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STUDENTERRAPPORT

Make-believe Politics: Gaming for Democratic Competences

*A case study of the educational role-playing game
Demokrativerkstaden*

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“Perhaps the greatest of all pedagogical fallacies is the notion that a person learns only the particular thing that he is studying at the time. Collateral learning in the way of formation of enduring attitudes of likes and dislikes may be and often is much more important than the spelling lesson or lesson in geography or history that is learned. For these attitudes are fundamentally what count in the future.”

John Dewey 1938:48

Dansk resumé

Forskning om demokratiske deltagelsesmønstre har vist, at politisk deltagelse er tæt knyttet til borgernes demokratiske viden, politiske interesse, politisk selvtillid og systemtiltro – fire koncepter som sammen kan refereres til som demokratiske kompetencer. Yderligere forskning peger på, at disse adfærdsdispositioner konsolideres i teenageårene, hvorefter de er nogenlunde stabile gennem voksenlivet. Disse mønstre bidrager til, at interessen for forskning om unges politiske deltagelse er steget i de seneste år, og har aktualiseret spørgsmålet om hvordan disse holdninger dannes. En lovende trend er såkaldt deliberativ undervisning, hvor elever aktivt inddrages i diskussioner og debatter. Dette speciale tager udgangspunkt i ovenstående og udforsker hvordan demokratiske kompetencer påvirkes af deltagelse i en særlig form for deliberativ undervisning – et læringsrollespil.

Specialet er skrevet med udgangspunkt i et mixed methods forskningsdesign, og har undersøgt udvikling af demokratiske kompetencer i relation til læringsrollespillet Demokrativerkstaden. Spillet administreres af den svenske riksdag i deres lokaler i Stockholm og tilbydes til elever i 7-9 klasse. Specialet undersøger udviklingen af to dele af demokratiske kompetencer, navnlig elevernes demokratiske know-how og demokratiske attituder. Udviklingen i elevernes demokratiske know-how undersøges kvalitativt vha. interviews og deltagende observation, og analysen fokuserer på iscenesættelse af demokratiske praksisser i spillet. Udviklingen i elevernes demokratiske attituder undersøges kvantitativt, og analysen tager udgangspunkt i en operationalisering af demokratiske attituder som politiske interesse, politiske deltagelse, politiske selvtillid og systemtiltro.

Den kvantitative del af undersøgelsen når frem til, at Demokrativerkstaden ikke har en målbar effekt på demokratiske attituder. Dog er det værd at bemærke, at det kvantitative forskningsdesign ideelt set kan styrkes på en række parametre. På trods af det forbehold er konklusionen, at Demokrativerkstaden ikke har en stærk effekt på demokratiske attituder hos deltagerne.

Den kvalitative analyse tager et praksisteoretisk udgangspunkt for at undersøge Iscenesættelsen af elevernes rolle som politikere samt udfoldelsen af samarbejde og debat i spillet. Analysen viser at deltagerne bevæger sig mellem forskellige roller i spillet, og at de aktivt bruger deres egne holdninger for at validere de holdninger, som de får i rollen som politikere. Praksissens åbenhed gør det muligt for deltagerne at iscenesætte deres roller på forskelligartede måder. Desuden giver åbenheden rum for at deltagerne kan udtrykke rolledistance, hvor de tager afstand til dele af rollen

ved parodisk optræden eller afvisning af rollens målsætninger og forventninger. Denne åbenhed forstærkes også af spilledere, spildesign og deltagernes forskellige forudsætninger for deltagelse. De forståelser der ligger til grund for handlinger i spillet og de mål som prioriteres af deltagerne er dermed heterogene. Konklusionen af denne analyse bliver derfor, at Demokratiwerkstaden som praksis understøtter udviklingen af demokratisk know-how hos deltagerne som er forskelligartet og nogen gange modsigende.

Den afsluttende diskussion i specialet lægger vægt på positive aspekter af at bruge et mixed methods design til forskning om læringsspil, der giver et helhedsbillede af både praksis og effekter. Diskussionen trækker ydermere på de demokratiske teoretikere Jürgen Habermas og Chantal Mouffe for at perspektivere den demokratiske know-how som deltagerne iscenesætter i spillet. Her pointeres, at der bliver skabt en spænding mellem at gengive komplekse og flertydige demokratiske praksisser, og at skabe en hensigtsmæssig didaktisk ramme for deltagelse i spillet. For fremtidig forskning anbefales dermed et fokus på denne spænding i læringsspil samt opmærksomhed på de køn som faktor i relation til udvikling af demokratiske kompetencer.

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Writing a thesis like the one you are about to read is a process of ups and downs. And as with all such processes, it is made much easier by having people around who can contribute with their support, input, feedback and company. I would like to thank some of those people.

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Copenhagen, 5.9.2018

Ida Nilsson

List of Abbreviations

Demokratiwerkstaden – DV

The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement – IEA

Committee of Justice – CoJ

Committee of Industry and Trade – CoIT

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1. Introduction

Civic participation is the backbone of any democracy. Questions about how to facilitate, teach and enable citizenship involvement will therefore always be justifiable, as every new generation has to redefine their role in a dialectic relationship to larger societal developments. In the last decade, researchers have been increasingly interested in the formation of youth political interest and political participation (Nygård et al. 2015, Shehata & Amnå 2017). As Shehata & Amnå (2017) point out, there is evidence from longitudinal studies showing that adolescence is an important period in terms of forming political attitudes, which for the most part are stable from the early 20's and throughout life. In the ICCS 2009 report, conducted by The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), 24 countries participated in the data collection to provide a picture of the ways in which youth are prepared to act as citizens in their respective societies. This report found that Nordic countries like Finland, Denmark and Sweden scored consistently low in terms of interest in local, national, European and international politics, with Sweden scoring lower than the average on all interest scales (Kerr et al 2009). Even though participation levels in the Nordic countries are deemed to be similar to previous generations, research is pointing to the fact that as society changes, the ways of democratic participation changes with it (Amnå & Zetterberg 2010). It thus continues to be important to analyze the relationships affecting youth's attitudes toward the political system and their place in it.

Democratic competence is a term that is used by some researchers to describe the different aspects of active citizenry (Wall 2012, Fjeldstad & Mikkelsen 2004, Ekman 2007). The concept is normally used as an umbrella term for *democratic knowledge* on the one hand and attitudes toward democracy like *political participation*, *political interest* and *internal and external political efficacy* on the other hand. The different aspects of democratic competence highlight the complexity of democratic citizenship and are highly interrelated. For example, Sohl (2016) and Ekman (2007:168) both argue that people who have a high political efficacy are more likely to be politically active and engaged, which means that a politically efficacious citizen is more probably an active citizen. Similarly, people who see themselves as less knowledgeable of politics are more rarely politically engaged (Ekman 2007:17). Supporting the development of democratic competence in young people is thus important in liberal democracies, as the preconditions for an active citizenry thereby would be strengthened.

How, then, are democratic competences developed in youth? When it comes to confidence in your own abilities to participate politically research points to it not being the quantity of civic education that matters but how that education is designed that has the largest impact on learning (Ekman 2007:166). Practices like student council work; volunteer work and debate clubs can result in greater interest in politics, higher rates of future participation as well as higher political efficacy compared to other students (Amnå & Zetterberg 2010). In relation to this, a case has been made for the promise of deliberative classrooms, where students are actively engaged in discussions and other interactive exercises, and the ability of such spaces to provide students with mastery experiences that will affect the dimensions of democratic competences positively (Kerr et al 2009, Amnå & Zetterberg 2010, Koskimaa & Rapeli 2015).

A promising trend in educational research that coincides with the above is the increased interest for experience-based and game-based learning (Kolb 2015:3, Qian & Clark 2016, Landers 2014). Games and simulations are deliberative and interactive didactic tools that have been part of teaching tool boxes for decades. Hanghøj (2008:310-11) argues that classroom games can be a constructive, creative and engaging supplement to existing learning resources and ways of teaching, but that there is a need for more in-depth and contextualized studies of how games are enacted. With this thesis, I aim to contribute to this intersection of democratic competence, youth and educational game research by investigating the game Demokratiwerkstaden (DV).

DV is a role-playing game run by the administrative branch of the Swedish parliament riksdagen since 2015. The game is designed for students in grade 7-9 and focuses on the work of Swedish members of parliament in the process of decision-making. The thesis is based on a mixed methods design case study conducted online and at the premises of the game in Stockholm during the spring of 2018 and investigates the game in relation to the umbrella term democratic competence.

The knowledge dimension of democratic competences is often understood as factual knowledge about the number of parties represented in the parliament or the definition of related terminology (cf. Kerr et al, ch. 3). This was also the approach taken in a recent evaluation of DV provided by the external analysis and evaluation institute, Novus. The evaluation addressed both overall satisfaction with the game experience among previous participants and factual knowledge related to the riksdag. They found that participants in DV scored higher than a control group on six out of ten knowledge questions. To take a different approach than the evaluation, I wish to consider another type of democratic knowledge in this thesis. Biesta (2011:85) has argued that researchers and practitioners

should change their focus from *teaching* citizenship to the ways in which democracy is lived and learned in practices of everyday life in both schools and society. These practices, he argues, provide complex lessons that are influential in how citizenship is performed on an individual level. In line with this argument, I will address the game's effects on the *democratic attitudes* political interest, political participation and internal and external political efficacy in the quantitative leg of the study and focus on democratic knowledge as *democratic know-how* through an analysis of the enactment of democratic practices in the qualitative leg. In this thesis, the term democratic competences is thus divided into two parts as shown in the figure below.

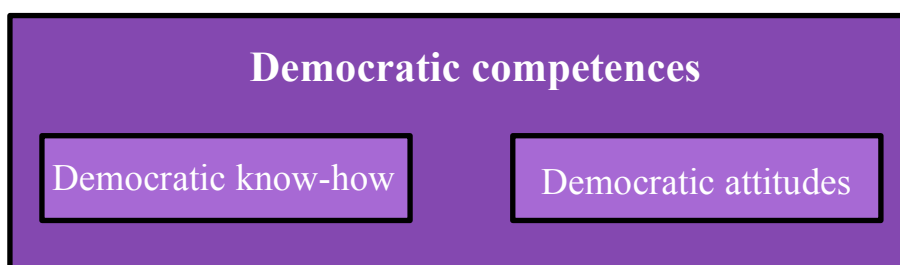


Figure 1: Analytical division of democratic competences

My analysis does not find any significant effects on the democratic attitudes in the quantitative data, although an explorative analysis finds some indication of the relevance of gender. The qualitative analysis concludes that the game practice is constituted through ambiguous understandings, rules and teleologies, which provides for enactment of diverse democratic know-how in the game.

1.1 Research aim & significance

As mentioned above, research is increasingly pointing to the importance of teaching styles rather than quantity of education when it comes to matters relating to democratic competence (Ekman 2007:168). This actualizes the question of focusing on the “how” when looking at teaching and learning democratic competence. There is also, however, a deep interest from the side of democracy research more broadly in investigating what works as there is much unknown about the formation of political attitudes (Robison 2017, Ekman 2007:168). Hanghøj (2008:310) notes that many studies of educational games are stuck in an either enthusiastic or skeptical view of games, seeing them as either an educational revolution or a false promise. He therefore argues that more studies are needed that transcend these dichotomous characterizations and focus on the actual usage of games by portraying both their complexity, potential and shortcomings. With this thesis I aim to contribute to research on youth, democratic competence and educational gaming by providing a qualitative analysis of the complex *practice* of an educational game about democracy as well as quantitatively

investigating the *effects* of the intervention on democratic attitudes. In this way, it is my aim to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how DV, and games like DV, function as didactical tools.

1.2 Research question

With the aims mentioned above in mind I have arrived at the following research question to guide work with this thesis:

How is democratic know-how enacted in the democratic practices of the educational role-playing game Demokrativerkstaden and how does participation in the game affect students' democratic attitudes?

As a further support in the process I have outlined more detailed and specific sub-questions for each leg of the research:

- Quantitative analysis: Does participation in DV have an effect on students' democratic attitudes in the form of internal and external political efficacy, political interest and political participation?
- Qualitative analysis: How do students enact democratic know-how through performing roles and engaging in practices like debating and cooperating in the game?

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is structured into nine chapters of which the current introductory chapter is the first. Thereafter follows an introduction of the case where the basic structure of the game is briefly explained. In chapter three I will introduce some of the previous research that has been relevant to the work with this thesis and provide my definition of DV in relation to previous literature. Chapter four describes the justification for my hypotheses for the quantitative analysis, which is built on previous analytical findings. Chapter five is the methodological chapter. In this chapter, I describe the epistemological and ontological assumptions that guided my approach to the research process. I also provide a detailed account of my research process, methods and treatment of data. After the methodological chapter comes the theoretical framework for analyzing the qualitative leg of the study – practice theory – in chapter six. Chapter seven is the analytical chapter and is divided in two parts: the qualitative and quantitative analysis. The first, qualitative part is concerned with the participant's performance of their roles in the game as well as their enactment of practices of cooperation and debate. The second, quantitative part focuses on the outcomes in relation to

democratic attitudes drawing on the quantitative data I have collected through my surveys. In chapter eight, I discuss my findings in three steps. The first step creates a synergy between the quantitative and qualitative analysis. In the next step I discuss my findings in relation to two acknowledged theoretical positions in the debate about what a healthy democracy should look like. This discussion aims to provide perspectives on what the experience and enactment in DV contributed with in relation to participants' democratic know-how. In the third and final step of the discussion, I provide perspectives on the methodological and theoretical choices I have made and their implications for my findings. I also suggest paths for further research. The final chapter is the conclusion.

2. The case: Demokrativerkstaden

DV is an educational game that takes place in a parliament-owned building close to the riksdag in Stockholm, Sweden. The game has existed in its current form since the spring of 2015 with an earlier version running before that. DV is designed for students in 7th through 9th grade and is adapted to the curriculum in social science relevant to these years. Teachers can sign their classes up for one of 16 weekly slots through a webpage. A normal week has two slots on Mondays and Fridays and four on the other days. Only one group can play the game at a time and including introduction and debrief the game lasts 1 hour and 45 minutes. A facilitator who is employed by the Department of Visits, Education and Events at the riksdag administration in Stockholm leads the game with the aid of individual iPads and game software. In the game, students are randomly divided into five party groups with different opinions and policy proposals. They are also assigned to a committee, which decides the main issue that they will be discussing during the game. Their task in the game is to negotiate with others, form coalitions and succeed in enacting their policies through debate and voting in the committee meetings and the Chamber.

2.1 Scenarios

The simulation can be played with four different scenarios, two designed for larger groups and two for smaller groups. The scenario “Nuclear Summer” (Atomsommar) about environmental activism and nuclear power as an energy source in Sweden is the most commonly played scenario and is the only scenario analyzed and described in this thesis. In the scenario, the participants are presented with a “news” video about an environmental activist group called Grön Fred¹. The activists have broken into a nuclear power plant and somehow, one of the activists has died while inside the plant, which creates a scandal. The activists claim to have performed the action as so called “white hats”, meaning that they were trying to raise awareness of how bad security in the nuclear power plants is. Critics claim that their actions can be classified as a terrorist attack, as their presence in the plant could have led to damages that would have been detrimental to Swedish nature and surrounding cities. There are two topics in this scenario for the five parties to discuss, debate and vote on. Who works with what topic is decided on the committee that you are assigned in the beginning of the game, which can be either the Committee of Justice (CoJ) or the Committee of Industry and Trade and (CoIT). The issue for the CoJ concerns the activist group Grön Fred and whether they should be put on EU’s terrorist list. Three of the parties are initially against putting Grön Fred on the terrorist

¹ Grön Fred translates to Green Peace, a play on the famous environmental organization, which goes by its English name in Sweden.

list while two are in favor. The second topic concerns nuclear energy more generally and what Sweden's future energy supply should look like. With this issue, there are five proposals: 1) Dismantle all nuclear energy now, 2) Dismantle slowly, 3) Continue as usual, 4) Deregulate the market and allow private companies to build small reactors for commercial use and 5) Further development of more nuclear plants. On this issue all parties start with their own proposal. In the subsequent phases of the game, the participants are guided by prompts from their iPads. They have party meetings, meetings with members of other parties, send and receive emails to collect arguments, participate in Committee meetings and vote.



Figure 2: Overview of phases

A more detailed description of the phases of the game and pictures from the game space can be found in appendix 1.

3. Previous research

In this section I will contextualize my study of DV by presenting relevant research relating to the specific topic that I am investigating. In the first section I will discuss the definition of games and their importance and arrive at the definition of DV that I will use in this thesis. In the second section, I will address some previous studies, their findings and how they relate to this study. Due to the limits in space in this thesis, I have chosen only a few of the most relevant and recent examples, which I believe can help contextualize and provide insight to this study in particular.

3.1 Defining DV in game terms

Arjoranta (2014) has made the case for the necessity of defining games within games research. He argues that without boundaries around ideas and phenomena discussing them and understanding them in any real sense becomes impossible. Hence, when labeling DV in this thesis, I am deciding what previous literature is relevant to support the analysis as well as which larger theoretical discussion that the findings of my study are contributing to.

As I will show in chapter 7, the way that facilitators present DV has a relationship with the goals and rules that the participants prioritize. Because of this I find it relevant to stay close to the definitions used in DV itself, which is simply the term “game”². Furthermore, Lieberoth (2012) has noted that framing an activity as a ”game” has a positive effect on the experience of the intervention, making the participants experience it as more fun. Labeling DV a game is therefore significant.

Fine (1983:6) cites Lortz (1979:36) with his definition of role-play as “any game which allows (...) players to assume the role of imaginary characters (...)”. The roles that participants in DV are given have their opinions and party membership as their only attributes, but are meant to create a sort of fictional alibi for action in the practice. The role-playing element of the game is an aspect that is also made explicit by facilitators as participants are encouraged to leave their personal opinions outside of the game and “become” a politician. I will therefore consider DV a role-playing game. In addition to these elements, there are clear educational goals with DV. Hanghøj (2008:19) defines educational games as pragmatic “means” intended for educational “ends” and adds that an educational game is “any game design with explicit educational goals that are intended to support

² See for example the webpage for Demokratiwerkstaden at <http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/larare/demokratiwerkstaden-for-arskurs-7-9/>

processes of teaching and learning” (Hanghøj 2008:25). According to this definition as well as the importance given to the role element of DV, I will in this thesis consider DV an *educational role-playing game*.

3.2 Using games in civic education

Levy (2017) investigates the political efficacy outcomes of participation in a Model United Nations (MUN) extracurricular club in a school in the US. During a period of seven months, Levy follows a group of students who are engaged in the club and collects data through surveys, interviews and participant observation. The survey is distributed to students from both the MUN and a control group at two time points with six months in between. Results from the study show an increased political efficacy score both in general and in comparison to the control group. According to Levy (2017), participation in the MUN club: “involved repeated opportunities for engaging in political tasks and preparing for those tasks, all within a context of supportive, politically engaged peers.” (Levy 2017:25). He therefore argues that the results are connected to the fact that participation in the MUN club gave students the opportunity to practice concrete skills and actively use political knowledge in a relevant context. There are some notable differences between Levy’s study and this thesis. First of all, Levy (2017) is investigating a voluntary extracurricular activity, while I am looking at an in-school non-voluntary activity. This creates different points of departure, as there arguably are more similarities in Levy’s respondents, having in common that they have *chosen* an activity. Another important distinction is the time period. Levy’s study shows how participants develop their skills, confidence and efficacy over a period of six months, while the intervention addressed in this thesis solely takes two hours.

Similar results to Levy (2017) were found by Bernstein (2008) who studies a three week long political simulation in an American government class at a University. Through surveys administered before and after the simulation, Bernstein aims to measure developments in political efficacy among other items. Both gender and race (white and African-American) are analyzed as separate groups and gains in efficacy are seen in all groups except African-American women. Bernstein concludes that a simulation-based approach is successful in making students leave the class with more belief in their own ability to participate and theorizes that “This may well be because they are not learning about managing information, people, and rules but are instead *actually* managing information, people, and rules.” (Bernstein 2008:15). Political skills are in this way increased by experience with using those skills, which in turn leads to an increase in internal and external efficacy. As with Levy (2017), this study measures an effect in political efficacy after a

longer time of activity than DV. Bernstein furthermore measures knowledge levels of facts relating to the government and finds positive developments for participants in the simulation.

Hansen (2017) investigates political participation and political efficacy among other items in his study of the mock elections in Danish schools 2017. In the report, Hansen (2017) could show significant positive results in terms of students' external and internal political efficacy and participation scores as well as on several more knowledge-based tests after participation in the mock election. Especially internal efficacy, the belief in your own abilities to participate, showed an increase in Hansen's (2017) sample. His research design included supplying each participating student with a personal ID from the pre-survey so that individual students could be traced in the before and after and his sample was large at around 700 students. His study has inspired the work with this thesis due to the similar contexts of Danish and Swedish school students as well as similar age groups. I have for example relied to a large degree on Hansen (2017) for the scale items in my participation and efficacy scales.

A final important study in terms of this thesis is Hanghøj (2008), who in his dissertation argues that more studies on educational games should focus on how games are enacted and validated by teachers and students in different contexts. His focus is a classroom debate game on parliamentary elections where students play roles like politicians and journalists while researching, discussing and debating political issues. In contrast to the other research mentioned here, Hanghøj (2008) does not go into the content of the game itself, but focuses on the participatory and discursive performances in the game space by both students and teachers. He concludes that a number of competences are enacted through the game and that students through these competences demonstrate abilities to navigate strategic knowledge, use ideological voices to position themselves as well as persuading and gaining trust from their peers (Hanghøj 2008:322). In this way, he argues that significant aspects of being educated as a democratic citizen are practiced in the game.

4. Setting up hypotheses

In this chapter, I will outline the theoretical underpinnings for the hypotheses developed for the quantitative part of this study. This chapter will therefore be divided into three main sections accounting for the three areas addressed by the survey: political interest, political participation and political efficacy. Together, these terms are often referred to as democratic competence (Ekman 2007, Fjeldstad & Mikkelsen 2004, Wall 2012:251), which is an umbrella concept that I have chosen to use in this thesis. Besides accounting for the assumptions behind the hypotheses, part of the purpose of this chapter is also to clarify my definition of these three concepts. Detailing this process as well as the subsequent operationalization of the concept in the data collection is furthermore important to ensure validity in the research.

4.1 Political Interest

Previous research has shown that interest in political issues has a high correlation with socioeconomic background and parents' level of education (Ekman 2007). Parents with a stronger position in society and a higher level of education are more likely to discuss politics with their children, which in turn leads to a higher level of interest in politics. Political interest has also been found to be a key indicator of political participation, which makes it an important factor to consider for active citizenship (Koskimaa & Rapeli 2015, Shehata & Amnå 2017). An interested individual is more likely to be knowledgeable and participate in public life. The broad picture of how interest in political matters is developed is still not clear (Robison 2017). However, research has shown that formation of political interest takes places primarily in adolescence and that high stability in interest levels can be shown already in a person in their early 20's (Shehata & Amnå 2017). Studying political interest in youth is therefore key to discovering what factors can affect this development.

In line with conceptualizations by Robison (2017) and Shehata and Amnå (2017), I understand political interest as an intrinsic motivation to pay attention to and engage in politics - an attitude towards the desirability of political engagement. Attitudes are not hereditary but learned, which in itself presupposes the possibility of outside factors affecting the degree of political interest. The socioeconomic and parental/peer explanations to the development of political interest cannot be addressed within the scope of this thesis, and will therefore not be considered further. However, other research has focused on the role of the school in development of political interest and found support for the significance of teaching methods (Eklund 2007, Amnå & Zätterberg 2010,

Koskimaa & Rapeli 2015). Specifically deliberative methods have proven effective to develop political interest, here meaning methods that actively engage students in discussions and democratic practices (Eklund 2007, Koskimaa & Rapeli 2015). Robison (2017) argues from a theoretical perspective that roots political interest in psychological models of attitude formation. He claims that social rewards play a big part in the development of political interest and writes: “Individuals animated by a positive social motivation perform an action, such as voting in an election, to generate rewards from network members such as status, honour, pride and friendship”³ (Robison 2017:26). DV is a social arena where the performances and enactments of students are constantly happening in relationship to other students and where active engagement is rewarded by the game design. Therefore one could assume that social rewards from other students, resulting from showing skill in debating or persuading others to join their politics, could result in a higher level of interest in politics. Moreover, research has shown that different types of games and gamification improve motivation in students and thereby increase their positive experience with the subject or tasks at hand (Wilson et al 2009, Lieberoth 2014). Based on these previous results, I pose the following hypothesis:

H₁: Participation in DV will affect students’ political interest

Sohl (2014) notes that political interest is often measured by straightforward questions about interest in policies, which is also the approach taken here. She also mentions that youth have a tendency to react negatively to the word “politics” and that it might be good to include other wordings, which I have taken into account in my operationalization.

4.2 Political Participation

Researchers and society at large have raised some concerns about the declining political participation of youth (Arensmeier 2010). Traditional ways of participation like voting and membership have been in decline during the last decades. However, much of this concern seems to be unfounded as subsequent in-depth research has shown that youth participation is changing some patterns but remains more or less equal to previous generations (Torney-Purta & Amadeo 2011, Arensmeier 2010). Youth today are more active in what has been termed non-institutionalized forms of political participation – like boycotts or social media activity – than institutionalized ditto, which counts for example party membership (Nygård et al 2015). This is mainly attributed to the changing media landscape entailing new methods for engaging politically (Sohl 2016:67).

³ The same relationship has been shown by Sohl & Arensmeier (2015) on political efficacy and social rewards.

As with political interest, adolescence is an important formative period for political participation. A strong link has for example been found between the intended voting of youth and actual voting patterns in adulthood (Nygård et al 2015). In terms of influences on participation, literature mentions both socioeconomic and ethnic background as well as high scores of political interest. Ekman (2007) along with Morell (2005) distinguishes so called mastery experiences, where students who were involved in democratic processes like student councils or acted as class president have been shown to have a greater political participation as adults. Practical experience of participation can thus affect political participation positively. Based on the above, the hypothesis for participation is:

H₂: Participation in DV will affect students' self-estimated future political participation.

Political participation will in this thesis be defined in line with Brady's definition (1999, quoted in Ekman & Zetterberg 2010:47) as the "action of ordinary citizens directed towards influencing some political outcomes". The questions in the survey have been inspired by Hansen (2017) and address both traditional forms of participation like voting, party membership and participating in demonstrations as well as online activities like following politicians on Facebook.

4.3 Political efficacy

Political efficacy is a concept that was first used by US-American researchers in 1954 in a study of the national election to address the feeling that individual action for political ends was worthwhile and could lead to change (Sohl 2014:25). In later conceptualizations the term has been split up into two parts: external efficacy, which alludes to the belief in a responsive system, and internal efficacy, the belief that I as an individual am competent enough to make a difference. As such, political efficacy is a set of dispositions towards participation in society in the form of confidence in one's own ability and effectiveness in politics as well as trust in the responsiveness of the system (Sohl 2014:26, Morell 2005, Niemi et al 1988). Low internal and external political efficacy thus equals low belief in your own value as a participant combined with a low belief in that political action matters. Political efficacy, both internal and external, has therefore been argued to be a prerequisite of political participation (Balch 1974, Sohl 2014:16, Levy 2017). Having low efficacy is generally considered a characteristic of what Balch (1974:2) refers to as the "politically apathetic" as these dispositions lead to very low levels of political activity. Hence, stimulating

efficacy in a population is important for active citizenship, which could be argued to be the very foundations of a democracy (Sohl & Arensmeier 2015).

As previously mentioned, socioeconomic background is a factor behind both political interest and political participation. However, according to Sohl and Arensmeier (2015), political efficacy could compensate for a disadvantaged background. As political efficacy is developed throughout life it is a more dynamic variable than background as it can be increased and strengthened by efforts of socialization. School, although under-researched in terms of political efficacy development, is an important arena for such a process (Sohl & Arensmeier 2015, Morell 2005). Similarly to political interest and political participation, research on political efficacy shows that experience is key to its development – especially experience with decision-making, discussion as well as a generally deliberative classroom climate (Sohl & Arensmeier 2015, Sohl 2014:86, Levy 2017). Morell (2015) furthermore shows active political experience to be crucial but finds no difference between deliberative decision-making and parliamentary process decision-making in his experiment on internal efficacy development. Hansen (2017) was also able to show an increase in both internal and external efficacy for students participating in a mock election at school, which is a result supported by Levy (2017). Based on these previous studies I have worked with the following hypotheses for political efficacy:

H₃ participation in DV will affect students' internal political efficacy

H₄ participation in DV will affect students' external political efficacy

Hansen (2017) and Niemi et al. (1988) have served as the primary inspiration when constructing the measures for internal and external political efficacy for this thesis.

4.4 Summary of hypotheses

In this thesis I investigate the effect of participation in DV on students democratic attitudes, here operationalized as political interest, political participation and political efficacy. This chapter has described the theoretical background for my hypotheses. Though I have presented the concepts separately, previous research has shown that they are highly correlated. Sohl (2014:82) for example concludes that political interest has a positive effect on political participation in itself but that this effect is amplified by strong political efficacy. She therefore claims that political efficacy should be regarded as: “ a lever of the effect of political interest on political participation” (Sohl 2014:82). The relationship between interest, efficacy and participation is thus mutually enforcing. I have

furthermore shown that there is support in previous theorization for relevant practical experience as a stimulant on all four elements. With this background, I have arrived at the following four, two-sided hypotheses:

H₁: Participation in DV will affect students' political interest

H₂: Participation in DV will affect students' future political participation.

H₃: Participation in DV will affect students' internal political efficacy

H₄: Participation in DV will affect students' external political efficacy

A detailed account of how I have operationalized interest, efficacy and participation is provided in section 5.2.1. An account of the validity and reliability of measures is also available in section 5.4.

5. Methodology

The following chapter will describe the methodological choices made in this thesis. The thesis is a result of a mixed-method research design with DV as a case, and explores how democratic practices are enacted in the game as well as whether participation has an effect on participants democratic attitudes. These questions take their departure in the more general aim of the thesis, which is to contribute to the research on the potential, strengths and weaknesses of educational games in teaching youth about democracy and active citizenship. As such, the research interest has been both with how democratic know-how is enacted in the game in the qualitative leg of the study as well as with measuring outcomes related to democratic attitudes in the quantitative ditto.

In this chapter, I outline how the data for this thesis was collected. First I describe the epistemological and ontological stance underpinning work with this thesis as well followed by a presentation of the reasoning for a mixed method research strategy before moving on to describe the work with the quantitative data and survey construction. Thereafter, I will address the qualitative methods for data collection; interviews, participant observation as well as the coding process. Finally I will discuss the ethical considerations made in relation to the carrying out of this research project.

5.1 A pragmatist philosophy of science

During work with this thesis, I have been influenced by pragmatism as an approach to research in two main ways. The first has to do with the ontological and epistemological assumptions that I approached this study with, while the second is related to research design. I will develop both of these perspectives below.

The first reason why pragmatism is underpinning this thesis has to do with the Deweyan concept of interaction and experience. According to Biesta and Burbules (2003:9), the significance of John Dewey in regards to educational research lies in what they call his *philosophy of action*. To Dewey, there is such a thing as an objective reality, but our embodied experience as living organisms will make that reality appear differently to us. This is because we are constantly interacting with the world in different ways and developing from it. In *Experience and Education* Dewey writes: “The statement that individuals live in a world means, in the concrete, that they live in a series of situations. (...) The conceptions of situation and of interaction are inseparable from each other.” (Dewey, 1938:43). To be in the world is therefore to be in interaction with the world. Dewey

referred to this as his transactional approach, an approach that focuses on the interactional process and looks upon distinctions between subject and object or mind and matter as results from that process rather than as starting points for metaphysical discussion (Biesta & Burbules 2003:26).

Experience is the term that Dewey used to refer to the specific transactions occurring between living organisms and their environment and is what ultimately connects them to reality (Biesta & Burbules 2003:28). Learning is in this sense the result of transaction with the environment, a process in which both the environment and the living organism are transformed. Through our interactions with our surroundings we form habits that we rely on in future interactions. This is why Dewey argued that the goals of education must be directly linked to the specific actions being undertaken in practice so as to provide opportunity for shaping relevant and effective habits (Dewey 1938:27).

In this thesis I am investigating the enactment of democratic know-how in practice in an educational role-playing game as well as the effects that this game has on indicators of democratic attitudes. The underlying assumption with this study has therefore been that the experience of participating in such a game can have relevance in terms of learning more broadly and the development of democratic competences specifically. This assumption comes from an understanding of the game practice as an arena for democratic experiences in a Deweyan sense. It is also connected to the aims of an educational game, which basically is to learn specific content from the experience of playing a game (Hanghøj 2008:7). Taking my ontological and epistemological departure in Dewey's transactional approach thus allows me to focus on the *experiences* of DV as significant generator of knowledge about the social world. I will return to this in section 6.1.2.

The second reason why I have chosen the pragmatist approach for work with this thesis is that allows for the research question and aims to be king and queen rather than taking a point of departure in any one specific methodological paradigm. This pragmatist stance has also shaped the mixed methods research approach that I have had to undertaking this study. Mixed methods research refers to the mixing of qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. In short, a mixed methods research design should contain “the numbers *and* a story” (Sammons 2010:698).

Previous debates on methodology have centered on the connection between research methods and ontological and epistemological positions (Bryman 2016:636). Some researchers have argued that methods carry with them certain assumptions about reality and knowledge, which are contradictory

or at least not possible to combine (Biesta 2009). Proponents of mixed methods, however, argue that this idea does not hold up in research practice, where the strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches become more relevant to the researcher. This is one of the reasons why pragmatism has been considered the best strategy for mixed methods research, as it takes a stand against the dichotomous division of quantitative or qualitative approaches and attempts to build bridges between realist and constructivist claims of knowledge (Greene 2007:83, Biesta 2009:96, Teddlie & Sammons 2010). In this thesis, primacy is not given to either quantitative or qualitative methods but they are instead viewed as complementary and well suited to answer the research questions together. As has been argued by Sammons (2010), having statistical findings *and* thick descriptions of specific cases can generate new insights and promote a wider understanding of a social phenomenon that neither of the methods could have accomplished alone.

My research interest has been with the measureable effects of my case on democratic attitudes as well as with the enactment of democratic practices. Approaching the case from these two angles has been facilitated by the pragmatist breakdown of methodological divides and the option of letting my research aims guide the design.

5.1.1 Case study design

The selection of DV as a case was based primarily on access. However, there are several reasons why this is a relevant case to research. First of all, DV is open to teachers and students from all over Sweden. Even though practical issues result in most participants being from schools in Stockholm or the surrounding area, the potential reach of the game is unique. This also means that the game caters to very different groups of students, not only in terms of grade and age but of general different compositions. The reach of the game is thereby also broad and the participants are diverse in background, conditions and motivations. Furthermore, the administrative branch of the most powerful democratic institution in Sweden facilitates the game, which gives the game status and credibility as an educational tool. Many researchers study games that are played only a few times or that are played in different contexts each time. The fact that this case is facilitated centrally made it well suited to answer my research question because the same scenario is being played in the same setting many times over with only the student group changing. The stability of the case increases the chance of any effects being due to the game itself and not a particular enactment, material preconditions or other changing surroundings and makes patterns easier to distinguish. The generalizability of case studies is normally low (Bøgh Andersen 2010:111). However, if investigating a similar case of educational role-playing games, I would argue that there is a degree

analytical generalizability of this project that can be used as a point of departure for further research.

5.2 Quantitative research

The quantitative leg of my study consists of a pre and post survey measuring the indicators of democratic attitudes outlined in chapter 4 – political interest, political participation and political efficacy. The assumption is that a difference between scores pre and post participation in DV will indicate that the game has an effect in terms of these concepts.

5.2.1 Operationalizing democratic attitudes in the survey

Measuring abstract multidimensional concepts like democratic attitudes is not possible to do through asking direct questions (i.e. “How high is your political efficacy?”). Instead, a common approach is to use scales. A scale measures a concept indirectly by taking the mean of the scores on several different questions that capture different dimensions of a concept (Bang Petersen 2012:402). This means that if you score high on all questions in the scale, you get a high scale score and vice versa. The purpose of using scales to measure phenomena has to do with validity. In comparison with single variables, multivariable scales will likely be more valid when measuring complex concepts, i.e. there is a greater certainty of measuring what you are attempting to measure (Bang Petersen 2012:406).

I constructed four separate scales to capture the concept of democratic attitudes: political interest, political participation, internal political efficacy and external political efficacy. Both the questions and the scale construction were mainly based on those used in Hansen’s (2017) survey research on the effects of Skolevalg 2017 (School elections 2017). This was due to the fact that Hansen’s research was closely connected through subject, context and time and there was little time to develop my own scales. A few changes were made to the scales that Hansen (2017) used. This was due to the different context of DV as well as due to issues of translation and language viability. I also chose to make a scale out of political interest with three questions where Hansen only has one. This was due to political interest being more central to my research than to Hansen’s. A table with a comparison of Hansen’s scales and my own is available in appendix 2. Due to the time limitations I assumed that the scales were valid to be able to undertake the survey research, but I have conducted a reliability test in the form of Cronbach’s alpha after data collection was concluded.

5.2.2 Collection of data

The survey was set up in online survey software SurveyXact and contained three background variables; school name, grade and gender. School name was included to be able to separate the answers and see which schools had participated and which I should send reminders to. Grade and sex were included to provide an overview of my sample characteristics and to be able to evaluate the representativity of the sample. It also enables me to perform further exploratory analysis. These initial variables are followed by three separate pages of questions, which all made use of a Likert scale of 1- 5. The first scale concerned political interest and contains three questions. Then follows eight questions addressing political participation. The last battery of questions form the political efficacy scales, which consisted of ten questions in total – five for external and five for internal. Questions for internal and external efficacy are mixed in the survey. Seven questions are phrased in a positive way (where a 5 on the Likert scale would suggest a high efficacy score) and three questions are phrased negatively (where a 1 would suggest high efficacy). This is a technique used to avoid respondents consistently choosing the same answer for all questions - typically consistently high or low scores (Bryman 2016:216).

To make sure that the phrasing was intelligible, I piloted the survey with several native Swedish speakers. Among these was a native speaker in the target group for the survey (7th to 9th grade) who was specifically asked to report any difficulties with understanding questions. After incorporating some minor changes following the pilot, the survey was distributed to the first group of schools. The before and after-surveys were separate, with the after-survey being distributed after the class had visited DV. The surveys can be found in appendix 3 and 4.

The survey was distributed through the self-creation with hyperlink method available in SurveyXact. This method enabled the teachers to function as gatekeepers for their students and copy the link into their relevant channels for student contact. After their visit, all teachers (participants in the pre-survey as well as non-participants) received a link to the post-survey. An overview of the sample size, grade and gender can be found in appendix 5.

5.2.3 Data treatment

The data from the surveys was downloaded from SurveyXact and imported into the statistical software SPSS for analysis. I cleaned the data from acquiescence, meaning that cases with consistent answers throughout were removed. As a rule, I removed all respondents with 18 or more (out of 21 scale questions) answers using the same point on the Likert-scale or with more than 10 answers in a row of the same Likert-scale point as I deemed this a sign of acquiescence. Lastly, I

had made a special school variable named “miscellaneous” that I encouraged teachers to use if they wanted to try the survey before sending it to their students, which was also removed. All in all, 18 cases were cleaned out. I also reversed the coding of the scores for the three negatively phrased questions to ensure scale consistency.

In SPSS, I used a two-sided t-test on the pre and post survey data to measure any effects and their significance.

5.3 Qualitative research

In this section I will account for my use of research methods to collect qualitative data in the form of participant observation and short semi-structured interviews. In terms of qualitative research, Alvesson (2003:172) argues that: “a multitude of methods – sometimes referred to as triangulation – is often to be preferred”. Triangulation is normally defined as an approach that uses several data sources or theoretical perspectives within a single project (Bryman 2016:386). The goal with triangulation is to be able to support and confirm one’s findings and thus arrive at better-founded conclusions. In this project, the ambition with triangulation has been to strengthen the qualitative part of the study. How this has been done will be addressed below, where I start by describing my approach to participant observation, followed by my approach to interviews, interview guide design and selection of participants. Finally, I address the way the qualitative data has been treated and analyzed.

5.3.1 Participant observation

The primary source of qualitative data in this project is participant observation. I spent one week in Stockholm observing in 9 games during five continuous days. Participant observation is a primarily qualitative method used to enhance understanding of social life, experiences and practice in situated spaces (Szulevics 2015:84,85). One of the basic tenets of the method is that social practice is negotiated and constructed through social interactions and language as well as spatially, thus connecting human practices to material spaces. Inspired by Bernard (2006), Szulevics (2015:86) describes a number of reasons for engaging in participant observation in a research project. Three of these, in an intertwined manner, have acted as determining arguments in this project; insight, thick descriptions and intuitive understanding.

The first reason for participant observation is that it enables the project to cover issues that were not available for study with other methods. Interviews give an insight into the process, but as Szulevics

(2015:86) and Alvesson (2003) both mention, interviews tend to be retrospective reflections and constructions of a situation, whereas observation has the potential of catching the actions in situ and thus getting access to things that are not noticed by the actor – the embodied, non-reflected and interactional aspects of a situation. I experienced this to be the case in DV, especially as I engaged with the field from a different background and (theoretical) focus than the students and was therefore paying attention to things that went unnoticed for them.

Participant observation has also enabled me to provide “thick descriptions” of the game as a social practice. Being present and observing several different installments of the game has given me insights into the nuances in the game as it is played with different groups and facilitators, as well as the more stable patterns that are present throughout. This knowledge enables me to convey the mechanisms and phases of the game in a more competent manner. Engaging in participant observation allowed me to access a more contextualized story of what it meant when students in interviews later told me that they learned about the political process in a new way or that it was fun to build alliances with others.

Finally, participant observation, according to Szulevics (2015:86) can provide the researcher with an intuitive understanding of the collected data, which in turn can minimize the risk of hasty and decontextualized conclusions - something qualitative research sometimes is accused of producing (cf. Bryman 2016:398).

In terms of my role as a researcher in the field, I was an overt but mostly passive participant. At the start of each session, the facilitator gave me some time to introduce myself to the group. While the game was being played I was a passive observer. Throughout my observations I had a notebook with me in which I wrote my field notes continuously. My overall strategy was to write notes as fast as possible while still in the situation. However, as Bryman (2016:441) notes, having a stranger walking around looking at you performing tasks while taking notes might cause a certain amount of self-consciousness. To avoid this, I developed strategies in the field, for example avoiding to directly face the students I was observing, and focusing my presence in rooms where there were more than one group of students interacting. These and other strategies allowed me to take notes while an interaction was ongoing and thus enabled me to capture more details in writing. As a support for my observations I also recorded the audio of the committee meetings in the game. This allowed me to focus on other aspects of the debate than would have been possible if I also wanted

to capture large parts of the dialogue. How the observation data and recordings were used in the analysis will be described in section 6.4.3.1 on coding. My field notes are included in appendix 6.

5.3.2 Interviews

During the last two days of fieldwork I conducted a total of four interviews with two students in each interview. As described in chapter 2, there are, as a norm, four slots per day to visit DV with a class and there are 15 minutes in between each visit. Most classes visiting DV choose to do so in combination with a guided tour of riksdagen, either before or after their game and also have travel time to and from the premises. Circumstances thus made it difficult to arrange interviews with students on the premises of DV in connection to the game. I therefore chose to conduct my interviews during the reflection at the end of each game, which lasts around 10-15 minutes. The time frame for the interviews was in other words very tight and they were all conducted within 7 to 11 minutes.

The reasoning behind interviewing two students at a time under these conditions was two-fold. First of all, it was an attempt to make the students feel more comfortable in the interview situation. Kvale and Brinkmann (2015:34) has argued that the interview situation should be seen as a social practice where knowledge is co-produced between interviewer and interviewee, and as such it is not a situation free of power relations. This is reinforced by DiCiccio-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) who argue that the establishment of rapport is essential to the qualitative interview, as the power relationship between the researcher and the subject of research otherwise can become hindering. Having a classmate present could thus be one way of addressing these power relations and hopefully make interviewees more comfortable. Second, it was my intention that the sharing of perspectives from one student could trigger thoughts and reflections from the other student. As has been argued by Gaskell (2000:46-47), focus group interviews can have a stimulating effect on reflections and insights in the interview situation. This can result in opportunities for participants to build on or reject each other's statements and reflections and thus give more full accounts of their experiences. Even though two students hardly qualify as a focus group, it was my impression that the dynamic with two students provided a degree of the above-mentioned advantages. However, I did notice during one of the interviews that a single person interview probably would have been better, as the difference in opinion of the two participants seemed to hold the more critical student back a little when expressing critical thoughts. Even though I generally found the choice to interview two students at a time very fruitful to get insight into the students' reflections about the game, there might have been some depth lost with this particular student.

5.3.2.1 Interview guide

I deliberately chose not to develop a full interview guide previous to my fieldwork in DV so that my initial observations could inform my questions. This strategy can be compared to Bryman (2016:469) citing Lofland to suggest that the researcher asks him or herself “what about this thing puzzles me?” before constructing an interview guide. Observing the game for a couple of days prior to constructing the guide made it possible for me to have a better idea of my answer to that question. The practical constraints surrounding DV made my time frame for interviews very short, which encouraged me to narrow my themes down to a few questions that I considered most complimentary to my participant observation data. I chose a semi-structured interview approach, which allows for some variation in when and how questions are asked, as well as allowing flexibility to follow eventual themes that the interviewees bring to the fore. The majority of questions remained the same in all interviews. The interview guide can be found in its entirety in appendix 7.

5.3.2.2 Participants

The interviews were conducted with a total of eight students who participated in DV. Five of the students were approached by me during the game and asked if they would participate in a short interview after the game was finished. These students were chosen specifically because of their participatory strategies, which I had noted during their game, a strategy that Bryman (2016:410) refers to as purposive sampling. Two of the students were dominant and very talkative, two others were somewhere in the middle, participating actively but not very independently, and the last student was a student I had seen as passive and unengaged during the game. The three other students interviewed were found through asking the class in general if anybody would like to participate. It should be noted that none of the participants who volunteered expressed critical opinions about DV.

5.3.3 Qualitative data treatment

5.3.3.1 Transcription and Coding

Before coding, I transcribed my interview material verbatim, which means that I have attempted to include all words being said, including pauses like “ehm” or repetitions. I have also noted laughter and any interruptions, like a phone ringing or buzzing. I then turned to the recordings I had made of debate situations in the game and listened to them and took detailed notes, which were added to my field notes. Because of the large amount of data, I chose to only include the recordings of the last four games that I observed, which were also the ones where I conducted interviews. The recordings

where in this way used as a complement to my field notes. The interview transcripts are included in appendix 8.

Coding of the qualitative data was conducted in several steps aided by the software Nvivo. The first step was to perform an open coding on the field notes and interview transcripts aimed at discovering and systematizing recurring themes in the data (cf. Jakobsen 2012:177). Thereafter, a theory driven coding was performed where I coded with the terms “role” and “role distance” as well as “adversarial” and “deliberative” approaches (cf. chapter 6). These theoretical concepts were chosen because of my primary open coding as they corresponded to themes in the data and could help me accentuate these in the analysis. After this, I coded the whole material again in a process known as intracoding, which is when the same person codes the same material several times at different times (Jakobsen 2012:185). I also went back to the recordings and transcribed the sections that I had coded from them verbatim so that they could be used as examples in the analysis. My coding process can be described by the following visualization:



Figure 3: Coding process

I have attached examples of my coding in appendix 9, including nodes and citations.

5.4 Research quality and scientific credibility

As mentioned by Bøgh Andersen (2012:98), it is a fundamental principle of science that we build on existing knowledge and research in a cumulative expansion process. It is therefore important to evaluate the methods used in a project in terms of established concepts of scientific credibility. In quantitative research this is often related to the concepts replicability, reliability and validity (Bøgh Andersen 2012:97). In qualitative research there has been an ongoing discussion of whether these criteria are transferable to qualitative research designs or if there is a need for separate criteria (Tanggaard & Brinkmann 2015:522, Kvale & Brinkmann 2015:316). In this section, I will briefly account for the credibility of this study both in terms of qualitative and quantitative data collection.

5.4.1 Qualitative criteria and replicability

Tanggaard and Brinkmann (2015:524-526) outline a number of criteria that can determine the quality of qualitative research. These criteria are mainly concerned with clarity in terms of choices made during the research, a nuanced and contextualized description of the case and the participants,

providing examples of data to strengthen the points made and a reflective approach by the researcher in terms of the process and their own position in the data collection as well as during theoretical interpretations. They also suggest triangulation with quantitative or other qualitative methods (Tinggaard and Brinkmann 2015:525). My aim during work with this thesis has been to provide a nuanced description and analysis of my case and the tools that I have used to investigate it. I have been explicit in this chapter and others with detailing the methods, considerations and understanding of theory and concepts used while working with the data. I have also chosen, to this end, to include my surveys, interview guide, coding schemes and transcripts in appendices and I have used examples from the data throughout my analysis. These measures have also strengthened my thesis in terms of *replicability*, which is the term used in quantitative research to refer to transparency of the research process (Bøgh Andersen 2012:98). I have furthermore worked with triangulation within the qualitative leg of the study by using both interviews and observation to strengthen my understanding of enactment in the practice. To avoid biased interpretations, I have contextualized quotes from participants and I have been explicit about what is actually observed or said and where I have interpreted on actions and comments.

5.4.2 Quantitative validity

Internal validity in quantitative research has to do with whether the conclusions of causality drawn from it are valid (Bøgh Andersen 2012). There are some issues with my research in regards to this. First of all, my samples have not been randomly chosen but consist of those students that had a teacher that decided that they would take part in the survey. With relatively small, non-random sample sizes I cannot be sure that the sample is representative for the population. Second, as the sample respondents for the pre survey are not the same as the post survey, it cannot be fully determined that DV is the (sole) cause of potential differences in means – e.g. there could be chance differences in socio-economic background between the pre and post groups. Third, I did not have control over the time that passed between the survey and participation in DV. Time could have played a role, partly because the effects of DV might be such that they diminish over time and a longer time between participation and filling out the survey could therefore miss any effects. The longer time that passes between participation and the survey, the more likely it becomes that something else happens that also could have an effect on their democratic attitudes. I must therefore conclude that the internal validity of the quantitative part of my research is relatively low.

In terms of survey-construction I rely on what Bryman (2008:152) refers to as “construct validity”, which means that I draw on the work of previous research in the relevant fields to construct my

scales, i.e mainly Hansen (2017). I have described my theoretically underpinned hypotheses in chapter 4.

5.4.3 Quantitative reliability

Reliability has to do with the consistency and stability of a measurement (Bryman 2008:149). Stability is usually measured through a test-retest, where the same group is tested with the same measure more than one time (Field 2013:13, Bryman 2008:149). If the values are the same or similar at both times of testing the stability of the measure is high. Due to the scope and time frame of this thesis I did not have the possibility of testing my measures in this way. However, by way of the design I do have different groups answering the same survey at different times without any real changes in internal reliability. Internal reliability of the scales was measured by a Cronbach's alpha test, which is a test that calculates a score for each participant and splits it in two – one for each half of the scale (Bryman 2008:151). If the scale is reliable, the two scores should be very similar (Field 2013:708). A score of 1 equals perfect reliability while 0 indicates zero correlation between the variables. Normally an acceptable value is anything above .7, with values over .8 being preferred (Pallant 2010:98, Field 2013:709). Important to note is that the number of variables in the scale will affect the outcome of the Cronbach's alpha, the higher the number of variables, the higher the result. Lower values than 0,7 might therefore be acceptable for scales with less variables than 10. In my case I have no scales with more than eight variables. External and internal efficacy both have five variables while interest only has three. Because of this, I have chosen to account for the inter-item correlation value as well, which is recommended by Pallant (2010:100) in instances where Cronbach's could be low because of few variables.

Table 1: Cronbach's alpha

	Pre survey Cronbach's α	Post survey Cronbach's α	Pre survey Inter-item	Post survey Inter-item	Number of cases before / after
Interest	0.794	0.812	0.231	0.343	358 / 243
Participation	0.825	0.869	0.464	0.466	358 / 243
Internal efficacy	0.697	0.709	0.42	0.521	357 / 243
External efficacy	0.39	0.499	0.312	0.376	356 / 241

As we can see here, Cronbach's alpha scores for *participation* and *interest* are good around .8. *Internal efficacy* has an acceptable score of around .7. However, Cronbach's alpha for *external efficacy* is low even though it is in the acceptable range for inter-item, which should be between .2

and .4 (Pallant 2010:97). This implies that the external efficacy scale is not reliable and that the variables are not measuring the same underlying construct. Comparing with Hansen (2017), which all but one questions in the external efficacy scale was based on, it is noteworthy that he too shows a below acceptable Cronbach's alpha for this particular scale with 0,5-0,55⁴. I have chosen to include external efficacy in the analysis even though the low reliability of this scale should be taken into account.

Further reflection on my methodological choices can be found in section 8.3.

5.5 Ethical considerations

As researchers, we must consider carefully the ethical issues of our practice when exploring the social domains. Kvale and Brinkmann (2015:113-120) have described a number of issues that an interview researcher should consider while conducting and writing up research, which I believe to be applicable to other research methods as well. I will here present the considerations made in this project concerning the main points 1) anonymity, 2) informed consent and 3) the role of the researcher.

It has been central to both the quantitative and qualitative data collection process that no individual students can be identified in the data. In the survey, the only identifier for the respondents is their school name, grade level and gender, which are not mentioned together in this thesis. In the other variables, individual respondents are never displayed, as it is the mean values that are interesting to this study. Furthermore, I have chosen not to include information about the specific time period during which the survey has been active. This also applies to the qualitative part of the study. Any information from observation or in interviews that may identify a single individual has been redacted from the transcripts included in the appendices of this thesis. Records of sign up sheets were stored in a password-protected location and were deleted after use.

In terms of informed consent, all emails with teachers have stated the purpose of the survey as well as my position as a master's student at Aalborg University. I stated that participation in the survey was voluntary and they were encouraged to contact me with any questions. The students who agreed to participate in interviews with me were asked to send a short statement that I had prepared beforehand to their parents. The statement included my contact information, information about the project and that their child would not appear with their name or school name in the thesis. Parents

⁴ Hansen (2017) does not report inter-item correlation.

were asked to respond with an “OK” to this text. The same information was conveyed to the students, and they were informed that they could withdraw their consent at any time during or after the interview.

As a final point I want to address my role as a researcher in the DV context. My initial contact with DV was facilitated through my personal social network. However, in all subsequent contact with DV personnel, teachers and students in the survey, interviews or participant observation I have made sure to be clear that my role was that of a master’s student collecting data for a thesis. This was deemed important, especially in interview situations where it was paramount that the students did not see me as affiliated with the game as that may have stopped them from speaking freely in their interviews. In terms of the survey, it was distributed from my Aalborg University student email address and I made clear that it was an investigation made independently from riksdagen.

6. A theory of practice

In the following chapter I will account for the theoretical perspectives that will be used to analyze the qualitative data in this thesis. The main analytical vehicle is the practice theoretical framework as conceptualized by philosopher and social theorist Theodore Schatzki. This chapter will start with an introduction to practice theory as an approach to social research followed by a description of practice theory as conceived by Schatzki (1996, 2001a, 2001b, 2012). I have chosen the practice theory approach to my case because it is a framework that allows for close up analysis of individual action while still acknowledging the importance of the social and relational aspects guiding that action. Practice theory thus gives me the tools to analyze specific actions and practices without losing sight of structure or individuality. Practice theory furthermore focuses on social life as performative, which made it easily adaptable to analysis of a role-playing game practice. I chose to work with Schatzki's terminology because he is considered one of the driving theorists within practice theory family (Nicolini 2012:15). He also has a well-developed terminology to address enactment in practice and the know-how that it builds on and develops.

Practice theory is a research paradigm normally focused on the goings-on of everyday life (Jensen 2011:37, Reckwitz 2002). Because DV is a role-playing game there are specific aspects of the practice that would be harder to capture if practice theory was used as a stand-alone framework. Therefore, while practice theory will be used throughout, I will use other theorists with similar perspectives to deepen the analysis. The first to be described is the concepts of role and role distance advocated by Erving Goffman. A second perspective is adapted from Gary Alan Fine, who builds on Goffman and addresses levels of roles in role-playing situations. A third and final complimentary perspective has to do with the concepts deliberative and adversarial debate as conceptualized by Lee Jerome and Bhavini Algarra with some additions from Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative action. The chapter will be concluded with a short summary.

6.1 The foundations of practice theory

Practice theory is the name of an approach to the studies of social life that regards human practice as the most central unit of analysis (Reckwitz 2002, Nicolini 2012:7, Schatzki 2001a: 11). In this view it is through practice that intelligibility is structured and negotiated. The practice theoretical approach has much in common with a pragmatist epistemology and ontology. For example, Schatzki and Dewey both argue that the dualisms that previous philosophical debates have centered

on, like subject/object, mind/matter or structure/agency should be allowed to transcend the either/or and instead be approached from their positions and meanings in human action (Buch & Elkjær 2015). Furthermore, even though there is an objective reality, Dewey argues that our embodied experience as living organisms will make that reality appear differently to us. Similarly, Schatzki has pointed out that there is no practice in itself, but that practice depends both on our cultural positions and on our relationship with the material (Schatzki 1996:107, 2012). Hence the social cannot be separated from material reality, including the body. Practices are, according to theorists in the practice theory family, the site of the social. This means that social order is reproduced and materialized in social practice through individual doings and sayings. Thus both individuality and social order are constituted in practice (Schatzki 1996:11, 47).

In a practice theoretical view, social practices are bodily and mental routines and individuals are carriers and carry out social practices (Reckwitz 2002). Buch and Elkjær (2015) argue that this understanding of practice as routinized actions and behaviors is mirrored in Dewey's concept of habits – the idea that living organisms learn by storing experiences in our bodies and forming habits on the basis of them. Individuals are therefore neither completely determined nor independent, but carry out those practices that are intelligible to them. To practice theorists, as well as to pragmatists, practice is structurally anchored but still open to change (Jensen 2011:37-38, Buch & Elkjær 2015).

It is a corner stone for all practice theorists that human activity is always embodied (Nicolini 2012). The body is not an instrument for the mind, as we do not have to activate the body for it to do what we want. Rather, a person is a body and carries out bodily activity (Schatzki 1996:45, Reckwitz 2002). The body is thus the place where the mind meets activity and where individual activities meet social structure (Schatzki 1996:43). At its core, practice theory is therefore a performative theory, as doings and sayings are performed in and with the body. Gestures, movements and tone of voice are all expressions of mental activities and of how bodily activities “manifest, signify and constitute conditions of life” (Schatzki 1996:47). Expressive bodies in social practices are in turn what constitute individuality and particular identities. This is because it is in the body that we store our habits for behavior in practice, such as how loud to speak, how to run, how to speak or how to laugh – all things that express individuality (Jensen 2013:45).

In sum, practice theory is a heterogeneous approach to the study of social life emphasizing the importance of human life being understood in terms of organized, human, embodied, social action.

These activities are carried out in practices, which are where, in Schatzki's (1996:13) own words: "the realms of sociality and individual mentality/activity are at once organized and linked".

6.1.1 Practice: doings, sayings and the organizing dimensions

With that said, a definition of "practice" might be in place. Schatzki refers to a practice as a: "temporally unfolding and spatially dispersed nexus of doings and sayings" (Schatzki 1996:89). Thus, a practice is what individuals say and do in organized nexuses of activity somewhere in objective space and at some point or during some duration of time.

With doings, Schatzki is referring to actions that people perform, and those actions are always embodied. A doing could be moving your hand, thinking a thought, dancing or laughing. A saying is a subclass of doing and refers to things being said – "all doings that say something about something" (Schatzki 2012:15). As stated by Jensen (2011:38), doings and sayings should be understood very specifically as the things we say and do in a practice, e.g. in a birthday party practice you *give* someone a gift and *say* happy birthday.

Our doings and sayings are organized in practice through a nexus of three dimensions: 1) understandings 2) rules, and 3) teleoaffective structures. Understanding is to Schatzki the dimension that collects three aspects of know-how: the ability of carrying out an act, the ability of identifying an act and the ability to prompt or respond to an act (Schatzki 1996:91). In the school setting, this may involve listening to the teacher, identifying an instruction from the teacher and responding to that instruction through further doings or sayings. This dimension is therefore dependent on previous experiences and abilities. Imagine a game of soccer that one team understands as friendly and the other as competitive. These differing understandings will be based on previous experiences with how a friendly or competitive game is played and will affect the actions that take place in that soccer game practice.

Rules are explicit rules, laws, instructions or norms governing social life, which encourage or discourage specific actions (Schatzki 2012:16). Examples can therefore be an instruction to show up at school on time as well as the law stating that all children between certain ages should attend some form of organized schooling. Schatzki (1996:100) stresses the fact that rules do not have to be followed to function as rules. Their mere existence guides our behavior even if we choose to deviate from them. He uses the example of a recipe in a cookbook, where the contents guide us even if we choose to add or remove things from the list of ingredients.

Another central theme in Schatzki's practice theory is the notion of intelligibility. In Schatzki's (2001b: 55) words, intelligibility is the notion that: "People almost always, (...) do what makes sense to them to do; more elaborately, they are almost always performing bodily doings that, in the current circumstances, constitute the actions that make sense to them to perform".

What makes sense for us to do is based on our understanding and the rules of the practice but also highly dependent on the last organizing dimension of Schatzki's theoretical apparatus: teleoaffective structure. With this term, Schatzki is describing a dimension of social action that is "hierarchized orders of ends, purposes, projects, actions, beliefs, and emotions that fall within a certain field of possible such orders" (Schatzki 1996:100). Teleological ends are contingent and can be everything from passing a test, getting a teacher's attention or winning a game. Simply put, a teleoaffective structure is to be understood as the goals that we connect to certain actions as well as the emotional aspects that affect the prioritization of these goals. The goal of throwing a birthday party can for example be to make the child happy but it can also be an excuse to see family and friends. How these goals are prioritized will affect how the action is performed. Teleoaffectivity is strongly connected to Schatzki's notion of practical intelligibility because it has to do with determining what goals are worth pursuing on the background of emotions – how things matter to us (Schatzki 2001b: 55). Intelligibility should thus not be confused with rationality - what matters and makes sense for us to do is not always what is rational to do.

In summary, the three dimensions that organize doings and sayings can be put into a relevant example. In DV, students may understand the practice as a learning situation similar to a situation unfolding in their classroom every day. In a learning situation, the rules might have to do with behavior – listening to and following instructions, asking questions if you do not understand and taking the assignment seriously. A goal for a student might be to impress the teacher, which is prioritized due to positive feelings connected to getting good feedback. The doings in the practice will therefore be those that make sense to the student to achieve that goal on the base of the practical understanding of the tasks necessary and rules that the individual has recognized in the practice. The student thus participates actively in debates contributing with sayings relevant to the context, especially when the teacher is present. An overview of these theoretical concepts, for reference when reading the analysis in chapter 7, is available in appendix 10.

6.1.2 Learning, experience and know how

Schatzki does not really develop his thinking about the learning aspects of practice, except to note that we learn how to act and what to say through socialization in practice (1996:186). As such, learning in practice theory is something that happens by participation in practice and through testing different actions and has both tacit and explicit elements (Nicolini 2012, Reckwitz 2002). Turner (2001) calls practices “lessons” that enable people to do things and iterates the heterogeneous ways in which learning takes place. As mentioned above, Buch and Elkjær (2015) argue that Schatzki’s view of practices as routinized actions learned through participation mirrors Dewey’s concept of habits and experience. To Dewey, experience leads to the formation of habits for thinking and acting that, similarly to Schatzki’s notion of separating intelligibility from rationality, can be both productive and non-productive in an educational sense (Dewey 1938:25-26). As I have outlined in section 5.1, my pragmatist point of departure in Dewey’s transactional approach puts experience at the forefront in terms of how knowledge about the social world is constructed. In combination with my practice theoretical framework I will therefore for the purposes of this thesis consider experience in practice as the catalyst for democratic know how, which should be understood as knowledge of “how to act, how to speak (and what to say) but also what to feel, what to expect and what things mean” (Nicolini 2012:6) in democratic practices.

6.2 Additional perspectives

6.2.1 Roles and role distance

Complimentary to the above-described theoretical apparatus of Schatzki, I will in this thesis employ the sociologist Erving Goffman’s concepts of role and role distance. These concepts will be used to analyze the special circumstances of DV being an educational role playing game, which implies that performativity in the practice is dependent on a specific role enactment. The role and role distance concepts can therefore provide useful insights into how this role taking process unfolds in the practice.

In his theory of social life, Goffman emphasizes how social identity implies a continuous set of role performances, which are enacted in a cycle of face-to-face situations with relevant audiences (Goffman 1961:85). These audiences are referred to as *role others* and have great importance for the way that a role is enacted. This is because a role, in Goffman’s understanding, contains an identity, which is made up of normative expectations on the role. The role performance is thus the enactment of the role in relationship to these expectations. However, it is central to Goffman’s role

concept that an individual will have and perform more than one role (Goffman 1961:90). For example, in DV the participants are students, but they are also players of a game, classmates and friends. Goffman (1961:107) writes that each person has to deal with the normative expectations that come with a role as: “Some attributes he will feel are rightfully his, others he will not. Some he will be pleased to accept, others he will not”. Therefore, the identity of a person does not lie in the role(s) they are assigned but in how they perform those roles. Similar to most practice theorists, Goffman is thereby a believer in the concept of “doing is being”, acknowledging that human (inter)action through role performance is the most important arena of analysis of social life (1961:86,88).

Role distance according to Goffman is the “effectively expressed pointed separateness between the individual and his putative role” (Goffman 1961:108). When the individual is enacting a role, they are performing their identity. If the role contains expectations that the individual cannot accept or embrace, the performance is where this can be shown. You are enacting the role of a boy – but maybe *not that kind of boy*. Or the role of a *fun* teacher, showing both how you understand the role of a teacher and also how you differ and align with that role. With role distance you are specifically showing the distance between your image of self and the self that the role contains. In this way, performers can give themselves some elbowroom to maneuver a situation in a different way than expected (Goffman 1961:108). Important to note is that role distance cannot be applied to all situations where an individual in some way does not live up to expectations of a role, but only to behavior which actively suggests disaffection or resistance to the role. Furthermore, there are two main ways to show role distance, which can be roughly categorized as isolation and parody. Isolation refers to a performance where the individuals attempt to perform the role while simultaneously isolating themselves as much as possible from the “contamination of the situation” (Goffman 1961:110). This is done by a performance where the rules of the practice are followed, but where a clear disaffection to the identity the role brings with it is shown. The second way to show role distance according to Goffman is to perform the role jokingly or childishly to in a way parody or make fun of the implied self (1961:110). In this way, the individual can signal that they do not take the role seriously enough to be associated with the expected self that the role contains. These performances will be addressed in chapter 7.1.

6.2.1.1 Role levels

Drawing on Goffman’s work with frames and roles, Gary Alan Fine (1983) presents a model of three levels of role taking that fantasy role-play gamers are juggling when engaging in a game

situation. The first level is the “primary framework” of people in the real world, which is dependent on the “ultimate reality of events” (Fine 1983:186). In this first level, it is the actual self connected to the actual social reality that leads the interaction. On the second level we find the player. The player is adhering to the rules and structure of the game and manipulating the context accordingly to achieve relevant motivations and goals within the game structure. The players know the structure of the game and therefore have a meta relationship to it, they do not have to relate to what is physically possible in the real world of the primary frame but instead use the game structure and rules as their strategic point of departure. A third level presented by Fine (1983) is the level of the character. A character in a role playing game can know less than the player playing it about the story or events of the game and has no relationship to the real world, it solely adheres to rules inside the fiction. Fine (1983:186) thus points out that all of these levels have their separate shared understandings and meaning constructions, which in this case will be analyzed with the practice theory terms understandings, rules and teleoaffective structures. However, as Hanghøj (2008:98) has pointed out, Fine’s framework of role levels was constructed in terms of leisure gaming and is therefore missing some dimensions if we are to translate it to the world of educational gaming. He suggests that in addition we must add the educational frame, as students participating in an educational game are already performing their role as *students*, which contains its own set of expectations and possibilities for meaning-making and action. Transferred to the context of DV, I will refer to four different roles; individual, student, player and character (politician). As an overview, here is a revised model of these roles building on Fines (1983:186, 205) framework:

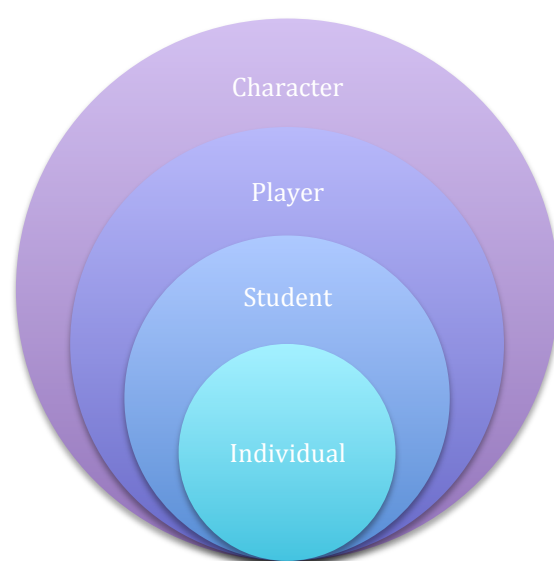


Figure 4: Role levels

As the model shows, these role dimensions are not clearly separated in the practice but are enacted simultaneously and in different combinations, constituting a dynamic interplay. While the individual self and the student are almost always present in DV (the first due to being the primary frame and the latter because the game is enacted within a school framework – together with a class and with the presence of teachers) the other two roles are present in different ways. This model will guide the analysis to consider how the students navigate these roles in the game. Within the larger analytical framework of practice theory, these roles will be used as a supplement to understand how the teleoaffective structures, rules and understandings that guide the students' actions in the practice relate to the role that the student is currently enacting. How this enactment takes place will be analyzed in chapter 7.

6.2.2 Analyzing debates and discussions

A central aspect of the practices in DV is the debates and discussions between students. The way that these interactions are carried out is therefore a primary focus of analysis. To aid this analysis, I take my point of departure in two concepts used by British educational researchers Lee Jerome and Bhavini Algarra. In their article, they analyze data collected as part of an evaluation of the London Debate Challenge and use this to outline a pedagogical approach to teaching democracy through debate. In their view, the difference between discussion and debate is that the former is characterized by an “informal open ended exchange of views and ideas” while debate is conceptualized as “any formal learning situation in which the students are encouraged to express and respond orally to opinions on a specific issue” (Jerome & Algarra 2005). In DV, debates take place in the form of committee meetings while the more informal discussions are present in the interactions surrounding these meetings. Furthermore, Jerome and Algarra (2005) use the terms *deliberative* and *adversarial* to classify and explore the types of debates that students in their study engaged in. An adversarial debate or discussion is one where students are presented with a ‘for and against’ framework and expected to adopt a competitive style of giving counter arguments. The authors note that although it is possible to explore other perspectives in an adversarial debate, it is more rare that a larger change of opinion or position occurs due to the competitive framework. The deliberative debate, on the other hand, does not provide predetermined positions. With this approach, students are instead encouraged to explore the subject and have more open discussions with focus on understanding other perspectives.

For the purposes of this thesis, I will use the terms deliberative and adversarial presented by Jerome and Algarra (2005) with a slight modification. Habermas (1984,1987), in his influential books

outlining his *Theory of communicative action*, proposes an understanding of social action as either strategic or communicative action. All actions are in Habermas' view – as in Schatzki's – teleological (Habermas 1984:85). A strategic action is any non-social action and those social actions, which are oriented towards success, while a communicative action is an action where the speaker reaches a mutual established understanding with another person about something in the world (Habermas 1984:86). The main difference between the two lies in whether the underlying approach is objectivist or intersubjectivist. With strategic social action, an individual is manipulating the situation and interacting with people in a way that is conducive with their “egocentric calculus of utility”, aiming for their own success and thereby enacting an objectivist understanding of others (Habermas 1984:88). In communicative social action, however, the underlying approach is intersubjectivist, meaning that plans of action are coordinated through agreement by which consensus is made possible. Thus, in this thesis, I wish to include these perspectives on social action in my definition of the concepts deliberative and adversarial debate. With deliberative debate or discussion, I understand an interaction that is oriented towards commonly established goals, reaching understanding and agreeing on a consensus. The term adversarial will be used in the sense of an interaction characterized by strategic utility with the goal of individual success as well as to describe any interactions that derive from an understanding of the practice as being competitive and antagonistic.

In summary, I have in this chapter presented the theoretical concepts and frameworks that will be employed in this thesis. From Schatzki's practice theory, the concepts of *practice*, *embodiment*, as well as *doings*, *sayings*, *understanding*, *rules* and *teleoaffective structure* are the main vehicles for analysis. These concepts will be used to gain a close understanding of the actions in the practices of DV. Furthermore, I am relying on the *role* and *role distance* concepts of Goffman as well as the role level development made by Fine to address the dynamics that the role-playing dimension add to the practice. Finally, the debates and interactions in the practice will be analyzed with the help of Jerome and Algarra's terms *deliberative* and *adversarial* with additional content from Habermas conceptualization of *strategic and communicative action*. In appendix 11 I present an analytical overview outlining when these perspectives are used in the analysis.

7. Democratic competences in Demokrativerkstaden

In this chapter, I will analyze the relationship between DV and the concept of democratic competences in two parts. The first part, Enactment of democratic practices, takes its point of departure in the qualitative data and focuses on how the practices in DV are enacted by the participants. With a practice theoretical approach I thereby focus on the know-how of democratic practices that is actualized through that enactment. In the second part of the analysis, Effects on democratic attitudes, I turn to the quantitative data to investigate my hypotheses about the game's effects on the participants' democratic attitudes.

7.1 Enactment of democratic practices

Drawing on the qualitative empirical data, this section will address the enactment and performance of democratic practice in the game. The analysis is divided into three parts. First I will describe the performative dimensions of the game, focusing on how the role-playing element unfolds, how students embody those roles and on the role levels are used in the game. I will then move on to the cooperative practices in DV. In this section, I focus on how students relate to each other and what motivations steer their cooperative engagement during the game. Lastly, I explore the debate practices of DV, concentrating on how students navigate the debate situations in the game.

7.1.1 Performative practice in DV

7.1.1.1 *Moving between the role levels*

A common way to introduce the game to the participants was to utilize the structure of the room to establish the commencement of role-playing. The game takes place in a specially designed game space that resembles the formal meeting rooms of the parliament. The entry hall is connected to the game space by a short staircase with a rounded wall above, forming a portal. Facilitators attached the role process to this staircase by for example saying “when you walk through the portal, you leave your own opinions behind” or the more dramatized version “this is a magic portal that will transform you into politicians!” (Appendix 6: Field notes, p.13, 15.). In this way, by separating the active game space from the outside world, the facilitators establish a rule that you are not supposed to be yourself in the game– you should play a role. The role that participants should take is “a politician” from one of the parties with the only role attributes being a set of opinions that the participants are introduced to in their iPad. This gives the participants a lot of interpretive space to enact the role in different ways. This enactment is what I turn my attention to in this section.

When asked about the experience of playing a role, participants did not seem to regard the rule about separating themselves from their role as axiomatic. In one of the interviews, two students expressed this as follows:

Student 1: I felt like we were doing a role-play (...). Because when you got an opinion that you were supposed to go for it felt like you were given a role.

Student 2: yes but you... I at least mixed my own opinions in also, because it wasn't like I just read straight off, you were also thinking about it - well is it like this, yes it is like this and then you could build on that kind of. (Appendix 8: Interview 4, p.10).

One of these students also commented that: "I was kind of on my own side, otherwise I wouldn't have voted the way I did" (Appendix 8: Interview 4, p.10). This shows that even though facilitators had established the rule of leaving your own opinion outside when you walked down the stairs to the game, the students had their own strategies of how to engage with the roles offered to them. When student 2 from the quote above says that she was thinking about it in terms of "is it like this", she is relating the knowledge and opinions of her character with the knowledge and opinions she has to validate them. For the situation to be teleoaffectively acceptable to her, therefore, she needs these two understandings to match. The final say opinion-wise thus comes from the participants as individuals outside of the game, but that opinion is adapted to and enacted in line with the game framework, effectively intertwining them as individuals with their roles as players and characters in the game.

In chapter 6 I describe four primary roles that the participants take in DV: individual self, student, player and character (cf. figure 4, page 45). The difference between a student engaging as a player and as a character lies in what teleoaffective structures and understandings are influencing action in the practice. The players engage in the rules of the game but adhere to the teleoaffective structures of one of the other roles they are performing by for example preferring a different opinion than the one the game supplies them with. This dynamic becomes very clear in the following quote from the debrief discussion after a game:

Facilitator: I'm turning to you again in the Orange party, how come you changed your mind on this issue?

Student: Well, that guy, our party leader, was totally wrong. The arguments were not the best. (Appendix 6: Field notes, p. 8)

In this quote, the participant indicates that the internal logic of the character was not applied, but was instead evaluated from an outsider perspective to be not "good enough" and then altered to better suit the individual student. This coincides well with Fine's (1984:207) study of fantasy role

players, where he concludes that inexperienced and young players are more likely to play themselves. Fine also finds that the more similar the role is to the person playing it, the more likely it is that the player goes into character. The student in the quote above is expressing that the character he was supposed to play was too far away from him opinion-wise for him to want to engage in that role. There could in this way be a lack of identification between the participants and the character role.

One example of how a character enactment could play out is the following interaction between two participants in the CoJ:

Student 1: Then could you mention a terrorist group that did the same thing?
Student 2: I'm sorry but I cannot share information about my secret sources.
(Appendix 6: Field notes, p.23)

Student 2 is here using the fictional narrative of being a politician with “sources” to answer a factual question in the game. We can assume that the student did not know the answer to this question, but that she thought that her character – the politician – probably would. She therefore uses an excuse about secret sources to uphold the fiction. Similar to this example, the character role was enacted by participants by engaging with the content of the game from a first person perspective and actively upholding the fiction of DV. A crucial element to performing the character role has to do with accepting the teleoaffective structure of the character as your own. That means caring about the issues that the character would care about, knowing (or acting like you know) the things that the character would know and enacting doings to further the goal of getting the policies through the votes. The student from the first example above, who did not identify with the role attributes – the opinions – is thus performing more of a combination of the player role and the individual role, as the teleoaffective structures guiding his actions were not those of the character.

Another typical demonstration of the role has to do with the way in which students embody the practice. A student playing a character will for example change certain things about their behavior, maybe gesticulate more or use a more formal language and tone. One of these bodily doings that I observed is the handshake, a formal gesture that participants use often during the game, both as a celebratory gesture and as a greeting or confirmatory gesture. In my field notes I have noted a couple of such situations, where my interpretation is that the handshake is used to enhance the fictive formal practice that the students are in. Without having seen the students outside the game practice I cannot know if this is an everyday act for the students. My personal experience working with this age group as well as the slightly caricatured way in which the action is performed,

however, leads me to believe that the handshake is an expression of the embodiment of a role rather than simply a greeting. A handshake can be used as a way to uphold the fiction and claim the role of the politician and at the same time as a demonstration of the understanding that this is what politicians do. Similarly, a formal tone of voice is a way to express the role, as it signals to the other participants that the student was not their usual self. These role attributes that participants used to convey that they were enacting the role of a politician sometimes generated laughter from the rest of the group, but could also lead to more students picking up the attribute in similar ways.

However, I did find that the role performances in the game are not static and students had a dynamic relationship with their roles. This for example meant that students could be completely in character during a discussion with a person from the other party, talking only from the role of the character and then go and ask their teacher about some homework for next week or have a meta-discussion with their party group about how to win the game. In this way, several roles could be enacted within a short time span.

A final example of an embodied action in DV is the ironic or parodist act. A simple example of this is an observation from my field notes from the introductory phase of a game. The students are all gathered in the spaces allocated to their party and are looking at the screen where their party leader is presenting them with the stance and opinions of their party on the issues.

“One of the students is holding his right hand over his chest in a gesture common during the national anthem, while standing with a very straight posture. He looks at me and immediately starts laughing and removes his hand, signaling that he was jokingly parodying the situation”.
(Appendix 6: Field notes, p. 11)

This student is creating a parody by performing a bodily doing that is overly dramatic in the situation. In this way, he is showing his understanding that the game is a formal and serious practice while at the same time placing himself outside of the practice by making fun of that very same seriousness and formality. I will explore this enactment of *role distance* further in the coming section.

7.1.1.2 Role tensions

In the previous section, I explored the concept of the embodied role in DV, and students' reflections on the role-playing that they were engaged in. In this section I explore this further, by addressing how tensions between role and the self, the fiction and reality, were played out in the game. As previously mentioned, students had different conceptions of how much actual 'role playing' in the sense of pretending to be somebody else, that they should do during the game. Enacting politicians in the riksdag was thus something that they did in varying ways. While some saw the fictional

character as a strategy to engage with others, other students seemed to treat the role as more of a backdrop and negotiated purely out of their own interests. I will look at these strategies in this section.

One observation I made during the first exploratory phase, was that some students were quick to start using the “we” form when discussing with their party fellows or members of other parties. They would say things like “ok, what is *our* position on that question” or “therefore *we* believe that...” referring to their party line. This “we” shows an acceptance of their position in the game as members of a party. It was also common, however, to resist this role and thus the fiction itself through sayings like “it says here that we think that...” or “we’re supposed to say...”, which do not express this acceptance. Participants with this approach are employing role distance. As described in section 6.2.1, role distance demands a certain use of the role, as a complete rejection will not convey the same message as holding it off a little (Goffman 1961:108). However, the engagement with the role is used to display disaffection and resistance to the virtual self that the role implies. When saying: “it says here” instead of “we think that” the students are therefore actually conveying that they are not fully committed to the virtual self of a politician that the role in the game is offering them. One example of how this takes place in the practice is the following situation from my field notes:

“They [the students] are having their first meetings with representatives from other parties, one on one. Some are talking freely and gesticulating while others are reading from their iPad. A girl and a boy are sitting together on the floor and discussing. The boy is arguing from the point of view of his party and using “we” form. The girl interrupts him and says: “But really, who are you trying to play, who do you think you are? I don’t agree with you! Bam!” (Appendix 6: Field notes, p. 4)

In this case, the boy was upholding the fiction by arguing from his party’s standpoint and presenting the party’s views as his own. The girl interrupts him to make it clear that she does not want to be associated with the role that he is performing and that she either cannot or will not attempt the same role performance. By uttering this saying she is positioning herself at an arm’s length to the fiction and the role that the fiction has provided for her. This can be likened to Goffman’s (1961:112) description of role distance as a way of saying “I will not be judged by this incompetence”. In this situation, the girl is communicating through sayings and doings that the role that the boy is performing is not to be applied to her and that she will not be judged by his role standards.

Another way of showing role distance in the game practice was by not accepting the rules and goals of the game as one’s own rules and goals. One student demonstrates one such strategy:

A member of the turquoise party is sitting on the floor. She calls on another student who is a member of a different party. Hey, can you come negotiate with us?
Other student: Why?

Because it says that we are supposed to.
(Appendix 6: Field notes, p. 16)

In this example, the participant is not playing the role of a politician in a negotiation process, but rather identifying with the role of a school student in a school situation - her understanding of the practice is that it is something she, as a student, has to do - something mandatory. She is present and goes through the motions of the established rules of the game, but she does not *perform* a character. As Goffman (1961) writes, role distance is about entering the role just enough to make clear that one does not take the role seriously. This student is performing the tasks of the role that was assigned to her in the game, but without assuming the teleoaffective structures of that role.

In one debate, some confusion about the topic arises because one of the participants uses arguments pertaining to the issue on nuclear power plants although they are currently in the justice committee. This situation creates confusion in terms of what doings and sayings are appropriate for the participants and which roles they are supposed to act from:

Student 1 (turquoise): What? I don't understand - are we talking about closing down nuclear power plants or putting them on the terrorist list? But this, I don't get why you are mixing the thing about nuclear power in here - I don't get the assignment! (Laughs)
Student 2 (turquoise partner): Me neither! (laughs) (Appendix 6: Field notes, p. 26)

In this example, the participants from the turquoise party are not showing role distance, rather they are communicating that the rules, understandings and teleoaffective structures of the practice are not intelligible to them. While the students in previous examples used an ironic distance to the game while still performing the tasks pertaining to their role, these participants are not acting from one of the accepted roles in the game. They lack the practical understanding of recognizing the practice, and are thus not able to contribute with appropriate doings and sayings. This conception is strengthened a couple of minutes after this exchange when one of the participants from the quote above says: "But I don't actually think that they are terrorists. Have we done it wrong?" (Appendix 6: Field notes, p. 27). This saying indicates that the participant is indeed having difficulty figuring out if the debate is supposed to be from her own standpoint or from the party line that she has in her iPad. A similar ambiguity is described by Fine (1983:201) as a common occurrence. He points to Goffman to say that when juggling several roles simultaneously in this way "what is at stake is determining which framework to apply" (Fine 1983:201 citing Goffman). The situation with the turquoise party is resolved towards the end of the debate session when the same participant says:

Student: Basically, we did not understand this assignment and that they were doing this to prove that it wasn't safe. We didn't get that (laughs). We just...yeah.
Teacher: But now you understand.
Student: We understand now and maybe we would have changed our opinion.
(Appendix 6: Field notes, p. 27).

With this saying, the student is changing position and referring to an understanding of the practice where the arguments of her fellow students are more objectively true than her own party's arguments. The participant identifies her lack of practical understanding of the game practice to be caused by her having the "wrong" opinion. She has now come to the understanding that the "correct" opinion is that expressed by her fellow participant. However, this new understanding is not correct either – the opinion she was awarded with her party affiliation is no more or less "wrong" than any of the others. She just interprets the reason for the other participants having different opinions than her to be due to a mistake that she made. The freedom to enact the roles in DV according to own understandings and teleologies can thereby also result in a lack of intelligibility for some students, which affects their ability to participate on equal terms with their fellow participants.

In the upcoming sections I will look more closely at other significant elements of the game where ambiguous understandings and teleoaffective structures unfold, namely the cooperative and debating practices. A summary of this and the two upcoming sections is provided in section 7.1.4.

7.1.2 Cooperative practice in DV

7.1.2.1 Setting the scene

The participants are introduced to the practice by the facilitators when entering the game space. In this presentation, facilitators mention both rules and acceptable teleological orientations of the practice to students. One example of this is a segment of the introduction where the facilitator asks the students what a politician must know or must be good at – basically asking them: how are you a good politician? Words like cooperation, debating, communicating and compromising were used at the start of every game that I observed. One facilitator phrases the introduction as follows:

No party is big enough to make decisions on their own, so you have to cooperate. It will be easier for some of you than others. You have to continuously coordinate within your parties so that everybody agrees on both issues. Persuade the other [party] that your proposal is the best.
(Appendix 6: Field notes, p.14)

The main goal of the game is in this quote presented as being part of a coalition big enough to make decisions and thereby winning votes. To be able to make decisions, there has to be a majority, which can happen in two ways: through cooperation or persuasion. These teleological options that are presented as normatively correct in terms of reaching the goal – compromise, cooperation, persuasion and debate – form a tension in the game. Compromising demands a certain affective disposition and a set of doings and sayings that are very different from what the act of persuasion

entails. By framing the game in this way, the facilitators are thereby opening the game practice up to a heterogeneous set of teleoaffective structures, understandings and rules.

The game scenario in itself also presents students with grounds for different actions. The CoJ has a yes or no vote on the issue of putting the activist organization on a terrorist list, while the CoIT has five proposals each represented by one of the parties. The yes/no vote is stacked towards a no to begin with, as three out of the five parties start on the no-side and thus form a majority. It is on the other hand necessary in the CoIT to gather support for a proposal unless the biggest party is to win by default. This vote had different combinations of proposals going on to the chamber from the committee every time. There were some that featured more than others, but all were at some point successful in being voted through during my observations. In the yes/no vote, however, the yes vote did not win a single time during my observation period. And more often than not, the voting percentages awarded to each alternative were very similar. This in effect means that one of the issues in the scenario is more open to cooperation and compromise than the other.

The game is through its design and through the framing by the facilitators presenting normatively correct actions to the participants. These rules that are laid out create a tension in the practice between the teleologies of maintaining the pre-awarded opinion of your party or aiming to be on the side of the policy that wins the vote. It also creates the need for participants to prioritize between concrete tasks such as compromising and persuading to reach those goals. In the practice, I observed patterns of cooperation and competition emerging and forming three distinct teleoaffective structures. The first is the strategy of not cooperating, the second is cooperation as competition, here referred to as the adversarial approach and the last is cooperation as compromise, which I will refer to as the deliberative approach. I will look more closely at how these patterns played out in the practice in the coming section.

7.1.2.2 Choosing not to cooperate

One of my field notes was about the confusion surrounding whether or not it was ok to change your opinion, or if you had to keep to the party line. In the first exploratory phase of the game, this was one of the most common questions that participants asked the facilitator. It was also an issue that was brought up in several of the post-game discussions that I observed, usually to address some instance of a party voting against their own party line. In the instances where students were unsure of whether rules prohibited them from changing opinions or not, the insecurity seemed to come from the clashing of their practical understandings as players and characters respectively. This is evident

in the following example, where a student asks the facilitator a question just before voting in the committee:

Student: But are we supposed to say our honest opinions?

Facilitator: You are in the party now, no, do not go outside of your role now because you are a part of this party still!

Student: But then you can't change! (Appendix 6: Field notes, p. 24).

When the student says “honest opinion”, she is referring to a personal opinion, pertaining to roles that are not connected to the game. When the facilitator iterates that the role should still be in play and personal opinions kept out, the student understands this as a restriction of opinion. The understanding here is therefore that the characters cannot change opinion, even though the players want to. I have noted the results of the votes that I observed in my field notes and notably some of the CoIT votes have a total percentage of votes that adds up to a 100 percent, which means that everybody voted for one of those two winning alternatives. Hence coalitions must have been made. However, in other games the total voting percentage for the two winning alternatives is as low as 59 percent, indicating that many committee members vote for their own proposal. In the CoJ and the issue of the terrorist classification of Grön Fred, voting for the your own party's proposal is especially common, which resulted in the “no” side winning in every game that I observed.

Some facilitators enforce the understanding that the opinions of the party that you were given are static. In one introduction to the nuclear power committee meeting, the facilitator notes the following:

Facilitator: And if it happens that ‘continue as usual with nuclear power’ and ‘increase nuclear power’ are the two winning proposals and you think that it should be dismantled now – what do you vote for later in the chamber do you think? (...). Then you abstain from voting. You put down a blank vote so that you can show your voters that ‘we are firm in our position to dismantle nuclear power’. (Appendix 6: Field notes, p. 20).

With this saying, the facilitator is establishing that the highest end in the hierarchy should normatively be being firm in your politics and thereby true to your voters. The fiction and role-play element of the game, where there are voters depending on the parties to fulfill certain promises, is therefore to be prioritized above the interest in winning. An action supporting this end is abstaining from voting if it does not look like your policy will win. This action is not compatible with compromise; in fact compromising would make this end unattainable. Because all of the proposals are pre-determined in the game, abstaining would only be compatible with cooperation if the other party agrees to leave their party line for yours. Hence, any possible cooperation would have to be

based in the strategic use of other players to ensure own success. This approach, which I call the adversarial approach, will be in focus in the upcoming section.

7.1.2.3 *The adversarial approach*

When prioritizing to put winning at the top of the teleoaffective structure, there are a range of doings necessary to achieve that end. Most importantly you need to be part of a coalition of votes, which means that you either need people to be persuaded to choose your proposal, or you yourself have to change your position. To persuade other participants, the students often appealed to the player role of the other person. The goal with persuasion is to win the votes, which means that there is an understanding of the practice as competitive. The persuasion often focused on the aspect of winning and on communicating the positive affective dispositions connected to it. Persuasion was thereby focused on pre existing relations between students. An example from my field notes shows a strategic appeal to the whole party group:

Students from different parties are talking before the final vote in the chamber:
“You have to come over to us if we are going to get the majority!”
“No you can come to us!”
“But we already have two so it is better that you change!” (Appendix 6: Field notes, p. 11)

In this example, no reference to the policies and their compatibility is made. The students who are having the exchange are trying to persuade another party to join them. When explaining their actions in the follow-up discussion, this strategy of cooperation was mentioned several times. In one instance from my field notes, a participant explains why they changed their party line with the saying: “We chose to change our minds because there were more people on the other alternative so then we could get more votes.” (Appendix 6: Field notes, p. 9). Winning the vote is therefore in the practice more important than the actual policy outcome, which suggests that these students are acting from an understanding of the game as a competition. This means that winning votes is prioritized in the teleoaffective order. The goals that the participants have and their doings towards that goal can be characterized as adversarial. Cooperation is a means to an end rather than the end in itself.

A different example from my field notes shows the strategic adversarial approach even clearer. In this example, students are filing out after their first committee meeting.

They have just voted in the committee and are walking out. The winning side is celebrating. A representative of the purple party (the biggest party) exclaims: “*We have to get more people over on our side and then we can win both votes! Go after a weak person without their own opinion, just get them!*” He then sees the rest of his party members and turns to them making a victory gesture with his arm and fist in the air: *We won!!!* (Appendix 6: Field notes, p. 2)

This situation shows a participant who in his doings and sayings is manifesting that winning the committee votes is teleologically preferable. The saying also expresses the tasks he recognizes as acceptable means to this end, which entails the persuasion of others to join his party line. He expresses an adversarial understanding of the game in the sense of wanting to use other participants for his own gain – not because they have similar policies but because they can secure a win of both votes. The act of going after “a weak person” implies a doing like persuasion, which seemingly excludes other actions like listening to or arriving at a compromise with another party. Participation in DV is in this case based on a strategic orientation towards cooperation where other perspectives and their representatives are seen both as a hindrance for winning a vote and as possible recruits. The cooperation is therefore strategic and adversarial.

A final example concerning the adversarial approach comes out of my field notes. The participants are in the committee meeting and have two minutes to discuss the options with the others informally before casting their votes. Several smaller groups have formed to discuss potential collaboration. One of the participants turns to the facilitator:

Student 1: But does it really matter what you vote for if you are in a minority?

Facilitator: Well, there could be others voting for that minority as well so it could become bigger

Student 1: But I don't think so, I think we're pretty satisfied! (Appendix 6: Field notes, p. 29).

Contrary to the example in the previous section, where the facilitator promotes the possibility of abstaining if your party line does not make it through to the final vote, this interaction shows a more opportunistic approach to voting. The participant is questioning the relevance of your vote if you are not on the side of the majority. The answer from the facilitator enforces the idea that the teleology of the game is to get more votes, as this is the way of making a minority into a majority. The fictional narrative of acting as representatives of parties with agendas, voters and an ideological standpoint is not promoted here, instead DV becomes a game that is about strategically acting towards winning.

7.1.2.4 The deliberative approach

The third and final approach that I have identified in my material is what I have chosen to call the deliberative approach. Cooperation that is characterized by a deliberative understanding of the practice is performed with a different set of doings and sayings than the adversarial approach that I have outlined above. First and foremost, the teleological order of the deliberative approach has cooperation in itself as a goal that should be prioritized, whereas cooperation in the adversarial approach is a means to an end of winning. Tasks like listening to other standpoints, trying to

understand other arguments and discussing policies are therefore part of the deliberative teleological order. In one of the interviews, the participants explain their approach in the following exchange:

Interviewer: So in the beginning you thought that you were kind of agreeing with what the leaders of your parties had said, but then you changed a little during the game?

Student 2: Yes, yes because before we had no idea why the others thought the way they did (...)

Student 2: So you hadn't really heard the others until after

Student 1: And then when we got to hear their arguments it became more, like, the brain began to work more so we were more adjusted (...)

Student 2: To think bigger, like not only about your party but what the others think as well (...)

Student 2: What you can do to cooperate. And come to a good decision.

(Appendix 8: Interview 2, p.3).

In this exchange, the participants are talking about the process of being introduced to the position of the party they were assigned to and then meeting the other parties and discovering their positions. While starting out with accepting the position they were given and thereby deciding to play the character of a politician from that party, they describe that they changed their opinions later in the game. This change was due to the encounter with the other parties during the game. They describe how listening to the arguments of others changed their minds from pursuing their own policy to trying to find something that they could all agree on. This understanding is also reflected in the following quote from the same interview:

Student: Yeah you look around to see what all the people in the party think and then you go to the other parties to see their, their view (...) or like how they want it. (...) And then I guess you have to compromise and figure something out that everybody hopefully can agree on but still keep yours, like what you believe yourself. (Appendix 8: Interview 2, p.5).

This quote enforces the goal of finding common ground and getting people to agree. Again the doing of listening to the others and considering options for cooperation together is emphasized. There is also a focus on content in the deliberative approach that is not as present in the adversarial ditto. The way that participants describe it they are paying attention to the fiction and using the policy content actively when deciding who to cooperate with and what to vote for. This example from my field notes shows how this unfolds in the practice:

Student 1: But there isn't any, we have sources to claim that there isn't a plan to update. (...) But listen, there is no plan outlining how Sweden could update its nuclear power to the latest technology!

Student 2: We'll join you

Student 1: You'll join us?

Student 2: You are most like us; we'll cooperate with you (Appendix 6: Field notes, p. 29).

The students are in this situation preparing for the vote in the committee and it is the last chance to form coalitions with other parties. Student 1 is trying to convince the others how to vote by arguing from the role perspective of her character. When Student 2 decides to join the proposal of student

1's party, she does so with a motivation grounded in the content of the policies they are debating – because the party lines are similar. The cooperation is therefore performed with a teleology that is within the fiction, where your policies and what you stand for are prioritized over winning for the sake of winning. The game is thus in this understanding conceptualized less as a competition and more as role-playing game.

It is important to note that the deliberative approach described here is limited because of the game design. I have mentioned the general set up with the scenario construction dividing the parties into oppositional categories like yes and no and the effect that this has on the outcomes of those cooperative practices. However, another important factor is the fact that participants can only choose between pre-made propositions. Compromise in the sense of both parties conceding something to meet at the middle is therefore not possible in the scenario – one of the parties in the discussion have to leave their proposal for cooperation to be possible. In this last example from the interviews, two participants are discussing how they acted when they tried to find common ground:

Student 1: But we just put all of our arguments together and just decided that everybody votes for that now. (...) You have to be a little strategic about where you can get. Either it was build more [nuclear power plants] or it was continue [as usual] and then you have to think about what is closest to what we started with.

Student 2: Yeah, that's what we did with the last one, we also voted D because it was closest to our original stance.

Student 1: Because if you know that you're not going to win anyway with your own proposal...

Student 2: Then you take the one closest to it (Appendix 8: Interview 4, p.11).

In this example, the participants mention the need to be “a little strategic” when deciding how to vote. They both agree that if you are negotiating with others and there is more support for another proposal than your own it is okay to vote for that proposal if it is close your own. Hence it is acceptable to change your opinion to vote a proposal through that is not your own as long as the content of that proposal is similar to what you started with. The motivation for changing your stance at all is to be able to win the vote and get your policy passed, but the actions leading up to that goal are deliberative as they entail listening to others and deciding on an alternative together.

The proposals of other parties were made available to participants in their iPads, but arguments for and against proposals were mainly presented in the committee debates. In the next section, I will address how the adversarial and deliberative understandings of the practice that I have shown here play out in these debates.

7.1.3 Debate practice in DV

The debates in DV take place in the committee meeting room. There are two committee meetings with half of the students participating in each one. In the debate situation, students are seated around a large wooden table. A participant from the largest party, the purple party, serves as chair of the meeting. The president of the parliament appears on a screen and gives instructions to the students. In the CoJ, three parties are against the motion to add Grön Fred to the European Union terrorist list and two are in favor. In the CoIT debate each party starts with a different proposal. As mentioned previously, compromise and negotiation are therefore seemingly closer at hand in the CoIT debate. Changing from yes to no is a bigger step than changing from “dismantle now” to “dismantle slowly”. The two debates thus present different incentives for the participants to act and make some teleologies easier to prioritize than others.

The fact that the scenario-design establishes a majority for the participants affected the way that the students experienced the CoJ debate. In one of the interviews, a student who was in this committee says:

Student: I think it was fun but the issues were a little too bland, like everyone had the same opinion basically. (...)
Interviewer: What did you do when everybody thought the same? Did you try to convince somebody or...
Student: No, it was more like you were sitting and waiting. And discussing a little bit why you thought the way you did. But everybody had the same opinion pretty much, almost.
(Appendix 8: Interview 3, p.6).

The participant is expressing that in his understanding, a debate is supposed to be characterized by more difference in opinion. When these differences did not appear, he describes how they were “sitting and waiting”. Consensus is not understood as an expected thing. Instead, this student understands antagonism and an adversarial approach to be more normative of the debate practice.

Two other participants mirrored this understanding of the debate practice:

Student 1: Well, like, I read the arguments earlier and then I thought that I could refer to the arguments and draw my own conclusions from them like (...) maybe you don't take what it says [on the iPad] because then there is probably a counter argument to that. But if you kind of think for yourself like in several steps then maybe you can build on the arguments...
Student 2: Like sometimes it wasn't put like you would have said it if you were debating with someone so you had to change it a little if you for example wanted to contradict someone.
(Appendix 8: Interview 4, p.10).

The participants are explaining how they used the text that the iPad provided them with and changed it into more confrontational arguments. They were thus already before the debate expecting to have to have contradicting arguments ready and furthermore made sure that they

improvised a little so that their opponents could not anticipate what they were going to say. This was a strategy for the teleology of winning. Their conception of the debating practice is thus that the goal should be to win the others over with your arguments, and therefore your arguments needed to be something that the others could not contradict.

That the debate was affectively and teleologically connected to having the best arguments was also expressed in an example from my field notes:

Two students from the same party are walking out of the justice committee meeting discussing their defeat in the vote. One of the students says, in an agitated tone of voice: But, like, we had better arguments! Anton's argument was like "if there are power plants it is not going to be safe", but they are still a terrorist group! (Appendix 6: Field notes, p.16)

To this student, it feels unfair that her party has just lost the vote, because in her opinion, their arguments were better. In her understanding and the rules she connects to the practice with this saying, the party with the best arguments should have won the debate. In this scenario however, her coalition was in minority in terms of votes.

A final example of an adversarial approach to debate is shown in the following example:

Student 1: Then could you mention a terrorist group that did the same thing?
Student 2: I'm sorry but I cannot share information about my secret sources.
Student 1: But then you can't say that and accuse others of things and say things...
Student 2: I'm not accusing it is just the facts.
Student 1: like you said to me and say things that you don't know
Student 2: It is just facts. I'm not accusing, I'm just saying the truth!

This example shows how the debates could also be antagonistic and contain disagreement. Both debaters are standing their ground and there is no sign of them seeking compromise. Their sayings are expressing engagement in the issue that they are debating the teleology seems to be more connected to proving the other person wrong than to understand each other or reach agreement.

However, everybody did not share this type of antagonistic understanding of the practice. In one of the interviews, two participants were asked about what they thought that they had learned from the game experience:

Student 1: That their job isn't easy
Interviewer: That their job isn't easy? (laughs). No, how do you mean?
Student 1: Yeah but like, it isn't always that you want to agree with others but sometimes you have to take a step back to be able to...
Student 2: Agree
Student 1: Agree and make progress
Interviewer: Right. So you have to make compromises with what you believe kind of?
Student 1: Exactly
Student 2: And you have to be able to empathize with other situations and make it good for everybody kind of. (Appendix 8: Interview 2, p.4).

In comparison with the examples showed previously, these students are expressing completely different understandings of the practice, demonstrating that the adversarial and the deliberative understandings and teleoaffective structures can exist in the practice at the same time. The participants describe how one of the difficult things with being a politician is the action of compromising. While on the one hand describing this as the hard thing to do, they are also positioning compromise and agreement at the top of the teleoaffective structure in the practice. Even though it is not easy, it is what is right and makes the most sense to them. When asked how they came up with the arguments that they used in the debates, the same students say:

Student 1: Rephrased the ones that you got

Interviewer: Aha, okay

Student 2: Yeah, you looked at the other's arguments about how – why you should think like them and then you questioned your own decisions a little, or your own thoughts. (Appendix 8: Interview 2, p.3).

Similarly to the students in the interview above, these students are using the prewritten arguments from the iPad while adding some of their own opinions or wordings to them. However, while the students in the first example had the goal of winning the debate by making their arguments harder to contradict, these students are instead thinking critically about their own arguments in relation to other arguments with the teleology of compromise in mind. As their previous saying about having to “empathize with other situations and make it better for everyone” pointed to, they are not only focused on themselves and their success in the process of finding arguments but are preparing to find common ground. Their doings and sayings are thus connected to a deliberative understanding of the practice.

The two different approaches can also be found in the actual debate situations. In the following example the students are debating nuclear power plants. A participant from a party that is propagating the “dismantle slowly” approach is interacting with a student from the “continue as usual” approach:

Student 1: But it sounds like you are leaning more towards slowly dismantling, because you think that at the same time it's better with other sources of energy too. Then it's not really continue as usual if you also think that you should develop...

Student 2: Well yes we want them to kind of still be there, those that are already there at the same time as you gradually, like this might take decades, to like gradually exchange nuclear power to renewable sources when we have found a safer way (...). (Appendix 6: Field notes, p.20)

In this example, Student 1 is attempting to convince Student 2 to vote for her party's proposal by explaining what she thinks are the similarities between them. Rather than attacking the proposal, she is trying to make the other participant see what they have in common, and that it would therefore make sense for the other participant's party to vote with their party. She finds her

argument by listening to the other participants' argument, rephrasing it and mirroring it back like a question. This strategy of convincing by finding commonalities can be derived from a more deliberative understanding of the practice, where the teleoaffectivity is connected to finding common ground.

In a last example from the debate practice, three students are discussing nuclear power plants and whether Sweden should expand their use or dismantle power plants all together:

Student 1: Yes, there is a pretty large problem with increasing our nuclear power plants. It is very expensive. It would take a lot of money from our budget, which is a big problem. So, therefore I think that we should invest some money in renewable energy in the long term, a little wind, a little sun, so that we'll have sustainable energy in the future.

Student 2: I definitely agree on that. But right now we need more electricity as we are still buying from Germany and Poland. So when we have opened more nuclear power plants and gotten more electricity we can, as I said, sell it to other countries and make money off it and then also continue with renewable energy and power plants.

Student 3: But it is not true that nuclear power is cheap, it is expensive now that nuclear power plants are so safe and modern. And we want our energy production to be... but it is still very expensive with nuclear power plants.

Student 2: Well, I came with a solution there... (Appendix 6: Field notes, p.17)

This quote shows two participants engaging in a debate with different solutions to the same problem – that nuclear power is expensive. In the first part of the exchange, the students are actively taking in what has been said before and answering accordingly while identifying agreement and disagreement in their sayings. When the third participant enters the debate, however, this dynamic changes as this student is rephrasing an argument that the two previous students have already agreed on: nuclear power plants are expensive. With this saying, student 3 is thereby showing a different, or lack of, practical understanding of how to participate in the same way that the other two students were, which is remarked upon when student 3 says: “Well, I came with a solution there...”. The saying itself does not tell us anything about the teleoaffective structures guiding this participant's actions. However, due to the short time that participants have to prepare for the debate and to get to know the topics and arguments of their parties it is very likely that understandings and know-how relevant to participation in debate will differ widely between participants. The debate practices of DV are in this way shaped by and dependent on participants' previous experiences.

7.1.4 Summary of findings

Overall my analysis of the performative, cooperative and debate practices in DV has painted a picture of a heterogeneous practice where performances have many forms. In the analysis of the performative dimension I have concluded that participants go between different roles and role levels. An important aspect of the role enactment is the closeness and identification that participants experience with the role that they are given. As this role has a set of opinions as its only attributes,

closeness to these opinions becomes important to the students. In my analysis it has been evident that students bring themselves as people with opinions into the game and that DV is an arena where “real life” values and opinions are tested. Participants who do not find the role position agreeable are likely to perform role distance. Role distance allows the participants to reject certain parts of the role while still participating in the practice. I have shown how participants performed role distance through not accepting the teleoaffective structures of the role as their own but also by parodist performances where the role is exaggerated.

I have furthermore shown that unfamiliarity with the practice as well as ambiguity in the rules and teleologies that the game design and the facilitators present the participants with leads to a heterogeneous role enactment. The openness of the practice gives participants room to interpret the game differently based on their previous experiences and can create confusion around what doings and sayings are appropriate. The teleologies that participants are presented with are furthermore sometimes contradictory. Being asked to work towards consensus and compromise *and* to make sure that your party’s policy is voted through are not tasks that are easily aligned. This ambiguity leads to differences in practical understanding of what the practice is, which can hinder some participants from taking part in all aspects of the practice.

My analysis of the cooperative and debating practices has shown that there are both deliberative and adversarial understandings and teleological dispositions active in guiding performance in the practice. I have shown that the strategies of participants in DV are related to the role that the participants are taking on. With the adversarial disposition, students are more likely to be focused on winning in any way possible and are therefore most likely in the player-role, which is more strategic. The deliberative approach is more connected to the fiction and therefore approached from the role of the character, which is more focused on the content of the policies. DV is thus understood as different practices, with the adversarial approach the focus is on the game part of the practice with the goal of winning, while the deliberative approach emphasizes the role-playing part of the practice with the goal of agreeing on the best policy. Both of these approaches have their own teleoaffective structures, rules and understandings that sometimes can be intertwined. The goal of getting support for your own policy is for example present in both approaches. There are however different doings and sayings connected to reaching that goal, as the understandings and feelings connected to the goal are different. The experience of enacting the democratic practices of DV thus results in a multifaceted democratic know-how.

7.2 Effects on democratic attitudes

The following section is based on the survey data and analysis that I have conducted in SPSS. The survey data measures effects specifically in regards to the four main themes covered by the term democratic attitudes – political interest, political participation and external and internal political efficacy. I will first present the descriptive statistics of these scales and thereafter proceed to present the results of the inferential statistical analysis. The section is concluded by a summary of the findings.

7.2.1 Descriptive statistics

In the table below I have included the descriptive statistics of all the scales from the survey. Graphical inspection of the scale distributions of the pre and post survey data has shown that the distributions approximate the normal distribution.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics

Scale	Pre survey			Post survey		
	Mean	Std. Dev.	N.	Mean	Std. Dev.	N.
Interest	3,11	0,98	358	3,22	0,96	243
Participation	2,66	0,82	358	2,63	0,87	243
Internal efficacy	3,11	0,85	357	3,24	0,81	243
External efficacy	3,06	0,63	356	3,14	0,65	241

As shown in the table, the scale for interest has a mean of 3,11 for the pre-survey and a mean of 3,22 for the post survey, which results in a small difference of 0,11. The standard deviation together with the mean describe the distribution of respondents' scale scores around the mean. The standard deviations pre (0,98) and post (0,96) show that the distribution around the mean is relatively wide compared to the other scales, being close to a full score point. The interest-scale is thus the scale in which the respondents' scores are most spread out.

For participation there is a very small decline of 0,03 between the pre and post survey means. The standard deviation is around 0,8 for both surveys. The comparatively largest difference between means is found with internal efficacy, even though this is also a small difference of 0,13. External efficacy also shows a very small increase of 0,08 and also has a lower standard deviation than the other three scales at 0,63 (pre) and 0,65 (post) respectively. This tells us that respondents have been more likely to answer similarly on this scale. In terms of number of respondents (N) there are fewer

respondents in the post survey than the pre survey. This can have several explanations, like lack of time or prioritization by teachers after the visit was over, but the cause cannot be determined here. The reason for the number of respondents dropping with each scale is however that some respondents have not answered all of the questions in the survey.

7.2.2 Inferential statistics

In this section I will test my hypotheses, which are as follows:

H₁: Participation in DV will have an affect on students' political interest

H₂: Participation in DV will have an affect on students' self-estimated future political participation.

H₃ participation in DV will have an affect on students' internal political efficacy

H₄ participation in DV will have an affect on students' external political efficacy

The hypothesis testing will be conducted by comparing the scale scores of the respondents in pre and post survey data through independent two tailed t-tests with a standard alpha level of 0.05. The independent t-test is relevant here because I am comparing means from two different participant groups (Fields 2009:325). The results of the t-test are presented in the graph below and the accompanying table.

Graph 1: Result of t-test

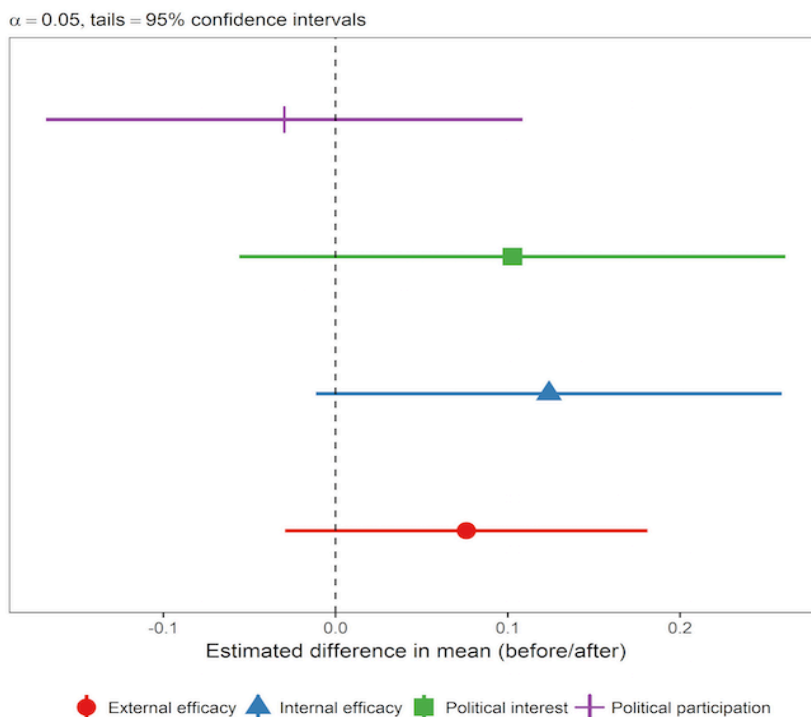


Table 3: Result of t-test⁵

Scale	Mean difference	Conf. low	Conf. high	p. value
External efficacy	0,08	-0,03	0,18	0,157
Internal efficacy	0,12	-0,01	0,26	0,073
Political interest	0,10	-0,06	0,26	0,204
Political participation	-0,03	-0,17	0,11	0,673

7.2.2.1 H₁: Political interest

If participation in DV has an effect on the measured concept then the scale scores of the post survey respondents will on average be higher than the pre survey scores. The t-test compares the scale scores of the respondents of the pre and post survey data. In the case of H₁, the p value of the t-test is above the 0.05 standard threshold indicating that the difference between the average scale scores for the pre and post survey respondents is not significantly different from 0. In other words the result does not support H₁, as it cannot be ruled out that the effect of the game on participants' political interest is 0. This is also illustrated by the confidence interval, which overlaps 0 [-0,06 – 0,26]. The confidence intervals show the range within which the true mean is expected to be with 95% certainty (Fields 2009: 44-45). When it overlaps 0 that tells us that the true mean might be 0 and therefore a so-called null hypothesis (where a treatment has no effect) cannot be ruled out.

7.2.2.2 H₂: Political participation

In terms of political participation, the result of the t-test shows the very small negative effect of -0,03 from the pre survey to the post survey. The score after the game is ever so slightly smaller than the before score. Similar to the interest score, the confidence interval is overlapping 0 with scores of -0,17 – 0,11 and the effect is therefore not significant. The more respondents you have, the better your picture of the population becomes, which means that the confidence interval would shrink. However, with such a small effect a larger sample might give a statistically significant result but no real practical significance can be awarded to it (cf. Pallant 2010:125). Hence, H₂ cannot be confirmed, as the null hypothesis cannot be contradicted.

7.2.2.3 H₃: Internal political efficacy

The t-test of the hypothesis H₃ is almost statistically significant with a p value of 0,073. The confidence interval also very narrowly overlaps 0 with a score of -0,01 – 0,26. This indicates that a higher number of respondents in either or both surveys could decrease the p value below the 0.05 threshold and thereby make the result statistically significant. As they are now however, these

⁵ The differences from Table 2 are due to rounding of the decimals in Table 2.

results do not support H₃. Hence, the results show a weak indication towards DV having a small effect (0,12) on a 1-5 point scale on the internal efficacy of the participants but I would need more respondents to investigate the significance further.

7.2.2.4 H₄: External political efficacy

External efficacy mean scores show a difference of 0,08 between pre and post survey data. As shown in the graph, the p-value is 0,157 with a confidence interval of - 0,03 – 0,18. The results are not significant. Again, this is a small effect and even though a larger sample might make it significant it has little practical value. H₄ is thus not confirmed by the results of the t-test and the null hypotheses cannot be disregarded. As previously mentioned in section 6.3.4.1, there is furthermore an issue with the reliability of this particular scale, which casts further insecurity over these results. The conclusion is that this scale did not contradict the null hypothesis and was a generally weak measure of the construct of external political efficacy.

7.2.2.5 Exploratory analysis

Gender was a background variable included in the survey that had sufficient variation to allow for further exploratory analysis. I therefore did t-tests on the genders boy (“kille”) and girl (“tjej”) for the difference in scale scores pre and post DV. The third gender variable, “other” (“annat”), had too few observations to perform such a test. The results are similar to the results of H₁-H₄ with one exception: Girls have a statistically significant slightly higher internal efficacy post DV.

Table 4: Exploratory analysis t-test

Scale	Mean difference	Conf. low	Conf. high	P.value
Internal efficacy GIRLS	0,21	0,02	0,39	0,025

This exploratory result has to be taken with caution. As the test is not based on a theoretical expectation and there are four tests besides this, the result could be spurious. While it cannot be confirmed as an effect it is an indication of a pattern that could be interesting to explore in further research.

7.2.3 Summary of findings

In this section I have shown the results of the quantitative data analysis in two parts, first through descriptive statistics and thereafter the inferential analysis. The descriptive statistics showed a small

positive effect for the scales on interest, internal efficacy and external efficacy, while participation showed a very small decline. A subsequent inferential analysis through a two-tailed independent t-test showed that none of these effects were statistically significant and the null hypothesis could therefore not be rejected. Even if a larger sample of respondents could be added, the effects were still too small to carry any real practical significance. The biggest effect was in internal efficacy at 0,12, which was close to being significant with a p-value of 0,073, which might suggest a tendency of DV having a small effect on internal political efficacy. I also performed exploratory analysis on the background variable gender, and found a statistically significant value for girls on the internal efficacy scale. As this analysis was not made on the background of a hypothesis, further research is needed to investigate if there indeed is a real effect. Perspectives on these findings will be provided in the upcoming discussion chapter.

8. Discussion

The following chapter has three main aims; 1) providing a synergy of the findings in the two analytical sections 2) connecting some of the findings to a larger debate around democracy and democratic participation as theorized by Chantal Mouffe and Jürgen Habermas and 3) to evaluate and comment on the findings in relationship to my research design and provide perspectives for further research. These aims will be addressed chronologically with the aid of previous research.

8.1 A synergy of the findings

In my analysis of the qualitative data from the fieldwork, focus has been on the enactment of democratic know-how in the practices of DV. Defining DV as a educational role-playing game practice and approaching it with the tools provided by practice theory allowed me to shed light on the specific undertakings of students in relation to the practice as a game, as a role-play and as a new practice for the participants.

My analysis of the performance of democratic practices in DV showed that the game as a practice is ambiguous. On the one hand, facilitators provide rules and a range of acceptable teleologies for the game that have as their purpose to anchor the game to the reality of the work of members of parliament. On the other hand, the previous experiences of participants as well as the contradictions that these teleologies sometimes contain, result in participants enacting doings and sayings that are connected to different understandings and teleoaffective structures.

It furthermore became evident in my analysis that students engage themselves, their own opinions as well as their preconceived notions of what being a politician is in their performances. The rule about leaving yourself at the door and embracing a role is thus not followed. Instead the participants engage in the game by oscillating between roles and thereby also between teleoaffective structures, rules and understandings. As shown by for example Goffman (1961) and Fine (1982), this is common in practices where a person is juggling several different roles, but it is also something that you can be better or worse at. Hence, the performances of participants in DV are connected to their ability to perform and juggle the roles that they are presented with in the game. The game is in this way open to many different types of performances, including those of role distance, where participants partly reject the roles that the game is offering them, which in turn can affect the game dynamic negatively.

What is at play in DV as a practice is both a negotiation about what the *content* of the game is and what *participation* in the game should look like and the results of these negotiations differ between participants and games. It is therefore the role enactment of students, which mirrors different know-how about the practices, that determines whether the game becomes a competitive arena where the goal is to win the game or a role-playing exercise that prioritizes compromise and the promotion of the common good.

The quantitative results showed small tendencies towards increase in mean for all scales except for participation, but were not significant and could thereby not contradict the null hypotheses. My conclusion is therefore that participation in the game does not lead to significant effects on democratic attitudes. Some of the effects, like internal efficacy, which was closest to being significant, could with all probability become significant with more participants in the sample. However, the practical significance of such small effects must also be considered. What does it really mean for the students' internal efficacy that DV has an effect of 0,12 on a 1-5 scale? Mastery experiences have been connected to increase in political efficacy (cf. section 4.3) but this research has mostly looked at long time engagements like debate clubs, student councils or Model United Nations (cf. Levy 2017). DV in turn is an experience lasting 1 hour and 45 minutes on one day, which could speak against any large effects. On the other hand, changes in attitudes happen slowly and there is no telling if this effect grows or diminishes over time as the experience is consolidated. A longitudinal research design could provide some insight into this.

The quantitative part of the study showed no significant effects on democratic attitudes but participants in DV are gaining new experience with practices like debate, discussion cooperation and political compromise. Through these experiences in the practice they are familiarizing themselves with the normative organization of such practices and gaining know-how of how to act, what to say, what to expect and what things mean. In the upcoming section I will add new perspectives to what democratic understandings and behaviors are actualized and negotiated in the enactment of DV as a practice.

8.2 Learning democratic know how in DV

Democracy is a prolific word in the Swedish curriculum. In fact, the first sentence of the newest curriculum Lgr11 is: "The school system rests on a democratic foundation"⁶ (Skolverket 2017).

⁶ "Skolväsendet vilar på demokratins grund" in Swedish.

The term is thereafter used to form concepts like “democratic values”, “democratic principles” and “democratic forms of work”, which are all construed as essential building blocks of the Swedish school system. Lgr11 does not, however, provide a clear definition of any of these terms. In line with a Scandinavian school tradition that emphasizes teacher autonomy and professionalism, the curriculum is value and goal oriented but not rich in specific definition (cf. Osler & Vincent 2002:41). Democracy is not lacking of definitions though, in fact Jerome and Algarra (2005:498) quote Crick calling democracy “the most promiscuous word in the world of public affairs”. To say that the term is self-explanatory is thus a volatile claim. I therefore wish to address the meta-norms of democratic practice that are experienced in DV.

One way to open this discussion is to look to Habermas and his promotion of the concept of deliberative democracy. In my analysis of the performative aspects of DV, I used the terms adversarial and deliberative as conceptualized by Jerome and Algarra (2005) with an addition of the Habermasian concepts of strategic and communicative social action. Habermas uses the concept of communicative action to sketch out his idea about a deliberative model of democracy. In this model, it is fundamental that both the content of our common decisions and the way that we make those decisions can be rational (Habermas 1996:304). Habermas argues that a deliberative process where all perspectives have the same opportunity of recognition is the best way of reaching a rational conclusion that is in the best interest of all. It is through such processes of deliberation that the legitimacy of democracy can be upheld. The content of politics should be argued on the basis of a procedural communicative action – action that searches for the common ground with an intersubjectivist approach (Habermas 1984:86). Habermas’ idea of a deliberative democracy is thus that societies use the principle of communicative action as a guide in political processes approximate rational and consensual decisions (Khan 2013). Even though he admits that consensus is a hard to reach ideal in the political arena of modern societies, it should be the normative good that we strive for (Oddvar Eriksen & Weigård 2003:251). Habermas would argue, therefore, that political discussions and debates following procedural communicative action is what our modern democracies need to ensure legitimacy and an active citizenry.

As I have pointed out in section 7.1, reaching consensus and compromise are teleologies that facilitators in DV express. I have also shown instances where participants use a deliberative approach to the proceedings in the game by teleoaffectively prioritizing tasks and ways of interacting that promote the common good. When acting within the framework of a deliberative democratic understanding of the practice, the participants are enacting communicative action and

thereby approaching their opponents as subjects to compromise and cooperate with rather than as objects to manipulate. In my analysis, I connected this approach to an understanding of the game as a role-playing game primarily.

A theorist who has clinched with Habermas on his definition of the healthy democracy is Chantal Mouffe. To Mouffe, any form of consensus in politics is a sign of hegemony as “social objectivity is constituted through acts of power” (Mouffe 2000:21). Arguing for reason and rationality as the guiding norms for political discourse in a democracy thus misses the whole point of the *political* according to Mouffe, as the political represents the inherent antagonisms in human relationships (Mouffe 2000:101). Instead she proposes a model that she calls agonistic pluralism as the more viable road to a vibrant democracy. Agonistic pluralism as Mouffe articulates it in *The Democratic Paradox*, forms a sort of middle ground between the intense antagonistic view of politics argued by the conservative political theorist Carl Schmitt and the deliberative democracy as conceived by Habermas and his followers. When Schmitt visualizes the political as a fight for life and death between enemies and Habermas promotes the high road of consensus seeking, Mouffe argues that while consensus is necessary aspect of democratic institutions and their authority, dissent is also necessary in terms of political positions (Mouffe 2000:101). The political oppositions are not enemies but adversaries whose right to defend their positions must be respected, albeit confronted. The danger to a well-functioning democracy is complacency of the sort that is experienced when the lines between political adversaries are blurred and no distinctive political identities are clear to the citizenry. Mouffe argues that putting moral ideas of consensus politics as the ideal will in fact lead to just that, when what democracy actually needs is “a vibrant clash of democratic political positions” (Mouffe 2000:104).

This concept of democracy is also visible in my analysis of DV, both in the way that the participants bring themselves, their own values and opinions into the game and in the situations where antagonisms based on policy content are upheld and enforced. When the facilitator tells the participants to abstain from voting in the chamber if their proposal does not make it through the first round as a show of force for their voters, that is an encouragement compatible with the agonistic approach. In several ways, however, I would argue that DV due to being an educational role-playing game is built more around the procedures of cooperation and consensus than around the politics – and maybe necessarily so. Bernstein (2008) has for example argued the need for learning how to form coalitions as a democratic citizen.

One example of how DV prioritizes the “how” over the “what” and “why” of politics is that the voters are not present in the game. If the participants decide to change the party line it has no real consequence within the game. In “real life” politics voters play a larger role in determining which coalitions, cooperation and agreements are acceptable. There are alliances where procedural deliberation is guiding but the left and right wing are still dichotomized and other lines of separation between parties are drawn in policy discussions. From a Habermasian perspective, the voters’ presence or not in the game design is not what is important. Instead, the most important lesson that participation in DV can provide is to teach participants the norms of productive, rational democratic procedures so that these can be translated into a stronger, deliberative democracy. From the perspective of Mouffe however, the lack of real representative pluralism in the game can convey an image of party politics that holds form higher than content of policy, which in turn contributes to an image of democracy as de-politicized. Without the citizenry, the process of negotiation of political propositions becomes procedural rather than political. To Mouffe therefore, rather than enhancing the political participation and interest in the participants, DV could be contributing to the very stand-by citizenry that a democracy wishes to avoid (cf. Amnå & Zetterberg 2010:60).

Both Mouffe and Habermas agree on the fact that an active citizenry is pivotal to a democracy (Khan 2013). Participation is how civil liberties can be maintained and how democracy reproduces itself over the generations. What they disagree on is what this participation should look like. DV channels an authority on democracy as it carries the stamp of the highest decision-making organ in Swedish democracy. This actualizes the question of what experience DV is supposed to give the participants. My analysis has shown that the openness of the practice gives participants experiences with a wide range of doings and sayings connected to different teleoaffective structures, rules and understandings. In terms of giving students experiences and know-how to build their future participatory patterns on, the practice is therefore ambiguous. However, one could easily argue that actual political participation in a liberal democracy will similarly be fraught with different motivations and contain both adversarial and deliberative elements. In this way therefore, the democratic practices of DV resemble the reality of a democratic landscape in society.

8.3 Perspectives and future research

As has been argued by Jensen (2013:47) and Nicolini (2012:9), practice theory allows for a close up investigation of specific practices of everyday life without losing sight of the social, discursive or material. Using practice theory has thus given me a theoretical approach that is well suited for analyzing human activity at the micro-level and getting close to the specific activities and the

understandings ascribed to them in DV. One limitation that I have experienced during my work with this paradigm, is the lack of tools to address the different preconditions of actors in the practice. The anti-dichotomous position of being in a dialectic space between structure and human agency is not always allowing visibility of the individual preconditions that are so important in education. In terms of both the educational and performative aspects of DV, previously acquired know-how played a role in how the participants were able to grasp what was expected and the role of previous knowledge about politics was also highlighted. Learning in process is also hard to capture, as the doings and sayings of any actor reflects what they know, feel and aim for in that moment – not what they learn from performing those doings and sayings. In this thesis, my pragmatist epistemological underpinnings allowed me to rely on the Deweyan understanding of learning as experience and the forming of habits as a complementary understanding, which has helped me make the connection between development of know-how through experience of enactment of democratic practices.

In terms of viewing the game as a practice, there have also been pros and cons of working with practice theory. The definition of DV as a practice is made more complex because of the layers that are added due to it being not only a role playing game but also an educational game. My analysis showed that there is a range of ways of participating in the practice depending on how it is conceived by participants and framed by facilitators. This was a finding that was made possible with the tools of practice theory, which also allowed for a closer look at those types of participation. However, the fact that DV is a constructed educational practice, in the sense that it was designed with specific purposes and content in mind, is harder to approach with the practice theoretical tools provided by Schatzki. I chose to add Goffman's concepts of role and role distance to enable a closer look at what the game and role-playing elements meant for performance in the practice. Jerome and Algarras terms "deliberative" and "adversarial" in synthesis with Habermas' terms strategic and communicative action were subsequently incorporated to address the content aspects of the game and how participants' participatory strategies in the practice related to conceptions of the game. Categorizing doings and sayings as adversarial or deliberative was a way for me to theoretically underpin and anchor my findings of these different teleoaffective structures present in the game. It was not necessary to make the point, but made the point clearer. The role concepts however highlight a shortcoming with using practice theory to study educational games. The fact that DV is a role playing game gives participants an alibi to experiment with the social normativity of a practice. There is less social consequence for a non-normative performance, and the expectations for behavior in the practice might not be the same as they would be were it an actual political debate

and not a role-play with a debating element. The multidimensionality that is added by role-play and game elements in the practice cannot, at this point in time, be captured by practice theory alone. If practice theory is to be used in future game research there is a need of conceptual and theoretical development.

All in all, I have found practice theory to be a good tool and analytical lens in the work with this thesis. The strengths of the approach lie in being able to provide detailed analysis of meaning making in social situations, which fits well with my aim in the analysis of enactment of democratic know-how.

I also want to highlight some methodological strengths and limitations. Overall, the mixed methods approach to the case of DV has been constructive. Viewing my case from these different angles has given me an in-depth perspective of my case and both approaches have highlighted different aspects of the practice I was investigating. The qualitative interviewing and participant observation provided nuance to each other by adding aspects that were not visible with either one of them alone. Most fruitful was to observe the doings and sayings in the practice and subsequently get participants' own rationalizations for those actions and the understandings and teleoaffective structures that led to them. Based on this dynamic triangulation, more interviews with participants could have provided an even more nuanced picture of their doings in the practice and their own rationalizations. It could furthermore have included a more diverse group of participants in terms of their experience with the game. Due to practicalities, I was not able to conduct the interviews in the way that I had wished to do. There was very little time for the interviews, which the participants knew. This may have resulted in less detailed answers than they would otherwise have given.

In terms of the quantitative part of my research I had to make some tradeoffs in the design because of the limitations in time, scope and technical opportunities. With the exception of a few classes, the pre and post surveys had different sets of respondents. This means that any result of the analysis could have been affected by factors that were not the same for the pre and post group. Testing the same group before and after at least means that the people you are testing have the same background, interests and motivations to participate. When testing two different groups, the pre group could have different characteristics than the post group by chance – especially when my sample sizes are relatively small. The internal validity of the quantitative part was therefore low. The design that for example Hansen (2017) has used, where each participant is assigned a unique ID for the survey, is better suited for this kind of research. For future research on the effects of DV,

or any other educational game, I therefore recommend a paired sample.

Another issue has to do with the reliability of the scales. Due to a very limited time frame for the survey, there was not enough time to thoroughly test the scales before using them. Even though they were constructed on the basis of other similar research, there is always the possibility of cultural, contextual or translation issues affecting the way questions are understood. As it were, the external efficacy scale used in this study had a lower than desirable Cronbach's alpha, which means that the reliability of this measure is low. For future research it should be noted therefore that these measures are sensitive to such issues mentioned above and that adequate pre-testing should be prioritized. In the quantitative analysis my results indicate that no large effects on democratic attitudes are to be expected of DV, while my qualitative analysis has shown how complex an educational game practice is and how many layers of negotiating content and participatory styles there are. On the background of these results, I believe that there are great gains for educational game research in the mixed methods design. A quantitative study provides insight to larger patterns and developments while a qualitative perspective shines a light on the complexity and enhances understanding in other ways. Both approaches are necessary to drive the knowledge production about educational games, their potential and limitations forward.

In the exploratory analysis of section 7.2.2.5, I found an indication that gender might play a role in development of internal political efficacy in the game. As this was an exploratory result not covered by my hypotheses, it should be taken with a grain of salt. However, there is some support in the literature for the gendered relationships of democratic competence. Ekman (2007:86) has for example shown that internal efficacy is lowest among girls at vocational educational programs. Kerr et al (2009:12) furthermore showed that while girls performed better than boys in political knowledge questions, boys scored much higher in confidence and self-efficacy than girls. In future research it could therefore be interesting to look more closely into gendered relationships of games like DV and their significance for learning and democratic competence.

I have used democratic attitudes in this thesis as a way of unifying political interest, participation and external and internal efficacy into one concept. I concluded that as far as this research design can tell, the game does not have a significant effect on these attitudes. In my qualitative analysis of DV, I have shown that the game offers participants a possibility to experiment and practice democratic actions like negotiation, discussion, debate and voting. This gives participants a way of figuring out their strengths and weaknesses as well as to challenge assumptions about them. At the

same time it offers an opportunity to understand and make sense of these practices in an environment where the stakes are not as high as in the “real world”. The diversity in understandings and motivations that create ambiguity in the democratic practices of the game can be said to mirror democracy outside the game. While this provides a realistic experience, it also means that a tension is created between the game as an inclusive and clear didactical tool on the one hand and a realistic demonstration of political life on the other. How this tradeoff can be negotiated in the educational game practice is a question for future research.

9. Conclusion

This thesis is the result of a mixed methods case study of the educational role-playing game Demokrativerkstaden, which is facilitated by the administrative branch of the Swedish riksdag. With the overarching research aim of contributing to research in the intersection of youth, democratic competence and educational gaming, the thesis set out to answer the research question: *How is democratic know-how enacted in the democratic practices of the educational role-playing game Demokrativerkstaden and how does participation in the game affect students' democratic attitudes?* The qualitative leg of the study has therefore been concerned with the enactment of democratic practices in the game with a focus on democratic know-how while the quantitative leg of the study focuses on measuring effects of participation in the game on students' democratic attitudes – an umbrella term here used to encompass political participation, political interest and internal and external political efficacy.

In relation to democratic attitudes my data shows no significant differences between pre and post surveys. DV thus has no effect on the democratic attitudes of participants. An explorative analysis of the background variable gender gave a hint about possible effects on internal efficacy for girls as a group. Further research should thereby look closer into possible gendered differences in effects of the game on these attitudes. I also conclude that for this type of study, which aims to measure effects through a pre and post survey, it is preferable to use a paired sample to counteract spurious relationships and increase the likelihood that any effects are in fact due to participation in the game.

Addressing the enactment of democratic practices in DV with a practice theoretical approach provided a picture of the game as an ambiguous arena. Separate and sometimes contradictory teleologies, understandings and rules guide participants' actions in the game due to an interpretive openness that is created by a mix of game design, facilitators statements and the previous understandings that participants bring into the game. This leads to a practice where some actors are focused on the *game* aspect, where a successful outcome is prioritized while others are concerned more with the *role-playing* aspect, where policy content and mutual understanding is more important. In the tension that this creates, confusion can arise as to what is expected of the participants, which can lead to both role distance and role rejection. It can also hinder those individuals with less experience from similar practices from participating on equal terms.

In the discussion I address my findings from the theoretical positions of Habermas and Mouffe. I

thereby highlight how the different positions that the participants take and are offered in the game carry normative understandings about democratic participation. The ambiguities of the game offer a meaningful representation of the complexity of democratic practices, but might weaken the didactical edge and lose sight of educational goals. Simulating democratic practices in an educational game thus contains a difficult trade-off between the didactical need for simplicity on the one hand and portraying the relevant complexity and ambiguity on the other. As this is likely to be an issue in other similar educational games, further research will hopefully continue to explore this tension in the intersection of youth, democratic competence and educational gaming.

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Educational gaming: a game changer for democratic competence?

A case study of the educational game Demokrativerkstaden

Abstract

This article is based on a master's thesis written during the spring and summer of 2018. The project employs a mixed methods design to investigate development of democratic competence in an educational roleplaying game administered by the Swedish parliament. The qualitative leg of the study uses a practice theoretical approach to address the experience of enacting democratic practices and thereby development of democratic know-how. The quantitative leg uses pre and post game survey data to investigate effects of the game on democratic attitudes. The quantitative analysis does not show any significant effects on democratic attitudes. The qualitative analysis shows an ambiguous practice where role performances take many forms and the enactment of democratic practices is heterogeneous. The article concludes that for the game to be a successful representation of real democratic practices and function as an educational game, a balance needs to be found between ambiguity and didactical structure.

Introduction

Recent research has indicated that important parts of the development of attitudes and competences for being democratically active citizens are consolidated in young adults and teenagers (Nygård et al. 2015, Shehata & Amnå 2017). These findings have actualized research on youth political participation, as much about the formation of these behaviors is still unknown (Robison 2017). One way of approaching this complex issue is through the concept of democratic competence, an umbrella term for democratic knowledge, political interest, political participation and internal and external political efficacy. In the thesis that this article builds on, the dimensions of democratic competence were conceptualized in two parts as democratic know-how on the one hand and democratic attitudes on the other. Through a mixed methods approach, the project investigated development of these competences in participants in the educational role-playing game Demokrativerkstaden (DV) in Stockholm. Facilitated by the Swedish parliament, the game is an example of a deliberative and interactive didactical approach, which has been claimed by previous research to be an important factor in terms of democratic competences. In the game, participants are divided into five parties and two committees, one for each issue addressed by the scenario. From their different policy positions they are then supposed to discuss, persuade, form coalitions, compromise and work towards the final vote in the chamber where a policy decision is made.

Methodological approach

The research for this article was conducted on a pragmatist approach to research, which advocates for the breakdown of dichotomous understandings of research paradigms and for putting the research aims and questions before methodological preferences (Biesta 2009:96, Teddlie & Sammons 2010). Deweyan pragmatism takes its epistemological point of departure in experience as the foundation of knowledge (Biesta & Burbules 2003:28). With this understanding I have therefore approached the research process with the assumption that knowledge informing future actions can be developed through the experience of educational gaming.

Survey data was collected through a pre and post survey that operationalized the indicators of democratic attitudes through the construction of four scales. Reliability of the scales was tested through a Cronbach's alpha test, which revealed acceptable scores for all scales except for external efficacy. There were also some limitations in the research design due to limitations in scope, access and resources that weakened the internal validity of the research. Most notably it would have been preferable to use a randomized paired sample in the survey, meaning that the same sample is tested at both points and that it is selected through a randomized process to increase representativity.

The qualitative data were collected through participant observation and interviews with participants in the game. A total of nine games were observed and four interviews with two participants in each were conducted in conjunction with the game.

Practice theory and hypotheses

For the quantitative leg of the research four hypotheses were put forth based on analytical findings from previous research. In short, this research has shown that the democratic attitudes interest, efficacy and participation are mutually enforcing. There is furthermore support in previous studies for practical experience as a stimulant on all four elements. I chose the more conservative approach of a two-sided hypothesis. The hypotheses were:

H₁: Participation in DV will affect students' political interest

H₂: Participation in DV will affect students' future political participation.

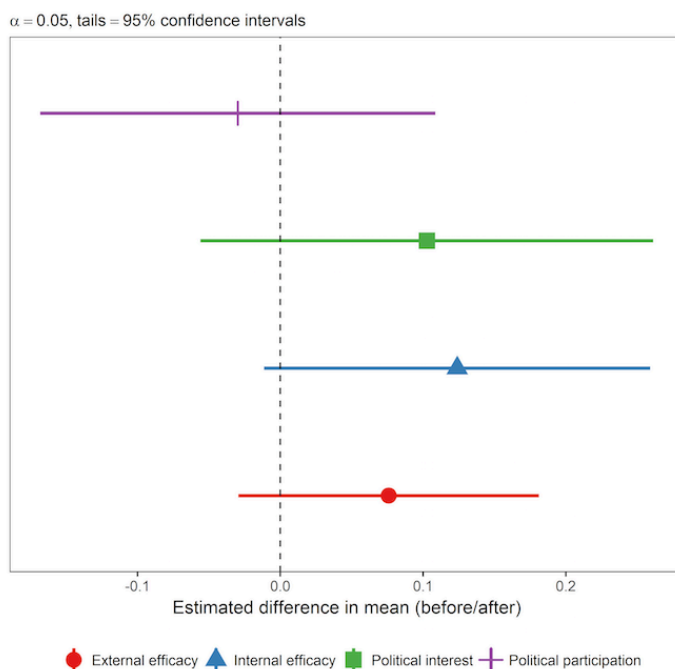
H₃: Participation in DV will affect students' internal political efficacy

H₄: Participation in DV will affect students' external political efficacy

The qualitative leg of the study was approached from a practice theory lens building on the theoretical concepts of Theodore Schatzki. To Schatzki, a practice is defined as a nexus of doings and sayings that are organized by three dimensions: understandings, rules and teleoaffective structures (Schatzki 1996:89). Doings and sayings should be understood as the specific things that are said and done, while understanding is the ability to recognize, respond to and prompt the practice. Rules are explicit norms or laws regulating behavior in the practice and teleoaffective structures are the goals that we tie to our actions and the feelings that affect our prioritizations of those goals and the tasks that lead to them (Schatzki 1996:91, 2012). Due to the special circumstance of DV being an educational role-playing game, this conceptual apparatus was supplemented by Goffman's (1961) conception of roles and role distance and Fine's (1983:186), idea of role levels. I also relied on Jerome and Algarra's (2005) concepts of deliberative and adversarial debate with conceptual additions from Habermas' (1984) theory of communicative action.

Research findings and Discussion

The quantitative data is analyzed through a two-sided t-test with 95% confidence intervals on each scale. The result is demonstrated in the graph below.



As the graph shows, none of the four democratic attitudes show a significant effect. The closest to being significant was internal efficacy, which showed a mean difference of 0,12. However, the null hypotheses could not be rejected for any of the scales. A subsequent exploratory analysis of the

background variable gender indicated that girls as a group might have experienced a significant effect on internal efficacy. This analysis was however not hypothesis driven, and therefore needs further research to determine if there indeed is an effect.

The qualitative analysis provides a picture of a heterogeneous practice. Due to the sparse role descriptions provided by the game, the participants have a great freedom of interpretation when it comes to their role performances. This opens the practice up to a multitude of performances but also results in some participants' exercising role distance, where they distance themselves from parts of the role or enactments that they cannot conform to their own preferences. It furthermore makes it possible for the enactment of different doings and sayings that underpin both adversarial and deliberative teleoaffective structures, rules and understandings. I therefore conclude that the experience of DV provides the participants with the possibility of enacting democratic practices in diverse ways, which enables the development of heterogeneous democratic know-how. One could argue that democratic practices in liberal democracies are also ambiguous and can contain seemingly contradictory motivations and understandings. The ambiguity of the game could in this way be seen as a mirror of the diversity and complexity of democratic practice. As a didactical tool however, the ambiguity might lead to the game being unclear and hard to understand for the participants. Based on my analysis, I would argue that a better balance is needed between these aspects for the game to be able to effectively provide an experience of complex democratic practices while at the same time being inclusive and clear about its learning goals.

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