENT WHICH IT IS HIS DUTY AND PRIVILEGE TO CARRY ON

8. EXERCISES HIS RIGHT TO VOTE. 9. ACCEPTS CIVIC RESPONSIBILITIES AND DISCHARGES THEM TO THE BEST OF HIS ABILITY. 10. ASSUMES A PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY TO CONTRIBUTE TOWARD THE SOLUTION OF PROBLEMS OR ISSUES

performs his regular, his assigned, and his assumed school duties responsibly and well

is interested and participates in making a voluntary activity a success

11. KNOWS TECHNIQUES OF SOCIAL ACTION (e. g., HOW TO WIN SUPPORT FOR DESIRABLE LEGISLATION) AND CAN COOPERATE WITH OTHERS IN ACHIEVING SUCH ACTION

is quiet, orderly, and attentive in carrying on an activity

assumes leadership in maintaining quiet, orderly behavior, and assumes leadership in continuing the work or activity under progress

is quiet, orderly, and attentive in the absence of the regular teacher

12. ACCEPTS THE BASIC IDEA THAT IN A DEMOCRACY, THE MAJORITY HAS THE RIGHT TO MAKE DECISIONS UNDER THE CONSTITUTION

13. REALIZES THE NECESSARY CONNECTION OF EDUCATION WITH DEMOCRACY

works hard in his studies and encourages others to do so

helps students succeed in their work

14. RESPECTS PROPERTY RIGHTS, MEETS HIS OBLIGATIONS IN CONTRACTS, AND OBEYS REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE USE OF PROPERTY. 15. ASSUMES A PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WISE USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES

cares for the property of others

respects the ownership of the property of others

avoids marking property and removes marks from property that has been defaced

16. SUPPORTS FAIR BUSINESS PRACTICES AND FAIR RELATIONS BETWEEN EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES

17. ACCEPTS RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT OF A COMPETITIVE ECONOMIC SYSTEM ASSISTED AND REGULATED WHEN NECESSARY BY GOVERNMENTAL ACTION

18. KNOWS IN GENERAL HOW OTHER ECONOMIC SYSTEMS OPERATE, INCLUDING THEIR POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES

19. KNOWS ABOUT, CRITICALLY EVALUATES, AND SUPPORTS PROMISING EFFORTS TO PREVENT WAR, BUT STANDS READY TO DEFEND HIS OWN COUNTRY AGAINST TYRANNY AND AGGRESSION

20. IS DEEPLY AWARE OF THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF PEOPLE AND REALIZES THAT A GOOD LIFE CAN BE ATTAINED ONLY BY THE ORGANIZED COOPERATION OF MILLIONS OF PEOPLE ALL OVER THE WORLD.
21. UNDERSTANDS CULTURES AND WAYS OF LIFE OTHER THAN HIS OWN

helps bring new students into the group

helps orient strangers to the school

allows others to ride in his car

is courteous toward opponents

avoids or prevents ridicule of others

avoids or prevents ridicule of teachers

22. CULTIVATES QUALITIES OF CHARACTER AND PERSONALITY THAT HAVE A HIGH VALUE IN HIS CULTURE

is a good winner and a good loser

refuses to cheat or to allow others to cheat

refuses to drink intoxicating beverages

apologizes for causing an accident

opens a door and holds it open for others

behaves properly as a host and as a guest

performs chores and runs errands for teachers

helps carry or move things for teachers

provides a seat for others

allows others to "go first"

avoids and discourages the use of vulgar language and gestures

shows kindness to animals

apologizes for his misbehavior

speaks politely to others

respects the flag and the national anthem

23. IS A RESPONSIBLE FAMILY MEMBER AND ASSUMES HIS FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR MAINTAINING THE CIVIC STANDS OF HIS NEIGHBORHOOD AND COMMUNITY

helps improve the appearance and functioning of the school, the plant, and equipment

has regard for the general tidiness of the school, the classrooms, and the campus

24. RECOGNIZES TAXES AS PAYMENT FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES AND PAYS THEM PROMPTLY

The pupils report one or more behaviors that correspond to each of sixteen of the behaviors identified by the committee. They do not report behaviors which correspond to those numbered 5, 7, and 12, 16 through 19, inclusive, and 24.

Behaviors 5, 7, and 12 pertain to self-government. In behavior 5, the committee states: a good citizen understands that in the long run, people will govern themselves better than any self-appointed group would govern them. Although pupils do not report a corresponding behavior, the investigator believes that several behaviors reported by the students reflect a sensitivity to the value of self-government. Two examples of such behaviors are listed under behaviors numbered 8, 9, and 10: the good citizen performs his regular, his assigned, and his assumed duties responsibly and well, and the good citizen is interested and participates in making a voluntary activity a success.

In behavior 7, the Committee states: a good citizen feels that he has inherited an unfinished experiment in self-government which it is his duty and privilege to carry on. This is a broad concept of the term self-government which is not restricted to the process of voting on current issues or to the selection of leaders. It is difficult to determine whether pupils have this feeling, but the variety of behaviors to which pupils reveal sensitivity may lead to a judgment that pupils do not consider citizenship to be restricted to a narrow concept of self-government.

In behavior 12, the Committee states: a good citizen accepts the basic idea that in a democracy, the majority has the right to make decisions under the constitution. The students do not indicate a sensitivity to the concept of majority rule.

Behaviors 16, 17, and 18 pertain respectively to employer-employee relationships, the relationship between government and the free enterprise system, and the understanding of how other economic systems operate. Behavior 19 relates to war and peace, and behavior 24 relates to the individual's responsibility for the financial support of community services. These are behaviors which might not be expected to relate to school citizenship.

Of the twenty-four categories of citizenship behavior identified by the Working Committee on Citizenship of the National Council for the Social Studies, the pupils report one or more behaviors in each of sixteen categories. To two additional behaviors listed by the Working Committee, the pupils had indicated sensitivity through behaviors which are listed under other categories. Five behaviors listed by the Committee were not judged by the writer to be related to school citizenship. The pupils did not indicate sensitivity to a behavior listed by the Committee which is concerned with the concept of majority rule. The evidence provided by this comparison suggests that the citizenship behaviors reported by the pupils sampled may be substantially equivalent to eighteen of the criteria identified by the Working Committee on Citizenship as being essential for good citizenship in the American democracy, at least insofar as these criteria are represented by overt behaviors reasonably to be expected in school-related situations.

We may conclude then that the day-to-day school experiences of these children afforded them practical training in eighteen of the twenty - four basic principles of democratic citizenship. Meaningful experiences in out-of-school life must be provided if these children are to complete their experiential learning of the principles of democracy.

Footnotes

1. Education for Democratic Citizenship, Twenty-second Yearbook of the National Council for the Social Studies, edited by Ryland W. Crary, (Washington, D. C.: National Education Association, 1951), pp. 154-160.
2. The full study is reported in: Morris G. Sica, "A Classification and Analysis of Incidents of Good and of Poor School Citizenship, Together with the Reasons Therefore, As Reported by Secondary School Pupils and by Instructional Personnel in Twelve Schools of Florida and South Georgia" (unpublished Ed. D. dissertation, School of Education, Florida State University), 1956.

The technique is an adaptation of the procedure developed by John C. Flanagan who presents a detailed discussion of the technique in his article "The Critical Incident Technique," Psychological Bulletin, 51:327-58, July, 1954.

3. A detailed description of this procedure is given in Sica, op. cit., pp. 73-75.
4. Morris G. Sica. "A yardstick for good school citizenship." The Social Studies, 49:60-63; February, 1958.