THE TEACHING OF CIVICS IN RURAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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THE TEACHING OF CIVICS IN RURAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This qualitative study examined the perceptions of social studies teachers in rural public schools about essential topics to be discussed in the classroom. In particular, the study examined how social studies teachers defined civic engagement, the teachers' perceptions of essential content associated with teaching civics, and how their perceptions of civics education and content aligned with the Act 35 assessments and C3 framework. Sixteen social studies teachers from nine rural school districts in Pennsylvania completed an online Likert-scale survey and open-ended responses. Seven individual Zoom and phone interviews provided additional insight into teachers' perceptions. The survey questions were informed by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) 1999 Civic Education Study (CivEd). The survey and interview questions were designed to examine educators' perceptions of essential content to facilitate in the classroom. Five school districts provided their Act 35 civics assessments, which were used to determine alignment with recommended state standards and participants' survey responses. The research findings demonstrated a majority of social studies teachers agreed with the essential content to be facilitated in civics education. Findings indicated that teachers strongly agreed on topics but often facilitated the information differently. Teachers' civic engagement definitions varied on what it meant to be civically engaged in society, suggesting a need for consensus among social studies teachers on defining civic engagement. These findings can guide future research on what is considered essential content in civics education and how to encourage alignment of the Pennsylvania Act 35 assessments.

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Table of Contents

Table of Tables

Table of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

To preserve democracy in the United States, citizens must understand the rights and responsibilities necessary to maintain it (Pitts, 2016). According to Shattuck and Risse (2020), "The American people are not well-informed about their government, do not turn out to vote in high numbers, and do not engage significantly in politics and civics" (p. 3). They further stated civic education has been reduced at both the state and federal levels. Myers et al. (2019) asserted civic engagement in the United States has declined among the younger generations, suggesting that a strong predictor of civic engagement is educational attainment. Reichert and Torney-Purta (2019) suggested adolescence is a critical time for teachers and adults to encourage participatory civic engagement and skills. Teachers across all disciplines, but especially those in history and civics, have a responsibility to provide citizenship education to their students. Research also provides evidence that for students to be prepared to become civically engaged, and they must be given guided opportunities to practice and participate in civic activities and experiences during their K-12 schooling (Levinson & Levine, 2013). Coley and Sum (2012) stated, "One of the most important acts of civic participation by adults is their willingness to vote and participate actively in political campaigns" (p. 13). According to Jamieson (2013), "In the past decade, low levels of youth voting and non-proficient student performance on a widely respected civics assessment test" have led to a movement to provide common standards for social studies (p. 65).

In 2013, the Commission on Youth Voting and Civic Knowledge by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) found that among citizens ages 18-24, voter turnout and civic knowledge in citizens' presidential election years did not significantly change. Between 1972, when the average youth turnout was 43.7%, and 2012, the average youth turnout was 41.2%. When examining the data, the Commission found that youth voter turnout never broke above 50% (CIRCLE, 2013). Pertaining to the 2016 election, CIRCLE (2018) surveyed young adults between 18 and 29 who were registered to vote. The results indicated that 65% of those surveyed did not vote because they did not like the candidates. Additionally, 47% of youth with college experience and 44% of youth without college experience stated they did not vote because they were too busy or had a conflict that day (CIRCLE, 2018).

Multiple studies have offered reasons why 18–29-year-olds have failed to vote. Coley and Sum (2012) surveyed voters on their reasons for not voting in the 2010 elections. Non-voters aged 18-24 and 25-29 indicated a lack of interest in voting, and they did not think their vote would matter or did not like the candidates. The non-voters also stated they did not vote because they forgot, were too busy, or had schedule conflicts. Levine and Kawashima-Ginsberg (2017) reported that the 2014 congressional election saw “the lowest youth turnout in American history” among millennials 18-36 years of age (p. 3). Further evidence provided by CIRCLE (2018) suggested that voting declined among youth ages 18-29, especially youth of color and those without college experience. CIRCLE pointed out that in the 2016 election, “nearly six million young people ages 18-29 were ‘under-mobilized’ - meaning they were registered but did not vote” (p. 1).

According to CIRCLE (2018), probing why youth from various backgrounds do not go to the polls is crucial to address those issues. According to another CIRCLE (2017), not only are millennials ages 18-36, including non-White millennials, disenfranchised from voting in the United States, but those who live in rural areas also face challenges. Rural areas sometimes called "civic deserts," constitute small geographical areas with fewer than 50,000 inhabitants and are characterized as "without institutions that typically provide opportunities like youth programming, culture, and arts organizations and religious congregations" (CIRCLE, 2017, p. 2). Wanting to research youth in civic deserts, CIRCLE (2017) surveyed 1,000 millennials after the 2016 election to collect data on their levels of political involvement. The researchers found that 59.7% of youth in rural areas had significantly limited access to civic and political engagement opportunities.

Hypothesizing that an increase in civic participation overall could exponentially increase the number of youth voters, Syvertsen et al. (2011) studied trends and patterns of high-school seniors' current and potential future civic participation over 30 years between 1976 and 2005. The researchers examined the younger generations' role in political change and found that many youths believed conventional politics were ineffective, slow, and unconnected to their lives. The researchers also found declines in students' participatory trends over those 30 years (Syvertsen et al., 2011).

Citing a lack of civic engagement, Pitts (2016) cited the lack of civic engagement mentioned in studies by the Annenberg Public Policy Center (APPC) (2014) and the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (2016) and made a case for civics education as part of schooling. Pitts (2016) questioned, "If democracy lies in the hands of ordinary

citizens, who ultimately serve on juries, vote in elections, evaluate public issues, and possibly run for office, what impact will this civic education deficit have on self-government?" (p. 9). Guilfoile and Delander (2014) suggested that civics education had been diluted for many years and that other subjects had taken center stages, such as math, science, and English language arts.

Despite the decline in civics education as part and parcel of school curriculum, and cited by some researchers (Myers et al., 2019; Pitts, 2016; Shattuck & Risse, 2020), the state of Pennsylvania expects that by the time students graduate from high-school they will have gained some level of civic understanding. Recognizing the importance of learning civics and government for citizenship, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) introduced the Pennsylvania Social Studies Academic Standards (SSAS) to educators in 2003. The SSAS was developed and approved by the State Board of Education but was never formally adopted; instead, they are considered "recommended" standards. The SSAS provides a framework for what students should know and be able to do at varying levels in their school careers from K-12 in social studies (PDE Standards Aligned System [PDESAS], 2020). The standards contain clear expectations of what is to be taught to students at all levels of their K-12 educational experience (PDESAS, 2020). The SSAS delineates the curricular content based on students' grade levels (PDESAS, 2020). The civics and government standards cover the historical foundations of the U.S. government, the U.S. Constitution, and the criteria for what makes an informed citizenry. The SSAS in civics and government intended to focus on what the PDE believed to be an intentional education about historical and foundational aspects of the U.S. government (PDESAS, 2020). The recommended SSAS supports the

Pennsylvania Public School Code of 1949, which mandates students receive instruction in civics and government.

Chapter 4, Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code, § 4.11. Purpose of public education, provides the following goal:

> (b) Public education prepares students for adult life by attending to their intellectual and developmental needs and challenging them to achieve at their highest level possible. In conjunction with families and other community institutions, public education prepares students to become self-directed, lifelong learning and responsible, involved citizens. (p. 1)

The SSAS civics and government standards provide the curricular guidelines for meeting Pennsylvania's Public School Code of 1949 legislative requirements. The requirements mandate that all students receive instruction in civics education for at least one semester between the student's 7th- and 12th-grade years of school (Public School Code of 1949, No. 35 [Act 35], 2018). The Pennsylvania legislative requirements of Act 35, introduced in 2018, mandate that as of 2020-2021, all students must pass a civics test before graduating from high-school. What is *not* required is a specific test across all districts. Instead, each district is permitted to create its test (Act 35, 2018). Section 1605.1 of Act 35 provides more detail:

> Beginning with the 2020-2021 school year, each school entity: (1) Shall administer at least once to students during the grades seven through twelve a locally developed assessment of United States history, government and civics that includes the nature, purpose, principles, operations, and documents of United States government and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

> Each school entity shall determine the form of the assessment and the manner in which the assessment shall be administered and may administer the assessment at the conclusion of the course of study required under section 1605(a) or at the conclusion of another related course or instructional unit. A school entity may use the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services Test to satisfy the requirements of this paragraph. (Act 35, 2018)

The Pennsylvania state standards reflect Campbell and Niemi's (2016) statement that "Democracy requires an electorate with at least a modicum of political knowledge" (p. 4). The apparent lack of political knowledge has been a concern supported by the National Association of Educational Progress (NAEP), where student civic knowledge scores in Grades 4, 8, and 12 demonstrated that only 25% of the students scored proficient on civics tests (Coley & Sum, 2012).

While the SSAS focus on learning specific dates, events, and historical content, *The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies Standards: Guidance for Enhancing the Rigor of K-12 Civics, Economics, Geography, and History* (C3 framework; 2013) was created to encourage civic engagement, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills. The C3 framework is a set of guidelines developed with input from 15 social studies content organizations and 21 states that collaborated to help reinforce the areas of social studies considered necessary for classroom learning and student engagement. Published by the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS; 2013), the guidelines have a centralized focus on inquiry as a means for students to develop knowledge attainment skills through information and data-collection efforts. The C3 framework can be used by teachers, school districts, and state educational facilitators to

provide rigorous content lessons, build critical-thinking skills, and align with the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies. (As of this writing, Pennsylvania has not officially adopted the C3 framework.)

To understand the various definitions of civic engagement and the expectations of state standards and assessments, Jamieson (2013), a director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania, lamented states' and public schools' roles in providing civics education to students. The 2018 Brown Center Report on American Education reported that each state develops curricular standards that include what every student should know and be able to do (Hansen et al., 2018). Ultimately, the report found that states establish standards and requirements for schools about "recommended practices" for civic engagement. In contrast, schools are responsible for creating and facilitating civics curricula with assessments aligned with state requirements.

Need for the Study

The need for this study arises from current research questioning whether public school curricula focus on a rigorous examination of civics and civic engagement that promotes civic responsibility beyond the school's walls (Brezicha & Mitra, 2019; Myers et al., 2019). Ahranjani et al. (2013) maintained that an essential element of keeping constitutional rights is facilitating students' learning of the U.S.'s constitutional foundations through critical reading, problem-solving, and real-world scenarios that develop higher-order thinking skills in students. Merritt et al. (2018) affirmed that teaching American history to students and for students to possess constitutional

competence is necessary for them to attain self-government and demonstrate democratic principles.

Coley and Sum (2012) stated, “The lack of civic knowledge provides ample concern for the future of our democracy, as it affects civic participation and one of the most critical civic acts – voting” (p. 3). According to Saavedra (2016), “Democracy works best when its citizens are informed,” and it is “highly problematic that political knowledge today is lower than it was several decades ago” (p. 2). Saavedra questioned whether schools are adequately facilitating an effective and meaningful civics curriculum.

The APPC (2014) at the University of Pennsylvania conducted surveys with 1,146 adults and found deficiencies in constitutional knowledge. For example, just 36% of Americans could name the three branches of government, while one in five Americans believed a Supreme Court decision was sent back to Congress. In a different study, Coley and Sum (2012) collected data on non-civic participation by adults compared to the number of individuals who become civically involved in society; they concluded there is a need to improve student civics understanding in schools. The APPC (2014) and Coley and Sum (2012) highly recommended focusing on civics education.

Wilson et al. (2019) credited George Washington’s farewell address, which stated, “The role of education [was for] nation-building and political participation” (p. 49). Pitts (2016) stated, “The better educated our citizens are, the better equipped they will be to preserve the system of government we have” (p. 10). Pitts (2016) argued the need for rigorous and purposeful civics education, stating that students demonstrate

"basic knowledge deficits" and that "this deficiency, coupled with the decline of quality civic education in our nation's schools, is cause for concern" (p. 9).

Research has suggested that an effective civics curriculum is essential to creating civically engaged citizens who possess the knowledge and skills necessary to be active in society (Myers et al., 2019). To accurately assess students' civic knowledge and understanding, it is valuable to determine if social studies teachers' perceptions of the essential content associated with teaching civics reflect best practices in civics education as dictated by the Pennsylvania Act 35 requirements. Additionally, it also proves valuable to investigate the current alignment of Pennsylvania public school civics assessments with the Act 35 requirements and Pennsylvania SSAS. There is a need to investigate whether school districts and educators are developing assessments that align with PDE-designed state standards.

Statement of the Problem

According to the 2018 Brown Center Report on American Education, 42 states and Washington, D.C. require teaching civics. Shapiro and Brown (2018) reported in February 2018 that of the states requiring a civics course, 31 states require at least one semester of civics education, and nine states and the District of Columbia require one year of civics education. Pennsylvania is one of seven states that require only one course of civics (Hansen et al., 2018). (The difference between the 2018 Brown Center Report and Shapiro and Brown is per their numbered reporting.) Jamieson (2013) argued that the lack of consistency in civics education across states and the failure of districts to follow state policies are concerning. Jamieson questioned how schools address the lack of civic engagement among youth to maintain the U.S.'s constitutional democracy.

The purpose of this study is to understand how social studies teachers in public schools in Pennsylvania define civic engagement, examine social studies teachers' perceptions of the essential content associated with teaching civics, and examine if the teachers' perceptions of civics education and content align with Pennsylvania Act 35 assessments and the C3 framework in rural public schools. The rural areas chosen for the study mirror the civic deserts mentioned earlier in the CIRCLE (2017) study, where millennials lack adequate cultural resources and experience varying levels of civic engagement. Identifying these crucial reasons could result in a better alignment of the civics curriculum with Pennsylvania state requirements.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used in this study:

Civics education: The study of the historical foundations of the U.S. designed to encourage active engagement in society and understand the structural processes of government. Civics education can include the study of political science, history, government, and economics.

Civic engagement: "Engaging young people in a purposive and critical way to examine their environment, to notice and question injustices, and to act to improve their civic and political communities" (Brezicha & Mitra, 2019, p. 65).

Civic knowledge: "An understanding of government structure, government processes, and relevant social studies knowledge and concepts" (Hansen et al., 2018, p. 16).

Civic skills: "Abilities that enable students to participate in a democracy as responsible citizens" (Hansen et al., 2018, p. 16).

Youth voting: Refers to individuals 18-29 years of age.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. For an area to be considered rural, the population must contain fewer than 50,000 people and be located outside larger city areas (CIRCLE, 2017). Therefore, the rural population may not include a proportionally diverse teacher or student population. Because the study area is small, the teacher population in each school district is smaller compared to the size of school districts and schools in suburban and urban areas, which may have limited the number of participants in the study. The study was conducted in rural public schools and does not represent urban, private, parochial, or charter schools.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this qualitative study to investigate, define, and identify the alignment of civics assessments with Pennsylvania standards:

1. How do social studies teachers in rural school districts define civic engagement?
2. What are the perceptions of social studies teachers in rural school districts of the essential content associated with teaching civics?
3. How do rural public school teachers' perceptions of civics education and content align with state standards and assessment expectations?

Summary

The low voter turnout among individuals ages 18-29 may be evidence that U.S. schools need to improve civics education for all students (CIRCLE, 2013). Jamieson (2013) pointed out that the original role of public schools was to promote citizenship.

Campbell and Niemi (2016) found a need for a rigorous study of civics in schools to increase civic knowledge and encourage civic engagement.

The more recent concern is derived from low test scores on civics knowledge by the APPC (2014). The APPC (2014) questioned the effectiveness of civics education. Saavedra (2016) questioned whether schools adequately facilitate a meaningful civics curriculum. Shapiro and Brown (2018) argued that high-schools should require students to pass the U.S. citizenship exam before high-school graduation. The creation of the SSAS, which the state of Pennsylvania has not adopted, and the subsequent legislation, Act 35, demonstrates a need for educational and legislative leadership to focus on improving student understanding of civics and government through civics education. If there were general agreement on important content and skills, the C3 framework for civics education could serve as a context for teaching civics and testing civic content approved through state standards (NCSS, 2013).

This study was designed to gather data on teachers' perceptions of civic engagement. This study included analyzing the Pennsylvania Act 35 civics exams and comparing them to Pennsylvania state requirements. The data collected may help educators develop a more focused and consistent alignment between the Act 35 civics assessments, the Pennsylvania SSAS, and best practices suggested by research. Chapter 2 will review relevant literature that includes factors influencing civics engagement, essential civics educational content, and state civics education standards related to the Pennsylvania SSAS, the C3 framework, and social studies best practices.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter examines the body of literature related to the three research questions examining how social studies teachers in rural school districts define civic engagement, the teachers' perceptions of essential content associated with teaching civics, and teachers' perceptions of civics education and how social studies content aligns with state standards and assessment expectations. The last section focuses on social studies guidelines and assessment expectations while addressing best practices in civics education. As it relates to an evolving understanding of civics and civics education, this literature review examines research on factors that may influence civic engagement, the essential content of civics education, and state standards and assessments for civics education.

It is important to note that many studies cited in this review used data collected from prior years, as some were longitudinal studies. Some researchers used data from the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), which used a survey from the 1999 International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (CivEd) . Martens and Gainous (2012) and Gregory and Miyazaki (2018) used the same CivEd questions that established the foundation for the online survey used in this study. Additionally, the NAEP data used in this literature review represents the most current data available at the time (Coley & Sum, 2012).

Historical Context

Early in the 20th century, the goal of civics education was to create a dutiful citizenry that met the needs of industrial society (Jamieson, 2013). In the early part of the

20th century, the curricular expectations for civics focused on memorization and rote learning of the Constitution and citizens' rights and responsibilities. Jamieson (2013) explained that by the 1960s, the focus of civics education began to change by including an activism component where students learned civics by becoming engaged in society. This change led to increased concern that the United States was failing to educate its citizens about the Constitution and citizens' rights and responsibilities (Jamieson, 2013). Jamieson (2013) further stated that civics education was "associated with increased knowledge of the U.S. system of government and heightened participation in democratic activities such as voting," suggesting that a lack of adequate civics education may have led to a lack of civic engagement (p. 65).

A Nation at Risk (1983), a report from the National Commission on Excellence in Education and touted by the Reagan administration, sought to gather support for a national call to change civics education. The goal was to address the educational deficiencies of U.S. citizens. The report suggested the U.S. was losing its competitive edge compared to other nations (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Almost two decades later, in 2002, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), supported by the George W. Bush administration, focused on increasing student test scores in English, math, and science with little focus on history and civics (Davenport, 2020; Jamieson, 2013). In 2002, the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) introduced the Teaching American History (TAH) initiative to encourage the development of history and civics curriculums and activities (Ragland, 2015). In 2011, the federal grant funding for TAH was eliminated, as was much of the federal money given to civics education (Shattuck & Risse, 2020).

In light of the funding cuts for civics education, in 2015, the USDOE's Every Student Succeeds Act promoted civics education in grades K-12. Continuing a sustained focus on civics, in 2018, Pennsylvania instituted the Act 35 civics exam requirement, an educational mandate for students prior to high-school graduation (Public School Code of 1949, P.L. 227, No. 35). According to the PDE and written in their *Materials and Resources in Support of Act 35 of 2018 Assessment of Civic Knowledge* guidelines, the goal of the Act 35 requirement was to help ensure

> each school entity shall administer at least once to students during grades 7-12 a locally developed assessment of U.S. history, government and civics that includes the nature, purpose, and principles and structure of the U.S. constitutional democracy, the principles, operations and documents of the U.S. government and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. (PDE, 2019a, p. 3)

The PDE developed three pillars to support a civics education program that may encourage civic knowledge and engagement in response to the required exam. The first pillar, Knowledge, addresses the U.S. government's fundamental structure. The second pillar, Skills, concentrates on the necessary traits of active and engaged citizens. The third pillar, Actions, tackles the multitude of ways citizens can become civically engaged in society (PDESAS, 2020).

Definitions of Civic Engagement

If there is a need to improve civics education in schools, there may first need to be a consensus on the defining characteristics of civic engagement, as there exist varying definitions throughout the research. One definition of civic engagement is "working to

make a difference in the civic life of one's community and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference" (Jeffrey & Sargrad, 2019, p. 3). Offering a slightly different definition, Wray-Lake et al. (2017) characterized civic engagement as "the behaviors, values, knowledge, and skills that comprise political and prosocial contributions to community and society" (p. 266). Lin (2015) defined civic engagement at the community level as the "collective actions taken in the neighborhood context and can include everything from helping a neighbor to attending a town meeting" (p. 37). Brezicha and Mitra (2019) defined civic engagement as "engaging young people in a purposive and critical way to examine their environment, to notice and question injustices, and to act to improve their civic and political communities" (p. 65). Despite variations in these definitions, there is a common thread that civic engagement requires active participation by the individual.

Trends and Influence in Civic Engagement

Community Engagement

According to Herczog (2013), students who are prepared for the civic responsibilities of citizenship are

> Active and responsible citizens [who] are able to identify and analyze public problems, deliberate with other people about how to define and address issues, take constructive action together, reflect on their actions, create and sustain groups, and influence institutions both large and small. (p. 219)

One of the many ways U.S. citizens demonstrate civic engagement and responsibility is voting. However, voting among 18- to 24-year-olds has been limited since 1972 and did not reach the 50% threshold between 1976 and 2005 (CIRCLE, 2013;

Syvertsen et al., 2011). A further indication of limited youth engagement can be found in the low percentage of youth who voted in the 2008 election. In Coley and Sum's (2012) report on U.S. citizens' civic knowledge, voting behaviors, and civic engagement, the authors cited the U.S. Census Bureau's statistics that only 48.5% of registered voters ages 18-24 chose to vote in the 2008 election, while the overall rate of registered voters who voted in 2008 was 64%. Coley and Sum (2012) reported that the lowest voting rates for individuals ages 18-24 occurred in 1996 and 2000, with approximately 32% voting. Despite this increase, when reviewing the data, Coley and Sum (2012) found "that voting is becoming increasingly associated with individual characteristics including age, education, literacy levels, and income, creating immense stratification in this society" (p. 13).

While noting trends in voting behavior among youth appears to be increasing, Lunberg et al. (2020) collected and analyzed data that suggested voter turnout among youth ages 18-24 had increased in all but six states prior to the 2020 election. By September 2020, 18 to 24-year-old registered voters had increased from the November 2016 election. Furthermore, an analysis of data of youth voter turnout for 18-29 year-olds for the 2020 election showed an 11-point increase from the 2016 election and is considered one of the highest rates of youth voting since the voting age was lowered to the age of 18; an estimated 50% of the youth voted in 2020. Youth voting turnout was highest in states that automatically sent mail-in ballots to voters. It was suggested that changes in state law and election administration policies led to the easier voter registration. The mail-in voting option is credited with the increase as well (CIRCLE, 2021).

Family

White and Mistry (2016) examined civic engagement in middle childhood to determine the degree of influence a parent's civic beliefs, civic participation, and socialization practices had on a child's civic engagement. Survey data were collected from 359 student participants in grades 4-6, ranging from 9 to 13 years old. Parents, grandparents, stepparents, and foster parents were also included in the data collection. Student participants attended one of six schools in southern California that were considered racially; ethnically (42% White, 27% Latino, 15% multiracial, 12% Asian, and 4% other); and economically (28% low-income, 33% middle-income, and 39% higher-income) diverse. Using exploratory factor analyses, the researchers employed a Likert-scale survey to rate parental responses. The survey used statements such as, "most people are fair and don't take advantage of you," and "most people just try to look out for themselves, rather than try to help other" (p. 48). Likert-scale statements were rated from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree).

The students were asked to respond to Likert-scale statements about civic responsibility, such as current events, politics, and community issues. The students were asked to rate their parents' civic participation by measuring their (students') frequency of communication with their parents on a scale from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). The researchers concluded that children in later elementary school years became aware of political topics and people while discerning their views on such topics. White and Mistry (2016) found that the more a parent was involved in social and civic activities and modeled such behavior, the more the child followed that parent's involvement in civic activities compared to just having civic discussions. The researchers also found the

more social trust a parent had in people's goodness, and the more involved the child was in civic responsibilities. These findings suggested parental modeling impacts a child's civic engagement.

While White and Mistry's (2016) study focused on parental influence on children's civic engagement, Gregory and Miyazaki's (2018) study looked at factors impacting children's civic knowledge. They examined students' family backgrounds and environments, school characteristics, school climates, classroom environments, and teachers' instruction to determine whether these characteristics impacted students' civic knowledge. Using data from the IEA's 1999 CivEd survey, Gregory and Miyazaki (2018) analyzed information from 1,497 14-year-old students in 9th grade from 86 different U.S. schools. The schools and classrooms, or teachers, "were considered indistinguishable" as "there was only one teacher who taught civics class surveyed per school in most of the schools" (p. 299). Data collected internationally from other schools were not used in this study. The researchers considered parental education level, home literacy (the number of books in the home), gender, public or private school attendance, and school climate. They also considered the impact of teachers' practices on their classes.

The researchers used a two-level hierarchical linear model to study the students' civic knowledge scores and school environmental effects on students' civic knowledge. Level One included student variables such as gender, home literacy, and parents' education levels. Level Two included school- or classroom-level variables such as mean home literacy, the proportion of girls to boys in the school, parents' mean education levels, school safety climate, teachers' teaching methods or practices, the number of

years teachers had taught, whether the teachers' degrees were in civics, the teachers' sexes, and whether the school was public or private.

The researchers found that parental socioeconomic (SES) status and education levels were statistically significant ($p = 0.05$) and positively affected students' civic knowledge scores. It was suggested that parents with higher education levels had higher academic expectations for their children. The results also suggested that schools impacted students' learning, and more school district money impacted students' civic knowledge. Additionally, school characteristics made a more substantial impact on students' knowledge than home characteristics. However, the researchers found teachers' practices had no effect on students' civic test scores after analyzing the data for teacher responses to activities such as student projects, student participation in group activities, role-playing, events, and discussions in class.

Culture

In contrast to Gregory and Miyazaki's (2018) study about the impact of parental SES and school climate on students' civic knowledge, Clay and Rubin (2019) compared three previous qualitative studies they had conducted to consider how Latinx and students of color viewed their negative social experiences (injustices) in comparison to their school-provided civic lessons. Rubin conducted studies in 2007 and 2012, while Clay's study, conducted between 2015 and 2016, explored how youth at different times in history experienced and interpreted racialized injustices. Participants in all three studies were from an urban mid-Atlantic region.

The researchers examined how home environments, school experiences, and community experiences impacted the worldviews of students of color and Latinx students

by studying four broad categories: citizenship; personal narratives of race/ism; history, civics, and social studies learning; and out-of-school civic resources. Using grounded theory and a cross-study data analysis, the researchers explored how marginalized youth viewed the disconnect between their life experiences and classroom learning about history and citizenship. Through their analysis of the three studies, the researchers found that students looked to their outside experiences to make sense of the civic world and citizenship. The researchers also suggested school-based civics courses failed to understand students' real-world experiences. Clay and Rubin (2019) suggested traditional civics content had limited relevance to young people's lives. They also suggested civics lessons ought to build on youth's experiences outside the classroom for critically relevant civics learning, as suggested in the inquiry guidelines of the NCSS's (2013) C3 framework.

Essential Content Associated with Teaching Civics

Low Civics Scores and Knowledge

The focus (and lack thereof) on history and civics, as well as concerns about how to encourage Americans to become more civically engaged, has led to a great deal of research on citizen political participation and the role of public schools in providing civics education (Lenzi et al., 2012; Dassonneville & Hooghe, 2017). Championing better civic learning in U.S. schools, Jamieson (2013) identified some inherent challenges in improving civics education. She maintained the need to ensure civics education is high quality while noting it has not been a state or federal priority. Jamieson (2013) suggested that evidential studies showed not all schools require studying civics: "Fewer high

schools civics courses are offered now than were offered in the past; that the time devoted to teaching the subject in lower grades has been reduced" (p. 66).

Jamieson (2013) opined on the need for a high-quality civics education due to concerns centered on the lack of youth voting and civics test proficiency. She also suggested low civics test scores "elicited efforts to increase the amount and quality of time spent teaching civic education [which] have ignited a movement to create common standards in the social studies" (p. 65).

Jamieson's (2013) concern for addressing low civics scores and lack of civic knowledge is supported by Coley and Sum's (2012) findings regarding the lack of civic knowledge and civic engagement presented in the NAEP's 2010 report. Here, the scores of 7,000 4th-graders, 9,000 8th-graders, and 9,000 12th-graders were assessed according to their "civics knowledge, skills, and dispositions [which] are critical to the responsibilities of citizenship in America's constitutional democracy" (Coley & Sum, 2012, p.7). In their analysis of the NAEP report, the researchers found 27% of 4th-graders, 22% of 8th-graders, and 24% of 12th-graders were proficient in civics knowledge. The analysis indicated two-thirds to three-quarters of all students scored at basic levels, while 4% of the 12th-graders scored at the advanced level, thus demonstrating a lack of solid civics skills and knowledge (Coley & Sum, 2012). Additionally, in grades 4, 8, and 12, the White and Asian/Pacific Islander students scored significantly higher on the survey across all grades than did American Indian/Alaskan Native, Black, and Hispanic students. Based on survey results, Coley and Sum (2012) suggested "the limited amount of civic knowledge displayed by our students does not bode well for the likelihood that they will be civically engaged as adults" (p. 12).

Findings from this study were also supported by the more recent research conducted by Clay and Rubin (2019) on the cultural impact of civic engagement.

Teaching and Instructional Strategies

Davenport (2020) recommended that key components of a civics education include beginning a student's civics education in elementary and middle-school and continuing it into high-school. Davenport (2020) believes there is a crisis in civics education and asserted this crisis was caused by the federal and state governments' low priority for civics education. The author recommended educators participate in professional development, develop a curriculum with civics knowledge collaboration, develop civic competencies at each grade level, and use primary historical sources in the social studies curriculum. Davenport (2020) supports Coley and Sum's (2012) concern about the importance of civic knowledge as a necessary foundation for becoming civically engaged and participative in society, leading to discussions on the appropriate instructional strategies for teaching civics and history. Martens and Gainous (2012) investigated best practices for creating effective instruction.

Martens and Gainous (2012) examined various instructional methods used by social studies teachers in 9th-grade classrooms across the U.S. to determine which teaching approaches or combinations thereof enhanced students' political knowledge, political efficacy, and intent to vote. The data used came from the 1999 IEA study. There were 2,811 participants surveyed across 124 public and private schools in the United States. Principals and teachers were also included in the survey. The survey data from principals and teachers were merged with the student data. Because some teachers did not complete the survey, 2,615 participants provided usable data.

The four main teaching approaches included traditional learning, active learning, video teaching, and maintenance of an open classroom climate. (An open classroom climate involved thoughtful discussions on various topics where all students could share and learn to appreciate varying viewpoints.) The researchers also looked at the following factors influencing classroom learning:

- Social studies frequency: The "function of the four instructional methods factor scores while controlling for the frequency students received social studies instruction" (Martens & Gainous, 2012, p. 962).
- Other social studies: What type of social studies class the students attend.
- Curricular breadth: The range of civics topics discussed in class.
- School SES: Based on the number of students receiving free/reduced lunch.
- Civic engagement: How civically engaged the students were.
- Home environment: Indicators of ways students learned and socialized outside school.
- Demographics: Students' gender, race, and ethnicity.

Martens and Gainous (2012) believed civics education's effects depended on two aspects of efficacy: an internal and an external component. The internal component of efficacy pertains to an "individual's confidence in his or her ability to understand and navigate politics" (p. 960). An external component of efficacy refers to "an individual's beliefs in the responsiveness of government to citizen's demands" (p. 960).

Martens and Gainous (2012) found that using varying instructional approaches stimulated students' political efficacy, meaning teachers who diversified their instructional techniques tended to create politically confident and engaged youth. The

researchers added that while youth may have been engaged, the instructional approaches did not necessarily prove they were fully informed. Additionally, the researchers posited that knowing the most effective instructional approaches would be beneficial to teachers to improve the curriculum and instill in students' knowledge and participatory behaviors.

Through analysis of data and teaching practices, the researchers suggested an open classroom climate where students were encouraged to participate and share their views tended to be the best for learning and encouraging the "democratic capacity of America's youth" (Martens & Gainous, 2012, p. 956). However, creating an open classroom was not more effective than implementing active learning techniques (role-playing, writing to representatives, and having guest visitors talk about the local community) to produce politically confident and engaged youth. The researchers also suggested teachers must be attentive to "instructional tradeoffs," which consist of mixing the four broad teaching approaches to encourage participatory and informed citizens.

Reflecting on historical context, Martens and Gainous (2012) also found "knowledge, external efficacy, and the intent to vote respond differently than internal efficacy to classroom effects" (p. 971). The researchers stated, "The goal of civic education is undoubtedly to create 'good' citizens, but [the] research suggest[ed] identifying 'good' teaching may depend on your definition of 'good' citizenship" (p. 971). The researchers also suggested teachers may need to decide if their instructional choices are designed to build political knowledge (e.g., knowledge of the U.S. Constitution, Bill of Rights, courts, and Congress) or to build political confidence (democratic active learning techniques) in their students.

To provide educators with quality instructional resources that would help them create effective civics lessons, a group of civics thinkers created the Six Proven Practices (SPPs) in 2003 with the support of the Carnegie Corporation of New York and CIRCLE. The SPPs were later supported in 2011 by the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, with the following elements identified as essential to civics instruction:

> The necessary elements of effective civic education include classroom instruction in civics & government, history, economics, law and geography; service learning linked to classroom learning; experiential learning; learning through participation in models and simulations of democratic processes; guided classroom discussion of current issues and events, and meaningful participation in school governance. (Guilfoile & Delander, 2014, p.3)

The goal of the SPPs was to provide instructional strategies to improve civics education toward "fostering civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes, promoting civic equality, building 21st-century skills, improving the school climate, and lowering the drop-out rates" (Guilfoile & Delander, 2014, p. 5).

Guilfoile and Delander (2014) advocated for improving civics education, moving from the days of rote memorization to the current idea of active engagement by creating a resource called *Guidebook: Six Proven Practices for Effective Civic Learning*, which provided high-quality and effective civic learning strategies for teachers, administrators, policymakers, and educational leaders. Guifoile and Delander (2014) provided examples of what the SPPs would look like in a classroom setting, research supporting the SPPs, and accompanying lists of organizations and projects that supported the SPP's ideas.

To study instructional strategies and the role of essential content in encouraging active participation, Monte-Sano and De La Paz (2012) examined whether writing-prompt structure and focus influenced students' historical thinking and content learning. Students in 10th and 11th grades in a mid-Atlantic urban public charter school representing eight modern world history courses ($N = 68$) and three U.S. history courses ($N = 33$) completed a pretest and an experimental task while agreeing to allow the researchers to review their student academic records. Ninety-one of the students completed a 10-question multiple-choice quiz on their general understanding of the Cold War. The students were presented with primary source documents and document analysis worksheets and were assigned writing tasks in which they had to use historical reasoning to question past records. The students were encouraged to analyze evidence to understand, construct, and explain a "historically plausible account of the past" by asking questions like, "Who made this? What else was going on? Who was this document made for? What did the author want? What is it about? and How does the author feel?" (Monte-Sano & De La Paz, 2012, pp. 290-91). The researchers found that focusing on corroborating documents when reading and analyzing historical texts helped the students understand history by making connections between the documents. Monte-Sano and De La Paz (2012) found that using documents to make connections in history improved students' historical reasoning. They also found that writing prompts significantly influenced student performance and was a "key factor in facilitating students' reasoning, conceptual change, and content area learning" (Monte-Sano & De La Paz, 2012, p. 291).

To identify best practices for improving students' historical knowledge through civics education programs, Heafner and Fitchett (2015) examined how the Opportunity to

Learn (OTL) framework was associated with students' achievement in the U.S. history courses. The researchers' interpretation of the OTL framework was based on the idea that the connection between the quality of content being taught and the frequency of that content's classroom instruction leads to a student's academic success. Using data from the 2010 NAEP United States History Assessment for 12th graders, Heafner and Fitchett (2015) examined the relationship of school characteristics, demographics, and OTL to the achievement of proficiency in history. They used student background items, multiple-choice questions, short responses, and constructed-response questions. The study included data from 8,160 participants. Heafner and Fitchett (2015) examined four variables of data collection. The first variable focused on student background and school-level variables related to 12th-grade students' U.S. history achievement. The second variable addressed how OTL variables related to 12th-grade students' U.S. history achievement. The third variable centered on student background and school-level variables related to Black students' U.S. history achievement. Finally, the fourth variable focused on OTL related to 12th-grade Black students' U.S. history achievement. The researchers examined "commonalities in the learning interactions among students and pedagogical types associated with the instruction," such as "field trips, use of film, online, group projects, and guest speakers" (Heafner & Fitchett, 2015, p. 233).

Heafner and Fitchett (2015) found that OTL is associated with learning outcomes. Data indicated that student and school characteristics, such as free/reduced lunch eligibility, SES, and individualized education plan eligibility, were significantly associated with student achievement and those pedagogical decisions impacted student learning in U.S. history classes. The researchers suggested that culture and gender

differences were significant to students' learning and should be considered when creating lessons. They also found that Black students were underserved in U.S. history classes and that "instructional exposure and motivational factors associated with OTL accounted for a significant and large percentage of the total variance in NAEP United States History achievement [and] pedagogy can have a substantial effect on students' historical knowledge" (Heafner & Fitchett, 2015, p. 245).

Heafner and Fitchett's (2015) findings that Black students were underserved in U.S. history centered on the idea that Blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans, females, and the poor were not overly represented in the curricular content. The researchers also found that these students were less likely to achieve the successes of White or Asian males from affluent and educated families. The researchers suggested students' different backgrounds led to a racial opportunity gap. Also, other factors such as understanding the tests, cultural differences, and socioeconomic disparities may interfere with students' positive academic achievement, regardless of pedagogical decisions made in class.

Saavedra (2016) conducted further research into instructional strategies that could improve academic achievement and civic capacity. Saavedra (2016) maintained that historically, education's purpose was to improve a democratic society. The researcher explained that this civic purpose transitioned to an economic purpose in 1984 after *A Nation at Risk* was released. By 2014, U.S. schools no longer placed a high value on civics education, and that civic engagement had declined. Saavedra (2016) suggested one challenge in teaching civics education was that the teaching methods were no longer as effective as they had been. In Saavedra's (2016) study, in which 24 12th-grade students from varying backgrounds and 15 teachers from four California schools participated, the

researcher examined the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme's effect on students' civic knowledge and skills and attitudes. The IB used social and political issues to develop students' oral communication, interpersonal, diplomacy, and compromise, and negotiation skills. The research participants were 60% female, and 22 of the 24 participants were minorities. Three of the four schools had a high percentage of students who qualified for free or reduced lunch, and 75% of participants had at least one parent born outside the United States. The researcher used semi-structured teacher and student interviews to study how the IB's curriculum, pedagogy, and culture promoted academic civic-mindedness, investigate teachers' and students' perceptions of model citizenship, and determine how the IB encouraged a student's model citizenship. For this research, academic civic mindedness included "student knowledge of the U.S. government, public policy, and effective advocacy techniques" (Saavedra, 2016, p. 2).

Interview results suggested that although teachers and students were able to provide examples of how the IB curriculum and pedagogy developed their knowledge of U.S. public policy issues, it did not strongly encourage student knowledge of the U.S. government system. The researcher also found that students and teachers believed they needed the following skills to address social and political issues: oral communication (n = 29); interpersonal skills (listening, patience, flexibility, intercultural sensitivity, diplomacy, and ability to compromise and negotiate) (n = 24); written communication (n = 23); collaboration or teamwork (n = 10); leadership (n = 8); and research skills (including close reading and source evaluation) (n = 7). Saavedra (2016) stated, "According to all student and teacher interviews (100%), the Diploma Programme's heavy pedagogical reliance on discussions, debates, oral presentations, writing, and

teamwork facilitates students' development of the many skills necessary for civic engagement" (p. 9). The researcher suggested the skills practiced through the IB helped them develop critical thinking, objectivity, open-mindedness, and an ability to compromise, which are skills and attitudes teachers and students should possess to advocate for social issues actively. The researcher also suggested the IB could aid students with project management skills and that all the skills gained were important to college and career success.

In the same vein as the previous studies, Maddox and Saye (2017) examined how to best design authentic writing assessments in history while encouraging students to develop higher-order thinking skills needed for effective citizenship. They maintained that part of a student's education should include instruction that encourages critical thinking, analysis, and problem-solving skills. The participants in this study included four 10th-grade classes in a school in southeastern Alabama with a diverse student body (N = 155 students), including 61% White students, 32% African American students, 5% Asian/Pacific Islander students, and 20% students on free or reduced lunch. The students were asked to complete scaffolding assignments to increase their civic knowledge and application. The scaffolding assignments included a critical analysis of two documents associated with historical events in which students were expected to connect past and current events. The scaffolding assignments were divided into two parts. Students were given a timeline of critical events and two primary documents associated with the Texas Revolution and the Mexican American War, content that they had just studied in class.

Part I of the writing assignment involved writing an editorial where students assumed the role of a journalist from the 1840s. Part II required students to use their

knowledge of Manifest Destiny to take a position on a central question and compare the idea to contemporary times. By doing so, the students were expected to make connections between past events to current issues. The skills utilized in connecting the past to the present using researched events aided students with class discussions. These skills enabled students to consider all facts and sides to an argument, challenge classmates using historical evidence, and use historical evidence to solve current social issues.

The student essays were scored from zero to 14 for Part I. The criteria for Part I included points for decision-making, historical context, persuasiveness, and dialectical reasoning (containing opposing arguments). For Part I, Maddox and Saye (2017) found that most of the students (80%) had difficulty with the editorial essay on Manifest Destiny, which demonstrated a need to improve their writing skills. Fifty-three percent of students did not demonstrate they understood an opposing point of view.

In Part II, the essays were scored on a points scale, determining whether students demonstrated connectedness in their writings. The essays needed to include a dimension of comparing the historical event to specific contemporary issues. The essays were expected to have an introduction, provide supporting arguments, present opposing views, and include a conclusion, all parts that could assist a student in making connections. For Part II, only 4.5% of students demonstrated the ability to connect the past (Manifest Destiny) to today's contemporary issues. The researchers suggested the study revealed the need to provide curricular content that builds students' higher-order and critical-thinking skills, which also helped improve their knowledge of contemporary issues. One challenge the researchers found was ensuring students had adequate historical resources and background knowledge about the topic to write a successful essay.

Decline of State/Federal Funding and Support

Despite research suggesting the importance of civics education in schools, there is evidence of a steady decline in funding for such programming. The decline in federal funding for civics education may have had its foundations in the 2002NCLB, which focused on increasing scores in language arts, mathematics, and science but did not make social studies (or civics) a priority (Jamieson, 2013). Concern over a lack of civics in schools can be seen through a comparison of the Department of Education Schools and Staffing Surveys given from 1987-1988 to those from 2002-2004, right after NCLB's implementation. The results showed a

> reduction in time spent on social studies instruction in elementary schools. History and social studies instruction time decreased by 21.6 minutes over that period, compared to an increase of 36.6. minutes for reading/English language arts and a 28.8-minute increase in mathematics. (Shattuck & Risse, 2020, p. 6)

Helping to reduce the focus on civics education in 2011, Congress decreased funding for civics education from $40 million to approximately $4 million while increasing the budget for STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) (Shattuck & Risse, 2020). The $40 million had already been decreased from $150 million before 2010 (Davenport, 2020). Shattuck and Risse (2020) pointed out that in the fiscal year 2012, "Congress terminated funding for the *Teaching American History* (TAH) grants [and] appropriations earmarked for civics education and federal funding for National History Day," a program that had increased student participation in historical studies nationwide (p. 8). According to Shattuck and Risse (2020), the history and civics education funding under the USDOE was eliminated by 2011.

Shattuck and Risse (2020) reported a significant decrease in federal funding similar to what Davenport (2020) reported. Supporting the need to address civics education in the United States, Davenport (2020) asserted that federal government funding dropped from $150 million in 2010 to $5 million in 2019. Davenport (2020) lamented the lack of priority in testing civics by pointing out that the federal NAEP tests in reading and math are administered every two years at varying grade levels, while the government and history tests occur every four years. Further, the limited time students are tested in government and history may prevent states and districts from understanding the effectiveness of civics education across grades.

State Standards and Assessments in Civics

Inconsistencies in Essential Content

One issue for teaching civics education is what individual states believe should be taught. Jamieson (2013) identified that social studies curricula in the 1960s began to include an active engagement aspect. According to Martens and Gainous (2012), one way to prepare students for active engagement was to assign role-playing activities. Guilfoile and Delander (2014) maintained that students needed to learn through "participation in models and simulations" (p. 3). However, contrary to this idea, Gregory and Miyazaki (2018) found role-playing was not crucial to active student engagement. The researchers noted that it was possible that problem-based learning through role-playing, where students solved problems associated with everyday issues, was not similar to the activities demonstrated in previous studies.

Stuteville and Johnson (2016) examined whether perspectives on citizenship were included in state standards for K-12 schools and institutions of higher learning and

whether the academic content provided the tools, knowledge, and skills necessary for students to become "good citizens." Social studies curriculum standards in five states (California, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, and Texas) were analyzed to determine if they reflected vital aspects of social studies and government and whether there was a consensus on what to teach. A total of 637 social studies content standards were analyzed to determine which of the philosophical and pedagogical perspectives of citizenship education were reflected in the standards and which ones were most frequently identified in curricula. The philosophical and pedagogical standards were divided into groups: liberalism, communitarianism, civic republicanism, assimilation, cultural pluralism, critical thinking, and legalism. The researchers investigated whether there was a consensus across the standards on what makes a good citizen or a "lack of sufficient opportunity for students to learn the dispositions, knowledge, skills, and abilities related to citizenship" (Stuteville & Johnson, 2016, p. 105). The results indicated an average of 127 civics and government standards identified per state. The philosophical and pedagogical perspectives were found in all standards in each state except Massachusetts. Legalism (the knowledge of facts) was identified 235 times, with the following highest number (110) involving critical thinking. Critical thinking was found in more than 15% of the standards from each state except Massachusetts. The researchers also found that social studies standards provided opportunities for students to learn basic facts about government and critically think about the content learned in school. As a result of the study, Stuteville and Johnson (2016) suggested the concerns pertaining to citizenship education may stem from ideological differences about what to teach and from the lack of citizenship education in schools of higher learning.

Pennsylvania is an example of one state that does not agree on what should be taught in civics education. PA has yet to formally adopt social studies standards, including the Civics and Government and History standards. The PDE has approved Social Studies Academic Standards but has yet to agree on whether the standards can be adopted. However, the SSAS are *recommended* guidelines for teachers to create curricular content based on best practices.

Citizen Education and State Standards

To improve upon best practices in civics education, states developed standards of what students should know and be able to do (PDESAS, 2020). Introducing their work, Levine and Kawashima-Ginsberg (2015) stated, "All states have standards for civics, and 40 states have a standardized social studies test, although not always in civics. However, civics education is not usually a high priority in the current educational system" (p. 5).

The low test scores on civics surveys led to research questioning civics education requirements across the United States (Coley & Sum, 2012; Levine & Kawashima-Ginsberg, 2017). State standards were implemented to improve common criteria across school districts regarding critical content to teach (PDESAS, 2020). Godsay et al. (2012) analyzed standards, laws, and requirements in all 50 states plus the District of Columbia. At that time, 39 states required a course in civics prior to graduation. Godsay et al. (2012) asserted that 34 states provided regular assessments for social studies by 2001. With the introduction of NCLB (2002), the number of states with regular social studies assessments dropped from 34 to 21, indicating that NCLB (2002) may have changed the academic focus away from social studies to emphasize math, science, and language arts.

The perceived failure to focus on civics education practices and engagement led to additional research regarding civic knowledge attainment and meaningful civics assessments (Brennan & Railey, 2017; Shapiro & Brown, 2018). Demonstrating a concern for mandated exams focused on memorization, Shapiro and Brown (2018) asserted that no state effectively provided adequate civics education based on their data collection of civics education measures. Shapiro and Brown (2018) collected data from state departments of education, the Educational Commission of the States, and the College Board and organized it into categories. The categories included the required civic course, length of the course (in years), full curriculum, required community service, mean score on the U.S. government AP exam, and required civics exam to graduate. After analyzing civic curriculum requirements from all the states, the researchers found that only nine states and the District of Columbia mandated one year of civics or government, 31 states required at least one semester, and 10 states had no civics education requirements. Shapiro and Brown (2018) also found 31 states and the District of Columbia provided curricular content on learning about United States government systems, other government systems, and the history of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Framework for Instruction

To improve upon instruction, and provide a basis for curricular content, in 2013, the C3 framework was developed to support the NCSS (2013) and the K-12 Common Core State Standards (Herczog, 2013; Levine & Kawashima-Ginsberg, 2017; NCSS, 2013). The C3 framework sought to create a cohesively guided curriculum that provided for the problem-solving, collaboration, and critical-thinking skills a person would need in

the workplace, institutions of higher learning, and as participative citizens in society (NCSS, 2013). According to the C3 framework, "Students need the intellectual power to recognize the societal problems; ask good questions; and develop robust investigations into them; consider possible solutions and consequences; separate evidence-based claims from parochial opinions; and communicate and act upon what they learn" (NCSS, 2013, p. 14).

The C3 framework's premise is to provide support for state standards through the development of the Inquiry Arc, which is "a set of interlocking and mutually reinforcing ideas that feature the four Dimensions of informed inquiry in social studies" (NCSS, 2013, p. 17). Croddy and Levine (2014) promoted the C3 framework's best practices based on its four dimensions:

1. Dimension 1: Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries: "Helps prepare students to identify and construct compelling and supporting questions to make determinations about the kinds of information sources that will be helpful in answering them" (p. 282).
2. Dimension 2: Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools: "The Framework emphasizes essential concepts and skills drawn from disciplines of Civics, Economics, Geography, and History, all of which are critical for an understanding of the problems, issues, and controversies that confront policymakers and citizens alike" (p. 283).
3. Dimension 3: The Information Age: "With its vast array of print, electronic, and emerging media, the ability of participants in civic life to evaluate a multitude of sources" (p. 283).

4. Dimension 4: Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action: "Students learn to apply the learnings from the previous dimensions and develop concepts and skills for active engagement in the real world" (p. 283).

These dimensions are critical because they serve as the foundation upon which the standards build when teachers use them to create curricular lessons for students.

The Inquiry Design Model (IDM) follows the dimensions of the C3 framework by breaking down each of the four dimensions into inquiry questions with accompanying performance tasks and sources to support student inquiry. Swan et al. (2015) used the IDM to explain how to help educators create lessons around the C3 framework's Inquiry Arc. The IDM approach of "questions, tasks, and sources" was designed as a blueprint that provided a "visual snapshot of an entire inquiry such as the individual components and the relationship among the components" to help educators create instructional materials for students (Swan et al., 2015, p. 316). To design the IDM model, Swan et al. (2015) used 84 New York State toolkit inquiries that New York teachers developed for New York teachers. The toolkit is a framework that features a blueprint and describes how the inquiry might be taught. The IDM's assessment component included formative and summative performance tasks to demonstrate competency. Educators who used the IDM were encouraged to create instructional materials and lessons based on their students' needs for each respective curriculum.

VanSledright (2013) maintained the C3 framework supports diagnostic performance assessments that expect students to act on and describe their viewpoints and experiences based on what they have learned. The researcher asserted that the C3

framework focuses on learners' capabilities by demonstrating their sociocultural knowledge based on their thinking processes (cognition).

Thacker et al. (2017) examined social studies teachers' curricular practices to investigate whether the curriculum included inquiry-based best practices. They also studied whether the teachers' instructional practices followed the C3 framework's inquiry guidelines. Middle-school and high-school teachers in a southeastern U.S. school district ($N = 45$) completed an online survey that consisted of 30 closed questions, four open-ended questions, and 11 demographic questions. The survey focused on the teachers' general beliefs and practices about social studies, their knowledge of state standards, and to what extent their current instructional practices aligned with the C3 framework. The survey aligned with the C3 framework's four dimensions in the Inquiry Arc.

The survey responses were then divided into five categories:

1. Instructional beliefs: 28 of the teachers' inquiry explanations matched the teachers' definitions, and 45 teachers agreed facts were important.
2. Use of instructional sources: 39 teachers reported using textbooks daily, weekly, monthly, or per semester. Forty teachers reported using historical sources either daily, weekly, or monthly.
3. Instructional practices: 33 teachers used inquiry practices daily or weekly.
4. Knowledge of state and national standards and practices related to the C3 framework dimensions: 44 teachers reported being familiar with Common Core Standards for English/Language Arts, History/Social Studies, and Science and the Technical Subjects. The same teachers also reported being familiar with the North Carolina Essential Standards. Eight teachers reported

being familiar with the C3 framework, while 20 were not familiar. Most of the teachers were familiar with some of the standards because of professional-development opportunities.

5. C3 Framework dimensions: Lastly, survey questions focused on the C3 framework asked teachers to report on their instructional practices that aligned with the C3 framework. Eighteen percent of the teachers reported using lectures as their instructional approach, 13% reported using inquiry, and 35% reported using discussions. Only 5% used simulations, 18% used collaboration, and 10% claimed to use student-centered instructional approaches.

Overall, the study found that teachers understood (but may not have practiced) the idea of inquiry aligned with the C3 framework. Their reported classroom practices demonstrated a need to move toward the inquiry method in the C3 framework. Teachers also needed professional development to improve at implementing inquiry-based strategies, so the theory and practice of the C3 framework were aligned.

As the strategy of inquiry set forth by the C3 framework for history and civics, Educating for American Democracy (EAD) (2021) is an initiative comprised of over 300 historians, political scientists, and educators who developed 21st-century K-12 learning goals in history and civics that could be used as a guide for inquiry-based learning. The EAD argued that the "majorities are functionally illiterate on our constitutional principles and forms" (p. 9). The EAD (2021) also argued that the lack of high-stakes accountability in social studies has led to a decline in curricular competencies among students and teachers. As a result, the EAD Roadmap (2021) focused on an "inquiry-based approach

to content that is organized by major themes and questions and vertically spiraled across four grade bands: K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12" (p. 12). The Roadmap (2021) outlined six core pedagogical principles for teachers that focus on the following six core pedagogical principles: 1. Excellence for all; 2. Growth mindset and capacity building; 3. Building an EAD-ready classroom and school; 4. Inquiry as primary mode of learning; 5. Practice of constitutional democracy and student agency; and 6. Assess, reflect, and improve.

In addition to the six core pedagogical principles, the following seven themes were included for civic participation:

1. Civic participation: "Using history to provide an understanding of how active engagement is important to the American society" (p. 15).
2. Our changing landscapes: "Using history to understand that different people in different places have differing experiences which has led to advantages and disadvantages for the people" (p. 15).
3. We the people: "Focuses on the concept that the people are a political entity who may have agreement and disagreement but who all need to be included in the decision-making processes of the United States" (p. 15).
4. A new government and Constitution: "Using the historical foundations of the United States, this theme centers on the founding of the U.S. and the creation of the Constitution and the Amendments and how they allow for debates on improving the lives and rights of all people" (p. 15).
5. Institutional and social transformation (series of re-foundings): "Focuses on the social, cultural, and political processes have shaped the people over time from the past to the present" (p. 15).

6. A people in the world: “This theme centers on the place of the people of the United States in the global context and the role of the American people in the world” (p. 15).
7. A people with contemporary debates and possibilities: “Uses the historical background of civic action and events to consider the contemporary arguments and thought processes for civic participation and engagement in the political, economic, and social debates that take place currently” (p. 15).

The third aspect of the EAD Roadmap (2021) involves “design challenges” meant to focus on students’ learning and development. These challenges were developed to encourage students toward civic engagement and participation while challenging them toward higher learning and understanding political, social, and economic institutions and behaviors.

The EAD Roadmap (2021) is a new and yet unproven set of strategies to improve how civics and history are taught, emphasizing inquiry-based learning and student engagement. However, the C3 framework (2013) and the SPP strategies are regarded as best practices in civics education by the National Council of Social Studies (NCSS) and the Education Commission of the States, respectively. All 50 states have implemented at least one SPP, with 22 states using two proven practices (Hansen et al., 2018). Hansen et al. (2018) asserted that as of 2017, 23 states had used the C3 framework to guide their standards; in the same year, Pennsylvania had not adopted the C3 framework but did report using three of the SPPs (Hansen et al., 2018). Hansen et al. (2018) argued that the SPPs are a means to insert certain activities into civics education. At the same time, C3

framework guidelines promoted by the NCSS (2013) centered on supporting social studies and civics standards.

Where Herzog (2013) encouraged the use of the C3 framework as a foundation for creating curricular lessons and Shapiro and Brown (2018) showed concern about state requirements for civics education, Brennan and Railey (2017), with the support of the Civics Education Initiative (CEI) and the Joe Foss Institute (JFI), analyzed state requirements for civics education and asserted that states should require students to pass a civics exam prior to their high-school graduation. The researchers postulated that "ample evidence documents the poor state of American civic literacy "while noting the lack of quality of curricular content in civics education (Brennan & Railey, 2017, p. 2). Brennan and Railey (2017) researched the legislative requirements for civics education in all 50 states, noting that Arizona was the first state to pass a civics initiative in 2015 with the expectation that high-school students would pass an assessment based on the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) test. Sixteen other states followed their lead. Brennan and Railey (2017) reported that 18 states had failed to pass civics legislation between 2015 and 2017, in part because the USCIS was not designed as a high-school civics literacy exam but instead only involved memorizing facts. Further, they asserted that memorizing civics facts could lead to a low bar for students merely passing a test and not encouraging participatory student engagement.

The ongoing discussion of best practices in civics education includes designing an assessment that measures student knowledge and skills attainment. Considered the nation's report card, the USDOE's NAEP is a Congressionally mandated survey that collects student information on achievement in the study of math, science, reading,

writing, history, geography, and civics. The NAEP developed the civics framework in 2018 to

> Specify the civic knowledge and skills that students should possess at Grades 4, 8, and 12; Describe the desired characteristics of the assessment of civics.; and, Present descriptions of the three levels of achievement – Basic, Proficient, and Advanced - by which students' performance should be judged and reported in that assessment. (p. xii)

The assessment was designed to provide information about students' civics and government knowledge and skills. The civics framework (2018) included knowledge, intellectual and participatory skills, and civic dispositions. The first section, civic knowledge, includes five key questions considered to be the basis for the framework:

> What are civic life, politics, and government?; What are the foundations of the American political system?; How does the government established by the Constitution embody its purposes?; Values and principles of American democracy?; What is the relationship of the United States to other nations and to world affairs?; What are the roles of citizens in American democracy? (p. 18)

The second component of the framework focused on civic skills, including learning about civics and being able to apply this knowledge, participate in society, and influence civic life. The second component was implemented to encourage students to think about what is involved in a constitutional democracy and how citizens should actively engage in that democracy and civic life.

The third component of the framework involved civic dispositions, which included citizens' rights and responsibilities to improve upon society while preserving

constitutional democracy. Lastly, the framework acknowledged that learning about civics and civic dispositions can occur in the home, school, and/or community, both nationally and internationally.

The NAEP civics framework (2018) was designed with three parts: content to be assessed, the processes or methods by which the content is assessed, and the levels of achievement or performance expectations reflected in the assessments. The assessment questions were apportioned based on grade level. The framework included selected-response and open-ended questions. The assessment's open-ended questions allowed for short-answer or extended responses to a statement or question, which sometimes required writing paragraphs or creating charts. The framework for assessment provided content focus and percentage distribution of questions to develop practical civics assessments.

Whereas the C3 framework (2013) provided guidelines to support state standards and the NAEP (2018) focused on what are the best practices for creating effective civics lessons, Stern et al. (2021) researched all 50 states' standards and rated the standards from exemplary to inadequate. The researchers evaluated the quality of the K-12 civics and U.S. History standards adopted by the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The states' standards were evaluated based on "their content, rigor, clarity, and organization" (p.14). Stern et al. (2021) rated the standards based on the relevant content for the civics standards and the U.S. History standards. Five states received the rating of 'exemplary' (an 'A'), ten states received 'good' (a 'B') ratings, three states scored 'good' in one set of standards but 'mediocre' in another set of standards. Eight states earned the rating of 'mediocre' in both subjects while four states rated 'mediocre' in one subject and

‘inadequate’ in another subject. Lastly, 20 states were rated as ‘inadequate’, meaning the states earned a ‘D or F’ for both subjects as per their state standards.

In order to receive an ‘exemplary’ status for civics and U.S. History, the standards had to meet the following criteria:

1. “Effectively articulate what every American should know about this country’s democratic institutions, traditions, and history” (p. 14).
2. “Emphasize skills that are essential to informed citizenship such as critical thinking, problem analysis, and evaluating, interpreting, and arguing from evidence” (p.14).
3. “Champion essential civic dispositions such as respect for other persons and opinions, an inclination to serve, and a commitment to American institutions and ideals” (p.14).
4. “Make effective use of elementary and middle school and require at least one year of U.S. History and one semester of Civics in high school” (p14).
5. Develop user friendly standards documents that are well organized and clearly written” (p. 14).

However, states that received a low score with a rating of ‘inadequate’ for civics and U.S. History standards failed to provide the following:

1. “Provide overbroad, vague, or otherwise insufficient guidance for curriculum and instruction” (p.15).
2. “Omit or seriously underemphasize topics that are essential to informed citizenship and historical comprehension” (p. 15).

3. “Make poor use of the early grades or fail to revisit essential content in later grades” (p. 15).
4. “Take an overly rigid or needlessly complex approach to organization” (p. 15).
5. “Pay little attention to writing, argumentation, problem analysis, and the connections between core content and current issues and events” (p. 15).

Stern et al. (2021) rated the standards for the state of Pennsylvania as ‘inadequate’ and have recommended a full revision of the standards. The civics content was considered to be broad, vague, and repetitive while the U.S. History standards, as suggested by Stern et al., failed to contain actual U.S. History content. The researchers maintained that the standards were considered ‘voluntary resources’ and are awaiting final consent.

Additionally, it was stated that a failure of the state of PA in civics and U.S. History is that PA does not “specifically require that high school students take any civics or U.S. History coursework to graduate high school” (p. 28) which is believed to be an indication of the value the state of PA places on informed citizenship. (As of 2018, PA voted on a mandate (Act 35) that all students receive instruction in civics between the grades of 7-12. The PA Act 35 assessment students must take includes civics and history.)

Civics Assessments and Pennsylvania’s Act 35

Brezicha and Mitra (2019) examined the JFI’s push for states to require civics assessments prior to high-school graduation to address the effectiveness of mandating a civics assessment. The initiative had three goals: to ensure students had the tools to

become informed citizens, ensure civics was taught in all classrooms, and revive an interest in civic learning and engagement. JFI sought legislation to require all states to mandate a civics assessment and promoted the use of the USCIS assessment, which includes 100 questions designed to demonstrate that test-takers understand the U.S. government's foundation. Brezicha and Mitra (2019) suggested the USCIS focused on a set of facts to learn but did not encourage students' active engagement. The authors expressed concern that testing mandates might not encourage students to value civics education. They were also concerned that classroom curricula would be designed around a test instead of relating to students' daily lives. Additionally, Brezicha and Mitra (2019) suggested that primarily testing facts without student engagement may signal student disengagement from civics education. The authors suggested that when students are actively engaged in the classroom, they may be actively engaged in society.

Pennsylvania was one of the states that allowed the use of the USCIS as a pre-graduation civics assessment. According to Act 35, local districts may develop their assessments for the U.S. government and civics assessment. They may use questions from the USCIS but are not required to do so. School districts are required to administer a civics assessment to students one time between grades seven and 12. Although there is no civics assessment requirement to graduate in Pennsylvania, beginning at the end of the 2020-21 school year, schools are required to report to the state every two years on the "type of assessment used [and the] total number of students who took and passed the test" (Act 35, 2018, p. 71).

Although the PDE has not formally approved these social studies standards, Pennsylvania mandates a civics assessment that includes "United States history,

government, and civics that includes the nature, purpose, principles, and structure of United States constitutional democracy, the principles, operations and documents of the United States government and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship" (Act 35, 2018, p. 1). The sample questions provided in the Act 35 Toolkit (2020) include factual knowledge, evaluation of sources, open-ended questions, and written responses. All sample questions are aligned with state standards, with each standard posted next to the question. Additionally, the sample assessment provides rubrics to inform the scoring guidelines.

The PDE gives each local school board across Pennsylvania the responsibility of determining the content to be taught in social studies based on the code. Although the State Board has approved Pennsylvania SSAS of Education, they have not been formally adopted. The Pennsylvania standards for social studies are "recommended." In addition to the Act 35 Civics Toolkit (PDESAS, 2020), the PDE provides a Social Studies Curriculum Framework (SSCF) (PDE, 2019b), which includes ideas, concepts, competencies, essential questions, and vocabulary. The academic standards and competencies were written to "guide the educator to what the student has to know and be able to do" so students can demonstrate the following skills:

> "Analytic Thinking — parts, break down complexity to useable information;
> Critical Thinking — the rational, reasonable thinking, problem-solving;
> Strategic Thinking — planning what to do with the information;
> Chronological Thinking — thinking across time and space (temporal)"
> (PDE, 2019b, p.3).

Consequently, the PDE provides resources for teachers to create curricular content and assessments, including the Act 35 civics assessment mandate but has failed to provide a set of formal standards for all teachers to use when creating curricular content and assessments.

Summary

Civics education is a multidimensional process with much debate over what makes a compelling social studies curriculum and how to design and implement best practices in social studies. Best practices, including civics education, are shown through many programs and strategies created to address the need for improvement. CIRCLE (2013), Coley and Sum (2012), and Shapiro and Brown (2018) have suggested there is a lack of civic knowledge among U.S. youth. To address the efficacy of social studies and civics curricula, Guilfoile and Delander (2014), Heafner and Fitchett (2015), and Saavedra (2016) studied curricular practices and programs to improve curricular content for students. Although the recommended Pennsylvania SSAS and SSCF (Standards Aligned System, 2019) provide for civic knowledge, the National Council of Social Studies (2013) believes educators could benefit from the set of guidelines provided in the C3 framework. The NCSS promoted the C3 framework as a foundation to support state standards and provide instructional strategies for educators to incorporate best practices in social studies. The NAEP civics framework (2018) set the standard for assessment development and grade-level distribution for states and school districts. Because the C3 framework provides a foundation from which to create lessons, Thacker et al. (2017) and Swan et al. (2015) demonstrated a need for further educator professional development to

learn to create inquiry-based instructional materials based on the C3 framework as aligned with state standards to best serve all students.

Chapter 2 reviewed reports and studies that demonstrated a concern for improving civics education, identified factors that influence civic engagement and provided data on students' participatory behaviors or lack thereof. Chapter 2 also explored curricular content considered necessary components of a civics curriculum and reviewed state mandates that demonstrated a need to create civics assessments aligned with Pennsylvania's recommended standards and Act 35 requirements. Chapter 3 will identify the methods and procedures used to conduct this qualitative study.

Chapter 3: Methods and Procedures

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to understand how social studies teachers define civic engagement, to examine these teachers' perceptions of essential content associated with teaching civics, and to examine if the teachers' perceptions of civics education and content align with the Act 35 assessments and the C3 framework in rural public schools in Pennsylvania. The rural areas chosen for this study mirror the civic deserts CIRCLE (2017) has described, in which millennials may lack adequate cultural resources and experience varying levels of civic engagement. There may also be a lack of meaningful civics education during these students' K-12 educational experiences. Identifying these essential factors could result in a better alignment of civics curricula with state requirements.

This chapter addresses the study's methodology and procedures. It also describes the study's participants, setting, and instruments. Finally, this chapter explains the survey's validity and reliability, the study's design, and the procedures used to conduct the study.

Participants

Eligible participants for this study were middle-school, high-school, and junior/senior high-school social studies teachers from nine rural school districts in Pennsylvania. Data were collected through an online survey and follow-up oral interviews. Confidentiality was maintained throughout all aspects of the study to protect participants' privacy. There were two data-collection opportunities. The first effort resulted in an insufficient number of responses. Three months later, the second round of

data collection was conducted to garner more participants. Of the 68 teachers who qualified for this study, 16 completed the online survey, and seven completed oral interviews.

Setting

This study was conducted in nine rural public school districts in Pennsylvania. Each district included one middle-school and one high-school or junior/senior high-school.

Pennsylvania's Future Ready Index (2020/2021), a website used to retrieve statistical information, provided the data to compile Pennsylvania school districts' demographic information (Table 3.1). The Future Ready Index also provided data on how students in the respective school districts met measurable math and English language arts goals. The school districts included in this study demonstrated a range of measurable student goals. Some schools met or exceeded their math and English language arts goals, while some did not meet the goals for one or both core courses.

Table 3.1

Demographics per School per School District by Percentage for Schools A-I.

	Dist. A	Dist. B	Dist. C	Dist. D	Dist. E	Dist. F	Dist. G	Dist. H	Dist. I
Students per school	1947	2024	2615	2892	1285	1510	1279	1502	2114
Gender									
% of males	50.9	51.5	52.4	51.5	52.2	54.6	50.7	53.5	52.4
% of females	49.2	48.5	47.7	48.6	47.8	45.4	49.3	46.5	47.6
Race									
White	92.6	83.4	88.5	70.5	95.3	95.7	89.0	85.4	96.7
Black	2.2	3.6	1.6	3.2	0.5	1.0	2.6	2.6	0.8
Hispanic	2.7	8.2	4.9	14.3	1.7	1.1	2.0	8.1	1.2
Asian	0.5	0.3	1.2	0.2	0.4	0.4	1.3	0.9	0.4
American/Alaskan Native	0.2	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1
2 or more races	1.9	4.3	3.8	11.9	2.0	1.7	5.0	2.9	0.8
Other									
Economically disadvantaged	44.0	54.7	41.6	43.6	23.6	37.4	47.6	68.0	47.8

Note. The demographics for schools A-I.

Instruments

This study employed varied data-collection methods. Participants received a survey administered through SurveyMonkey consisting of both Likert-scale and open-ended questions. Upon completing the survey, they were also invited to participate in follow-up oral interviews via telephone or online via Zoom. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed using the Temi app to ensure accuracy. Six participants chose the Zoom oral interview option, and one participant chose a phone interview.

The first part of the survey addressed five demographic questions. The survey questions for the Likert-scale portion of the survey were guided by a partial set of questions from the IEA's CivEd tool. Dr. Judith Torney-Purta provided permission to this researcher Ito use the CivEd questionnaire on behalf of the International Steering

Committee, which she chaired (Appendix A). As guided by some questions from the CivEd questionnaire, the survey for this study included 23 Likert-scale questions (items 7-29) and two open-ended questions (items 30 and 31).

The first page of the survey asked respondents to consent to take the survey. Upon choosing "Yes," the respondent moved to the survey's demographic section. If the respondent chose "No," they were taken to the end of the survey. On page 2, in the demographic section of the survey, the respondent was asked five questions. The first question provided a drop-down menu of options pertaining to the grade the respondent currently taught. Questions 2 through 6 offered multiple-choice options that best described the respondents' demographics (Appendix B). After the demographic questions, the respondent was directed to Section B of the questionnaire, a Likert-scale survey including items 7-16. Section B focused on the content taught to students in a civics classroom. Items 7-16 offered the following options: Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree (Appendix B).

Section C of the survey included items 17-29, and the following response options were provided for questions related to civics education topics: Very important, Important, Of little importance, and Not important (Appendix B).

Section D included two open-ended questions (items 30 and 31). It offered participants a chance to fully state, without text limitations, their viewpoints on how to define civic engagement and whether they used state standards or other best practice guidelines to create their Act 35 assessments (Appendix B).

The oral interviews were designed to complement the survey findings. The structured interviews were conducted via Zoom for all but one participant who chose a

phone interview. Seven participants indicated their willingness to participate in these interviews and answer questions related to the study topic. The interviews consisted of five predetermined questions (Appendix C), which was to allow participants to expand upon their answers to the survey questions.

In addition to the survey and interviews, the researcher requested that each district include a digital copy of their Pennsylvania Act 35 civics assessments in the first round of data collection. Five school districts' Act 35 assessments were used in this research. The researcher did not ask for the districts' assessments from the second round of data collection because participants were on their summer break. The researcher ensured the confidentiality of each district's assessments by labeling them as Districts A through F.

Validity and Reliability

Creswell (2014) stated that in a qualitative study, the "procedures in reporting the results […] are to develop descriptions and themes from the data, to present these descriptions and themes that convey multiple perspectives from participants and detailed descriptions of the setting or individuals" (p. 204). Creswell (2014) defined qualitative validity as to how a researcher ensures accuracy during study procedures. Qualitative reliability refers to the consistency of the research approach compared to other research precedents and practices. The triangulation of data sources is done by "examining evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes" (Creswell, 2014, p. 201).

In this qualitative study, validity and reliability were achieved through triangulation. The Likert-scale survey results, open-ended questions, and interviews allowed for triangulation. Further, triangulation included the teachers' responses, a

critical review of the C3 framework, and a review of the Act 35 assessment and state standards. The Likert-scale survey questions were informed by a questionnaire from an international study, for which Dr. Turney-Purta gave permission to use the questions (Appendix A).

The reliability and validity of the original survey questions in Dr. Turney-Purta's study were informed by the IEA's CivEd study. The questionnaire process for the IEA's CivEd study was developed over four phases. In Phase 1, the questionnaire was piloted in four countries (Belgium [Flemish], Colombia, Finland, and Italy). Phase 2 consisted of changes made from the first phase and was reviewed by experts and the Project Advisory Group. In Phase 3, the revised questionnaire was administered to a sample of teachers as part of the international trial, including all the countries participating in the study. The last phase of the study included a review of the trial study results, and the main survey items were chosen after discussions with the Project Advisory Group.

Using questions based on those in the IEA's CivEd study, the researcher intended to conduct and maintain a valid and reliable collection of data while maintaining consistency across all data-collection methods. The CivEd questions were reviewed, and the researcher modified survey questions for this study to meet this study's data-collection needs.

Design of the Study

This study utilized a qualitative research design that included an online survey of Likert-scale and open-ended questions and interviews with teachers who work in rural public schools in Pennsylvania. The methodology for the research questions examined how social studies teachers in rural public schools define civic engagement, perceive the

essential content associated with teaching civics and perceive the alignment of civics education and content with state standards and assessment expectations. The research occurred in nine school districts, and participants included social studies teachers at the middle-school, high-school, and junior/senior high-school levels.

Procedure

The researcher requested permission from each school district's superintendent to conduct the qualitative study (Appendix D). Due to limited responses from the first round of data collection, the second round of data collection took place three months later. The first round of data collection included six school districts and the second round of data collection involved three additional school districts. The researcher's proposed study was submitted and approved by Immaculata University's Research Ethics Review Board (RERB) for the first round of data collection. For the second round of data collection, the RERB reviewed and approved superintendent permissions to ask teachers to participate in the study. Once the permissions were received from each superintendent for both data-collection methods, RERB approval was received (Appendix E).

To conduct the study, the researcher retrieved the names of school districts in a rural area of Pennsylvania through an intermediate unit. For the first round of data collection, six school district superintendents approved the researcher's request to conduct the study in their districts. The superintendents of School Districts A, B, C, D, E, and F granted the researcher permission to contact the building-level principals of each school and to provide the administrators with the Survey Monkey link, the Teacher Letter of Recruitment (Appendix F), the Teacher Informed Consent Form for Survey (Appendix G), and the Teacher Informed Consent Form for Interview (Appendix H).

Following each district's permission, the researcher emailed principals in Districts A, C, D, and F the survey link, recruitment letter, and consent forms, requesting that they be forwarded to social studies teachers. The researcher emailed these materials and invitations to social studies teachers in District E directly. The superintendent's secretary in District B emailed building principals requesting that the survey link, recruitment letter, and consent forms be sent directly to social studies teachers. For the first round of data collection, the survey was available for two weeks, which resulted in eight participants consenting to take the survey and six participants consenting to be orally interviewed.

Due to an insufficient number of responses, the researcher conducted a second round of data collection three months later. The researcher invited the six school districts from the first round of data collection to participate and received approval from five of the six districts. Superintendents of three additional school districts (School Districts G, H, and I) also agreed. The second round of data collection surveys was available for two weeks.

The researcher sent the principals of School District I an email requesting that they send the three letters to inform the social studies teachers in their respective schools. The School District H superintendent sent an email directly to the principals with the three letters asking them to inform the social studies teachers of the study. The School District G secretary emailed social studies teachers directly on behalf of the superintendent. For the first round of data collection, eight teachers consented to participate in the survey, and six agreed to be orally interviewed. In the second round of

data collection, eight more teachers consented to participate, and one teacher agreed to be orally interviewed.

When the social studies teachers (participants) in the first and second rounds of data collection opened the Survey Monkey link, they saw the Teacher Informed Consent Form for Survey (Appendix G) and were asked to respond either "Yes" or "No." If the teacher responded "Yes," the demographic, Likert-scale, and open-ended questions followed (Appendix B). If the participants chose "No," the participant was taken to the end of the survey.

If participants proceeded to complete the survey, they were asked to volunteer to participate in an oral interview as a follow-up survey at the conclusion of the questions. The participants chose "Yes" or "No." Choosing "Yes" led them to the confidential Teacher Informed Consent Form for Interview page (Appendix H). Choosing "No" took them to the end of the survey. If the participants answered "Yes" to the oral interview, they were taken to a new page in Survey Monkey that was separated from the permission and their survey responses. They were asked for contact information to schedule the recorded phone or Zoom interviews. Participants were identified as Teacher A, Teacher B, Teacher C, and so on. All information from the interview process was kept confidential. The online survey (Appendix B) was distributed to middle-school, high-school, and junior/senior high-school.

The researcher contacted the social studies teachers who entered their contact information in a separate page of the Survey Monkey survey during the first and second rounds of data collection. They were reached via email and text. The text was used to alert the teacher to look for the email and remind them of the meeting. Each teacher's

email was used to send a link to a private Zoom meeting, and email was also used to remind the social studies teacher of the meeting.

For the first round of oral interviews, all participants chose to be interviewed via Zoom. One teacher chose a phone interview for the second round of oral interviews. The phone or Zoom interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of each teacher to ensure content accuracy. Each respondent's interview responses were transcribed using Temi, an app that records and transcribes. The transcriptions for each respondent's interviews received minor edits for spelling and grammar. The transcriptions were then emailed to each respondent to check for accuracy and to see if they wanted to add any information. Six of the seven participants responded to the emails with little to no changes. One respondent corrected the name of a program. No audio interviews were provided to the participants.

All the Survey Monkey data and transcribed oral interview transcriptions will be kept in a locked safe in the researcher's home. After five years, the information will be shredded. The electronic data collected will be protected by a username and password security. After five years, it will be permanently deleted.

Act 35 Assessments

Five of the six school districts from the first round of data collection that gave permission for the survey sent their Act 35 civics assessment to the researcher. The three school districts from the second round of data collection were not asked for their Act 35 assessments due to the timing of the data collection.

The researcher manually compared each of the Act 35 assessments to the Pennsylvania Act 35 requirements and state standards. The researcher looked at each

question in each school district's Act 35 assessment and manually identified and labeled each question. The questions were manually aligned to the state standard the question represented. The assessment questions were then manually compared, looking for similar or identical test questions across Act 35 district assessments to ensure the identifications of each question to the state standard matched across assessments. The results of the comparisons were analyzed and compiled to determine the number of questions and the degree to which each district Act 35 assessment aligned with the Pennsylvania state standards.

To connect information gathered from the survey questions and the Act 35 assessment questions, the researcher then compared each of the Act 35 assessments to the participants' survey responses. The researcher looked at each question in each school district's Act 35 assessments and aligned the questions to the survey responses. The researcher manually compared the alignment between assessment questions and survey responses to check for alignment continuity. The results of the comparisons were analyzed and compiled by hand to determine the degree to which each assessment question aligned with the survey responses.

Data Analysis

After the surveys and interviews were completed, the researcher analyzed the information collected to determine themes emerging from the responses. Data collection was arranged into three categories: (a) how social studies teachers in rural public schools define civic engagement, (b) the perceptions of social studies teachers in rural school districts of essential content associated with teaching civics, and (c) how rural public school teachers' perceptions of civics education and content align with state standards

and assessment expectations. The data were analyzed and derived from each participant's Likert-scale survey responses, open-ended survey responses, and oral interview responses.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to understand how social studies teachers in rural public schools in Pennsylvania define civic engagement, to examine the perceptions of social studies teachers regarding essential content associated with teaching civics, and to examine if the teachers' perceptions of civics education and content align with the Act 35 assessments and compared to the standards and the C3 framework.

Social studies teachers in nine school rural school districts in Pennsylvania were invited to participate in this study. The study examined teachers' perceptions of definitions of civic engagement, the essential content associated with teaching civics, and the alignment of content with state standards and assessments. Data were collected from survey questions, open-ended responses, and optional interviews. Sixteen participants completed the survey, and seven participants participated in optional follow-up interviews. Results are presented in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how social studies teachers in nine rural public school districts in Pennsylvania defined civic engagement, to examine the perceptions of social studies teachers in these districts of essential content associated with teaching civics, and to compare the Pennsylvania Act 35 requirements with Act 35 assessments. Lastly, the study examined how rural public school teachers' perceptions of civics education and content aligned with state standards and assessment expectations.

The data collected for this study included responses to Likert-scale questions, open-ended questions, and oral interview questions. The Likert-scale, open-ended, and oral interview responses were compiled and categorized based on the study's three research questions

Seven of the 16 participants who participated in the survey chose to be interviewed via Zoom or phone. Each participant was asked five questions pertaining to civic engagement, civic instruction, patriotism, and social justice in civic engagement (Appendix C).

Results of the Study

Teacher Demographics

The first question of the survey asked teachers for consent to continue the survey. Questions 2 through 6 consisted of five demographic questions, including grade level taught during the 2020-21 school year, subjects taught in social studies, the approximate number of years of teaching experience, participants' approximate ages, and participants'

genders. As shown in Table 4.1, the demographic data for questions 2 through 6 were collected via a drop-down menu (Q2) and Likert-scale options (Q3-Q6).

Table 4.1

Demographic Information for Participating Social Studies Teachers

Demographics	Number	Percent
Q2: What grade do you currently teach?		
Grade 6	1	6.25%
Grade 7	1	6.25%
Grade 8	1	6.25%
Grade 9	3	18.75%
Grade 10	4	25.00%
Grade 11	5	31.25%
Grade 12	1	6.25%
Q3: How many years have you been teaching?		
0-5	3	18.75%
11-15	3	18.75%
16-20	4	25.00%
21-25	3	18.75%
26-30	2	12.50%
31+	1	6.25%
Q4: How many years have you been teaching civics education or related subject?		
0-5	4	26.67%
6-10	2	13.33%
11-15	4	26.67%
16-20	3	20.00%
21-25	1	6.67%
26-30	1	6.67%
31+	0	0%
Q5: How old are you?		
21-29	3	18.75%
30-39	5	31.25%
40-49	4	25.00%
50-59	3	18.75%
60+	1	6.25%
Q6: Gender		
Male	9	56.25%
Female	7	43.75%

Note: N=16; 1 participant skipped Q5.

Teacher Survey Results

Research question 1: How do social studies teachers in rural school districts define civic engagement?

(RQ1): Open-ended question. Open-ended Q30, "How do you define civic engagement?" offered participants a chance to state, without text limitations, their viewpoints fully. Participants gave a range of responses to this question centered on a theme of active engagement. Most participants (93.75%) cited themes of personal involvement in society as crucial to their definitions.

In relation to being actively engaged in society, two participants (12.50%) referenced voting in elections as being important in their definition of civic engagement, while five participants (31.25%) stated the importance of being involved in society, one's community, and school. For example, Respondent 1 stated, "Individuals being involved in political matters such as voting and writing representatives." Participant 2's definition of civic engagement included, "Getting involved in your school, community, etc., by volunteering."

Additionally, six participants (37.50%) shared involvement in the political process as important to civic engagement, and seven participants (43.75%) shared that action and activism are necessary for civic engagement. For example, Respondent 5 wrote that civic engagement is "taking part in the government process at all three levels whether you disagree or agree with the policies," and Respondent 10 shared that civic engagement is "a combination of political/societal awareness paired with forms of political action/participation."

RQ1: Oral interview responses 1 (OIR1). To further ascertain the teachers' definition of civic engagement, the teachers who consented to the oral interviews shared the types of curricular expectations they facilitated in their classrooms. The teachers' responses to interview Q1, "What does the teaching of civic engagement look like in your classroom?" elicited a range of responses from each participant. Teachers A, B, and C (42.86%) had implemented a community outreach where students were expected to be actively involved in society. In contrast, Teachers D, E, F, and G (57.14%) focused on becoming aware of issues and making connections between the issues and the students' beliefs. Teacher E also encouraged the students to write legislators and to vote.

Teacher A stated that each student was required to "do a community services project together as a group" and then had to present their project to the teacher. At the end of each presentation, the class would discuss "what it means to be a good citizen and getting involved in the community." Teacher A stated that civics teachers need to "have kids understand what it means to be a good citizen." Teacher B shared each student must complete "a semester-long project" that requires the student to be engaged in "an all-community outreach and/or a political situation." The project could focus on "something about the classroom, the school or local community." Teacher B stated the students "have to go to a local meeting, and they have to make contact with several lawmakers throughout the state."

For Teacher C, as a part of teaching civic engagement in the classroom, the students were required to "work with the local and state government to try to advocate for some sort of community-based change." Teacher D stated that there are two parts to teaching civic engagement in their classroom: First, "every student is assigned a

current event report once per marking period," where the student must "pick an article of something that [we] can discuss as a class and then present it to the class" so each student has the "power to choose what they engage with." However, the teacher sets parameters and attempts to guide the students. Part 2 of teaching civic engagement in Teacher D's classroom entails making "connections to issues that [we are] facing today."

Teacher E shared the importance of "relating it [civic engagement] to real life." This teacher facilitated civic engagement in the classroom that focused on "serving your community," "going to vote," and having students "write their legislators about a topic they [the students] were interested in"; this teacher found writing to legislators essential to expose students to "real-life activities." Teacher F noted that the students "do some hands-on activities, notes, and tests," and the teacher attempts to add "real-world examples in there every once in a while when the news permits." Teacher G stated,

> Teaching civic engagement in my classroom starts with an awareness of what citizens are called to do both by our government and by our local communities and what expectations kind of exist both explicitly and implicitly on our citizens. So, you have to know what it looks like in the classroom. So it starts with just an awareness of what the ideals are of our nation, and then spreads to where they are called to participate, your duties and responsibilities, and awareness of what the government is kind of doing and working on, beginning to develop what their opinions and what their beliefs and values are, that kind of align with what the actions of the government.

RQ1: Oral interview responses 5 (OIR5). To further define civic engagement, interview Q5 asked the teachers, "What role does social justice play in your definition of

civic engagement?" For many, social justice is a phrase that elicits the idea of actively participating in society when addressing political, economic, and social issues. All teachers (100%) interviewed encouraged discussions of social justice.

Teacher A acknowledged that the question hit on "a touchy subject" while sharing, "Both social justice and civic engagement is *(sic)* taught in contemporary issues and civics where a country is based on being fair, equal, and just." Teacher A discussed with the students that it is "okay to question authority and try to look for the truth" through "discussions on certain controversial topics that we see in the news and stuff with what is going on."

Teacher B stated that "social justice is something that we should all be aware of" and "we should teach all students to strive for social equality as a part of social justice" and to be "aware of some of the past history of the United States […] while hopefully mak[ing] progress moving forward through their activism to create a more just and equal society." Teacher C stated they "encourage students to any interests that they feel is *(sic)* worth advocating for."

Teacher D shared, "I don't think you can talk about civic engagement without addressing social justice and what that means for diverse groups throughout our nation." Teacher E responded, "It's crucial to teach students to have respect for all different people," which includes class discussions of "MLK, Rosa Parks, and other people who contributed to history" and also discussing whether "we have equality today." Teacher E believes social justice can be "a targeted term that means different things to different people." Teacher E stated that an "important part of being a good citizen is treating your

fellow citizens with respect, understanding empathy, and not discriminating against anyone for any reason."

Teacher F shared they "don't do a lot of that because unfortunately, we live in a school district where there's not a lot of diversity." Teacher F and their students do "talk about civic rights when [we] talk about voting amendments […] but not really much about social justice itself." Teacher G shared,

> I think we should always be fighting for social justice. We should always be at least considering it. The reason why we vote is to improve social justice. Students need to prove and defend the rights of others, including ourselves. You can always have a keen eye on social justice as you're engaging civically. So, whether that's writing your congressmen and voting, a person is civically engaged.

Research question 2: What are the perceptions of social studies teachers in rural school districts regarding essential content associated with teaching civics?

RQ2: Essential content, part B. The second research question pertains to the perceptions of social studies teachers in rural school districts regarding essential content associated with teaching civics. Likert-scale survey questions 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16 pertained to civics topics facilitated by teachers to encourage civic engagement in society. Part B of the online survey focused on the following questions: "What should students learn to become good citizens?" and "To facilitate the development of civically engaged students, students need to learn the importance of…" When answering these questions, participants chose the following response options: Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly disagree.

Educators rated their agreement with several items when considering civics topics that could be considered essential to encouraging civic engagement in the classroom. Most questions received strong agreement, but a few had some disagreement. None of the participants strongly disagreed with any questions in this section. The following participants' responses were arranged based on a consensus of an agreement to disagreement.

Q13 focused on "Knowing about the country's history…" All 16 (100%) participants indicated they strongly agreed. All 16 participants responded to Q7, "Considering multiple perspectives.". Fourteen (87.50%) participants strongly agreed, while two (12.50%) participants agreed.

Of the participants who responded to Q11, "Understanding the justice system," 14 participants strongly agreed (87.50%), while two (12.50%) agreed. Thirteen (81.25%) participants strongly agreed with Q14, "Developing media literacy skills to critically analyze political and social issues," while three (18.75%) participants agreed.

In Q10, "Participating in local and national elections," 12 (80.00%) participants strongly agreed, and three (20.00%) agreed. The next Likert-scale survey option, Q9, inquired about the importance of "Developing empathy" in students. Thirteen (81.25%) participants strongly agreed, while two (12.50%) agreed, and one (6.25%) disagreed.

Q12 referenced the focus on "Participating in a peaceful protest against a law believed to be unjust." Ten (62.50%) participants strongly agreed, while five participants (31.25%) agreed and one (6.25%) disagreed. For Q8, "Collective action," nine (56.25%) strongly agreed, six (37.50%) agreed, and one (6.25%) disagreed.

Q15 focused on “Taking part in activities promoting human rights.”. Seven (43.75%) participants strongly agreed, seven participants (43.75%) agreed, and two participants (12.50%) disagreed. The last question about encouraging civic engagement, Q16, inquired about the educators’ viewpoints on facilitating “Being patriotic and loyal (devoted) to the country.” Seven (43.75%) participants strongly agreed, seven (43.75%) agreed, and two (12.50%) disagreed. All responses to Q7 through Q16 are presented in Table 4.2.

Additionally, as shown in Table 4.2, the teachers disagreed with the importance of facilitating collective action, developing empathy, participating in activities promoting human rights, and being patriotic and loyal to the country.

Table 4.2

Topics Facilitated to Encourage Civic Engagement

B. What should students learn to become good citizens? To facilitate the development of civically engaged students, students need to learn the importance of…

Survey Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Q7 Considering multiple perspectives…	14 (87.50%)	2 (12.50%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Q8 Collective action…	9 (56.25%)	6 (37.50%)	1 (6.25%)	0 (0%)
Q9 Developing empathy…	13 (81.25%)	2 (12.50%)	1 (6.25%)	0 (0%)
Q10 Participating in local and national elections…	12 (80.00%)	3 (20.00%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Q11 Understanding the justice system…	14 (87.50%)	2 (12.50%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Q12 Participating in a peaceful protest against a law believed to be unjust…	10 (62.50%)	5 (31.25%)	1 (6.25%)	0 (0%)
Q13 Knowing about the country's history…	16 (100.00%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Q14 Developing media literacy skills to critically analyze political and social issues…	13 (81.25%)	3 (18.75%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Q15 Taking part in activities promoting human rights…	7 (43.75%)	7 (43.75%)	2 (12.50%)	0 (0%)
Q16 Being patriotic and loyal (devoted) to the country…	7 (43.75%)	7 (43.75%)	2 (12.50%)	0 (0%)

Note. $N = 16$; numbers are based on survey questions and responses to the questions; Q10 had only 15 responses.

RQ2: Oral interview responses (OIR2). To support the facilitation of essential content in civics education, students need to develop the critical skills necessary to "discern the credibility and veracity of sponsored content and news sources" (Jeffrey & Sargrad, 2019, p. 11). As a part of addressing the active engagement component in the classroom, Q2, in the oral interviews, asked the participants, "How do you help students

develop media literacy and critical analysis skills through your instruction?" All (100%) respondents agreed that facilitating critical analysis skills and media literacy discernment was important. However, there were no fundamental similarities in how each teacher encouraged the development of such skills.

Teacher A stated, "Media literacy skills is *(sic)* trying to find reliable resources via the Internet and TV." Teacher A shared that prior to assigning papers or projects, they "do a little mini-lesson on how to find reliable resources" and conduct a "whole unit on media literacy" looking at "media bias" and "different media networks and trying to understand what their bias was" while "trying to kind of establish what the actual truth was from what they [news sources] were trying to portray."

Teacher B stated they "have them [students] do a couple of projects" where they "have to seek out information on multiple platforms. Their goal is to identify media bias." Teacher C stated they implement a "lesson on media literacy and media bias" in their classroom, and "throughout the entire year after that lesson," the students must "find multiple news sources with different opinions so that they [students] can try to see through the politics, specifically about government."

Teacher D requires students to work with the school librarian to "develop some of those critical thinking skills to analyze the resources" and to "find a good online source." Teacher E discusses with students the "use of credible sources." In terms of the media, the teacher and students "talk about the different viewpoints and about how the media can be biased." Teacher F tries to "push them [students] to look at multiple sources for information" and not "just rely on the mainstream media." Teacher F further stated they encourage the students "to go out there and find some other things."

Teacher G shared,

> I referenced current events very frequently throughout my year. One of the cooler activities they do in that regard is we look at some headlines. I was actually copying and pasting some articles into a Word document that I can open later this summer that's perfect to show them, to bring up some points as to how to evaluate this headline and information in this online article. We talk about the idea of media sources being biased themselves and having their own objective ideas for policy. A cool thing we looked at, we have a section where we analyze former presidential campaign commercials and just try to look at those in terms of aspects of what kind of picture they are trying to paint: What are they trying to highlight in these commercials?

RQ2: Civics education topics, part C. The focus for Part C of the survey was educators' perceptions of topics they facilitate in the classroom. Survey questions 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, and 29 pertained to civics education topics teachers perceived as essential in the classroom. *Topics* refer to the general ideas to be discussed and learned, while *content* refers to specific information to be facilitated and learned. The questions for civics education topics required participants to choose from the following options: Very important, Important, Of little importance, and Not important. The following section arranged the questions based on participants' consensus on most important to least important responses. Overall, participants had a general consensus, with ten questions eliciting agreement, while three elicited responses that differed from the full agreement. Notably, one participant believed the inclusion of social justice was

not important to facilitating civics education, the only "not important" response out of all the questions.

The first question, Q17, inquired about educators' responsibility for facilitating "Constitutions and state/political institutions." Fourteen (87.50%) participants selected *Very important,* while two (12.50%) chose *Important.* The next question, Q18, focused on "Citizens' rights and obligations." Fourteen (87.50%) participants indicated they were *Very important,* while two (12.50%) chose *Important*.

The participants' choices for Q23, "Important events in the nation's history," indicated that 14 (87.50%) believed this topic to be *Very important* in teaching civics, while two (12.50%) thought it was *Important.* The participants' beliefs about "The judicial system" in Q21 were divided between 13 (81.25%) choosing *Very important* and three (18.75%) choosing *Important.*

The inclusion of "Human and civil rights" in Q22 as necessary to a civics education curriculum was regarded by 12 (75.00%) participants as *Very important,* while four (25%) participants believed it to be *Important.* For the last question in the survey about topics to be taught in the civics education curriculum, Q29, "Dangers of propaganda and manipulation," 12 (75%) participants indicated the topic was *Very important,* while four (25%) participants thought it was *Important.* Q20 focused on "Election and electoral systems" as part of civics education. Ten (66.67%) participants indicated this topic was *Very important,* while five (33.33%) chose *Important*.

Regarding the teaching of "Civic virtues" in the classroom in Q28, ten (66.67%) participants chose *Very important,* while five (33.33%) chose *Important*. For the question "International problems and relations" in Q24, nine (56.25%) participants chose *Very*

important, and seven (43.75%) thought it was *Important*.

The next question, Q26, pertained to teaching "Economic issues" in civics education; eight (50%) participants labeled it *Very important,* and eight (50%) indicated it was *Important*. Regarding the teaching of "Different/comparative political systems" in Q19, eight (50.00%) participants indicated it was *Very important,* while seven (43.75%) chose *Important* and one (6.25%) chose *Of little importance.*

As a part of civics education in the curriculum, Q25, "Migration of people," six (37.50%) participants thought it was *Very important,* nine (56.25%) indicated it was *Important,* and one (6.25%) considered the topic to be *Of little importance*. In the next question, Q27, pertaining to the facilitation of "Social Justice" in the civics education curriculum, ten (66.67%) indicated the topic was *Very Important,* while three (20.00%) believed it to be *Important*, one (6.67%) indicated it was *Of little importance,* and one (6.67%) chose *Not important.* Q17-29 are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Civics Education Topics

A. How important do you think is this topic for civics education?

Survey Questions	Very Important	Important	Of Little Importance	Not Important
Q17 Constitutions and state/political institutions…	14 (87.50%)	2 (12.50%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Q18 Citizen's rights and obligations…	14 (87.50%)	2 (12.50%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Q19 Different/Comparative political systems…	8 (50.00%)	7 (43.75%)	1 (6.25%)	0 (0%)
Q20 Election and electoral systems…	10 (66.67%)	5 (33.33%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Q21 The judicial system…	13 (81.25%)	3 (18.75%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Q22 Human and civil rights…	12 (75.00%)	4 (25.00%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Q23 Important events in the nation's history…	14 (87.50%)	2 (12.50%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Q24 International problems and relations…	9 (56.25%)	7 (43.75%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Q25 Migration of people…	6 (37.50%)	9 (56.25%)	1 (6.25%)	0 (0%)
Q26 Economic issues…	8 (50.00%)	8 (50.00%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Q27 Social Justice…	10 (66.67%)	3 (20.00%)	1 (6.67%)	1 (6.67%)
Q28 Civic virtues…	10 (66.67%)	5 (33.33%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Q29 Dangers of propaganda and manipulation…	12 (75.00%)	4 (25.00%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Note. N=16; numbers are based on survey questions and responses to the questions; Q28 received 15 responses.

RQ2: Oral interview response 3 (OIR3). Q3 of the oral interview asked, "What are the important facts, events, or topics you believe students need to understand about

our country's history?" RQ2 elicited responses from interviewees that focused on the essential content associated with teaching civics.

Teachers A, E, F, and G (57.14%) stated the importance of learning and discussing the Constitution. For Teachers B, C, and D (42.86%), interview Q3 discussed historical viewpoints from various societal stakeholders. Furthermore, Teachers A, C, and D (42.86%) shared that learning history was essential to understanding the U.S.'s background.

Teacher A believed students "just need to understand how our government works" and that "a lot of kids coming out into the real world after high-school really […] don't have a good grasp of how our government works. That's what leads to […] going back to being a good citizen […] and participating." Teacher A further postulated that "it's important to understand our basic history, where we started from, and where we've come" and that "we don't want to make the same mistakes we made in the past." Teacher B believed, "The topic should be inclusive to what has made us [the United States] stronger or what had taught us a lesson as a country" and "how to behave both domestically and internationally" because understanding basic history is the student's "responsibility as a citizen." Teacher C maintained that students "need to understand the rationale for our democracy" pertaining to "what we aim to achieve and its origins" and "how we continue to strive to protect our democratic republic." Teacher C shared, "It's essential for citizens to not only be knowledgeable but to participate in civic discourse." Furthermore, Teacher C stated people should participate "in their local, state, and national elections."

Teacher D maintained the importance of "always try[ing] to provide a well-balanced view of history" by telling "all sides of the story." Teacher D "refrains from sharing [their] own beliefs" because it is their job to teach the students to think independently and to "provide instruction that involves both great men of history, the lives of the common man, and other oppressed minorities within our country." Teacher E facilitates "understand[ing] the basic principles that are a part of the Constitution" and "what an amendment is and what the important amendments are." Teacher E shared students should learn about the "two-party system as well as the role of other parties that can kind of serve as a spoiler effect on elections" in addition to encouraging the students to understand "the presidents and what each contributed to history."

Teacher F likes "to start the very beginning with the colonies and their development" because it leads to "our documents, like the Declaration and ultimately the Constitution and Bill of Rights." Teacher G shared their school

> does not have a formal social studies class until seventh grade and, when they get to me, they dabble in some things in fifth and sixth grade, and each year I have to reach out to those teachers in fifth and sixth grade that are at our intermediate building and ask, "How far did you get? What did you cover this year?" So, about our history, I'm always asking myself that same question to see what I need to go, that they even understand. So, I think there needs to be a basic understanding of what government looks like or are employed, what government looked like prior to the United States of America, part of the Constitution. And, we look at that in terms of the king and various taxes. […] As we are leading up to the revolution, we look at it compared to the Articles of Confederation that comes first. You need

> to really understand where the fears of the Founding Fathers fears were. And, we're to understand a lot of the decisions that were made in our Constitution today in terms of checks and balances and things like that. [For example,] division of the three branches, separation, power, and whatnot. I think that this is the gist of what they really need to know in order to understand what our Constitution is striving to accomplish.

RQ2: Oral interview responses 4 (OIR4). The focus on the essential content necessary for civics education and the ongoing debate surrounding what is essential to facilitate in the public school classroom centers on leading students toward patriotism. Q4 of the oral interviews asked, "What are your thoughts about what it means to be patriotic and how you address this through your teaching?"

Teachers A and E (28.57%) spoke of learning to respect the American flag, while Teacher G spoke of facilitating a discussion on the love of one's country. Teachers B, C, and D (42.86%) believed engagement in society was important to patriotism, and Teachers A, C, and E (42.86%) mentioned the importance of learning about the history of the United States.

Teacher A stated they "hit this topic a lot" when discussing "contemporary issues" such as 9/11 and when talking "about patriotism." Teacher A shared the students look "at the flag and what it means to everybody and how it affects patriotism of the current age." Additionally, Teacher A facilitates civics learning by looking at "first amendment rights and free speech" and how "those conflict sometimes with patriotism or feelings of patriotism."

Teacher B stated, “Patriotism is showing an awareness and interest in learning facts and information so you can be an activist within the legal confines of the system.” Teacher B maintained, “Activism is a really important part of being aware and civic education is being involved in your community.”

Teacher C stated, “It’s patriotic to have an understanding of our nation’s history, and it’s patriotic to want to learn about it and to want to participate in our government for voting or through other acts of community service.” Teacher C stated students are encouraged “to be registered to vote and to learn as much as possible about the history that created their world we live in today, the country we live in today.” Teacher D acknowledged students should be able “to understand that patriotism is engagement and strongly believing and being able to support what you believe in.” Teacher D encourages student patriotism through “current event reports that we do four or five times a marking period when students take turns presenting” and shared it is important to “teach them [students] how to be respectful to each other, but also how to engage and support their beliefs with facts from what they have read online.”

Like Teacher D, Teacher E maintained, “Being patriotic is understanding our country’s history and respecting the important people that contributed to history.” Teacher E shared, “I don’t think patriotism means you always have to agree with everything in your country,” while stating, “students should learn basic respect for their country, respecting the flag, and respecting the National Anthem.” As for how Teacher E conducts their class, the teacher shares with students how “super-patriotic” they are and discusses the “difference between patriotism and fascism.”

Teacher F covers “patriotic symbols” and “patriotic music” with their students, facilitating an activity where the students “find historical spots and travel around the country.” Teacher G shared,

> That’s a loaded question. I'm very clear with my students that we [teachers] are not people who feel it’s our duty to share our opinions and our beliefs, as in terms of specifically what our government is doing or not doing, but to set them up in a place where those conversations can be welcomed and happen. They can start formulating their own opinion on certain things. I think being patriotic today, the basic definition is to love your country and defend your country. You’ve got a difference of opinions, so I try to really impress upon my student that it’s important for you to figure out what you believe is in the best interest of Americans to fight for but to never lose a grip on listening to each other. And that what listening to each other and dialogue each other is what the foundation of our truly great Republic looks like.

Research Question 3: How do rural public school teachers' perceptions of civics education and content align with state standards and assessment expectations?

RQ3: Civics assessments and Pennsylvania Civics and Government standards. This study includes five of the nine participating school districts’ Pennsylvania Act 35 civics tests. The assessments were analyzed and compared to the expectations of the Act 35 requirements, including the Pennsylvania SSAS (PDESAS, 2020). The SSAS are guidelines for educators to facilitate a cohesive, uniformed curriculum, ensuring all students in the Commonwealth receive a high-quality, rigorous education (PDESAS, 2020). Pennsylvania’s recommended Civics and Government

standards cover the historical foundations of the United States government, the United States Constitution, and the criteria for what makes an informed citizenry (Appendix I). The SSAS in Civics and Government were intended to focus on what the PDE believed would provide an intentional education about the historical and foundational aspects of the U.S. government (PDESAS, 2020).

In July 2019, the PDE supported school districts and educators in guiding instruction and assessments through the Materials and Resources in Support of Act 35 of 2018 Assessment of Civic Knowledge (PDE, 2019a). The PDE identified three pillars to provide a quality civics education curriculum: knowledge, skills, and actions. Knowledge is defined as "a fundamental understanding of government structure and the processes by which government passes laws and makes policy" (PDESAS, 2020, p. 4). Skills are defined as "abilities necessary to participate as active and responsible citizens in a democracy" (PDESAS, 2020, p. 4). Finally, actions are defined as "activities of citizens that include voting, participating in community meetings, volunteering, communicating with elected and appointed officials, signing petitions" (PDESAS, 2020, p. 4).

Furthermore, the PDE (2019) provided school districts and educators with 17 sample questions indicating the structure and type of questions the state deemed acceptable. The sample questions were aligned with PA SSAS for Civics and Government and included multiple-choice questions such as, "What is the basic purpose of all governments?"; "What form of government is established by the United States Constitution?" (p. 14); and "What has been the lasting importance of the National Road in U.S. History?" (p. 20). The sample assessment questions provided by the PDE suggest

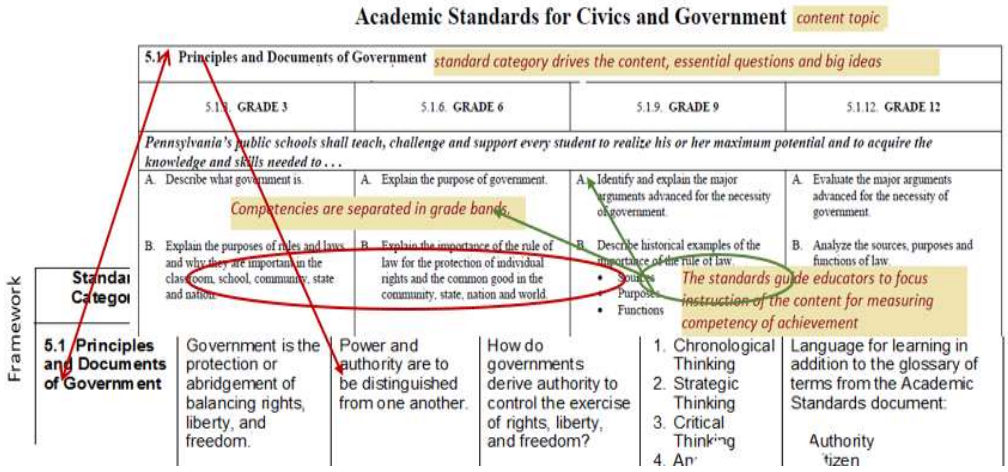
the tests focus on students learning factual information without emphasizing active engagement.

The questions on the Act 35 civics tests received from each district were analyzed and compared to the Civics and Government and the History SSAS to determine alignment. The SASS for Civics and Government and History were written to guide K-12 instructors on what students should know and be able to do at various stages of learning (PDESAS, 2020). For this research, the Civics and Government standards for Grade 12 (Appendix I) were utilized when aligning the civics tests and the History standards for Grade 12 (Appendix J).

The SSAS for Civics and Government in secondary education are available for Grades 7, 8, 9, and 12. For example, SSAS number 5.1.12.D for Civics and Government standards, which stands for "5.1 – Principles and Documents of Government," is that the "standard category drives the content, essential questions, and big ideas" (SSCF, 2019, p. 2). The number 12 denotes the grade level at which the student should know and be able to apply the content topic. And the letter D identifies the content topic for "measuring competency of achievement" (SSCF, 2019, p. 2).

Figure 4.1

Explanation of the PA Academic Standards



Note: Social Studies Curriculum Framework (PDESAS, 2019b, p. 2).

The SSCF (PDESAS, 2019b) provides a guide for educators that includes "Big Ideas, Concepts, Competencies, Essential Questions, and Vocabulary," as shown in Figure 4.1 (p. 2). Class instruction may be designed using the SSAS for the intended outcome of student competencies. The Civics and Government standards are comprised of four categories: Principles and Documents of Government, Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship, How Government Works, and How International Relationships Function. Each category contains a series of standards. The Principles and Documents of Government category contains six specific standards spanning 5.1.12.A to 5.1.12.F. The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship category encompasses standards 5.2.12.A to 5.2.12.D. The How Government Works category contains standards 5.3.12.A to 5.3.12.J, and the How International Relationships Function category is comprised of standards 5.4.12.A to 5.4.12.E (Appendix I). For this research, the Civics and Government

standards and the History standards were aligned with the five Act 35 civics tests (Table 4.4).

While Pennsylvania requires a civics test at some point in all students' secondary school careers, most of the schools represented by teachers who completed the survey gave the Act 35 test during the students' high-school careers. Therefore, the Grade 12 SSAS were utilized to identify the standards represented on the school districts' Act 35 civics assessments. As shown in Table 4.4, the Act 35 civics assessments questions were primarily focused on Principles and Documents of Government and How Government Works. The table also shows the number of questions from each respective school district's Act 35 assessment that correspond to the standards. As noted before, the assessment questions loosely align with the standards, as many of the standards entail active wording while the assessments contain questions that elicit fact-based responses.

Table 4.4

Number of Civics Questions on the School Districts' Act 35 Civics Assessments for Each Category of the PA Standards.

Standards	District A	District B	District C	District D	District E	District F
Principles and Documents of Government	N/A	28	20	11	12	27
Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship	N/A	3	2	11	2	8
How Government Works	N/A	34	15	43	9	58
How International Relationships Function	N/A	0	0	0	0	0

Note: District A did not provide an Act 35 civics test. Numbers represent only Civics and Government standards.

RQ3: Civics assessments and Pennsylvania History standards. The SSAS History standards were also developed for Grades 7, 8, 9, and 12. The categories for the History standards include Historical Analysis and Skills Development, Pennsylvania History, United States History, and World History. For Historical Analysis and Skills Development, there are three standards: 8.1.12.A to 8.1.12.C. The Pennsylvania History standards contain 8.2.12.A to 8.2.12.D. The United States History standards are comprised of 8.3.12.A to 8.3.12.D. The World History standards include 8.4.12.A to 8.4.12.D (Appendix J). The standards are to be used by teachers as a guide for creating curriculum for student competency on the Act 35 civics test (Appendix J).

For the History standards in the Historical Analysis and Skills Development category, Districts C and E had zero questions on their Act 35 civics assessments. Districts C and F did not include the Pennsylvania History category. All five Act 35 civics assessments provided questions under the United States History category, and only District B represented World History was only represented by District B (Appendix J).

Table 4.5 demonstrates the Pennsylvania standards represented on the school districts' civics tests. It also shows the number of questions from each respective school district's Act 35 assessment that correspond to the standards. As noted above, the assessment questions loosely align with the standards, as many of the standards entail active wording while the assessments contain questions that elicit fact-based responses.

Table 4.5

Number of History Questions on the School Districts' Act 35 Civics Assessments for Each Category of the PA Standards

Standards	District A	District B	District C	District D	District E	District F
Grade 12: Historical Analysis and Skills Development						
	N/A	17	0	31	0	1
Pennsylvania History						
	N/A	3	0	2	1	0
United States History						
	N/A	9	2	10	6	5
World History						
	N/A	2	0	0	0	0

Note: District A did not provide an Act 35 civics test. Numbers represent only History Standards.

RQ3: Open-ended responses. The second open-ended question, Q31, asked the participants to "Please explain your involvement and familiarity with the development of the Act 35 civics assessment in your district." Five respondents (31.25%) stated they were familiar with the Act 35 assessment or directly involved in aligning the civics assessment to the Act 35 requirements.

Respondents indicated a range of familiarity with the assessment, from being very familiar with Act 35 to not knowing anything about it. For example, Respondent 11 shared they were "very involved" and "were part of the team of teachers that put it together," and the Act 35 test was "based on the Citizenship test." Respondent 12 shared, "As a department, we created a district test that meets the Act 35 requirements based on the PA State Standards." The eight participants (50.00%) who indicated having no direct involvement with the Act 35 alignment to the civics test stated they were not involved in

making the Act 35 civics assessment for their districts or admitted to being unfamiliar with the Act 35 civics assessment.

RQ3: Act 35 civics assessments compared to survey questions. The school districts' Act 35 civics assessment questions were compared to the survey questions. The number of school districts' Act 35 civics assessment questions aligned with the Likert-scale questions can be found in Tables 4.6 and 4.7. Based on their Likert-scale responses, the tables demonstrate the comparison of the school districts' Act 35 civics assessment questions to teachers' perceptions of what they considered important. Likert-scale survey questions 7-16 in Table 4.6 focus on the topics or components that may be the basis for the civics curricular content. For example, as demonstrated in Table 4.6, "Knowing about the country's history," several school districts' Act 35 civics assessment questions were well-represented compared to all other topics. It is important to note that the Pennsylvania Act 35 civics assessment specifically designates civics and history be assessed on school-mandated assessments. The state requirements do not specifically include the other topics listed in Table 4.6, such as "Taking part in activities promoting human rights" or "Being patriotic and loyal (devoted) to the country."

Table 4.6

Number of Districts' Act 35 Assessment Questions That Align with the Survey Questions

Survey Question	District A	District B	District C	District D	District E	District F
Q7 Considering multiple perspectives…	N/A	1	0	0	0	4
Q8 Collective action…	N/A	0	0	0	0	0
Q9 Developing empathy…	N/A	0	0	0	0	0
Q10 Participating in local and national elections…	N/A	0	0	0	0	0
Q11 Understanding the justice system…	N/A	0	0	0	0	0
Q12 Participating in a peaceful protest against a law believed to be unjust…	N/A	0	0	0	0	0
Q13 Knowing about the country's history…	N/A	20	2	32	5	10
Q14 Developing media literacy skills to critically analyze political and social issues…	N/A	0	0	0	0	2
Q15 Taking part in activities promoting human rights…	N/A	0	0	0	0	0
Q16 Being patriotic and loyal (devoted) to the country…	N/A	0	0	0	0	0

Note: Test numbers are based on each district's assessment. Geography questions were not included.

Similarly, Table 4.7 aligns the school districts' Act 35 civics assessment questions with the Likert-scale survey questions. Survey questions 17-29 focused on the essential content teachers perceived to be important in teaching civics. Table 4.7 shows how the areas of essential content are demonstrated through the districts' Act 35 assessments. For

example, "Constitutions and state/political institutions" and "Important events in the nation's history" are heavily represented on Pennsylvania's Act 35 civics assessments, while in comparison, few to no questions focused on the other content questions.

Table 4.7

Number of Districts' Act 35 Assessment Questions That Align with the Survey Questions

Survey Questions	District A	District B	District C	District D	District E	District F
Q17 Constitutions and state/political institutions…	N/A	44	30	53	12	30
Q18 Citizen's rights and obligations…	N/A	1	0	7	1	12
Q19 Different/Comparative political systems…	N/A	0	0	0	2	4
Q20 Election and electoral systems…	N/A	5	0	8	1	10
Q21 The Judicial System…	N/A	1	3	0	1	11
Q22 Human and civil rights…	N/A	3	0	8	0	2
Q23 Important events in the nation's history…	N/A	17	3	11	4	0
Q24 International problems and relations…	N/A	0	0	0	1	0
Q25 Migration of people…	N/A	0	0	0	1	1
Q26 Economic issues…	N/A	1	0	2	0	8
Q27 Social Justice…	N/A	0	0	2	0	4
Q28 Civic virtues…	N/A	0	0	0	0	1
Q29 Dangers of propaganda and manipulation…	N/A	0	0	0	0	0

Note: Test numbers are based on each district's assessment. Geography questions were not included.

Summary

This qualitative study examined how social studies teachers in rural Pennsylvania school districts defined civic engagement. Additionally, the study examined the teachers' perceptions of essential content associated with teaching civics based on Pennsylvania Act 35 assessments. Finally, the study examined how rural public school teachers' perceptions of civics education aligned with state standards and assessment expectations.

This chapter presented the data collected from 28 Likert-scale survey responses, two open-ended survey responses, and interviews. Further discussion, analysis, and the study's limitations are provided in Chapter 5. The next chapter also includes suggestions for further research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This qualitative study investigated how social studies teachers in rural Pennsylvania public school districts defined civic engagement. The study examined their perceptions of essential content associated with teaching civics. Additionally, this study explored how public school teachers' perceptions of civics education and content aligned with the Pennsylvania SSAS and Pennsylvania's Act 35 assessment expectations. A summary of how teachers in rural public schools defined civic engagement along with the social studies teachers' perceptions of essential content associated with teaching civics are discussed in this chapter. This chapter provides a summary analysis of how the teachers' perceptions of civics education and content align with the Act 35 assessments and the C3 framework in rural public schools in Pennsylvania.

Summary of the Study

The eligible participants for this study were 16 social studies teachers who volunteered from nine rural school districts, including high-schools, middle-schools, and junior/senior high-schools in Pennsylvania. Eligible participants provided data for this study through an online survey and voluntary follow-up interviews. Participants received a survey consisting of six demographic items, 23 Likert-scale items, and two open-ended questions. Additionally, participants were asked to participate in follow-up interview questions. The researcher used Survey Monkey to administer the survey. Participants had the opportunity to volunteer for the oral interview at the end of the survey. Seven participants consented to be interviewed via Zoom or phone call.

The survey results and responses were categorized based on the three research questions. Participants' open-ended responses were manually compiled for each question.

The oral interview questions were also manually compiled based on each question and aligned with the three research questions. The oral interviews were recorded using Temi, an online app, and transcribed and shared with each respondent to allow them to check for accuracy and clarify or add information if necessary.

Summary of Results

The purpose of this study was to solicit social studies teachers' definitions of civic engagement and their perceptions of the essential content necessary for civics education. The study also sought to determine how the Pennsylvania Act 35 requirements aligned with the school districts' Act 35 civics assessments and the C3 framework. To yield themes in the data, all results and responses were manually compiled and analyzed as they pertained to the three research questions.

Research Question 1: How do social studies teachers in rural school districts define civic engagement?

The majority of participants' (93.75%) responses to open-ended questions indicated that personal involvement in society was important to civic engagement, even if that only occurred through voting. Participant responses suggested active participation included "taking part in the government process" and being "aware of current events/issues impacting" the country. However, there was no consensus on what defined civic engagement across all teachers.

Based on the aggregate data from the interview questions, most teachers (71.43%) indicated that civic engagement in their classrooms involved requiring students to participate in their school, the community actively, or state or by attending a "local meeting" and writing to lawmakers or representatives in the state. Only three (42.86%)

teachers required the students to work in the community to encourage change or volunteer their time. Additionally, the interview questions revealed that most teachers (71.43%) indicated the importance of having students understand how current issues are relevant to their lives to make connections to issues and events taking place locally, nationally, and internationally.

To further support encouraging students to become civically engaged, an analysis of the data revealed that 100% of the interviewed teachers encouraged social justice discussions. However, one (14.29%) teacher acknowledged that the topic was a "touchy subject." Another teacher (14.29%) stated that social justice can be "a targeted term that means different things to different people." While some rural schools may be limited in diversity and students have little interaction with people from varying cultures and races, two (28.57%) teachers appeared to acknowledge that the term *social justice* elicits an adverse reaction. One teacher pointed to the importance of discussing "controversial topics that we see in the news and stuff" and that an "important part of being a good citizen is treating your fellow citizens with respect, understanding empathy, and not discriminating against anyone for any reason."

There is a lack of consensus regarding social justice as an essential topic to civics education, which may suggest that not all civics courses provide similar instruction. It may also suggest that much of the content to be facilitated is left to individual teachers. For example, the topic of social justice elicited many responses when teachers were asked, "How important do you think is this topic for civic education?" in the online survey. Aggregate data revealed a majority of teachers (87.50%) believed it was

important, while two (12.50%) did not think it necessary to include the topic of social justice in the class curricula.

The teachers' civic engagement definitions and interview responses rarely reflected the importance of the essential content topics. Addressing social justice through civic engagement did not appear to be thoroughly explored in all the classroom settings. Teacher responses suggest social justice may be facilitated in a variety of ways. Their responses also demonstrated that social justice issues were mainly discussed in terms of history and were attributed to non-White individuals. Not all teachers believed it was important to include social justice in civics education.

Research Question 2: What are the perceptions of social studies teachers in rural school districts regarding essential content associated with teaching civics?

Survey data from the Likert-scale questions and interviews were used to evaluate social studies teachers' perceptions regarding essential content associated with teaching civics. The aggregate data from Likert-scale responses pertaining to teachers' perceptions showed a majority of participants agreed on what students should learn. Listed in order of strong agreement to disagreement, five (50.00%) of the survey questions that focused on topics that encouraged civic engagement (Q7, Q10, Q11, Q13, & Q14) received full agreement from participants. The other five questions (Q8, Q9, Q12, Q15, & Q16) received 93.75% agreement or 87.50% agreement. Although the majority of participants' survey responses to the Likert-scale questions in Part B agreed on what students should learn to become civically engaged, almost all the school districts' Act 35 assessment questions of what students should learn to become civically engaged were focused on "Knowing about the country's history" (questions 20, 2, 32, 5, and 10, respectively)

compared to almost no questions on the assessment addressing what teachers stated was important in their survey responses. Although the participants' survey responses point to the importance of the topics, the topics were not assessed through the school districts' Act 35 civics assessments.

Additionally, through the oral interview responses, the teachers' perceptions of what students learn focused on learning about the Constitution (57.14%), history (42.86%), and patriotism (100.00%). The teachers' interview responses displayed limited agreement on learning about the principles of government and history and strong agreement about what it means to be patriotic. While most teachers agreed on the importance of learning about government structures, it was not clear how they went about teaching these concepts. Additionally, all the teachers believed facilitating learning on what it means to be patriotic was important, but the focus on what to teach varied across the teachers.

Questions in Part C of the survey (Q17-29) focused on civics education topics to teach and how important those topics were for civics education. The participants' survey responses demonstrated a majority consensus on the educational content to be facilitated in the classroom. There were only four instances where one participant believed a topic to be of little importance and one instance where the participant believed the topic to be not important. However, when comparing the participants' survey responses to the school districts' Act 35 civics assessments, most Act 35 civics assessment questions aligned with "Constitutions and state/political institutions" (questions 44, 30, 53, 12, & 30, respectively). The school districts' Act 35 assessments varied in the number of questions

aligned with the other topics participants rated as important to civics education, with many content topics not represented in the Act 35 assessments.

As reported in their survey responses, the teachers' perceptions of what is essential content and the lack of representation of this essential content in the school districts' Act 35 civics assessments suggest a disconnect in perceptions of what is important in civics education. The lack of formally adopted SSAS could precipitate this disconnect. Pennsylvania's lack of consensus on the essential content to be facilitated in the classroom may be partly responsible for the lack of alignment between school districts' Act 35 civics assessments. Furthermore, the lack of adopted standards could be the underlying reason the educators' focus on and facilitation of what they believe to be essential content varies depending on the topic and the teacher.

Research Question 3: How do rural public school teachers' perceptions of civics education and content align with state standards and assessment expectations?

As part of the survey, the third research question asked, "How do rural public school teachers' perceptions of civics education and content align with state standards and assessment expectations?" Open-ended Q31 asked participants to "Please explain your involvement and familiarity with the development of the Act 35 civics assessment in your district." The teachers elicited many similar responses in that half (50.00%) of participants admitted to knowing very little about the content alignment of civics with state standards and Act 35 assessment expectations. Teacher responses such as "I do not have direct involvement in its development" and "I am not familiar with it" may demonstrate a need to provide professional development on the Act 35 requirements.

However, five (31.25%) participants acknowledged being directly involved with aligning the Pennsylvania Act 35 requirements to the state-mandated civics exam. The teacher alignment of the Act 35 civics assessments to the Act 35 requirements appears to be related to the subject the teacher facilitates. If the social studies teacher does not teach civics, the teacher may have zero involvement in creating the Act 35 civics assessment. It may be pertinent for social studies teachers to receive professional development to understand the intentions of the Act 35 mandate for school districts' civics assessments.

Analysis of school districts' Act 35 assessment to the SSAS revealed a theme that the districts' Act 35 assessments in Civics and Government and History are loosely aligned with the SSAS. The SSAS contains active wording such as *analyze, evaluate,* and *compare and contrast.* The school districts' Act 35 civics assessments primarily elicited fact-based responses. The school districts' Act 35 assessments ranged from 30 questions to 128 questions, with four of the five assessments set up for multiple-choice responses and one assessment calling for the student to give a factual written response.

To further explore content alignment, the Act 35 assessment questions were compared to the indicators of the C3 framework, which is supported by the NCSS (2013) and forms the foundation for what is thought to be essential when creating curricular content in social studies. The districts' Act 35 assessment questions were manually aligned with the C3 framework's civics and history indicators (Appendices K & L). The C3 framework's indicators came from the civics and history guidelines. As the guidelines are worded for active engagement and academic learning behaviors, there is a difference between which assessment questions aligned to the SSAS and which aligned to the C3 framework. The words *evaluate, analyze, use appropriate deliberative processes, apply,*

distinguish, critique, and *explain* mostly suggest active academic processes versus choosing from multiple-choice responses or writing in a response that asks, for example, "How many senators are there from each state?"

Additionally, the history indicators require primary and secondary sources, evidence and reasoning, consideration of many points of view, and research similarities and differences (NCSS, 2013). A multiple-choice assessment often fails to include such considerations. Lastly, this research examined the number of school districts' Act 35 assessment questions that align with the survey questions. As stated previously, the lack of alignment between the Act 35 mandate and the lack of active participation as a part of the Act 35 school districts' assessment may demonstrate a need for professional development.

Limitations

There were several limitations to the present study. The small sample of participants hardly represents all social studies teachers. It only covered nine school districts in a rural area in Pennsylvania. The low participation could partly be due to the survey's focus on teaching civics education when not all social studies teachers are assigned to teach civics education. Additionally, the demographics shown in Table 3.1 depicts a lack of diversity among students which suggests there may be a lack of diversity among respondents. Lastly, as the survey and interviews focused on educators in rural public schools, it must be noted that the research and data collection was conducted during a very trying time in U.S. history. The COVID-19 pandemic required a paradigm shift in that many, or most, teachers in the state of Pennsylvania had to learn how to teach students in the classroom, online synchronously, online synchronously with students also

in the classroom, or online asynchronously – for some teachers, at least three models of instruction were required. With all the new technologies and software programs to be learned, the lessons to be revised to fit new online teaching requirements, and the lack of consistency in which teaching modalities schools were using to reach students, many teachers could have been overwhelmed by the work they needed to do to meet students' needs. Thus, they may not have had the time or energy to complete a solicited volunteer survey sent to them via their school district leader.

Relationship to Other Research

These qualitative data gained through Likert-scale statements, open-ended questions, and interviews were used to understand better how social studies teachers define civic engagement, examine the perceptions of rural school district social studies teachers regarding essential content associated with teaching civics, and examine if the teachers' perceptions of civics education and content align with the Act 35 assessments and how they compare to the C3 framework in rural public schools in Pennsylvania.

Participants in this study shared their viewpoints on what it means to be civically engaged and what they believe is essential content to facilitate in the classroom to encourage students to become active and engaged citizens. Previous research and reports such as *Roadmap to Educating for American Democracy* (2021), *Commonsense Solutions to Our Civics Crisis* (Davenport, 2020), and *Civic Education: Reimagining Rights and Responsibilities in the U.S.* (Shattuck & Risse, 2020) indicated there is a need to determine the best way of facilitating civics education in K-12 public schools.

CIRCLE (2013) and Syvertsen et al. (2011) pointed to low levels of civic involvement among youth ages 18-24 between the 1970s and the early 2000s and have

encouraged more research on these low numbers. The focus on civic engagement, instructional guidelines, and instructional strategies has been at the forefront of encouraging civic engagement with the creation of the C3 framework (NCSS, 2013), the SPPs (Guilfoile & Delander, 2014), and the *Roadmap to Educating for American Democracy* (2021).

Reichert and Torney-Purta (2019) suggested that adolescence is the critical time to encourage participatory civic engagement and skills and that "teachers across subject areas play a role, with those who specialize in civics or in history and social science having particular responsibilities" (p. 112). Shattuck and Risse (2020) maintained, "Civic education is the key to democratic governance because it imparts critical American values and encourages civic participation" and that civics education allows for "informed citizens [to] better hold their elected officials accountable, engage in productive public discourse, and demand accurate information from the media" (p. 2). Brezicha and Mitra (2019) maintained, "When civics education seeks to develop empowered, active citizens, the focus shifts to civic action that supports students' civic engagement" (p. 65). The findings from this study demonstrate a consensus among all educators that encouraging civic engagement is an essential component of civics education.

The findings based on the teachers' definitions of civic engagement also demonstrate that no single definition or belief defines civic engagement. For example, the literature shows one definition of civic engagement is "working to make a difference in the civic life of one's community and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference" (Jeffrey & Sargrad, 2019, p. 3). The general teacher responses to the open-ended questions about civic engagement in this

study indicate that taking part in government processes at the local, state, and national levels and addressing issues of public concern are a part of civic engagement. Additionally, the open-ended responses and the interviews revealed the teachers' beliefs that becoming actively engaged in society is necessary for members of society.

Much of the literature examines instructional methods versus detailing the specific content necessary for civics education. Guilfoile and Delander (2014) shared their concern about student civic learning, noting that "students have shown little improvement" (p. 3) based on the NAEP scores for students in grades 4, 8, and 12. Coley and Sum (2012) shared that the discussions on what is necessary to build civic knowledge have led to discussions on the appropriate instructional strategies for teaching civics and history. Martens and Gainous (2012) suggested that "identifying 'good' teaching may depend on your definition of 'good' citizenship" (p. 971) and that teachers may need to decide if their instructional choices are to build political knowledge or to build political confidence in their students. Saavedra (2016) pointed out that the way civics education has been traditionally taught may not be as effective currently.

Though the literature does not explicitly state which content topics are necessary for effective civics education, it provides instructional strategies for teaching civics education. For example, Gregory and Miyazaki (2018) looked at instructional strategies such as student projects, participation in group activities, and role-play activities, while Heafner and Fitchett (2015) looked at the impact of field trips, film, online group projects, and guest speakers on student academic attainment. Coley and Sum (2012), Levine and Kawashima-Ginsberg (2017), Shattuck and Risse (2020), and Davenport (2020) have demonstrated concern over the lack of civic engagement and civic

knowledge. At the same time, Saavedra (2016) found that the skills students believed they needed to address the social and political issues included oral communication; interpersonal skills (listening, patience, intercultural sensitivity); written communication skills; collaboration and teamwork; and research skills. During the oral interviews, many teachers shared that listening, patience, and cultural diversity understanding were important to facilitating civics education, while some teachers shared that writing to governmental leaders was also important.

The current findings from the survey data demonstrate a consensus around topics that are considered important to teach. The interviews showed that prioritizing these topics and how they are facilitated in the classroom is determined by each teacher's beliefs.

To further build on the importance of providing a cohesive and meaningful civics education to all students, this study sought to examine if the teachers' perceptions of civics education and content aligned with the Act 35 assessments and compared to the C3 framework. The state of Pennsylvania developed the Pennsylvania SSAS to guide instruction and designate what students should know and be able to do (PDESAS, 2020). The standards were implemented to improve upon common understandings across school districts in the state.

As per the Act 35 civics assessments, the assessments across all Pennsylvania school districts may differ in content and length. Act 35 requires civics and history education but does not state specifically the content that must be found in the assessments. However, Brezicha and Mitra (2019) argued that state legislation "reduces

civics to 100 memorizable facts rather than a dynamic introduction to the United States' rich and complex democratic community" (p.64).

This research study examined five Act 35 civics assessments to compare and analyze the focus of the civics assessments against the SSAS and the C3 framework guidelines. The examination of the school districts' Act 35 civics assessment showed that the length of the exams differed from 30 questions on one exam to 128 questions on another. Additionally, although Pennsylvania passed legislation requiring students to receive formal study in civics, there is a lack of clarity and consensus across the exams as per the number of test questions that should align with the SSAS in Tables 4.4 (Civics and Government) and 4.5 (History). Most of the questions on the school districts' Act 35 exams were loosely based on the SSAS. For all but one assessment, the questions were in a multiple-choice format that did not require any type of action on the student's part other than to choose a response. The school districts' Act 35 assessments were predominantly knowledge- and fact-based, while the SSAS focused more on active learning through analyzing, evaluating, and comparing and contrasting topics and events.

Compared to the SSAS, the school districts' Act 35 assessments also showed that some standards were heavily represented while other standards were not represented at all. Additionally, the differences in length between the school districts' Act 35 assessments demonstrate a disparity between school districts regarding how many questions ought to be on the tests for a student to prove competency.

Similarly, when the school districts' Act 35 civics assessments were compared to the C3 framework, the alignment of the test questions depended on the wording of the C3 framework indicators. When analyzing the Act 35 assessments and manually aligning the

assessment questions to the C3 framework, the difference of one word on the assessment or on the indicators could determine whether the assessment questions could be aligned to the C3 framework.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study focused on how teachers defined civic engagement and examined social studies teachers' perceptions in rural school districts regarding essential content associated with teaching civics. Additionally, this study explored how public school teachers' perceptions of civics education and content aligned with the Pennsylvania SSAS and Act 35 assessment expectations and compared to the C3 framework. The research for the study found a lack of consensus on defining civic engagement and also found a lack of defined understanding of the phrase 'social justice'. As demonstrated in the survey responses and in the oral interview responses, there may be a need to clearly define social justice as it pertains to civics education. The study further found a majority consensus regarding the essential content associated with teaching civics education. Further consideration should be given to collecting more information from larger groups of social studies teachers as to the essential content necessary for facilitating effective civics education to garner a fuller perspective. Also, based on some social studies teachers' open-ended responses revealing they had little to no knowledge of the state's Act 35 requirements, professional development on the understanding of the Act 35 requirements for school districts' civics assessments ought to be considered for all Pennsylvania social studies teachers. Based on the literature reviewed, more research could be conducted on the effects of defunding civics education at the federal level on student civics scores through the NAEP.

Conclusion

This qualitative study investigated how social studies teachers in rural school districts defined civic engagement and examined their perceptions of essential content associated with teaching civics. Additionally, this study explored how public school teachers' perceptions of civics education and content aligned with the Pennsylvania SSAS and Act 35 assessments and compared to the C3 framework. The study included social studies teachers in nine rural school districts located in Pennsylvania and included middle-schools, high-schools, and a junior/senior high-school.

The findings from this study revealed a lack of agreement on a definition of what it means to be civically engaged. The central themes for encouraging civically engaged students centered on voting, writing to representatives, or to getting involved in local, state, and national politics. Additionally, being aware of current events or issues, addressing issues of public concern, and being actively involved in improving society was a part of the social studies teachers' definitions of what it means to be civically engaged.

This study found social studies teachers' perceptions of essential content associated with teaching civics were often similar in focus and scope. Many of the teachers believed the content topics that encourage civic engagement, such as considering multiple perspectives, participating in local and national elections, and understanding the justice system, were important to encourage students to become "good citizens" and civically engaged.

Furthermore, this study explored how public school teachers' perceptions of civics education and content aligned with the Pennsylvania SSAS and Act 35 civics

assessment expectations, including the C3 framework indicators. Although the content topics aligned with many of the SSAS and the indicators within the C3 framework, the Act 35 civics assessments asked for mostly fact-based responses to mostly multiple-choice questions. Since the Act 35 civics assessments were multiple-choice, the assessments failed to exactly match the active wording within the SSAS and the C3 framework.

This study has provided the foundation for future research on the essential content necessary to facilitate an effective civics education that encourages students toward active participation. Albeit limited in participants, the data collected showed there is more to be done to improve upon the statewide Pennsylvania civics curricula. Additionally, based on responses from the oral interviews, this research study showed a need to implement professional development for social studies teachers on what the Pennsylvania Act 35 civics assessment requirements are, how to develop an effective assessment that includes active student participation, and how to evaluate student ideas while demonstrating their civic knowledge.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Survey Permission Letter

January 20, 2021

Julia G. Myers
103 South Red Maple Street
Selinsgrove, PA 17870
Phone: 570 850 7480

To Whom It May Concern:

Through my correspondence with Julia Myers, I understand that she is in the process of writing a dissertation and will be conducting a study of how social studies teachers in rural school districts define civic engagement and also examining the perceptions of social studies teachers in these districts regarding the essential content associated with the teaching of civics. Also, I understand that the study seeks to examine how these teachers' perceptions of civic education and content align with state standards and assessments.

Julia's survey questionnaire is based on the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) Civic Education Study's Teacher Questionnaire. I was the Chair of the International Steering Committee (ISC) for Civ-Ed guiding the test and survey questionnaires' construction and I was senior author of the report.

After receiving permission from the co-originator of the instrument for teachers, Professor Bruno Losito, I am granting Julia permission to use the questions from the IEA Civic Education Teacher Questionnaire. I understand that only a portion of these survey questions will be used and that some of the questions have been modified to meet the needs of Julia's study. We look forward to seeing the results.

This is one of the ways in which those of us who design these studies hope in the future to encourage the US Department of Education to rejoin the IEA's cycle of civic education studies as a full participant.

Sincerely,

Judith Torney-Purta

Judith Torney-Purta, Ph.D.
Professor Emerita of Human Development and Quantitative Methodology,
University of Maryland, College Park.
Co-author, *Citizenship ad Education in Twenty-eight Countries.*

Appendix B

Survey and Open-Ended Questions

The Teaching of Civics in Rural Public Schools

A. **Demographics**

2. What grade level are you currently teaching?
   Grade 6
   Grade 7
   Grade 8
   Grade 9
   Grade 10
   Grade 11
   Grade 12

3. How many years have you been teaching?
   0-5
   6-10
   11-15
   16-20
   21-25
   26-30
   31+

4. How many years have you been teaching civics education or related subject?
   0-5
   6-10
   11-15
   16-20
   21-25
   26-30
   31+

5. How old are you?
   21-29
   30-39
   40-49
   50-59
   60+

6. Gender
   Male
   Female

B. What should students learn to become good citizens?

To facilitate the development of civically engaged students, students need to learn the importance of…

All items will have a choice of: Strongly agree; Agree; Disagree; Strongly disagree.

7. Considering multiple perspectives…
a. Strongly agree
b. Agree
c. Disagree
d. Strongly disagree

8. Collective action…
a. Strongly agree
b. Agree
c. Disagree
d. Strongly disagree

9. Developing empathy…
a. Strongly agree
b. Agree
c. Disagree
d. Strongly disagree

10. Participating in local and national elections…
a. Strongly agree
b. Agree
c. Disagree
d. Strongly disagree

11. Understanding the justice system…
a. Strongly agree
b. Agree
c. Disagree
d. Strongly disagree

12. Participating in a peaceful protest against a law believed to be unjust…
a. Strongly agree
b. Agree
c. Disagree
d. Strongly disagree

13. Knowing about the country's history…
a. Strongly agree
b. Agree
c. Disagree
d. Strongly disagree

14. Developing media literacy skills to critically analyze political and social issues…
a. Strongly agree
b. Agree
c. Disagree
d. Strongly disagree

15. Taking part in activities promoting human rights…
a. Strongly agree
b. Agree
c. Disagree
d. Strongly disagree

16. Being patriotic and loyal (devoted) to the country…
a. Strongly agree
b. Agree
c. Disagree
d. Strongly disagree

C. What topics do you teach?

How important do you think is this topic for civic education?

All items will have a choice of: Very important; Important; Of little importance; Not important.

17. Constitutions and State/Political institutions…
a. Very important
b. Important
c. Of little importance
d. Not important

18. Citizen's rights and obligations…
a. Very important
b. Important
c. Of little importance
d. Not important

19. Different/Comparative political systems…
a. Very important
b. Important
c. Of little importance
d. Not important

20. Election and electoral systems…
a. Very important
b. Important
c. Of little importance
d. Not important

21. The Judicial System…
a. Very important
b. Important
c. Of little importance
d. Not important

22. Human and civil rights…
a. Very important
b. Important
c. Of little importance
d. Not important

23. Important events in the nation's history…
a. Very important
b. Important
c. Of little importance
d. Not important

24. International problems and relations…
a. Very important
b. Important
c. Of little importance
d. Not important

25. Migration of people…
a. Very important
b. Important
c. Of little importance
d. Not important

26. Economic issues…
a. Very important
b. Important
c. Of little importance
d. Not important

27. Social Justice…
a. Very important
b. Important
c. Of little importance
d. Not important

28. Civic virtues…
a. Very important
b. Important
c. Of little importance
d. Not important

29. Dangers of propaganda and manipulation…
a. Very important
b. Important
c. Of little importance
d. Not important

D. **Open-ended Questions**

30. How do you define civic engagement?
31. Please explain your involvement and familiarity with the development of the Act 35 civics assessment in your district.

Appendix C

Oral Interview Questions

E. Oral Interview questions

(Questions 1 – 5 are based on the Dimensions of the C3 Framework)

Question 1 – What does the teaching of civic engagement look like in your classroom?

Question 2 – How do you help students develop media literacy and critical analysis skills through your instruction?

Question 3 – What are the important facts, events, topics, etc. you believe students need to understand about our country's history?

Question 4 – Share your thoughts about what it means to be patriotic. How do you address this through your teaching?

Question 5 – What role does social justice play in your definition of civic engagement?

Appendix D

Superintendent Permission Letter

January 12, 2021

Julia G. Myers
103 South Red Maple Street
Selinsgrove, PA 17870
570.850.7480; jmyers@mail.immaculata.edu

Mr. XX
Street
Town, PA, Zip code

Dear XX,

My name is Julia Myers and I am currently enrolled in the Immaculata University doctoral program. I am employed by the Danville Area School District in Danville, PA as a 7th grade social studies' teacher. I would like to ask your permission to conduct a qualitative study of the perceptions of social studies teachers in rural school districts regarding civic engagement, the teachers' perceptions of the essential content associated with the teaching of civics, and the teachers' perceptions of how civics education and content align with the state standards and assessment expectations.

My three study questions that I would like to investigate:

1. How do social studies teachers in rural school districts define civic engagement?
2. What are the perceptions of social studies' teachers in rural school districts regarding the essential content associated with the teaching of civics?
3. How do rural public school teachers' perceptions of civic education and content align with state standards and assessment expectations?

The evaluation component of the study includes using Survey Monkey to administer Likert-scale questions and open-ended questions. Additionally, the teachers will be asked to volunteer to be interviewed via online or, speaking to them via phone, at their convenience. The study will be conducted during the 2020-2021 school year.

All individual's names and information will be kept confidential. All the individuals who agree to an oral interview will be asked for contact information. The information will be kept confidential.

It is my goal that this doctoral dissertation will provide the school districts with important data pertaining to the teachers' perceptions of the essential content to be taught in civics education and whether the content aligns with the state standards and assessments.

I would appreciate your formal approval to conduct this study. Please consider my request and forward a written response to me at your earliest convenience. Thank you in advance for your consideration and anticipated support. Please contact me if you have questions or require further details.

Sincerely,
Julia G. Myers

Appendix E

Research Ethics Review Board Approval

IMMACULATA UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW BOARD
REQUEST FOR PROTOCOL REVIEW--REVIEWER'S COMMENTS FORM
(R1297)

Name of Researcher: Julia Myers

Project Title: The Teaching of Civics in Rural Public Schools

Reviewer's Comments

Your proposal is **Approved**. You may begin your research or collect your data.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS APPROVAL IS VALID FOR ONE YEAR **(365 days)** FROM DATE OF SIGNING.

Reviewer's Recommendations:

_____ Exempt	__X__ **Approved**
_____Expedited	_____ Conditionally Approve
_____Full Review	_____ Do Not Approve

Marcia Parris

April 6, 2021

Marcia Parris, Ed.D.
Chair, Research Ethics Review Board

DATE

Appendix F

Educator Letter of Recruitment

Spring 2021

Dear Educator,

This letter is to request your participation in a research project to fulfill the requirements of my doctoral program at Immaculata University. My dissertation topic focuses on the perceptions that educators have of civic engagement, the essential content to be taught in civics courses, and the alignment of civics assessments to state standards.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to answer questions or withdraw participation at any time. All data will remain anonymous and confidential. There are no anticipated or known risks from participating in this study.

There are two segments to this research study in which you may choose to participate: an online survey and a personal interview. Your participation would be greatly appreciated.

The online survey can be found at (Place URL here) and will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. The Educator Informed Consent Form found on page 2 of this packet will be the first page of the online survey. If you wish to participate in the survey and agree to the contents of the Educator Informed Consent Form, then click "Yes" to move onto the survey questions.

This packet of information also includes an Educator Interview Consent Form which will be the first page found at (Place URL here). If you would like to participate in a personal interview and agree to the contents of the Educator Interview Consent Form, then click "Yes" to be able to fill in the required contact information. The online survey and online interview consent form are two separate sites, thus preserving confidentiality and anonymity. We will work together to schedule an interview at a time of your convenience; the interview should take approximately 20 minutes. The interview will be conducted using either the virtual meeting platform, Zoom or a phone interview. Hand-written notes taken by the researcher will be sent to the interviewee to ensure the information is accurate.

If you have any questions pertaining to my study, feel free to contact me at (570) 850-7480 or email: jmyers4@mail.immaculata.edu. You can also contact my Dissertation Committee Chair, Dr. Wendy Towle at (610) 240 -1903 or email: wtowle@mail.immaculata.edu. This study has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Review Board at Immaculata University. Any questions concerning your rights as a research subject may be directed to Dr. Marcia Parris, Chair, (610) 647-4400 ext. 3220; mparris@immaculata.edu; Room 130 Loyola Hall.

Thank you for your time and consideration with this matter. Your participation in this research study would be greatly appreciated!

Sincerely,
Julia G. Myers
jmyers4@mail.immaculata.edu

Appendix G

Teacher Informed Consent Form for Survey

Spring 2021

Dear Educator,

I invite you to participate in a study concerning the perceptions that educators have of civic engagement, the essential content to be taught in civics courses, and the alignment of civics assessments to state standards. I am asking you to complete a survey, comprised of 34 total questions (7 demographic questions, 25 Likert-scale questions, and 2 open-ended questions). The survey should take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Participation in this study is voluntary. By volunteering for this study, you will find questions pertaining to civics education. There are no personal benefits to participation. You may decline to answer any questions presented during the study if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time by advising the researcher and may do so without any penalty. All information you provide is considered completely anonymous and confidential; your name will not be included or in any other way associated with the data collected in the study. Because the interest of this study is in the average responses of the entire group of participants, you will not be identified individually in any way in written reports of this research. There are no known or anticipated risks associated to participation in this study.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Review Board at Immaculata University. The final decision concerning participation is yours. If you have any questions pertaining to the study, feel free to contact me at (570) 850-7480 or email: jmyers4@mail.immaculata.edu. You can also contact my Dissertation Committee Chair, Dr. Wendy Towle at (610) 240 -1903 or email: wtowle@mail.immaculata.edu. Any questions about your rights as a research subject may be directed to the Chair of the Research Ethics Review Board, Dr. Marcia Parris at (610) 647 -4400 Ext. 3220 or email: mparris@immaculata.edu. Thank you for your assistance in this project.

The first page of the interview consent, found at (https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/XJTD8MJ), will be this consent form. Please review it again. Clicking "Yes" will indicate that you understand this consent form and that you agree to participate in the interview portion of this study giving permission to the researcher to use the provided information in the final report. Clicking "Yes" will not waive any legal rights, and you may withdraw consent at any time. You will then be directed to complete contact information necessary for scheduling the personal interview. The link to the Educator Informed Consent Form for Interview is separate from the link to the Educator Survey, thus preserving your anonymity.

Sincerely,

Julia G. Myers
jmyers4@mail.immaculata.edu

Appendix H

Teacher Informed Consent Form for Interview

Spring 2021

Dear Educator,

I invite you to participate in a study concerning the perceptions that educators have of civic engagement, the essential content to be taught in civics courses, and the alignment of civics assessments to state standards. I am asking you to complete a Zoom or phone interview as part of the data collection. The interview questions will be open-ended. The researcher will take notes during the interview. The interview notes will be sent to you to ensure that you are in agreement with the researcher's summary of your interview responses.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to answer questions or withdraw participation at any time. All data will remain anonymous and confidential. There are no anticipated or known risks from participating in this study.

If you have any questions pertaining to my study, feel free to contact me on my cell phone (570) 850-7480 or email: jmyers4@mail.immaculata.edu. You may also contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Wendy Towle at 610-240-1903, or email wtowle@mail.immaculata.edu if you have any questions. This study has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Review Board at Immaculata University. Any questions about your rights as a research subject may be directed to Dr. Marcia Parris, Chair at (610) 647-4400 ext. 3220; or email: mparris@immaculata.edu; Room 130 Loyola Hall.

The first page of the interview consent, found at (place URL here), will be this consent form. Please review it again. Clicking "Yes" will indicate that you understand this consent form and that you agree to take part in the interview portion of this study giving permission to the researcher to use the provided information in the final report. Clicking "Yes" will not waive any legal rights, and you may withdraw consent at any time. You will then be directed to fill in contact information necessary for scheduling the Zoom interview or the phone interview. The link to the Teacher Informed Consent Form for Interview is separate from the link to the Teacher Survey, thus preserving your anonymity and confidentiality.

Sincerely,

Julia G. Myers
jmyers4@mail.immaculata.edu

Appendix I

Pennsylvania Social Studies Academic Standards: Civics and Government

Grade 12: Principles and Documents of Government; 5.1.12

Standard - 5.1.12.A Analyze the sources, purposes, functions of law, and how the **rule of law** protects **individual rights** and promotes the **common good**.

Standard - 5.1.12.B Employ historical examples and **political philosophy** to evaluate the major arguments advanced for the necessity of **government.**

Standard - 5.1.12.C Evaluate the application of the principles and ideals in contemporary **civic life.**

- Liberty / Freedom
- Democracy
- Justice
- Equality

Standard - 5.1.12.D Evaluate **state** and federal powers based on significant documents and other critical sources.

- Declaration of Independence
- United States Constitution
- **Bill of Rights**
- Pennsylvania Constitution

Standard - 5.1.12.E Analyze and assess the rights of people as written in the PA Constitution and the US Constitution.

Standard - 5.1.12.F Evaluate the role of **nationalism** in uniting and dividing **citizens.**

Grade 12: Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship; 5.2.12

Standard - 5.2.12.A Evaluate an individual's **civil rights**, responsibilities and obligations in various contemporary **governments.**

Standard - 5.2.12.B Examine the causes of conflicts in society and evaluate techniques to address those conflicts.

Standard - 5.2.12.C Evaluate political **leadership** and **public service** in a r**epublican form of government.**

Standard - 5.2.12.D Evaluate and demonstrate what makes competent and responsible **citizens.**

Grade 12: How Government Works; 5.3.12

Standard - 5.3.12.A Analyze the changes in power and **authority** among the three branches of **government** over time.

Standard - 5.3.12.B Compare and contrast policy-making in various contemporary world **governments.**

Standard - 5.3.12.C Evaluate how **government** agencies create, amend, and enforce regulations.

Standard - 5.3.12.D Evaluate the roles of political parties, **interest groups**, and **mass media** in politics and public policy.

Standard - 5.3.12.E Evaluate the fairness and effectiveness of the United States electoral processes, including the **electoral college.**

Standard - 5.3.12.F Analyze landmark United States Supreme Court interpretations of the Constitution and its Amendments.

Standard - 5.3.12.G Evaluate the impact of **interest groups** in developing public policy.

Standard - 5.3.12.H Evaluate the role of **mass media** in setting public agenda and influencing political life.

Standard - 5.3.12.I Evaluate tax policies of various **states** and countries.

Standard - 5.3.12.J Evaluate critical issues in various contemporary **governments.**

Grade 12: How International Relationships Function; 5.4.12

Standard - 5.4.12.A Examine **foreign policy** perspectives, including **realism, idealism**, and **liberalism.**

Standard - 5.4.12.B Evaluate the effectiveness of **foreign policy** tools in various current issues confronting the United States (e.g., **diplomacy**, economic aid, military aid, **sanctions**, treaties).

Standard - 5.4.12.C Evaluate the effectiveness of international organizations, both **governmental** and **non-governmental.**

Standard - 5.4.12.D Evaluate the role of **mass media** in world politics.

Standard - 5.4.12.E Compare and contrast the politics of various **interest groups** and evaluate their impact on **foreign policy.**

Appendix J

Pennsylvania Social Studies Academic Standards: History

Grade 12: Historical Analysis and Skills Development; 8.1.12

Standard - 8.1.12.A Evaluate patterns of continuity and rates of change over time, applying **context of events.**

Standard - 8.1.12.B Evaluate the interpretation of historical events and **sources**, considering the use of fact versus **opinion**, multiple perspectives, and cause and effect relationships.

Standard - 8.1.12.C Analyze, synthesize, and integrate historical data, creating a product that supports and appropriately illustrates inferences and conclusions drawn from research. (Reference RWSL Standard 1.8.11 Research)

Grade 12: Pennsylvania History; 8.2.12

Standard - 8.2.12.A Evaluate the role groups and individuals from Pennsylvania played in the **social**, political, cultural, and **economic** development of the US and the world.

Standard - 8.2.12.B Evaluate the impact of historical **documents, artifacts**, and places in Pennsylvania which are critical to U.S. history and the world.

Standard - 8.2.12.C Evaluate continuity and change in Pennsylvania are interrelated to the US and the world.

- **Belief systems** and religions
- Commerce and industry
- Technology
- **Politics** and government
- Physical and **human geography**
- **Social** organizations

Standard - 8.2.12.D Evaluate how **conflict** and cooperation among groups and organizations in Pennsylvania have influenced the growth and development of the US and the world.

- **Ethnicity** and race
- Working conditions
- Immigration
- Military **conflict**
- **Economic** stability

Grade 12: United States History; 8.3.12

Standard - 8.3.12.A Evaluate the role groups and individuals from the U.S. played in the **social, political**, cultural, and **economic** development of the world.

Standard - 8.3.12.B Evaluate the impact of historical **documents, artifacts**, and places in U.S. history which are critical to world history.

Standard - 8.3.12.C Evaluate how continuity and change in U.S. history are interrelated with the world.

- **Belief systems** and religions
- Commerce and industry
- Technology
- **Politics** and government
- Physical and **human geography**
- **Social** organizations

Standard - 8.3.12.D Evaluate how **conflict** and cooperation among groups and organizations in the U.S. have influenced the growth and development of the world.

- **Ethnicity** and race
- Working conditions
- Immigration
- Military **conflict**
- **Economic** stability

Grade 12: World History; 8.4.12

Standard - 8.4.12.A Evaluate the role groups and individuals played in the **social, political**, cultural, and **economic** development throughout world history.

Standard - 8.4.12.B Evaluate the importance of historical **documents, artifacts**, and sites which are critical to world history.

Standard - 8.4.12.C Evaluate how continuity and change have impacted the world today.

- **Belief systems** and religions
- Commerce and industry
- Technology
- **Politics** and government
- Physical and **human geography**
- **Social** organization

Standard - 8.4.12.D Evaluate how **conflict** and cooperation among groups and organizations have impacted the development of the world today, including its effects on Pennsylvania.

Appendix K

C3 Framework Indicators for Grade 12 Civics

Suggested K-12 Pathway for College, Career, and Civic Readiness Dimension 2, Civic and Political Institutions

D2.Civ.1.9-12: Distinguish the powers and responsibilities of local, state, tribal, national, and international civic and political institutions.

D2.Civ.2.9-12: Analyze the role of citizens in the U.S. political system, with attention to various theories of democracy, changes in Americans' participation over time, and alternative models from other countries, past and present.

D2.Civ.3.9-12: Analyze the impact of constitutions, laws, treaties, and international agreements on the maintenance of national and international order.

D2.Civ.4.9-12: Explain how the U.S. Constitution establishes a system of government that has powers responsibilities, and limits that have changed over time and that are still connected.

D2.Civ.5.9-12: Evaluate citizens' and institutions' effectiveness in addressing social and political problems at the local, state, tribal, national, and/or international level.

D2.Civ.6.9-12: Critique relationships among governments, civil societies, and economic markets.

Suggested K-12 Pathway for College, Career, and Civic Readiness Dimension 2, Participation and Deliberation

D2.Civ.7.9-12: Apply civic virtues and democratic principles when working with others.

D2.Civ.8.9-12: Evaluate social and political systems in different contexts, times, and places, that promote civic virtues and enact democratic principles.

D2.Civ.9.9-12: Use appropriate deliberative processes in multiple settings.

D2.Civ.10.9-12: Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interests and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.

Suggested K-12 Pathway for College, Career, and Civic Readiness Dimension 2, Processes, Rules and Laws

D2.Civ.11.9-12: Evaluate multiple procedures for making governmental decisions at the local, state, national, and international levels in terms of the civic purposes achieved.

D2.Civ.12.9-12: Analyze how people use and challenge local, state, national, and international laws to address a variety of public issues.

D2.Civ.13.9-12: Evaluate public policies in terms of intended and unintended outcomes, and related consequences.

D2.Civ.14.9-12: Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.

Appendix L

C3 Framework Indicators for Grade 12 History

Suggested K-12 Pathway for College, Career, and Civic Readiness Dimension 2, Change, Continuity, and Context

D2.His.1.9-12: Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.

D2.His.2.9-12: Analyze change and continuity in historical eras.

D2.His.3.9-12: Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.

Suggested K-12 Pathway for College, Career, and Civic Readiness Dimension 2, Perspectives

D2.His.4.9-12: Analyze complex and interacting factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

D2.His.5.9-12: Analyze how historical contexts shaped and continue to shape people's perspectives.

D2.His.6.9-12: Analyze the ways in which the perspective of those writing history shaped the history that they produced.

D2.His.7.9-12: Explain how the perspectives of people in the present shape interpretations of the past.

D2.His.8.9-12: Analyze how current interpretations of the past are limited by the extent to which available historical sources represent perspectives of people at the time.

Suggested K-12 Pathway for College, Career, and Civic Readiness Dimension 2, Historical Sources and Evidence

D2.His.9.9-12: Analyze the relationship between historical sources and the secondary interpretations made from them.

D2.His.10.9-12: Detect possible limitations in various kinds of historical evidence and differing secondary interpretations.

D2.His.11.9-12: Critique the usefulness of historical sources for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.

D2.His.12.9-2: Use questions generated about multiple historical sources to pursue further inquiry and investigate additional sources.

D2.His.13.9-12: Critique the appropriateness of the historical sources used in a secondary interpretation.

Suggested K-12 Pathway for College, Career, and Civic Readiness Dimension 2, Causation and Argumentation

D2.His.14.9-12: Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past.

D2.His.15.9-12: Distinguish between long-term causes and triggering events in developing a historical argument.

D2.His.16.9-12: Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.

D2.His.17.9-12: Critique the central arguments in secondary works of history on elated topics in multiple media in terms of their historical accuracy.