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Qualifying the potential impact of civic educators: A literature review of dispositions, behaviors,  
and student outcomes

by

Collin Bowen

A thesis submitted to the Department of Education of the College at Brockport, State University  
of New York, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Science in Education

December 10, 2019

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## Abstract

Civic education teachers are confronted with a landscape in which they are: asked to comply with varied and somewhat contradictory standards, confronted with high-stakes testing which may not measure meaningful civic learning outcomes, and despite their best intentions, made painfully aware that only approximately 25 percent of students are achieving a level of civic proficiency. In order to remedy this ragged state of civic education, teacher agency can be developed. This agency can be realized through a careful interrogation of a teacher's presence in the classroom and an examination of the presence's implications on student learning outcomes. The specific elements of the problem around which I hope to create clarity are as follows: civic education teacher perspectives (civic and pedagogical dispositions) and behaviors, which teacher dispositions precipitate which pedagogical behaviors, and the pedagogical best-practices which precipitate the most desirable or highest levels of student civic outcomes. Upon articulating these concepts and their relationships as well as the research surrounding them, it is evident that certain teacher dispositions are to a moderate degree correlated to pedagogical behaviors and in turn conceptually and statistically linked to improved civic outcomes for students. The dispositions which most favor improved civic results reflect common ideologies of participation, engagement, and student agency.

## Chapter One: Introduction

**Problem Statement: Given civics education in the United States, various teacher dispositions may ultimately influence student learning outcomes to differing degrees depending on the pedagogical strategies which these dispositions rely.**

### **Significance of the Problem:**

97 percent of Americans say that public schools should teach civics, and 70 percent say it should be required. American adults largely agree that common values should be included in that civics education as well (Langer, Baskakova, Filer, Sinozich, & De Jong, 2019). In addition, civic education is considered *the* prime or *a* prime purpose for education in 32 states (Rogers, 2019).

Despite this esteemed valuation of civics education, most students across the United States do not achieve academically when measuring for civic proficiency. National assessment data states that of the students in public schools across the US, 27 percent of 4th graders, 22 percent of 8th graders, and 23 percent of 12 graders are proficient or above in civics standards (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). While the statistics at or above proficient have been relatively static, the students who have achieved a basic qualification have increased marginally from 1998 to 2014 (National Center for Education Statistics: National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP], 2014). Overall, this means that proportion of students who articulated an ability to understand the nuances of the government, the balances of power between various bodies, and the power that they themselves possess (National Center for Education Statistics: [NAEP], 2014) was less than 25 percent of all of the students which took the test (regardless of grade level). Complicating matters further: disparities in achievement of

lower NAEP Civics Test scoring demographic groups such as low-income, African-American, and Latino/a students exist compared to demographic groups such as middle-class, White, and Asian students. This results in inconsistencies in civic participation between these groups as well measured by activities such as volunteering and community engagement (Mirra, Morrell, Cain, Scorza, & Ford, 2013).

Another challenging element of civic education is the current level of support for social studies teachers. Social studies teachers ongoing professional development at lower rates (72%) than similar to other content areas (80%) (Hansen & Quintero, 2017). Similarly: social studies educators are significantly more likely to coach a sport, teach physical education or do both in addition to teaching social studies (Hansen & Quintero, 2017).

Symptoms that provide various perspectives of the inadequacies of the civic and social studies education system are innumerable and include discrepancies in various standards and exams. Both the New York State Social Studies Framework (NYSSSF) and the College, Career, and Civic Life Framework for Social Studies (C3 Framework) place an overwhelming emphasis on civic knowledge rather than civic action. In the case of the NYSSSF, student learning outcomes are centered around civic knowledge while perhaps two or three of these enduring understandings deviate to place an emphasis on student action or participation in meaningful or authentic circumstances (The State Education Department, 2014). By contrast: the C3 Framework places meaningful emphasis on the development of enduring civic skills and understandings that transcend specific pieces of knowledge and ultimately result in the articulation of informed conclusions and taking informed action to solve student-identified problems (NCSS, 2013). The C3 Framework juxtaposed to the NYSSSF shows the variance

possible in standards, and these discrepancies in standards of effective civic education ultimately indicate another facet of failure.

These problems extend into the exams that assess the NYSSSF, which perpetuate the consistent standardized testing environment in the United States and New York characterized by numerous tests commonly using multiple choice questions, decreased education quality, increased student stress, and high-stakes circumstances for students and teachers (TEDxStanford, 2015). To paraphrase Sir Ken Robinson: instead of assessing the deeper purposes and goals of education, the measurable aspects of social studies have become important rather than striving to make what is important measurable (HundrED, 2016). This is another excellent reason why assembling a compelling research narrative that asserts the importance of pedagogical strategies or behaviors that will achieve powerful civic outcomes for students rather than test scores which may only measure myopic civic knowledge.

All of the previously stated educational circumstances describe a most dire consequence: a decline in civic virtues throughout society, a decline that should be apparent and measurable. And given the proxies for civic engagement or the factors which researchers choose to measure, the United States is indeed experiencing some difficulty in propagating a national culture in which its citizens seek to unite and contribute to a collective vision for the future. Over the course of a few studies performed by the Pew Research Center found that the United States ranked 26<sup>th</sup> out of 32 developed democratic countries in voter turnout, and determined that (at the time of the study in 2014) Democrats and Republicans are the most ideologically polarized they have been in the past two decades (Ji, 2019). Pew's research synthesizes the ailments of a society where civic education is consistently undervalued and ignored. Systemically, standards and assessments fail to prioritize meaningful civic learning outcomes, teachers are hindered by

the same institutional hurdles we have continued to enable, and students do not achieve, ultimately creating future generations that will continue not to vote and become ideologically polarized further still, only perpetuating the very problems we claim to oppose.

The status of civic education and the implications that change may have demand a paradigm shift in social studies education and in turn New York where civic education becomes central to all education, and it becomes an increasingly challenging, unconventional and controversial element of education that demands participation in democracy and society as a duty which must be fulfilled (Theisen, 2000). But the changes necessary to the various parts of the educational institutions especially the sprawling institution known as public education in the United States can appear daunting. Civic education teachers are: asked to comply with varied and somewhat contradictory standards such as the NYSSSF and the C3 Framework, confronted with high-stakes testing which may not measure civic learning outcomes which are impactful for the future participation of students within society, and despite their best intentions, made painfully aware that only approximately 25 percent of students are achieving a level of civic proficiency as we currently measure it. Surely the ragged state of civic education was not created wholly by educators but can be overcome through a careful interrogation of a teacher's presence in the classroom and an examination of the presence's implications on student learning outcomes.

**Purpose:**

The solution I offer to civic education's ailments is: via a thorough review of the existing research and resources available to social studies educators, provision of meaningful conclusions and potential solutions to educators considering the impact of teacher perspective in the

classroom and the potential effect on student learning outcomes those dispositions may have.

The elements of the problem around which I hope to create clarity are as follows: civic education teacher perspectives (civic and pedagogical dispositions) and behaviors, which teacher dispositions precipitate which pedagogical behaviors, and the pedagogical best-practices which precipitate the most desirable or highest levels of student civic outcomes.

**Rationale:**

This knowledge, considered all together has useful implications to the practice of social studies educators. The civic and pedagogical dispositions which social studies educators possess have a tremendous potential impact on the pedagogical experience of the students, and potentially on society as a whole. When a certain pedagogical environment (including dispositions and correlated behaviors) is associated with certain civic outcomes for students, then changes in the civic participation and discourse within society can begin with careful consideration and implementation. Teacher dispositions and behaviors were specifically selected for two reasons, the first of which is that one can easily understand why educators might experience feelings of despair related to their disenfranchisement within their profession and within society. Social studies teachers and many educators may strongly identify with the cause of civic education and lament many of the failings of the United States' public education related to civic education. Teachers, despite membership within an institution which may marginalize them, should create change. The second reason is that one of the primary tenants of the educational profession is self-reflection and an examination of the impact that a teacher's dispositions and resultant behaviors have on the classroom and have on the civic future of the United States is in the spirit of self-reflection for all civic educators.

**Definition of Terms:**

1. Civic education – broadly speaking it is “all processes that affect people’s beliefs, commitments, capabilities, and actions as members or prospective members of communities” (Crittenden, 2018) but in this context *civic education* will pertain only to those processes conducted within, sponsored by, or otherwise related to formal primary and secondary educational institutions, particularly public schools.
2. Disposition - *disposition* may be used interchangeably with *perspective* in the context of this work. Both (disposition or perspective) are the tendencies to act based on beliefs given a specific set of circumstances as defined by Villegas (Knowles, 2018).
3. Civic disposition – A tendency to act based on a set of beliefs or ideals within a context that requires exercising community or political, knowledge or skills. The specific context considered in this work will be educational experiences within a conventional classroom setting where teachers may have a tendency to guide classroom activities based upon their knowledge, experiences, beliefs, or ideals, either subconsciously or consciously.
4. College, Career, and Civic Life Framework for Social Studies (C3 Framework) – A national framework for social studies instruction designed by the National Council for Social Studies centered around the 4 instructional shifts, each precipitating the next: developing questions and planning inquiries, applying disciplinary concepts and tools, evaluating sources and using evidence, and communicating conclusions and taking informed action.
5. National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) – a country-wide test used in the United States since 1990. It measures student proficiency in a range of skill sets and

content knowledge areas including civic knowledge and related skills in the 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades.

6. New York State Social Studies Framework – The curriculum designed by New York State to support its educators in achieving state-wide social studies learning outcomes for all students and aligned to such national standards as the Common Core Literacy Standards and the College, Career, and Civic Life Framework for Social Studies.
7. Pedagogical disposition – Considering the general definition of *disposition* above: this is a tendency to act based on a set of beliefs or ideals within a context that requires exercising educational knowledge or skills. The specific context considered in this work will be experiences within a conventional classroom setting where teachers may have a tendency to guide classroom activities based upon their knowledge, experiences, beliefs, or ideals, either subconsciously or consciously.
8. Pedagogical behavior – The sum of an educator’s dispositions or perspectives that result in: an action to guide classroom activities in a specific way and student learning achieved.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **Civic Dispositions**

When identifying the various civic education perspectives and behaviors of teachers, there is a distinction that must be made between civic dispositions and pedagogical dispositions and behaviors. As highlighted when defining terms, all civic dispositions are those which strictly pertain to a set of beliefs or ideals which may subconsciously or consciously influence a person’s

conduct given a context of civic knowledge or skills and those dispositions are distinct from how a teacher identifies as an educator and the pedagogical dispositions which they carry surrounding their profession and not civic conduct.

Three primary civic dispositions identified by Knowles (2018) which are illustrated along a familiar spectrum on which many ideologies are understood are called the conservative, liberal, and critical civic education identities (civID). The primary values and knowledge that the conservative civID indicates are a sense of common national identity and culture, and a respect for national traditions such as free markets and international presence or power (Knowles, 2018; Knowles & Castro, 2019).

On the other end of the ideological spectrum is the critical civID which denies most societally constructed civic knowledge and instead challenges the, often identity-based, established systematic oppression and limitations of human liberty (Knowles, 2018; Knowles & Castro, 2019). The essential premise of the critical CivID (civic disposition) is that power imbalances and injustices exist throughout society and the study of and correction of those inequalities should be the primary focus of civic duty.

The middle ground, liberal civID, espouses values and knowledge of individual rights, pluralist perspectives of citizenship through various methods of participation, as well as learning to live within a culturally diverse society (Knowles, 2018; Knowles & Castro, 2019). Of note is the raw correlations between these ideologies based on the data that was able to be gathered about their intersections within the civic dispositions of teachers. The liberal and critical civic dispositions are highly positively correlated meaning that a teacher is more likely to hold both dispositions simultaneously (Knowles & Castro, 2019). Both the liberal and critical civic dispositions as measured by Knowles and Castro (2019) were also weakly correlated to the

conservative civic disposition which they measured. This ultimately lead Knowles and Castro (2019) to the conclusion that “teachers may hold a variety of civic perspectives depending on the context. Indeed, teachers appear unlikely to hold a single ideology while rejecting the other two.” (p. 232)

Another perspective through which to understand civic dispositions and their intersection with pedagogical dispositions can be found in the same research Knowles and Castro (2019) conducted in which they examined the beliefs surrounding the civic behaviors that schools and teachers should endorse to their students. Knowles and Castro (2019) also found that the previously discussed intersecting civic dispositions share common ground when analyzing civic behaviors emphasized in schools. Maintaining a theme of triads, these behaviors are categorized into three dimensions: personally responsible, participatory, and social critiquing civic behaviors (Knowles & Castro, 2019). Theoretically, each of these behavior categories should align to a corresponding intuitive civic disposition: personally responsible to conservative, participatory to liberal, and socially critiquing to critical (Knowles & Castro, 2019). However, this does not truly occur and reinforces their first finding that teachers have at least two intersecting civic dispositional identities. Knowles and Castro (2019) instead found that all of the civic dispositions (conservative, liberal, and critical) are (relatively) equally likely to emphasize personally responsible civic behavior (positive statistically significant relationships). Both the conservative and liberal dispositions showed a positive statistically significant relationship with endorsing participatory civic behavior, the liberal disposition indicating a strong relationship (Knowles & Castro, 2019). Uniquely: the critical civic disposition is alone its endorsement of social critiquing civic behaviors, not only is it alone but this relationship is a strong positive statistically significant one (Knowles & Castro, 2019).

Summarily: civic dispositions influence not only the worldview of the teacher but the perspective and potential actions of the teacher within the context of the school which therefore transcend boundaries and become pedagogical dispositions as well. These dispositions often intersect, and it is not unlikely (at least given the research conducted) for educators to bear various civic dispositions and thus emphasize various civic behaviors in schools depending upon these simultaneous intersectional dispositions.

### **Pedagogical Dispositions**

Conversely, pedagogical dispositions or perspectives are teacher beliefs that inform classroom conditions such as how education much occur. Levine (2010) notes that democratic classroom discussion may occur in two forms depending on the pedagogical choices of the teacher. Knowles (2018) builds upon the dichotomy of critical thinking versus socialization. However, the medium through which the learning happens is refined into two different groups that reside nicely alongside those already outlined by Levine. Knowles measures pedagogical dispositions to be either “collaborative-research” based or “teacher-text” based with a number of precipitate pedagogical behaviors aligned under each umbrella disposition (Knowles, 2018). Some teachers may believe that critical thinking and inquiry of democratic ideals in a classroom forum may be optimal for learning, while others will prefer a more teacher-centric socialization method of discussion (Levine, 2010).

The first is teacher-centered, student assimilative learning. Levine (2010) describes this learning as teacher-centric and a method of discussion specifically designed to yield socialization to previously identified values, beliefs, ideas, or knowledge or another construct. Meanwhile Knowles (2018) categorizes this learning as “teacher-text” oriented learning. Reichert and Print

(2018) developed measurable perspectives when attempting to quantify the effect of various civic learning activities on future student civic participation and qualified one possible perspective which aligns with student assimilative learning called the “participatory perspective”. According to this interpretation, through participation in school students will learn the required skills, behaviors, and knowledge necessary to participate in future civic activities of a similar nature (Reichert & Print, 2018).

The second is a critically-oriented method requiring student action and typically involving inquiry as a vehicle for that action (Knowles, 2018); to Levine (2010): critical thinking and inquiry of democratic ideals in a classroom discussion forum. Both of these dispositions or perspectives of civic education emphasizing student action are also reflected in a pedagogical philosophy called critical democracy which similarly insists in “students using social inquiry to gather, interpret, and disseminate data that represent their voices and views related to the struggles they experience every day” (Mirra, Morrell, Cain, Scorza, & Ford, 2013, p. 6). Another contributing perspective, much like many of scholars attempting to quantify a critical civic or pedagogical disposition, is called the “structural perspective” (Reichert & Print, 2018). This perspective suggests that activities that allow students to realize their agency for the “common good” and ability to contribute to the community (promote a sense of civic efficacy) are of the most relevant in promoting future civic participation (Reichert & Print, 2018). All of these pedagogical dispositions are premised on the central notion of student action and student agency, a central tenet of the corresponding civic disposition.

The third common ideology guiding civic education is more a compromising middle ground, invoking “liberal perspectives of civic engagement, tolerance, and inclusion” (Knowles, 2018, p. 71). Pedagogically, Knowles would define this dispositional subset as comprising a mix

of both teacher-centric assimilative classroom techniques and student-centric collaborative or action-oriented classroom techniques. Reichert and Print (2018) examined a perspective which resonates the central principle of participation to both the liberal civic and pedagogical dispositions: the “developmental perspective”. According to the perspective as articulated by Reichert and Print (2018), organized forms of participation within a school context or sponsored by a school which require cooperation and will likely illicit feelings of civic efficacy are likely predictors of future civic participation.

### **Pedagogical Behaviors**

Now begins the connection between civic and pedagogical dispositions and how those dispositions are actually manifested in the classroom in the form of pedagogical behaviors. It is therefore useful to consider pedagogical behaviors as indicators of these dispositions in the classroom when a teacher consciously or unconsciously chooses to inject them. Unconscious examples may be the presence of bias or assumptions (such as an ideological assumption) which may limit open discourse within a classroom (Knowles, 2018). Meanwhile, conscious behaviors may be efforts to create a democratic classroom (with measurable attributes of positive deliberation and discussion) (Bayram Özdemir, Stattin, & Özdemir, 2016), or an engaged and inspired teaching style (Bayram Özdemir et al., 2016). However, there are distinct connections to build between the civic and pedagogical dispositions and the behaviors that might be measured in the classroom.

Returning to Knowles (2018), the author creates a few notable connections between the CivID’s of teachers or in this case, *civic dispositions*, *pedagogical dispositions*, and resultant pedagogical behaviors. Specifically: Knowles (2018) positively correlates a significant

relationship between the conservative CivID (civic disposition) and the instructional strategies of: teacher led discussions and reading from the textbook, both which can be thought of as a “teacher-text” pedagogical disposition. A similar ideological connection is the Reichert and Print’s (2018) measurement of the participatory perspective through the association of civic achievement through structured and traditional mechanisms within the classroom and the potential implications which achievement might have upon future civic engagement.

On the other end of the ideological spectrum, critical civic dispositions were shown to demonstrate a significantly positive relationship with all of the “collaborative-research” instructional strategies with the exception of one: independent research projects, indicating that the pedagogical dispositions of these teachers are falling under a student-centric or student action classification. This to Knowles (2018) means that these teachers are more likely to display the following pedagogical behaviors or instructional strategies: discuss controversial issues, participate in role-playing/simulations, read primary sources, read secondary sources (excluding a textbook), develop group projects, participate in debates, participate in cooperative learning groups, and participate in student led discussions.

Furthermore: there is a significant positive relationship between a liberal CivID (civic disposition) and several instructional strategies measured. “[R]ole-playing/simulations, reading primary sources, reading secondary sources, and cooperative learning groups” (Knowles, 2018, p. 90) demonstrating an overall student-centric pedagogical disposition. This statement is reinforced by the fact that the same liberal, theoretically blended ideology (between conservative and critical), “demonstrated a negative relationship” with a smaller portion of the measured instructional strategies, “including teacher-led discussions, worksheets, and textbook assignments” (Knowles, 2018, p. 90). The liberal civic and pedagogical disposition, now

manifested in a series of behaviors in the classroom could also be considered as an attempt to cultivate a democratic classroom environment. This atmosphere provides a degree of agency to students such as partnership in establishing classroom rules, participation in classroom discussions, and formative learning and disciplinary practices (Jagers, Lozada, Rivas-Drake, & Guillaume, 2017). All of these practices incorporate the previously stated liberal dispositional ideals of participation, inclusion, and engagement.

Somewhat independent of all of the dispositions discussed, some researchers sought to measure the commonalities that any classroom might share or what might be thought of as the behaviors that most closely represent an intersection of dispositions or holding more than one disposition in equal regard (Knowles, 2018; Knowles & Castro, 2019). Such pedagogical behaviors are teacher deliberation over civic and political issue, engaged teaching style (Bayram Özdemir et al., 2016).

### **Student Civic Outcomes**

Determining the relationship between pedagogical behaviors and the most powerful civic outcomes (both educational outcomes and post-education outcomes) is the final element of relational connections to discuss. Initiation of civic and political discussion, youth perception of politics, youth political efficacy beliefs (Bayram Özdemir et al., 2016), future civic action, and promotion of important issues (Reichart & Print, 2018) are all measured and meaningful student civic outcomes which are correlated to certain pedagogical behaviors (Bayram Özdemir et al., 2016; Reichart & Print, 2018). Once more, the previous dispositions and their corresponding behaviors must be considered to analyze the potential impact of these ideals, or their intersection, on students' civic outcomes inside of and beyond the classroom.

Perhaps the most compelling results occur for the liberal disposition, coincidentally comprising less polarized pedagogical behaviors and dispositions. For example: democratic teaching practices (embodying the liberal ideals of participation, inclusion, and engagement) had a moderately positive correlation with an equitable school climate and was additionally correlated to an enhanced student civic engagement (behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs); this improvement did not persist over time however (Jagers et al., 2017). Likewise, Campbell (2008) studies the effects of an “open classroom climate” allowing students agency to participate in the exploration of political issues which would theoretically facilitate civic knowledge and skill growth. Findings indicate that the effects of this open classroom climate facilitate a positive and statistically significant relationship between an increase in civic knowledge, appreciate for conflict within politics, and likelihood for future voting (Campbell, 2008).

Regrettably, the most narratively compelling research is not as well supported as some of the prior research. Rather than using statistical analysis, Mirra and others (2013) illustrate the power of the participatory action research through quotes and other anecdotal evidence to represent the civic participation outcomes yielded from the pedagogical strategy. Student understanding and articulation of civic agency through authentic practice (Mirra et al., 2013) is nonetheless a meaningful contribution to the pedagogical potential of civic educators and aligns with the critical dispositions via shared ideas of student action and challenging power dynamics.

Independent of any individual disposition but instead favoring the intersectional disposition and behavior theory, Bayram Özdemir and others (2016) seek to establish the importance of an “engaged and inspiring teaching style.” Presenting questions, ideas, and information in a way that encourages participation was determined to “predict an increase in youth’s initiation of discussions about civic issues in class over time” (Bayram Özdemir et al.,

2016, p. 2240). The researchers determined that youth feelings about politics were actually directly correlated with perceptions of engaged teaching and these enhanced feelings in turn were correlated to an initiation in of civic and political discussions (Bayram Özdemir et al., 2016).

Similar to the independence of an engaged and inspiring teaching style and the potential dividends it may yield, Reichert and Print (2018) measured a number of curricular implementations that could improve future student civic participation as measured by two parameters: future civic action (such as voting) and promoting important issues. The resultant data indicates that student participation, engagement and action in activities such as a school paper, student government, and within the community all yielded strong positive statistically significant relationships for both metrics of future student civic participation (Reichert & Print, 2018). While it might be easy to categorize these activities as liberal disposed, one must bear in mind that these actions are not necessarily pedagogical or civic behaviors by teachers but the agents are instead schools or the students themselves and therefore the relationship to the teacher is somewhat tenuous but significant and therefore noteworthy. In addition to those student participatory actions, student achievement in civics and student sentiments of civic efficacy also reflected positive statistically significant relationships with both measured forms of future civic involvement (Reichert & Print, 2018).

Youniss, McLellan, and Yates (1997) offer similar conclusions about the efficacy of student government and participation in social-political reform, both measures of civic action. To begin: it is important to distinguish partaking in social-political reform from participatory action research the pedagogical strategy. The first may be a pedagogical strategy but is not exclusively so (for example: taking part in a protest) while the second is exclusively an intended pedagogical

behavior and thus different associations can be made. It is interesting to note that correlations were made over time that if students participated in school governments or social-political reform movements, they were more likely to be engaged in civic actions such as voting, election campaigns, alongside other conventional civic activities (Youniss et al., 1997). These correlations support a developmental theory of civic identity where these practices and ideologies are acquired over time as a young adult (Youniss et al., 1997). Affirming the point of view of other scholars, Youniss and others state: “[b]y offering youth meaningful participatory experiences, we allow them to discover their potency, assess their responsibility, acquire a sense of political processes, and commit to a moral-ethical ideology.” (p. 630). Not only does this quote reference and support the potential power of student action and agency realized by the critical dispositions and through the pedagogical behavior participatory action research, it connects the civic identity to previously undiscussed facet of the classroom and its potential effects: emotional and sociocognitive learning.

It is important to understand first the significance of sociocognitive and emotion learning (SEL) in the context of civic participation and that meaning lies primarily in the common ground which they share. Civic engagement in whatever way a scholar wishes to measure it relies on requisite knowledge, but also depends mightily on prosocial skills and values (Metzger et al., 2018). These prosocial skills and values are significant because they are typically are formed in a school through a more organic context using developmental competencies (Metzger et al., 2018) similar to the lens conceptualized by Youniss and others (1997) arguing development of civic engagement and values over time. “Civic development theory argues that youth civic engagement is undergirded by the development of emotional and sociocognitive skills” (Metzger et al., 2018, p. 1676). This quote illustrates the strong conceptual bond between the

developmental perspectives of both civic participation and SEL. Four emotional and sociocognitive competencies: empathy, emotional regulation, prosocial moral reasoning, and future mindedness were all found to be associated with various forms of civic engagement in a study comprising over 2,400 students (Metzger et al., 2018). Emotional regulation was found to predict informal helping, civic skills, and environmental behavior (supporting the environment such as recycling) and prosocial reasoning predicted social responsibility values, informal helping, and civic skills (Metzger et al., 2018). Lastly, future mindedness in particular predicted political engagement. Between the theoretical underpinnings, experimental results, and statistical significance, it is evident that sociocognitive and emotional competencies are strongly related to students likely to contribute to their respective societies.

### **Chapter Three: Conclusions and Recommendations**

The conceptualizations of teacher civic dispositions, pedagogical dispositions, pedagogical behaviors, and how all of these ideas coalesce to impact the current and future civic outcomes for students may seem increasingly disparate or disjointed. Unfortunately, most of the literature does little to confirm the dispositions that we hold or the truths that may seem intuitive. And so, these distinct ideas of dispositions, behaviors, and outcomes must be joined in a way that is meaningful and on which one can act.

Scholarship defines the conservative civic and pedagogical dispositions as centered around the emphasis of a common culture and the communication of those shared values, beliefs, knowledge, and more through teacher-centric student assimilative pedagogy. Behaviors one might expect in such a classroom would be teacher led discussions, reading from a textbook, and emphasis on traditionally conceived civic achievement. Of all of these pedagogical behaviors,

only an emphasis on civic achievement would yield positive student civic outcomes in the future as we can recall that civic achievement is positive correlated with both future civic action and promoting important issues (Reichert & Print, 2018).

The starkest alternative to the conservative disposition is the critical, which are dispositional identities that insist in student agency, collaboration and action especially in spite of existing power inequalities both in the classroom as a proxy for society and society itself. Pedagogical behaviors one might expect to accompany these dispositions are: discussion of controversial issues, participation in role-playing/simulations, reading primary sources, reading secondary sources (excluding a textbook), developing group projects, participating in debates, participating in cooperative learning groups, participating in student led discussions (Knowles, 2018), and participatory action research (Mirra et al., 2013). The narrative surrounding participatory action research certainly presents it as compelling if only anecdotally. However, while it may only be anecdotally compelling at first, it seems to be based on sound theory when one considers other curricular or potentially pedagogical behaviors which share the same critical dispositional foundation. For example: students' participation in school governments or social-political reform movements both produce an increased likelihood in future civic activity (Youniss et al., 1997).

The most documented disposition, associated pedagogical behaviors, and correlated student outcomes is certainly the liberal disposition because it represents the middle of the ideological spectrum and we must remember that teachers are likely to hold more than one disposition at any given time (Knowles, 2018; Knowles & Castro, 2019) which means that they are likely to draw upon the liberal toolkit. Participation, engagement, and inclusion are the foundational principles of this perspective and it is likely to manifest in the classroom as: role-

playing/simulations, cooperative learning groups (Knowles, 2018), as well as creating a democratic or open classroom environment (Jagers et al., 2017; Campbell, 2008). Creation of a democratic classroom environment predicted enhanced student civic engagement which didn't persist over time (Jagers et al., 2017), however an open classroom environment under different circumstances did predict an increased likelihood of future voting amongst other improved civic outcomes (Campbell, 2008). Conceptually related to the same disposition but not necessarily pedagogical behaviors: participation in organizations such as the school paper, student government, and within the community likewise meaningfully enhanced student civic engagement (Reichert & Print, 2018).

Lastly: sociocognitive and emotional competencies produce similar results to the positively correlated strategies discussed previously. And despite the apparent differences between the other positive civic outcome correlated behaviors, sociocognitive and emotional competencies likewise share the potential to be a teacher-initiated pedagogical behavior and these competencies, through a SEL curriculum in the classroom, are conceptually connected to either a liberal disposition or an intersection of dispositions.

Therefore, the strongest amount of research and evidence for power of a teacher's disposition in the classroom indicates that a liberal disposition or a disposition that allows for various perspectives is most likely to allow pedagogical behaviors in the classroom that are correlated to positive civic outcomes both in the classroom and outside of the classroom.

Professionals have similarly decided on a number of pedagogical behaviors identified as "Proven Practices" (Mann Levesque, 2018). These practices confirm the dispositions and behaviors assembled in stating these ten practices as effective civic education: classroom instruction in multiple disciplines including civics, government, history, law, economics, and

geography, discussion of current events, service learning, extracurricular activities, student participation in school government, simulations of democratic processes and procedures, news media literacy, action civics, social-emotional learning (SEL), and school climate reform (Mann Levesque, 2018). Many of these suggested strategies resonate the same ideals of the liberal and critical disposition including participation, inclusion, student agency, and the critiquing existing power dynamics.

Student achievement of proficiency or higher in civics as determined by the 2014 NAEP assessment was determined to be only approximately 25 percent as mentioned when framing the conditions of the civics education classroom. However, when students surveyed on a NAEP civics questionnaire reported common civics classroom strategies. The most engaging pedagogical behaviors such as field trips, writing letters to solve problems, and simulations of democratic processes and procedures were reported as practiced the least in the classroom of the pedagogical behaviors surveyed (Mann Levesque, 2018). A possible explanation for a lack of meaningful student achievement (set aside for a moment long-term educational goals such as improved civic engagement after graduation) is that civic education largely stops at class discussion and does not ask students to take an active role in their education as they would participate in a civic sense after public education ends (Mann Levesque, 2018; Eva, 2018).

Just as civic educators maybe discouraged by the conditions in which civic education currently finds itself, it should now be evident that teacher dispositions are to a moderate degree correlated to pedagogical behaviors and in turn conceptually and statistically linked to improved civic outcomes for students. Pedagogies that promote ideas within citizenry aligned to ideals of “education for critical civic agency” that promote student and individuals that are “self-actualized and critically empowered civic agents” (Mirra et al., 2013, p. 2) as well as promotes

ideals of participation and engagement are supported by various researchers and professional as effective in producing positive civic outcomes for students in the classroom and as they become realized citizens.

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