FOSTERING STUDENTS' CIVIC SKILLS: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ABOUT SCHOOL AND EXTERNAL LEVEL FACTORS

by

ATAKAN ATA

(Under the Direction of John Dayton)

ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study examined middle school teachers' beliefs about school and external level factors that fostered or impeded students' civic skills development. From the literature, civic skills are categorized for students and their ability to critique, communicate, and collaborate. Recent school reforms have placed emphasis on testing, often affecting the amount of time teachers might have to teach students the application and the integration of the skills needed to foster civic skills. Findings of this study revealed that collaboration among teachers, time for instructional planning, and parental involvement were influential factors that helped teachers promote civic skills to their students. On the other hand; tests, lack of parental involvement, and traditional practices in teacher observation were found to be factors that impeded teachers' efforts in the promotion of students' civic skills. Other factors and implications were also discussed.

INDEX WORDS: Democracy, civic engagement, skills and knowledge, public schools, case study

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by

ATAKAN ATA

BA, Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Turkey, 2008

MPA, Kennesaw State University, 2010

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by

ATAKAN ATA

Major Professor:	John Dayton
Committee:	Gayle Andrews
	Sally J. Zepeda

Electronic Version Approved:

Suzanne Barbour
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
August 2016

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to teachers who work relentlessly to build a better future.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

We believe that education is central to the realization of a democratic and egalitarian society, and it is the education that provides us with the necessary skills to fulfil the responsibilities of citizenship and to enjoy the freedoms no matter how previously advantaged or disadvantaged an individual (Levin, 1986). However, we cannot take our rights and privileges for granted. History has shown that a working democracy and the rule of law are vital to people (Maiello, Oser, & Biedermann, 2003). The destiny of countries lacking people's participation in public processes is in the hands of a reduced number of people who hold the power and deny it to anybody else. In the so-called democracies of the past and present, we have witnessed talented workers getting fired because they criticized the system; we have witnessed gas chambers built by learned engineers, and we have witnessed children being poisoned by educated physicians (Ginott, 1972).

Democracy is an on-going process. It is not a one-time event that will continue to thrive uninterruptedly. A country also does not become a police state overnight — a state in which the activities of the people are controlled by the government. The greatest danger is when we think of our freedom given for granted and when we ignore the pieces of losses taken from our rights (Dayton, 2013). Like many other nations, people of the United States fought for their freedom, and the founding fathers set a system that ensures to respect people's freedom in their speech, thought, and religion; they set democracy.

One of the pillars that make democracy work is civic engagement. Civic engagement or people's active participation in the public spheres that affect their everyday lives ensures that people are truly represented (Hauser, 2000).

Civic engagement is possible when one possesses both civic knowledge and civic skills (Smith, 2012). Civic knowledge is a prerequisite to civic skills, and the possession of civic skills is the key to civic engagement (Kirlin, 2003). Information and action are essential in the civic engagement processes. However, neither information nor action is satisfactory without the proper skills.

Schools are the environments where students are expected to develop their civic skills, but do students really get to develop their civic skills fully before they graduate? Also, what do we mean by civic skills? The conceptualization of civic knowledge has been consistently cited in the literature (Galston, 2001; Jennings & Niemi, 1974; Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001). Unfortunately, the conceptualization of civic skills has no certainty (Llewellyn, Cook, & Molina, 2010).

For instance, in a cover story, *TIME* magazine wrote that young Americans' civic engagement was high because voters' turnout rates almost doubled in 2008. On the other hand, according to a study by the 2010 National Assessment of Educational Progress report, civics were reported to be very low because "only about one-quarter of students in fourth, eighth and 12th grades score[d] at or above proficient" (Coley & Sum, 2012, p. 3) in the section measuring students' civic knowledge. These statistics are not wrong. However, they do not necessarily represent civic engagement. Uninformed participation voting during an election is an action lacking civic knowledge, or a wrong answer given

to the question of when the Declaration of Independence was signed is not an indication of the lack of civic skills.

Individuals are not born with an understanding of the values of democracy (Dayton, 2014). Therefore, democracy has to be born again in every generation, and education is its midwife (Dewey, 1916). Dayton and Glickman (1994) reminded us that we could not expect children to develop a commitment to democratic principles if these principles were not taught, modeled, and practiced in our public schools and other public institutions. Therefore, teachers are the key in the promotion of civic skills, and despite the various challenges that public schools face today, they are most likely the very institutions to play a critical role in individuals' engagement in democratic practices (Carnoy & Levin, 1985; Flanagan, Cumsille, Gill, & Gallay, 2007). Moreover, schools have been reported to provide an equalizing effect in terms of civic engagement gap caused by socioeconomic statute differences (Kahne & Sporte, 2008). Schools are the nurseries of democracy, but if teachers are not prepared to teach the essential knowledge and the skills to the next generation, democracy can be lost in a single generation (Dayton, 2013).

Dynamics of organizational structures in schools may potentially support or impede teachers because organizational structures in schools are the most important influences regarding the core of schooling and influences teacher behaviors (Baldy, Green, Raiford, Tsemunhu, & Lyons 2014; Fidler, 1997; Hoy, Miskel, & Tarter, 2012; Rutherford, 2006). Considering that teacher instruction is the first most important influence on student learning (Baldy et al., 2014), it is important to investigate how

school and external level factors such as school resources, decision-making, instruction, student relationships, collaboration, parents, or leadership affect teachers in this regard.

One of the most influential factors that affect teachers is educational policy. Recent educational reforms seem to focus on a few disciplines and competitiveness by placing emphasis on information while drawing attention from youth development and their preparedness for participating in a democracy. Policy as a factor is only one example. By conducting this research, I wanted to examine if public school teachers believe they can teach students necessary civic skills, and what things/factors help them or hinder them. What skills do teachers believe students need to develop as responsible citizens? If teachers are given such opportunities to develop students as democratic citizens, then how does the structure of schooling assist teachers in accomplishing this goal?

Statement of the Problem

The education of the public is in the interest of the states and federal government, and accountability has been one of the greatest among these interests (Jacob, 2002). Therefore, states issue several policies to regulate accountability in education. Interestingly, education policies of most states are shaped by the policies of the federal government. These broader policies, consequently, might have an impact on school climate. In fact, federal government constitutionally cannot mandate education policies since education is not enumerated as a fundamental right in the U.S. Constitution (*fundamental right* is a legal term to say that this right is not recognized in the Constitution, thus left to states' control). The federal government's presence in the educational arena has grown greatly for the last several decades as federal officials create

funding programs which mostly require a state to adopt their policies if this state chooses to opt in these programs.

Race to the Top is the most recent federal grant program designed to spur state-level education innovation to boost student achievement, close achievement gaps, and prepare students for college and careers. Originally authorized in 2009 under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Race to the Top encourages states to develop and implement standards based on four core components: 1) Rigorous college- and career-ready standards and assessments, 2) Recruiting, evaluating, and retaining highly effective teachers and principals, 3) Building data systems that measure student success and inform teaching and learning, and 4) Turning around low-performing schools (Miller & Hanna, 2014). What does, for instance, Race to the Top mean for a teacher if the state she or he teaches in opts in the program? According to a study by Onosko (2011), Race to the Top means an increase in standardization, centralization, and test-based accountability, and a results-based system yields to narrowed curriculum (Amrein, 2002).

Many policymakers are hopeful that these rigorous new standards will fix whatever is wrong with American education and boost U.S. standing in international comparisons (Kuhn, 2013). However, the drive to create robust accountability systems places far too much emphasis on inspecting and testing. Costa, Garmston, and Zimmerman (2012, p. 1) argued that "a system of quality control founded on the belief that inspection and multiple-choice tests are valid measures of effectiveness is flawed." Zhao (2013) recently pointed out that a decentralized education system that allowed local autonomy, the lack of a national curriculum, and teaching practices that respect individual differences have made American schools relatively ineffective in producing

students who score high on standardized international tests. But this very ineffectiveness has made schools more successful in preserving students' creative and entrepreneurial talents. However, recent accountability efforts in education are going in the direction of centralization and based on the results of quantitative results of student achievement tests. Ohler (2013, p. 42) also stated that "the United States neglects creativity in its education system […] If you search English Language Arts and Literacy standards for the words creative, innovative, and original, you will find scant mention of the words and the ideas they represent."

Accountability reforms push testing, and high-stakes testing influence both instruction and content in classrooms (Amrein, 2002; Pedulla et al., 2003). Teachers align their curriculum according to testing (Pedulla et al., 2003), and unfortunately, they narrow their curriculum which is basically called teaching to the test. A research study by Amrein (2002) suggested that narrowing of curriculum often resulted in an increase in high-stakes test scores. The press for increased student performance has placed pressure on teachers for their students to obtain high scores. This pressure has even enticed some instances of teachers engaging in unethical practices (Vogell, 2011).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to broaden our understanding of teachers' perspectives about external and school level factors that fostered or impeded students' civic skills development. We often complain that civic engagement in the Unites States is steadily decreasing (Coley & Sum, 2012; Putnam, 2000), and we are quick to blame public schools for this decline (Coley & Sum, 2012; Levinson, 2012).

Numerous studies have been conducted to investigate civic education and students, and they all have suggested that public schools need to increase the number of hours spent on social studies or extracurricular activities (Evans, 2004); however, there are few studies that have examined how school teachers actually promote civic skills. Besides, an increase in the amount of time a teacher engages students in civic education is significant; however, knowledge might make an individual a more informed citizen, but not necessarily a more engaged citizen. If we want a more engaged next generation, we have to understand how public school teachers promote civic skills for their students along with civic knowledge.

To broaden our understanding of teachers' beliefs, I hoped to discover school and external level factors that influence teachers regarding promoting students' critiquing, communicating, and collaborating—all civic skills. Teacher behavior is the most important factor in student learning in schools (Baldy et al., 2014), and teachers' beliefs about the nature of teaching and learning mainly shape how teachers teach (Yero, 2002). Therefore, it is important to understand teachers' beliefs about civic skills and the factors that are necessary or need to be eliminated to promote these skills.

Research Questions

Determining the research questions was an important step because these questions narrow the research objective and research purpose (Creswell, 2008). To be able to discover and understand school and external level factors that influence teachers' beliefs regarding promoting students' critiquing, communicating, and collaborating skills, this study was based on the following research questions:

1) From public school teachers' perspectives, what school-level factors foster students' civic skills?
2) From public school teachers' perspectives, what school-level factors impede students' civic skills?
3) From public school teachers' perspectives, what external-level factors foster students' civic skills?
4) From public school teachers' perspectives, what external-level factors impede students' civic skills?

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework provides guidelines so a researcher can examine a topic in a certain frame. There is no right or wrong theoretical framework to use when examining a research topic since every topic can be looked at from a number of different perspectives. A critical theory perspective was a practical guidance to me in investigating teachers' beliefs in fostering civic skills because as van Manen (1990) also emphasized critical theory tried to promote critical consciousness, and struggled to break down the institutional structures and arrangements which reproduce oppressive ideologies and the social inequalities that are sustained and produced by these social structures and ideologies. How teachers teach and students learn are shaped by the culture in which they grow up (Hinde, 2004). Especially, within the environment created by the recent governmental policies requiring strict accountability measures, teachers, as a particular group of a society, are held accountable for the quality of education, and go through some similar challenges that some oppressed groups experienced in the past and critical theorists critiqued, but in a modern format.

Brookfield (2005, p. 94) explained that ideology "can be viewed as embedded in a system of practices – behaviors and actions that people learn to live out on a daily basis within personal relationships, institutions, work, and community." Brookfield continued that "Ideology becomes hegemony when the dominant ideas are learned and lived everyday decisions and judgments and when these ideas pervade the whole of existence" (p. 94).

For a true liberation, formation and development of critical consciousness is important (Gramsci, 1971) because "the oppressed have internalized the values, beliefs, and even world view of their oppressors… and willingly cooperate with those who oppress them in maintaining those social practices that result in their oppression" (Freeman & Vasconcelos, 2010, p. 12). Another central concept of critical theory is commodification or objectification. Commodification is originally a Marxist notion that a human quality or relationship is regarded as a product, good, or commodity to be bought and sold, and in a such a setting, exchange value of a product (monetary worth) becomes more important than its use value (satisfaction of a human need or desire).

How does this theory inform us and help form a framework? There were two essential implications of critical theory that helped me accomplish with this research. First, central to the phenomenon of this research, most high-stakes accountability policies suggest that student achievement is to be measured and this measurement is attributed to the teaching quality of teachers. There is a value that we ascribed to teaching in this sense. The concept of subjectification now can tell us that although the use value of teaching (for example, teaching self-confidence or being a good citizen) is important, it is mainly the exchange value (for example, scoring high on Trends in International

Mathematics and Science Study) that policymakers or education interest groups consider when deciding on curriculum, funding, or evaluation. Critical theory invites us to question this situation and lets us think whether life success is something that can be measured, and what the consequences would be if we do so.

Second, a distinctive characteristic of critical theory is to provide people an understanding of freeing oneself from oppression, and produce knowledge that will make changes. Patton (2002) inserted that the knowledge a theory produces could be considered useful to the extent that it helps change the behavior of its unit of analysis. Critical theory is clearly transformative and aims to bring about social change (Brookfield, 2005), so the purpose in this study became not only to interpret the relationship between school and external level impacts and teachers' beliefs in their teachings, but also needed to empower teachers to bring about changes in their lives.

Overview of the Methods

The methodology that was used to conduct this research study was case study research. Even though case study research has been used in applied sciences for decades (Gilgun, 1994), there is little consensus on what a case study really is. Merriam (1998, p. 26) noted that this confusion mainly stemmed from the fact that case study was "equated with fieldwork, ethnography, participant observation, qualitative research, naturalistic inquiry, grounded theory, or exploratory research." The most distinctive characteristic of case study research is the ability to understand a complex social phenomenon by asking how and why questions and delimiting the object of study (Yin, 2008). Bromley (1986, p. 23) wrote to support this idea that case studies "get as close to the subject of interest as they possibly can." Another characteristic of case studies is the *discovery mode*. Merriam

(1998) emphasized that case study was likely to be the best choice if the variables were so embedded in the situation as to be impossible to identify ahead of time. Yin (2003, p. 13) defined a case study in a very precise way as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between and context are not clearly evident."

Six social studies middle school teachers participated in this study. Individual in-depth interview was the primary method used to understand the participants' perspectives on instruction and the factors that foster or impede students' civic skills. Field notes were taken during each interview.

In-depth interviews were used for data collection, and a thematic analysis method was used to analyze the written transcripts of the conversations with the six middle school teachers who taught in two schools within one district in a southeastern state. In total, 161 pages of transcript data were collected from September through December 2015. All teachers are supposed to contribute to the whole child development; however, social studies teachers were selected because they are the ones who are primarily responsible for promoting instruction and activities that develop students' civic skills. Public school teachers were chosen because they are representative of the majority (77.43%) of all K-12 schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). Finally, teachers who teach 6th, 7th, and 8th grades participated in this study because students in these grades are at a critical stage for their learning (Amna, 2012; Kaviani, 2011).

Significance of the Study

First, lack of information in the literature about what civic skills is both surprising and not surprising at the same time. It is not, because the concept of civic skills is messy.

A comprehensive report by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) (2003, p. 3) highlighted that

> Civic skills do not exist in a vacuum; they are part of a larger set of ideas about what is believed to be necessary for citizens to be engaged in public life. The notion that, in addition to knowledge, some type of 'skills' are required in order to effectively participate in public life makes intuitive sense.

However, there is a scarcity among empirical studies that investigate the promotion of civic skills, and even a larger gap among standards and means of accountability that measure civic outcomes. Policymakers and citizens are concerned with preparing young people for college and a competitive, global job market, and schools have generally sidelined their civic missions in an era of standards and accountability focused on other subjects such as math or reading (Levine, 2007). It is, however, vital to place emphasis on youth's civic skills development because civic skills are life skills and they are what makes democracy work (Levine, 2007).

Studies report that, with the exception of volunteering, most of the main characteristics of citizenship such as working on a community project or believing that people are trustworthy have been declining among the youth since 1970s (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). The same studies make recommendations that students before their college years should engage in extracurricular activities and community services. It is proven to predict voting and other forms of civic engagement in young adulthood (Flanagan & Levine, 2010); however, we really do not know the details and systems in which students are nurtured necessary skills to be engaged citizens of their society. Another study conducted by Kahne and Sporte (2008) found that providing civic learning opportunities in public schools could meaningfully support the development of students' civic participation. Yet, are we creating opportunities for teachers to provide civic

learning opportunities for their students? If yes, what are they? This research study is significant because it contributed to close the gap in our knowledge of how teachers get their students engaged, and what support and hindrances they experience, so we can recommend more than saying that students should spend more time on Social Studies.

Besides, one of the problems of our education system is simply boredom. Student engagement with school and the intellectual work of learning have been consistently recorded as low (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008; Marks, 2000), and consequently students finds distractions in non-educative means. Students get bored because they do not relate to learning in a personal way (Evans, 1989). Integrating activities in curriculum that involve local communities and civic skills is a solution to this problem because often times the problems that societies face are too complex to be handled by any single discipline, and an interdisciplinary approach to a problem would better explain what happened or what should be done to solve a problem (Kaviani, 2011). In *real* life, we never approach an issue from solely a numerical or a political or a technological perspective; in life, problems are complex, in layers, and there is not one right path to solve a problem.

Definition of Key Terms

Civic – The word *civic* is simply related to a city, citizenship, or community affairs ("civic," n.d.). Often times civic is associated with governments, but in this dissertation, *civic* refers to citizenship or being a part of community.

Civics – the study of the rights and duties of citizens and of how government works.

Democracy – Form of government in which people choose representatives by voting. It protects the interests of citizens and promotes equality, but democracy can be just an image without the true participation of the people. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.

Citizenship – Citizenship has its rights and privileges, but to be a citizen comes with responsibilities as well. We need to keep in mind that citizenship involves more than just voting every four years or paying taxes. It involves deliberating about the common good, participating in shaping the forces that govern the collective destiny (Libresco, n.d.).

Civic knowledge – The Civic Mission of Schools was one of the first organizations to formally conceptualize civic knowledge, and to them, it consisted of an understanding and awareness of: important historical events; issues and actors; the structures and process of government and the legal system; the role of social movements; and the relevant social and political networks for change (Smith, 2012).

Civic skills – Civic knowledge has a degree of certainty in its conceptualization, but civic skills do not (Smith, 2012). However, civic skills can be categorized under three common titles: Communication skills, collaboration skills, and critiquing skills. See chapter two for a more comprehensive description of civic skills.

Civic engagement – Individual and collective actions taken for public concern: It can include efforts to directly address an issue, work with others in a community to solve a problem or interact with the institutions of representative democracy (American Psychological Association, n.d.). Civic engagement is one of the pillars of democracy.

Limitations of the Study

Various limitations with planned and unplanned outcomes existed within this case study. Delimiting the object of study is the single most defining characteristic of case study research (Merriam, 1998). This study is limited by six participants who are middle grades school teachers in one school system in a southeastern state. . However, the study benefited from this limitation because the purpose was to investigate the phenomenon intensively and holistically within its real-life context. The term limitation may be associated with restraints, but applying some limits to a study design is helpful especially when limitations' strengths outweigh the restraints.

These limitations present certain restraints with the outcomes. The most frequently mentioned limitation with a case study is the generalizability of the study findings. Some researchers agree that case studies should not be used for generalization or drawing inferences; rather be used for discovering uniqueness of each case (Hays, 2004); nonetheless, case studies do yield to generalizable results (Flyvbjerb, 2001). This does not mean case study is always appropriate as a research method, but when a phenomenon needs to be investigated in-depth, this is a more relevant tool. Another limitation is the length of the conduct of the research. Data was collected over a period of three months due to the nature of the position of the researcher. This may be considered as a limitation when the study is compared to studies whose data collection processes take about years.

A third limitation is the instrument for data collection. Large scale samples are measured with validated and reliable instruments, but in qualitative studies, the researcher is the primary instrument (Maxwell, 2012). Although it has advantages, it may

limit the study depending on the investigator's quality of the training in observation and interviewing.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter one mainly provides the background and the rationale for the study. More specifically, it includes the statement of the problem with the research questions, significance of this study, definitions of the key terms, limitations to the study, and an introduction to conceptual framework and methods used. Chapter two presents a review of the related literature examining what civic skills are and how they are related to civic engagement and democracy. It also incorporates recent and established empirical and seminal works on teacher belief and school climate and their relation to promotion of civic skills.

Chapter three presents the research design and the theoretical framework in which this study was situated. Research design includes a description of the population, specific methods for data collection and analysis, and the overall scope of how the study was performed. Chapter four reports the data and its thematic analyses in a qualitative research tradition. Finally, chapter five discusses the findings and insights into each research question, and offers recommendations about fostering civic skills among students and implications for those who draft policies for K-12 schools, and for those who hold leadership positions at the district or building level.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this research study was to broaden our understanding about teachers' beliefs regarding external and school level factors that fostered or impeded students' civic skills development. I planned to find out what external and school level factors influenced teachers' beliefs about promoting students' critiquing, communicating, and collaborating—all civic skills. The following research questions framed the present study:

1) From public school teachers' perspectives, what school-level factors foster students' civic skills?
2) From public school teachers' perspectives, what school-level factors impede students' civic skills?
3) From public school teachers' perspectives, what external-level factors foster students' civic skills?
4) From public school teachers' perspectives, what external-level factors impede students' civic skills?

This chapter presents a review of the related literature. It was very important to review and understand the previous studies on democracy and dynamics of public schools as they helped shape the direction of this study. In an effort to contribute to the civics literature, and form the research questions to lead the study, the following areas were reviewed:

- Civic skills
- School and external level factors
- Organizational Structures in K-12 Schools
- Bureaucracy in School Structure
- School Culture and Climate
- School Leadership
- Teachers' Beliefs

The chapter concludes with an examination of the relationship between school dynamics and teacher beliefs based on the literature.

Civic Skills

A working democracy is vital to people. Without the separation of powers and without the checks and balances, the government has the sole power, and ultimate say over the everyday lives of people. Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely once remarked John Dalberg-Acton (James, 2013). Eventually, we have learned that a high level educatedness or developedness is not necessarily a token of humanely living society. Therefore, a government should truly practice the rule of law and should justly represent the society it serves to, and this is only possible with civic engagement of the people. Civic engagement is one of the pillars that makes democracy work (Hauser, 2000). The destiny of countries lacking participation is in the hands of a reduced number of people who hold the power and deny it to anybody else (Maiello et al., 2003). Maiello et al. (2003) explained the concept of civic engagement with an analogy: you wanted to have a house with brown window frames and decided to

commission a constructor. The constructor is painting the windows frames blue. Without any objection from your side, you will get a house with blue window frames. The constructor needs to be reminded that you wanted your window frames brown. Here, what the intervention to the constructor is the engagement to democracy.

Despite the various challenges that public schools face today, they are most likely the very institutions to play a critical role in individuals' engagement in democratic practices (Carnoy & Levin, 1985; Flanagan et al., 2007) and schools have an equalizing effect in terms of civic engagement gap stemming from socioeconomic statutes (Kahne & Sporte, 2008). Schools are also the means by which the young generation are given opportunities to develop a sense of themselves as part of the body politic (Flanagan, P. Cumsille, S. Gill, & Gallay, 2007). Although schools have an important role in increasing students' knowledge (Flanagan et al., 2007; Niemi & Junn, 2005), they play an equally significant role in students' civic skills and commitment to the polity (Flanagan et al., 2007). Schools are the nurseries of the democracy, but if the teachers are not prepared to teach the essential knowledge and the skills to the next generation democracy can be lost in a single generation (Dayton, 2012).

Democracy is an on-going process. The greatest danger is when we think of our freedom given for granted and when we ignore the pieces of loses taken from our rights (Dayton, 2012). We are too busy with our personal lives to care about these small, but accumulating loses. Besides, individuals are not born with an understanding of the values of democracy. Therefore, democracy has to be born again in every generation, and education is its midwife (Dewey, 1916). Dayton and Glickman (1994) had reminded us that we could not expect children to develop a commitment to democratic principles if

these principles were not taught, modeled, and practiced in our public schools and other public institutions.

A true civic engagement is possible when one possesses both civic knowledge and civic skills. The concept of civic knowledge consists of an understanding of governmental structures, actors and processes; a comprehension of governmental outputs in the form of policies; knowledge of non-governmental forces such as the media, interest groups, and social movements; and familiarity with the prominent social networks within a given community setting (Smith, 2012). This conceptualization has consistency in the literature (Galston, 2001; Jennings & Niemi, 1974; Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001). However, the conceptualization of civic skills has no certainty. Besides, we have data regarding the political knowledge of many populations, yet few have investigated the extent to which youth have the skills necessary to be engaged, active citizens (Llewellyn et al, 2010).

The people of the United States are able to address the nation's fundamental problems, but again it requires both civic knowledge and civic skills to do so. Civic knowledge is a prerequisite to civic skills, and possession of civic skills is the key to civic engagement. Information and action are essential in this process. However, neither information nor action is satisfactory without the skills needed how to do what to do. Schools are the environments where students develop their civic skills, but do they get to develop their civic skills truly before they graduate? This is an essential question to be addressed, but first of all, what are the civic skills? Are they merely the knowledge of whom to vote and action of how to vote? Or are they beyond these?

General public opinion on civic skills is not quite the same with the meaning in dictionaries or the descriptions in the literature. While some people stated that they had no idea, some related civic skills to being nice or having social skills. I asked random people what they thought civic skills were, and here are some examples:

> A civic person would be considerate to other people and listen to what they have to say. They wouldn't ignore people speaking by being on there phone or messing with their hair. A civic person is not a rude person (A. Bishop, personal communication, September 5, 2014).

> Having the characteristic traits that will help others in business and when trading with other companies (R. Ofili, personal communication, November 6, 2014).

Some more example conversations where they connected the concept to city or community which was a right thing to do because the word civic is "of or relating to a citizen, a city, citizenship, or community affairs" (civic, n.d.):

> I think civic skills would include being informed about what's going on in the town, state, or country in which one lives (M. Anderson, personal communication, November 6, 2014).

> Umm I'm honestly not sure. I guess I would say that it's the skill set of social interaction and participation in your community. What are they really? (T. Felt, personal communication, October 13, 2014).

These definitions are not necessarily wrong and not being able to define them completely does not mean they do not have these skills. However, understanding what they really are is important if we need to see whether teachers can provide these skills to students. Especially for assessment purposes, we need to have a sharper and deeper understanding of what civic skills are.

A review of literature has showed that there is no consensus on what exactly civic skills are. However, there are descriptions for civic skills even though they vary greatly. Often times, academics discuss civic skills as skills necessary to be effective citizen in political participation. They are sometimes even reduced to skills necessary to vote (Smith, 2012). It is not rare that we actually see that voting rate alone is referred to describe civic engagement rate in certain publications (Coley & Sum, 2012) or civic engagement is represented by students' social studies knowledge levels. This is one of the main problems that needs to be resolved before we address the actual problems in civic engagement. Since definitions for civic engagement or skills have no boundaries, results that represent civic engagement are very easy to be manipulated in both ways.

If we expect an active and thoughtful civic engagement from the youth, we should understand that students' knowledge of democratic processes is of little use without the skills to put this knowledge into practice (Llewellyn et al., 2010). Beauvais, McKay, and Seddon (2001) argued that citizenship education rarely actually taught about political participation. Little attention within curriculum is paid to skills required to make political knowledge useful. For those who teach English or Mathematics, it is very important to have their students practice the knowledge they taught by making meaningful sentences or by multiplying numbers. Understanding the usefulness of knowledge is no different in civic literacy. The type of skills eventually varies depending on what society expects from the proper roles of democratic citizens. For people who consider voting is sufficient for civic engagement, few skills need to be developed in youth (Llewellyn et al., 2010). However, a survey conducted by Kubow (1997, p. 38) identified several skills for a strong citizenship

> the ability to understand, accept, and tolerate cultural differences; the ability to work with others in a co-operative way and to take responsibility for one's roles and duties within society; … a willingness to resolve conflict in a nonviolent manner; the ability to be sensitive towards and to defend human rights; and the capacity to think in a critical and systemic way.

Based on a report by Carnegie Foundation and CIRCLE (2003), Smith (2012) emphasized two key components of civic skills: active listening and a respect to diverse approaches. One of the ultimate goals of civic education is to develop "component and responsible citizens" who are "concerned for the rights and welfare of others;" who are "socially responsible, and willing to listen to alternative perspectives" (Carnegie Foundation and CIRCLE, 2003, p. 10). A review of literature displayed various definitions for civic skills, and to be able to see the big picture, an exhaustive list of description is provided in table one.

Table 1

Civic skills defined in the literature by chronological order

Author, year	**Skills as defined by author(s)**	**Skill referred to**
Morse (1993)	"dealing with difficult decisions for which there are no right or wrong answers" (p. 165)	Critiquing
Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995)	Proficiency in English, vocabulary, write a letter, make a speech or presentation. Knowledge of how to cope in an organizational setting. Attend a meeting in which decisions are made, plan such a meeting.	Communication Collaboration Collaboration

Battistoni (1997)	Listening to each other, understanding the places and interests of others in the community, achieving compromises and solving problems when conflict occurs. Also imagination: thinking creatively about public problems.	Communication, Critiquing
Boyte (2000)	Public speaking, write letters Plan strategies Work in a team	Communication, Collaboration
Morgan and Streb (2001)	Make important decisions	Critiquing
Torney-Purta (2002)	Skills tested in 14-year-olds include the ability to interpret political communication (leaflets and cartoons)	Critiquing
Schwadel (2002)	Writing, public speaking Organizing	Communication, Collaboration
Hurtado, Engberg, Ponjuan, and Landreman (2002)	"perspective taking skills" (p. 183)	Critiquing

Patrick (2003)	Monitoring public events and issues, influencing and implementing policy decisions on public issues, taking action to improve political and civic life. Influencing and implementing policy decisions on public issues and taking action to improve political and civic life. Interacting with other citizens to promote personal and common interests, deliberating and making decisions about public policy.	Critiquing Communication, Collaboration
Kirlin (2005)	"civic skills are competencies that allow one to become a participant in democratic processes rather than an observer." (p. 308)	Collaboration
Llewellyn, Cook, & Molina, (2010)	Support a candidate for office, organize a protest, locate information, and develop policy	Collaboration, Critiquing
Johnson (2011)	Skills to monitor events and understand context, to deliberate and appreciate other points of view, to follow a plan to reach a goal, and to know who the decision makers are and how to work with others	Critiquing, Collaboration

After analyzing different definitions by different scholars, I drew a pattern of categories as follows: 1) Critiquing: Critiquing ideas, and questioning positions. The

ability to gather, judge and distill information. The ability to identify multiple causes beneath problems and to interpret political communication; 2) Communication: Understanding and listening to others/other views are frequently mentioned. They come before expressing one's opinions. The ability to discuss controversial issues without demonizing others or their opinions; and 3) Collaboration: Participation in community matters or attending to meetings is one of the most important civic skills considered by many studies. This category also includes working with others and problem-solving. These categories and skills in each category do not imply a final draft for all civic skills, but unlike a simplified version of civic skills such as voting or volunteerism, based on a broad analysis of civic skills, they are comprehensive civic skills needed for an effective civic engagement in a democratic system.

School and External Level Factors

Factors that influence student achievement or the very core of schooling present a wide variety of characteristics, ranging from very global to very specific (Spade, Vanfossen, & Jones, 1985; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993). Such a factor can be the culture in the building, school district leadership, principal, parents, or even the physical condition of the building. What factors are considered as school-level factors, and what factors are considered as external-level factors? Different studies listed different factors as school or external level factors (Marzano, 2003; Purkey & Smith, 1993). For example, the following list of school-level factors, which is widely used to this day, were developed by Daniel Levine and Lawrence Lezotte (1990):

- productive climate and culture,
- focus on central learning skills,

- appropriate monitoring,
- practice-oriented staff development,
- strong leadership,
- salient parent involvement, and
- high expectations and requirements.

Nonetheless, it is difficult to draw a sharp line for some factors whether they are school-level or external-level. For instance, Levine and Lezotte (1990) categorized parent involvement as a school-level factor, but some studies considered parent involvement as an external-level factor (Wang, Chiang, Plaisent, & Bernard, 2013). There might be slight differences in the lists, and this is only natural. This is also due to a perspective one holds. A parent's involvement can be an internal level influence on student achievement if we look at the results of the action, and it can be an external level impact if its origin is taken into consideration. In this study, the main idea is that what helped or did not help teachers promote their students the skills they need so that these students can engage in their communities and become citizens who can think, communicate, and collaborate. For the sake of consistency, a factor was categorized as school-level if it originates in/from the school such as the principal, school structure or teachers themselves, and a factor was categorized as external-level if it is externally driven such as state-mandated tests, or regulations of the school district.

Organizational Structures in K-12 Schools

Public schools are structured organizations in some way because schooling is no longer a matter of only a certain local community. Educational institutions have gone through tremendous changes since the times of early settlements in America. In 1647

Massachusetts Bay Colony officials passed legislation requiring towns of at least fifty families to hire a teacher and towns of at least one hundred to establish a grammar school (Sparkman, 1994). First identifiable schools began to appear by 1700s, and the education of the youth was local people's responsibility (Bailey, 1997). There was no formal teacher preparation, and the teacher in a school had various assignments ranging from sweeping and scrubbing floors to administrative duties (Apps, 1996). Today, formal education systems in the United States have adopted defined structures as the population increased. School districts make the immediate circle beyond individual schools, and the states have also established departments to regulate education systems. Although the federal government cannot mandate rules on public schools since right to education is not in the Constitution, the presence of the federal government has also grown drastically in public school policies through federal grant programs.

Organizational structure in schools is one of the most important influences regarding the core of schooling, and determines teacher behavior for the most part (Baldy et al, 2014; Fidler, 1997; Hoy, Miskel, & Tarter, 2012; Rutherford, 2006). The concept of role specification is a fundamental element in structure that the specificity of role prescription is a means of measuring structural variations (George & Bishop, 1971; Hickson, 1966). Organizational structure of schools may also vary according to the type of teacher hired (Bidwell, 1965). Various organizational structures may contribute to organizational effectiveness because defined roles will allow organizational goals to be met (Fidler, 1997; Rutherford, 2006).

Organizational structure characterizes the way schools work and defines a broad range of aspects of school culture such as academic emphasis, collective efficacy, faculty

trust (Hoy, Tarter, & Hoy, 2006), coherent instructional guidance system, the professional capacity of the school, strong parent-community-school ties, a student-centered learning climate, and leadership that drives change (Bryk, 2010). Teacher plays a critical role at the preponderance of these aspects. Considering that teacher instruction is the first most important influence on student learning (Baldy et al., 2014), the power of organizational structure in school that may potentially support or impede teachers cannot be overlooked. Moreover, both administrators and teachers need to collectively seek for ways to improve the structure in a school where it will help novel ideas flourish.

Organizational structure is a key element in the way of building an effective school culture. According to Schoen and Teddlie (2008), school culture can be identified by four major dimensions: organizational structure, professional orientation, quality of the learning environment, and student centered focus. Bosworth (2000, p. 9) stated that "even seemingly minor steps to create a positive culture can have profound effects on students' lives. Yet, it is frequently overlooked or taken for granted." Campbell (2008) found that schools had an impact on whether adolescents were likely to become active, informed citizens and schools could also compensate for the civic disadvantages of young people with low socioeconomic status. However, his analysis (2008) noted that it was actually the nature of political discussions within the classroom and school events, not simply the frequency of formal Social Studies instruction, which had the effect. This argument is supported by previous studies (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 1996; McFarland & Thomas, 2006; Smith, 1999), and it suggests that the way and to the extent teachers carry out the message has more influence than formal Social Studies class itself because students will not become good citizens by memorizing what good citizens should do.

Hoy et al., (2012) gave a two-tier explanation to structures in schools: First tier is composed of two patterns and they are bureaucratic and professional patterns. The second tier is the four types of organization structures: 1) A Weberian school structure (described by Karl Weber as an ideal type) is a mixture of both professionalization and bureaucratization, 2) an authoritarian structure emphasizes bureaucratic authority and monopolizes the power, 3) a professional structure is where the organization members are treated as experts and competent of all job assignments, and 4) a chaotic structure is lack of both professionalization and bureaucratization, thus confusion and ineffectiveness are the common characteristic of chaotic structure.

An attempt from chaotic structure to authoritarian structure, from authoritarian structure to Weberian structure, and from Weberian structure to professional structure is a stable environment, but a change from professional structure to chaotic structure or from Weberian structure to authoritarian structure is a turbulent environment (Hoy et al., 2012). Change always happens in organizations, but it is a real challenge to determine how to successfully implement a planned change (Sherer & Spillane, 2011). Some scholars identified different aspects of the school organization as critical to planned change: For example, Seashore-Louis and Kruse (1995), Lee and Loeb (2000), McLaughlin and Talbert (2001), Bryk and Schneider (2002), and Seashore-Louis (2006) all pointed to the normative structure including norms of trust, collective responsibility and academic press. Frank, Zhao, and Borman (2004), Leana and Pil (2006), and Penuel, Frank, and Krause (2007) focused more on the behavior or interaction patterns among organizational members, underscoring the critical role of strong ties and ties that span the formal organizational structure in enabling planned change.

Drawing from various studies, Sherer and Spillane (2011, p. 615) explained different frames to study planned change in organizations and schools that "Some [scholars] focus on the leader, identifying, for example, behaviors along a developmental continuum, a set of behaviors, styles, or functions. Other scholars focus on building a culture of change or the need for people to learn together." Organizational routines define the structure in the school, and they are a key component of everyday life in organizations (Sherer & Spillane, 2011). Organizational routines are often taken for granted, but they define work practices by enabling and constraining interactions among organizational members. Organizational routines contribute to constancy in organizational work practice, and reduce conflict about how work gets done and who has responsibility for what (Cohen & Bacdayan, 1996; Feldman, 2000; Feldman & Pentland, 2003). On the other hand, organizational routines also have a hitch as they allow organizational members to go through the motions of work with a certain degree of mindlessness, potentially contributing to deskilling and demotivation (Hannan & Freeman, 1984).

Bureaucracy in School Structure

Characteristics of bureaucratic structure became an integral part of the organizational blueprint for most public schools (George & Bishop, 1971). These characteristics are 1) division of labor, 2) professionalization, 3) hierarchy of authority, and 4) administrative staff of clerks (Blau, Heydebrand, & Stauffer, 1966), and this kind of structure empirically criticized as early as 1960s it being inadequate and not compatible with schools (Bennis, 1967; Golembiewski, 1966). Bidwell (1965) claimed that systems which were highly bureaucratic, and consequently emphasized

administration by rules, alienated the professional oriented teacher who desires autonomy and collegial forms of administrative control. George and Bishop (1971) also studied the relationship between bureaucratic organizational structure and certain personality characteristics of teachers to determine their effects on teacher perception of organizational climate in schools, and found opposing patterns that in a smaller and less bureaucratic district, teachers were more dependent, conservative, and trusting people, who exhibit inauthentic behavior in their organizational roles whereas in the larger and more bureaucratic district, the teachers were more independent, opinionated, and brighter. Although common perception of the term bureaucracy is pejorative, Hoy and Sweetland (2001) also claimed that bureaucracies could also enhance satisfaction (Michaels, Cron, Dubinsky, & Joachimsthaler, 1988), increase innovation (Craig, 1995; Damanpour, 1991), reduce role conflict (Senatra, 1980), and lessen feelings of alienation in schools (Moeller & Charters, 1966).

The literature has mixed points toward bureaucratic structure in schools, but we like it or not, schools today are bureaucracies with hierarchy of authority, division of labor, impersonality, standards, and rules (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001). Most schools across the nation are common in organizational structure. Nonetheless, each school has its own distinct characteristic or climate that can be bent in a way that it brings about success or failure. Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1997, p. 75) found that school organization structure exerted the least influence on student learning whereas "school culture and climate were among the top influences in affecting improved student achievement."

School Culture and Climate

Deal (1985), Sarason (1996), Hopkins (2001), Harris (2002), and many more asserted that culture or climate (used interchangeably in the literature) in schools is the center of planned change. However, research that explore the role of school climate and school culture in the school improvement process is surprisingly scarce (Lindahl, 2006), yet existing studies (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Deal & Peterson, 1994; Wilson & McGrail, 1987) are promising that understanding school culture and school climate, and measuring them will eventually help educators attain a planned change.

School culture and school climate are difficult terms to describe, and indeed, there are probably as many definitions as the number of authors attempting to define these constructs (Lindahl, 2006). Some drew sharp lines between two that, for example, Rousseau (1990) differentiated between these two constructs on the basis of climate being the descriptive beliefs and perceptions individuals hold of the organization, while culture is the shared values, beliefs, and expectations that develop from social interactions within the organization. Some, however, thought that the "boundaries between organizational climate and culture can appear to be artificial, arbitrary, and even largely unnecessary" (Lindahl, 2006, p. 2), and offered an integrated description for both constructs. Cited in Owens (2004) and Lindahl (2006), Tagiuri (1968)'s systemic model presented culture as one of four components of organizational climate, along with ecology, milieu, and structure.

Culture refers to norms, values, and beliefs that exist in school and can be very difficult to change or measure, while climate refers to perceived environmental factors that impact behavior, and thus may be more amenable to influence and change (Drago-

Severson, 2012). Within Tagiuri (1968)'s construct of organizational culture, he included assumptions, values, norms, beliefs, ways of thinking, behavior patterns, and artifacts; this definition seems to parallel closely many of the prominent authorities in the field. Within the sub-component of ecology, he included buildings and facilities, technology, and pedagogical interventions. Within milieu, Tagiuri (1968) subsumed the race, ethnicity, socio-economic levels, and gender of organizational members and participants, their motivation and skills, and the organization's leadership. His organization or structure construct includes communication and decision-making patterns within the organization, the organizational hierarchy and formal structures, and the level of bureaucratization (Lindahl, 2006).

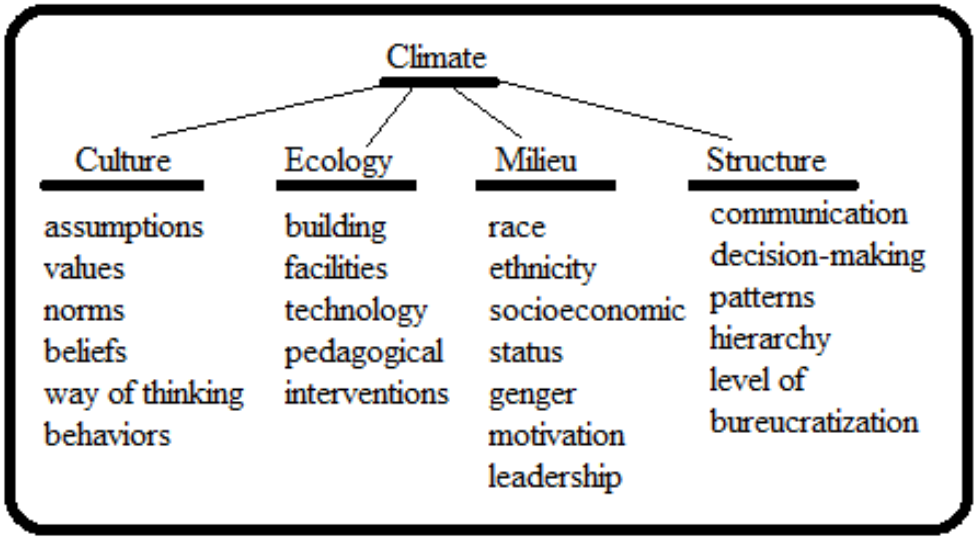

Figure 1. Tagiuri (1968)'s taxonomy on school climate

Organizational climate is the broadest term used to describe the total environmental quality in schools. Tagiuri (1968)'s taxonomy established a broad understanding of school climate and illustrated organizational issues that must be taken into consideration when planning for large-scale organizational improvement. However,

schools today have new dynamics and changed balances because of many factors including recent standardization and accountability practices. Therefore, based on Johnson, Stevens, and Zvoch's (2007) school climate study, I proposed a revised school climate where its quality is indicated by leadership, instructional innovation, decision-making, school resources, student relations, and collaboration.

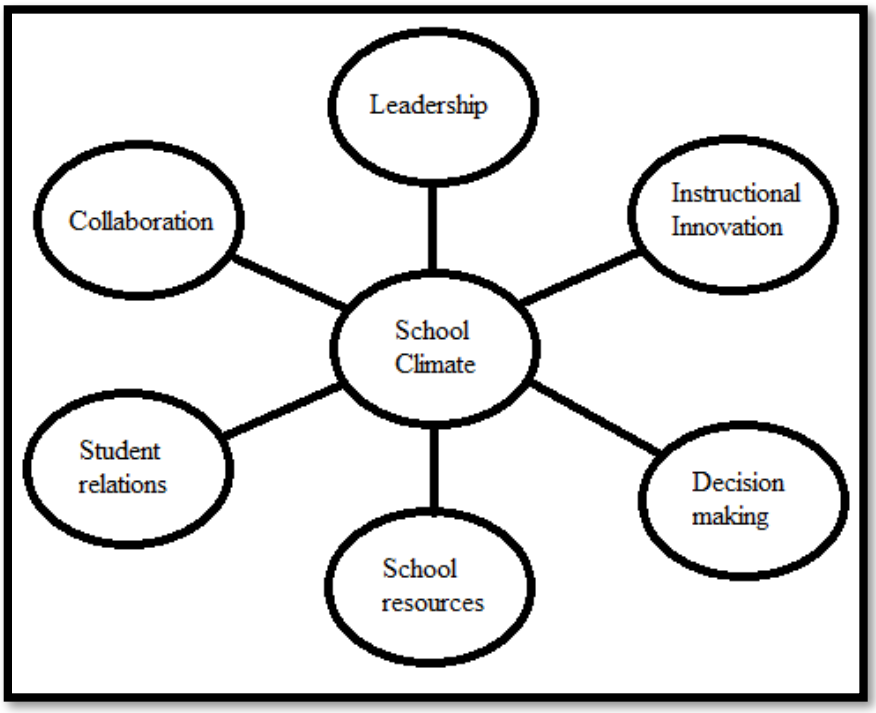

Figure 2. Revised school climate. Adapted from Johnson, Stevens, and Zvoch (2007)

Deal and Peterson (1994) claimed that dysfunctional school climates such as inward focus, short-term focus, low morale, fragmentation, inconsistency, emotional outbursts, and subculture values that surpass shared organizational values, can impede organizational improvement. The perception that teaching is an isolated and self-reliant profession is partly because of the school's organizational structure (Fallon & Barnett, 2009; Flinders, 1988), therefore, restructuring activities that are designed to break this

perception of professional isolation foster collegiality (Fullan, 1991; Hoy & Sweetland, 2001). Teachers can nurture students' needs for commitment to the polity by establishing a democratic climate for learning and social instruction (Flanagan et al., 2007). Structures that allow greater participation in the decision-making processes support opportunities for professional growth (Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor, 2003; Elmore, 2000; Rutherford, 2006; Smylie, 1997).

There is no direct research on the relationship between school climate and fostering civic skills. However, school climate has been found to be a mediating effect in student learning in general (Freiberg, 1998; Johnson et al., 2007; Kelley, 1981).

A positive school climate is the foundation for learning and positive civic development. School climate refers not to discrete educational experiences that students may receive such as a discussion in social studies class or a service learning project, but rather to the overall ethos or norms of the school. A school with a positive climate is one that

> promotes norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, and physically safe; supports a sense of unity and cohesion in the school as a community; promotes a culture of respect; and encourages students to consider themselves stakeholders in the school's success (Gould, 2011, p. 23)

Attempts to develop school climate require a long-term plan - a grass roots change, however we want a now change. We made immediate gratifications such as test scores as the main goal of education instead of waiting for a delayed gratification such as a student's success in real life. According to legend, it took Thomas Edison 1,000 tries to invent the light bulb. In other words, he failed 999 times before he reached success. Soon after Edison revealed his earth-shattering invention, a French reporter asked, "Mr.

Edison, how did it feel to fail 999 times?" As the story goes, Thomas Edison just replied, "Young man, I have not failed 999 times. I have simply found 999 ways how not to create a light bulb." (Chinsky, 2012, para. 2) Fostering civic skills requires patience, practice and participation. Fostering civic skills requires a school climate that encourages students to think and try; tells them that it is okay to make mistakes; and makes both teachers and students feel comfortable in unsettling the settled.

School climate also influences the nature of school leadership by utilizing leadership capacity (Camburn et al., 2003; Rutherford, 2006). Camburn et al. (2003, p. 350) described this utilization as an activation composed of "social processes that encourage incumbents of the formally-designated leadership positions to actively perform leadership functions." On the other hand, principal as the school leader has a profound effect on school climate (Pepper & Thomas, 2002). Principals have the capacity to guide the direction a school wants to move forward to and the capacity to create relationships within the school community that impact the overall climate.

School Leadership

There is substantial evidence in the literature to suggest that a school principal must first understand the school's climate before implementing change (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009). School leaders should provide an atmosphere of optimism rather than an environment of competition and confrontation (Pepper & Thomas, 2002). Littrell and Billingsley (1994, p. 308) claimed that uniting the staff through a 'we' approach rather than a hierarchical approach helped teachers to feel esteemed and respected as well as committed to and satisfied with their jobs. In a recent study, Black (2010) also inserted that school leaders investing time and effort in assessing and improving their schools'

climate can increase their school's overall performance. Dumay and Galand (2012)'s study supported the potential increase in performance that school leaders can strengthen the culture in school by making close relationships with teachers and exhibiting consistency across situations in terms of leadership practices, so that they inspire the behaviors of teachers.

Different practices that leaders display tell us about leadership traits. These traits may change in different situations, but scholars have studied the similar characteristics that different leaders possess and have come up with different types of leadership style. There are various leadership types; some are well-established and some are emerging. One person is more likely to display more than one leadership style, but it is important to see what characteristics are dominant with a leader or with a person in a leadership position because leadership is an essential part of the organizational structure.

Following the work of Burns (1978), Bass (1985) constructed a wide-ranging and highly influential model for leaders in social organizations, and based on Bass' (1985) construct, three main leadership types are commonly accepted in leadership studies. First one is Laissez-Faire leadership. Laissez-faire leaders are passive leaders and they avoid interaction with followers. Hoy et al. (2012, p. 449) described a Laissez-faire principal as someone who "stays in the office, engages faculty and students as little as possible, shows minimal concern for the learning and development of students or needs of the teachers, and allows school structures and processes to continue in the same way." This type of leadership describes someone with no leadership traits in a leadership position. It is actually a state of leadership absence as the original French phrase laissez-faire would mean: Let it be.

The second leadership type is transactional leadership in which the leaders promote compliance of their followers through both rewards and punishments. This type of leaderships is also known as managerial leadership. Transactional leaders recognize what followers want from work and they provide them with what they want (Hoy et al., 2012). Bass and Riggio (2005) stated that transactional leadership can be very effective in most situations especially by providing followers with rewards contingent on the follower's performance. Transactional leadership is effective in industry organizations including schools with bureaucratic structure. The third type is transformational leadership which can be considered as an augmentation to transactional leadership. According to Hoy et al. (2012), transformational leaders go beyond simple exchanges and agreements. They are proactive and raise the awareness levels of followers about collective conscience.

Hauserman and Stick (2013) studied the leadership that teachers want from principals with a sample of 77 Canadian schools, and they supported Bass' (1985) idea that transactional and transformational leadership qualities were not dichotomous, but that elements of both styles were present in effective leaders, surfacing to greater or lesser degrees according to prevailing circumstances. More precisely, a transactional leader works within a defined system and follows its rules. Control is maintained through processes. On the other hand, transformational leaders seek new ways of doing things and are less likely to support the status quo. They shape an environment where followers are a part of the process (Hauserman & Stick, 2013).

Transactional leadership skills is a foundation for the development of transformational leadership skills and the relationship between the two leadership styles

is one of augmentation (Bass, 1998; Bass & Avolio, 2000). Transformational leaders are able to display transactional leadership when the need arises because they also have the many of the managerial characteristics of transactional leadership. However, being a transactional leader is not necessarily a bad thing. It is a leadership and actually works in many organizations, and is a good fit for school whose climate encourages a stable environment and keeps the status quo. On the other hand, transformational leadership is an effort to satisfy followers' needs and to move followers to a higher level of work performance and organizational involvement by displaying respect and encouraging participation (Burns, 1978). This type of leadership is possible when there is a collective interest in unusually high performance. Burns (1978, p. 4) said the apparent differences between transformational and transactional leadership arose because the former "recognizes and exploits an existing need or demand of a potential follower . . . looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower." Transactional leadership meets immediate requirements and brings success in short term while transformational leadership takes patience but favors long-term performance.

Teacher Beliefs

Beliefs are defined as assumptions that are subjectively felt to be true (Kleickmann, Tröbst, Jonen, Vehmeyer, & Möller, 2016). Pajares (1992) claimed that beliefs were "the best indicators of the decisions individuals make throughout their lives" (p. 307). Because personal beliefs have been widely accepted as one of the driving forces in determining teachers' actions in classroom situation (Bandura, 1986; Markic, & Eilks,

2013), teacher beliefs are considered as one of the most valuable constructs for teacher education (Kagan, 1992; Kim, Kim, Lee, Spector, & DeMeester, 2013; Pajares, 1992).

Ernest (1988) also argued that teachers' beliefs have an influential impact on instruction. For example, teachers' beliefs influence decisions about the specific lesson objectives and lesson content, as well as what instructional strategies are most appropriate for providing optimal learning opportunities for students (Belo, van Driel, van Veen, & Verloop, 2014; Meirink, Meijer, Verloop, & Bergen, 2009). Also, teachers hold complex beliefs that influence more or less every aspect of teaching, including defining and selecting instructional tasks, knowledge acquisition, choices of assessment, and interpreting course content (Belo et al., 2014; Keys, & Bryan, 2001). In brief, people act upon what they believe (Mansour, 2013). Even more, Nespor (1987) decisively stated that educational reforms could only succeed if and when teachers' beliefs are seriously taken into account and incorporated into the reform. Therefore, it is important to understand teachers' beliefs, and their beliefs on factors that might support or hinder their efforts in the promotion of civic skills.

On the other hand, school leadership (principal's behaviors that are recognized by the teachers) can influence teachers' beliefs in emphasizing accomplishment, giving frequent feedback, and promoting an academic emphasis in the school (Dumay & Galand, 2012; Ross & Gray, 2006). A principal is critical in creating organizational conditions under which teachers work best (Blase & Kirby, 2008; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Recent reforms on school change call for successful educational leaders who have a deeper understanding of how to create sustainable organizational conditions. Hauserman and Stick (2013) emphasized that shifting leadership from a sole decision-

maker to greater teacher involvement fostered positive change among teachers. Teachers experienced a sense of empowerment when they viewed themselves capable of focusing on student learning (Hauserman & Stick, 2013).

Leadership actions can help teachers in emphasizing student learning, giving frequent feedback and encouraging an academic emphasis in the school (Dumay & Galand, 2012). Transactional leaders, for example, seeks to manage and control organizational members to move toward a predetermined set of goals; however, for teachers' improvement, the leadership must transmit a vision of the improvement (Rhoden, 2012). High-functioning schools were found to have transformational principals who shaped the school vision and a principal's vision and the establishment of a collegial culture fostered teacher empowerment (Skalbeck, 1991). Hoy and Smith (2007) found that transformational leadership – unlike transactional leadership – empowered teachers. Blasé & Kirby's (2008) findings supported previous statement that teachers reported that principals who had the greatest influence were open, participatory, and effective. Principals demonstrating transformational leadership were also related to better student learning and more committed teachers (Hauserman & Stick, 2013).

In their study on the mediating effects of teacher beliefs on school improvement, Ross and Gray (2006) found that teacher belief was connected to the context in which teachers work. For school leaders, it is very important to understand how climate influences teachers and overall school performance. Each school has its own culture that forms the climate of the school and sends a message to teachers and students about what is important (Wilen, Ishler, Hutchison, & Kindsvatter, 2000). A professional school climate provides teachers with collaboration in which they work together by offering

constructive feedback, developing common goals, and setting realistic limits of what can be achieved (Pepper & Thomas, 2002; Ross & Gray, 2006).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study was to broaden our understanding of teachers' perspectives about external and school level factors that fostered or impeded students' civic skills development. To understand this phenomenon in depth, social studies teachers at Pinecrest Middle School and Clearwater Middle School were interviewed twice to gain their perspectives on things that they believed to be influencing their abilities and efficacies to foster students' civic skills. These six middle school teachers made up the case for this study. Field notes were also used to strengthen the findings of the study.

This chapter presents the research questions, theoretical framework, research design, methodology, the case for the study, data collection, data analysis, subjectivity statement, credibility, transferability, dependability, and the limitations.

Research Questions

Research questions were important, and they took shape with time to narrow the research objectives and purpose (Creswell, 2008). In fact, the design did change as the study unfolded over time while collecting data then during data analysis. Nested in a qualitative case study design, this study aimed to investigate teachers' beliefs in depth regarding internal and external factors that fostered or impeded students' civic skills development. The research questions included:

1) From public school teachers' perspectives, what school-level factors foster students' civic skills?

2) From public school teachers' perspectives, what school-level factors impede students' civic skills?
3) From public school teachers' perspectives, what external-level factors foster students' civic skills?
4) From public school teachers' perspectives, what external-level factors impede students' civic skills?

While these research questions formed the objective and the purpose of the study, adopting a theoretical framework was as important as the research questions.

Theoretical Framework

Adopting a conceptual or theoretical framework throughout a research study provided a perspective or lens through which a researcher can examine the study topic with certain guidelines. This is not to limit the research; on the contrary, a theory adds new and focused dimensions to it. There is no right or wrong theoretical framework to use when examining a research topic since every topic can be looked at from a number of different perspectives. Becker (1993) claimed that we would not know what to do in progressing our research without a theoretical framework. Merriam (1998, p. 45) also emphasized the importance of the theory in research by stating that "many believe mistakenly that theory has no place in a qualitative study. Actually, it would be difficult to imagine a study without a theoretical or conceptual framework."

How teachers teach and students learn are shaped by the culture (social or political) in which they grow up (Hinde, 2004). Especially, within the environment created by the recent governmental policies requiring strict accountability measures, teachers, as a particular group of a society, are held accountable for the quality of

education, and go through some similar challenges that some oppressed groups have experienced in the past and critical theorists critiqued, but in a modern format. Again, there is no right or wrong theoretical framework to use when examining this research topic, but a critical theory perspective provided a practical guidance to me in investigating teachers' beliefs in fostering civic skills because as van Manen (1990) also emphasized critical theory tries to promote critical consciousness, and struggles to break down the institutional structures and arrangements which reproduce oppressive ideologies and the social inequalities that are sustained and produced by these social structures and ideologies.

In 1970, Marx and Engels outlined the idea of hegemony as how the ideas of the ruling class become universalized as the ideas of all. Brookfield (2005, p. 94) additionally explained that ideology "can be viewed as embedded in a system of practices — behaviors and actions that people learn to live out on a daily basis within personal relationships, institutions, work, and community." Brookfield continued that "Ideology becomes hegemony when the dominant ideas are learned and lived everyday decisions and judgments and when these ideas pervade the whole of existence" (p. 94). As one of the central beliefs driving critical theory, hegemony has been also discussed by many scholars as false consciousness.

It should be noted that false consciousness is not ignorance, but is a state of "social life…systematically distorted by social forces" (Wood, 1988, p. 358). Therefore, among many, Certeau (1984), and Freeman and Vasconcelos (2010) emphasized that developing critical consciousness helps people see themselves as active subjects rather than people to act upon, and it is a reflective approach and a means to liberation.

Formation and development of critical consciousness is important for liberation (Gramsci, 1971) because "the oppressed have internalized the values, beliefs, and even world view of their oppressors… and willingly cooperate with those who oppress them in maintaining those social practices that result in their oppression" (Freeman & Vasconcelos, 2010, p. 12).

Another central concept of critical theory is commodification or objectification. Commodification is originally a Marxist notion that a human quality or relationship is regarded as a product, good, or commodity to be bought and sold, and in a such a setting, exchange value of a product (monetary worth) becomes more important than its use value (satisfaction of a human need or desire).

Critical theory informed and helped me frame the study in two ways. First, central to the phenomenon of this research, most high-stakes accountability policies suggest that student achievement is to be measured and this measurement is attributed to the teaching quality of teachers. There is a value that we ascribed to teaching in this sense. The concept of subjectification now can tell us that although the value of teaching (for example, teaching self-confidence or being a good citizen) is important, it is mainly the exchange value (for example, scoring high on Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) that policymakers or education interest groups consider when deciding on curriculum, funding, or evaluation. Among countless examples, one is a newspaper article that highlights the importance of international tests: "Fourth- and eighth-grade students in the United States continue to lag behind students in several East Asian countries and some European nations in math and science […]" (Rich, 2012); thus, policymakers responded to this problem in the American education system by placing

emphasis on test scores. Critical theory invites us to question this situation and lets us think whether life success is something that can be measured, and what the consequences would be if we do so.

Second, a distinctive characteristic of critical theory is to provide people an understanding of freeing oneself from oppression, and produce knowledge that will make changes. Patton (2002) inserted that the knowledge a theory produces could be considered useful to the extent that it helps change the behavior of its unit of analysis. Critical theory is clearly transformative and aims to bring about social change (Brookfield, 2005), so the purpose of the researcher becomes helping participants (teachers) research their settings with a view to changing them in directions they determine. The products of this research cannot be an interpretation of the situation, but need to be concluded from the changes it creates. Therefore, the critical perspective I employed for this research informed me that I should not only interpret the relationship between school and external level impacts and teachers' beliefs in their teachings, but also needed to empower teachers to bring about changes in their lives.

Research Design

The design of this study was constructed in a qualitative research tradition. Qualitative works can be criticized to be unreliable simply as a possible result of conscious lying or a result of respondents' unconscious bias and self-interest while quantitative researchers can also be criticized to be blind to plausible alternative explanations and conforming preconceived notions (Reichardt & Rallis, 1994). These two research methods, however, are not competing, but both try to understand and improve human condition, and both have distinguished tools to help researchers deepen their

understanding. Therefore, the important step is to find what the best tools are for a specific study, and to realize the strengths and the weaknesses of those tools in the research.

In a qualitative study, in-depth understating is a key feature where the researcher takes a wider step to investigate a phenomenon in depth. The deeper investigation is especially needed in social and educational sciences because educational phenomena are so much more complex than most natural phenomena. There are two constructs in my study, including 1) school and external level factors, and 2) public school teachers' beliefs in fostering civic skills among their students. I chose to conduct my study in a qualitative research tradition to understand teachers better, and how they do what they do and what they need, so I can see the relationship between the factors and teachers' beliefs. The overall design of my study was developed to understand this relationship is displayed in figure 3.

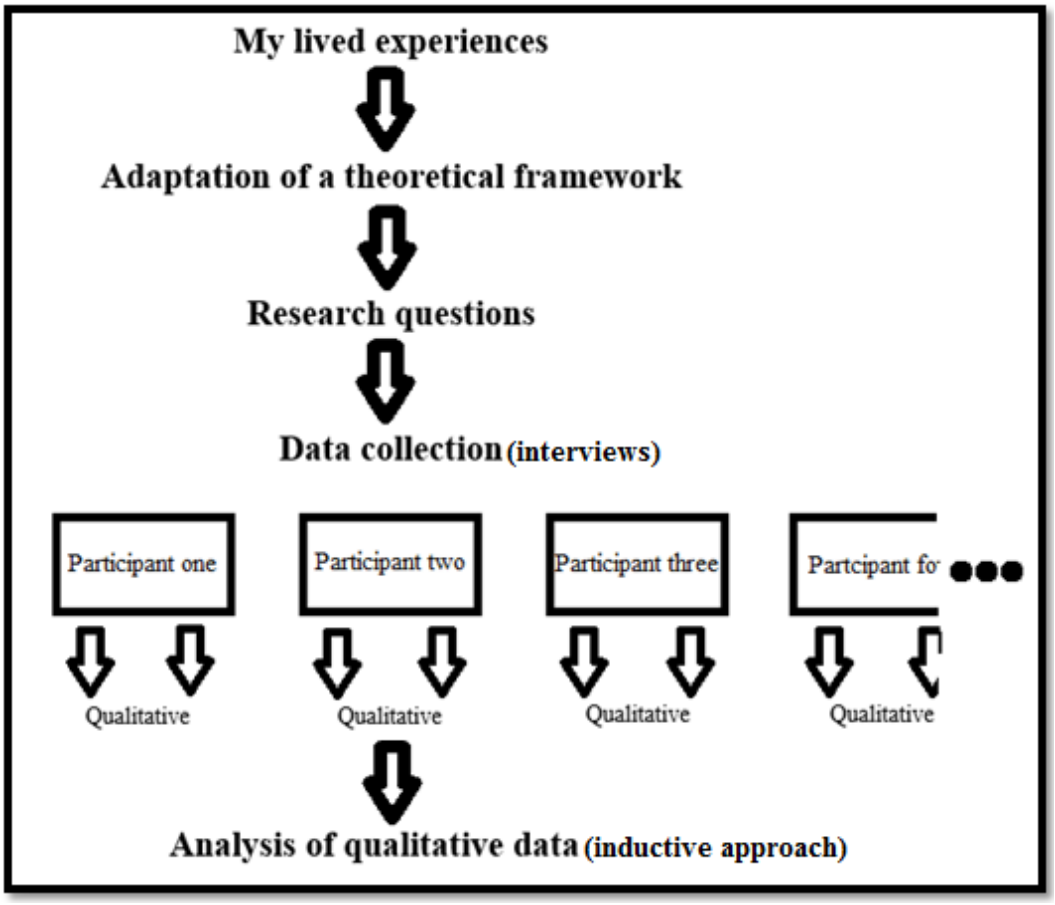

Figure 3. Overall design of the study

Maxwell (2012) warned researchers that a sharp separation between their research and the rest of their lives is harmful to research. Idealism in objectivity may lead to such a separation, but instead of fighting for a perfect objectivity against our biases, as Peshkin (1988) emphasized, researchers should work with their objectives throughout their research hand in hand. My lived experiences as a former teacher and an intern at the U.S. Capitol shaped my research study. Factors that influence learning are well-studied and their construct is established, and quantitative methods such as surveys are helpful to examine them. However, the conceptualization of civic skills has no certainty and is perceived differently by different people. Therefore, I investigated the relationship

between school and external level factors, and teachers' beliefs in depth as a case study with tools such as interviews and field notes.

Methodology

The methodology that was used to conduct this research study was case study research. Although case study research has been used in applied sciences for decades (Gilgun, 1994), there is little consensus on what a case study really is. Merriam (1998, p. 26) noted that this confusion mainly stemmed from the fact that case study was "equated with fieldwork, ethnography, participant observation, qualitative research, naturalistic inquiry, grounded theory, or exploratory research." The most distinctive characteristic of case study research is the ability to understand a complex social phenomenon by asking how and why questions and delimiting the object of study (Yin, 2008). Bromley (1986, p. 23) wrote to support this idea that case studies "get as close to the subject of interest as they possibly can."

Another characteristic of case studies is the discovery mode. Merriam (1998) emphasized that case study was likely to be the best choice if the variables were so embedded in the situation as to be impossible to identify ahead of time. Yin (2003, p. 13) defined a case study in a very precise way as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between and context are not clearly evident." As we empirically do not know exactly what factors have an influence on teachers regarding their beliefs to teach their students skills needed to be active citizen of their society, a case study was the best fit for such a construct, so that this would be a base for future research.

The Case for the Study

This case study was conducted with six social studies teachers from two different middle schools in the same school district located in a Southeastern state. These were Pinecrest Middle School and Clearwater Middle School (both pseudonyms). The reason these schools were chosen was that they were considered to be "average" schools by many that represented most of the middle schools in the United States. They were not underperforming nor outperforming schools. These schools also had a diversity within the students enrolled in them.

Pinecrest Middle School

One of the two study sites was Pinecrest Middle School which was situated in a medium-sized suburban district in a Southeastern state. Pinecrest Middle had a diverse student body, and served 728 students. This school is an International Baccalaureate World School, and 46 of its 63 teachers had an advanced degree. Pinecrest Middle School's mission was to prepare the students to be productive members of a global society while being considerate to diversity.

Clearwater Middle School

Clearwater Middle School was the other study site for data collection which was located in the same school district as Pinecrest Middle School. Clearwater Middle served 677 students, and had a diverse student body. It was also an International Baccalaureate school, and had 54 teachers, 38 of them with advanced degrees. Clearwater's mission was stated as to be open to new ideas and dreams while concentrating on academics.

Public school teachers were chosen because they are representative of the majority (77.43%) of all K-12 schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013).

Although all teachers are supposed to contribute to a child's civic skills development, social studies teachers were selected because they are the ones who are primarily responsible for promoting instruction and activities that develop students' civic skills. Finally, teachers who teach 6th, 7th, and 8th grades participated in this study because students in these grades are at a critical stage for their learning (Amna, 2012; Kaviani, 2011). The participants (whose names are pseudonyms) are profiled so that the reader gains insight about each.

Mr. Baker

Mr. Baker began teaching in 1993. At the time of the study, he taught social studies, and was certified in English and math also. He previously served in assistant principal and principal roles, but went back to teaching. When I praised him because of his expansive experiences, he sarcastically spoke of the recent policies citing how there was no significance difference in performance between novice and senior teachers.

Ms. Williams

Ms. Williams was passionate about teaching, and she loved her students. She is a social studies teacher with a certification in special education. She is a veteran teacher, and taught in middle school for the majority of her teaching career.

Mr. Miller

Mr. Miller served in the Army and worked for the Government, but he was not pleased with this type of work. He gave a pause to his career by going back to graduate school for a master's degree in public administration. He took a substitute teaching job on the side while in school, and realized teaching had been the job he was looking for. At the time of this study, he had taught for 13 years. He described teachers as people with a

"higher sense of purpose, higher sense of duty" compared to any other jobs. It took him two years to get his teaching certification and to find a full-time teaching job.

Ms. Taylor

It was Ms. Taylor's fifth year at her current school, and she taught for seven years in total. She had a bachelor's degree in criminal justice, but she decided to teach government and history. She enjoyed teaching social studies because she believed that it was course that helped students gain multiple perspectives.

Mr. Thomas

Mr. Thomas was also an experienced teacher. He was never in the administration, but he taught for 12 years in different subject areas such as Health, Physical Education and Visual Arts. When he realized school districts were reducing budget allocations for non-core courses in 2008, and systems were laying off teachers, he decided to also get certified in areas such as social studies and Political Science to secure his job. At the time of this study, he taught social studies for six years, and he kept himself even busier coaching. He had a master's degree in Kinesiology, and he was interested in research-based teaching practices.

Mr. Martinez

Mr. Martinez taught social studies and math at his current school for seven years. This was his first full-time teaching job after substitute-teaching for one year, and he enjoyed teaching social studies because he believed it was interesting and there were always interesting discussions in social studies classes. Mr. Martinez seemed caring about his students, and he said he wanted to expose them to lots of different things so they had a framework in which to think about the world.

Data Collection

Semi-structured in-depth interview was the primary method used to understand the participants' perspectives on the factors that foster or impede students' civic skills. Each participant was interviewed twice. Field notes were also taken during each interview. Kvale (2007, p. xvii) stressed that "A qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations." If done properly, a semi-structure interview is an effective tool for producing valuable knowledge. It is regarded more of a craft where the interviewer opens doors to the production of new knowledge by asking questions and listening carefully for further questions rather than as a method with explicit rules and pre-determined questions. Thus, the quality of the interview is highly dependent on the interview-conductor, and on the questions being asked in the interview. One might think that questions should not be leading or directive to certain answers, so the interviewees can reflect their true lifeworld. However, there is a thin line between leading and directive questions: "Although the wording of a question can inadvertently shape the context of an answer, it is often overlooked that deliberately leading questions are necessary part of many questioning procedures" (Kvale, 2007, p. 88).

My target sampling population was middle school teachers. Although critiquing, collaborating, and communicating skills have a potential to be fostered in any discipline, social studies teachers were chosen to keep study focused, and it was a good starting point as social studies teachers were considered to be primarily responsible to help children develop their civic skills.

Once permissions to conduct a research study from the school district and an institutional review board were obtained, principals at Clearwater Middle and Pinecrest Middle were asked to distribute my recruitment mail to the social studies teachers. A total of six teachers from these two schools volunteered to participate in the study. An interview protocol was constructed to understand teachers' beliefs about school and external level factors, and how these factors affect teachers when attempting to foster civic skills among their students. Opinions from practitioners and experts were taken into consideration when I formed the interview questions. Questions that helped me structure an interview conversation are provided in table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Interview questions

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1. Please tell me about you and your work.
2. Can you provide an example of helping your students to recognize multiple perspectives towards an issue/problem?
    a. Can you provide other examples?
    b. Are you able to accomplish this in most of your classes?
3. Are you able to show your students that it is okay to take risks, make mistakes, and think divergently?
    a. Can you provide an example?
    b. Are you able to show your students that there are often more than one correct answer to a question?
    c. Can you provide an example?
    d. What impact does heavy reliance on single correct answer multiple choice testing have on students' willingness to take chances or think divergently?
4. How would you describe critical thinking skills?
5. How do school-level factors affect your ability to promote critical thinking skills?
    a. What helps you in promoting critical thinking skills in your students?
    b. What impedes you from promoting critical thinking skills in your students?
6. Can you provide your students with opportunities to develop their collaboration skills?

    a. Can you provide an example?
    b. Are you able to accomplish this in most of your classes?
7. How can you promote respect for others' views in your students?
8. What do you think the school's role is in promoting the following:
    a. Listening to others/other views
    b. Discussing controversial topics
    c. Working with others
    d. Participating in events
    e. Judging and distilling information
    f. Perspective-taking and interpreting problems
9. What impact does the use of social media have on students in developing these skills?

As stated earlier, the interviews were semi-structured meaning that I did not follow the protocol verbatim. Each interview had its own dynamics, and there were times that the topic was very relevant to the study, so I dug out more and more information by following the stream of the participants. Also, the participants were not given a list of factors, so that they would talk about them. Instead, the participants came up with factors that that they believed to supported or hindered civic skills. The participants were only reminded of a factor if it was a significant one and the participant had never mentioned it (e.g., "how about collaboration with your colleagues?").

First interviews with each participant were audio-recorded with their permissions. Each session ran between 30 to 90 minutes. Some themes began emerging as I talked with the participants. One or two weeks after the first interviews, the participants were interviewed again. Field notes and notes from the first interview recordings were used to frame the second interviews. Sometimes, it is difficult to come up with examples when we are asked about something, but our brains continue thinking about it afterwards. That's why, the second interview session rendered more productive and rich conversations with the participants. These interviews were also audio-recorded. At the

end, all conversations were transcribed verbatim, and 161 pages of qualitative data were ready for a full analysis.

Data Analysis

An inductive thematic method was used to analyze the written transcripts of the conversations with the six middle school teachers. These teachers taught in two different schools located in the same district in a Southeastern state. In total, 161 pages of transcript data were collected from September through December 2015.

The inductive thematic data analysis approach reflects the frequently occurring patterns that emerged. Thomas (2003) explains the purposes for using an inductive approach as to (1) to condense extensive and varied raw text data into a brief, summary format; (2) to establish clear links between the research objectives and the summary findings derived from the raw data and (3) to develop a model or theory about the underlying structure of experiences or processes which are evident in the raw data.

Indeed, the analysis began with the very first interview. As discussed earlier, the researcher is the instrument in a qualitative study, and as the participants started stating their perspectives, I also started connecting dots — coding emerging ideas in my mind. Simons (2009, p. 105) stated that data analysis can be characterized by procedures such as, "coding, categorizing, concept mapping, theme generation — which enable you to organize and make sense of the data to produce findings and an overall understanding of the case." Once data collection process ended, data were analyzed using a commercial software program called NVivo. NVivo is a software that supports qualitative and mixed methods research, and it helps researchers organize, analyze and find insights in unstructured, or qualitative data from interviews, open-ended survey responses, articles,

social media and web content. With the help of this software, common themes from each participant were coded and categorized. As an example, Table 3.2 shows how each transcription was analyzed for the participants' perspectives.

Table 3.2

Sample of Transcription Analysis

Key words	**Code**	**Factor originated**	**Comments**
I think one of the challenges that we have is planning and the amount of time we have for planning. So in order to come up with activities and structure them in a way that's helpful to my kids…	Planning	Internally	Lack of planning time, impedes
A lot of that [support] comes from things that my teammates and me find and put together ourselves.	Collaboration	Internally	support
If parents don't make them be respectful toward adults and things like that at home, rarely are they going to come here and be respectful. If parents are at home and they can't read themselves, then most of the time their children can't read.	Parents	Externally	Potential to support or impede
It has to start with conversations with the parents and in our country we don't have a society of parents anymore that raise their children.	Parents	Externally	Impede
Kids don't like to think. These kids don't like to think. I don't know about all other kids but they do not like to think. They want you to do the thinking for them	Attitudes toward education/students	Internally	Impede

Field notes were helpful as well in this process. All data were run through couple of times, and each time themes became more distinct. Finally, each theme was labelled whether it was a factor at the school level or external level, or whether it was a factor that helped or hindered teachers. The aggregate data findings are presented in chapter four.

Subjectivity Statement

It is often difficult to see things from other people's perspectives. My lived experiences shape myself and inform me in terms of who I am as a person, family member, academician, and a person with special attributes. All of these could be considered subject positions from where I see and understand the world. The awareness of myself as the instrument in this qualitative study brings up the subjectivity issue. Seeing things from other people's perspectives by developing a sense of empathy is not enough to understand the world. Subjectivity adds a whole new dimension to a study. Nonetheless, fighting for a sterile research free from researcher's subjective thoughts will not make up a perfect objective study, or we will only think it will. As Peshkin (1988) suggested, I should be aware of my subjective thoughts throughout the study, and act accordingly.

In this qualitative study, I served as the measuring instrument for the central phenomenon: Fostering civic skills in public middle schools. Democracy should be revisited in each generation, and schools are the means that carry the responsibility of promoting democracy. Therefore, it is very important to regularly evaluate not only what we teach to our kids, but also how we teach what we teach. We all want our kids to be equipped with necessary knowledge, but we also want them to be responsible and engaged citizens of the society. Any subject taught at schools has the potential to prepare

students as informed and civilly engaged citizens, but this role is primarily given to social studies classes in our current education system. With the recent federal education initiatives such as No Child Left Behind or Common Core, courses including social studies have been regulated - or standardized - in terms of curriculum and evaluation.

Going back to the issue of subjectivity, I know that struggling for an objective perspective is not more than a bluff when I am looking at the problems with promoting democracy and civic empowerment among the youth. We are human beings, and we come with our own backgrounds, life experiences, and biases. Nonetheless, if I look beyond the positions of my objectivity or subjectivity and focus on how my subjectivity informs my ways of constructing and producing knowledge, then I can create compelling and convincing argument about how I write myself into my research as a valid form of scientific inquiry in qualitative methods. Peshkin (1988) believed that one's subjectivity cannot be removed and researcher should systematically seek out their subjectivity during the entire research process

> Researchers should systematically identify their subjectivity throughout the course of their research. When researchers observe themselves in focused ways, they learn about the particular subset of personal qualities that contact with their research phenomenon has released. These qualities have the capacity to filter, skew, shape, block, transform, construe, and misconstrue what transpires from the outset of a research project to its culmination in a written statement. (p. 17)

Initially, there were two things to be identified for a researcher to be able to seek out their subjectivity: Bias and reactivity (Maxwell, 2012). I saw myself both biased and reactive in this study because the motive for this study came out to be a desire to change things and I decided not to continue teaching, but pursue my further studies to make some changes in teachers' lives and consequently in people's lives. I believed that taken their

autonomy away, public school teachers as a community resembled the characteristics of an oppressed community. Therefore, I knew I might have carried my research in a reactive or protective way.

This reactive or protective way of my stance had been also fueled by being a teacher and an intern at the United States Capitol and by seeing how policies are shaped: Education policies were not necessarily initiated by education specialists, and the process in which a policy was formed can be influenced by various factors such as political popularity, intellectual ignorance, or lack of time. Commonness of writings or popular beliefs about the ineffectiveness of bureaucratic practices of such government policies also gave me a feeling of alienating policymakers rather than seeing them the inevitable part of the education system in a democratic society.

In a traditional scientific discourse, subjectivity is often presented as a polar opposite to objectivity. In this sense, objectivity is often seen as an absence of bias, thus implicitly implying that subjectivity is equated with bias. However, subjectivity is highly dependent on one's epistemological and ontological assumptions, so I know its presence should be acknowledged and I worked out with my own subjectivities throughout this study.

Credibility, Transferability, and Dependability

Depending on their philosophical perspectives, some qualitative researchers reject the framework of validity or reliability that is commonly accepted in more quantitative research in the social sciences (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Credibility, commonly known as internal validity, involves gathering accurate data, and establishing that the findings of the study are credible. Several procedures were employed to secure the credibility of this

research study. Participants were assured that pseudonyms would be used for any identifiable information, so that they were able to speak freely. Also, all the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, so all collected information was accurate.

As for as the external validity, or transferability in other words, sufficient data were collected to construct an externally valid study. Generalization is not the primary purpose of case studies. Some researchers agree that case studies should not be used for generalization or drawing inferences; rather be used for discovering uniqueness of each case (Hays, 2004); nonetheless, case studies do yield to generalizable results (Flyvbjerb, 2001). To ensure transferability of this case study, interview sessions continued until participants' responses showed solid patterns or a level of saturation was reached (Patton, 2015).

The traditional quantitative view of reliability is based on the assumption of replicability or repeatability. Essentially it is concerned with whether we would obtain the same results if we could observe the same thing twice. Nonetheless, Trochim (2006) stated that we could not measure the same thing twice; we would be measuring two different things if we were measuring twice. The idea of dependability, however, deals with the logical consistency for selecting people or events to observe, or interview, and the consistency is assessed by independent auditor reviews (Williams, 2011). Dependability of this study was ensured by three doctoral dissertation committee members.

Limitations of the Qualitative Inquiry

Adapting a qualitative research design has advantages and limitations. There is no one best research design. Each serves to a different perspective, not to a worse or better

degree. Interviewing method is a great tool for producing valuable knowledge especially when trying to understand a social phenomenon. However, it may limit the research because the researcher is the instrument to measure the construct and I might come with my biases and reactions that might change the direction of interview. Findings from the interviews are also limited in a sense that they are difficult to be generalized. Nonetheless, this does not imply an insignificancy. Education reforms have suffered greatly because we have long taken a position that only welcomes "generalizable" results. However, for educational phenomena, it is very important to understand issues in-depth and broadly, and with the help of the reflectivity of the interviews, this study aimed to do that.

The next chapter presents the findings of this study in an aggregate form as categorized by common themes, and as factors that either supported or hindered students' civic skills development.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter first presents an overview of the context in which the study took place, including profiles of Pinecrest Middle School and Clearwater Middle School, and the six participants who participated in the study. Next, the chapter includes the findings and analysis of the data, which was derived from participant interviews.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to broaden our understanding of teachers' perspectives about external and school level factors that fostered or impeded students' civic skills development. The researcher planned to discover what external and school level factors influenced teachers' beliefs about promoting students' critiquing, communicating, and collaborating—all civic skills. The following questions framed the present study:

1) From public school teachers' perspectives, what school-level factors foster students' civic skills?
2) From public school teachers' perspectives, what school-level factors impede students' civic skills?
3) From public school teachers' perspectives, what external-level factors foster students' civic skills?
4) From public school teachers' perspectives, what external-level factors impede students' civic skills?

To find answers to these questions, the researcher collected data with the methods of in-depth interviews and field notes, and analyzed the data using thematic data analysis techniques. Data sources included two sessions of in-depth interviews with each participant, from the review of the 161 pages of written interview transcripts, and prior relevant research in the area of civic engagement and schools. Interviews with the participants were conducted within the late months of 2015 (September through December).

A qualitative case study approach was used to understand these teachers' perspectives on school and external level factors that influence students' civic skills development, and this chapter reports the findings as data aggregated by common themes. The researcher looked for data from six participants as one case to find common themes. Common themes were categorized as school-level or external-level factors that foster students' civic skills or factors that impede students' civic skills.

Context of the Research Sites

This study's research sites included two middle schools. These were Pinecrest Middle School and Clearwater Middle School. The reason these schools were chosen was that they were considered to be "average" schools by many that represented most of the middle schools in the United States. They were not underperforming nor outperforming schools. These schools also had diversity within the students enrolled in them.

Pinecrest Middle School

One of the two study sites was Pinecrest Middle School which was situated in a large suburban district in a Southeastern state. Pinecrest Middle had a diverse student body, and served 728 students. This school is an International Baccalaureate World

School, and 46 of its 63 teachers had an advanced degree. Pinecrest Middle School's mission was expressed as to prepare the students to be productive members of a global society while being considerate to the diversity of the students.

Clearwater Middle School

Clearwater Middle School was the other study site for data collection which was located in the same school district as Pinecrest Middle School. Clearwater Middle served 677 students, and had a diverse student body. It was also an International Baccalaureate school, and had 54 teachers, 38 of them with advanced degrees. Clearwater's mission was stated as to be open to new ideas and dreams while concentrating on academics.

Context of the Research Participants

This research study was conducted with six social studies teachers from two different middle schools in the same school district. The participants are profiled in Table 4.1 and Table 4.2, so that the reader gains insight about each. Table 4.1 displays profiles of the participants at Pinecrest Middle School.

Table 4.1

Demographic information of the participants at Pinecrest Middle School

	Mr. Baker	**Mr. Miller**	**Ms. Williams***
Total years in teaching	24	14	
Years at current school	5	1	
Bachelor's major	Business	Sociology	
Highest degree	Bachelor	Master of Public Administration	

Certification	Alternative	Alternative	
Subjects certified to teach	Social studies and sciences, math, language arts	Social studies and sciences	
Prior significant positions	Manager at a chain restaurant, district manager for a gas company	U.S. Army officer, member of State Forestry Commission	

*Participant did not provide demographic information.

Table 4.2 displays profiles of the participants at Clearwater Middle School.

Table 4.2

Demographic information of the participants at Clearwater Middle School

	Ms. Taylor	**Mr. Thomas**	**Mr. Martinez**
Total years in teaching	7	12	7
Years at current school	5	2	7
Bachelor's major	Criminal justice	Physical Education	History education
Highest degree	Master of Education	Masters of Education	Masters of Education
Certification	Traditional	Traditional	Traditional
Subjects certified to teach	Social studies and sciences	Health and physical education, Social studies and sciences, and gifted endorsement	Social studies, math, gifted endorsement
Prior significant positions	Substitute teacher	Football coach	Graduate teaching assistant

As Tables 4.1 and 4.2 indicate, most of the participants were experienced teachers and had a master's degree. The next section lays out the overview of all the findings, and then findings categorized as common themes are presented.

Overview of the Findings

During the interviews, participants were not given a list of school or external level factors. Rather, the participants were asked for anything that they believed supported or hindered their effort to promote students' civic skills. Table 4.3 charted all the factors that the participants believed influenced them in a way with the promotion of civic skills.

Table 4.3

Overview of the findings

Factors	**I. School-level:**	**II. External-level:**
a. Foster	1. Teacher collaboration 2. Planning 3. Teacher motivation	1. Teacher observation 2. School district 3. Parental involvement
b. Impede	1. (Lack of time for) Planning 2. Teachers' beliefs about education 3. Children's motor behaviors	1. (Lack of) parental involvement 2. Teacher observation 3. School district 4. Testing

Next, findings for school level factors are presented.

School-Level Factors

Factors at the school level which may influence students' development of civic skills include, but not limited to, teacher collaboration, planning, teacher motivation, lack of time for planning, teachers' beliefs about education in general, and how systems deal with children's motor behaviors.

Table 4.4

School-level factors

Factors	I. School-level:
a. Foster	1. Teacher collaboration 2. Planning 3. Teacher motivation
b. Impede	1. Lack of time for Planning 2. Teachers' beliefs about education 3. Children's motor behaviors

As Table 4.4 displays, factors were categorized as the ones that foster the promotion of civic skills, and the ones that impeded the promotion of civic skills.

School level factors that foster the promotion of civic skills

Factors in schools that supported the participants in their efforts to promote critiquing, communicating, and collaborating skills among their students were found to be teacher collaboration, planning, and teacher motivation.

Teacher collaboration

Findings showed that collaboration among teachers had a positive impact on the efforts of promoting students' civic skills. In conversations with the participants, teacher collaboration was mentioned frequently, and was listed as one of the primary support systems in regards to doing something beyond presenting facts. When asked about where to seek help about promoting civic skills, Mr. Martinez immediately thought of his colleagues:

> A lot of that [support] comes from things that my teammates and me find and put together ourselves […] So we're pretty tightly paced and it's easier for us to plan together. That way, when it comes time for us to figure out something like a project or something like that or if we need material, then one of us will divide it up somehow. We'll go find it.

An example of teachers collaborating to help students elaborate things they learn more deeply is when teachers "divide the roles up." For example, when it comes to making an assignment, that's one teacher's job. "She'll put the components of that together. She's very methodical." When it comes to finding reading resources, it is Mr. Martinez's job: "I put together seven or eight or nine different articles. With some of them I had to do a little bit of editing to make them appropriate for my kids."

Another example of teachers taking collaboration further is from Mr. Thomas:

> What we do is, we take the three Social Studies classes down to the gym. All three of us. We all go to the gym. We have about 70 kids because the more kids the better.

Mr. Thomas continued to explain how students gained practical information and benefited from the strong collaboration among teachers:

> We have what we call the fruit bowl elections. We may change this next year, but it's just something generic. We have the Apple Party, the Banana Party and the Pear Party. We pull so many kids from each group and we give them 10 minutes

> and say, ‘okay, come up with a platform of why people should vote for the Banana Party or the Apple.’ They usually come up with neat things.

Teacher collaboration creates a stable and consistent environment for civic skills to flourish, and students to get the message that this is not just one teacher’s idea, but all significant figures in the building think that working on developing civic skills is important. Similarly, Mr. Martinez explained, “I believe that it's really supportive or helpful to have my colleagues do the same things [engage kids using critical thinking, communication and collaboration] in their classrooms.” Mr. Martinez continued to explain why:

> So, students are saying, ‘oh it's not just for this one hour a day I'm going to be doing this but it's really something that I'm doing in all my classes so it's really that important.’ When you can get a school or a grade level or a team of teachers to work together and do that and so that when they're teaching all of the same students then those students really can kind of see how important that is.

Students with different types of learning style also benefit from collaboration among teachers because some students “want you [teacher] to be quiet. They want to read about it and because I talk, talk, talk…” as Ms. Williams stated. She further explained that she needed another teacher “who has a calmer spirit to actually do that,” and “who can work with those students on the same subject by being attentive to their learning styles.” When teachers can work together, “that's collaboration!” according to Ms. Williams.

As much as teacher collaboration is an effective way to increase productivity in promoting and fostering students’ civic skills, it is not an easy thing to do or not every teacher might see the value in it. Even though Ms. Taylor strongly believed that

collaboration would be a great way to help students excel their skills, she did not experience the collaboration she wanted:

> From my grade level and my other Social Studies teachers, we don't collaborate very well. So when I want to try a real activity or something, we don't have that collaboration. We're working on it. I think I have support from my principal and everything, but collaboration on a grade level is not great. I don't know why.

Having time for instructional planning was found to be as important as collaboration among teachers. Findings for planning are presented next.

Planning

Findings showed that *planning* was a theme that needed to be discussed as a factor that helped teachers with promoting civic skills, and its inexistence as a factor that impeded teachers. Mr. Thomas believed that "If you're going to be a good teacher, you need time to plan. It takes time to develop that lesson like you're talking about where there's a lot of collaborative learning, and it's well-thought out and it's critical thinking." Mr. Martinez gave an example that it showcases how and why planning was important in a class where students' civic skills flourish:

> So in order to come up with activities, and structure them in a way that's helpful to my kids, I'm having my kids have roles so they learn how to collaborate for example. I want to think that through and plan those activities very well because I need to give them structure. I can't just say, 'Go work on this together' because some of them don't know how to do that yet. I need to teach them. So thinking through, that takes time.

Planning can be made stronger by collaboration among teachers, and findings showed that collaborative planning was one of the foundations for more meaningful instruction in classroom. Ms. Williams said that she collaborated with a Language Arts teacher for her social studies class where students talked about the Declaration of Independence letter after they worked on writing separation letters for the Language Arts

teacher. Students "had to write up information, but Language Arts teacher had given them the format to do it," Ms. Williams said, and continued "The product was a finished product; they wrote a separation letter from something or someone. The Language Arts teacher looked for punctuation. How it was assembled and what not. So they received two grades for one assignment."

Findings showed that planning was a strong indicator for well-thought out classroom instruction that promoted civic skills. Having some time for instructional preparation was mentioned by almost all participants, but something as they did not have anymore. Planning is again discussed more under the impediments section. The third and the last school level factor that was found to support teachers was teacher motivation.

Teacher motivation

We know that the teacher is one of the most influential factors for a child's academic achievement (Baldy et al., 2014). This is a two-way direction, though: Students can achieve very high because they might have a motivated teacher; or students can be left behind because their teacher might be an unmotivated person in the classroom. Ms. Taylor expressed that she tried to make sure that her students were "not just learning the facts of the culture or the facts of the religion," but they had a "chance to have an opinion," and she gave an example: "We just talked about different economies in Europe. They had to decide which economy they thought worked the best and why." Ms. Taylor asked her students "which type of economy would be the best for their country if they had their own country." She believed that "this gives them an opportunity to express and come up with their own opinions and things."

Also, from a perspective of presenting information/facts versus going way beyond that, Mr. Thomas explained why he was always trying his best to give his students skills that they would carry with them: "I just think when I die, and I meet my maker, he's going to hold me accountable because I think I'm in a position to do a lot of harm or a lot of good, as a teacher." Further, Mr. Thomas tied his beliefs and how he acted because of these beliefs to his minimal requirements of his job as a teacher:

> So yes, there is this pressure to – okay – they say, 'teach to the test,' and I make sure I cover what the test is going to have, but I also want to give them some confidence, and some skills and things beyond the test. I want them to walk out of my class and say, okay; 'I've left Mr. Thomas' class with something that I can use. I've got some skill or something I can carry with me. And it may not even be something that was based in Social Studies […] I don't just teach to the test. I feel this moral obligation to teach beyond that.

Motivation also comes in other forms. Ms. Williams loves her students. She tries innovative ideas and goes beyond fact-giving because as she would say: "This is not my career. It's my passion. I love it." Other participants also expressed that having the motivation to prepare our children for life was the key to the promotion of civic skills, but findings showed that motivation did not have one unique source such as high stakes test or performance evaluation.

This section discussed teacher collaborating, instructional planning, and teacher motivation as factors that supported teachers in their efforts to promote students' civic skills. Next, the factors that impeded the promotion of civic skills are presented.

School level factors that impede the promotion of civic skills

Factors in schools that hindered the participants in their efforts to promote critiquing, communicating, and collaborating skills among their students were found to

be lack of time for planning, teacher beliefs about education, and how systems deal with children's motor behaviors.

Lack of time for planning

As mentioned before, planning – having time to spend for classroom preparation - has a positive effect on promoting civic skills. Nonetheless, almost all the participants saw *time* as a problem, and they felt like their planning time was taken away day by day, and allotted for other tasks in the building. Mr. Thomas continued: "There are a lot of resources out there that you can use. You modify them for your class, but nevertheless that takes time. And our planning time has just been taken from us," and he explained that school climate was compounded because of the tough times in economy. Mr. Thomas further elaborated that "People started acting like 'you should just be glad you've got a job. Don't complain about what we ask you to do because if you want to complain or rock the boat, we'll find somebody else to come do it.'"

There is also a human side to teaching where it is sometimes very difficult to anticipate students' interests or their motivations, so planning should be comprehensive and include alternatives in case something does not work with a certain group of students on a certain day. For instance, Mr. Miller stated that "I think lesson plans are great, but that's what they should be is just a plan. So I know what I'm going to be doing on that day, but exactly how I'm going to be doing it, I really may not know." He believed that he was more of "an artist painting with a brush than somebody who is working on a lathe." Mr. Miller continued to explain further about planning: "I see how things go in the classroom. If I'm trying to do A and A doesn't work and then suddenly some kid comes up with a B that all the kids go yeah! Well, that's where I go." Ms. Williams mentioned

the same issue with planning. Mr. Baker also said: “Sometimes I just stop what I'm doing and I just go, okay, this isn't working, let's do it this way. Let's try it this way.”

However, for teachers to be able to say “let’s try something else,” they need time to think about what needs to change and why. The following two examples from other participants summarized what happened when teachers did not have planning time while they were in the building. Mr. Martinez shared:

> Sometimes I just spend time thinking about how to set up groups so that my kids would be more successful or how to teach them to think critically and collaborate and I don’t have enough time to do that. So I’ll go with whatever maybe my first idea is instead of spending more time.

The second example supported the idea that having no time for preparation pushed teachers to “cut corners” and to create lessons plans that was prepared in minutes and were mainly “blah blah blah blah blah,” according to Mr. Thomas. He continued his explanation:

> I understand there are going to be certain things you do outside this building, but it shouldn’t be a thing where the expectation is you go home and do all your planning at home. If you expect me to go home and do all this, then it’s going to be hard for me to come to work everyday with a lot of energy and a lot of enthusiasm and me taking that time to plan out that great lesson because let’s be realistic. When people are tired, they’re going to cut corners.

As discussed earlier and in this section, instructional planning time had a positive effect on promoting civic skills by helping teachers construct well-planned classes. Nevertheless, ‘time’ was found to be a problem for the participants. The next factor is teacher beliefs about the education system in general.

Teacher beliefs about education

Findings showed that some teachers’ beliefs about the education in the United States in general are an invisible barrier to the promotion of civic skills. Even though all

the participants were motivated teachers, three teachers' attitudes toward education did not speak the same. Participants had the hope in students, but this sense of otherwise hopelessness seemed to came from things that bothered teachers such as lack of parental involvement or pressure to teach to the test. Mr. Miller raised his voice and showed some enthusiasm when he talked about education in general: "In this country, we have a huge challenge of students showing up who are not ready for school. So that's a real challenge. There are some unrealistic expectations on teachers. what I'm expected to actually do everyday is completely ludicrous."

Mr. Thomas' attitude toward education was also negative because he believed that everything became "very results-oriented" and teachers were just numbers to compare, and teachers had no control over results. Mr. Thomas further elaborated:

> The educators that are closest to the system, the local board, the teachers, the administrators do not like a lot of the changes coming down. They're being made by legislators who are never in the classroom; who don't know anything about teaching other than the fact that when they were in school some of them 50 years ago. And they supposedly listen to recommendations, but what they're listening to are the political people that pay them money.

Unfortunately, Mr. Baker also believed that the students are not at a level where they can articulate original and critical ideas because they do not get enough support from their parents in terms of reading and academic motivation. Mr. Baker shared, "I don't know about other countries but these kids do not like to think. They want you to do the thinking for them and when you ask them a 'why?' or a 'how?' question smoke comes out of their ears."

The third and last factor that impeded the promotion of civic skills was how we deal with children's motor behaviors, and is presented next.

How systems deal with children's motor behaviors

Findings showed that children's motor behaviors are an issue. However, the problem is how we deal with them. It is children's nature to want to move, but we ask them to sit down and not to do distracting behaviors. DuPaul and Stoner (2002) suggested that teachers should offer students frequent opportunities for more movement by designing instruction to actively engage them as learners (e.g., cooperative learning). Mr. Thomas agreed that "it's human nature," and continued, "We're asking them to sit here. And the reason we're doing that is because there's pressure coming from the top, and from the State and you may even say the national level test scores… 'Why aren't they performing?'" The idea is that students should practice more, but sometimes less is more.

Mr. Baker gave an example to support the idea that having more recess time improved learning and communication among students:

> It [an article] was talking about school in Canada. It took their physical activity to 2.5 hours a day, not at once, but it was like 'we'll do 90 minutes of class and 30 minutes of physical activity.' And I think it said their discipline problems dropped about 200% and their test scores went up about 100% because kids this age – their bodies are screaming get up and move and run around and be social.

Overall, findings showed the participants agree that more and more recess time was being replaced for academic subjects. If the instruction does not involve any cooperative learning, teachers get behavioral problems in classrooms which greatly reduce learning time. Next, findings for external level factors are presented.

External-level factors

External level factors which may influence students' development of civic skills include, but not limited to, teacher observation, school district, parental involvement, lack of parental involvement, and testing.

Table 4.5

External-level factors

Factors	II. External-level:
a. Foster	1. Teacher observation 2. School district 3. Parental involvement
b. Impede	1. Lack of parental involvement 2. Teacher observation 3. School district 4. Testing

Table 4.5 displays the categorized factors that originated outside of the school such as the school district, or policies from a state department of education.

External level factors that foster the promotion of civic skills

Factors that are externally motivated, and supported the participants in their efforts to promote critiquing, communicating, and collaborating skills among their students were found to be teacher collaboration, school district, and parental involvement.

Teacher observation

Teachers are observed as part of their job performance evaluation. Findings showed that teachers welcomed observations, and thought they were necessary Observations also helped teachers promote skills such as critiquing, collaborating and communicating with their students. However, findings also indicated that teachers benefited from classroom observations "done" by administrators when they were done

right. Here Mr. Thomas explained an observation he would want to see and have benefited from: “Some schools have hundreds of teachers in a building and four administrators. That’s an unrealistic ratio for them to constantly be in classrooms all the time. Get middle level people like instructional coaches trained with it.” And he continued to explain how instructional coaches could conduct their observations: “They don’t have to have anything to write down, just come in and talk to kids. Do that a couple of times a week. You don’t have to have that checklist in front of you. That intimidates people.”

A good example of teacher observation is where a teacher is visited frequently in an unthreatening manner, and is comforted that the observations are carried out to create opportunities for professional development. Mr. Martinez also thought it promoted student engagement: “What our administrators do on walk-throughs, a lot of times they pick certain things they’re looking for. For the first quarter of the year they’ll be looking for differentiation, for example, but they always want our students to be engaged.” Even though teacher observation is an effective tool to help teachers with their instructional and classroom strategies, malpractice during observations negatively influence the learning environment. Findings about teacher observation experienced by the participants are discussed further in the impediments section. The next external factor that, even though little, helped teachers with their efforts was school district.

School district

Looking at the data, we see that the school district has little effect on teachers’ beliefs about promoting civic skills. The commentary of Ms. Williams was illustrative of this finding: “I don’t know at this point if I see a lot of just direct support from that level,

but I don't think they impede it either." However, the district encouraged teachers not to maintain the traditional lecturing model in their classrooms. Mr. Miller explained the climate he experienced: "They [school district] really kind of frown upon what I would call the old school traditional classroom model," and he explained that the traditional model as "somewhere all the students are facing the board and the teacher is up there talking and lecturing the whole time."

Participants had not much to say about the support from the district level except the fact that Ms. Taylor thought it was useful that "the district gets a hold of parents when teachers can't." Ms. Taylor summarized it, otherwise, when she shared: "I wouldn't say there's a ton of support from the district level or anything."

The last factor under this section was parental involvement. There was an agreement among the participants that parental involvement was significant, but it was something the participants did not see much at their schools.

Parental involvement

Parents or parental involvement was a huge part of the conversations with the participants. Findings suggested that it held a potential to make a difference in students' academic lives. Mr. Thomas highlighted that "all things aside, the parent can't control necessarily what the government does. They can have some say on what the school does, but more than anything on a day-to-day, on a night-to-night basis, they can control what their kids do." In addition, Ms. Miller explained that parents' role and how they can practically change their children for the better:

> They can control whether they're studying. They can control whether they're spending time helping them learn. They can control whether or not that they're placing importance on their education that those same kids will adopt and say, 'this is important to me. I need to value it. I need to own it.' And so, they can

> control that. And that factor alone can help negate some of the negative things that are coming down from the top that are affecting kids.

Almost all the participants mentioned how significant parental involvement was, but the conversations were about the lack of support from the parents. This will be discussed under the impediments section.

This section listed external level factors that supported teacher with the promotion of civic skills, and they were teacher observation, school district, and parental involvement. Nevertheless, findings showed that these factors held strong potential as a support system rather than they actually were. Next, factors that promoted civic skills are presented.

External level factors that impede the promotion of civic skills

Factors that are externally motivated, and hindered the participants in their efforts to promote critiquing, communicating, and collaborating skills among their students were found to be lack of parental involvement, teacher observation, school district, and testing.

Lack of parental involvement

Findings showed that teachers had no support from the children's parents, and this made things very difficult for teachers in general. One of the problems it creates is discipline issues, and this had a negative indirect effect on the promotion of civic skills. Teachers are not able to do their jobs when there is no student motivation to learn. Ms. Taylor explained that "There's no parent involvement. We have some parents that talk to us in the beginning of the year and now they've changed their number and won't give us their new number." Ms. Taylor continued this thought:

> They don't even want to contact. They don't want to hear it. That's really hard because the kids know we can't get in contact with their parents. So, you know – 'what's the point of behaving?' If they're not going to get in trouble at home. So

> we don’t have a ton of parent support here and that has always been a struggle, which is sad, very sad.

Supporting Mr. Taylor’s stance, Mr. Miller touched on how parents’ disengagement created further problems: “They have one parent who is maybe working two jobs. They’ve been exposed to little that helps them academically. They show up and they don’t have any reading skills. Education is not high on the to-do list in their home.” Mr. Baker also brought up some disturbing facts about parents:

> We work with some kids that don't know where their dinner is coming from. The only food that they eat is what they get at school. And it's hard to make them see multiple perspectives of things. When they're worried about, ‘Okay, where am I going to eat?’ It's – it's not just here. It's everywhere. That, that, the -- we are expected to raise the children. We have to teach the children how to behave, how to think, how to read, how to write… Nothing is done in the home. Nothing.

Just like teacher collaboration where students should see a stable and constant environment where they are expected to think harder and collaborate with other students, findings suggest that this should also be the case for teacher and parent, but findings also showed that it was not the case.

While parental involvement had a positive effect on teachers, lack of it made the same effect in a negative way. This was also true for teacher observation. Lack of effective practice during teacher observations experienced by the participants was found to be hindering teachers.

Teacher observation

As discussed about the factors that foster the promotion of civic skills, teacher observation was welcomed by teachers. Findings showed that teachers thought they were necessary, and helped them promote skills such as critiquing, collaborating and communicating with their students. However, the participants expressed that the way they

were observed sometimes created impediments for working on students' communication, collaboration, and critiquing skills. Moreover, it sometimes made teachers adopt an attitude toward teacher observation in general as Mr. Miller would describe:

> They [district] printed out the standards on paper about this long [spreading arms half way]. They had us hang it in the front. They say, 'this is what the District requires. Take your standards. Put them in the front prominently displayed.' I say, 'all right.' If that's what they want, I did it. They hang around for about 10 minutes and then I get this piece of paper and it tells me that my standards were not clearly visible.

Mr. Miller continued to explain how this incident permanently affected him in regard to teacher observation: "I tore down that stupid thing and it's in that closet over there. That's crazy-making. That was one of the things that made me decide to just tune that stuff out: Worry about the students in my classroom being successful." Mr. Miller said that he stopped worrying about it forever because he believed that he was a good teacher and always worked "hard enough trying to teach these kids to be successful." He, however, added: "I really don't care what they say to me about my job performance. But, yeah, it's a big stressor for a lot of people in the building."

Ms. Taylor thought, generally, that teacher observation was helpful. However, she added that "honestly" they "are going to come in for 10 minutes;" this is going to be a "snapshot" and "that's frustrating." Mr. Thomas was also frustrated that the observation checklist system was not the best way to help promote civic skills: "Some places have tried to move away from that [checklist] a little bit, but that mentality is still out there and they've replaced the checklist with other things in some ways that still function like a checklist."

As a former administrator, Mr. Baker also believed that "observing teachers is necessary because it keeps the lazy teachers from doing the kids injustice." However, he thought that there was a "complete disconnect" between observations and the promotion of civic skills:

> I really don't know if any of this new evaluation system is teaching us anything about helping children think and helping children -- I mean, they have stuff on there about, uh, engagement. 'Are the children engaged?' I mean, come on, if I'm coloring on a map they're engaged, but that means I'm teaching them how to think higher? You see what I'm saying? So, there's a, there is a huge disconnect between how they grade us.

Data suggests that it is not the *observation* that impedes teachers from promoting students' civic skills, but it is the observers' lack of clear and useful feedback that indirectly blocks higher level learning for teachers, and in some instances, students by extension. Related to teacher observation, school district was another factor that impeded teachers.

School district

As discussed earlier, participants did not experience much direct or indirect support from their school district. Findings showed that the district was trying, but it did not make a considerable difference in teachers' practices. For example, Mr. Baker wanted to see more hands-on activities so that teachers could help their students with higher level thinking, but the District failed to provide that. The District would say: "Okay, here's what you've got to do. We've got to get them thinking on this level." Mr. Baker would respond: "How? How do I get them thinking on this level?" "Well, we're going to give you an hour of professional… We're going to have somebody come in for an hour and teach you how to do positive behavior intervention, okay?" However, Mr. Baker was

frustrated and he did not want to be lectured. Mr. Baker wanted the district to "Show how this thinking is supposed to look [like] in the classroom." In professional development, there is "a lot of, 'this is what we want you to do,' but there's not a lot of 'this is what it should look like.'"

Mr. Miller who learned how "to tune the district people out" believed that he was a really good teacher, but he was "never good enough" for the district because they were "not on the same page." Mr. Miller said "That's a terrible feeling," but added: "I don't think they mean to do it. I think they mean well. I think their motivations are fine, but they don't get it. A lot of them don't."

Finally, Mr. Thomas also thought the district was not trying to make things hard, but things were becoming hard in general: "I don't think they make decisions for it that are hard, with the exception – I'll say this because we've been in some meetings about this – with the exception of testing." Mr. Thomas explained testing created an "incentive to teach to the test" and "fear" among teachers, and did not lend teachers "as much time to do critical thinking things." He further explained that the "district was in a position that they could control some of the testing, and this would help teachers become better professionals." Elaborating further, Mr. Thomas said, "Because of testing, the district forces me to teach their order and at their pace. And it kind of takes some of that freedom away from me and some of the professionalism of being a teacher." During this interview, Mr. Thomas was upset and finally offered a recommendation to the district:

> I think the biggest thing District levels can do is give us more freedom and more time and back away from some of the testing and things like that. I understand we've got to know where the kids are. There's got to be that balance, but there's got to be a balance.

Findings showed that although the participants believed that school district had a positive effect, even though it was little, school district had also negative effects on teachers regarding the promotion of civic skills. This was also connected to the issue of testing which is presented next.

Testing

There was an agreement among the participants that there was too much testing in public schools. Mr. Baker enthusiastically stated that "We are over tested. These kids are tested to death. They are -- by the time they hit the end of the year they are sick and tired of tests." Mr. Baker then summarized the journey of a student's testing experience:

> You got a reading test [for placement]. Then we have to test them on where they are in math and other subjects. Then, every time I start a unit we got to pretest. Every time I end a unit we got to pretest. Every three or four months we have a benchmark test because we got to know where they are in the content. Then you got end of course tests. Then you got end of the year tests. Then you got SAT tests. Then you've got the [international] standardized tests. And they get tired of it. I mean, it's like every time we turn around we're tested.

Findings showed that testing was a factor that impeded teachers from promoting civic skills to their students. Other external-level factors had something to be discussed under the factors that foster civic skills, but testing only falls under the section of impediments for the promotion of civic skills as Mr. Martinez would describe that "I think the tests are a constraint that we have to work within because the tests don't do a good job of assessing students on whether or not they can think critically or come up with solutions." Participants saw the tests as a check system whether students knew the facts or the basic concepts rather than a system that would promote higher order thinking.

Continuing on the discussion that teachers' professionalism is limited because so many things are tied to the tests, Mr. Thomas gave more information on how this really affected efforts of going beyond the fact-giving:

> Some information you need to give students some background. So you've got a kind of – 'this is going to be a little more traditional today.' You give them some background information, some notes, explaining, and then the next day you'd be able to come in – 'all right, now that you have this information, let's do something with it.' And that would be more of the collaborative side.

But, according to the curriculum map which is based on testing, teachers may not have two days to spend on it as Mr. Thomas provided an example: "We just have to give them the basic information – 'hey, this is what you're going to be responsible for on the test' and move on."

Findings also showed that an accountability system was needed and teachers agreed on this. However, from the data we see that testing is not doing a good job in terms of accountability. Mr. Miller said that "Real skills that they'll learn in class are how to read in-depth material, how to think critically, how to construction arguments and argue with one another and support their reasoning and things like that, those aren't measured on the test." The participants expressed that they would not mind the accountability, but they wanted to be held accountable fairly because as Mr. Thomas put: "We're one of the only professions where we're evaluated on factors that more than 50% of them are out of our control." Here he explained the logic behind it: "Students who come from middle and upper incomes whose families go on vacation, who take them and travel, things like that, they perform better because they're exposed to the world more and they get these more real-world hands-on experiences." He then gave a real-life

example to showcase that "we're talking about people. We're not talking about an object."

> An 850 in A county where the median income is $12,000 a year and these students are very, very, very poor and they have literally dirt floors in their houses, it's not the same as an 850 in a community somewhere in B county where the median income is $85,000 a year. One to me is a complete success. The other might be looked at as a failure potentially because this kid had so many different chances and outside things to help them out.

Participants saw this as one of the very reasons that caused teachers to leave the profession and to feel that they are treated unfairly. Mr. Thomas explained, "That's not going to bring teachers to the field. I don't think any teacher is scared to be held accountable, but I think the way we're held accountable has to be looked at from a completely different perspective." And overall, data suggested that testing was seen as a counterbalance to the efforts of promoting civic skills. Mr. Martinez further explained:

> We're definitely encouraged to have our kids think critically and to go in-depth on topics. But at the same time, there's also the 'we want you to do this, but you're still going to have a test at the end of the year' or 'we want you to do this, but there's still going to be a benchmark at the end of this unit.' So there's a balance.

Finally, this statement by Mr. Martinez represented the situation in which teachers were: "So part of my perspective is that the tests are here and I'm not going to be able to change that." This feeling of hopelessness is tightly tied to the theoretical framework of this study and is discussed in the next chapter. Factors presented under this chapter are also discussed in chapter five, and each research question was answered based on the findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative study was to broaden our understanding of teachers' perspectives about external and school level factors that fostered or impeded students' civic skills development. I hoped to discover what external and school level factors influenced teachers' beliefs about promoting students' critiquing, communicating, and collaborating skills. The following questions framed the study:

1) From public school teachers' perspectives, what school-level factors foster students' civic skills?
2) From public school teachers' perspectives, what school-level factors impede students' civic skills?
3) From public school teachers' perspectives, what external-level factors foster students' civic skills?
4) From public school teachers' perspectives, what external-level factors impede students' civic skills?

In this chapter, I presented a discussion of the research study and the data analysis to answer each research question. Implications for future research and final thoughts completed the chapter.

During the interviews, the participants were not given a list of school or external level factors. Rather, the participants were asked for anything that helped or hindered

them. At times, they were reminded of some factors if it was an important one and they never talked about them, but the goal was to see what was that a teacher believed to be helpful or hindering, and how, in the process of going beyond presenting information. Many factors even including the usage of cell phones were discussed. However, 11 main factors distinguished. These factors were

1) teacher collaboration

2) planning

3) teacher motivation

4) lack of time for planning

5) teachers' beliefs about education

6) how we deal with children's motor behaviors

7) teacher observation

8) school district

9) parental involvement

10) lack of parental involvement

11) testing

It should be noted that some factors held a potential for both fostering and impeding students' civic skills development, and in some cases, the absence of a factor was counted as another factor. Table 5.1 displays factors in categorizations. Each factor is discussed in its corresponding research question below.

Table 5.1

Overview of the findings

Factors	I. Internal School-Level Factors	II. External-Level Factors
a. Foster	1. Teacher collaboration 2. Planning 3. Teacher motivation	1. Teacher observation 2. School district 3. Parental involvement
b. Impede	1. Lack of time for planning 2. Teachers' beliefs about education 3. Children's motor behaviors	1. Lack of parental involvement 2. Teacher observation 3. School district 4. Testing

Next, I answered each research question based on the findings that interview and field note data provided. Answers to research questions also offer implications for practice, research, and policy.

Insights into Research Question One

Research question one focused on school-level factors that helped teachers teach their students communication, collaboration, and critiquing skills. Collaboration among teachers is one of them and has a strong positive influence on teachers' efforts to promote civic skills to their students. Going beyond fact-presenting in the classroom is challenging for teachers, and it becomes even more difficult when we consider the fast paced curriculum teachers have to follow and the tests they need to prepare their students for. On the top of all of these, providing instruction that nurtures students' communicating, collaborating, and critiquing skills requires much thought and time.

Findings show that teacher collaboration is an effective way to overcome most of these challenges as teachers work together as a team and each member of the team contributes in a certain way to students' skills development efforts. This can be an assignment for the same grade level and the same subject, so that the assignment will be more than, for example, asking for a definition of oligarchy, but it will be multifaceted and trigger students' thinking because it is invested and well-thought by more than one teacher. Indeed, "teacher isolation is the enemy of improvement" (Kanold, Toncheff, & Douglas, 2008, p. 23).

Collaboration also allows things to happen that one teacher cannot do alone. Simulating civic engagement sometimes takes more than a classroom of students. Voting, for instance, is one of the fundamentals of democracy, and by making up masses with two or more classes, students can realize in person how their engagement makes final decision such as choosing a leader.

When different "brains" contribute to the development of an assignment or a project, it will also be likely a project that appeals to students' various learning capacities. Differentiation of instruction is a phenomenon that educators and policymakers agreed to be significant for students (Tomlinson, 2005). It is also cared much in teacher evaluation. By looking at the data, we see that teachers believe that creating differentiated instruction is difficult. It involves offering several different learning experiences in response to students' varied needs (Ravitch, 2014; Tomlinson, 2005). However, by the help of collaboration among teachers, teachers can "vary learning activities and materials by difficulty, so as to challenge students at different readiness levels; by topic, in response to

students' interests; and by students' preferred ways of learning or expressing themselves" (Ravitch, 2014, p. 75).

Data suggests that collaboration should also be extended to teachers of different subjects. An integrated content is more meaningful to students, and saves teacher time on creating well-thought projects. Data also suggests that seeing their colleagues on board for collaboration encourage teachers toward a more meaningful and differentiated instruction. A collaboration for example between a Social Studies teacher and a Language Arts teacher can allow students to work on one assignment that is comprehensive and helps students develop their skills in expressing ideas. This collaborative planning not only serves to teachers, but also gives a message to students that collaborative and meaningful work is encouraged across different classes. It creates a consistent and stable environment for students to reason that higher order thinking, collaboration, and/or communication are always encouraged and expected. Expectations are documented to have a significant relation to social behavior and academic accomplishments (Bouchey & Harter, 2005; Simpkins, Davis-Kean, & Eccles, 2005).

Planning is tightly tied to collaboration. Based on the data, teachers firmly believe that if a teacher wants a class where there is a lot of collaborative learning, and it is well-thought, and there is critical thinking, this teacher needs time to plan. Two main barriers to collaboration and planning have been identified to be lack of time and poor administrative support (Leonard & Leonard, 2003; Prytula, Hellsten, & McIntyre, 2010). Instructional planning time is vital to teachers, and the purpose of this time is to prepare for upcoming lessons, discuss data, or call parents (Barney & Deutsch, 2012). Planning prevents teachers from having students work on ill-thought activities, and helps them

deliver meaningful instruction that promotes the development of students' civic skills. Therefore, principals and other school administrators should not see planning time as an opportunity for teachers to do a task that is not related to their instruction. Moreover, school leaders should encourage teachers to wisely and effectively use their planning time.

Collaboration *and* planning empower teachers. This also aligns with the previous research. Teachers who engage in collaborative work are able to learn from one another (Tschannen-Moran, Uline, Hoy, & Mackley, 2000). Collaborative networks generate action plans for student achievement and school improvement (DuFour, DuFour, Eacker, & Karhanek, 2004; Rimpola, 2014), and teachers learn to re-conceptualize their roles as they work together with others (Rimpola, 2014). Principals have a significant role of bridging and orchestrating teachers, and teacher observation is an invaluable tool for principals in this process. Also, a recent study by National Center on Time and Learning (2014, p.14) has found that "investing time for teachers to jointly plan lessons with their colleagues can raise the quality of instruction because lesson plans are produced through careful consideration by a team of experts who each bring varying skills and experience to the process."

Teacher motivation or teachers' being motivated is another factor in the findings that fosters students' skills development. Various motivations drive teachers. Whether its cause be religion or social justice, motivated teachers always try their best and go beyond the minimum. According to the data, teachers want to do more than just preparing their students for tests because they either love their students, or they feel obligated to make a change for the better in students' lives, or they might even think that their "maker" will

hold them accountable. Previous studies also showed that improvement in teacher motivation had benefits for students as well as teachers (Bishay, 1996). Tealdi and Bruni (2005) found that motivation was a required component for job retention and parallel to that, Filak (2003) concluded that teachers' motivation was one of the biggest contributors in maximizing teachers' performance. The next section discusses findings on school level factors that hindered teachers with their efforts to promote civic skills.

Insight into Research Question Two

Research question two focused on school-level factors that impeded teachers from teaching their students communicating, collaborating, and critiquing skills. Data has showed that limited time for planning, teachers' beliefs about the education system in general, and how schools deal with children's motor behaviors are influential factors that do not help teachers in promoting students' civic skills development. These factors, on the other hand, hinder teachers in their efforts.

Planning – having time to spend for classroom preparation – was found to be a significantly helpful factor for teachers. Findings, however, show that teachers' designated planning periods are used for other purposes such as staff meetings or professional development activities. These are school-related activities, yet it is against the idea of having time for instructional preparation. Findings also show that preparing a class where students' civic skills are nurtured is not easy, and there is always a human side to teaching where it is difficult to anticipate students' interests or their motivations. Therefore, planning should be comprehensive and include alternatives. It, again, should address different learning styles of different students. Limited time make teachers cut corners. According to data, when teachers do not have enough time for preparing a lesson

plan that helps students to think critically or to collaborate, they teach with the first idea in their lesson plans.

Another factor that slows teachers down in the promotion of civic skills is the teachers themselves, or their beliefs about education. Findings show that teachers are hopeful about their students' achievements, but they have negative ideas about various dynamics of education such as parents or testing, or the politics in the education systems. They believe that some of the issues, for example, lack of parental involvement, or results-oriented educational policies negatively impact their efforts to promote their students' civic skills development.

Lastly, teachers believe that the instruction they are using is against the nature of children's motor behaviors. Findings show that teachers are well aware that their instruction needs to incorporate physical or engaging activities. They, however, feel that they can better meet the needs of what the system wants from teachers (adequate progress on tests) by making their students sit and not to engage in distracting behaviors. The Center on Education Policy (2007) found that some school districts in the United States in 2006 to 2007 reduced recess time by an average of 50 minutes per week to allocate more instructional time. Ramstetter, Murray, and Garner (2010, p. 524) highlighted that recess provided "a unique contribution to a child's creative, social, and emotional development." However, from the data, we can conclude that teachers are under pressure to get their students ready for tests that measure students' knowledge levels over recess in incorporating physical activity. External level factors that helped teacher foster students' civic skills are discussed next.

Insight into Research Question Three

Research question three focused on external-level factors that helped teachers teach their students communicating, collaborating, and critiquing skills. Factors under this category have either minimal positive effect on the teachers' efforts to develop students' civic skills, or they have a potential to help teachers rather than an actual contribution. These factors are teacher observation (as part of teacher evaluation), school district, and parental involvement.

Teachers are observed as part of their job performance evaluations. Data suggests that teachers welcome observations, and believe that they can potentially help them increase their students' achievement. Teachers also think that they can use the feedback to improve their instruction for the students' civic skills development. However, findings show current teacher observation practices do not help teachers in promoting students' civic skills. What are, then, the teacher observation practices that help teachers promote students' communication, collaboration, and critiquing skills? The literature (Range, Finch, Young, & Hvidston, 2014; Zepeda, 2014) suggested that informal teacher observations might promote professional growth and student achievement. Informal observations are brief, and simultaneous, yet it is not a "gotcha moment." Ponticell, Zepeda, Jimenez, Lanoue, Ata, & Haines (in press) also concluded that informal visitation, non-evaluative in nature, provided valuable information about the school's instructional statutes and, it allowed principals to show their presences and extend their assistance when needed in a non-threatening environment.

Even though the school district seems to have little influence on teachers regarding the students' civic skills development, teachers believe that people at the

district encourage them not to maintain a traditional lecturing model in the classrooms. Teachers can also benefit from specialist staff at the district for example when they want to engage in outreach to their community or to the parents of the students, but it is something that rarely happens.

Lastly, parental involvement was found to have a fundamental potential to make a difference in students' academic lives and their skills-development. Teachers believe parents can help change most of the negative elements for the better in the process of learning in school and help promote their kids' civic skills development. This finding confirmed previous studies (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989; Hoover-Dempsey, & Sander, 1995; Barge, & Loges, 2003) that the more intensively parents were involved in their children's learning, the more beneficial were the achievement effects. A meta-analysis study on the existing research on parental involvement by Hill and Tyson (2009) also determined that parental involvement was positively associated with achievement. Although a specific relationship between parental involvement and students' skill development is not established, collaboration among teachers and a consistent environment give a message to students that developing their communicating, collaborating, and critiquing skills is really important and encouraged by all figures in school. Parents' caring about their children being good-collaborators, communicators, and critical thinkers support teachers' efforts in that direction. Students' beliefs about their teachers are very important. Learning and skill-acquiring can happen when students believe that their teachers are the guides from whom they can learn something. Expectations on students can have a powerful effect on how students feel about

themselves and how they perform academically (Hamachek, 1995). The last research question is answered next.

Insight into Research Question Four

Research question four focused on external-level factors that impeded teachers from fostering their students' communicating, collaborating, and critiquing skills. These factors were found to be lack of parental involvement, traditional practices in teacher observation, school district, and testing.

As discussed earlier, parental involvement, or in other words, parents' cooperation with teachers in students' academic lives is crucially significant. Therefore, lack of their involvement makes the same weight of its effect, in a negative way. Teachers have little support from their students' parents. Teachers believe that their students are not motivated or assisted at home, and that this creates an adverse situation in their learning processes. This also triggers discipline issues in the building that interrupt orderly learning environments because students know that teachers can not do much about discipline problems.

The second factor under this category is traditional practices in teacher observation. I refrain to call this factor teacher observation because as discussed earlier, teacher observation - described by experts - has a positive influence on teachers' efforts to promote students' civic skills. Nonetheless, observers' inspector-like practices and dwelling on things like the sizes of standards posted on walls frustrate teachers and discourage them.

The school district has little direct or indirect support for teacher regarding students' civic skills development. School district personnel also want teachers to go

beyond presenting facts in their classrooms, but teachers find district workshops or seminars inadequate or meaningless. Moreover, the school district becomes a disliked authority when it implements state-mandated regulations such as benchmark tests or teacher evaluations. Teachers also think that the district's common curriculum that teachers must follow for testing purposes takes away their professionalism and autonomy.

Lastly, testing was found to be an influential factor that teachers believed to be hindering their efforts in promoting civic skills to their students. Students are tested too much, and success (label) both for student and the teacher has become the score students get on the tests. Teachers believe that testing encourages them to focus on knowledge and getting their students ready for tests, and that the tests do not do a good job measuring students' skills. Results from a large-scale study done by Duckworth, Quinn, and Tsukayama (2012) are in align with the current findings that student grades (from homework, projects, etc.) are a better predictor than SAT test scores for a successful graduation or admittance into a university because grades reveal much more than mastery of content. High-stakes tests cause creative interdisciplinary activities and project-based investigations to be left out (Minarechova, 2012) because teachers prefer more traditional models over innovative instructional strategies to maximize students' test scores (Blazer, 2011). High-stakes testing also leads to an increased emphasis on tested content (Blazer, 2011). Levin (2004, p. ix) also argued that "much of what is done under No Child Left Behind is done to increase scores on stultified tests, not to engage students in a world which they will succeed."

The climate is that teachers see tests as a constraint that they cannot do anything about and have to work within. Teachers also see tests as a check system whether

students know the facts or basic concepts. Testing is one of the solutions for holding teachers accountable, and teachers welcome being held accountable, but they think having been held accountable based on students' test scores is completely unfair. They feel objectified, and think teachers leave the profession because of the fear and lack of professionalism that tests cause. For some teachers, tests are there, and they cannot change it, so they think they will just do whatever they are asked to do.

Implications for Future Research

The findings of this research study have implications for future research regarding teachers' being able or unable to promote students' skills development and gaining skills in communication, collaboration, and critiquing. The literature so far calls for public schools to focus on skills-development and to go beyond fact-presenting, but we hardly see how schools should do it, and what the challenges and support are for teachers. Recent education reforms and practices concentrate on teacher accountability and increasing the equity among students. Although these reforms are implemented with the intention to raise student achievement and to close the equity gap, they have adverse effects on student learning and teacher instruction. The findings of this study have documented the school and external level factors that might help or hinder teachers in promoting students' civic skills, but a study conducted with school and district level leaders has the potential to provide more insights into the matter.

This study attempted to understand the beliefs of six Social Studies teachers in depth. The school district in which these teachers work is a suburban setting. Teachers' beliefs in other contexts such as urban or rural school districts could be explored. This is especially important whether there is a difference or not because educational policies that

originate at the state or federal level have often times no distinction for different regional settings. Also, civic skills are related to the subject of social studies, but students' development in communicating, collaborating, and critiquing can be improved in any subject matter. Therefore, researchers can obtain a better understating of the promotion of these skills by studying teachers across different subjects and grade-level configurations.

Lastly, a qualitative case study design was used for this study to be able to identify and understand better the factors that may help or may impede teachers' efforts in promoting students' civic skills. A quantitative study in order to assess factors that support or impede civic engagement skills with a larger sample size. This study should also be replicated with a similar size in different geographical regions to see if the results would be similar or different from the present study.

Concluding Thoughts

We want our children to be skilled for the future, but in terms of job skills, we do not know what specific skills they need because most future positions have not yet even been created, or maybe thought about. However, we know what skills children do need to become active citizens in their societies, and they are civic skills. People with critiquing, collaborating, and communicating skills display a strong civic engagement and establish a working democracy. We often complain that civic engagement in the Unites States is decreasing, and we are hurried to blame public schools for this decline. Before we come to a quick conclusion that schools should increase the number of hours spent on social studies, we need to understand what works or does not work with the efforts of fostering civic skills.

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APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Researcher's Statement
We are asking you to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This form is designed to give you the information about the study so you can decide whether to be in the study or not. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." A copy of this form will be given to you.

Principal Investigator: Sally J. Zepeda
Department of Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy
szepeda@uga.edu 706-542-0408

Co-investigator: Atakan Ata
Department of Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy
The University of Georgia
ata@uga.edu

Purpose of the Study
You are asked to participate in this study because you are a public school teacher. The purpose of this research study is to explore teachers' beliefs in fostering civic skills among students and how school and external-level factors have an influence on it.

Study Procedures
If you agree to participate, you will be asked to meet with one of the researchers to talk about your teaching experiences and how school level factors support or impede your beliefs in fostering civic skills. This interview is expected to take an hour and the entire conversation will be recorded if you agree. Any identifiable information will be kept confidential and pseudonyms will be used when we are publishing the findings from this study.

Risks and discomforts
We do not anticipate any risks from participating in this research.

Benefits
Participation may help you reflect on your quality of teaching and influence on your students' growth of skills. You may also benefit from the results of this study as an educator.

The findings from this project may provide information to public including education policy-makers or educational leaders about teachers' beliefs in the promotion of critical thinking, communication and collaboration skills. This is important to improve the quality of public education overall.

Incentives for participation
You will receive $20 gift certificate for your time spent during this interview.

Audio Recording
Interview will be audio-recorded. This procedure is required because we want to pay attention to the actual conversation and its development rather than focusing on taking notes of what you will be saying. Recording will also help us analyze the conversation more accurately. Recorded and transcribed materials will be kept confidential, archived securely and destroyed after 5 years.

Please provide initials below if you agree to have this interview audio recorded or not. You may still participate in this study even if you are not willing to have the interview recorded.

_____I do not want to have this interview recorded.
_____I am willing to have this interview recorded.

Privacy/Confidentiality
You will disclose your name and your contact information in this interview. Any identifiable information will be kept confidential on a password protected electronic device or a locked file cabinet. Pseudonyms will be also used for any identifiers in this study.
Researchers will not release identifiable results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent unless required by law.

Taking part is voluntary
Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may ask to skip any question that you do not feel comfortable answering. Your decision to participate or not will have no bearing on your employment or employment evaluations.

If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as yours will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.

If you have questions
The main researcher conducting this study is Sally Zepeda, a professor at the University of Georgia. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Dr. Zepeda at szepeda@uga.edu or at 706-542-0408. If you have any questions

or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or irb@uga.edu.

Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:
To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. Your signature below indicates that you have read or had read to you this entire consent form, and have had all of your questions answered.

_____	_____	
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date
_____	_____	
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview protocol

Hello, my name is _____ and I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Lifelong Education, Administration and Policy at the University of Georgia. We are studying public school teachers' beliefs in fostering students' civic skills. Civic skills can be categorized as critiquing, collaboration, and communication. This study aims to see how school and external-level factors have an effect on the teachers' beliefs in fostering civic skills. Because you are a public school teacher, we are interested in hearing about your classroom experiences.

Before we began the interview, I would like to go over a few things with you. With your permission, I will make an audio recording of this interview, which will be transcribed. It is very important that you answer questions with full honesty. As detailed in the consent form, your name will not be used in the transcription and any other identifying information will also be removed. You reserve the right to stop participating in the interview at any time. Do you have any questions for me before we get started?

Ok, let's start our conversation by getting to know you:

1. Please tell me about you and your work.
2. Can you provide an example of helping your students to recognize multiple perspectives towards an issue/problem?
    a. Can you provide other examples?
    b. Are you able to accomplish this in most of your classes?
3. Are you able to show your students that it is okay to take risks, make mistakes, and think divergently?
    a. Can you provide an example?
    b. Are you able to show your students that there are often more than one correct answer to a question?
    c. Can you provide an example?
    d. What impact does heavy reliance on single correct answer multiple choice testing have on students' willingness to take chances or think divergently?
4. How would you describe critical thinking skills?
5. How do school-level factors affect your ability to promote critical thinking skills?
    a. What helps you in promoting critical thinking skills in your students?

    b. What impedes you from promoting critical thinking skills in your students?
6. Can you provide your students with opportunities to develop their collaboration skills?
    a. Can you provide an example?
    b. Are you able to accomplish this in most of your classes?
7. How can you promote respect for others' views in your students?
8. What do you think the school's role is in promoting the following:
    a. Listening to others/other views
    b. Discussing controversial topics
    c. Working with others
    d. Participating in events
    e. Judging and distilling information
    f. Perspective-taking and interpreting problems
9. What impact does the use of social media have on students in developing these skills?