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CULTURAL TRANSMISSION OF CIVICNESS

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Abstract

This paper estimates the intergeneration transmission of civicness by studying second generation immigrants in 29 European countries with ancestry in 83 nations. There is significant transmission of civicness both on the mother's and the father's side. The estimates are quantitatively significant and provide evidence on the transmission of trustworthiness.

JEL codes: D13, D83, J62, Z13

Keywords: intergenerational transmission; civicness; civic virtues; trustworthiness; cultural transmission; integration of immigrants

1 Introduction

Civicness is part of the social and civic capital which is important for societies to overcome free-rider problems and achieve greater collective outcomes. The literature has focused on trust, while trustworthiness has received only limited attention in part due measurement challenges. I argue that civicness as measured by the willingness to help others and disapproval of exploiting others capture facets of trustworthiness.

I study how civicness is transmitted across generations. I relate the civicness of second generation immigrants to the civicness in their parent's birth country. Within each of the 29 European countries of residence I compare if second generation immigrants with ancestry in more civic countries express higher civicness compared to those with ancestry in less civic countries.

This method has been used to examine the intergenerational transmission of trust in the U.S., see for example Algan and Cahuc (2010) and Tabellini (2008).² I contribute to the literature in three ways. First, I study different outcomes in civicness and facets of trustworthiness. Second, I study a broad set of countries

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² Dohmen et al (2011) correlate trust among parents and children in Germany.

rather than just one country that could be particular. Third, I analyze a broad set of ancestry, 83 countries, from across the globe. The aforementioned papers study up to 25, primarily European, ancestral countries. Furthermore, the results provide micro evidence on the intergenerational transmission of civiness that is at the core of Aghion, Algan, Cahuc, and Shleifer's (2010) model of regulation.

2 Empirical Specification

I run ordinary least squares regressions of the following form:³

$$\text{Civic}_{i\text{cat}} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Mean_Civiness}_a + \beta_2 X_i + \gamma_{ct} + \epsilon_{i\text{cat}} \quad (1)$$

$\text{Civic}_{i\text{cat}}$ captures the civiness of individual i , born and residing in country c with a parent born in country a , and $a \neq c$, in period t . The average level of civiness, Mean_Civiness_a , is common to all individuals with a parent born in country a . X_i captures individual demographic and economic controls that may affect civiness. The country of residence-by-year fixed effects is denoted by γ_{ct} , and $\epsilon_{i\text{cat}}$ is the error term. All standard errors allow for clustering by the parent's birth country.⁴

Reverse causality is not a concern since the civiness of a child born and residing in country c can't affect the average value of civiness in the parent's birth country a . Confounding factors are of course a concern so it is important to include an extensive list of individual controls in X_i , which is done. The inclusion of the country fixed effect γ_{ct} means that I account for the institutional structure and all other unobserved differences which apply to all residents in country c in period t . It also means that the variation used is to compare the outcomes of second generation immigrants within each country of residence and year relative to the traits in their countries of ancestry.⁵ Since the country fixed effects are included for each year they account for non-linear trends that may differ across countries.

Moreover, the empirical approach produces a conservative estimate of β_1 . The country mean is a noisy measure of the parent's civiness, which introduces attenuation bias. Finding a significant effect in spite of this bias would be strong evidence that the effect is present. Fernandez (2010) provides a more detailed discussion of the method and the related literature.

³ The results are robust to using the ordered logit or the ordered probit estimator.

⁴ Survey design weights are used to estimate the average responses.

⁵ For example, I am comparing if individuals with high civic ancestry born in France have higher civiness than those born in France with lower civic ancestry.

3 Data

The European Social Survey (ESS) is the main data set. Data from the second to fourth rounds of the ESS integrated file are used. The survey asks about the country of birth of the respondent as well as the country of birth of both parents.⁶ This information allows me to identify second generation immigrants and which countries their parents originate from. Looking at 29 countries of residence for second generation immigrants reduces the concern that the results are driven by conditions of one particular country. Individuals with ancestry from 83 countries are observed. This reduces the concern that the results are particular to a small number of ancestral backgrounds. The summary statistics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary statistics for 2nd generation immigrants.

Variable	Immigrant mother sample		Immigrant father sample	
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Help people	4.75	1.02	4.73	1.05
Behave properly	4.33	1.28	4.35	1.28
Civic virtues in parent's country	-.038	.408	-0.026	0.417
Age	43.5	17.9	43.8	17.9
Female	.533	.499	0.536	0.499
Married	0.475	0.499	0.489	0.500
Never married	0.336	0.472	0.327	0.469
Upper secondary degree	0.449	0.497	0.444	0.497
College/univeristy degree	0.294	0.455	0.290	0.454
Out of labor force	0.433	0.496	0.441	0.497
Unemployed	0.045	0.208	0.046	0.210
Low income	0.219	0.414	0.218	0.413
Middle income	0.284	0.451	0.278	0.448
Catholic	0.196	0.397	0.183	0.387
Protestant	0.081	0.272	0.071	0.256
Orthodox	0.113	0.316	0.123	0.329

3.1 Individual Civicness

Civic virtues are captured by two questions in the ESS, that captures habits of personal living that may be important for the success of the community. The first question asks how important it is to help other people and care for their well-being. This captures an active part of civic virtues, that you should help and care for others. The second question relates to the importance of behaving properly. Using the World Values Survey, Ljunge (2012) finds that the mode in attitudes is to never accept cheating on taxes, benefits, and a range of other activities of exploiting others for personal gain. I hence argue that part of behaving properly reflects not exploiting others for personal gain.

⁶ Extensive documentation of the data is available at <http://ess.nsd.uib.no/>.

Preceding the survey question is the statement "Now I will briefly describe some people. Please listen to each description and tell me how much each person is or is not like you. Use this card for your answer." The first question is then "It's very important to her/him to help the people around her/him. She/he wants to care for their well-being." There are 6 possible answers on the card; "Very much like me"; "Like me"; "Somewhat like me"; "A little like me"; "Not like me"; "Not like me at all". I code "Very much like me" as 6 and each following answer with a lower digit down to coding "Not like me at all" as 1.

The second question is worded as "It is important to her/him always to behave properly. She/he wants to avoid doing anything people would say is wrong." The possible answers and their coding is the same as for the first question.

3.2 Civicism in the Parent's Country of Birth

Average civicism in the parent's country of birth is computed in the integrated European Values Survey and the World Values Survey (EVS/WVS). This allows me to expand the analysis of second generation immigrants beyond those with ancestry in the countries covered by the ESS. In the EVS/WVS civicism is observed for 83 nations. Moreover, the countries in the EVS/WVS are much more diverse and include countries from Africa, the Americas, and Asia.⁷

I construct a summary variable of civic virtues based on five variables, from which I extract the first principal component. The questions are chosen because they measure important aspects of civic virtues and they are measured in many countries and waves. The five variables are attitudes toward "Cheating on taxes if you have a chance"; "Claiming government benefits to which you are not entitled"; "Avoiding a fare on public transport"; "Someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties"; and the importance of children to learn "Tolerance and respect for other people."

The variables are ordered such that a higher value of the principle component corresponds to stronger civic virtues in the sense that a higher value represents a stronger disapproval of cheating and more importance on respect for other people. The country average of the principal component is labeled 'Civic virtues, mother's/father's birth country' in the table below. The results are robust to alternative ways of summarizing civicism.

4 Results

I examine the impact of civic virtues in the parent's birth country on the respondent's civic virtues in Table 2. In the first two specifications I regress the importance of helping others and behaving properly,

⁷ Extensive documentation is available at www.worldvaluessurvey.org.

respectively, on civic virtues in the mother's birth country. The estimate in the case of helping others is positive as expected and strongly significant. For the importance of behaving properly the estimate is both positive and strongly significant ($p=0.012$). The estimate is quantitatively significant. A one standard deviation change in ancestral civiness corresponds to moving one income group (middle-to-low or high-to-middle), and it's almost as large as the effect of being married.

The estimated effects are also present on the father's side. The estimate in the case of helping others is positive as expected and significant at usual levels. For the importance of behaving properly the estimate is positive and significant as well.

Those who are married and catholic express stronger civiness. Women express a stronger importance of helping others. To behave properly is more important for those with low income. The other individual controls such as age or education don't show strong effects.

Table 2 provides evidence of a causal effect of civic virtues of the parent on the respondent's civic virtues, or phrased differently, direct evidence of the vertical cultural transmission channel.⁸ Parents from countries with stronger civic virtues have children with stronger civic virtues, although the children are born and reside in a different country. Taken together, there is significant evidence that the civic virtues in the parent's birth country are transmitted to the respondent's civic virtues. The results suggest a constructive role for families in socializing children to be more civic; an important component of Aghion et al's (2010) model for which I present evidence.

Civiness captures facets of trustworthiness, as discussed in Ljunge (2012), while most existing studies have focused on trust. The evidence presented here complements studies of the intergenerational transmission of trust such as Algan and Cahuc (2010), Tabellini (2008), and Dohmen et al (2011).

Although the main reason for studying second generation immigrants is that it allows separating the cultural influence from institutions there are implications for the integration of immigrants, which could have consequences for immigration and integration policy. The results show that civiness of the ancestral country affect attitudes into the second generation. It suggests that the civiness of a country may be influenced by the composition of immigrants.

⁸ Bisin and Verdier (2010) discuss models of vertical and horizontal cultural transmission, as well as applications.

5 Conclusion

I find evidence of significant intergenerational transmission of civicness when studying second generation immigrants in a wide range of European countries. The effects are quantitatively significant and similar for individuals with an immigrant mother or father. As civicness captures facets of trustworthiness the estimates provide novel evidence on the cultural transmission of trustworthiness.

Table 2. Effects of civic virtues in parent's birth country on children's civic virtues.

Dependent variable:	Important to help others (1)	Important to behave properly (2)	Important to help others (3)	Important to behave properly (4)
Civic virtues, mother's birth country	0.095 (0.047)**	0.217 (0.085)**		
Civic virtues, father's birth country			0.117 (0.047)**	0.140 (0.067)**
Age	0.004 (0.005)	-0.007 (0.006)	-0.002 (0.006)	-0.003 (0.007)
Age squared/100	-0.003 (0.006)	0.015 (0.006)**	0.004 (0.006)	0.012 (0.007)*
Female	0.260 (0.030)***	-0.002 (0.044)	0.231 (0.028)***	-0.009 (0.043)
Married	0.088 (0.035)**	0.121 (0.063)*	0.093 (0.049)*	0.132 (0.044)***
Never married	0.062 (0.053)	-0.060 (0.070)	0.043 (0.057)	-0.043 (0.059)
Upper secondary	0.025 (0.038)	0.035 (0.055)	0.021 (0.035)	0.095 (0.057)
College or university	0.003 (0.052)	-0.156 (0.080)*	0.037 (0.049)	-0.098 (0.069)
Out of labor force	0.025 (0.043)	-0.016 (0.047)	-0.043 (0.033)	-0.042 (0.046)
Unemployed	-0.146 (0.062)**	-0.051 (0.096)	-0.063 (0.058)	-0.140 (0.069)**
Low income	0.011 (0.040)	0.180 (0.053)***	0.022 (0.042)	0.136 (0.060)**
Middle income	-0.130 (0.031)***	0.089 (0.053)*	-0.042 (0.038)	0.046 (0.054)
Catholic	0.100 (0.042)**	0.196 (0.057)***	0.147 (0.046)***	0.298 (0.057)***
Protestant	0.087 (0.072)	0.172 (0.079)**	0.060 (0.076)	0.068 (0.089)
Orthodox	0.009 (0.068)	0.241 (0.073)***	0.015 (0.058)	0.164 (0.084)*
Country-by-year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R-squared	0.087	0.098	0.089	0.092
Observations	5362	5351	5169	5159

Notes: Answers to the questions are coded from 1, not like me at all, to 6, very much like me.

Standard errors, in parenthesis, are clustered by the parent's birth country, * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01.

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