

NOVICE SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS' SENSE MAKING OF THEIR EMERGING  
IDENTITIES AS CIVICS TEACHERS

By

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To Michael

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School  
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By

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This constructivist study investigates the sense making of novice social studies teachers in order to explore their emerging identities as civics teachers. In the summer of 2010, the Florida Legislature unanimously adopted the “Justice Sandra Day O’Connor Civics Education Act” to enhance civics instruction and assessment in the state. Among other provisions, the act requires that students successfully complete at least one semester of civics for middle school promotion and pass an end-of-course examination. To date, no studies have examined the experiences or perspectives of the teachers who have been charged with implementing this mandate. While energetic efforts have been made to train teachers and provide high-quality curricular materials, most studies have focused on the degree to which such efforts impact student achievement. For teachers, we are left to wonder why they chose civics (if they had a choice), how they perceive good civics instruction, and if they understand and value the important task of preparing students to be informed and active citizens in America’s republican government. Over the course of three interviews and through journaling in personal Weblogs, the participants in my study addressed the meanings they constructed from their limited experiences as civics teacher. In order to systematically

examine these interview and journal data, I employed a structural narrative analysis methodology that fostered a strong focus on the authentic voices of these novice practitioners. Through these narratives, my study provides important insights into the decisions, perspectives, and beliefs of novice civics teachers that I hope will be a source of valuable information for practicing teachers, methods professors, preservice teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers. In turn, these insights can inform future teacher-training efforts, as well as larger-scale studies to investigate and support the civic mission of public schools.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### **Introductory Remarks**

During my short tenure as a high school American government teacher, I was committed to helping my students realize the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for republican citizenship. I believed that if I provided them with a strong understanding of the history, principles, and processes of government, and if I helped them to see their important place in the Republic, then they would be much more likely to assume an active civic role. In effect, I hoped to instill a sense of efficacy and interest that would inspire responsible citizenship. At the same time, I lamented what I saw as a decline in the significance placed upon the teaching of the social studies, specifically civics. I felt certain that my value as a classroom teacher had less to do with my ability to inform and inspire young citizens and more to do with my ability to improve upon my students' reading and writing skills. The social studies, including civics, had no place on Florida's Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), Florida's high-stakes test and accountability measure, and students only needed one semester of American government for graduation. For most students, my course was their first exposure to any civics instruction, which I had to sneak into the curriculum, and because I taught seniors, it would probably be their last.

As I transitioned to my full-time doctoral work, I embraced a new commitment: to prepare preservice social studies teachers to be effective civics teachers in an educational milieu that undervalued both their subject matter and the civic mission of schools as a whole. Serendipitously, just as I was starting my studies, the Florida legislature passed a mandate providing for at least one semester of civics instruction in

middle school and an end-of-course examination that would affect student promotion. Over the next two and a half years, I adopted civic education as my primary research interest, wrote a curriculum for a new yearlong, seventh grade civics course, and worked with preservice and inservice teachers to prepare them for their new roles as middle school civics teachers. Now, as middle school teachers across the state are implementing this new curriculum, I am interested in their experiences and their perceptions, particularly the experiences and perceptions of those who are new to the teaching profession.

### **Statement of the Problem**

It is often told that as Benjamin Franklin was leaving the Constitutional Convention in September of 1787, a woman asked him what he and the other framers had wrought. His famous response – A Republic, if you can keep it – has remained a powerful reminder of the fragility of America’s democratic experiment and has inspired many educational efforts. Indeed, our ability to “keep the Republic” rests upon an educated citizenry, and for this reason, civic education is a necessary component of schooling. As Thomas Jefferson wrote in an 1818 letter to William Jarvis, “I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education” (as cited in National Commission, 1983, p. 7).

To be sure, political and educational theorists have always viewed education as crucial to the continued health of the American Republic. In other words, the importance of education is that “without a populace informed about their civic duties, the rights and freedoms promised by our constitutional structure may not be realized” (Lewis, 2006, p.

13). This widely recognized notion, that citizenship education is necessary for a thriving democracy, is the very reason that public schools in America were established.

Operating under the assumption that all education had civic purposes and that every teacher was a civics teacher, schools were created to prepare young people to be knowledgeable, engaged in their communities and in politics, and committed to the public good (Carnegie Corporation & CIRCLE, 2003). As R. Freeman Butts (2001) posits, “Preparing citizens to preserve and improve constitutional democracy has been the most important stated purpose of K-12 education ever since there has been a United States of America” (p. 5).

However, Hess (2009) points to studies suggesting that schools and parents do not value this task, especially when it is held up against workplace preparation or learning basic academic knowledge in reading, math, and science. Sadly, she observes, support for civic education appears to be more rhetorical than substantive. As such, we have witnessed a rise in high-stakes tests and increased instructional emphasis in math, reading, and science. The social studies, and with them, civic education, has been brushed aside as schools are being held accountable for their ability to foster student achievement, which is narrowly defined as grade-level math, reading, and writing skills, and scientific knowledge. As of September of 2010, 23 states do not include civics in their assessment or accountability systems. Of the remaining 27 states that do, usually under the umbrella of general social studies, ten do not test until students reach middle school (Education Commission of the States, 2010).

As a direct result of this high-stakes testing reality, an alarming 71% of school districts nationwide report cutting back time on other subjects, most often social studies,

to make room for reading and math instruction (Center on Education Policy, 2006). High school students, who up until the 1960s used to receive up to three courses in civics and government, are now left with one twelfth-grade course on “American government” that typically devotes little time to how people can and why they should participate as citizens. Moreover, this one course completely misses the large number of students who drop out before their senior year, a significant population that is arguably in the greatest need of understanding their rights and responsibilities as citizens (Education Commission of the States, 2010).

This marginalization is exacerbated at the elementary level where educational researchers have documented strong evidence of reduced time for social studies instruction and increased emphasis on the skills required for high-stakes tests rather than subject matter (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Burroughs, Groce, & Webeck, 2005; Doppin, Misco, & Patterson, 2008; Furin, 2003; Hutton & Burstein, 2008; Leming, Ellington, & Schug, 2006; Lintner, 2006; Mathis & Boyd, 2009; Rock, Heafner, O’Connor, Passe, Olendorf, Good, & Byrd, 2006; Stecher & Chun, 2001; VanFossen, 2005; VanFossen & McGraw, 2008; von Zastrow & Janc, 2004). Even elementary teacher education programs offer minimal coursework and field experiences in social studies content and methods (Bollick, Adams, & Willox, 2010; Lanahan & Yeager, 2008; Owens, 1997). Given such trends, it is hardly an overstatement for Judith Pace (2007) to declare, “We are in danger of losing a generation of citizens schooled in the foundations of democracy – and of producing high school graduates who are not broadly educated human beings” (p. 1).



The state of Florida is no exception to this civic education crisis. A recent survey asked 1,600 Florida elementary school teachers about how much time they spend teaching social studies each week. Notably, 28% said that they spend 30 minutes or less. Another 30% said that they spend 60 minutes. Overall, the average elementary school teacher in Florida spends about ten minutes per day on all of the social studies (Florida Joint Center for Citizenship & Florida Association of Social Studies Supervisors, 2009). A cursory glance at Florida's assessment and accountability system helps to explain this phenomenon. The FCAT is administered to students in grades three through eleven. Specifically, it measures the state's Sunshine State Standards in reading and mathematics for grades three through eleven; science for grades five, eight, and eleven; and writing for grades four, eight, and ten (Florida Department of Education, 2010). From the test's inception in 1998, the social studies has never been included.

Given these trends, we find students underperforming on civic assessments. In 2006, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) "evaluated students' understanding of the democratic institutions and ideals necessary to become informed citizens in shaping America's future" (Lutkus & Weiss, 2007). This recent and authoritative study, known as *The Nation's Report Card: Civics*, reported that only 24% of fourth grade students scored at or above the *Proficient* level in terms of civic knowledge, meaning that they demonstrated at least competency over challenging subject matter. While 75% knew that only citizens could vote in the United States, only 14% recognized that defendants have a right to a lawyer. Among eighth graders, only 22% scored at or above the *Proficient* level as, for example, less than a third could

explain the historical purpose of the Declaration of Independence. Twenty-seven percent of twelfth graders scored at or above the *Proficient* level, but less than half could describe the meaning of American federalism.

Four years later, NAEP conducted its civics assessment again, revealing that students are making progress in fourth grade but not eighth or twelfth grade. Specifically, in comparison to earlier civics assessments in 1998 and 2006, the average score in 2010 was higher than the scores in both years in fourth grade, not significantly different from the score in either year in eighth grade, and lower than the score in 2006 but not significantly different from the score in 1998 at twelfth grade (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011, p. 1). Based on these findings, it would be fair to state that what America's students know and can do in civics has stagnated. While the higher average score for fourth grade students is encouraging, the difference from 2010 is only three points. Moreover, this higher score is difficult to interpret considering that most elementary school teachers report cutting back time for social studies instruction.

Equally worrisome results are found when American adults are surveyed on their civic knowledge. The American Bar Association surveyed a national sample of 1,002 American adults. Just over half of those surveyed could identify the three branches of government, even in a multiple choice test, and fewer than half understood the concepts of separation of powers and checks and balances (Bookman, 2006). More recently, the Center for the Constitution at James Madison's Montpelier conducted a nationwide telephone survey of people across the United States to gauge Americans' understanding of constitutional principles. It found that 21% reported "little" or "not much" understanding of the Constitution. When analyzed by age, the youngest

respondents (ages 18-24) demonstrated much less understanding of the Constitution than older people. This is discouraging given that the younger groups should have most recently studied American history and government in high school and/or college. Similar results were found when participants were asked about how much of the Constitution they have read. Other notable findings include the following:

- Of all respondents, only 48% believe there to be a clear division of power between federal and state governments.
- Only 61% know that the power to regulate interstate commerce is reserved to the federal government.
- Only 35% agree that American constitutionalism is a system in which the government's powers are limited.
- Only 45% agree that American constitutionalism is a system in which the government is empowered to act for the common good. (The Montpelier Foundation, 2010)

If such national findings are not disheartening enough, civic education supporters in Florida must digest state-level civic indicators that are even worse. For example, a 2009 study by the Florida Joint Center for Citizenship (FJCC) examined Advanced Placement scores in history and United States government among states with comparable rates of Advanced Placement participation. They found that Florida's students ranked last in United States government and next to last in American history. Moreover, when the Florida Bar surveyed 400 Floridians using the same instrument as the American Bar Association, it achieved similar results: 33% of Floridians (compared to 29% of Americans) could not accurately describe the concept of checks and balances in a multiple-choice test (Bookman, 2006).

In addition to its unimpressive civic knowledge, Florida has a weak civic culture. In fact, when compared to the rest of the country, Florida ranks 46 in terms of civic health.

Specifically, in 2008, Florida ranked: 34 in average voter turnout; 49 in the percentage of citizens who volunteered; 48 in the percentage of its citizens who attended a public meeting; and 37 in the percentage of citizens who worked with others to address a community issue (FJCC & National Conference on Citizenship, 2009). Whether the result of ineffective civics instruction, little civics instruction, or no civics instruction at all, these numbers have raised concern among Floridians and the Florida Legislature alike, and have invoked calls for high quality citizenship education in public schools.

### **Purpose of the Study**

In 2006, Florida's Republican-dominated legislature passed a mandate as part of a larger general education bill requiring that school districts offer at least one semester of civics instruction at the middle school level. Since the mandate carried neither stipulations nor resources for professional development and instructional materials, districts across the state were free to comply through a wide variety of approaches. Some created stand-alone courses while others simply integrated civics into existing courses such as geography or American history. Two years later, Florida adopted a new set of curriculum standards – The Next Generation Sunshine State Standards – and reviewers generally agreed that they go a long way toward setting instructional goals that can improve the civic knowledge and skills of Florida's students (FJCC & Florida Association of Social Studies Supervisors, 2009). Most recently in the summer of 2010, the Florida Legislature unanimously adopted the "Justice Sandra Day O'Connor Civics Education Act" to enhance civics instruction and assessment in the state. Specifically, the act, dubbed the "anti-Jay Leno bill" by one of its sponsors, requires

- that the reading portion of the language arts curriculum include civics education content for all grade levels;

- that students successfully complete at least one semester of civics for middle school promotion;
- administration of an end-of-course assessment in civics education as a field test at the middle school level;
- inclusion of civics education end-of-course assessment data in determining school grades. (CS/HB 105, Civics Education)

While this legislation will greatly enhance civic education in the state, it falls short of meeting the demands of civic education supporters, specifically in its failure to require an entire year of civics for middle school promotion.

In spite of this shortcoming, there was and continues to be an energetic response to the middle school civics requirement. Most notably, FJCC, a partnership between the Lou Frey Institute of Politics and Government at the University of Central Florida and the Bob Graham Center for Public Service at the University of Florida, authored a yearlong applied civics curriculum for middle school students. The curriculum is touted as “one-stop shopping” for teachers as it provides “everything they need to teach a yearlong civics course: lesson plans, content summaries, supporting materials such as student worksheets and teacher keys, and assessment plans” (<http://www.florida-citizen.org>). According to the FJCC website:

This curriculum focuses on the civic knowledge, intellectual and participatory skills, and dispositions useful for the 21<sup>st</sup> century middle school classroom, focusing on two forms of student engagement: engagement with civics content (curricular) and with civic life (experiential). It aims to involve students in critical and higher-order thinking, to teach students "life-long learner" skills, and to present students with multiple perspectives. Its "eclectic approach" draws from a variety of materials to provide both content and teaching strategies that build on students' background experiences, incorporate a variety of learning styles, make use of appropriate technologies, develop FCAT-related literacy skills, and offer authentic assessment to gauge student learning. (<http://www.florida-citizen.org>)

In the 2009-2010 school year, 20 teachers from two large Florida school districts piloted this yearlong, seventh grade civics curriculum, and 28 more teachers did the same during the 2010-2011 school year. These numbers do not include an additional 35 teachers across three more counties, including large counties in the greater Orlando area, who used the curriculum to supplement their geography and American history courses. Beginning in the fall of 2012, when the statewide mandate to teach seventh grade civics went into effect, hundreds of middle school teachers from all over the state of Florida began using this curriculum and, consequently, ceased traditional textbook instruction.

Of the 48 teachers who piloted this curriculum during the 2010-2011 school year, only two were in their first or second year of teaching. For these two teachers, civics was not something that was forced upon them. Rather than viewing their teaching assignment as the result of a legislative mandate, they saw it as an exciting opportunity to teach a student-centered curriculum. They were neither geography teachers being told to teach civics, nor were they history teachers being told to abandon years of tried and true lesson plans. They were simply new social studies teachers who were thrilled to get a job in a tough economy and dismal job market. Moreover, unlike most of the teachers who only taught civics during part of their workday and who may or may not have implemented the entire 145-day curriculum as intended, these two novice teachers taught seventh grade civics all day, every day and used the curriculum in its entirety. For these reasons, I studied these two novice social studies teachers in order to explore their sense making of their emerging identities as civics teachers.

## **Research Question**

Principal Research Question: How do novice social studies teachers make sense of their emerging identities as civics teachers?

## **Method**

My study employed a qualitative design and a constructivist perspective to explore the ways in which novice social studies teachers make sense of their emerging identities as civics teachers. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), qualitative research comprises “any kind of research that produces findings that are not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other forms of quantification” (p. 17).

Constructivism, instead of trying to describe some reality or truth, describes individual human subjects engaging with objects in the world and making sense of them (Crotty, 1998). In order to answer the principal research question, two novice social studies teachers in north Florida were recruited to share their experiences and perspectives teaching a new, yearlong seventh grade civics curriculum. These two teachers are exceptional in that they teach seventh grade civics all day, every day. Each participated in three semi-structured interviews and used a private blog to journal about their experiences teaching the new curriculum. These data were analyzed using structural narrative analysis as described by Reissman (2008).

## **Significance**

Consistent with my theoretical perspective and methodology, I neither formulated hypotheses nor anticipated directions or findings at the outset of my study. That said, I had a clear sense of the ways in which I hoped the study would be useful and the audience I hoped would benefit most from its findings. For the former, I knew that I wanted the study to truly illuminate the ways in which novice civics teachers make

sense of their experiences in the classroom and the ways in which those experiences shape their emerging identities. I wanted to learn about why they became civics teachers and how they understood the purpose of civics. I wanted to uncover the types of classroom experiences that they consider most effective for teaching civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions, and, likewise, the types of classroom experiences that they consider least effective. I was curious about the degree to which they felt prepared or even qualified to teach civics and the types of support they received, or did not receive, that helped them or hindered them through their early experiences as civics teachers. More than anything, I wanted to learn about them, the participants. As such, my study was subject driven from the very beginning. I knew that my participants and my participants alone would steer my analysis and determine the findings that would emerge from my efforts.

For the latter, I knew that I wanted the study to be a source of valuable information for methods professors, preservice teachers, and curriculum developers. In the difficult and complex environment of high-stakes accountability, complete with widespread curriculum narrowing, it is important for these stakeholders to appreciate the experiences and perspectives of classroom teachers so that they may be better trained, better supported, better outfitted with sound instructional materials, and, most importantly, better convinced that they do not have to abandon the teaching of their content in order to prepare their students for the examinations. I also knew that I wanted the study to be useful for practicing teachers, especially novices, who may find themselves with a civics teaching preparation for which they feel inexperienced, unprepared, and perhaps unqualified. Lastly, and optimistically, I wanted the study to be



useful to policymakers – the state legislators who are charged with setting requirements for public school promotion, crafting school accountability measures, and determining the scope of the public school curriculum.

### **Cautions**

In qualitative studies, the researcher serves as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). It is therefore important for the researcher to be aware of his or her experiences and identity, and the degree to which those will limit the interpretation of findings. As a former K-12 civics teacher who has spent the past three years studying and conducting civic education research and developing curricular materials for civics teachers, including the new, yearlong seventh grade curriculum that was implemented by my study's participants, I made sense of their experiences and their identities in the context of my current experiences as a civics educator, and my not so distant past identity of a novice civics teacher. Additionally, while I have benefited from the phenomenal support and guidance of my doctoral chair and committee, I am still a novice researcher and my study represents my first major undertaking with independent research. I elaborate the challenges and issues that limit my study in Chapter 3.

### **Description of Chapters**

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 explores the history of America's civic mission of schools. It discusses the republican imperative for civic education and traces the development of civics programs in public schools. Further, it explores late twentieth and early twenty-first century trends that have derailed efforts to teach the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of citizenship, concomitantly occurring while access to education has expanded and conceptions of citizenship have liberalized. I conclude

Chapter 2 by outlining more recent attempts to restore the civic mission of schools. In this way, Chapter 2 represents an intellectual history of civic education advocacy, rather than a traditional review of the literature. There are a few reasons behind my decision to approach Chapter 2 in this way. First, it provides a historical foundation for the context in which the participants currently find themselves teaching. Civic education has traveled a long and complicated journey through the history of American public schools, and this journey informs the current curriculum – the curriculum that the participants must teach – just as much as the politicking that constructed it. Second, the methodology utilized for my study requires that findings be induced from the participants themselves, rather than from a set of premises or hypotheses. I believe that a traditional review of the literature has a strong inclination to lead novice researchers, such as myself, down a deductive path that betrays the epistemology they purport to embrace. Third, Chapter 2 is a manifestation of my identity as an arduous supporter of civics and a historian of education. It serves as a reflection of the passions, interests, and general socio-educational agenda that drive my research.

Chapter 3 details the research methodology and procedures used in the study, in addition to providing specific descriptions of the research participants and the settings in which they practice. It was deliberately written in such a way as to allow another researcher to duplicate the methods employed. Chapter 4 comprises a thorough presentation of the study's findings, including structural and substantive insights that were deduced from the participants' narratives. Chapter 5 consists of a summary of my study's conclusions and recommendations for the teaching practice, teacher education, and all of those who continue to fight for high quality civic education in America's K-12

schools. It is there that I systematically integrate much of the traditional literature related to social studies education, novice teachers, and teacher identity, thereby recognizing the canon that informed much of my study's design. Chapter 5 concludes with suggestions for future research.

### **Concluding Remarks**

As David Labaree (2003) acknowledges, “[q]ualitative research is well suited to the task of making sense of the socially complex, variable rich, and context-specific character of education” (p. 14). Unfortunately, the same emphasis on standardization and high-stakes testing that led to the widespread marginalization of the social studies has also had a detrimental and far-reaching influence on educational research. The federal government, a tremendous source of funding for academic research projects, is decisive in its call for large-scale, quantitative impact studies. This privileging of numbers, measures, and statistics over voices, perspectives, and experiences, has had the effect of reducing the nation’s educational research agenda to a game of “biggest, baddest, best” in which individual students are viewed as mere datum in a sample size of 1,000 and teachers are held accountable for student achievement measures that recognize neither the whole-child nor the contextual realities of schools and classrooms. Despite this unsupportive, if not combative, climate, qualitative research has become a widely used methodology for educational scholars, and qualitative researchers in the social studies have persisted in their important work. In particular, I am thankful to Ronald Evans, S. G. Grant, Carole Hahn, Diana Hess, Walter Parker, and Elizabeth Washington for furthering the qualitative tradition as it applies to research on civic education and continuing to probe the ways in which teachers and students make sense of their experiences.

For my part, I hope that my study makes a small, yet meaningful contribution to the fields of civic education and qualitative methodology – two veritable underdogs in the larger realm of educational research. From beginning to end, it is based on a firm belief that civic education is good for kids and good for the Republic, and it operates from the assumption that meaningful research seeks to understand the ways in which people make sense of their experiences. That said, I would be remiss in not acknowledging the important studies in other research fields on which my study builds: studies related to either novice teachers, teacher identity, or, sometimes, both. These studies were tremendously helpful as I crafted research questions, drafted interview protocols, and made analytical decisions. I also found them helpful as I reflected upon my findings and sought to tie them to previous findings from related research efforts.

Specifically, countless studies have ventured to explore the experiences and perspectives of beginning teachers, usually categorized as those in their first to fourth years of teaching. Some of these studies employed quantitative methods to study teacher preparation (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009), beginning teacher beliefs and instructional actions (Marbach-Ad & McGinnis, 2009; Turley, Powers, & Nakai, 2006), and the development and effectiveness of stayers and leavers (Bang, Kern, Luft, & Roehigh, 2007; Henry, Bastian, & Fortner, 2011; Knobloch & Whittington, 2002). Most of these quantitative studies focused on mathematics and science teachers and were naturally less helpful for my qualitative and social science objectives. Nonetheless, they provided helpful insights into the challenges facing teachers early in their careers.

Far more helpful were the studies that explored the general experiences or beliefs of novice teachers through a qualitative lens (Brown, & Howard, 2005; Clausen, 2007; Deal & White, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Fry, 2007, 2009; Gaudelli, 2006; Gibson & Romano, 2006; Lane, Lacefield-Parachini, & Isken, 2003; Rieg, Paquette, & Chen, 2007; Romano, 2008; Tait, 2008; Watson, 2006). However, the *most* helpful were qualitative studies that explored the intersections of novice teachers and teacher identity (Alsup, 2006; Cook, 2009; Dotger & Smith, 2009; Featherstone, 1993; Samuel & Stephens, 2000; Stark, 1991; Sugrue, 1997) or novice social studies teachers (Angell, 1998; van Hover & Pierce, 2006; van Hover & Yeager, 2004; van Hover, Hicks, & Irwin, 2007; Yeager & van Hover, 2006). Regrettably, for the latter group, none of the studies focused on civics teachers. Still, their illumination of challenges for history teachers, especially in light of high-stakes testing and accountability measures, proved to be invaluable as I framed my study.

Studies that examined teacher identity, even without a focus on novice teachers, were helpful in providing conceptual frameworks through which to consider teacher identity and teacher identity formulation and maintenance. For example, Beijaard, Verloop, and Vermunt's 2000 study of 80 experienced secondary school teachers' current and prior perceptions of their professional identity illustrated that teachers oftentimes see their professional identity as consisting of a combination of distinct aspects of expertise. Even more germane to my study, they found that most experienced teachers' perceptions of their professional identity differ significantly from their prior perceptions of this identity during their period as beginning teachers. Other pieces, such as Wenger (1998) and Zembylas (2003) highlighted the pervasive power

of external forces such as community, environment, and social discourses over teacher identity formulation and maintenance.

As this limited but representative review demonstrates, there is already a canon of great research related to novice teachers, teacher identity, and novice teachers' teacher identity. Even better, some of this research focuses on social studies teachers, usually those who teach history. Unfortunately, there is no research related to novice *civics* teacher identity. This narrow subset is precisely where I hope my study will make a powerful contribution. With the slow but steady resurgence of civic education in Florida and, to a lesser extent, the United States, it is necessary for policymakers, teacher educators, curriculum developers, and even textbook publishers to understand the experiences and perceptions of this vulnerable but important group of teachers, particularly the ways in which they view their important task of educating the next generation of republicans.

## CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### **Introductory Remarks**

Americans have always possessed a deep faith in schooling. Under the influence of contemporary revolutionary thought in Europe and America, the founders of the Republic believed that the strength of the new nation depended on the spread of learning and enlightenment (Counts, 1952). As Thomas Jefferson declared in an 1816 letter, “If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be.” Horace Mann, father of the common school, expressed America’s faith in schooling when he said, “The Common School is the greatest discovery ever made by man.” This faith was obvious even to foreign students of American civilization. As the perceptive observer of American life, Frenchmen Alexis de Tocqueville, noted, “The universal and sincere faith that they profess here in the efficaciousness of education seems to me one of the most remarkable features of America.” Indeed, from its late eighteenth and early nineteenth century beginnings, America’s faith in schooling as the unflinching solution to all of society’s problems has endured.

This faith has always been in concert with an American belief in democratic government that transcends class distinctions. As the 2003 *Civic Mission of Schools* report declares, “For more than 250 years, Americans have shared a vision of democracy in which all citizens understand, appreciate, and engage actively in civic and political life” (Carnegie Corporation & CIRCLE, 2003, p. 8). Of course, citizens cannot be expected to understand, appreciate, and engage if they are not properly educated. In other words, we are not born democrats:

The values and habits upon which democracy rests are neither revealed truths or innate habits. There is no evidence that we are born with them. Devotion to human dignity and freedom, to equal rights, to social and economic justice, to the rule of law, to civility and truth, to tolerance of diversity, to mutual assistance, to personal and civic responsibility, to self-restraint and self-respect – all these must be taught and learned and practiced. (Albert Shanker Institute, 2003, p. 8)

Taken together, these three American tenets – faith in schooling, faith in democratic government, and the belief that the values and habits of democratic government must be taught – comprise the civic mission of America’s public schools.

The best single explanation for the founding and early diffusion of public schools in this country is that they were seen as essential for citizenship training (Labaree, 2007). At different times throughout American history, schools have addressed this need either narrowly – through specific courses such as social studies, American government and civics, or American history – or more broadly as the fundamental purpose of schooling in and of itself. For the first 100 years of the American Republic, it was the latter: the history of civic education and the larger history of schooling, generally speaking, were one in the same. That is, one could not differentiate between the goals and plans for schooling and the goals and plans for civic education. Preparing children for their future roles as citizens in America’s republican government, for the preservation of said government, was the primary purpose of schooling. Civic education, infused with Protestant moral principles, was the school’s most crucial object. Accordingly, the better part of this chapter is devoted to those first 100 years. It is within those years that America’s philosophy of education was honed and the great American public school system was born.

Once America reached the later decades of the nineteenth century, “modern” civic education emerged as a recognized and discreet curriculum (Quigley, 1999). Civic



education was increasingly viewed as a subject matter within schooling, a question of curriculum, rather than a primary purpose of schooling. I will then treat it as such and provide a more streamlined history of civic education advocacy and trends for the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. It was during this time period that schools witnessed a gradual chipping away of the civic mission of schools, even as citizenship rights slowly expanded to include more groups.

Throughout this chapter, I will try to keep the tension between *Unum* and *Pluribus* in focus throughout this chapter. David Tyack (2003) maintains that American society has always been pluralistic in character, but alongside that *Pluribus* citizens have also sought an *Unum*, a set of shared political assumptions and institutions. These competing truths “have been in inescapable tension, constantly evolving as Americans struggled to find common ground and to respect their differences” (p. 63). The history of civic education advocacy in America places this tension in sharp relief. Many Americans believe in schooling for national unity, and therefore look to civic education to inculcate shared American values. However, Americans also believe that schooling should promote pluralistic freedoms of both belief and action. As R. Freeman Butts (1980) declares, “We expect the schools, above all the public schools, to serve both causes” (p. 51). Therefore, as this chapter will illustrate, the history of public schools and their civic education programs represents a steadfast labor to achieve some semblance of balance between the two, although the goal of *Unum* has typically reigned supreme.

As a final word, I take the position that civic education is a primary purpose of schooling in America and that preparing students for their role in America’s republican democracy is both desirable and essential. Like many of the scholars that are cited in

this chapter, I am an ardent advocate for civic education, and I decry the historical shifts that displaced civics, first, as the primary object of public education, and later, as an important part of the public school curriculum. I make no attempts to hide this position in the history provided below.

### **Securing the Republic: Education in the Early National Period**

In June of 1788, upon ratification of the Constitution, the United States of America officially began its experiment in republican government, an arrangement in which the will of the people is refined and articulated through democratically elected representatives. James Madison thought republicanism would be a safer system than direct participation because public passions would be cooled through the lengthy process, and representatives, he hoped, would be older, wealthier, and wiser than the common man and better able to make rational decisions (Barbour & Wright, 2009). During the founding era, prevailing theories of government held that these older, wealthier, and wiser men – the aristocracy – were naturally suited to rule (Rury, 2002). Proudly, however, the United States had no landed aristocracy, and without its perceived stabilizing influence over governance, many contemporaries dismissed popularly elected government as potentially disastrous (Brown, 1996; Rury, 2002; Tyack, 1967).

Implicit in this dismissal was an unflattering view of humankind as ignorant, self-interested, and generally lacking virtue. Madison's famous quote in *Federalist No. 51* embodied this view: "If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary." This Hobbesian view conjures a narrow conception of citizenship, a belief that individual participation in government should be limited and that too much

democracy is unhealthy. It stands in contrast to a more positive conception of citizenship, one espoused by Enlightenment thinkers such as John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, which placed faith in the citizen's ability to act virtuously on behalf of the common good. These competing views, which featured prominently in the Founding Fathers' writings, have endured. As Barbour and Wright (2009) illuminate, "When observers claim, as they often do today, that there is a crisis of American citizenship, they usually mean that civic virtue is taking second place to self-interest as a guiding principle of citizenship" (p. 20). It is then that civic education is brought to the fore.

### **The Founding Fathers' Philosophies for Republican Education**

The framers of the Constitution (whom Americans affectionately refer to as the Founding Fathers) were learned men and, in many cases, astute students of history. They knew that republics were doomed to failure (Kaestle, 1983; Kurland & Lerner, 1987; McClellan, 2000; Rury, 2002). They read the most basic works on Greek and Roman history – Tacitus, Livy, Sallust, and Plutarch – which gave detailed accounts of political corruption, as well as the works on English politics and political history, which focused on the constitutional conflicts of the seventeenth century (McClellan). From their readings, they knew that the most stable governments had pieces of democracy, monarchy, and aristocracy, and they knew that they had just created a system almost completely devoid of the latter two elements (Kaestle). Because of this awareness, the Framers pinned their hopes on education as the best means of securing the Republic.

Despite this faith in education, it received little attention in the deliberations of the Constitutional Convention, and America's two governing documents – the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution – are silent on the topic. Nonetheless, a great deal

was written about education for youth in the founding era with many of the most notable Founding Fathers helping to persuade Americans that if democracy was to take root as a political tradition in their fledgling nation, popular education had to become an American institution (Rury, 2002). However, while they were united in their support for widespread popular education, these early advocates for civic education disagreed among themselves. Indeed, their writings are rife with differing fears for the new Republic, differing conceptions of citizenship, and differing goals for the civic curriculum. Still, three distinct themes permeated their political philosophies of republican education. They believed that education was necessary to prepare knowledgeable and virtuous citizens who could vote intelligently and act as safeguards against tyranny; to achieve unity in a large and fragmented new nation that was beset with local jealousies and diverse political viewpoints; and to balance liberty and order when both the American Revolution and Shays' Rebellion were still heavily engrained in the nation's collective memory.

### **Preparing virtuous citizens**

Of the three main founding era goals for popular education, the need to prepare virtuous citizens to sustain the Republic was the most oft articulated. One of the main concerns of the Founding Fathers, as it was, resided in popular elections where the common man was charged with choosing virtuous representatives to lead the country, a task for which they believed the ignorant and immoral to be ill fit (Rury, 2002). They found themselves in general agreement that the perpetuation of republicanism depended ultimately upon the character of the citizenry. It therefore followed that a sound education would be needed for all Americans in order to ensure that men would

vote intelligently, choosing only the virtuous to represent them, and that women would train their sons to do the same (Kaestle, 1983; Macedo, 1999; Tyack, 2003).

While many of the Framers, most notably Benjamin Rush and Noah Webster, concerned themselves with issues of unity and order, Jefferson, always the most fearful of tyranny, wrote at length about the need for an educated populace that would choose leaders wisely, defeat ambition and corruption in politics, and keep a vigilant eye on government. He stated this view most pithily in the preamble to his 1778 plan for public education entitled *A Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge*:

Yet experience hath shewn [*sic*], that even under the best forms, those entrusted with power have, in time, and by slow operations, perverted it into tyranny; and it is believed that the most effectual means of preventing this would be, to illuminate, as far as practicable, the minds of the people at large, and more especially to give them knowledge of those facts, which history exhibiteth [*sic*], that, possessed thereby of the experience of other ages and countries, they may be enabled to know ambition under all its shapes, and prompt to exert their natural powers to defeat its purposes. (as cited in Kurland & Lerner, 1987, p. 672)

American scholar and diplomat Joel Barlow agreed: “The representative system must necessarily degenerate, and become an instrument of tyranny . . . where there is an extraordinary disparity of information between the generality of citizens and those who aspire to be their chiefs” (as cited in Hyneman & Lutz, 1983, p. 1121). Ignorance, they believed, was an infallible instrument of despotism, and education was their best defense.

The Founding Fathers, as Tyack (2003) eloquently states, believed that “the educated character and trained mind of the individual was the safest foundation of public virtue” and that “an uneducated individual was an untrustworthy custodian of rights and liberties, but a properly schooled individual would recognize the bonds of obligation and principle that stabilize society and preserve freedom” (p. 10). They all

emphasized the heavy responsibilities of citizenship and the importance of education for the survival of republican government. Accordingly, they argued passionately for free common schooling, one of the primary objects of which must always be to prepare citizens “to choose with discretion the fiduciary of those he delegates; and to notice their conduct with diligence, with candor, and judgment” (Thomas Jefferson as cited in Kurland & Lerner, 1987, p. 689).

### **Achieving unity**

Upon ratification of the Constitution, the population of the United States was about four-fifths English descent and overwhelmingly Protestant (Tyack, 2003). Nevertheless, the Founding Fathers were concerned with political and, to a lesser extent, denominational diversity, and they believed public education would unify the language and culture of the new nation (Kaestle, 1983). As Tyack states, “American society was socially diverse, scattered across a continent, politically contentious, religiously splintered, and averse to government. But the political and educational leaders who laid the foundations of civic education in the United States did believe that unity was possible” (pp. 9-10). Accordingly, they looked to a thoroughly American curriculum to instill love for country, contempt for the Old World, and even political conformity and disciplined behavior (Kaestle). As Webster advised, “Begin with the infant in his cradle. . . let the first word he lisps be ‘Washington’” (as cited in Tyack, p. 17). In a nation divided by bitter partisanship, religious sectarianism, and geographic dispersal, the Founding Fathers believed that all Americans could agree on political moral truths, which a common education could impart.

Most memorable for his republican zeal, particularly in regards to popular education, was the Pennsylvanian Benjamin Rush. In his scheme for introducing public education to his home state, he renounced *Pluribus* and encouraged total uniformity:

I conceive the education of our youth in this country to be peculiarly necessary in Pennsylvania, while our citizens are composed of the natives of so many different kingdoms of Europe. Our schools of learning, by producing one general and uniform system of education, will render the mass of the people more homogenous, and thereby fit them more easily for uniform and peaceable government. (as cited in Kurland & Lerner, 1987, p. 686)

In his estimation, a republic depending on the will of the people must see to it that those wills be republican. More concerned with regional jealousies than ethnic ones, Barlow, in an open letter *To His Fellow Citizens of the United States*, called for “universal attention to the education of youth” and maintenance of the federal ties among the different states “by extending and enlightening the minds of those whose votes are frequently to be consulted, and whose actions are always irresistible by their numbers, and the direction which they take” (as cited in Hyneman & Lutz, 1983, p. 1121). Barlow believed that universal education was both a civil and political concern, and like Rush, he urged his home state of Pennsylvania to see to its implementation.

Many of the Founding Fathers worried about the coherence and stability of a nation covering such a large geographic expanse. Although rampant fears of religious denominationalism, ethnic diversity, and classism were still a few decades away, political leaders were wary of individualism and political diversity as threats to America’s republican experiment. Throughout their many impassioned pleas for popular education, they repeated the need for a shared commitment to homogeneity of principles, opinion, and manners and to republican liberties and duties, or for *Unum*. By today’s standards, these goals might sound more like indoctrination than education. However, during the

earliest days of the Republic, they were a reflection of the Founding Fathers' awareness that "republics had historically been as evanescent as fireflies on a summer evening" and insecurity that "a continental nation composed of many states could not long remain republican" (Tyack, 2003, p. 15).

### **Balancing liberty and order**

Nowhere are the differing views of founding era civic education advocates more evident than in their writings surrounding education and the competing virtues of liberty and order. This schism, so prominent during the ratification debates, naturally carried over into the discourse on public education where two distinct conceptions of its goals are clearly seen. Given some of the more enduring events in America's brief history, such a split is hardly surprising. The goals of the Revolution remained highly valued in American political thought. Meanwhile, uprisings such as the Whiskey Rebellion in Pennsylvania and Shays' Rebellion in Massachusetts perpetuated a deep concern over a seemingly precarious national government. Reconciling liberty and order, it would seem, was a tall order, and common education, many believed, represented the best strategy.

On one end of the broad spectrum that spans liberty and order there were men such as Rush who considered order and restraint to be the most honorable of virtues. In his widely circulated *Thoughts upon the Mode of Education Proper in a Republic*, Rush's anxieties betrayed him, leaving historians with memorable, if not also chilling, words that are too powerful to abridge. Believing that "a Christian cannot fail of being a republican," he advocated for popular education steeped in Protestant values: "Man is naturally an ungovernable animal, and observations on particular societies and countries will teach us that when we add the restraints of ecclesiastical to those of



domestic and civil government, we produce in him the highest degrees of order and virtue” (as cited in Hyneman & Lutz, 1983, pp. 682-683). Later, he made this dogmatic appeal:

In the education of youth, let the authority of our masters be as absolute as possible. The government of schools like the government of private families should be arbitrary, that it may not be *severe*. By this mode of education, we prepare our youth for the subordination of laws and thereby qualify them for becoming good citizens of the republic. I am satisfied that the most useful citizens have been formed from those youth who have never known or felt their own wills till they were one and twenty years of age. (p. 686)

Then in his most infamous prose he declared, “I consider it possible to convert men into republican machines. This must be done if we expect them to perform their parts properly in the great machine of the state” (p. 687).

On the other end of the spectrum, men such as Jefferson wrote about the liberating power of education: “But of all the views of this law none is more important, none more legitimate, than that of rendering the people the safe, as they are the ultimate, guardians of their own liberty” (as cited in Kurland & Lerner, 1987, p, 674). For Jefferson, liberty was the great political end to be sought, and education the best means for securing it. In this way, America might protect the liberty for which the Revolution was fought.

To be sure, Rush’s views represent the extreme of early republican educational thought. However, he was not alone in fearing for disorder in the wake of ignorance. Even the staunch Anti-Federalist Robert Coram warned of the miseries that befell governments that neglected the education of its youth: “The actions of mobs are always characteristic of the people who compose them, and we will find the most ignorant always guilty of the greatest outrages” (as cited in Hyneman & Lutz, 1983, pp. 793-794). Still, the American people were not nearly prepared to disregard their nascent freedoms

in the name of government stability, and, as a whole, they looked to popular education to help them achieve that delicate balance of liberty and order.

### **The Founding Fathers' Plans for Public Education**

In addition to their philosophical expressions on public education and republican citizenship, the Founding Fathers' writings on the subject were heavily infused with practical plans. Drawing upon the previously delineated philosophies, they proposed schools that were publically financed and controlled, arranged in a system of lower and higher schools, and devoted to producing republican citizens (Kaestle, 1953; Tyack, 2003). They called for an end to parochial arrangements for schooling and argued for state agencies of political socialization that would promote a new national identity (Rury, 2002).

Of all the founding era plans for republican education, the one that has received the most attention by historians of education is that of Jefferson (Rippa, 1992). Written in 1779, before the Revolution's end, Jefferson's *A Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge* outlined a three-tiered pyramidal system for local education comprising free elementary schools, twenty regional academies with free tuition for selected boys, and support at William and Mary College for the best ten, needy academy graduates. According to Jefferson, this scheme would facilitate the rise of a "natural aristocracy" of talent and accomplishment and provide leaders for the new nation (Rury, 2002, p. 49). Although it had little effect at the time, his appeal for merit-based schooling duly informed the larger philosophy that has guided America's public school system.

Webster and Rush, similar in their more draconian conceptions of civic education, also introduced plans for the establishment of public schools. In his 1788 manuscript, *On the Education of Youth in America*, Webster proposed that every small district be

furnished with a school for at least four months each year in which children would be taught “the usual branches of learning; submission to superiors and to laws; the moral or social duties; the history and transactions of their own country; the principles of liberty and government” (as cited in Kurland & Lerner, 1987, p. 680). Rush, in his 1798 statement, *Of the Mode of Education Proper in a Republic*, called for establishing schools across Pennsylvania that were supported by taxes and land grants and seeped in religious instruction, which he believed to be the only foundation for education in a republic. With a firm belief in this progression, Rush’s plan called for the blending of religion, liberty, and learning in the name of preserving the Republic.

In his eighth annual message to Congress in 1796, Washington also highlighted a plan for education, encouraging lawmakers to establish a national university for “the assimilation of the principles, opinions, and manners, of our countrymen, by the common education of a portion of our youth from every quarter” (as cited in Allen, 1988, p. 509). Later, in his *Farewell Address*, Washington made a general suggestion respecting schooling: “Promote then, as an object of primary importance, Institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened” (as cited in Butts, 1978, p. 37).

In the end, the efforts of Jefferson, Webster, Rush, and Washington (as well as others not illuminated here) came to naught (Macedo, 1999). While revered by historians as harbingers of later state systems, their proposals for public education failed to win legislative approval (Rippa, 1992). As Kaestle (1983) explains, “Resistance to new taxes, devotion to local control and individual choice, and a faith in existing

educational arrangements – these were the factors that foiled early plans for state systems of free common schooling” (p. 9). As such, from the Revolution until Jefferson’s death in 1826, the majority of schools in America remained heterogeneous and private, and tended to perpetuate differences among the citizenry rather than promote a universal brand of republicanism (Tyack, 2003).

To be fair, in a few northern states, “republican enthusiasm for education bore some legislative fruit” (Kaestle, 1983, p. 10), although it was with varying and almost always modest impact. In 1789, Massachusetts passed a law requiring all towns of 50 households to provide an elementary school for at least six months a year and all towns of 100 households to do the same for 12 months. Beginning in 1795, the New York legislature provided aid to local schools with a five-year appropriation of 50,000 dollars a year to be divided among local school committees that agreed to match at least half of the state allotment. Lastly, a 1796 Connecticut law provided support for public schools through a combination of local taxes, special fees from residents and parents, and proceeds from the sale of all of its land in the Western Reserve Territory. While they set the stage for future state-supported systems of education, these laws were anomalous and failed to meet the expectations of public education enthusiasts.

Despite the Founding Fathers’ failure to rally Americans and state legislatures to adopt widespread and enduring systems of public education, their vision for civic education deeply permeated existing educational institutions. Most agreed that the principle ingredients of civic education were literacy and the inculcation of patriotic values (resting upon moral and religious precepts), which were oftentimes infused with the study of history and the principles of republican government (Butts, 1978; Butts,

1980, Kaestle, 1983; Rury, 2002, Tyack, 2003). And while *Pluribus* expanded across the nation, *Unum* remained the ideal. Webster's spellers, readers, and grammar books exemplified the combination of faith in Americanized literacy, patriotism, and Protestant devotion to duty; and popular textbooks celebrated the values of national cohesion, love of country, and love of liberty. As Elson (1964) illustrates, the paramount theme across mainstream educational materials was to "attach the child's loyalty to the state and nation" (p. 282). The goal of public education and civic education alike was to achieve the highest form of *Unum* for the infant Republic (Butts, 1980).

The attention given to public schools in the early national period can be characterized by an overabundance of rhetoric, countless proposals and generalized plans, a good deal of petitioning of local government, and minimal passage of legislation (Butts, 1787). In other words, the results were not momentous. While extant schools stressed a common program of literacy, moral values, and inculcation of patriotism, the "creation of systematically organized, state-controlled systems of public education dedicated to the purposes of mass socialization would have to wait for another generation of visionary leaders" (Rury, 2002, p. 50). This brings us to the common school movement of the mid-nineteenth century.

### **Searching for Order: The Common School Movement**

According to Butts (1978), "*Unum* was the dream envisioned by the advocates of public education in the first decades of the Revolutionary Era, but *Pluribus* remained the social and political reality which educators had to face" (p. 41), particularly as America advanced deeper into the nineteenth century. As major economic, demographic, social, political, and religious changes swept the still nascent Republic, even the most steadfast critics of tax-supported education began to reconsider the value of a universal

educational experience for American youth (Butts, 1978; Kaestle, 1983; Reese, 2000; Rury, 2002; Tyack, 1967). In light of widespread industrialism, urbanization, immigration, and westward migration – in addition to growing poverty and classism, democratization, religious sectarianism, and perceived moral dissipation – concerned political leaders and other elites looked to schools to secure the nation's future. Accordingly, support for public education, and particularly its republican mission, grew precipitously during this time period.

### **Sweeping Social Changes**

The degree to which America was experiencing change, and the sense of urgency this created regarding the need for public education, cannot be overstated. The common school movement was able to make the remarkable headway that it did during the middle decades of the nineteenth century thanks in large part to major shifts in American society (Kaestle, 1983). I will now explore those shifts, treating them as the collective impetus for the promotion of public education, first orchestrated by a few influential reformers and later adopted by more mainstream and even periphery groups.

On the economic front, modernization meant that America was shifting from an agrarian society to an industrial one. During the colonial period, almost all articles were made in the home or in small workshops that dotted rural villages, but an industrial revolution, pulled domestic manufacturing out of towns and workshops and into cities and factories (Macedo, 1999; Rippa, 1992). Unfortunately, as Rury (2002) explains, this meant that fewer children attended school because early factory owners recruited child labor to help control costs. Moreover, the availability of factory work and the opportunity to make money created an alluring alternative to attending school.

On a demographic level, urbanization, immigration, and westward migration were forever altering the American landscape. To be expected, an exodus of Americans from the countryside to the cities accompanied the rampant industrialism described above. Concomitantly, the demand for industrial labor led to a wave of new immigrants, many who did not speak English, into America's largest cities. For example, comparing 1840 to 1850, the total population increased 35% while the number of immigrants entering the country increased 240%. As a final demographic shift, beginning with the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, land-hungry Americans were moving steadily westward, leading to deeply engrained factional interests (Butts, 1978; Rippa, 1992).

With America's growing industrialism and urbanization came a widening gulf that separated the wealthy from the laboring classes. As Reese (2000) laments, "With the first factories appeared social extremes: the fabulously wealthy and the abysmally poor, both given to excessive behaviors, according to many reformers" (p. 17). Indeed, the rewards of increased American productivity were uneven and political leaders offered dire predictions of imminent social war. For example, workingmen's associations feared that industrialization and concentration of wealth were restricting their equality of economic opportunity, and skilled craftsmen, who saw their trades usurped by machines, were concerned that their children would eventually become cogs in a factory (Tyack, 1967). Expectedly, the elites were more fearful of moral dissipation as they witnessed increased alcohol consumption, children running in the streets, and widespread poverty. Common school reformers, then, looked to universal public education as a way out of potential social chaos (Macedo, 1999).

On the political front, the extension of voting rights, the development of political parties, and the rise of the Jacksonian Democrats meant that America was experiencing widespread popular participation in politics (Butts, 1978; Kaestle, 1983; Macedo, 1999; Tyack, 1967; Ripa, 1992). To be fair, “popular participation” really meant “white male participation” for most of the mid-1800s. Still, as Butts (1978) points out, compared with any other country at that time, more American men took part in political affairs and repeatedly voted in elections. This development would have a two-pronged effect on the common school movement. First, the extension of suffrage enabled workers who congregated in cities to become important political factors, thus giving their demands (e.g., common schools) a new potency (Carlton, 1965). Second, conservatives and elites believed that the democratization of politics had created duties (e.g., voting, jury duty, serving public office) “which would be a menace if performed by an ignorant citizenry” (Tyack, p. 122). As Kaestle pithily explains, “If the republic was to have universal white male suffrage, it needed universal white education” (p. 72). More and more Americans began to embrace this truism, even if it meant raising taxes.

While the most visceral social antagonism seemed to shift from the religious to the economic point of view (Carlton, 1965), religious tensions persisted as America became home to a growing number of sects. With the proliferation of Protestant denominations and the immigration of Roman Catholics, people began viewing religious diversity as a threat to the *Unum* that they believed necessary to sustain a republic. Additionally, the prevailing view of human nature was shifting from the Calvinist belief in predestination to the idea of *tabula rasa* and even the goodness of children (Macedo, 1999). Under this view, teaching kids morality would make them less inclined to corrupt behavior, which



many reformers believed was getting out of hand in the nation's growing cities. Public schools, therefore, would be needed not only to teach a common English language and love of liberty, but a common Protestant morality as well (Kaestle, 1983).

Collectively, these economic, demographic, social, political, and religious changes posed new problems, which Americans hoped a universal public education would solve. Concerned about growing diversity and potentially widespread social conflict in the absence of common values and a shared identity, reformers committed themselves to the idea of the common school, a public institution that mixed students from all walks of life, with the hope of teaching them a common denominator of non-partisan and non-sectarian political and moral truths (Rury, 2002). It followed that political parties and religious denominations should "stop their quarrels and competition at the schoolhouse door" (Tyack, 2003, p. 20), and let civic education work to transform the *Pluribus* into the *Unum*, even as citizenship and political rights were expanding.

### **Visions for Common Schools**

The changes explored above did not simply represent a crisis for education, but also a crisis for *civic education*, although the distinction was quite weak in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Histories of the common school movement are thus replete with quotes from leading reformers that tied the need for universal public education to the democratic purposes of schooling. In this section, I will highlight some of the most powerful statements on the matter from those who exercised the most influence over the movement.

Much of the rhetoric in support of common schools echoed that of the Founding Fathers. Politically, common school reformers shared a set of concerns about the future prospects of the America's republican form of government, which was still a recent

experiment on the larger stage of world history. Men like Horace Mann, the Secretary of the Massachusetts State Board of Education and the most widely celebrated common school reformer, viewed public schools as essential institutions of the emerging American Republic (Rury, 2002). In his 1848 *Twelfth Annual Report*, he declared without equivocation, “[t]he establishment of a republican government, without well-appointed and efficient means for the universal education of the people, is the most rash and fool-hardy experiment ever tried by man” (as cited in Cremin, 1957, p. 84). He therefore embraced the Jeffersonian view that no republic can endure unless its citizens are literate and educated.

The conservative Senator from Massachusetts, Daniel Webster, also cited self-government in his calls for common schools:

And knowing that our government rests directly on the public will, in order that we may preserve it we endeavor to give a safe and proper direction to the public will. We do not, indeed, expect all men to be philosophers or statesmen; but we confidently trust, and our expectation of the duration of our system of government rests on that trust, that, by the diffusion of general knowledge and good and virtuous sentiments, the political fabric may be secure. (as cited in Tyack, 1967, p. 126)

The conservative governor of Massachusetts, Edward Everett, shared Webster’s conviction that “where the people are not only in theory the source of power, but in practice are actually called upon,” as in the United States, “it is plain that education is universally and indispensably necessary” (as cited in Tyack, 1976, p. 127). He also agreed that while all men did not have to be philosophers or statesmen, they all had to be educated to exercise sound judgment at the polls. Interestingly, despite their Whig party affiliations, both Webster and Everett believed that every man should be subject to taxation for public education in proportion to his property and whether or not he had children.

Similarly, school leaders believed in the central importance of individual character development as a key element of social progress and sustaining the Republic. As the argument went, virtuous people were essential to national survival, and, *ipso facto*, proper moral development was too (Rury, 2002). Considering the perceived social turmoil around them, the common school reformers were not confident that churches and families could ensure such development alone, as evidenced by this dramatic quote from Mann: “I see the poor and neglected children in the streets, or in their own wretched houses, and how they live and grovel in low practices, gradually losing their sweet innocence of infantile expression, and becoming coarse and violent, even brutal” (as cited in Tyack, 1967, p. 134). Mann believed that children were capable of great improvement and repeated the Founding Fathers’ claims that intelligence and virtue were the foundation of the Republic (Reese, 2000). Accordingly, he and his fellow educational crusaders looked to their Protestant-republican ideology for solutions.

Many of the voices for common school reform focused on the preservation of rights, the promotion of liberties, and the realization of equality when speaking on behalf of common schools, although perhaps none more emphatically than the workingmen groups. For them, failure to properly educate all children would certainly lead to “generation on generation, reared up in profound ignorance, and the final prostration of their liberties at the shrine of a powerful aristocracy” (as cited in Tyack, 1967, p. 137). The demand for equal liberties was the essence of their arguments, particularly in their proposals for legislation establishing common schools, which a workingmen’s committee submitted to the Pennsylvania legislature in 1830. As the one proposal stated, “[t]here can be no real liberty without wide diffusion of real intelligence” (as cited

in Butts, 1978, p. 91). Mann bolstered this argument in his 1848 *Twelfth Annual Report*, where he professed a belief that education – which he referred to as “the great equalizer of the conditions of men” – could help bridge the gap between the wealthy and laboring classes and promote social harmony at a time of increasing disparities in social status (as cited in Cremin, 1957, p. 80).

Lastly, the presence of so many immigrants in antebellum America greatly reinforced the use of common schools to acculturate children to a common English language, Protestant morality, and republican ethos (Kaestle, 1983; Rury, 2002; Tyack, 2003). Men like Calvin Stowe and William McGuffey argued for a uniform and systematic mode of education for assimilation. As the former argued, “To sustain an extended republic like our own, there must be a national feeling, a national assimilation” (In Tyack, 1967, p. 149). This solution, though oppressive and culturally insensitive by today’s standards, was seen as peaceful and democratic and was embraced by most native-born Americans, including some immigrants (Kaestle, 1983).

Most of the ideas delineated above were not controversial, and despite differing priorities, the proponents for universal public education in the middle decades of the nineteenth century shared a common set of values and purposes that lent the common school movement a clear goal: the unification of American culture, defined in narrow terms, for social order and preservation of the Republic (Rury, 2002). Out of great diversity in American society and American education came a remarkable degree of consensus that through the establishment of common school systems, all children in America would be taught not only the three R’s, but a non-sectarian Christian morality and a non-partisan republicanism (Tyack, 1967).

## **Civic Education in Common Schools**

This consensus, which also extended to more practical considerations, largely dictated the success of the common school movement. The ideas that schools should be supported by property taxes, should have great uniformity, should last for more than six months, and should be taught by trained, professional teachers became widely accepted (Rury, 2002). That schools should be public, free, of the highest quality, and inculcate individual and civic virtue became an educational creed with which the American people agreed with increasing conviction. As Tyack (2003) declares, “It is hard to find another reform in American history that spread as fast as the common school, had such an egalitarian rationale, and aroused so little dissent nationwide” (pp. 11-12). Even if battles over the details remained, by the second half of the nineteenth century, the common school wars had been largely won – an institution was born and civic education was its central purpose (Rury, 2002; Tyack, 1967; Tyack, 1978).

To achieve this purpose, school leaders proposed a politically neutral program: teach only republican principles that were universally approved “by all sensible and judicious men, all patriots, all genuine republicans” (Horace Mann, 1848, as cited in Cremin, 1957, p. 97). In other words, skip over the controversial. On this point, Mann was emphatic. Worried that parents would withdraw their students from school if they found that “their children are indoctrinated into what they call political heresies,” he urged teachers to teach only the most widely accepted articles in the “creed of republicanism” (as cited in Cremin, p. 95).

In place of controversial matter, Mann suggested a program of “political education” that was largely similar to the civics curriculum of today, stressing political knowledge upon the formal structure of governmental institutions. This included knowledge of the

Constitution, one's state constitution, separation of powers, checks and balances, the mode of elections, and the duties of citizenship. Impressing the skills of participation and the controversial was to be left to the non-school agencies of party, press, and family (Cremin, 1957). Mann believed that if students could share a common political foundation, they would be less likely to fall prey to party passions and the politics of excess as adults (Tyack, 2003).

American history constituted a large component of nineteenth century civic education. Prior to the Civil War, six states required the teaching of American history, which expanded to another 23 states between 1860 and 1900 (Tyack, 2003). In this way, students were taught to worship past achievements of America and to believe in the inevitable spread of American political culture throughout the world (Elson, 1964). Such instruction usually included the study of federal and state constitutions, which many states regarded as sacred texts. In New Hampshire, for example, all eighth-grade students were required to read the state and federal constitutions *aloud*. This exercise was typical of nineteenth century pedagogy. Indeed, through formal recitation and a reliance on textbooks (which were embedded with stereotypes, bias, and historical inaccuracies), students were viewed as passive learners and were expected to never question the legitimacy or validity of selected content (Evans, 2004).

Perhaps the best way to evaluate the civic education program during the common school movement is to look at contemporary textbooks and readers. For engaging in this exercise, historians of education owe a great debt to Ruth Miller Elson and her 1964 book *Guardians of Tradition: American Schoolbooks of the Nineteenth Century*. Here, Elson sums up hundreds of textbooks this way:

While they evade issues seriously controversial in their day, they take a firm and unanimous stand on matters of basic belief. They value judgment as their stock in trade: love of country, love of God, duty to parents, the necessity to develop habits of thrift, honesty, and hard work in order to accumulate prosperity, the certainty of progress, the perfection of the United States. These are not to be questioned. (p. 338)

Additionally, readers and textbooks deliberately promoted assimilation and national unity, as evidenced by the introduction that Jacksonian-Democrat George Bancroft wrote for his ten-volume *History of the United States* in 1834: “An immense concourse of emigrants of the most various lineage is perpetually crowding to our shores; and the principles of liberty, uniting all interests by the operation of equal laws, blend the discordant elements into harmonious union” (as cited in Butts, 1980, p. 58). In promoting unity in an increasingly diverse and pluralistic society, textbooks consistently extolled liberty as the most preeminent of political values.

The political values inculcated by the common school era civic education program did not substantially differ from those celebrated during the first 50 years of the Republic. To the values of liberty, equality, patriotism, and Protestant morality were added personal industry, honesty, integrity, the rewards of property, and obedience to legitimate authority (Butts, 1978; Butts, 1980, Rury, 2002). Diversity and individualism, as in years prior, was neither celebrated nor tolerated. Nonetheless, people in different classes with different political perspectives and educational philosophies agreed on a list of purposes for common schooling, not the least of which was citizenship training to protect republican government and to achieve *Unum* amidst an increasingly pluralistic population (Kaestle, 1983). Education and civic education were one in the same, but not for much longer.

## **Crafting the Social Studies through Committees: Civic Education in the Progressive Era**

In many ways, the social challenges of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were merely exacerbated forms of those of the middle decades of the nineteenth century: large-scale industrialization and urbanization; massive immigration from both Western Europe and poorer areas in Southern and Eastern Europe; widening inequality in the nation's major industrial areas; the growing prospect of class warfare; and political turbulence (Rury, 2002). To this, the post-Civil War era also added the growth of corporate business, the rise of "robber barons," odious tenement conditions, and increased corruption among political bosses (Bohan, 2004). From such alarming trends grew the Progressive Movement, a democratic and widespread (although hardly uniform) response to correct the growing evils of modern American society.

Reforms related to the Progressive Movement reached most aspects of American social life. Public education was no exception. Unfortunately, according to Lawrence Cremin (1962) a capsule definition of progressive education does not exist, for "progressive education meant different things to different people, and these differences were only compounded by the remarkable diversity of American education" (p. viii). Generally speaking, the origins of progressive education were "part of a larger humanitarian movement" that sought, like most reform movements, "social stability and social uplift" (Reese, 2001, p. 3). A new way of thinking about the nature of children, teaching methods, and the purposes of school had taken hold of educational discourse, and progressive education, with its emphasis on child-centered pedagogy and curricular experimentation, became part of a larger assault on traditional practices (Reese, 2005). The impact was remarkable: today, the high school social studies curriculum hardly



differs from that recommended by progressive era educators who served on national committees to propose instructional changes (Bohan, 2004).

The schools of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had to deal with a different kind of population from that of the schools of the first hundred years of the Republic. This population, which was far larger than that of previous generations, was increasingly diverse and not very likely to advance to higher education. As the editor of the *Wisconsin Journal of Education* illuminated in 1902, only 5% of students went to college, but the needs of the remaining 95% were being ignored (Reese, 2005). Moreover, the number of students actually attending school was rising precipitously. The period between 1890 and 1930 saw a massive effort to get youth into school, and with the help of compulsory education laws, more than 85% of those required to go to school went (Butts, 1978; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). What these students actually learned once they got to school was another issue entirely.

Butts (1978) argues that toward the end of the nineteenth century, both the purposes of education and the curriculum had become scattered and fragmented, leading many to call for order, uniformity, and consistency. Fortunately, the civic mission of schools was not forgotten as progressive educators formed a series of committees that were intended to improve the quality of schooling, increase access to it, provide a more uniform experience for those who attended, and standardize preparation for higher education (Bohan, 2004; Evans, 2004; Krug, 1964; Saxe, 1991; Sizer, 1964; Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

The first committee, representing the first national effort to suggest a high school curriculum, was the Committee of Ten. Created by the National Education Association

(NEA) in 1892, it was charged with reporting on the status of secondary education and recommending standards in the various school subjects. It promptly formed a special subcommittee on History, Civil Government, and Political Economy (known as the Madison Conference) that developed its own set of recommendations for the teaching of social science subjects in high schools. In the end, the Madison Conference recommended an eight-year sequence that included American history; Greek and Roman history; French and English history; and an intensive study of a special period of history along with the study of civil government in grade twelve (NEA, 1894). As Butts (1978) and Saxe (1991) contend, this strengthened the study of history and reduced the emphasis on civics. The Madison Conference would have contended that historical studies are particularly well suited to develop good citizens (Bohan, 2004).

A positive effect on all subjects, not the least of which included civics, was a shift in pedagogical thinking that emerged from the Committee of Ten's work (Saxe, 1991). Its report stated that teachers should use new teaching methods that engaged students rather than employ the traditional methods of rote memorization. It called for minimal use of lectures; wise use of multiple textbooks; recitation as a supplement to the reading; comment through "open textbook recitations"; encouragement of discussion and debate; and parallel readings in historical literature, poems, historical novels, and biographies. It also called for a wide range of writing exercises, frequently employing primary sources (NEA, 1894, pp. 181-197). Another positive effect was the Committee's recommendation that social science be extended into the elementary grades.

At the request of the NEA, the American Historical Association (AHA) appointed the Committee of Seven in 1896. This new Committee was asked to consider the

subject of history in the secondary schools and draw up a scheme of college entrance requirements in the same subject. The Committee operated from the assumption that learning history serves as preparation for civic competence – that by bringing “boys and girls to some knowledge of their environment,” the study of history fits them “to become intelligent citizens” (AHA, 1899, p. 20), which the Committee conceived as functioning members of society who are aware of their own civil responsibilities (Saxe, 1991). The members discussed the proposition that civic government be taught as a separate subject, but abandoned the idea in favor of a resolution that civil government be taught in conjunction with American history. Additionally, and similar to the final report of the Committee of Ten, the Committee of Seven’s report had much to say about instructional methods. Once again rote memorization of meaningless facts was eschewed in favor of promoting historical thinking through readings, written work, oral reports, map making and reading, notebook preparation, and the use of primary source material (p. 101).

In her essay *Early Vanguard of Progressive Education*, Chara Bohan (2004) argues that the reports of both the Committee of Ten and the Committee of Seven shed light on the early progressive spirit. Both committees recommended that social education curricula be extended to the elementary schools. Further, the Committee of Ten explicitly stated that females and children of foreigners, two groups with no political power, should receive the same benefits as the males destined to exercise legal rights. “Such recommendations,” Bohan states, “reveal egalitarian, if not also paternalistic, ideas of citizenship that had broadened to redefine citizenship in nonpolitical terms” (p. 14). Rather than maintaining the status quo, the committees suggested moderate progressive reform that included the following: increased support for universal public

education, expanded notions of citizenship, extension of subject matter to younger children, curriculum reform, and an acknowledgement that the purpose of high school was not merely preparation for college, but also preparation for life. Profoundly, the academic orientation of these two committees dominated curriculum making for secondary civic education programs for almost three decades (Butts, 1978).

The early 1900s witnessed a progressive upsurge of interest in the study of civil government as new ideas about civic education began to appear in political science, economics, and sociology. In 1916, a committee of the American Political Science Association argued for the restructuring of the standard civics curriculum: rather than beginning with the Constitution and a description of the formal structure of government and then proceeding to a similar study at the state level, the sequence should be reversed (Krug, 1964). Assuming that political affairs nearest to home were the most important and should be considered first, the committee endorsed the study of “community civics” (Butts, 1980). In the long run, however, the most influential force over civic education was the rising movement to make it the special province of the “social studies,” which accompanied the 1918 report of the Social Studies Committee of the NEA Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education (Evans, 2004).

In their final report, *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education*, the Social Studies Committee explicitly stated that citizenship was the social responsibility of the secondary school. It used the term “social studies” to include history, civics, government, and concepts from sociology and economics, and it declared the aim of the social studies to be the cultivation of good citizenship, which began to carry a broader definition (Krug, 1964). The Committee characterized the “good citizen” as neighborly

and loyal to one's city, state, and nation, which effectively added socialization and social efficiency as goals of the civics programs (Saxe, 1991). History still held a major place in secondary school course proposals, but it was expected to "answer the test of good citizenship" and infuse a problems approach throughout the entire program (NEA, 1918, p. 17). Most importantly, civics was proposed for the junior high school grades in a course entitled "Community Civics" and for grade twelve in a course aptly named "Problems of Democracy." The former "completely ignored formal politics and government in favor of themes of cooperation and community" (Reuben, 1997, p. 399). The latter focused on "actual problems, or issues, or conditions as they occur in life," rather than the direct inculcation of appropriate citizen behavior (p. 53). Both courses were radical when compared to the traditional history program created by the AHA two decades earlier (Evans, 2004).

The *Cardinal Principles* report was effective in making citizenship one of the cardinal goals of education, especially for the social studies. However, while it tended to reduce emphasis upon abstract civics material in favor of live problems, it also tended to reduce political concerns by withdrawing from "constitutional questions" in the pursuit of good citizenship (Butts, 1980). As the report stated, "Civics should concern itself less with constitutional questions and remote governmental functions and should direct attention to social agencies close at hand and to informal activity of daily life that regard and seek the common good" (NEA, 1918, p. 14). Additionally, the skills of civic participation were finally addressed in secondary classrooms as social studies teachers were attracted to progressive education's new stress on projects, units, and activities that promoted the skills and dispositions of membership in a democracy.

In addition to the withdrawal of constitutional questions, the new civics curricula redefined what it meant to be a citizen. Over a half a century earlier, the 1857 manual, *The American Citizen*, described the citizen as “a partner in the Republic,” who had the right “to express his honest convictions, in word or writing, concerning every candidate for office, and every political measure contemplated or adopted by those who are in possession of the legislative or executive function” (as cited in Reuben, 1997, p. 399). This definition carried an assumption of political activism, a privilege that was not afforded to many during the nineteenth century, as a tenet of citizenship. The 1915 Community Civics curriculum defined the good citizen “as a person who habitually conducts himself with proper regard for the welfare of the communities of which he is a member, and who is active and intelligent in his cooperation with his fellow members to that end” (as cited in Reuben, p. 399). The departure from the individual to the member of a community was clear, as was the new emphasis on the common good.

Collectively, the work of these committees helped to lay the foundation for educational curriculum in general, and the teaching of social studies in particular, that exists in most American schools today (Bohan, 2004). To be sure, at the time when their recommendations were offered, schools were engulfed with vast numbers of foreign immigrants; oftentimes, teaching English and the rudimentary structure of government was all that teachers could manage (Butts, 1980). Nevertheless, the vision of social studies as an integrated, issues-centered field of study was born, and civic education took its rightful and prominent place amongst the several subjects comprising it. In many ways, the civics and government courses that high school seniors in Florida

take today are not so different from those in which 18-year-olds enrolled in the early decades of the twentieth century.

### **Reforming the Curriculum: Civic Education in Postwar America**

The period extending from the end of World War I to Watergate – the 1920s to the 1970s, roughly speaking – witnessed three combat wars, a cold war, a depression, labor unrest, an emerging youth culture, a presidential assassination, and a civil rights movement. Known as the postwar era, it marked a time of extensive transformation in all aspects of American life including morals, dress, technology, racial and ethnic diversity, women’s roles, and forms of government. A sense of social instability was propagated by increasing industrialization and urbanization; a growing number of lynchings; a legislated quota system to restrict immigration; the emerging success of communism in the Soviet Union; a domestic red scare; and fear that the self-regulatory mechanism of the market had been shattered by the excesses of monopoly capitalism (Makler, 2004).

According to Rury (2002) the most striking feature of the postwar period was the growing importance attached to formal education. After World War II, schools were increasingly viewed as a primary factor in national economic growth, which was especially significant on the heels of a global economic depression. At the same time, the reach of the federal government over public education extended, as the executive and legislative branches became major sources of policy initiatives and funding. More and more, public schools were expected to address questions of economic and social inequality, all the while dealing with profound ideological shifts and major economic and demographic changes. To be sure, these trends impacted civic education programs. However, as Butts (1980) advises, “the outpouring of proposals and projects for more

effective civic education programs . . . would take volumes to relate” (p. 67). For his part, he summarizes the range of political outlooks that seemed to motivate the major approaches to civic education. Chronologically, I will do the same, while connecting those diverse outlooks to the reality of civic education in America’s public schools.

Anti-foreign, anti-pacifist, anti-immigration, and anti-reform outlooks dominated the civic education programs of the 1920s. Nativist organizations, as well as the recent memories of World War I and the first Red Scare, ensured that public schools would “rally ‘round the flag, extol the merits and successes, and say nothing derogatory about the greatest country on earth” (Butts, 1980, p. 68). Even ethnic groups, as Jonathan Zimmerman (2002) illuminates, “joined hands with Anglo-Saxons to block more critical, complicated readings of America’s origins” (pp. 14-15). By 1923, a majority of states had laws requiring the teaching of the Constitution and mandates that all teachers pass a test on the Constitution in order to be certified (Makler, 2004; Tyack, 2003). In the decade following the great war, the focus was on the *Unum* and civic education typically meant reading about the structure and function of government, reciting the Pledge of Allegiance daily, and learning about “the American republic as the form of government most favored by God, and the Westward march of the flag as a victory for God and the free market over heathen peoples” (Makler, p. 27).

In stark contrast, the civic education programs of the 1930s were dominated by a social reformist outlook in the wake of the Great Depression, the New Deal, and the dawn of totalitarianism in the world. In 1932, University of Chicago professor George S. Counts stunned the Progressive Education Association in a speech challenging teachers to lead the charge for a more democratic economic, social, and political



system through outright indoctrination of students (Butts, 1978; Makler, 2004; Perlstein, 2000). Rejecting Horace Mann's vision of civic education, Counts declared:

In their own lives teachers must bridge the gap between school and society and play some part in the fashioning of those great common purposes which bind the two together. . . . This does not mean that we should endeavor to promote particular reforms through the educational system. We should, however, give to our children a vision of the possibilities which lie ahead and endeavor to enlist their loyalties and enthusiasms in the realization of the vision. (In Butts, 1978, p. 385)

In other words, teachers committed to the protection and expansion of democracy should indoctrinate shared democratic commitments.

Counts' reasoning appealed to many progressive educators – including the preeminent social studies textbook writer Harold Rugg – who were unwilling to support indoctrination, but in agreement that teachers should help students understand and accept their responsibility to restructure society. They therefore worked to redefine civic education to focus on critical analysis and discussion of America's social and economic problems rather than the laudatory idealized version of the Founding Fathers and their design of the Constitution (Makler, 2004). This vision of civic education was embodied by Rugg's best-selling, 14-volume series of social studies textbooks, *Man and His Changing Environment*, which called for discussions of controversial ideas that would, in Rugg's estimation, produce a society of informed citizens able to provide guidance to their elected representatives (Zimmerman, 2002).

The philosophies of Counts and Rugg permeated the social studies establishment. The Commission of Social Studies of the AHA, funded by the Carnegie Foundation, issued their *Conclusions and Recommendations of the Commission* in 1934. It recognized the end of individualism and laissez-faire economics and the beginning of collectivism, social planning, and government regulation. The report concluded: “[i]f we

can show inventive ability in social and industrial arrangements equal to that developed in technological advancement, we can realize the promise of American life more fully than even the prophets have dared to dream” (AHA, 1934, p. xvii). While such pronouncements brought renewed attention to civic education, the views of Counts and the AHA, as well as Rugg’s texts, would soon lose favor as the United States geared up for war, and Americans “rejected any suggestion that poverty might prevent them from sharing in the nation’s birthright of freedom” (Zimmerman, 2002, p. 10).

America’s entry into World War II in December of 1941 signaled a full return to the *Unum* in civic education. Schools were mobilized for the war effort and served to reassert the values of patriotism as the basis for national unity (Butts, 1980). As Evans (2004) states, “The climate changed, from one of questioning American political, social, and economic institutions and focusing on the problems of American society, to one of emphasizing what’s right about our institutions” (p. 70). The group most directly responsible for social studies teaching during the war was the Commission on Wartime Policy of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS). Its report, *The Social Studies Mobilize for Victory*, described the need to prepare citizens who would willingly face the danger of combat: “Total war requires an informed and thoughtful population, aware of the task to be done, determined to preserve a democracy which it understands, and convinced of the responsibility of each citizen in the drive for lasting victory” (1943, p. 3). With that, the social reconstructionist views and problem-centered curricula of the 1930s were supplanted by an efficiency-oriented citizenship education model designed to foster faith in democracy and assist in the war effort (Evans).

In response to the Cold War, the primary objective of 1950s civic education was to support the basic principles of political democracy and the basic economic values of the free enterprise system (Butts, 1980). Concomitantly, the conception of citizenship expanded from the narrow view of a legal relationship with government to a broader concept that included many types of social and personal relationships. “Life-Adjustment” education, as it was called, stressed the problems of democratic living, involving the behavior and psychology of adolescents, their personal problems, marriage and family problems, vocational interests, and personal values. As the *Detroit Citizenship Education Study* declared, “The missing ingredient of citizenship education programs is a course of action capable of bringing about the satisfactory emotional adjustment of all children” (as cited in Dimond, 1953, p. 41). It continued by discounting additional instruction in American history and government if such instruction failed to account for the students’ adjustment to themselves and to their society. Needless to say, this approach to civic education either watered down or neglected altogether the basic political questions of power, influence, and decision-making (Butts, 1978).

Not all of the civic education proposals or projects of the 1950s subscribed to this overly broad conception of citizenship. In 1951, the NCSS listed 24 characteristics of good citizenship, the first 13 of which included the values of equality, liberty, basic human rights, law, and other political dispositions. Likewise, the Citizenship Education Program at Teachers College, Columbia University recognized the responsibility of citizenship in the arena of public affairs; stressed the values of the free individual, free government, and free world; emphasized the skills of political participation; and detailed how teachers and students could engage in action-oriented problem solving in their

schools and communities (Vincent, Bartlett, Tibbetts, & Russell, 1958). Had its suggestions gone mainstream, students would have been engaging in what educators today consider best practice: studying local congressional districts to see if they provide fair representation of minority groups, making a tax map of the community to determine if tax assessments are equitable, joining political clubs, registering voters, learning how candidates stand on issues, campaigning for candidates, drafting a school constitution, *et cetera* (Butts, 1980).

Despite the best efforts of groups such as the NCSS and researchers like those at Teachers College, major social forces would soon dictate the course of public education in the United States, leading to a large-scale de-emphasis of civic education. Concerns about the inadequacy of schools to meet the challenges of the postwar world were widespread. Few new schools had been built since 1941, teachers deserted classrooms for higher paying jobs in a burgeoning postwar economy, and books such as Bernard Bells' *Crisis in Education* and Arthur Bestor's *Educational Wastelands* accused schools of failing to develop children into critical thinkers. All of this coincided with rising public concern about national security and America's technological vulnerability (Dow, 1991).

On October 4, 1957, the Soviet Union launched the satellite *Sputnik* into orbit, effectively shaking America's confidence and precipitating a major school reform movement. As is often the case during times of national crisis, real or perceived, legislators on both sides of the aisle abandoned their scruples, this time joining forces to pass the nation's first comprehensive education bill (Dow, 1991). Less than a year later, President Dwight Eisenhower signed the *National Defense of Education Act* (NDEA) into law, authorizing unprecedented federal expenditures of more than a billion dollars

for improving mathematics, science, and foreign language instruction, in addition to other reforms. For the first time, public education, which had always been the purview of state and local government, became a major federal policy area, and instruction in math and science became a top priority for the nation's public schools (Rury, 2002; Kaestle, 2007).

Notably, the NDEA of 1958, as well as its reauthorization in 1961, did not include funds for the social studies. However, considering the national crisis and perceived threat of Soviet domination, it would be unfair to say that civic education went unnoticed. Critics of social studies, such as author E. Merrill Root, argued that the United States was losing the Cold War because of what was said or left unsaid in high school American history textbooks, which Root portrayed as critical of free enterprise, belittling toward authentic patriotism, and preachy about class warfare (Evans, 2004). At the same time, proponents expressed the Cold War connection to the importance of civic education. As Professor Frederick Gruber (1960) stated in a collection of essays on public schooling: "The perpetuation of and improvement of democracy depends upon the active, intelligent participation of all citizens" (p. 13). Interestingly, as Evans notes, while the rhetoric of education underwent profound changes during the Cold War era, teaching practices did not. The social studies curriculum continued to comprise an uncritical and uncontroversial study of history and government, and teaching practices continued to neglect the problems approach that was promoted by academicians. This reality gave rise to the "new social studies" of the 1960s.

In response to the "new science" and "new math" that were funded by NDEA, the new social studies took on the patterns of social science disciplines: cognitive analysis,

systematic acquisition of organized knowledge, conceptual analysis, inquiry learning, discovery method, and an emphasis upon thinking like a social scientist (Butts, 1980). The aim was to transform students into junior historians and social scientists. However, Butts (1980) laments, the disciplinary approach tended to belittle social studies programs in schools and downgrade explicit citizenship education as a curricular goal. Indeed, as he observed in *Social Education's* 1972 review of 26 major curriculum centers, only seven or eight seemed to place special stress upon citizenship objectives.

Despite historical events, reform movements, and the millions of dollars devoted to curricular changes, the field of social studies changed very little during the postwar period. American history remained the most common course, followed by world history and government. In fact, the general outline of the 1916 pattern for secondary social studies instruction remained impressively intact. Moreover, teacher-centered instruction continued to dominate social studies coursework (Evans, 2004). Civic education certainly grew more attuned to the claims for equality and struggles for civil rights, and civics curricula tried to avoid unrealistic and romanticized images of political life (Butts, 1978). Still, public education in America continued to comprise “a virulent socialization process with little or no countersocialization” and perpetuate “community desires for conformity and social control” (Evans, 2004 p. 145) through a very traditional pattern of content and instruction. Despite America’s undeniable pluralism as well as some degree of social progress, particularly in the realm of citizenship rights, *Unum* continued to be the primary goal of public education.

## **Marginalizing the Social Sciences: Civic Education during an Era of Accountability**

As America marched in to the 1970s, the seemingly unending Vietnam War, student unrest on college campuses, and a constitutional crisis surrounding the Watergate scandal affected civil society and civic education in two profound ways. First, there was a marked increase in political cynicism and a significant decline in political efficacy and knowledge. Second, there was renewed concern for deliberate citizenship education in the public schools that could help America to realize the promise of republican government (Butts, 1978). However, a short decade later, a conservative restoration in politics, American culture, and schools ushered in a perceived national crisis in education and an era of accountability that would profoundly transform the purposes and priorities of public education for rest of the twentieth century and beyond.

The effect that political events of the 1960s and 1970s had on civil society and civic values cannot be overstated. The experience of the civil rights struggles and the antiwar movement contributed to a rising level of skepticism about political institutions and their values (Rury, 2002). While the bombing in Cambodia, the shootings at Kent State, the Pentagon Papers, and Watergate were primarily legal and constitutional issues, they were also moral ones that many believed reflected an erosion of civic values (Guttek, 2000). From 1960 to 1976, the percentage of voter turnout dropped steadily and it was conservatively estimated that two-thirds of those between the ages of 18 and 21 (a cohort that had achieved suffrage through the 26th Amendment only five years earlier) did not vote. Surveys showed that high school and college students felt little obligation to participate in the political system and the National Assessment of

Educational Progress (NAEP) concluded that “young Americans lack knowledge of the fundamentals of politics and civil rights” (as cited in Butts, 1978, p. 388).

The Committee on Pre-Collegiate Education of the American Political Science Association (1971) summarized the failure of most civic education programs:

[They] transmit a naïve, unrealistic, and romanticized image of political life which confuses the ideals of democracy with the realities of politics. . . . The majority of civics and government curriculum materials currently in use at all grade levels either completely ignore or inadequately treat not only such traditionally important political science concepts as freedom, sovereignty, consensus, authority, class, compromise, and power but also newer concepts such as role, socialization, culture, system, decision making, etc. (p. 27)

Instead, programs contained dry portrayals of the formal structure of American federal government, charts on how a bill becomes a law, and idealized portraits of political heroes that failed to stimulate student interest (Quigley, 1999). Amid widespread political upheaval, a consensus formed around the decline in civic knowledge, values, and participation, and the shortcomings of civic education.

In response, the American Educational Studies Association and other educational and civic organizations called for a revival of civic education in the schools (Guttek, 2000). The mid- to late-1970s witnessed an upsurge of efforts to focus the civic instruction of schools upon problems of civil rights of ethnic minorities, women, and youth; the basic concepts of law and justice; the Constitution and the Bill of Rights; and the moral and civil values cherished in a democratic political community (Butts, 1978). Even President Gerald Ford took up the mantle of civic education, stating in 1976, “We cannot perpetuate our value system merely by telling our children it is good. We can only assure its future by educating our children to admire its strengths, correct its faults, and participate effectively as citizens” (as cited in Guttek, 2000, p. 254). This renewal of



interest in civic education was embodied by two trends: law-related education and education for moral development. The former covered basic concepts related to civism and pluralism. The latter represented an emphasis on civic morality that transcended political knowledge (Butts, 1978).

These trends were short lived as a larger political and social movement in the 1980s quickly usurped any chances for a true and lasting civics revival. The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 signaled the victory of neo-conservatism and the end of liberalism in American politics and ultimately American education (Guttek, 2000; Braungart & Braungart, 1998). The most defining characteristic of the new political milieu was the degree to which it was anti-big-government. However, mainstream public opinion remained sympathetic to educational expenditures and conventional wisdom held that schooling was a vital national interest (Rury, 2002). These sentiments, along with the watershed publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, ensured that the federal government would continue to play a leading role in formulating educational policy and that standardization and accountability would drive almost all future reform measures (Evans, 2004; Kaestle, 1983).

The thesis of *A Nation at Risk* was that public education was at fault for the nation's decline in international economic competition. Dramatically, the report pointed to "a rising tide of mediocrity in our schools which threatens our very future as a nation and a people" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 1). Generally speaking, the report and several subsequent reports that shared its central thesis focused public attention on a perceived crisis in education (Kaestle, 1983). Moreover, the reports effectively shifted the goals of public education away from citizenship

training and toward social efficiency and social mobility purposes (Labaree, 2007). As Evans (2004) illustrates, one typical report called for a broadened definition of education to meet the demand for “highly skilled human capital” in the “new era of global competition” (p. 152). Public schools, therefore, were regarded as instruments for training the human capital needed to remain competitive in a global market rather than as institutions for training the future citizenry needed to sustain the Republic. As education critic Richard Remy described, there was “a deep malaise in citizenship education” in the late 1980s and early 1990s (as cited in Braungart & Braungart, 1998, p. 99).

A decade later, President Bill Clinton pushed his *Goals 2000* bill through Congress. With a lack of funding, the legislation’s effect was more symbolic than transformative. For civic education, the third goal of the legislation stipulated that by the year 2000 all students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, which included civics and government (Center for Civic Education, 1995). In response, the Center for Civic Education, with support from the federal Department of Education, published *National Standards for Civics and Government* in 1995. The standards, which are still in circulation today, are organized around five major questions aimed to help students inquire into several important concepts related to American civic life, political institutions, and the role of the citizen (Evans, 2004). Despite the new standards, American students continued to perform poorly on tests of civic knowledge, claim that there is little they can do to make a difference politically, and report that secondary civics courses are dry and dull (Braungart & Braugart, 1998; Niemi & Junn, 1998).

Another decade later, President George W. Bush surprised many of his conservative supporters by promoting even stronger federal oversight of the standards and accountability movement (Kaestle, 2007). The *No Child Left Behind* Act (NCLB) was signed into law in 2002, requiring states to expand their reading and mathematics standards to reflect grade-level expectations; to implement aligned annual assessments in third through eighth grades and at least once in high school; to administer annual science tests; and to make “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) toward the goal of having all students perform at or above the proficient level on reading and mathematics assessments (Clarke, 2007). NCLB does not require the testing of social studies at any grade level, nor does social studies fall under federal guidelines for AYP. As discussed in Chapter 1, such measures have severely diminished social studies instruction, especially at the elementary level.

The extent to which the standards and accountability movement of the past three decades has quantitatively affected civics instruction is tremendous. Most states require some form of study of civics or American government, but less than half require that there be a separate course. Most simply mandate that the material be covered in some way during grades nine through twelve (Niemi & Junn, 1998). As Paquette and Kaufman (2008) illuminate, the segment of the school day in which young Americans traditionally learned about civic responsibility and politics (among other social studies topics) has never been as threatened. It was always bad enough that teachers had to suspend their social studies lessons for field trips, assemblies, rehearsals, and other supplemental activities. Since the onset of the standards and accountability movement, all or part of the time usually allocated for social studies instruction has been used to

provide additional preparation time for state assessments. Indeed, Kahne and Middaugh (2010) cite a 2006 study by the Center on Education Policy, which found that 71% of districts report cutting back time on other subjects, most often social studies, to make room for reading and math instruction.

The qualitative effects are more difficult to gauge. Evans (2004) sums up the impact of the standards and accountability movement this way:

Through its imposition of a technology of testing, [it] may freeze out the possibility of alternative approaches to social studies aimed at creating a thoughtful citizenry, in favor of a more narrowly conceived history and social science curriculum. The entire standards endeavor is predicated on the misguided notion of schooling as a lever for improving the position of the United States in international economic competition. (p. 173).

This notion runs antithetical to the civic mission of America's public schools and undeniably weakens their civic education programs. The task of preparing students for their roles as citizens and their responsibility to secure the republic is relegated to a subordinate position behind the primary task of molding good workers for the American economy, as evidenced by the current discourse on education, as well as allocation of instructional time. This is a mistake. As this chapter has shown, civic education was both the means and the end for America's earliest attempts at universal education and remains its best hope for maintaining its democratic heritage. As Stephen Thornton (2004) pithily reminds us, "We ignore it at our peril" (p. 211).

### **Staging a Comeback: The Current State of Civic Education**

Amidst widespread standardization and accountability measures that seemed to sound the death knell for civic education, Donovan Walling declared in a 2007 *Phi Delta Kappan* article, "But civic education is making a comeback" (p. 285). Indeed, thanks in large part to the programming and advocacy work of many civically-oriented

organizations, a few of which will be highlighted below, an impressive number of American youth have recently engaged in high-quality civic learning experiences, and many states have enhanced curricular requirements in civics and American government. To be sure, the social studies, including civics, continues to hold its second-class status behind reading, mathematics, and science, but there is hope.

One organization working to promote civic education is the National Center for Learning and Citizenship (NCLC), whose mission is “to assist state and district leaders to promote, support and reward citizenship education as an essential component of America’s education system” (Lennon, 2006, p. 1). Since 2003, NCLC has conducted a 50-state civic education policy scan that identifies and analyzes existing policies that encourage, support, and reward citizenship education. The June 2006 scan revealed that, compared to the initial 2003 scan, citizenship education made improvements, especially in the area of course and teaching requirements. For example, Michigan now requires three credits in civics as a graduation requirement, and Missouri requires at least two civics courses for graduation. Additionally, The Education Commission of the States (ECS) provides an online summary of high school graduation civics requirements and the inclusion of civics within state assessment and accountability systems. The most recent data show that civics continues to make improvements in all areas, although much work remains (Education Commission of the States, 2010).

In 2002, the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) and the Carnegie Corporation of New York held a series of meetings that brought together some of the nation’s leading civic education scholars and practitioners to determine the state of young people’s civic learning and

engagement and offer recommendations to that effect. Their work is summarized in the 2003 report entitled *The Civic Mission of Schools*, which has already been referenced in this chapter. Notably, the report acknowledges the importance of and theretofore decline in school-based civic education, provides goals for school-based civics, and enumerates the types of civic learning experiences that can help develop competent and responsible citizens. The report is clear in its dismissal of stereotypical civics classes, with their focus on “the minutiae of federal legislation procedures or election law” (p. 121), and urges schools to offer civic learning experiences that encourage and increase young people’s civic engagement. Specifically, the report lists “Six Promising Approaches to Civic Education”:

1. Provide instruction in government, history, law, and democracy.
2. Incorporate discussion of current, local, national, and international issues and events in the classroom, particularly those that young people view as important to their lives.
3. Design and implement programs that provide students with the opportunity to apply what they learn through performing community service that is linked to the formal curriculum and classroom instruction.
4. Offer extracurricular activities that provide opportunities for young people to get involved in their schools or communities.
5. Encourage student participation in school governance.
6. Encourage students’ participation in simulations of democratic processes and procedures. (p. 6)

While ECS data show that all states meet the first approach, albeit oftentimes minimally, it is difficult to determine the pervasiveness of the remaining five. Fortunately, there are many groups that provide high-quality civic learning experiences for students that meet the first, second, and sixth promising approach.

In addition to the NCLC, Carnegie Corporation, and CIRCLE, many organizations are working to promote the first promising approach. They include, but are not limited to, the American Constitution Society for Law and Policy, CIVNET, the National Alliance for Civic Education, and the National Conference on Citizenship. In addition, the Bill of Rights Institute, Close Up Foundation, the Constitutional Rights Foundation, the Center for the Constitution, and the First Amendment Center provide curricular materials and teacher training opportunities in efforts to enhance instruction and encourage discussion of current issues and events in the classroom. Lastly, the Center for Civic Education the Center on Congress, and iCivics provide opportunities for students to participate in simulations of democratic processes and procedures.

It is far too early to celebrate the return of civic education as a prominent and valued subject area in America's public schools. As the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) reported in January of 2012, half of the states no longer require civics for high school graduation. Moreover, it would be naïve to assume that the civics instruction most students receive meets the promising approaches outlined by the *Civic Mission of Schools* report and provided by some of the organizations highlighted above. In far too many schools, the usual one-semester, high school civics course is taught through a teacher-dominated lecture format (Torney-Purta & Amadeo, 2004). Worse, opportunities to develop civic skills in high school through community service, school government, or service clubs are available disproportionately to wealthier students (AACU). Nonetheless, the past five years have witnessed a renewed attention to civic education, both as an important part of the curriculum and a fundamental purpose for public education.

## Concluding Remarks

In a 1997 article for the *American Educational Research Journal*, Stanford University Professor of Education David Labaree (2007) argued that the central problems with American education are neither pedagogical nor organizational, neither social nor cultural. Rather, the central problems with education in America are inherently *political* and fundamentally related to the goals that schools should pursue. In his view, the history of American education is “a tale of ambivalent goals and muddled outcomes” (p. 90). However, the many and oftentimes contradictory purposes of American schooling have translated into three distinguishable goals – *democratic equality*, *social efficiency*, and *social mobility* – each of which has exerted considerable impact without succeeding in fully supplanting the others. According to Labaree, these goals differ across several dimensions, including the extent to which they understand education as preparation for political or market roles.

As the first half of this chapter has illustrated, from the Founding Era through the Common School Movement, the fundamental purpose of education in America was democratic equality. That is, the purpose of education was to promote both effective citizenship and relative equality for the preservation of the Republic. Later in the nineteenth century, social efficiency and social mobility were elevated to the fore as educational leaders grew concerned about how to deal with an increasingly large and pluralistic group of students and how to prepare them for a hierarchical workforce. During this time period, issues of democratic equality were visible but muted. By the 1960s and 1970s, democratic equality quickly regained prominence as schools struggled to embrace *Pluribus* and provide equal opportunity across lines of class, gender, race, and handicapping condition. However, it quickly lost favor in the 1980s



and 1990s when the movement for standardization and accountability reflected social efficiency and social mobility goals.

Today, the battles over education continue to rage across the three goals, but democratic equality appears to be losing the war to social efficiency and social mobility. To be fair, the argument that education has transcendent importance in the development of effective democratic citizens continues unabated in contemporary American politics (Niemi & Junn, 1998). However, this appears to be little more than lip service, especially since civic education is rarely taken as seriously as education for workplace preparation. Indeed, even the President of the United States, in his calls for educational reform, neglects democratic equality in favor of social efficiency. In his January 24, 2011 State of the Union address, President Obama championed enhanced mathematics and science instruction: “Over the next 10 years, nearly half of all new jobs will require education that goes beyond a high school education.” Later in his speech, he called for greater investments in innovation, education, and infrastructure to “make America a better place to do business and create jobs.” There was no mention of civic education, promoting citizenship, or preserving America’s democratic republic.

In Florida, the rhetoric of political leaders is equally disconcerting. In October of 2011, Republican Governor Rick Scott outlined his plans for reforming the state’s college and university system. His priorities included shifting funding to degrees that have the best job prospects (the so called “STEM” disciplines, which include science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), weeding out unproductive professors, and rethinking the system that offers faculty job security. For his first priority, shifting funding to degrees that have the best job prospects, Scott had this to say:

If I'm going to take money from a citizen to put into education then I'm going to take money to create jobs. So I want the money to go to a degree where people can get jobs in this state. Is it a vital interest of the state to have more anthropologists? I don't think so. (Anderson, 2011)

Again, the social efficiency goal is emphasized, seemingly at the deliberate cost of democratic equality. Regrettably, it is within this hostile environment that novice social studies teachers in Florida must begin their teaching careers and work to prepare the next generation of citizens for their roles in America's republic.

## CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODS

### **Introductory Remarks**

This chapter illustrates the study I designed and implemented in order to analyze and describe the sense-making processes through which novice social studies teachers construct their emerging civics teacher identities. Specifically, the study sought to address the following question:

How do novice social studies teachers make sense of their emerging identities as civics teachers?

In order to theoretically ground this research question and relate it to the methodology I chose for its exploration, this section provides general, but thorough discussions of qualitative research and constructivism. In order to illuminate the specific ways in which my study was enacted, I then describe the research settings in which my study was undertaken, as well as the process through which two novice social studies teachers were recruited and selected to participate in my study. From here, the chapter moves to a discussion of data collection and analysis, beginning with the theoretical and moving toward the actual as I delineate the processes through which I acquired what I believe to be meaningful data and then applied systematic qualitative analysis measures to make sense of them.

After this description of the study's methodology, I detail the ways in which my identity as an American white woman who is married, 28 years of age, and quite liberal affected my interpretation of the data, and the ways in which my experiences in the social studies, and more specifically, civic education, influenced my research decisions. The chapter ends with a discussion of validity and an explanation of the measures I took

to establish trustworthiness throughout the study, followed by some words of caution related to the study's methodology and context.

## **Research Perspectives**

### **Qualitative Research**

The research interests and questions embraced in my study are wholly consistent with the goals of qualitative research in that they subject-driven, interpretive, and naturalistic (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), qualitative research comprises “any kind of research that produces findings that are not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other forms of quantification” (p. 17). By eschewing the quantitative emphasis on measurement and analysis of causal relationships among variables, the qualitative researcher seeks to answer questions that stress “*how* social experience is created and given meaning” (emphasis in original, Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, pp. 16). Unlike the quantitative researcher “who is perfectly comfortable with aggregating large numbers of people without communicating with them face-to-face,” the qualitative researcher “studies a social setting to understand the meaning of participants’ lives in the participants’ own terms” (Janesick, 2000, p. 382). Therefore, the true power of qualitative research lies in its careful description and analysis of social phenomena in particular contexts, such as a classroom or a school (Erickson, 1986; Hatch, 2002; Heinecke and Drier, 1998). From this epistemological perspective, it is only appropriate that qualitative methodology drive my exploration of the ways in which novice social studies teachers make sense of their emerging identities as civics teachers.

At the outset of any study, qualitative or not, the researcher must formulate a clear issue or question (Cheek, 2000; Metz, 2001). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) suggest that he

or she be able to describe the intent of the project in one or two sentences. Of course, the researcher must also articulate specified research questions that will drive his or her study, and for this important and preliminary step, several scholars offer guidance (e.g., Creswell, 1998; Koro-Ljungberg & Hayes, 2010; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Hatch, 2002; Schutt, 1996). Much of this guidance comes in the form of listed criteria. For example, Schutt (1996) maintains that a good research question will be feasible within the time and resources available, socially important, and scientifically relevant. According to Creswell (1998), strong qualitative research questions are open-ended, evolving, and non-directional; restate the purpose of the study in more specific terms; start with words such as “what” or “how” rather than “why”; and are few in number.

While this advice serves as a good starting point for formulating qualitative research questions, I turned to Koro-Ljungberg and Hayes (2010) for more specific and theoretically grounded direction. In their 2010 article in the *Journal of Ethnographic & Qualitative Research*, they argue that “carefully developed research questions may support qualitative researchers by providing boundaries for their study designs” (p. 114). They then enumerate three boundaries – instrumentalization, study context and setting, and epistemology – that are associated with “well-crafted” research questions and can therefore appropriately frame a truly qualitative study (p. 118). Like Creswell, they indicate that good research questions are few in number and have a specific focus. More substantively, good research questions can be answered by using approaches, tools, and techniques commonly used within qualitative inquiry; illustrate study context or setting; situate the study into a body of literature; correspond with the stated epistemology or theoretical perspective; and are epistemologically consistent (p. 118).

With these considerations in mind, I crafted the central research question for my study: How do novice social studies teachers make sense of their emerging identities as civics teachers?

## **Constructivism**

In the preface of her book on Constructivism, Fostnot (1995) begins by writing, “Constructivism is a theory about knowledge and learning; it describes both what ‘knowing’ is and how one ‘comes to know’” (p. ix). In other words, constructivism is a theory about research and practice. Concomitantly, it guides the generation of knowledge through formal and informal research studies and informs the ways in which teachers approach instruction, and in turn, the ways in which students learn. In exploring the sense making of novice social studies teachers in regards to their emerging identities as civics teachers, a constructivist framework seemed ideally suited to elicit the personal narratives of participants. As a theoretical perspective, constructivism constitutes a radical break from the positivist tradition of empirical research, which claims to encode reality in terms of substances and phenomena that are independent of the observers involved (LaRochelle & Bednarz, 1998). Instead of trying to describe some reality or truth, constructivism describes individual human subjects engaging with objects in the world and making sense of them (Crotty, 1998). In this way, constructivism implies that knowledge is always knowledge that a person constructs.

From an epistemological standpoint, constructivism rests upon the assumption that learners construct knowledge as they attempt to make sense of their experiences in the everyday world. This stands in stark contrast to traditional teaching strategies and procedures, which assume that “what we ourselves perceive and infer from our

perceptions is there, readymade, for the students to pick up, if only they had the will to do so” (von Glasersfeld, 2005, p. 4). Again, the constructivist teacher, as well as the constructivist researcher, is there to remind us: knowledge does not exist outside a person’s mind. While constructivism is not a theory of teaching, it has powerful implications for how we approach instruction. A constructivist perspective holds that reality or understanding can only be created or constructed by each individual. Constructivism then affects the way in which we view learning and how learners are perceived.

Unfortunately, as Fleury (1998) posits, while constructivism holds great promise for empowering students to understand their social worlds, it is unlikely that such potential will be realized in American-style social studies, which continuously places historical understanding at the center of knowledge. Moreover, as Chapter 2 illustrated, the social studies, especially its civics components, represents a field of knowledge that is particularly important for maintaining the dominant culture and consecrating a one, legitimate national culture. There is little room for constructivism when these are the instructional goals. Therefore, it will not be until “the foundations of history are no longer presented as having emerged *ex nihilo*,” but instead, as “the mouthpieces of the persons who have produced them,” that constructivism will have a fighting chance (Fleury, 1998, p. 171). Fleury’s thesis represents an important consideration for qualitative studies in educational settings where civics instruction occurs. While the constructivist researcher seeks to uncover how civics teachers make sense of their identities, she must be aware of her subjects’ epistemological assumptions, especially since most civics teachers unknowingly embrace positivism.

While constructivism is often used interchangeably with constructionism, Crotty (1998) offers a helpful distinction that can be made between the two. He suggests that it would be useful to “reserve the term *constructivism* for epistemological considerations focusing exclusively on ‘the meaning-making activity of the individual mind and to use *constructionism* where the focus includes ‘the collective generation [and transmission] of meaning’” (p. 58). As such, constructivism refers to the unique experience of each of us, while constructionism refers to the hold that our culture has on us. As Richards (1995) articulates the difference, the constructivist “focuses on the individual act of construction on the learner” and the constructionist “focuses on the group conversation” (pp. 58-59). This distinction is particularly useful for the goals of my study as I investigated the experiences of a small sample of novice social studies teachers and explored their sense making surrounding *their* identities as civics teachers, rather than larger meanings and discourses related to teaching civics. In this way, my study was inherently constructivist.

### **Research Settings**

St. Johns County, Florida is located along the northeast coast of the state, just south of Jacksonville. As one of Florida’s original two counties, it was founded in 1821 when Spain ceded Florida to the United States. Named after St. John the Baptist, St. Johns County comprises a total area of 821 square miles and includes the nation’s oldest city, St. Augustine, as well as the incorporated towns of Hastings, Marineland, and St. Augustine Beach. St. Johns County is considered part of the greater Jacksonville metropolitan area and has experienced tremendous growth over the past decade, as many people who work in Jacksonville have chosen to buy or build their homes south of the county line and send their children to what they perceive to be



better schools in St. Johns County. They have good reason: a 2011 *Forbes.com* article ranked St. Johns County ninth in the nation for providing “the best schools for your real estate buck” (Fisher, 2011).

Between 2000 and 2009, the population of St. Johns County rose by 52.2% (United States Census Bureau, 2010a) and the number of students enrolled in grades pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade in the St. Johns County School District rose from 20,918 students in 2002 to 29,334 students in 2010, an increase of 40.2% (St. Johns County School District, 2011). The school district is the largest employer in the county, with 3,422 full-time employees (46% of which are teachers) and continues to build new schools and hire new teachers, including the two participants in my study, even as many other counties in the state are experiencing layoffs and furloughs as a result of a statewide economic and budget crisis. When compared to nearby and surrounding counties, St. Johns is anecdotally considered a desirable place for teachers to work due to its high-quality schools and competitive salary schedule.

The most recent census data (United States Census Bureau, 2010b) reveal a racially homogenous population in St. Johns County. Of its 187,436 residents, 89.9% are White, 6.5% are Black, and 4% report Hispanic origin. Germane to my study, 94% of St. Johns County residents are native to the United States, including 36% who were born in Florida. Among people at least five years old living in St. Johns County, only 8% speak a language other than English in the home. Ninety-two percent of people 25 years and over have at least graduated from high school and 38% hold a bachelor's degree or higher. The leading industries in St. Johns County are educational services, health care, and social assistance.

When compared to other counties in Florida, St. Johns County is considered wealthier and more conservative, a point which became quite relevant to my study throughout data collection and analysis. With the inclusion of Ponte Vedra Beach, home of famed The Players Championship Golf Club, St. Johns County is one of the highest-income counties in the state with a median household income of \$63,630 and a median home price of \$181,700 (Fisher, 2011). Still, 7% of all residents and 8% of children under 18 live below the poverty level. Of the 142,891 registered voters in St. Johns County, 53% are registered Republicans, 27% are registered Democrats, and 17% have no party affiliation. In the 2008 presidential election, over 65% of voters in St. Johns County voted for Republican candidate John McCain (St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections, 2011).

### **Selection of Participations**

In qualitative studies, researchers frequently work with small samples of participants who are studied intensely and in-depth (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For my selection of participants, I used a purposeful sampling approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). According to Patton (2002), “the purpose of purposeful sampling is to select information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study” (p. 46). Viewed as antithetical to random sampling in which participants are recruited to ensure that the characteristics of the subjects in the study are commensurate to those in the total population, purposeful sampling permits the researcher to choose particular subjects for whom the processes being studied are most likely to occur (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Riessman, 2008). Therefore, in order to explore how novice social studies teachers make sense of their emerging identities as civics teachers, I recruited two participants who

- are full-time public school teachers;
- have less than three years of classroom teaching experience;
- are currently teaching at the middle school level;
- are currently teaching a new, yearlong seventh grade civics course.

This purposeful sampling procedure produced a small, albeit meaningful sample of participants who were able to provide rich narratives on which I based my analysis. To be certain, such a small sample provides “poor representation of a population of cases” and “questionable grounds for advancing grand generalization” (Stake, 2000, p. 448). However, my prerogative was neither to represent a population nor to articulate generalizations. Rather, my purpose in undertaking my study was to represent, with great depth, my two participants’ personal and particularized sense making surrounding their emerging identities as civics teachers.

### **Description of Participants**

My first participant, Erin, is a 26-year-old White female. She was born and raised in St. Johns County, Florida and even attended the middle school at which she currently teaches seventh grade, Pre-Advanced Placement civics. She called herself a “true native” because even her parents, who still live in the same house in which she grew up, were born and raised in Florida. Upon graduation from high school, Erin attended a large, land grant university in north-central Florida where she received a bachelor’s degree in anthropology. She thought she was going to be “the next Indiana Jones” but after extended coursework and fieldwork, could not find her niche. Then, during an internship with the Student Conservation Association and the Forest Service, she realized that she enjoyed the teaching opportunities that the internship afforded her. Accordingly, she decided to pursue a master’s degree in social studies education so that she would be a certified teacher that would have “some idea about how to be a

teacher.” Erin describes herself as politically liberal but “living with someone,” her husband, who is “completely conservative” and holds opposite viewpoints from her on most issues.

My second participant, Matt, is a 24-year-old White male. He was born in New Jersey and, when he was ten, moved to Florida where he is proud to be “a product of public schools.” Matt attended the same large, land grant university in north-central Florida as Erin where he majored in American history and received a minor in geography and education. When asked about his political background, Matt presented “a political journey” that detailed his transformation from a “Young Republican” who identified with celebrated Republican presidents, such as Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt, Eisenhower, and Reagan, to a more moderately liberal adult that continues to use history, rather than politics, as his ideological compass.

### **Data Collection**

After forming a research question, choosing a site and a number of participants, and determining a reasonable period of time in which to undertake a study, the next step for the researcher is to identify a data collection strategy that is best suited to the study (Janesick, 2000). In any research project, data are the particulars that form the basis of analysis. In qualitative research, they are both the evidence and the clues about which the researcher must think soundly and deeply in order to describe and make sense of the aspects of life he or she is exploring (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Qualitative researchers depend on a variety of methods for gathering data and, most often, use some combination of participant observation, interviews, and document collection (Glesne, 1998). In this way, data collection should be viewed as “a series of interrelated activities aimed at gathering good information to answer emerging research

questions” (Creswell, 1998, p. 110). For my study, those activities were interviewing participants and asking participants to journal about their experiences.

At the earliest stages of designing my qualitative study, participant interviews were a clear and obvious choice for data collection. Interviews are consistent with the constructivist perspective in that they allow for participants to speak candidly, in extended turns of talk, about past experiences and current perceptions related to the research question. Additionally, interviews permit the researcher to elicit responses that illuminate how participants construct meaning from these experiences, which, in turn, uncovers the ways in which participants make sense of their identities. Asking participants to journal about their experiences offers similar benefits. More importantly, journaling allows participants full expression of their ideas without researcher obtrusion.

## **Interviews**

The use of interviews to acquire information is so extensive today that it is said that we live in an “interview society” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002; Silverman, 1993). Indeed, both qualitative and quantitative researchers tend to rely on the interview as the basic method of data gathering, regardless of their varying research objectives (Fontana & Frey, 2000). The difference is, rather than eliciting facts or laws, the purpose of the qualitative interview is to derive interpretations (Warren, 2002) by gathering descriptive data in the subjects’ own words (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In this way, qualitative interviews are viewed as special kinds of conversations (Kvale, 1996; Mishler, 1986) that help to “uncover the meaning structures that participants use to organize their experiences and make sense of their worlds” (Hatch, 2002, p. 91). This view is consistent with the constructivist paradigm adopted in my study in that the purpose of the interviews was to elicit responses from novice social studies teachers that would

illuminate the ways in which they make sense of their emerging identities as civics teachers. Therefore, as the researcher, I assumed an unobtrusive stance and tried to position the participants as the main producers of knowledge (Koro-Ljungberg, Yendol-Hoppey, Smith, & Hayes, 2009; Spradley, 1979).

That is not to say that my role in the interviews lacked meaning. As Holstein and Gubrium (1995) posit, both parties to any interview are necessarily and unavoidably active. That is, each is involved in meaning-making work, and therefore meaning is not just elicited by apt questioning nor discovered through respondent responses. Instead, meaning is actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter. It was therefore important that I acknowledged the contributions of both the participants and myself and consciously incorporated them into the production and analysis of interview data.

According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), good interviews are those in which the participants feel at ease and talk freely about their experiences. These experiences are commonly given to us in the form of narratives. Drawing on the work of Eliot Mishler, Gubrium and Holstein (2002) elaborate on this view:

When we communicate our experiences to each other, we do so by storying them. When, in turn, we encourage elaboration, we commonly use such narrative devices as “Go on” and “Then what happened?” to prompt further storylike communication. . . . Consequently, we must leave our research efforts open to respondents’ experiences in, and on, their own terms, leading to less formal control in the interview process. (p. 18)

With these considerations in mind, I used three semistructured interview protocols to interview the two participants. They were semistructured in that I came to the interviews with guiding questions, but I also remained “open to following the leads of informants and probing into areas that [arose] during interview interactions” (Hatch, 2002, p. 94). I

deliberately worded each question to elicit a story, beginning many of my prompts with “Tell me about...” and limiting most of my probes to “What happened next?” or “Could you tell me more about that?” I felt that such questioning was consistent with the constructivist perspective I had adopted and the analysis method I planned to employ. My doctoral committee and my university’s Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved all three protocols as a matter of promoting epistemological consistency and maintaining ethical standards in research practice.

### **Journaling**

Although interviews are important and certainly the most widely used method of data collection in social science research, they represent only one source of knowledge about an individual’s sense making (Riessman, 2008). When possible, it is helpful to access or encourage the production of other data sources, such as journals. Journaling allows for flexibility in data collection, provides a direct path into participants’ insights, and potentially guides the direction of other data collection methods, including future interviews. When journals are solicited – that is, when the researcher specifically requests that a participant keep one – the researcher is able to direct the author’s focus and, when desired, get a number of people to write on a single event or topic (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). As Hatch (2002) acknowledges, journal data are unique in that they come directly from the participant and are therefore not processed by the researcher, although the researcher will still interpret these data as analyses are made. For the purposes of my study, these data allowed me to unobtrusively explore how the participants make sense of their emerging identities as civics teachers. Accordingly, as part of the recruitment and research bargaining process, I asked participants to keep a written record of their experiences and reflections during the data collection period.

## Interview Process

After contacting participants using the recruitment email included in Appendix B, I arranged individual interview sessions to be conducted during the first week of February 2011. Together we decided that their classrooms would have too many distractions. Both participants voiced concern about students, faculty, and janitorial staff coming into their classrooms after school and one participant seemed particularly concerned about the number of announcements that streamed through the intercom system once the school day had ended. Accordingly, we decided that a study room in a local college library would provide both a quiet and confidential space for holding the interviews.

As Glesne (1998) acknowledges, “A common mistake in interviewing is to ask questions about a topic before promoting a level of trust that allows respondents to be open and expansive” (p. 73). It is therefore important for the researcher to at least spend a few minutes, if not an entire interview session, getting to know the participant and helping to put the participant at ease. With that in mind, the first interview protocol was devoted primarily to learning about each participant. In fact, the first three questions provided an opportunity for Erin and Matt to speak freely and extensively about their educational backgrounds:

1. First, tell me a little bit about you: where you grew up, where you went to school, etc.
2. What kinds of civics learning experiences do you recall from your own K-12 education?
3. Tell me about your decision to become a teacher (probe about decision to be a middle school, civics teacher).
4. How would you describe the purpose of civic education?
5. How would you describe the role of a civics teacher?



6. Tell me about the types of learning experiences that would you consider best practice for students in a civics classroom.
7. Describe experiences that you have had that you believe have prepared you to be a civics teacher.
8. Tell me about your expectations for the new, yearlong seventh grade civics curriculum you are using.
9. Tell me a little bit more about you: your upbringing, your political background, your take on the current educational climate, etc.

During these initial interviews, I made a series of memorable observations that seemed important enough to document in my research journal. First, talking to Erin and Matt felt like talking to an old friend. Both participants seemed genuinely at ease and excited to respond to my questions. That said, I could not help but notice the degree to which Erin was telling stories in response to my questions and the degree to which Matt was not. To be fair, when I asked about his background and political beliefs, Matt seemed to provide responses that followed a more narrative structure. However, when asked about civic education and being a civics teacher, he provided more direct answers to my questions. Second, I thought it was important that Erin did not grow up wanting to be a teacher. For her, the decision came early into her adult life. It was also interesting to learn that neither Erin nor Matt chose to be a civics teacher – rather, civics chose them. Third, end-of-course examinations, which will go into effect in St. Johns County during the 2011-2012 school year, came up multiple times throughout both interviews.

I ended this first interview by discussing the personal online journals (blogs) to which I hoped each participant would contribute. I tried to be consistent in my directions to each participant:

Over the next 2 months, I would like for you to use a blog to journal about what you would consider notable experiences with teaching the new, yearlong seventh grade civics curriculum. There is no set number of entries that I expect from you. I am simply asking you to reflect upon all experiences, positive or negative, that you would consider significant or memorable.

In addition to these directions, I told participants that I wanted this to be an enjoyable exercise for them and that I hoped it would not feel like an obligation. They both mentioned a belief in the importance of teacher reflection and seemed genuinely excited about the opportunity to discuss their teaching experiences with me through this very confidential online medium.

Before the second interview, I spent a lot of time reviewing the blog posts that Erin and Matt had written so that I could construct a series of additional questions to supplement the interview protocol. To provide time and space for these supplemental questions, this protocol listed only six questions, most of which focused on the teachers classroom experiences and being a civics teacher:

1. Tell me about your current teaching placement.
2. Talk to me about some notable teaching experiences you have had this year.
3. Tell me about characteristics or particular elements of the curriculum that you like teaching?
4. Tell me about characteristics or particular elements of the curriculum that you do not like teaching?
5. Tell me about any support you have as a civics teacher.
6. In your role as a civics teacher, how do you feel?

By this point, Matt had written seven posts. Erin had only written two. I interviewed Erin first and, despite her limited number of blog posts, I found that I had little problem drafting a series of meaningful probes related to school pressures, positioning herself as

a non-expert, identifying and adapting to student privilege, and winning her county's "Novice Teacher of the Year" award. For Matt, using his blog posts as a guide and a conversation starter, I probed about parent phone calls following third quarter grades, teacher reflection, the instructional activities that make him happiest as a teacher, and his love for historical content.

The third and final interview session afforded the participants an opportunity to share any final thoughts about teaching civics. The official protocol only included three questions:

1. Talk to me about some notable teaching experiences you have had since we last met.
2. Overall and up to this point, how have your expectations for the new, yearlong seventh grade civics curriculum been met?
3. How, if at all, have your views on teaching changed over the past school year?

In addition to these three questions, and similar to the previous interview session, I had read over the participants' blog posts and constructed a couple of probing questions related to what had been written. For Erin, I probed about her experiences teaching Project Citizen. For Matt, I asked him about disruptions to his instructional time.

This final interview session also served as an opportunity for member checking. For both participants, it was important to me that I was accurately interpreting the ways in which the looming end-of-course examination played into their civics teacher identity. Accordingly, I recited the following prompt to Erin and Matt: "Multiple times throughout the interviews and blog posts, you have brought up end-of-course examinations. Let's pretend that today is May 3, 2012 (rather than May 3, 2011). How do you feel as a civics teacher today, in light of the immediately pending examination?" This confirmed that both were tremendously uneasy about the examination and felt unsure of their

teaching. Additionally, because I suspected that the type of student Erin once was influences the type of teacher that she now is, I asked her to speak about that assessment. Matt was always mentioning that students “loved it” when referring to notable teaching experiences. Accordingly, I asked him about student satisfaction and the ways in which it plays into his identity as a civics teacher.

Once the interview data have been collected, the researcher must ask, “What is the correct transcription?” (Kvale, 1996, p. 166). According to Oliver, Serovich, and Mason (2005), “Transcription practices can be thought of in terms of a continuum with two dominant modes: naturalism, in which every utterance is transcribed in as much detail as possible, and denaturalism, in which idiosyncratic elements of speech (e.g., stutters, pauses, nonverbals, involuntary vocalizations) are removed” (pp. 1273-1274). As one would expect, these positions accompany certain views about the representation of language. Kvale therefore, suggests a more constructive question: “What is a useful transcription for my research purpose?” (p. 166). Because I planned to conduct a structural narrative analysis, I decided that my transcripts did not need to be fully equivalent to the interview talk. Idiosyncratic elements of speech would tell me little about the ways in which the participants make meaning through narration and their presence would only distract my attention from important structural features and content.

### **Journaling Process**

Once the decision was made to collect journal data, my committee chair suggested that I create two blogs – one for each participant – through which participants would record their reflections. The immediate benefit was that such a medium would allow for dialogic interaction between researcher and participant. Instead of collecting a

series of journal entries at the end of the data collection period, I could read the entries as soon as they were written, promptly ask participants to elaborate (if I felt that I my analysis would benefit from more information), and use the entries to guide future interview sessions. The immediate concern was confidentiality. Fortunately, it is possible to create an invite only, password-protected blog. I therefore created two such blogs, set myself as the administrator, and then invited Erin to one and Matt to the other. Both participants understood the technology (including the confidentiality protections) and Matt made his first post within a couple of days. As already indicated, Matt blogged about his experiences teaching civics more frequently. When we first met, he told me that Wednesdays are early release days in his county and that he anticipated blogging on those days. As such, I could count on a new post from Matt at least once a week. For Erin, the posts were far less frequent. However, when she did blog, she wrote long, extended narratives that seemed to cover multiple days of classroom instruction. For Matt, the narratives were usually about one lesson or one day in particular.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative researchers study spoken and written records of the human experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Once those records have been collected, the formidable task of analyzing them remains. In qualitative research, data analysis refers to the systematic search for meaning. It involves organizing, interrogating, and synthesizing data; identifying themes, patterns, and relationships; crafting descriptions, explanations, and stories; framing ideas and interpretations in relation to other scholarship; generating theory; and answering the question “So what?” as it relates to findings (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Glesne, 1998; Hatch, 2002). In a word, data analysis refers to the ways in

which the researcher makes sense of the data he or she has collected. For my study, data analysis refers to the theory I adopted and the systematic procedures I utilized in order to draw meaning from the ways in which novice social studies teachers make sense of their emerging identities as civics teachers. Here I will present both the methodology (the theory that governed my choice and use of methods) and the methods (the techniques and procedures I employed) that constitute data analysis for my study.

### **Narrative Analysis**

A primary way that people make sense of experience is by casting it in narrative form (Bruner, 1990; Mishler, 1986; Riessman, 1993). In doing so, they choose the ways in which they tell the story and the details they include based on the meaning they want to convey (Bailey & Tiley, 2002). Narratives, then, recount past experiences at the same time as they provide ways for individuals to make sense of their past, their present, and even their identities. Narrative analysis, then, is a technique for interpreting the ways in which people perceive reality, construct meaning from their worlds, and perform social actions. It refers to a family of methods for interpreting texts (e.g., oral, written, and visual) that have in common a storied form. For my study, I employed a structural narrative analysis procedure based on the approach of Riessman (2008). This approach invokes the theory of narrative structure formulated by Labov and Waletzky (1967), which suggests that a fully-formed narrative consists of six structural categories: Abstract, Orientation, Complicating Action, Evaluation, Resolution, and Coda. Analysis includes both identifying each element and exploring the underlying descriptions, emphasis, and word choice used by the interviewee. In this way, structural narrative analysis “fundamentally accounts for how people talk as well as what they say” (Wiles,

Rosenberg, & Kearns, 2005, p. 94), which helped me to see how the participants made sense of their experiences as novice teachers and constructed their identities.

The total of six interviews I conducted during the spring of 2011, as well as the journal entries that the participants wrote using our private blogs, produced a large number (71, to be exact) of rich and insightful narratives, which I believed would reveal the underlying forces and sense-making processes that inform the teacher-participants' emerging identities as civics teachers. The data analysis procedure began with a process of identifying these narratives, assigning each a number and an *in vivo* name, and conducting an initial structural identification in which I labeled the elements of a narrative – Abstract (summary and/or point of the story); Orientation (time, place, characters, situation); Complicating Action (the event sequence, or plot, usually with a crisis or turning point); Evaluation (where the narrator steps back from the action to comment on meaning and communicate emotions); Resolution (the outcome of the plot or the solution to the crisis); and Coda (ending of the story) – that were present in each (Riessman, 2008). By focusing on structure first, I hoped “to avoid the tendency to read the narrative simply for content” (Riessman, 1993, p. 61). This information was then used to carefully and systematically complete a “Narrative Inventory” (see Appendix C). For each narrative, I recorded the question to which the narrative was a response, the number and name that I previously assigned it, topics that the narrative addressed, a word or two relating to structure, and my thoughts on the narrative (e.g., if the content and structure warranted in-depth analysis).

As a next step, I organized the narratives into three categories: Comparing Erin and Matt, Erin, and Matt. The first category included narratives in which the participants

offered immediate responses to the same question, which I believed would allow me to home in on the similarities and differences across the *content* of their responses while focusing my analysis on the *structure* of their responses. The second and third categories simply included those narratives that remained, organized by participant. Because 71 narratives were far too many on which to conduct an in-depth and meaningful analysis, I needed a system for selecting the most valuable ones.

With each narrative in place under one of the three categories, I then color-coded the narratives using a “traffic light” organizational framework. That is, I shaded each narrative in green, yellow, or red to indicate its analytical value. My first criterion was the degree to which the narrative spoke to my primary research question. “Green light” narratives were the most significant in this regard, “yellow light” narratives were relevant, and “red light” narratives were tangential or completely unrelated to my research goals. My second criterion was related to structural adequacy and/or significance. I assigned a “green light” or “yellow light” status to those narratives that were structurally complete and that I believed would tell me something about the participant’s sense making. Accordingly, I focused on those narratives that contained most if not all of the six elements of a narrative and were structurally significant (e.g., elements were out of order, narrative included one or more sub-narratives, narrative included lengthy or multiple Complicating Actions).

Having finished this lengthy process of identification and organization, I began my in-depth analysis of the “green light” narratives that fell under my “Comparing Erin and Matt” category. For each narrative, I listened to the digital recording while reading the transcript, oftentimes twice. Mainly, I wanted to ensure that my initial structural



identification was accurate. That is, I listed for conversational cues that helped me to determine if, for example, I correctly labeled the Complicating Action of a narrative as such. Finally, I tried to make sense of how the participant told the story and looked for meaning in the organizational structure. I asked questions such as why did the participant tell the story in this order (this is particularly important with a non-traditional structure; that is, if a participant provides an Evaluation prior to a Complicating Action); what element of the narrative did the participant focus on; was there a Resolution or did the Complicating Action remain unresolved in the participant's mind? Nonetheless, “the emphasis is on language – how people say what they do and who they are – and narrative structures they employ to construct experience by telling about it” (Riessman, 1993, p. 40). As such, while pondering these questions, the content of the story and the language used to tell it were always central to my analysis.

With these steps complete, it was time to present my findings, and, more importantly, make decisions about how to represent them. Accordingly, for each analyzed narrative, I chose from three representation options: include separate elements/excerpts of the narrative as I discussed them, include the entire transcript, or include a visual representation and supplement it with narrative elements/excerpts. I most frequently selected the first option and only used the third option once. As for the second option, University editorial restrictions prevented me from including the entire transcript in the body of the dissertation. Accordingly, they are presented in separate appendices. After making the decision for each narrative, one-by-one, I began writing my findings. Naturally, writing itself served as a level of analysis, and I oftentimes found

myself returning to my research journal to record new observations or to the analyzed narrative to reassess the element labels I applied to certain parts of the story.

### **Subjectivity**

During the first minutes of our first interview together, I spent some time explaining my study to Matt. I gave him a topical preview of some of the questions I would ask him during that interview, as well as the remaining two, and concluded by saying, “So really, I’m just interested in your experiences and perspectives about teaching this civics course and how those experiences and perspectives have informed your civics teacher identity.” Matt, with a laugh, responded, “You mean this civics course that you co-wrote?” I also laughed and said, “Well, yeah, but give it to me straight. If you think the course is garbage than say so. I’m not here to evaluate the course anyways. I am far more interested in you.” He laughed again and said, “Don’t worry. I’ll give it to you straight.”

As I think about my study, this brief exchange helps me to understand both the nature of the knowledge that I seek, as well as how I am situated in the research. For the former, there can be no objective or factual description of an individual’s identity. Rather, identity is a constructed reality. Definitions and explanations are left to the individual, in this case, the participants, to decide. Likewise, as a progressive educator, I reject notions of objectivity and truth that are based on the positivistic premise that absolute knowledge can be deposited into passive students. Naturally, this rejection affects my theoretical stance as a researcher as much as it affects my philosophical stance as an educator. As a constructivist researcher, I believe that all knowledge is constructed. As a constructivist educator, I believe that learners construct knowledge as

they work to make sense of their surroundings. From both stances, I am constantly reminded that knowledge does not exist outside a person's mind.

For the latter, I know that I viewed the participants of my study from my particular positionality and understanding as an American white woman who is married, 28 years of age, quite liberal, and intricately connected to the new, yearlong seventh grade 'Applied Civics' curriculum that the teacher-participants use in their classrooms. I am also intricately connected to the teacher-participants themselves, as both were graduate students in the teacher-preparation program for which I teach and supervise interns, and both attended a four-day training that I conducted, which provided an orientation to the civics curriculum. Consciously or not, I viewed the participants as former students and made sense of their responses in the context of my prior knowledge of their teacher training, their personalities, and my perceptions of their strengths and weaknesses as novice teachers, and I subconsciously anticipated responses that confirmed what I thought I already knew.

Additionally, I approached my study as a former K-12 civics teacher who has spent the past three years studying and conducting civic education research and developing curricular materials for civics teachers, which, again, includes the civics curriculum that was implemented by my study's participants. As such, I made sense of the participants' perceptions and experiences in the context of my current identity as a civics teacher educator, and my not so distant past identity as a novice civics teacher. I must therefore acknowledge that it is likely that I made sense of participant responses in the context of my own life and my own identity, and anticipated responses that confirmed my experiences and perceptions.

## Validity

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006), “Validity refers to the degree of congruence between the explanations of the phenomena and the realities of the world.” While this definition remains true independent of the type of research one is conducting, the growth of qualitative research has led to increased interest in the topic of research validity (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Indeed, prevailing concepts of validity, borrowed from quantitative research, rely on realist assumptions and are therefore irrelevant to most qualitative studies. Still, the qualitative researcher must be able to answer the question, “Why should anyone believe it?” (Riessman, 2008). In order to do so, she must adopt alternative terms and rely upon alternative procedures. For the former, she can look to Denzin and Lincoln (2005) for guidance: “Terms such as transferability, dependability, and confirmability replace positivist criteria of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity” (p. 24). For the latter, she is well equipped with a multitude of strategies for ensuring quality and rigor: audit trails, verisimilitude in writing, crystallization of data sources, member checking, peer examination, and negative case analysis.

Whereas validation measures were once intended to inspire confidence in the ultimate truth to be found in a phenomenon under study, the purpose today, especially in qualitative studies, is to present multiple perspectives, gain more holistic understanding, and represent diversity (Koro-Ljungberg, 2002). This, in turn, inspires trust in the study’s methodology and findings. In order to enhance the trustworthiness of my study – that is, to make it more believable – I maintained an audit trail (primarily through a detailed research journal), crystallized two data sources (interview transcripts and participant blog posts), obtained and analyzed verbatim participant accounts (again, interview transcripts and participant blog posts), conducted member checks during the

analysis stages (specifically, during the third interview with each participant), and confirmed findings with participants at the conclusion of my analysis and write-up. Having implemented these measures, I feel confident that my explanation of my participants' sense making regarding their emerging identities as civics teachers provides a dependable representation of the phenomenon. Moreover, I believe it meets Riessman's (1993) criteria for trustworthiness. That is, I believe my explanation is persuasive (in that it is both reasonable and convincing), coherent (in that it is more than ad hoc), and pragmatic (in that it may become the basis for later work).

### **Cautions**

In reflecting upon the findings and conclusions that emerged from the data that guided my study, I could not help but think that some words of caution were in order, some methodological and some contextual. As Riessman (1993) pithily expresses, "To reach theoretical levels of abstraction, comparative work is desirable. Yet sample sizes in narrative studies are small, and cases are often drawn from unrepresentative pools" (p. 70). This was certainly the case for my study, in which I drew personal narratives from only two novice social studies teachers, making it exceedingly difficult to make substantive points that would necessarily apply to a different sample. This is compounded by the specific context of the study, which was confined to one county in northern Florida. Given this localized nature, the conclusions drawn from my three interviews with each participant, as well as their blog posts, may not be generalizable to other areas of the country or even the state. Indeed, many of my participants' concerns and many of the factors that seemed to play into their identities were specific to their schools, their district, and the nature of their student populations. It was only when they spoke of the impending end-of-course examination that their experiences took on a

statewide context, although it could be argued that the ubiquity of standardized testing allows for conclusions to be considered in larger, perhaps even nationwide, contexts.

Another cautionary element concerns the lack of observational data. To be sure, this was a deliberate choice. Because of the constructivist perspective that I adopted, I purposefully restricted my data to sources that would allow me to explore how the participants experienced teaching civics and made sense of their emerging identities as civics teachers. Given this perspective, the ways in which I might view their classroom experiences are irrelevant. More importantly, the interview and journal data I collected provided invaluable insights into the teachers' sense making processes and identity construction. Nonetheless, both participants on more than one occasion mentioned that they would enjoy having me visit their classroom and "see for [myself]" the issues, student behaviors, and instructional dilemmas to which they referred in our conversations and in their blog posts. While I certainly would have enjoyed such visits, I am hesitant to acknowledge any value in them, at least so far as the immediate study is concerned. Likewise, I am confident that the data produced during our limited meetings together and in our online correspondence were sufficient to fully exploring my research question and to making a significant contribution to the scholarship regarding civic education, novice teachers, and teacher identity.

### **Concluding Remarks**

In the rich field of social education research, many studies have examined civic education purposes, programs, and pedagogies, and have lamented the declining emphasis on the civic mission of schools and civics as a subject matter. In the broader realm of educational research, we have benefitted from a panoply of subject-driven inquiries that explored the experiences and perspectives of teachers, including those

who might be considered novice. However, with the recent and renewed drive to enhance civic education in our nation's public schools, researchers and other educational stakeholders have few sources of empirical information regarding the ways in which social studies teachers experience and perceive civics instruction or the ways in which *novice* social studies teachers makes sense of their identities as civics teachers.

Interestingly, because a full civics program has been missing from the public school curriculum for the past few decades, most current teachers of civics *are* novice civics teachers, regardless of the length of their classroom tenures. Nonetheless, my study was designed to elicit the stories of actual novice teachers, teachers in their first or second years of teaching, by exploring the unique structural and substantive patterns embedded in their narratives. In this way, I hoped to describe their sense-making processes in regard to their civics teacher identities and report meaningful findings that might be of service to those who work to provide civics teachers with high-quality curricular materials, training, and other support.

When I first entered my doctoral program, I was certain that I would be a quantitative researcher. As a student who was always “good at math” and as a believer in science and objectivity, I found comfort in numbers and formulas, and I figured that my research agenda would explore important questions of educational impact. This did not last. As I progressed deeper into my studies, especially surrounding qualitative methodology, everything I knew about the world – including my conceptions of reality, truth, and knowledge – began to unravel. I began to suspect that numbers were incapable of telling the whole story, and I could no longer “pretend to an objectivity that

was neither possible nor desirable” (Zinn, 2002, p. 8). To my delight, this new epistemology was a better match to my long-held political ideology. Having always been wary of standardized tests and their ability to measure student achievement, teacher effectiveness, or any other superficial construct related to educational quality, I could now embrace a methodology that was consistent with my understanding of the nature of students, teachers, and classrooms and that would allow me to explore questions that I truly believed were worth answering. As I jokingly said at the end of my second qualitative methods course, “Hi. My name is Emma, and I am a reformed positivist.”

Every step of my study was deliberately undertaken with the theory of qualitative research in mind. From crafting a research question to adopting a theoretical perspective, and from choosing a methodology to actually analyzing my data, I was cautious to avoid the trap of mainstream positivist thinking that privileges what I believe to be false knowledge. To be sure, it was difficult to avoid such terms as “influence” and “impact” and to refrain from making bold claims that I inferred from my analysis. But that is the nature of qualitative analysis. It is a long, tiresome, and oftentimes uncertain process. However, I believe that it is a process that yields the deepest and most meaningful understanding of the phenomenon under study. In Chapter 5, I present the initial understanding that I was able to reach regarding the ways in which novice social studies teachers make sense of their emerging identities as civics teachers.



## CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

### **Introductory Remarks**

As I worked to make sense of my data, a series of substantive questions guided my analysis: How do novice social studies teachers make sense of their emerging identities as civics teachers? More specifically, how and why did they decide to become civics teachers? What types of learning experiences do they consider best practice for teaching civics? What notable teaching experiences do they recall? What types of students were they and how do they feel their student identity, past or present, influences their civics teacher identity? What is it about civics that they enjoy teaching it, or perhaps do not? What issues or experiences have shaped their identities over the past year or two? How do they reflect upon those issues and experiences as novice civics teachers and what meanings do they construct from them?

This chapter confronts these analytical questions with the primary aim of understanding the ways in which the two teacher-participants made sense of their emerging identities as civics teachers through narrative telling of their recent experiences, both inside and outside of the classroom. Through storytelling, each presented an autobiographical self that is how he or she wants to be known (Riessman, 2008). Rather than quantify or generalize, these findings seek to describe these selves and the sense-making processes through which they were constructed by exploring the issues, experiences, and perceptions that define the former and investigating the idiosyncrasies and structural trends that constitute the latter. In the end, they will help us to better understand what it means to be a civics teacher and the ways in which novice teachers arrive at such an identity.

I present findings in three sections. In the first section I discuss findings from my comparative analysis of the teacher-participants' narratives surrounding similar topics by exploring their decisions to become civics teachers, the types of learning experiences they consider best practice, and notable experiences they had over the course of the study. In the second section I focus on teacher-participant Erin and discuss findings from my analysis of notable narratives from my three interviews with her. In the third section, I shift my focus to teacher-participant Matt and discuss findings from my analysis of notable narratives from my three interviews with him, as well as his many blog posts. For these latter two sections, I selected three to five "green light" narratives to analyze in depth. These narratives were structurally complete and/or significant and spoke meaningfully to my research question. When my analyses of those three narratives were complete, I went back to my nine or ten "yellow light" narratives – those that were less structurally and substantively significant, but still meaningful – and conducted a snapshot analysis on each. That is, I conducted analyses that were less intensive than those I conducted for my "green light" narratives but equally systematic. This step allowed me to glean substantive insights and discern structural patterns across a larger sample of narratives. As a general point, all narrative titles are *in vivo* and represent a good-faith effort to capture the essence of the *content* of the narrative. The chapter ends with a general summary and discussion of my findings.

### **Erin and Matt: Comparing Topically Similar Narratives**

In this section, I present the findings from my analysis of the teacher-participants' narratives surrounding similar topics. These narratives were in response to three interview prompts that I presented to each participant: Tell me about your decision to

become a civics teacher; What types of learning experiences do you consider best practice for teaching civics; and Tell me about a notable teaching experience you have had since we last met (note: this last question was asked during both the second and third interviews). Methodologically, I chose to do this for two reasons. First, I felt that their responses to these prompts formed a sort of foundation to their identities as civics teachers. That is, describing *why* they became civics teachers, *how* they perceive good civics instruction, and *what* they find memorable in their civics classrooms helps us begin to conceptualize their teacher identities. Second, this method allowed me to home in on the similarities and differences across the *content* of their responses while actually focusing my analysis on the *structure* of their responses. That is, I found it easy to compare the content of their responses when they were responding to the same prompt or question, which allowed me to focus more of my attention on structure.

### **Participants' Decisions to Become Civics Teachers**

At the outset of my first interview with each participant, I asked Erin and Matt to tell me about her or his decision to become a teacher. While Matt always knew that he wanted to be a teacher – at least ever since he was awarded the “Teacher’s Dream” superlative in seventh grade – for Erin, the decision was more of a realization that occurred late in her undergraduate education. I then probed about each participant’s decision to teach middle school. While working at a summer camp, Erin realized that she liked middle school-aged students because “they are so funny and naughty, but still interesting.” During his internship in an eighth grade American history classroom, Matt realized that he liked teaching middle school, although he is more concerned with teaching his preferred content area – American history – than he is with teaching a preferred grade level. Lastly, I probed each participant about his or her decision to

become a civics teacher. In what follows, I present my analysis of first Erin's and then Matt's response to my query.

### **Erin – Civics was probably not a big love of mine**

When asked about her decision to become a civics teacher, Erin provided a complete, yet somewhat messy narrative. She began with a short Orientation about her first year of teaching before shifting to her Complicating Action: "And then this job opened up and it was like seventh grade? Gifted students? Civics!" At this point, Erin succinctly stated her Abstract: "Civics was probably not a big love of mine." She then returned to her Orientation and, in doing so, qualified her hesitation toward civics:

**Orientation:** If I was like, "I'm going to be a social studies teacher," I'm definitely more of the geography side. Through our grad program I probably became more interested in history. I always liked learning about history, but I didn't know a whole lot and felt like I really knew what I was talking about. But, I don't know, I can see how it's easy to – when you appreciate history – it's really easy to get into American history because how could you not want to know all this stuff about our country once you're there? So once you've already hit the dork level, it's so easy to just take the plunge into that ((laughs)).

By explaining that geography is her natural inclination, but that she also learned a lot about history during her graduate studies, Erin tried to set reasonable expectations regarding her ability to teach civics. At the same time, by focusing on American history, which many view as intrinsically related to civics, she logically prepared me for her next point, which came in the form of a Complicating Action, that she is at least marginally qualified to teach the subject:

**Complicating Action:** So then with civics, this job opened up and I was like, "Oh, well I know a little bit about that" because like from our program, like we had that class where we were kind of introduced to it. You guys were awesome at making us aware of the fact that "This is coming. You might want to put that on your repertoire kind of thing, like keep it on the radar." So when it was there, I was like, "Pfft, click!" And I applied.

It was here that Erin began to justify her decision to teach civics. It was also here that the temporal sequence came to an end. The *telling* of “what happened” concluded.

Erin’s *assessment* of “what happened” followed.

Interestingly, what remained was longer than what preceded it. In her Evaluation, Erin explained that she is just as qualified to teach civics as anyone else in her county:

**Evaluation:** And the best part, which is probably funny for your research, I was like, “Well, it’s the first year it’s going in so I’m just as qualified as any other teacher. Nobody else has been teaching civics for 20 years, so why not me?” I mean truthfully, it’s a level playing field in this county right now because nobody who is teaching right now was ever teaching when it was taught, I don’t think. Like my mom took civics when she was, you know, she’s like almost 60. Like, no, her teachers are not still here. So it’s like a level playing field. I was like, “Well I can’t mess it up too badly. Not any more than anyone else who’s coming in.” Like, I might not know the methods as well, like have all that down as a new teacher, but “Pfft! I can teach that curriculum just as well as anyone else,” because no one has any idea what’s going on, or like all of the parts of it. Like no one’s familiar with these standards yet. So it was kind of just like, “Well, I can’t mess this up too badly.”

Twice, Erin referred to the unlikelihood of “messing it up too badly.” It is a peculiar criterion for judging one’s qualification to teach a subject, but it is one that makes sense in light of Erin’s observation that her county does not have experienced civics teachers.

Erin then jumped to her Resolution in which she emoted gladness in her decision to teach civics:

**Resolution:** But through that, it’s really funny because I’ve had a really good time *learning* about myself and *learning* about our curriculum, so like it’s funny because I’m a learner too in my class. I’m like, “Oh yeah, there’s the definition of home rule, and I knew what that was before I taught it to you, but now I definitely do” ((laughs)). And I mean, doing it over and over six times over two days is helpful.

In a way, Erin was saying, “Look, I didn’t mess it up too badly. I am having a good time and I am learning.” She did not, however, speak to her students’ learning. Lastly, Erin

ended with an unusually long Coda that remained true to her Abstract and brought her narrative full circle:

**Coda:** But I think it was like the opportunity to be in this, like a combination of things. It wasn't like I was just looking for civics, you know, opportunities. I was trying to snatch up St. Johns County. And when I saw the school and the opportunity to be with the advanced, gifted students, I was like, "Duh, like no brainer." But it has been like, if I could pick of the three grades to pick, I would want to be in civics. Like next year if they're like, "Want to teach World history, civics, or American?" I would say, "I like this curriculum. It's fun."

Taken as a whole, this narrative communicates an image of a somewhat unlikely, but highly energetic civics teacher. More importantly, it is a narrative with a happy ending. Erin got the job she wanted, she had a good year, and, if given the choice, she will stick with civics next year. By the time the story concluded, the listener has all but forgotten that Erin described herself as being "more on the geography side" of the social studies, and he or she feels confident that civics is a good fit for Erin.

### **Matt – But I love civics too**

In response to the same question about one's decision to become a civics teacher, Matt provided a short, yet well-structured narrative, presented in Appendix D in its entirety. He began with an Abstract (lines 1-2) where he admitted that his passion is American history, but then quickly countered with a declaration of love for civics. As he continued with his Orientation (lines 2-5), the longest part of this short narrative, he shared that civics is a close second to his love for American history and that he would only consider an instructional position that would allow him to teach American history and/or civics. Then in an almost fleeting Complicating Action (lines 5-6), so short that it could easily be missed, Matt acknowledged that the legislative decision to mandate civics in seventh grade helped in steering him toward civics. What followed was a short,

but telling Evaluation in which Matt seemed to be justify not only the legislative mandate, but also his decision to leave behind his passion – American history – to teach civics. In this way, he implied that the availability of the civics teaching position was not reason enough, and that there is good and perhaps even admirable reason to be teaching civics. Moreover, this Evaluation allowed “the decision to become a civics teacher” (my question) to be just that – his decision. Matt brought his narrative to a conclusion with a short Resolution in lines 9-11 that left the listener with a feeling that all is well. Then, like many of his narratives, he signals the end of the story with a one-word Coda: “So.”

Taken together, the content of these two narratives reveal an important first clue about the participants’ sense making regarding their emerging identities as civics teachers: neither entered the field with such an identity. Matt viewed himself as a teacher of American history, Erin of geography. However, like so many novice teachers, what each wanted more than anything was a teaching job. By telling the story of their respective decisions to become civics teachers, both Erin and Matt were able to convince me, and perhaps even themselves, that civics is a good fit. For Erin, comparing herself to other teachers in the county was a way to signal her qualification. For Matt, talking about a general lack of civic awareness was a way to signal the importance of civics, thereby justifying his decision to teach it.

In addition to *what* was said, *how* it was said also offers an important insight into Erin and Matt’s identities as civics teachers. In the beginning of Erin’s narrative, twice she bounced between her Orientation and Complicating Action, signaling a sort of uncertainty in her response. It is as though she never faced this question before. Also,

the Evaluation and Resolution sections dominate Erin's narrative. In this case, the length of these sections implies self-consciousness about her civics teacher identity. For Matt, the Orientation is the longest section of his traditionally structured narrative. He spent a lot of time telling me who he is as a teacher, and then briefly explained why he was comfortable teaching civics. I found this to be in direct opposition to Erin who spent only a moment talking about who she is as a teacher, and then loquaciously explained why she thinks she is qualified to teach civics. This difference in structure points to less self-confidence in Erin's identity as a civics teacher.

### **Participant's Ideas of Best Practice for Teaching Civics**

During our second interviews, I asked the participants about their ideas of best practice in teaching civics. Through their responses to this question, I believed that Erin and Matt could offer me a glimpse of the type of instruction in which they typically engage their students and the types of instructional activities that help them to feel good about themselves as civics teachers. What I received were two narratives containing very similar content, expressed through very different structures.

### **Erin – Anything that is applicable and engaging**

Looking across all of Erin's narratives, one will notice that many of them are really meta-narratives that include two to four sub-narratives. When I asked Erin about the types of learning experiences that she considers best practice for teaching civics, she provided one such narrative. The structure is both traditional and complicated: Abstract, Orientation, Sub-narrative one, Evaluation, Sub-narrative two, Sub-narrative three, and Coda. In terms of the overall structure, the narrative is missing a Complicating Action and a Resolution. However, it can be argued that the first Sub-narrative serves as the



Complicating Action for the meta-narrative and that the third Sub-narrative serves as the Resolution, as I will soon illustrate.

Erin's narrative began traditionally and uneventfully. She provided an immediate answer to my question, stating as part of her Abstract, "For civics, anything that is engaging and applicable to students' real lives." For her Orientation, she discussed an ongoing conversation she had with her students about the relevance of civics. After the Orientation, Erin took an unexpected turn by launching into her first sub-narrative, which serves as the Complicating Action for the meta-narrative:

**Complicating Action sub-narrative – At least he gets it**

**Orientation:** And I have one student who is hilarious who came into my class a communist. He is now, I mean he's 12, so you have to take that for what it's worth.

**Complicating Action:** Then he evolved to a socialist, and now he's decided that he's just purely an environmentalist. And I'm like, "That's not really the same thing" ((laughs)).

**Evaluation:** But, it's hilarious, like his level of awareness. He's a total jokester. He wanted to start a communist dictatorship in our classroom, like argues the devil's advocate perspective of everything. But truthfully, he is one of my most engaged students because he at least gets it. He's trying to form his own opinion and his own civic identity. And it is hilarious to me because of all things that he picks he wants to be a communist.

**Resolution:** But I'm like, "Hey, at least he cares. At least he gets it. He wants to be something." And my other kids are like, "What's a communist?" Like other kids are on a totally other level and like, "You're just so not ready yet."

**Coda:** But there's, you know, that's kind of neat to me.

In addition to serving as the meta-narrative's Complicating Action, this impressively structured sub-narrative speaks to Erin's belief that civics should be engaging for students. While at surface level, it seems tangential, a closer look at its Evaluation reveals the significance of the sub-narrative. In stating, "But truthfully, he is one of my

most engaged students,” Erin returned to the theme she introduced in her Abstract: student engagement.

After concluding her first sub-narrative, Erin returned to the meta-narrative with an

Evaluation:

**Evaluation:** So anything that gets them thinking about them in any subject I think is important, but it’s just so much easier in this. Because I mean, like I said earlier, “Try me. Try to tell me how this doesn’t relate to you because I can argue it any way.” And when they see it they’re like, “Pfft, oh.” You know, and they’re like 12 and then they’re like, “Fine, I guess I’ll do it.”

Again, she brought her story back to the content with which she began, this time going back to the content of the Orientation where she spoke about constantly engaging her students in a conversation about applicability. Interestingly, she extended her

Evaluation with a second sub-narrative:

**Evaluation sub-narrative – How does this not relate to you?**

**Orientation:** But it has a more, I mean, we were talking about utilities so I brought in my utility bill.

**Complicating Action:** And they’re all like, “Oh my god!!!” Like looking at it, you know. And they’re all shocked that it’s so low compared to their big families and their big houses. But we talked about it, so I’m like, “Okay, now go home and ask your parents if you can see yours and see what you pay and how it’s different and who you pay it to. Like, how does this not relate to you? How can you tell me that you don’t have this at your house or that you can’t ask your parents about this?”

Although this sub-narrative is grossly incomplete, it continues the important work of the Evaluation by providing anecdotal evidence of the ways in which Erin is able to make civics relevant to students.

As previously mentioned, while this meta-narrative does not have a stand-alone Resolution, it does have a sub-narrative that serves as a Resolution:

**Resolution sub-narrative – Your mom and dad don’t get it either**

**Orientation:** And that's another part of teaching at this school: I'm really grateful that my parents know what's going on and when I say, "Go home and ask your parents about this," my kids come back and are like, "Oh, I did!"

**Complicating Action:** Because they have parents who ask them, "What did you do at school today?" And they're like, "Oh, I'm supposed to ask you about this. I'm supposed to ask you if you know how the Electoral College works because I learned and I heard that it's really confusing." And they were told to go home and quiz their parents on whether or not their parents know how it works or not. And they're like, "My parents just told me to look it up on Wikipedia." Or "They tried to explain it and they got to a point where they got really confused and they just didn't understand anymore."

**Evaluation:** And I'm like, "See. So when you're frustrated about learning about this, like don't be surprised because your mom and dad don't get it either. We're all going through this together. It's part of being American. It's confusing" ((laughs)).

Erin used this sub-narrative/Resolution to close her story and to communicate an important message to her listener: "See, it all works out." Because she can count on her students' parents to be involved in their children's education, she is able to make civics even more relevant and engaging. Then, returning to her meta-narrative, Erin officially concluded her story with a brief Coda that brings everything full circle: "I think it's neat, that everyday our closing can be like, 'How does this relate to your life today?' And there's no way that it doesn't."

### **Matt – The classroom was sssilent**

When responding to the same question – What types of learning experiences do you consider best practice for teaching civics? – Matt did not provide much of a narrative. That said, I felt compelled to include it in my analysis for two reasons, one structural and one substantive. Structurally, this narrative provides a superb contrast to Erin's lengthier and more complicated response to the same question. Whereas Erin's narrative was a page and a half long and included three sub-narratives, Matt's narrative

comprised only one paragraph and offered an incomplete structure, with both a Resolution (arguably unnecessary) and a Coda absent from the story. Substantively, Matt's narrative provides a superb comparison to the content of Erin's narrative. Both participants believe that the best activities in civics engage the students and are applicable (Erin's word) or relevant (Matt's word) to students' lives.

Matt began with a brief Abstract: "I would say, you know the use of technology, of course. I love, well let me go on technology first." He then provided his Orientation:

**Orientation:** Engaging the students in actually, like one of my favorite things is the iCivics website. I love the games. They are so great. And "games" is such a *misleading* name for them. They learn more from that than they are ever gonna get out of a textbook."

It could be argued that the absence of important details, especially related to iCivics, would leave listeners confused about the main subject of Matt's story. However, Matt did not have an audience of listeners. He had me, and he knew that I know all about iCivics.org, a website that contains games and simulations of civic processes and experiences for middle school students. Accordingly, without delay, Matt launched into a short telling of an event to illustrate the power of an engaging learning activity, such as an iCivics game:

**Complicating Action:** I had a classroom the other day; we were doing 'Branches of Power.' Oh my gosh, I didn't even have to tell them. They sat down, they finally all logged on. The classroom was sssilent – dead silent for 45 minutes. And these kids are obnoxiously loud. I'm always on them to quiet down. I couldn't believe it.

In less than 60 words, Matt provided anecdotal evidence of a best practice for teaching civics. Because he was talking to another educator, he knew that classroom silence – teacher code for good classroom management and, in some circles, good teaching –

would convince his listener that the activity was effective, especially once he shared that this particular class is usually “obnoxiously loud.”

The remaining half of the narrative was all Evaluation. Matt stated:

**Evaluation:** So incorporating as much technology, I mean we’ve talked about this, I said it in my blog: I love the technology aspect because, times are changing, you know? These kids, they’re thrown with so many images of so many different things, it only makes sense that we incorporate technology when we can. And, you know, keeping them engaged with the technology keeps it *relevant*. Why would they come to school and just put their heads on their desks and go to the textbook when that’s not what the rest of the world is doing?

He brought his narrative full circle by returning to the theme of his Abstract (technology) and reminding me of why he prefers this best practice: because it keeps students engaged. He also referred to the ubiquitous nature of technology in the students’ lives and in society at large to further justify its inclusion in his instructional repertoire. Lastly, he ended his narrative with a hypothetical yet poignant question that implies common sense reasoning for using technology in the civics classroom. It is as if he was saying, “I would be a bad civics teacher if I did not incorporate technology.”

In order to fully grasp Erin and Matt’s sense making regarding their identities as civics teachers, it is necessary to describe the types of classroom activities they feel best about implementing. As a teacher, one’s identity is strongly linked to how one feels while teaching, and naturally, a teacher feels best when he or she is implementing the types of activities he or she believes to be best practice. These two narratives reveal the central importance of two elements – engagement and relevance – in providing high-quality instruction in each participant’s classroom. It is not much of a leap to assume that both Erin and Matt feel the best about their teaching, and therefore themselves as civics teachers, when they are delivering lesson plans that they believe to be engaging

and relevant. Lucky for them, as Erin stated in her Evaluation, “it’s just so much easier in [civics].”

Despite its complicated structure, Erin’s narrative is remarkably strong and sends a consistent message about the degree to which civics is a relevant subject. For Erin, this is a truism, and she feels confident in her ability to regularly demonstrate that fact, as evidenced by three separate sub-narratives that speak to it. While complicated narrative structures can oftentimes indicate incoherence on the part of the speaker, Erin’s narrative had the opposite effect. As already mentioned, Matt’s narrative was not much of a narrative at all, being both incomplete and exceptionally short. However, I view these two characteristics as being positive. Matt was concise in his response. He knew the answer and he had a quick story to back it up. And because his Complicating Action did not center on a negative experience, he had no reason to resolve the story.

### **Notable Teaching Experiences**

During both the second and third interview, I asked Erin and Matt to tell me about a notable teaching experience she or he had since we last met. I explained that “notable” could mean “exceptionally positive, exceptionally negative, or, for any number of reasons, particularly memorable.” On both occasions, Erin told me about a notably negative experience she had with her students. Matt, on the other hand, began both of his narratives with negative Abstracts, but in the end, told stories that had strong Resolutions and left the listener with a positive impression of the experience he narrated. These four narratives are presented here in alternating form, beginning with Erin.

## **Erin – I don't want to talk the whole time**

The first time I asked Erin to tell me about a notable teaching experience, she narrated a brief story, presented in Appendix E in its entirety, about delivering new content through in-class readings. Although I defined “notable” as good, bad, or just plain memorable, Erin decided to tell me about an experience that was “notably bad,” as she indicated in her Abstract (lines 1-2). Without providing any orienting information, she then gave a traditional narrative opening – “Well one day” – in her Complicating Action (line 2). Quickly, however, she shifted from telling about a specific past event (the one that happened on that “one day”) to telling me a habitual narrative, which recaps events that happened over and over. According to Riessman (2008), “Habitual narratives are less dramatic than blow-by-blow reports of a single occasion; they tell of the general course of events over a period of time with verbs and adverbs marking repetition and routinization” (p. 99). Returning to Erin’s narrative, the verb “do” instead of “did” in line 4 signals a habitual narrative in the making.

In the next sentence, Erin stated her first of three Evaluations, beginning with, “Like that sucks,” referring to in-class reading. She admitted that she does not know how to make in-class reading a worthwhile instructional activity, especially because there is no individual accountability. Erin then returned to her Complicating Action to explain the accountability issue in lines 7-8, followed by the second Evaluation: “And so they’re really smart and they know that they can get away, like they know how to manipulate it.” Erin went back to her habitual Complicating Action one last time in lines 10-12, this time using the present tense to signal that this was not a specific past event, but an ongoing problem.

The remainder of Erin's narrative is rather traditional and could just as easily follow a "blow-by-blow report of a single occasion" as it does "the general course of events over a period of time." Lines 12-14 provide her final Evaluation and the crux of the story: Erin does not like to talk all the time and she wants a more effective strategy for content delivery. In lines 14-17, she resolved the narrative by talking about strategies whereby she can "mix it up" and have students efficiently learn important vocabulary before moving on to the fun activities. Erin concluded with a brief Coda in lines 17-19 through which she shared her conception of a good activity: "ones where they actually get to do it."

### **Matt – Not a snowball's chance**

When I asked Matt the same question during our second interview, I received an uncharacteristically long and layered narrative about a bad experience he had teaching a federal budget simulation that is part of the FJCC Applied Civics curriculum. However, unlike the layers in some of Erin's narratives, which took the form of simple sub-narratives, Matt's layers came in three levels, which I labeled primary, secondary, and tertiary. To more clearly illustrate this impressive structure, I indented the levels and included the entire transcript in Appendix F.

The meta-narrative began simply and traditionally enough. Matt offered an Abstract (lines 1-4) followed by an Orientation (lines 4-8), a short Complicating Action (lines 8-19) that tells us that the students did not understand the simulation, a pre-Evaluation Resolution (lines 10-11), and then an Evaluation (lines 11-16) in which Matt opined about the core problem with the lesson. With Matt, I would not have been surprised if the narrative had ended at line 16, maybe with the word "So" to bring it to a



quick conclusion. However, this experience left such an impression on Matt that, by line 16, he was just getting started.

Line 17 marks the beginning of the secondary level of this narrative and the sub-narrative, “They loved it!” which also serves as an extended Resolution to the meta-narrative. The structure of this sub-narrative is quite traditional. Matt began with an Abstract (lines 17-18) and Orientation (lines 18-22) where he discussed the time he spent revisiting the budget. In his Complicating Action (lines 22-31) he introduced the new lesson that he devised in which students were asked to pretend they had their own country and then create a national budget. In line 31, Matt shifts to the Evaluation of the sub-narrative and, over the next 10 lines, offers what I believe to be the heart of the entire meta-narrative. In addition to twice mentioning the value of the new exercise, the exercise *he* created, he expressed his disappointment with the curriculum for failing to offer such a simple alternative to the simulation. For him, this was a “no brainer” (line 40), especially considering the emphasis that the curriculum tends to place on student-centered activities. Next, in a Resolution (lines 40-42), Matt appeared to be bringing the sub-narrative, if not the entire meta-narrative to a close, but then quickly began a tertiary sub-narrative, which signaled an extension to the Complicating Action of the secondary sub-narrative.

In his tertiary sub-narrative – “You guys are right on!” – Matt offered more details about the success of his alternative budget lesson, this time homing in on an interactive *New York Times* website that illustrates the federal budget and outlined President Obama’s 2011 budget proposal. The sub-narrative consists only of an Orientation (lines 43-46) and a Complicating Action (lines 46-66). Rather than directly stating his

Evaluation of the story and then offering a Resolution, Matt weaved evaluative clues into a dialog between his students and him, which is presented in the Complicating Action. For example, when students wisely identified defense as one of the largest parts of the budget, Matt responded, “You guys are right on! You’re right on” (line 48). Later, when “one exceptional group” also identified Social Security as the biggest expenditure, Matt responded, “You got it!” (lines 55-56). Through this dialogue, Matt conveyed his positive Evaluation of the experience and even provided a Resolution to the story.

When I first analyzed this narrative, I incorrectly labeled the next ten lines (lines 67-76) as the Resolution to the primary meta-narrative. Upon closer reading, I realized that Matt actually returned to the secondary sub-narrative to continue its Resolution. It is not a Resolution for the failed budget simulation. It is a Resolution for his successful alternative exercise in which students acted as their own countries and created budgets. As he indicated in this Resolution, Matt expected teaching about the budget to be “a snooze fest” (line 68), but was pleased by the serendipitous timing of a real-life federal budget crisis and possible government shutdown that offered the perfect material for a teachable moment.

At last, in line 77, Matt returned to the meta-narrative to offer his final remarks about the curriculum’s budget game. Recall Matt’s original Evaluation where he stated in lines 12-16, “And that’s what kind of surprised me most about that lesson, because there was no introduction to the budget. . . . But these kids are too young for this.” Continuing with the line of thinking, Matt stated in lines 77-79, “Because, you know, that’s what annoyed me. You’re gonna go ahead and do this game, they don’t even know what the words are. . . . That game is way too complicated.” Even after two sub-

narratives spanning two different layers, Matt was able to bring his narrative back to the beginning by restating the true problem with the budget game and, consequently, the point of his story. He then brought the narrative back to the present, discussing the day's activity and homework, before closing with a brief, Matt-style Coda: "So anyways, the budget game flopped" (line 84).

### **Erin – Complete catastrophe...disaster**

Again, during our third interview, I asked Erin to tell me about a notable teaching experience she had since we last met. This time, I received an earful. In fact, Erin really wanted to talk about a recent and particularly upsetting experience she had, which she indicated in her Abstract: "Oh, I'm so glad that you opened with this because I so wanted to put it on the agenda. Like we really need to talk about the survival game." What followed were four-transcribed pages of Erin's particularly awful experience with teaching an Economics lesson about limited resources and supplies. The narrative structure is complicated: Abstract, Orientation, Complicating Action, Evaluation, Sub-narrative one, Complicating Action, Evaluation, Sub-narrative two, Evaluation, Sub-narrative three, Evaluation, Sub-narrative four, Evaluation, Resolution, and Coda. Most significantly, Complicating Actions and Evaluations dominated the meta-narrative and the Resolution was brief. That alone is quite telling.

For space considerations, I will only include what I judged to be significant parts of the narrative, while summarizing details that are necessary to understanding the story. The lesson was a simulation. Students were told that they are stranded on a deserted island. With limited resources (e.g., paper, scissors, rulers), they had to provide for their basic necessities such as food, water, and shelter (e.g., for food, they must make fish out of paper). After a short Orientation, Erin launched into what would be the first of

three Complicating Action sections, not including a sub-narrative that also served as a

Complicating Action:

**Complicating Action:** I had kids about to literally kill each other. So then the second period, like thank god we teach six periods over two days so I can be like, “Okay, what went wrong ((laughs)), how can I fix that for the next class period?” Which I’m really glad I can just be like, “Mmm, okay, we need to obviously tweak.” So then the second period, I was like, “Okay, be very obvious about the roles.” Like any time they broke my wooden rulers, like they got snapped in half. I’m like, “Oh, way to go! You just completely eliminated the ruler for yourself. Like, your resources are even...” I did so much with that and I’m like, “No, no more.” So, every time I taught it I got better and better at explaining like, “This is what will happen to you if you are an idiot.” Or, if you don’t behave in a civilized manner, like, yep, I’m like, ((laughs)) “Are you literally going to die if you don’t make a paper fish? No. So do you need to physically harm your buddy to do that? No.”

Erin already told me in her Abstract that the lesson was a “complete catastrophe.” This first Complicating Action section helps me to understand why: the kids were trying to hurt one another and were breaking classroom supplies. In a following Evaluation, Erin briefly talked about her failure to anticipate their lack of maturity before returning to her Complicating Action where she reported that no groups “survived” the simulation in any of her six classes. To this, she responded with a brief Evaluation that illustrates the true failure of the lesson: “And I’m like, ‘How am I going to ((laughs)) exemplify the topic that I was supposed to teach if the simulation failed?’ I was flabbergasted.”

Through a short sub-narrative, which only included an Orientation and Complicating Action, Erin extended her Complicating Action by talking about her interaction with a “standard” civics teacher at her school who taught the same lesson:

#### **Complicating Action sub-narrative – A standard civics teacher**

**Orientation:** And what cracks me up is that a standard civics teacher – because I have all the pre-AP and gifted students – she came up to me and was like, “Have you done this game yet?” I’m like, “No, I’m doing it tomorrow.” She’s like, “Oh no, I’m doing it tomorrow too. I really wanted to

know how it went for you.” I’m like, “No, no, no. We can do it together. It’s going to be great! Like simulations always go the way they say they do.”

**Complicating Action:** The next day I’m like, “How’d it go?” She’s like, “It was awesome. It worked just like it was supposed to.” And I’m like, “What! My kids couldn’t do it at all!” And she’s like, “My kids were great.”

Even though Erin does not harp on this encounter, there is one very telling part that reveals that it made her feel poorly: Erin makes it a point to classify the teacher as being “a standard civics teacher” whereas Erin teaches “all the pre-AP and gifted students.” The fact that Erin’s students “couldn’t do it at all” while the standard teacher’s students “were great,” was clearly a troubling realization for Erin.

Given the upsetting nature of the first sub-narrative, it is not surprising that Erin followed it with another full Complicating Action section when she returned to her meta-narrative. This time, she talked about adjustments she made in vain, ending the section with, “But it didn’t matter. They still went into that same mentality, and I’m like, ‘Oh, my god.’” It is at that time, in another Evaluation, that Erin made a large leap from a bad classroom experience to a pessimistic outlook about the future:

**Evaluation:** So, I was thinking to myself like, “What is the world coming to? What’s wrong with the educated youth of the future, like, the elite, you know, the higher-level people? No wonder we’re like ((laughs)) in such bad shape as a country.” And I’ve noticed other teachers saying the same thing about their students, like they have a very “me, me, me” mentality. And I see it at times, but it really didn’t rear its ugly head until we played this game. Like, they were literally about to hurt each other grabbing rulers.

To illustrate her point about “the educated youth,” Erin told another sub-narrative. This time, her sub-narrative was about a particular student who, upon realizing that he would not survive, started going around the room and sabotaging other groups. She likened his behavior to that of a terrorist. In another Evaluation, she told me that the lesson shifted from one about limited resources to one about “what kind of society will we live

in if this is the mentality people have?” She concluded her Evaluation by stating, “I mean, I was completely shocked. I could not believe it.”

The meta-narrative does not end here. Erin provided a third sub-narrative about a similar teaching experience that failed and followed it with yet another Evaluation that truly emotes the despair this experience has caused her to feel:

**Evaluation:** I don’t know, it just really shocked me. And that was a huge moment where I was like, “I don’t know.” Like, it’s a real battle for me where I’m like, “Okay, are these concepts beyond them?” Or maybe I failed all year to truly create a community within our classroom where they cared that much about each other. But bottom line, they’ll tell you they care about each other – when someone’s sick, they write nice notes, they are compassionate and loving – but bottom line, who do they care about most? Them!

She subsequently began a fourth and final sub-narrative about a female student who admitted that she is too selfish to volunteer. Erin described the student in the Evaluation of that sub-narrative: “A gifted student who is supposed to have characteristics of empathy and compassion and who is smart enough to be a future leader of our country in some way, and that’s the mentality that she has.”

This meta-narrative does have a Resolution. However, when compared to the entire narrative, it is rather short and the tone is somewhat defeated:

**Resolution:** And I’m, “But they’re 13. Like are they going to grow out of that?” I hope so.” I’m like, “But I failed to pull it out of them this year.” I don’t know; it was really interesting. So economics in the sense has been really interesting for me to see, like, they don’t get. They’re like, “Why aren’t we a market. It just seems like the right thing.” Pure market makes so much more sense to them. And I understand why, because in everything that they exhibited, it was the only thing that was successful for them. Cause they would tear down everyone else to survive and to make it. I feel like maybe next year we should read *The Lord of the Flies* in my class. I don’t know. It was really interesting. And so since Spring Break, that’s what I’ve been dealing with, and I’m like, “Whoa.”

In one breath, she admitted that they are still young. In the next, she lamented that she “failed to pull it out of them this year.” Additionally, in mentioning “pure market makes so much more sense to them,” especially in light of “everything they have exhibited,” Erin alluded to an issue of student privilege that comes up in another interview and that I will discuss later in this chapter.

The meta-narrative comes to an end with a Coda in which Erin returns to the first sub-narrative (the one about her encounter with the “standard civics teacher”) and to the idea that her advanced students only care about themselves:

**Complicating Action:** But it was a shocker for me to hear that the other civics class— I’m like, “Was it the way the teacher taught it? Was it the way they were already set up?” I mean, in no class did they understand that if they worked together as a class they could have achieved more. They were like, “But then we would have to work together. We’re competing with them. We didn’t want them to survive. We only wanted us to survive.” So not only were they trying to survive, they were trying to keep everyone else from. And I’m like, “Really? Is that what you want for like your...” it was just weird.

It was bad enough that the lesson failed so miserably in her classes without knowing that it was such a success in the standard civics classes. Moreover, despite all of Erin’s efforts, not one class was able to realize that collaboration was the key to survival. This realization is particularly stressful in a civics class where Erin was trying to build a sense of community. Again, her despair is quite evident, this time as her voice trailed off without finishing her sentence.

### **Matt – That was interesting**

When during our third interview I asked Matt to tell me about a notable teaching experience he had since we last met, he immediately started into his Abstract: “Okay, the one that sticks out in my mind would be Lesson One and that’s introducing the political parties and then taking that survey. That was interesting ((laughs)).” By

“interesting” I assumed, correctly, that he meant, “It did not go so well.” From here, Matt moved unexpectedly to a Resolution without providing additional Orientation information. In his Abstract he gave a clue as to why he withheld important details, stating, “[a]nd then taking *that* survey” (emphasis added). Matt did not provide an Orientation because he knew that I am familiar with the lesson plan and the survey. Instead, he stated:

**Resolution:** the thing about the survey is, the way I’m going to go back, I’m going to go back next year as long as I’m teaching civics, I’m going to re-do the survey, okay, due to its content. Not just the content in terms of the pornography question, but ((hearty laugh)) some of it was just too elevated for them.

Here, before explaining the ways in which the survey is problematic, he told me that he plans to fix it, which would resolve the as of yet unknown problems.

After I gave Matt a slightly confused look, he shifted to the Complicating Action of the story, which described in detail how the survey is flawed:

**Complicating Action:** For example, “Give me your opinion, what’s your stance on wages and trade unions?” Are you kidding me?! And that’s where, you know, my mentor teacher best sums it up: “Have you ever met a seventh grader?” I mean, trade unions? Adults don’t understand trade unions. So there were just some issues that were like, “What?” And then I had to try to explain it to them and so that’s what took so long. Cause I wanted to give a fair explanation if they were going to take this survey, you know. I wanted them to try and make the best, well-informed decision without me putting in too much of my bias. But it was just trying to give a basic like— even just abortion; it was like, you know, “What’s abortion?” “Okay, a woman does not want to have her baby anymore, okay? Yes or no?” ((hearty laugh)). “Do you think the government should step in and say ‘Yes, she has the right to do that’ or ‘No, she doesn’t have the right?’” You know what I mean? So, it took forever.

More than anything, Matt wanted me to understand that some of the content was just too mature or complicated for seventh grade students. However, in the middle of his Complicating Action, he also spoke to a ubiquitous challenge related to teaching about



politics: keeping one's bias in check and allowing students to make their own decisions. His Complicating Action was followed by a very brief Evaluation that seemed to contradict everything he just told me: "But I enjoyed it, you know. I mean, yeah, I enjoyed it."

At its core, this narrative is a troubled one. As such, it is not surprising that Matt then devoted quite some time to offering a second Resolution; again presenting ideas that would make the lesson stronger. He spent about three minutes talking about technical improvements he would like to make to the lesson. Finally, after one more quick evaluative statement – "So it was fun. They enjoyed it. They really liked talking about it" – he wrapped up his troubled narrative with a longer Coda than I had come to expect from him:

**Coda:** There were a lot of things I had to explain, you know. We talked about that, from abortion to the porno one ((laughs)) to, you know, just even gun control rights. Some of them they got. Most of them knew the abortion one right away. There were a few who just plain didn't know. So, it was, I enjoyed that moment. So.

While it may not seem significant now, when looking across all of Matt's narratives, the words, "They liked it" or "The students love it" are a pervasive feature. Later, I will discuss the role that student satisfaction appears to play in Matt's civics teacher identity construction.

For all four of these "notable experience" narratives, it hardly seems constructive to compare the content. Because the lessons are so different, it is difficult to equate, for example, Erin's negative experience teaching a survival simulation to Matt's experience teaching a political ideology survey. The difference in structure, I believe, is far more telling. The defining features of Erin's narratives are her multiple Complicating Action and Evaluation sections. The defining features of Matt's narratives are his Resolutions,

with which he practically begins his “That was interesting” narrative, and certainly concludes. Likewise, “Not a snowball’s chance” had four separate Resolutions. For Erin, the negative experiences happened over and over again, as evidenced by the habitual narrative; seem to really affect her, as evidenced by phrases such as “that sucks” and “I don’t know how to make that good”; and tend to leave her with more questions than answers, as evidenced by the four separate times she stated, “I don’t know” in her “Complete catastrophe...disaster” narrative. For Matt, the negative experiences were isolated and ones from which he felt he had learned. At two separate times he talked about modifications he would make next year and at three separate times in his “That was interesting” narrative, he referred to enjoying the lesson.

**Erin: “I personally have fallen in love with civics”**

In this section, I present the findings from my analysis of notable narratives from my three interviews with Erin. I selected the narratives based on two criteria. The first and most important criterion was related to the *content* of the narrative. Specifically, I chose narratives based on the degree to which they spoke to my principal research question: “How do novice social studies teachers make sense of their emerging identities as civics teachers?” Therefore, I selected narratives in which Erin spoke about her feelings of success or failure as a civics teacher, the reasons she likes teaching civics, or her general sense of her students’ reactions to the civics curriculum. The second criterion was related to the *structure* of the narrative. Specifically, I looked for narratives that were structurally complete and that I believed would tell me something about Erin’s sense making. Accordingly, I focused on those narratives that contained all six elements of a narrative – Abstract, Orientation, Complicating Action, Evaluation, Resolution, and Coda – and were structurally significant (e.g., elements were out of

order, narrative included one or more sub-narratives, narrative included lengthy or multiple Complicating Actions). Using these two criteria, I selected three “green light” narratives to analyze in depth. When my analyses of those three narratives were complete, I went back to my nine “yellow light” narratives and conducted a snapshot analysis on each, which allowed me to glean substantive insights and discern structural patterns across a larger sample of narratives.

### **Erin – The Type of Student I Was Totally Reflects the Kind of Teacher That I Am**

Over the course of our first two interviews together, Erin referred to the type of student she was during her own K-12 education at least a handful of times. For this reason, I asked her the following member-checking question during our third and final interview:

I've been reading over the transcripts from the past two interviews, and I've noticed that the type of student that you once were, and probably still are – the type that's always challenging teachers and expecting teachers to really know their stuff – seems to influence the type of teacher that you are. Would you agree with that assessment?

Before I even finished my question, Erin energetically responded, “Yes, I agree!” and then provided a two and a half page narrative, presented in Appendix G, to support her immediate answer.

The narrative began with an extended Abstract (lines 1-10) through which Erin directly answered my question. She made it clear that the type of student she was influences the type of teacher that she is, and that as a teacher, she has two options: pretend like she has all of the answers or admit that she does not. Because she was the type of student who would call out any teacher who chose the former, she chose the latter. At this point, it was unclear if Erin was going to provide a narrative to support her answer. However, halfway through line 10 Erin began a brief Orientation, which

signaled that there would indeed be a narrative, and that it would, at least at first, be a habitual one (as evidenced most clearly by her use of the present tense). In lines 12-17, Erin provided the first of two Complicating Actions (not counting another Complicating Action that will be presented in the Coda sub-narrative), by recreating dialog, a ubiquitous feature of Erin's style of storytelling. Through the dialog, Erin offered an example of her admitting that she does not have all of the answers and then supporting her students' learning through collaborative classroom research.

In line 18, Erin restated part of her Abstract: "The type of student I was totally reflects the type of teacher that I am." She then provided a short Evaluation in lines 18-22 that reaffirmed her commitment to being honest about her shortcomings as a content expert. She believes this makes her more real – something she also believes comes naturally in the civics curriculum. This set her up to return to her Complicating Action (lines 22-33) where she continued to provide habitual classroom examples to support her point, only this time focusing on the ways in which civics naturally lends itself to an honest and open position as a teacher. She also used a "non-example" – being a World history teacher and teaching about the Renaissance – to further illustrate the degree to which civics is a more "real" subject area.

Over the next 22 lines, Erin provided equally lengthy Evaluation and Resolution sections that seemed to be drawing her story to a conclusion. She talked about the importance of being real and achieving student buy-in, and she talked about the ways in which she is going to try to allow student choice for every assignment she gives during the next year. At this point, I fully expected that Erin would provide a Coda to officially conclude her narrative, and in a way, she did. However, this Coda came in the form of a

sub-narrative that brought the focus back to the original subject of my query: Erin as a student.

She began with an Orientation (lines 56-59) that indicated a return to the adolescent Erin who was always challenging her teachers. She then began her Complicating Action in line 59 where she shifted back to her as a teacher having a conversation with her students. Through this recreated dialog she told her story about being a seventh grade student who challenged a bad teacher and actually walked out of class. The story allowed her to prove two points. The first point was for her students: As long as they do not want to walk out of class, everything is okay. The second point was for me: The type of teacher Erin is reflects the type of student that she was. Erin then provided a brief Evaluation in which she expressed a little bit of remorse for being the type of student that she was, and ended with a Resolution in the form of a recreated dialog with her students and a one-word Coda: "So." Thus ended both her sub-narrative and her meta-narrative.

### **Erin – I Just Love How Pertinent It Is**

As one of my final questions during our last interview together, I asked Erin simply, "As a civics teacher, what makes you tick?" Her response provided a notable narrative for two reasons. First, the content of the narrative spoke directly to my research question in that Erin talked about what she liked about teaching civics and how it made her feel. Second, the structure, though incomplete, was significant in that elements were provided out of order, and Erin bounced back and forth between Evaluation and Complicating Action sections seven times before concluding her story with a brief and unexpected Coda.

Erin began her narrative in a traditional manner by stating her Abstract: “The civics side is so interesting. I just love how pertinent it is. And I love how we can watch the news and every single thing we talk about is on the news. It’s so applicable and pertinent.” The applicability and relevance of civics was a recurring theme across Erin’s three interviews and many of the narratives I selected for in-depth analysis. Her Orientation served to continue this point and introduce the evidence she would provide to illustrate it:

**Orientation:** And my kids see that too, because now that we watch CNN Student News for the first ten minutes of class, and I’m so thankful that we have block scheduling, because if I had a 45-minute period and ten minutes of my period was watching CNN Student News, I wouldn’t be able to do it. But with 90 minutes, we can sacrifice ten to watch Carl Zeiss every day and have him tell us what’s up.

Although she went on a brief tangent in discussing the realities of instructional time, she effectively articulated the importance of news in a civics class. Additionally, present tense verbs and phrases such as “every day” effectively indicated a habitual narrative was forthcoming.

Then, rather unexpectedly, Erin provided an Evaluation that marked the beginning of a remarkable Evaluation-Complicating Action sequence that ends with a brief Coda:

**Evaluation:** And, I mean, it just makes sense. Everything that he talks about has to do with our classroom or has to do with something that we’ve already learned.

**Complicating Action:** And my kids are yelling out the answers to the quiz questions. They’re so involved and into it, and I love it. And so I’m like, “Yes! You get it!”

**Evaluation:** It makes me so happy. And so no matter what I was teaching I would love it, but it’s so easy to get them excited about civics, and that makes learning, like the whole teaching part so much more fun, because then I don’t have to pull teeth to get them to open their books or to get out their notebooks.

**Complicating Action:** I mean, there are days— they’re not all like, “Oh my god, I love civics, I can’t wait!” There are kids that literally hate my class. But there’s not ever a kid that won’t participate in our conversations or who won’t like raise his hand. Or even kids who other teachers are like, “They never do anything for me.” I’m like, “Well, they talk in my class. I don’t know why. I guess it’s probably what we’re talking about.” Like it can apply to everybody, it’s pertinent to everyone. Even my kids who aren’t American citizens are like, “What about me?” you know. They’re engaged. Everyone can be engaged.

**Evaluation:** And so I just love that. And I love um, just the ability to like, being young and to grow with my students again. Like, I’m learning about things.

**Complicating Action:** That I’m like, “Huh, I never thought about that,” or like now that we’re learning economics and I’m like, “Mmm, well I just bought a car two weekends ago,” the first big purchase ever. So I’m showing my students, “Here’s the interest that I have to pay. How many years is it going to take me to pay it off if I pay this much every month?” and all these things. “How much more am I really going to pay on my car?”

**Evaluation:** And I’m learning and they’re learning and we’re all figuring it out together! And it’s just so fun and neat. Like, they’re learning poetry and I mean, I like poems, I can write a poem, but like, this is so much more fun ((laughs)). So much more fun and applicable to everyone.

**Coda** And so I like that part, but yeah.

To be fair, the Complicating Actions in this narrative do not serve as plot twists; they do not indicate turning points, crises, or problems as is often assumed in structural narrative analysis. Rather, Erin’s Complicating Actions simply describe sequences of actions that help to illustrate the points Erin made in her Evaluations. Because Erin’s tone is positive throughout (e.g., “I just love how pertinent it is,” “And it’s just so fun and neat”), this makes sense. It also makes sense that Erin started and ended with Evaluations – this narrative is, first and foremost, an evaluative one. In providing this response, Erin was more concerned with making a point than telling a story. Nonetheless, her stories comprised a large portion of her response and gave it a narrative feel.

In addition to its interesting structure, the content of this narrative provided important insights into Erin's sense making regarding her civics teacher identity. Again, the applicability and relevance of civics was a recurring theme across Erin's interviews and no doubt contributes to Erin's confidence and happiness as a civics teacher. However, widespread student engagement also provides Erin with a great deal of satisfaction. As she stated throughout, "They're so involved and into it" and "[T]here's not ever a kid that won't participate." Most importantly, she finds that her students "get it," which "makes [her] so happy." In perhaps the most telling line in the entire piece, Erin exclaimed, "And I'm learning and they're learning and we're all figuring it out together!" While most every teacher, regardless of experience, calling, or subject matter, wants her students to learn and is most satisfied when she perceives that to be occurring, Erin finds additional joy in learning herself, alongside her students.

### **Erin – Please Don't Make Be The Spokesperson**

During our second interview, I asked Erin simply, "How do you feel as a civics teacher?" I was wholly unprepared for the 20-minute response she provided. To be sure, the story that Erin narrated in response to this question was the most impressive and most complicated one that I received, including all of the narratives that Matt shared with me, throughout the entire study. In total, the transcribed meta-narrative spanned eight pages and included three secondary and six tertiary sub-narratives. Despite its complicated structure, it had remarkable coherence and clearly articulated Erin's anxieties as a civics teacher surrounding a core theme: "practicing what I preach." This coherence and clarity is all the more remarkable considering that Erin was struggling to make sense of her identity as a civics teacher as she narrated the story, and even explicitly admitted to the struggle by stating "I don't know" over twenty times throughout.



Of all the narratives I analyzed in depth, this one presented the most difficult challenge in terms of presentation. That is, given the length and complexity of the narrative, I had trouble deciding on a method for presenting it here. Including the entire eight-page transcript seemed out of the question. Similarly, walking through each sub-narrative, one-by-one, while describing and offering analysis of all of its structural elements, would pose a challenge of space and would be tiresome for both me and the reader. After weighing several options, I decided to create a figure (Figure 1-1) to represent the narrative, and then use it as a reference to explain some of its most structurally and substantively significant elements.

As the figure illustrates, the meta-narrative included three secondary sub-narratives: “I just tell them,” “What the parents are going to think,” and “Is it really what matters?” The first two were presented in quick succession very early in the meta-narrative and seemed to split the meta-narrative into two themes: Erin’s civics teacher identity *inside* of the classroom and Erin’s civics teacher identity *outside* of the classroom. The third secondary sub-narrative came much later in the narrative and seemed somewhat tangential as Erin talked about her relationship with her politically opposite husband and how she uses it to illustrate political respect and understanding for her students.

As the figure also illustrates, the meta-narrative included six tertiary sub-narratives across the first two secondary sub-narratives (The secondary sub-narrative “Is it really what matters?” does not host any tertiary sub-narratives). Two of the tertiary sub-narratives fall under the secondary sub-narrative “I just tell them” and three fall under the secondary sub-narrative “What the parents are going to think.” One tertiary sub-

narrative entitled “I just don’t want bad attention” represents a strong blending of the themes from the first two secondary sub-narratives. Interestingly, and as the figure shows, these tertiary sub-narratives do not fall linearly below their respective secondary sub-narratives. Rather, Erin bounced back and forth among the secondary topics and thus, among the themes of her civics teacher identity *inside* of the classroom and *outside* of the classroom. The grey circles with the letter “M” represent spaces in the story where Erin returned to her meta-narrative, oftentimes to provide Evaluative comments.

In the Abstract of the meta-narrative, Erin quickly but effectively summarized the main themes of her story:

**Abstract:** I wonder if I’m actually modeling what I’m supposed to be teaching. Because everyone here is like, “You’re the Novice Teacher of the Year. You should be on the side of the road with signs, blah, blah, blah.” And I’m like, “Yeah, I know, but I get nerv—“ I don’t know, like I get nervous. I feel really torn. Like I know I’m practicing what I’m preaching in my classroom.

Because she was named Novice Teacher of the Year for her school district and because she teaches civics, she feels as though she should be more civically engaged in her community, which, in turn, would model civic activism for her students. However, because she *is* a novice teacher, she has reservations about taking a publicly political stand. That said, she feels confident about what is going on inside her classroom, which she discussed at length in her first secondary sub-narrative, “I just tell them.”

“I just tell them” is all about Erin’s disclosure of her political beliefs in the classroom and, for the most part, it is all Complicating Action. After a brief Orientation and an equally brief Evaluation – “And I don’t care. I just don’t think it’s a big deal. And they just want to know and once they know they’re like, ‘Oh.’ And then they move

forward” – Erin launched into a page-long Complicating Action section that illustrates the extent to which disclosing her political viewpoints is not “a big deal.” However, the most significant part of this secondary sub-narrative is the sentence-long Resolution with which she ended it: “So in my classroom, I’m really confident about like showing my ideology and exhibiting it.” This is one of only a few times throughout the entire meta-narrative that Erin provided a Resolution, a structurally significant occurrence that I will address later in my analysis.

The reassurance of Erin’s Resolution is short-lived. In her next breath she started another secondary sub-narrative, which served as the main Complicating Action of the meta-narrative.

### **Complicating Action secondary sub-narrative – What the parents are going to think**

**Abstract:** ((lowering voice)) Then there’s like this bridge to the real world that I get really nervous about crossing because a lot of my parents I fear are hypercritical.

**Orientation:** I went to great lengths to explain to my students why I would and would not tell them about certain things in certain ways, so that if they went home and said like, “Well my teacher said that she did this and this,” then they would also, if a parent came back, I would also be able to easily explain what I told their child and what great lengths I went through to not, you know, expose them to any indoctrination and biases or whatever.

**Evaluation:** But like, in the real world, I don’t know. I know I’m not practicing what I’m preaching.

**Complicating Action:** The union rep was like, “Why aren’t you out there with a sign?” And I’m like, “I don’t know. I’m a civics teacher.” And I’m like, “I don’t know, I get nervous about it. And what if, what the parents are going to think, and what they’re going to complain about or whatever.” And she’s like, “All the more reason! We need people like you, like being quoted in the paper.” And I’m like, “Oh, no, no, no, I don’t want to be quoted in the paper.”

**Evaluation:** Like I’m nervous about that because it brings the spotlight and I know that when people bring the spotlight it’s only for the bad things. And I get nervous about that.

**Resolution:** So, I think I just need to start manning up and just doing it.

The Abstract and Orientation powerfully express Erin's anxieties as a civics teacher and the expectation that she carry a political identity. Namely, she feels insecure about dealing with parents and, as she soon revealed, the larger community. That is exactly why she is hesitant to picket on behalf of the teachers' union, even though she is informally expected to as the District's Novice Teacher of the Year who also happens to be a civics teacher. Given her precarious position, it is not surprising that she stated "I get nervous" six times throughout this short sub-narrative. It is equally unsurprising that her Resolution has a reluctant tone.

What followed were three tertiary sub-narratives. In the first one, "I'm also extremely opinionated," Erin talked about getting into verbal disagreements with fellow faculty at department and school-wide meetings. In the second, "I don't talk about that," Erin discussed her inclination to avoid current political issues with her students, unless they bring them up. This is somewhat incongruous with previous statements that expressed confidence in teaching political subject matter. In the third tertiary sub-narrative, "I'm not going to hold a sign for that," Erin heatedly expressed her disagreement with colleagues over state legislation that might affect teacher pay, which helps explain her lack of motivation to rally against it. While the content of these three tertiary sub-narratives is interesting, and in some cases illuminating, their most significant characteristic is structural. Specifically, all three are dominated by Complicating Actions and none of them include a Resolution. As previously stated, I plan to return to this structural issue later in my analysis.

Briefly, Erin returned to the primary meta-narrative to offer one Evaluative comment: "But, um, I don't know. I don't like that I'm not modeling it." If we recall, Erin

began her meta-narrative with an Abstract in which she posed the question, “Am I’m actually modeling what I’m supposed to be teaching?” It is interesting that she first brought up the topic of modeling as a question, which she seemed to be trying to answer through storytelling. Here, about halfway through the entire meta-narrative, she seemed to arrive at a negative answer to her own question. To support her Evaluation of not modeling civic activism, Erin then launched into a tertiary sub-narrative through which she meshed the two themes of civics teacher identity *inside* of the classroom and civics teacher identity *outside* of the classroom:

**Complicating Action tertiary sub-narrative – I just don’t want bad attention**

**Orientation:** And at this meeting today, one of the civics teachers was telling me how she doesn’t tell her bia— like she doesn’t tell her students anything about her political stuff.

**Complicating Action:** And I didn’t disclose that I do because I thought that would just get us more off task and she would not be happy with it, and she’d probably start saying how the Novice Teacher of the Year does this really unethical thing or something like that. And I just don’t want bad attention. I’m like, “I don’t really need that.” So she was talking about how she was on the side of the road and one of her students saw her and they pulled off and had to ask her a homework question. So there she is holding her sign and someone was like, “Teaching never ends.” She’s like, “No it doesn’t. Here’s a perfect example.”

**Evaluation:** But, like she was doing what I think I’m supposed to be doing.

Structurally, this sub-narrative followed a pattern that has become characteristic of Erin in that it is dominated by Complicating Actions and, to a lesser extent in this case, Evaluations. Substantively, Erin showed signs of wavering in her commitment to disclose her political viewpoints to her students. Again, as Novice Teacher of the Year, Erin seems to perceive different expectations for her behavior and sense that certain stakeholders may be out to get her, an issue to which she returned later in her third

secondary sub-narrative. Whether perceived or real, these factors seemed to be limiting Erin's civic activism, which, in turn, caused her to feel that she was not fulfilling her duty as a civics teacher. *Ipsa facto*, Erin felt unsure about her civics teacher identity.

After this very powerful sub-narrative, Erin returned to her primary meta-narrative with a lengthy and powerful Evaluation:

**Evaluation:** And so that's something that I'm, like I guess I'm kind of disappointed in myself about. Like, "Maybe I should just be more active and, and maybe that would help for my students like modeling for them more." Like, I don't know. So, I don't know, that's something that I'm kind of unsure about. I feel very, I don't know, like lost in my civics teacher identity. Like I'm supposed to be doing that, but I'm not. But I want my kids to. So, I don't know, I guess it's kind of disappointing, but I don't really know why I'm not because I'm not—I don't have the same, I'm not sure where I stand as often as a lot of other people are. And that kind of like makes we weary, because I'm not sure that I'm not standing on the side—that I will be standing on the side that I completely agree with. I don't know.

This paragraph quite possibly represents the best example of Erin struggling to make sense of her identity as a civics teacher. Looking at it through a conversational or discourse lens, she showed signs of struggling to articulate her identity. She said "I don't know" six times, she cut herself off mid-sentence twice, and she used adjectives such as "disappointed," "unsure," "lost," and "weary" to assess herself as a civics teacher. It is truly the darkest point in the narrative.

To illustrate her uncertain stance when it comes to political issues, Erin provided another tertiary sub-narrative, "It's all or nothing," that offered a continued expression of her fear of parental backlash. Specifically, she talked about being a member of the teachers' union, if only for the legal protection it can provide in the event that "one of [her] crazy parents wants to sue [her] for something ridiculous." However, when it comes to major issues on which the union takes a clear stance, Erin gets "kind of weary because [she] hear[s] both sides and it's exceptionally hard." Again, Complicating

Actions and Evaluations dominate this sub-narrative, with only a brief Abstract at the beginning.

At this very late point in the meta-narrative, Erin presented her third and final secondary sub-narrative, "Is it really what matters." As I mentioned earlier, this sub-narrative seemed somewhat tangential as Erin talked about her relationship with her politically opposite husband and how she uses it to illustrate political respect and understanding for her students. However, a closer examination of structure revealed a potential reason for Erin including it. Here is the full sub-narrative:

### **Evaluation secondary sub-narrative – Is it really what matters?**

**Abstract:** Because my husband, like I'm more liberal than not, and my husband is completely the opposite,

**Orientation:** and all my friends are like, "I don't know how you're married. I can't imagine." Like, we're completely opposite. Like every night when we go home and like I'm here and I'm hearing all this stuff and I go home and I tell him about it and he's is really good at bringing up all the counter arguments

**Complicating Action:** And I'm like, "I don't know how I feel anymore!" And I'm like, "I really support this, though, and this is what I think is a bigger concern for me." And he's like, "Yeah, well, blah, blah, these things," and just not understanding. I'm like, "Don't you see this is like half of our pay?" And he's like, "Whatever." He's like, "I don't think it's right," you know and all these kinds of things.

**Evaluation:** And when I tell my kids, I'm like, "I'm way on this side of the spectrum. My husband is way on this side of the spectrum. Next year will not be a happy year in our house. But can we get past it? Do I still live with this person? Yeah! It's not the only thing that I care about. Every four years it's a big deal but all the other years, it's not."

**Resolution:** And they're all like, "Oh," because they started seeing where their ideologies fell and were like, "You believe this and you, like, you're my friend, how do you..." you know, and it's like, "Does it, is it really what draws your friendship? Is it really what matters? You have to weigh what's most important to you." And I said, "And politics aren't as important to either of us. Only at certain times, so we can get along." I told them, I'm like,

“College football!” I’m like, “Could we live in the same house if we were cheering for different teams? “No way! You guys know me.”

**Coda:** And they’re all like laughing about that.

Structurally, this is the only complete narrative in the entire meta-narrative. The meta-narrative itself, as well as all of the other secondary and tertiary sub-narratives, are incomplete. Most importantly, this sub-narrative has a Resolution and a strong one at that. The more I examined it, the more I felt that it represented Erin relocating her voice and her positive sense of her civics teacher identity. It was as though she was saying, “I don’t always know where I stand and I don’t always want to take a public position, but I know how to use my weaknesses to teach my students about civil discourse and respect.” Once again, she was voicing her confidence in what occurs *inside* of her classroom.

Erin then returned to her primary meta-narrative where she began with an Evaluative statement: “And so, I don’t know. I like that I can model that for them but I don’t like that I don’t know where I stand.” She then characteristically bounced back and forth between Complicating Actions and Evaluations as she talked about teaching political issues and modeling her political thinking for her students. Most significant from a substantive standpoint, in one of two Complicating Action sections, Erin talked about appreciating CNN Student News for bringing political issues into her classroom:

**Complicating Action:** And I’m like, “Come on CNN Student News! Come on, do it for me please! Bring it into the classroom!” Because if I do, then I know it can get totally twisted into something, because there have already been problems when they’ve sent through information about a political rally through school email and then teachers have passed it on to their parents and they had a parent who did not appreciate receiving the information and just go off at the School Board about how they received, how the information was disseminated to them and they didn’t think it was appropriate.



For Erin, any confidence she feels in teaching political subject matter *inside* of her classroom is tempered by her fear of what can occur *outside* of the classroom.

This fear is vividly illustrated by her final tertiary sub-narrative, “I’m exactly the person they want to fire!” in which Erin talked about panicking while having a beer at a bar after someone said that the news might be coming. In one memorable recreated dialog that comprised just a fraction of the entire Complicating Action section, Erin articulated her worst fear:

**Complicating Action:** And someone said, “Oh, I heard that the news might be here!” And I’m like, “What! I don’t want to be on the news at a bar with a beer!” And they’re like, “You’re the Novice Teacher of the Year! You won’t get fired.” I’m like, “I’m exactly the person that they want to fire! That’s exactly the person they want to catch doing something wrong so they can fire me.” And they’re like, “No, you’re good.” And I’m like, “Don’t you understand?” I was like, “The public hates my career and my profession! They’re out to get us. They’re trying to burn us.”

Notably, this was the third time Erin brought up being Novice Teacher of the Year, and for the third time, she did not refer to it as an asset. Also, another sub-narrative came and went without a Resolution.

The same can be said for the larger, primary meta-narrative. At this point, Erin returned to her meta-narrative with one last Evaluation and one last Complicating Action. For the former, she stated, “So I feel really torn and at least like, I’m thankful I’m teaching civics because I don’t think I’d be this aware of it if I wasn’t.” She then ended her entire seven-page narrative with this very short but telling Complicating Action: “And everyone wants to talk to me about it and just get my opinion, just like teachers around school and I’m like, ‘I don’t know. I don’t know what my opinion is. Please don’t make me be the spokesperson.’” She then shrugged her shoulders and looked at me as if to say, “Next question.”

## **Looking Across the “Yellow Light” Narratives**

As previously mentioned, when my analyses of the above three narratives were complete, I went back to my nine “yellow light” narratives for Erin and conducted a snapshot analysis on each. By looking across a larger sample of Erin’s narratives, I was able to glean substantive insights and discern structural patterns. For the former, I found that Erin spoke at length about the kind of teacher she is, her unexpected realization of student privilege, end-of-course examinations, and the idea that next year she will do things differently. For the latter, I found that three structural patterns – use of sub-narratives, Complicating Action-Evaluation sequences, and weak or absent Resolutions – help to illuminate the ways in which Erin makes sense of her civics teacher identity.

### **The kind of teacher Erin is**

While it can be argued that every story Erin narrated provided insight into the kind of teacher that she is, three in particular spoke directly to the topic. In sum, Erin is the kind of teacher who really loves teaching, bounces between taking responsibility for her shortcomings in the classroom and sometimes placing the blame on students, and is perfectly comfortable not knowing all of the answers. In a narrative entitled, “Well, I could always be a teacher, right?” Erin talked about an experience with students that helped her realize that she wanted to be a teacher: “I helped with this field trip that came to the museum and that’s when I was like, ‘I really like this part. I really like telling somebody else about stuff that *I like* more than I like just being around all of the stuff I like.” However, as much as Erin likes teaching, she sometimes finds that not everything goes as planned in the classroom. When this occurs, she struggles to articulate the source of the problem. In a narrative entitled, “It was hard. I taught it bad,” Erin initially

blamed herself when a lesson failed to meet expectations, but then in her Resolution stated, “They’re not ready yet” and “That’s so hard for them.”

Perhaps the most powerful insights into the kind of teacher that Erin is were neatly packaged in a narrative entitled, “I’m not your captain.” Before the interview, Erin had written a blog post in which she discussed her decision to be honest with her students about her inexperience with the large-scale student activism curriculum “Project Citizen,” for which classes identify a community problem, draft an action plan for addressing the problem, and then take action to attempt to solve or improve the problem. In a powerful statement of her philosophy, she wrote, “I think they appreciate it when I’m honest with them. It also takes pressure off me when they start asking what is going to happen next. I remind them that they are just as much in charge as I am.” I was intrigued by her willingness to admit her instructional vulnerability and devolve so much power, so I asked her about it when we met. In response, she narrated a three-page story about her experiences, offering multiple examples of her honesty with her students. Then, in an Evaluation she stated:

I just didn’t want my kids to be confused in thinking that I knew exactly what was going on and that this was going to be a success and that they were going to like change the world; and I don’t want them to think that they can’t. But I just want them to understand that like, I’ve never done this before. I do not know what comes next. This might be bad and we might have to go backwards and fix it. We might totally mess this up, but like, “It’s your project, you picked it. I don’t know what’s going to happen.”

While most teachers would readily admit to themselves and other adults that they do not have all of the answers, few would make such an admission to their students, which Erin acknowledges in her narrative. Still, Erin embraces her non-expert stance and values the culture of trust, initiative, and creativity that she is able to build in her classroom by assuming it.

## Realization of student privilege

Early in our first interview, I asked Erin about the types of civics learning experiences she recalls from her own K-12 education. After speaking somewhat flippantly about the traditional one-semester American government course in twelfth grade that was dominated by lectures and worksheets, Erin became very serious and changed the topic of our conversation to the privilege she sees in her students by providing this abstract: “My students are high socioeconomic class. They are privileged people and they feel like they don’t need to do this.” In her Complicating Action she continued:

Right now we’re about to start Project Citizen and like, “What problems do you have in your community?” That lesson is tomorrow, and I know, I’ve already heard it: “What do you mean? What if your community is perfect?” I’m like, “Really? There’s nothing wrong with where you live?” But they don’t see it. They don’t get it because they do live *really privileged* lives for the most part.

Later that week, in a follow-up blog post, Erin wrote: “They’re also primarily upper class children who don’t really feel as though they face true problems within their communities.” Considering the demographics of her school’s community, I should not have been surprised. Nonetheless, given the focus of my study, I found myself drawn to the ways in which student privilege and relative apathy upset Erin as they hindered the citizen activism she was trying to inspire. Accordingly, I asked her about it during our second interview.

Specifically, I wanted to know how this issue of privilege played out while the students worked through the Project Citizen lessons. Erin indicated that the students’ privilege was most evident when they were selecting community problems to tackle. As she stated in an Evaluation section:

When I look at their problems I think their privilege plays into it because they're not talking about homeless people or poverty; those issues are not there. They're mad because they don't have sports at school. They're mad because they don't like the way their school lunches taste. They're not mad that they don't like *have* a school lunch. You know what I'm saying? So their problems are privileged people's problems. But, that doesn't mean that privileged people aren't allowed to try to solve their own problems, so I don't really want to criticize it or put a lot of focus into it.

For just a moment, it appeared that Erin had come to terms with her students' privilege, but then she transitioned into another Complicating Action section followed by another Evaluation. I should also add that her narrative had a weak Resolution and that she ended with a very brief Coda: "I don't know." Taken together, these structural features illustrate Erin's uneasiness about her students' privilege and the degree to which it impedes their activism.

### **End-of-course examinations**

Of all of the topics that came up throughout our three interviews together, the most powerful was the looming end-of-course examination that will be implemented at the conclusion of the 2011-2012 school year. First, I never once initiated the topic. On the contrary, every time it came up (more than ten times), it was Erin who brought it to the table. Second, every time Erin spoke of it, she did so with a strong sense of foreboding. To be fair, she has good reason to be apprehensive about the examination. By the 2013-2014 school year, seventh grade students must pass this examination in order to be promoted to the eighth grade and aggregate student data from this examination will be factored into school grades (CS/HB 105, Civics Education). Moreover, at the time of our interviews teachers had not yet seen the examination and were uncertain of its format, time limitations, and approach to assessing some of the performance-based standards included in the NGSSS for middle school civics.

Throughout the nine “yellow light” narratives for which I conducted snapshot analyses, Erin brought up the examination seven times across two separate narratives. She first mentioned the examination in a narrative entitled, “I forgot about all of these parts of government,” which was in response to my prompt, “Describe the experiences that you have had that you believe have prepared you to be a civics teacher.” Remarkably, while this narrative is all about Erin’s educational and teacher professional development experiences, she still managed to talk about the examination three separate times. Her most telling reference to the examination came at the very end of her narrative in an out-of-place Complicating Action (another telling feature) in which she stated:

It will be really interesting for us next year when we have end-of-course exams, where they have to be tested on their level of achievement, because it makes me wonder sometimes, I’m like, “I know I’m teaching these kids to like— but ((lowering voice)) am I teaching them the standard?” Like I know they’re learning, I know they’re growing and if somebody wanted to ask them about what do they do if there’s litter on the side of the road and how do they make a difference, I know that they’re going to be able to tell me that, but that’s not what is going to be on the end-of-course exam.

In another narrative entitled, “I’m feeling really horrible,” Erin spoke about how she would feel if it were the end of the next school year when the end-of-course examination will be administered. While the title of the narrative (which I pulled from the Abstract of the narrative) properly summarizes Erin’s feelings about how her students would perform on the examination, her Complicating Action further illuminated her anxiety:

Because if it was the end-of-course exam for next year – no way. I feel like my kids would do well, but I don’t feel that they would be as good as I could have made them. I don’t think that my classroom had a lot of rigor. I don’t think that it was very rigorous. I think a lot of that was me not knowing what was coming next, not, you know, literally not busting my ass every like afternoon to make everything above and beyond for the next day. I was

really kind of going like, “Okay, I know what’s coming up. I’m feeling good about this. We’re going to do these things and then we’re going to get it.”

At this point, it became clear to me that Erin’s sense of her identity *this year*, is very different from what it will most likely be *next year*, when the end-of-course examination is implemented.

### **Doing it differently next year**

Related to the topic of the end-of-course examination is Erin’s notion that she will do things differently next year. For novice teachers, such thinking is common; they believe that they are learning and growing and that they will continue to get better at teaching with each passing school year. In Erin’s case, however, doing things differently is just as much about doing things better as it is about adapting instruction in response to an end-of-course examination. As she stated in one narrative, “Right now, I’m like, ‘It’s okay, it’s okay.’ But next year, I might be meaner to my students.” According to Erin, being “meaner” includes giving more worksheets, which she suspects “are going to do a better job” of teaching the standards, and not allowing students to engage in so many activities, which, as we have already learned, is when Erin feels best as a civics teacher. In another narrative, she took this thinking a step further:

I will tell you that I have loved my opportunity to teach my curriculum before it’s measured ((nervous laugh)) because now I’m like, “Okay, let’s look standards based at everything I’ve accomplished this year and whether or not my kids did something really cool and fun and interactive and had a great time or if they provide ((nervous laugh)) accomplishment and mastery of a true standard.”

As this statement sadly demonstrates, Erin does not necessarily equate “cool and fun and interactive” classroom activities with student mastery of standards, thus indicating that she will be less inclined to incorporate such activities into her future instruction.

To be fair, Erin did speak about doing things better next year in the context of simply improving upon her teaching. Most notable was her discussion of Project Citizen. In two separate narratives, Erin discussed making changes to this project during the next school year. In the Evaluation of one narrative, she spoke specifically about the changes:

I think maybe the way I set it up next year will be different. I'll have to think more about getting— I want to get them more involved in their communities, previous to this. Like requiring them to do community service, which, who knows if I'll even be able to do it because it's not a standard, but requiring them to get out into the community.

The opportunity to implement such changes seems to have a positive influence on Erin's civics teacher identity. As she stated in the Coda of another narrative, "I'm just really grateful that I get to do it again next year. I'm like, 'Yes! I get to be so much better and grow so much more.'" Unfortunately, after looking across our three interview transcripts, I found that Erin's optimism over growing and getting better in the coming years was severely overshadowed by her apprehension regarding high-stakes tests.

### **Sub-narratives**

One of the most impressive structural features found in many of Erin's narratives was her use of sub-narratives. Out of the 16 total Erin narratives that I analyzed, six of them included sub-narratives. Of those six narratives, three of them included both secondary- and tertiary-level sub-narratives. When I conducted my snapshot analyses of Erin's nine "yellow light" narratives, I found that two of them contained sub-narratives. The first one, entitled, "Well, I could always be a teacher, right?" contained five sub-narratives. Similar to Erin's other layered narratives, it is both incredibly complex and impressively coherent. By narrating five separate life experiences that influenced her



education and career choice, Erin effectively narrated one large narrative that thoroughly explains how she arrived at her important decision to become a teacher.

In another layered narrative entitled, “I forgot about all of these parts of government,” Erin failed to achieve the same level of coherence. The story lacks a clear focus and one of the sub-narratives might more accurately be described as a tangent. Interestingly, this narrative was shorter and far less complex than the preceding narrative. By comparing the respective topics of the two narratives, I found this difference in coherence to make sense. In the more coherent one, Erin talked about her decision to become a teacher – a decision with which she is very satisfied. The absence of multiple Complicating Actions and the presence of strong Resolutions throughout the multi-layered narrative further demonstrate her satisfaction. In the less coherent one, Erin talked about the experiences that prepared her to be a civics teacher. This narrative contains three Complicating Actions and zero Resolutions. Taken together, the substance of the narrative and the structural features demonstrate an uncertainty regarding her qualification to be a civics teacher, which helps to explain the lack of coherence in the narrative.

### **Complicating Action-Evaluation sequences**

One of the most frequent structural features across Erin’s narratives was her use of Complicating Action-Evaluation sequences. Out of the 16 total Erin narratives that I analyzed, 12 of them included such sequences. When I conducted my snapshot analyses of Erin’s nine “yellow light” narratives, I found that six of them contained these sequences. These narratives were usually characterized by negative foci, feelings of hopelessness or desperation, and the presence of multiple Complicating Actions and Evaluations, which tend to appear together in a linear sequence. During these

sequences, Erin typically talked about a negative classroom experience and evaluated it, and then talked about another negative classroom experience and evaluated it. Sometimes, she offered as many as four or five negative experiences, all of which serve the purpose of illustrating or emphasizing the main point she was trying to make in telling her story.

The *in vivo* titles of many of these narratives tend to reveal the negative foci and help us to anticipate the Complicating Action-Evaluation sequences. Examples from her “yellow light” narratives include “They are privileged people and they feel like they don’t need this,” “I forgot about all these parts of government,” and “But it was hard. I taught it bad.” In a very brief narrative entitled, “Disappointed they were not more interested in what I was teaching,” Erin provided one of her signature Complicating Action-Evaluation sequences:

**Complicating Action:** They came in with a really bad attitude.

**Evaluation:** And I had to remember that it probably wasn’t personal. That’s probably how they felt about everything because they’re 12.

**Complicating Action:** Um, but when I was trying to teach them the importance of civic activism, they didn’t see what I saw and I was kind of disappointed. Like they didn’t care about what I was teaching.

**Evaluation:** And part of that is like, they don’t have the same experiences as me. They really are 12. Like, where have they ever been, and like when do they interact with their government? I’m not sure. They don’t realize that they do or why it’s important.

Here, we see Erin talking about a negative classroom experience. Namely, her students entered her classroom with a bad attitude about civics. She then evaluated that experience by reminding herself (and explaining to me) that it was not personal, that it was a reflection of their age. She then talked about her failure to convey the importance

of civic activism to them, which she followed with another Evaluation that again discussed their age.

### **Weak or absent Resolutions**

Oftentimes when an Erin narrative included a Complicating Action-Evaluation sequence, it also included a weak Resolution or had no Resolution at all. This makes sense given the characteristics of these narratives (e.g., negative foci, feelings of hopelessness or desperation). Out of the 16 total Erin narratives that I analyzed, six of them either had a weak Resolution or no Resolution at all. When I conducted my snapshot analyses of Erin's nine "yellow light" narratives, I found that three of them sported this structural feature. By "weak Resolution," I mean that the Resolution was either very short, unconvincing, or both.

For example, in the narrative "That doesn't mean that privileged people aren't allowed to try to solve their own problems," the structure demonstrates distress. There is a very short Abstract and Orientation before Erin immediately dove into a long Complicating Action-Evaluation sequence. Then, in one sentence at the very end she stated, "I don't know how to change it other than maybe just next year trying to get them more involved in their community, supporting more community service like that where maybe they'll just be more exposed to other people's problems." Not only is this Resolution very short in comparison to the other structural elements of the narrative, but it is also very defeatist. This is confirmed by a short and negative Coda with which Erin ended the narrative: "I don't know."

### **Matt: "I really do enjoy it"**

In this section, I present the findings from my analysis of notable narratives from my three interviews with Matt, as well as his many blog posts. In the same way as I

selected narratives from Erin’s interviews, I selected Matt narratives based on two criteria. As a first criterion, I chose narratives based on the degree to which the *content* embedded in them spoke to my principal research question: “How do novice social studies teachers make sense of their emerging identities as civics teachers?” As such, I selected narratives in which Matt spoke about his feelings of success or failure as a civics teacher, the reasons he likes teaching civics, or his general sense of his students’ reactions to the civics curriculum. The second criterion was related to the *structure* of the narrative. I looked for narratives that were structurally complete and that I believed would tell me something about Matt’s sense making. Accordingly, I focused on those narratives that contained all six elements of a narrative – Abstract, Orientation, Complicating Action, Evaluation, Resolution, and Coda – and were structurally significant (e.g., elements were out of order, narrative included one or more sub-narratives, narrative included lengthy or multiple Complicating Actions). Using these two criteria, I selected five “green light” narratives to analyze in depth. When my analyses of those five narratives were complete, I went back to my ten “yellow light” narratives and conducted a snapshot analysis on each, which allowed me to glean substantive insights and discern structural patterns across a larger sample of narratives.

### **Matt – She loved it and I was livid**

In Florida, new teachers can expect to have at least two classroom observations a year by an administrator and a formal evaluation at the end of the school year. The classroom observations typically last one class period and are followed by a one-on-one meeting between teacher and administrator. Sometimes the administrator will use an instrument to evaluate the teacher’s performance during the observation, but oftentimes, he or she just takes a few informal notes. The formal evaluation typically

consists of a one-page, carbon copy evaluation form in which teachers are rated in a number of competencies. The rating scale is as follows: High Performing, Outstanding, Satisfactory, Needs Improvement, and Unsatisfactory. The administrator completes the form prior to meeting with the teacher and then reviews it with the teacher during their one-on-one meeting, which usually takes place during the final month of the school year.

Rather serendipitously, Matt had a classroom observation on the same day as our second scheduled interview. Then, a month later, Matt had his official end-of-year evaluation meeting on the day before our third and final interview. Naturally, Matt wanted to talk about both of these encounters, and considering the recent proximity of each event to an interview, the details and emotions surrounding them were easy for him to recall. Additionally, both of these encounters lent themselves to two very telling narratives – “She loved it” and “I was livid” – in terms of Matt’s sense making. Because of the similar topics yet very different experiences recounted in the two narratives, I decided to analyze them side-by-side.

As the titles reveal, Matt’s observation went very well and his evaluation, in his estimation, did not. As a cursory glance at the structure of the narratives reveals, Matt was happy to recount the experience of the observation and was upset as he narrated the experience of receiving his evaluation. For example, the narrative entitled, “She loved it” comprised only one transcribed page and was very well structured. It included an Orientation, a Complicating Action, an Evaluation, another Complicating Action, a meaningful Resolution, and a typical Coda for Matt: “So.” On the other hand, the structure of the narrative entitled, “I was livid,” conveyed a degree of distress. It

comprised two transcribed pages, an Orientation, seven Evaluations, six Complicating Actions, two sub-narratives (both serving as Complicating Actions), and an angry Coda. Most notably, there was no Resolution.

Beginning with the narrative entitled, “She loved it,” I could easily discern how a positive classroom observation helped Matt to feel confident and secure in his civics teacher identity. Interestingly, the majority of the narrative was dedicated to explaining a scheduling snafu that threatened to cancel the planned classroom visit. However, the administrator eventually made it to his classroom and was very pleased with what she observed. As Matt recounted in a lengthy Evaluation:

**Evaluation:** She thought it was excellent. It went well. Um, it was nothing fantastic. We were talking about the federal budget and then we were doing some stuff related to FCAT. It’s called informational text resources. They want us to be working on FCAT stuff, so basically we’re doing a chapter on the federal budget and I had them go through and find examples of captions, textboxes, subheadings, headings, bold and italicize, index, glossary. Administrators eat that stuff up because it’s all FCAT-related. It’s just, you know, familiarizing yourself with non-fiction text for the FCAT. So uh, she loved it. We talked about debt a little. I showed them the debt clock in New York City. The kids loved it.

Multiple times throughout the three interviews, Matt articulated a positive classroom experience by stating, “The kids loved it!” or “They loved it!” Over time, it became clear to me that Matt’s emerging civics teacher identity was strongest when he perceived that his students were really enjoying his class. The same appeared to be true when he perceived that a superior approved of his instructional choices, as he demonstrated in this Evaluation by stating, “She loved it.”

The other telling element in the narrative was its Resolution through which Matt brought his narrative to an end and also reiterated the positive reception of his lesson:

**Resolution:** So they were, you know, they were excited. But it went awesome. It went well. The first observation went well. Um, very

complimentary, and I think she just has a lot of faith in me and so she didn't feel compelled to stay very long and actually she did the same thing with that teacher and they love that teacher. She was in there for 20 minutes and peaced out.

Matt began the Resolution by once again proclaiming his students' satisfaction with the lesson. Quickly, however, he shifted to the observation, which he believed went well, and his administrator's satisfaction with the lesson. As Matt noted, she only stayed for about 20 minutes. Matt interpreted this short visit as a sign that "she just has a lot of faith" in him, and he therefore felt great about the whole experience. These sentiments are important to keep in mind as we now explore the structure and content of the narrative, "I was livid."

As already mentioned, this narrative was double the length of the previous one and had a far more complicated structure. In fact, in a structural style that is very reminiscent of Erin's storytelling, this narrative contained a Complicating Action-Evaluation sequence that included 12 transitions between the two elements. From the beginning, I could tell that Matt would be narrating a negative experience when he stated in his Abstract: "I had my evaluation, this is where the fun stuff comes out because— Here we go." He had barely begun and his story already included sarcasm and an incomplete sentence. He then continued:

**Orientation:** I don't mind sharing this at all. I will say that I was greatly surprised because administration has had nothing but wonderful things to say about me on both ends. I'm only viewed by one principal, or one administrator, the assistant principal. She reviewed me, um; she's been in my class two times, both formal observations.

While this section mostly served as an Orientation to the story that was to come, it also served as a preface. First, in stating, "I don't mind sharing this at all," Matt seemed to be preparing me for bad news while also communicating that he was not embarrassed by

it. Second, he told me that he was surprised by the bad news because, up until that point, he thought that everything was just fine and that his administration was satisfied with his performance. Third, he implied that his administrator's evaluation of him lacks credibility because she only visited his class twice and those two times were for the formal observations that were required by school district policy.

Rather unexpectedly, Matt provided a brief Evaluation where he admitted that the administrator's evaluation bothered him and that he talked to his mentor-teacher about it. Then he showed me the official evaluation form and began his first of six

Complicating Actions:

**Complicating Action:** This was my observation sheet and, like I said, they loved the lessons, they didn't have any criticisms for me. Okay, even at my evaluation, she had nothing to critique my teaching style, she said I taught like a veteran teacher, that she was amazed at how well I could connect—she told me from day one, she said, “You have a gift with these kids. You can just, you can't teach how to talk to kids and just be on their level and just kind of have them with you,” and she was like, “You circulate well and you talk to them and you're entertaining,” you know, all this good stuff. Well then I get my evaluation and ((clears throat)) nothing bad came of it, but...

Matt finished that thought with an Evaluation: “[t]o me it's bad.” As Matt was narrating this experience, I admittedly was looking over the evaluation form trying to quickly discern the source of his anger (note: at this point, he had not stated that he was angry, but his tone certainly emoted anger). Later, while analyzing the narrative, I realized that the majority of the Complicating Action was another preface, beginning with “[I]ike I said” and ending with “[a]ll this good stuff.” Once again, up until the formal evaluation, he thought that everything was just fine and that his administration was satisfied with his performance. He admitted that “nothing bad came of it,” and my quick perusal confirmed that indeed, it was not a terrible evaluation. Still, it was not glowing and therefore to Matt, it was bad.



Matt jumped back to his Complicating Action to quickly state, “And she explained to me, she’s like, ‘I want you to understand “satisfactory” is nothing bad at all. It’s good. It means you’re developing, that’s what it means.’” Then he provided an extended Evaluation that served as the heart of his narrative. For that reason, I will include the entire section here:

**Evaluation:** Well I was quite put off by the fact that I didn’t get *one* outstanding. Mostly I got satisfactory and four high performings. And this really ticked me off. And, mmm, I was conversing with my mentor-teacher about it and she feels that part of it might be just that I’m a first year teacher and they don’t want to give me, I don’t know. Um, like I said, I don’t think I’m the best teacher in the world, but some of these I don’t understand. The one that really annoyed me, being, you know me, being the nerd that I am ((looking for the content standard)), oh, “Demonstrates knowledge and understanding of the subject field.” Satisfactory. Woo ((taking deep breaths)). I was livid. Give me an outstanding for that! I went to college for my degree, I’m a history major with a, I would have been a political science double but I decided not to do, I pretty much majored in it. Political science background with a Social Studies Master’s degree on top of that. Satisfactory? Are you kidding me! I am known as the resident nerd at this school, okay. My mentor-teacher sends her kids to me when they have questions about government. I know I am not going to be humble at any point in this. I know more history than anyone in here. I am a history freak. I know politics and government more than anyone in here. I went to school and I understand it. I will not be humble about that because I know, I am a very realistic person and I know myself. Ask my kids! They think I’m some political genius, you know. To them, they think I am. For her to say satisfactory— completely just unbelievable, just unbelievable.

In so many ways, this Evaluation section speaks for itself. Matt was livid. He said so himself, though he hardly needed to. His deepest anger came out when we spoke about the “satisfactory” marking he received on a content standard: “Demonstrates knowledge and understanding of the subject field.” Matt viewed this as a direct attack on his identity as a content specialist, particularly in history and political science. This tells us something powerful about his civics teacher identity. Namely, a major part of Matt’s emerging civics teacher identity is related to his pride in his knowledge. That is, he feels

confident in his civics teacher identity because he feels confident that he holds the knowledge that is necessary for effectively teaching civics. Naturally, when that content knowledge comes under attack, Matt takes it personally. As he stated in a later Evaluation, “Yes, I got annoyed about all the other teaching stuff, but the content one was just like a direct slap in the face to me.”

Toward the end of his story, Matt provided two short sub-narratives – “Are you kidding me?” and “That’s what I don’t understand” – that served as additional Complicating Actions for the meta-narrative. In the first, he reflected on his formal observations in which he believed he had more than demonstrated his healthy content knowledge. In the second, he recounted his discussion with his mentor-teacher:

**Complicating Action sub-narrative – That’s what I don’t understand**

**Complicating Action:** And so then my mentor-teacher was like, “I don’t know. I don’t know what to tell you. All I can think of is maybe you’re first year and they don’t want to give you too many high marks, or she’s just being arbitrary.” But then I got annoyed because my mentor-teacher, who was observed for 15 minutes, and I was like, “I want to come down to your room Miss Got-all-outstandings-and-high-performings.”

**Evaluation:** And I understand, she knows what she’s doing, she a great teacher, she’s taught five years. But I mean, my lessons were nothing but praised. That’s what I don’t understand. There were no criticisms.

As many people would do, Matt compared himself to another teacher. He was frustrated that this teacher received higher marks than he did, which disproved the theory that the administrator only gave out “satisfactory” marks. Matt understood that his mentor-teacher is a fantastic teacher, but in the absence of any criticism from his administrator, he felt that he too should be viewed as a fantastic teacher who receives “outstandings” and “high performings” on his official evaluation.

Matt concluded his story by providing another Complicating Action and another Evaluation, but no Resolution. Along with the rest of the narrative, the Coda revealed that the wound was still raw and that Matt had yet to resolve his anger with the evaluation: “So it just annoys me. I mean, my mentor-teacher got all outstandings and high performings and she deserved them, but I think I do too.” Interestingly, Matt never absolved himself of receiving the lower marks (or the administrator for assigning them) by referring to the fact that he is a first-year teacher, although his mentor-teacher did mention it. This reveals the high expectations he has for himself and the confidence he has in his civics teacher identity. He does not believe that “outstandings” and “high performings” are marks to which he should aspire. Rather, he thinks that he should be receiving them now, just as his mentor-teacher with five years of experiences receives them.

### **Matt – Presidential purgatory and I loved that lesson**

During the three-month period that I collected data, Matt was very diligent about blogging. He would usually post once a week, typically about a particularly good or bad day in the classroom. Good days were usually a result of an engaging and successful lesson plan and bad days were usually the result of distractions (e.g., students being pulled for testing, mandatory writing assignments). One particularly good day for Matt surrounded a lesson on appropriate use of presidential power in which students were asked to place presidential actions along a spectrum ranging from appropriate use of presidential power to abuse of presidential power. Matt really enjoyed teaching this lesson, so much so that he wrote a blog post about it and later brought it up during an interview.

As a result of Matt's enthusiasm surrounding this particular classroom experience, I was provided with two separate narratives covering the same event – a fantastic opportunity for analysis. Despite some flaws with the lesson plan, particularly for Matt's more lower-achieving students, the content of both narratives was inherently positive and filled with statements such as "What a superb lesson!" and "I can't wait to do it again!" The structures, however, were deceiving. Both contained Complicating Action-Evaluation sequences, reminiscent of many of Erin's narratives, and both contained weak Resolutions. This served as a powerful lesson for me in the nature of narrative analysis: one cannot just look at structure. In narrative analysis, content and structure are intricately connected. Still, the focus should always be more on *how* one says what he or she says rather than *what* one says.

Chronologically, Matt wrote the blog post about the lesson before he talked about it during an interview, so I will begin with the narrative contained in the post. This narrative contained all six elements of a fully formed narrative. The Orientation prepared me for what I was about to read and ended with a positive indicator: "Overall I'd say the lesson actually went over quite well. The students enjoyed the lesson, and I enjoyed watching them engage in the lesson." Then came a big "However" when Matt transitioned to his first and shortest Complicating Action: "However, my fears did come true in some instances." This was followed by an equally short Evaluation through which Matt interpreted the trouble with the lesson: "My students simply are not and were not at the level to understand some of the more complex scenarios."

Because I actually authored this lesson plan, I knew the exact nature of the "complex scenarios" to which Matt was referring. To be fair, those scenarios were

written at a high school level, and I had anticipated problems with middle school implementation. To support his Evaluation, Matt offered an example in the form of a second Complicating Action:

**Complicating Action:** For instance, the CIA covert operations of overthrowing vast foreign governments went right over their heads. Also, the steel mill industry one was a complete swing and a miss. For a short-term fix, I simply went to the group and explained in layman's terms what happened. Once I did this, the students had a better understanding of the event, and I received a synchronized "Ohhh" from each group.

This offered a great deal of insight into why Matt enjoyed this lesson: despite its shortcomings, Matt was able to make it work. As he continued in a second Evaluation:

**Evaluation:** I do believe one of the reasons this worked is because I already have my classes in leveled groups. In each group, there is at least one level five reader or potentially gifted student. I noticed as each of the brighter students helped the others understand the scenarios. Once the groups gained a basic understanding of what happened, that's when things started to get interesting! Bringing the entire class back together and evaluating each group's answers was a great deal of fun.

Toward the end of his post, Matt narrated one more Complicating Action and one more Evaluation, both similar in content to the previous ones, before concluding with a brief Resolution: "What a superb lesson!" This was followed by a brief Coda: "Phew!"

Before analyzing this narrative in greater depth, it would be helpful to take a look at its sister narrative, "I love that lesson so much," which Matt shared during our second interview. In the same way as the blog post, the Orientation of this narrative prepared me for what I was about to hear and ended with a positive indicator: "My most fun, because I'm a – I know I already blogged about this – I'm just gonna say it anyways: I love any lesson that has to do with the presidents. And this lesson was just so much fun for me!" It is also worth noting that Matt realized that he had already told me this story, so we can expect that this telling will be different. Indeed, Matt transitioned directly to an

extended Evaluation in which he offered his analysis of the lesson plan and how it unfolded in his classroom. Here is a powerful selection that represents just about half of the entire Evaluation:

**Evaluation:** Obviously I love it because I have interests, I have enthusiasm, but the kids just get so much out of it. And I know you created it and I'm not trying to brownnose, but it is so much fun. I love that lesson so much. I really do. Because it's just, it's such a higher-order level thinking, it just garners so much thought and discussion and I love that. I love it when my kids are constantly, hands in the air, hands in the air, "Well, who did that?" "Why'd they do that?" "What! They can't do that!" "Huh?" Loved it. Like I said, at first I was hesitant. Like I said, I think it's a super lesson. The only thing, like I said in the blog, what I would do, what I will do next year when I do this lesson, I'm going to basically keep the scenarios, but I'm going to rewrite them. Because the language is still in some of them, it's just too high level for them.

There are some important things taking place in this Evaluation. First, Matt acknowledged that I created the lesson plan, something that I have to keep in mind as I try to make sense of his enthusiasm. Still, I read the blog post and I was there for this telling of the narrative, and I do not believe that Matt exaggerated his enthusiasm on my account. In my estimation, it was genuine. Second, Matt spoke about his students being fully engaged in the lesson, a recurring topic that seems to positively play into Matt's civics teacher identity. Third, Matt recreated classroom dialog, a feature we have come to expect from Erin, but have not seen as much in Matt's narratives. This phenomenon seems to further reflect his enthusiasm for the lesson. Fourth, despite his enthusiasm, Matt was being critical of the lesson – a behavior that helps to explain his extended Evaluation.

Excluding a very brief Resolution and Coda, the remainder of Matt's narrative included a Complicating Action-Evaluation sequence in which Matt talked about and

evaluated what happened in class, and then a short Resolution Coda. Below are the four Evaluations that he interspersed among the Complicating Action sections:

**Evaluation:** So, it was just such a fascinating exercise and just watching them and what— and they all loved it! They all were genuinely engaged. It was one of the most engaging lessons. And it was just very powerful and I actually submitted [their spectrums] to my principal. And she loved it. She thought it was great. And um, I just said, it's just such a great way to get them thinking about things.

**Evaluation:** But um, the best part was, I loved reviewing with them after each scenario and telling them who the president was.

**Evaluation:** And it was just really interesting.

**Evaluation:** But they, they just, they thought it was great.

Matt then concluded his narrative by stating, “But anyways, I loved this lesson. Loved it. I kept it, you know. I kept all the things they did because I enjoyed it so much. And uh, I definitely can't wait to do it again. So.”

Taken together, these two narratives surrounding the same classroom experience provide powerful insights regarding the ways in which Matt makes sense of his emerging identity as a civics teacher. Substantively, while Matt has energetically embraced the civics curriculum, he certainly clings to its more historical elements, such as the presidents. While this lesson teaches important government topics related to executive power, it does so by asking students to analyze presidential actions across history. For that reason, among others, Matt loves this lesson. Structurally, Matt tends to be more analytical in his storytelling, which might account for some of his more deceiving structural features. For instance, while Complicating Action-Evaluation sequences and weak or absent Resolutions are signs of distress in Erin's narratives, in Matt's narratives they would be more accurately interpreted as signs of reflection. Whereas Erin tended to give a play-by-play in her Complicating Actions and then

provide her emotional response in her Evaluations, Matt tended to follow his Complicating Actions with commentary, which may or may not have been emotionally charged.

### **Matt – What a long strange trip it's been**

At the conclusion of our third and final interview, I asked Matt for one more favor: to write one last blog post that would capture his entire first year of teaching civics. More specifically, I said, "Pretend as though we haven't been meeting over the past three months. Then, pretend that I ran into you this week and said, 'Hey Matt! Tell me all about your first year of teaching!'" Matt kindly obliged with a three-page post, which he divided into 10 paragraphs. At first, the paragraphs were self-contained Complicating Action-Evaluation sequences that represented time frames. Later, they ceased to follow any clear pattern.

The first two paragraphs that Matt wrote served as an Orientation:

**Orientation:** Reflecting back on 10 months' worth of work is not an easy task. As I type this, I am purposefully attempting this with all deliberate speed. Why? Simply because I'm trying my absolute best to recall everything of substance. I'm not a particularly sentimental or obsessive person when it comes to memories, but there were certainly moments that will resonate with me for the rest of my life.

The best way to go about this is by means of chronological order, so I'll begin with the weeks leading up to the first day of school.

Other than providing an introduction to his narrative, his Orientation does not serve a strong substantive purpose. Matt admitted to being non-sentimental, which is something that I perceived over the course of our interviews together. However, he also admitted that his first year of teaching, or at least moments of his first year, had a strong impact on him, but did not yet reveal how or why.



In the next paragraph, Matt wrote about the few weeks leading up to the start of the school year:

Few Weeks Prior: I was insanely petrified, well prepared, but petrified nonetheless, and I was excited and anxious to begin my new job. The FJCC Civics training helped, but it was the actual lessons that proved most valuable. The curriculum helped me conceptualize ideas and plans for the year to come.

I labeled the first sentence as the Complicating Action. Here, Matt recalled his most immediate thoughts at the time and admitted to feeling “insanely petrified,” “well prepared,” and “excited and anxious.” Then, Matt evaluated his feelings by referring to a recent training that he believed prepared him. Considering that Matt was about to be a first-year teacher, this paragraph does not reveal much by way of his sense making or identity. To be certain, most first-year teachers are very fearful and anxious during the days leading up to their first days, and at least Matt took comfort in feeling well prepared.

Unfortunately, some of Matt’s fears turned into realities as he revealed in his next paragraph:

First Day: I remember thinking to myself, "Oh geez, what have I gotten myself into?" Fortunately, my ambivalent emotions waned as the rest of the week continued. In my defense, my first class was and remains an absolute DOOZY: one helluva way to commence a teaching career. Truth be told, it was never the teaching or the children that made me question my choice, it was EVERYTHING else; the nagging from parents, the dominion of administration, all the bureaucratic B.S. that's not included in the job description. I realized how much I genuinely enjoyed my job (for the most part) and this has brought to me a rare semblance of peace. I made the correct choice. Teaching is my passion.

Again, I labeled the first sentence as the Complicating Action. Here, Matt told me what he was thinking on his first day on the job. Again, he followed this with an Evaluation, which reveals much about the ways in which novice teachers make sense of their

experiences. Most telling was the sentence beginning with “Truth be told” in which Matt told me the true nature of his anxieties regarding his decision to become a teacher. As we often hear from teachers, it is not the “teaching or the children”; it’s “everything else.” Fortunately, Matt did not focus on the negative aspects of his job for too long, which is illustrated by the Resolution with which he ended the paragraph. Despite “everything else,” it appears as though Matt was satisfied with his decision to become a teacher and confident in his teacher identity.

The next time frame upon which Matt reflected was the first semester of the school year, to which he devoted four paragraphs. The first paragraph was entirely Complicating Action material and conveyed Matt’s cynicism and dissatisfaction regarding disruptions to his instructional time:

There were moments where I felt I had already reached the apex of cynicism in the world of education. Here I am, a fresh, new, 23-year old straight out of college student prepared and ready to change the world. NOT. I try not to be cynical and aim for more of a realist perception, but the field of education hardly creates an auspicious atmosphere. My first feeling of dissatisfaction came within the first few weeks when I realized the students would be on the computers doing a reading program every Wednesday, thus taking away from MY instructional time. When it comes to teaching my kids and relaying content, I am as watchful as a shepherd over his flock of sheep. It’s my class time damn it, and nobody else’s. Regrettably, administration did not share the same sentiment.

Matt’s frustration with such disruptions was certainly a recurring theme throughout our interviews and his blog posts. In fact, of his 11 blog posts, he brought up instructional disruptions in five of them, usually citing the fact that the social studies is not tested and therefore undervalued by school officials. As this Complicating Action reveals, Matt takes this issue personally. He considers himself a content-oriented teacher and takes deep pride in teaching his content to his students. Accordingly, he feels as though he is not fulfilling his teacher identity when he cannot teach his students.

Never one to dwell on the negative for too long, Matt wrote an Evaluation in which he discussed the aspects of teaching civics that he enjoys most:

I will however say the topic of civics seem to genuinely peak the students' interest. This was particularly fun for me to watch unfold, as their eyes gazed upon this new information for which they had held no real previous acclimation. SO MANY QUESTIONS!!! This I positively loved, and for the most part I believe they were genuine. When my students are asking questions, I become infatuated with the moment. I love seeing their interests be piqued by whatever new topic we were discussing. All in all, life was PRETTTAAAY good.

Student enthusiasm for civics was another recurring theme for Matt. Previously, he referred to when students are raising their hands as his favorite classroom moment. To put it colloquially, this is how Matt gets his kicks as a civics teacher.

Shifting back to the negative, Matt launched into another Complicating Action where he revealed another issue for novice teachers: the life transition. He wrote about the teaching part of his life being manageable, but the living part as being a huge adjustment. For the first time, he had his own house and he lived in a place where he had no support system. Perhaps most importantly, he saw all of this as an end to his youth: "Where in the Sam Hill did my Gainesville support system go? No more late night rumpuses on the campus ground? How on earth would I survive such an extreme change?" Shifting back to the teaching part of his life, Matt wrote this Evaluation:

But by the second half of the year I had become far more comfortable and stable in the classroom and at my school. I was beginning to feel less and less like a newbie, and more as my individual self. I still feel I am growing, and I can't wait to be an even better teacher come next August.

Here, Matt spoke directly to the question of identity. As he grew "more comfortable and stable in the classroom and [his] school," he began to view himself less as a "newbie" and more as himself. He felt that he could stand on his own and emerged into, as I would put it, "Matt the teacher" as opposed to "Matt the novice teacher."

As Matt began to draw his narrative to an end, he offered a series of closing thoughts to encapsulate the year. These came in the form of an Evaluation and a Resolution. For the former, he wrote, “Looking back, all I can think to myself is ‘What a year!’ No mental break downs, no physical confrontations, and I managed to keep my job.” For many novice teachers, these are indicators of a great year. With that said, Matt then listed the largest stresses that he anticipates for next year: the end-of-course examination, standard mastery (a new district-wide initiative), and “the usual FCAT hokum.” Although he never mentioned standard mastery during his interview or blog posts, he certainly mentioned the examination and the FCAT on multiple occasions, and it would be fair to say that both deeply factor into his sense making as a civics teacher.

To end his narrative, Matt offered this very telling postscript:

As far as epiphanies, go, I don’t have too much to offer. I love teaching Civics, but in an ideal world I am an American history person teaching Civics. Don't get me wrong, it's my second favorite subject to teach, but nothing would give me greater pleasure than teaching American history. I've also become more disenchanted with the idea of remaining in the middle school setting. I feel I'd be able to delve deeper into the content with my students and there is a whole lot less babysitting. That being said, it will be a sad day when I leave this school. The school, the people, the students are all absolutely marvelous.

Even at this moment, I am not sure I can accurately label this a Resolution. Although it ended with a positive sentiment, the regretful tone of the larger paragraph seems to dominate it. As for message, Matt seemed to be saying, “I love civics, but I am not a civics teacher.”

### **Looking Across the “Yellow Light” Narratives**

As previously mentioned, when my analyses of the above five narratives were complete, I went back to my 10 “yellow light” narratives for Matt and conducted a snapshot analysis on each. By looking across a larger sample of Matt’s narratives, I was

able to glean substantive insights and discern structural patterns. For the former, I found that Matt spoke often and at length about the kind of teacher he is, the degree to which his students lack the intellectual foundation for higher order thinking and learning, and standardized testing and the disruptions they cause. For the latter, I found that three structural patterns – short narratives, one-word or otherwise very brief Codas, and multiple and oftentimes lengthy Evaluations – help to illuminate the ways in which Matt makes sense of his civics teacher identity.

### **The kind of teacher Matt is**

There is an old education joke that reads something like this: Elementary school teachers love their students, secondary school teachers love their content, and college professors love themselves. I can say with certainty that for one secondary teacher – Matt – the saying is quite accurate. Matt loves his content or, as he once stated, “Content is so important to me.” Indeed, countless times throughout our three interviews and his eleven blog posts, Matt explicitly declared his passion for content, although most often, he defined his content as American history, rather than civics or government.

From his very first narrative entitled, “I always wanted to be a teacher,” Matt expressed his affinity for social science content, stating in his Evaluation, “I always, I just loved school. I was such a *nerd*. And middle school, you know I enjoyed geography and history, and especially American history. I loved American history.” Naturally, his passion for content factors heavily into the type of teacher that Matt believes himself to be and even the type of teacher that he believes all teachers should be. As he tangentially opined in one lengthy Evaluation section in a narrative about a professional development workshop:

**Evaluation:** I also believe, and it comes down to philosophy, I really believe the best teachers— okay, you have great teachers who don't know the content well. But I fight about this with people. I strongly believe the teacher has to be passionate and knowledgeable about content. And civics is something I already knew *a lot* about. I didn't know everything, there's so much to learn, that's why I love it. I'm always learning: "Really, we can do that?" you know. But I just feel content is *so important*, and the kids can tell.

Matt asserted that a teacher has to be "passionate and knowledgeable about content," which he immediately followed with the concise statement, "And civics is something I knew *a lot* about." Notably, he did not express a passion for civics here, just strong content knowledge surrounding civics.

For anyone who works with secondary teachers, Matt's love for content would come as no surprise. Secondary teachers, unlike many elementary teachers, usually receive bachelor's degrees in their content area before learning how to teach and generally view themselves as content specialists. Still, many secondary teachers, while embracing their content, would point to a different passion that drives their work such as the child, the curriculum, teaching strategies and techniques (Erin would point to this passion), or advocating for equity and social justice (National School Reform Faculty, 2011). This is not the case for Matt. As he said during our first interview together, "I'm content oriented. I'm only happy with my content. I don't care who the kids are so much."

### **Lack of intellectual foundation in students**

While Matt's passion lays with his content and not necessarily with his students, he found that his students' lack of higher order thinking skills routinely handicapped his ability to teach them new content, an issue he brought up multiple times throughout our interviews. Matt struggled with this challenge, particularly because his student-teaching

experience in an academically accelerated magnet program was wholly different, which was something that Matt acknowledged in an Evaluation section:

**Evaluation:** My whole internship experience with the academy magnet program: those kids were brilliant. They're just so gifted, so in-tune with reality and they're just willing to learn, all of them, even the little rascals. I mean, they, in the end they *were there* to learn. So it was like an honors class. I'm regular now. Even the honors classes here are not the same, and I know because I work with an honors-level teacher and her students are bright, but they're not academy-level kids. And all of those controversial issues lessons that we did during my student teaching, I mean, I was just floored. I could not do that with these kids. No way.

Later at the end that same interview, I asked Matt if there was anything else he wanted to talk about, at which point he provided a narrative devoted entirely to this issue of his students' academic abilities.

I labeled the narrative, "They're not getting it," (see Appendix H) something Matt stated three separate times throughout the story, which consisted mostly of two large Evaluation sections (lines 3-13 and 21-27). While Matt devoted most of the story to highlighting his students' inability to think deeply and understand some of the most "rudimentary" concepts, he also tried to assign blame for their deficit. Most telling was the way in which he wavered between assigning blame and taking responsibility as the teacher to accommodate what he perceived to be an academic deficiency in his students.

Naturally, Matt's passion for content and his lamentation that his students lacked the higher order thinking skills to fully grasp the content are interrelated. Taken together, they negatively affected both his mental well being and his identity as a civics teacher. In other words, because content is so important to Matt and because his students lacked the skills to fully understand the content, he oftentimes felt down about his job and, to some extent, his job performance. As he stated at the end of our last interview

together, “Some days I, you know, I do enjoy it. I really do enjoy it. But some days it’s hard to come to work, you know.”

### **Standardized testing and disruptions**

Unfortunately, standardized tests and the instructional disruptions they invariably cause have a ubiquitous presence in American schooling. For most teachers, they are expected, if not fully frustrating, inconveniences. For most social studies teachers, they are the bane of their professional existences as the tests and disruptions rarely cater to their content area. This is certainly the case for Matt, who brought up testing on multiple occasions throughout our interviews and even devoted an entire blog post entitled, “And the hits just keep on coming,” to the subject of instructional disruptions.

Because there was no standardized, high stakes social studies test during the year of my study, many of Matt’s references to testing were targeted at the FCAT and the instructional time that was taken from the social studies to accommodate test preparation for reading, writing, math, and science. As he began in the Abstract of a blog post, “This week was mired in testing at our school.” Between the subject of the post and his verb choice for his first sentence, I knew that this was going to be a negative narrative. He continued in his Orientation: “The students are tested on a reading ‘Thinklink’ assessment that measures their reading-level ability and learning gains. There is no specific social studies test, so the students are tested only on reading skills.” Then, as I learned to expect from Matt, came his Evaluation: “Social studies takes the brunt of all blows to its curriculum, because there is no FCAT. Personally I detest standardized tests, and I enjoy not having to worry about teaching to a test (at least until next year).” Matt’s sentiments are common among social studies teachers.



While there was no social studies test during the year of my study, Matt, like Erin, knew that there would soon be an end-of-course examination for civics, a subject he initiated in the form of more negative narratives. As he wrote in the Complicating Action of a sub-narrative entitled, “I don’t want to be part of the monster,” “Next year is going to be the district test. And then the year after that we’ll transition to the state test. And I’m nervous because they’re saying civics is the one where if they don’t pass the test they don’t pass the course.” This sub-narrative was part of a larger meta-narrative entitled, “Freaked out,” in which Matt expressed his reservations about the pending examination. All of the narrative elements included words and phrases such as “stressed out,” “anxiety-ridden,” “good grief,” “I’m screwed,” and “nervous,” the last of which he said eight times throughout the story. Needless to say, standardized testing factors strongly and negatively into Matt’s civics teacher identity.

### **Short narratives**

On average, Matt’s narratives tended to be much shorter than Erin’s narratives. To be sure, there were more than a couple of two- to three-page transcribed narratives that he provided, but more often than not, the transcripts would be less than a page and sometimes less than half a page. Take, for example, this 229-word narrative, the first narrative Matt provided during our first interview together. It is entitled, “I always wanted to be a teacher”:

I always wanted to be two things: I wanted to be a teacher and a zoologist. I gave up on the zoologist later on because I realized it just financially was not what I wanted to be. And I considered veterinary, dual majoring, but I was just like, “I can’t be putting animals to sleep,” that’s not me. And it wasn’t a process of elimination. I always wanted to be a teacher. I just wanted to do some kind of dual career whether it was teaching zoology or teaching history, and then doing zoology part time. You know, I always wanted to do those things. And it was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, I won a superlative at middle school. This is how much of a nerd I was ((laughs)). I was, and you

don't want this superlative when you're in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. It was, um, "Teacher's Dream." And it's so, it's so embarrassing and I— it's not ((hearty laugh)). If I can go back, I was, oh I was so embarrassed, but "Teacher's Dream." And, you know, I always, I just loved school. I was such a *nerd*. And middle school, you know I enjoyed geography and history, and I just, especially American history. I loved American history. And I won "Teacher's Dream" and it was just, from then on, I was like, "Oh gosh, it's meant to be." But.

Impressively, despite the brevity of the story, it contains all six narrative elements in order, including a one-word Coda at the end (another structural trend of Matt's narratives that I discuss in the next sub-section). Matt's second narrative, "Veterinary was not working out," was even shorter with only 195 words. It too contained all six narrative elements, although many were out of order and he had a few transitions between Complicating Actions and Evaluations.

At first, I was not sure what to make of these short narratives, other than to say that Matt tends to be brief (although not curt) and to the point. However, when I thought about these short narratives in relation to Erin's typically longer narratives, a few ideas occurred to me. First, unlike Erin, Matt was a history major. Having taken many history courses and seminars myself (even at the same university as Matt), I know that two virtues are highly valued during discussion: not speaking until one has an original and meaningful point to make and making that point as quickly and succinctly as possible. These virtues are equally prized in written assignments on which professorial evaluations frequently encourage the writer to remove unnecessary words and clauses. Second, unlike Erin, Matt frequently posted journal entries on our blog and so I already knew a lot of what was occurring in his class before we had our interviews. This allowed him to gloss over contextual details and get to the point of his story. Still, I am left wondering how and in what ways his brevity and his sense making are related. For Erin, long-winded narratives allowed for a large degree of "thinking out loud" and I could

actually see her identity forming and shifting as she narrated her experiences. For Matt, this happened less frequently.

### **Brief Codas**

If there was one structural trend I came to expect from Matt, it was the way in which he oftentimes ended his narratives with either a very short or one-word Coda. In fact, of the ten “yellow light” narratives that I analyzed, Matt provided short Codas in six and one-word Codas in three. For example, Matt concluded an uncharacteristically long two-page narrative entitled, “Freaked out,” with one word: “So.” Interestingly, this abrupt end did not follow a Resolution in which Matt seemed to be winding the story down or bringing it to a natural stopping point. On the contrary, Matt was in the midst of a Complicating Action and had just recreated a dialog between him and his students when, with little warning, he shrugged his shoulders and said, “So,” thereby ending the story. This was not a pattern. Many of Matt’s Codas followed Resolutions, while some followed Evaluations and others followed Complicating Actions.

It is difficult for me to say if Matt’s brief Codas represent a significant structural feature of his narratives. The simple fact that a particular structural feature appears frequently does not necessarily make the feature significant. Moreover, this feature is not so uncommon in everyday conversation. Many people have difficulty concluding their stories or clearly restating their main argument at the end of a persuasive monologue. As a result, they do exactly what Matt did when he realized he was out of points or narrative details – they shrug their shoulders and say, “So.” As a final observation that challenges the significance of this structural feature, it was not accompanied by another structural trend. As already noted, these brief Codas followed Complicating Actions, Evaluations, and Resolutions, and can be found in both short and long narratives.

Nevertheless, they represent Matt's difficulty with providing a structured conclusion to his stories, a potential sign that Matt was not always sure of where he was going with a story or the kind of identity he was trying to articulate for himself through his telling of the story. Herein lies the feature's significance.

### **Multiple and lengthy Evaluations**

Without a doubt, the most significant structural feature of Matt's narratives was the quantity and length of their Evaluations. In all but a few, I found multiple Evaluations, long Evaluations, or both. For instance, in the narrative entitled, "I really do enjoy it," 309 of the 532 words (58%) that Matt evoked to tell me about his first year as a teacher were devoted to one Evaluation in which he explained his feelings about giving too much of one's time to the job. Likewise, in the narrative entitled, "Freaked out," there were four Evaluation sections comprising 54% of the entire story.

As I was trying to make sense of this structural feature, I went back and read through my research journal entries that followed my interviews with Matt. One entry stood out. Following our very first interview together, I recorded these thoughts:

Like Erin, Matt is very energetic and very passionate about teaching. Chatting with him was like chatting with a fellow graduate student and ardent supporter of education and the social studies. Matt answered my questions a lot more directly than Erin. There were definitely some narratives interwoven into his responses, but certainly not as many as in Erin's responses. Matt makes statements more than he tells stories.

To be certain, Matt made sense of his identity as a civics teacher by narrating his experiences in the classroom and beyond. He just did not do it to the degree that Erin did. In many instances, Matt seemed to have already thought a lot about some of the issues I brought up during our interviews. As such, his responses were far more direct. Still, he used stories to support his beliefs and, in doing so, continued to construct new

meanings from the experiences that have shaped his beliefs. Just as his beliefs cannot be separated from these experiences, his statements cannot be separated from the narratives in which they were located.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The narratives that emerged from my interviews with Erin and Matt illustrate that their experiences, and, more importantly, the meanings they have constructed from these experiences, have led to the emergence of very individual civics teacher identities. These nascent identities began with their decisions to become civics teachers and continued to evolve as each teacher spent more time in the classroom and became increasingly comfortable with his or her role. Interestingly, neither Erin nor Matt originally envisioned themselves as civics teachers, with the former favoring geography and the latter favoring history. Nonetheless, each embraced their assigned subjects over the course of the year and routinely felt invigorated by the teaching. With the exception of the looming and anxiety-inducing end-of-course examination, which both participants feel will negatively influence their instruction, Erin and Matt were excited about another school year of teaching civics and neither expressed regret that they would not receive new teaching assignments.

Both Erin and Matt were able to readily detail their classroom experiences and make meaning from them, as expressed in their unique but equally fascinating narrative structures. From Erin, I came to expect longer and untraditionally structured narratives with many sub-narratives, long Complicating Action-Evaluation sequences, and weak or absent Resolutions. From Matt, I saw shorter, more structured narratives with multiple and lengthy Evaluations and brief Codas. Sometimes, these structures told me more about the participant than the actual substance of his or her responses. However, taken

together, both structure and substance proved invaluable to my own sense making regarding the *participants'* meaning-making processes.

In terms of substance, from each participant I was able to glean a strong set of insights regarding their civics teacher identity. Erin is the kind of teacher who really loves teaching, bounces between taking responsibility for her shortcomings in the classroom and sometimes placing the blame on students, and is perfectly comfortable not knowing all of the answers. The type of student she was has a strong influence on the type of teacher that she is, and she finds much job satisfaction in learning alongside her students. Matt is a content-driven teacher. This passion for content seems to affect everything he does in his classroom and everything he feels regarding his teaching. His favorite lessons are the ones in which he can focus on more historical elements, and he oftentimes feels depressed when his students are unable to fully understand such historical content due to what he believes to be poor critical thinking skills. For both participants, the engaging and relevant qualities of the civics curriculum provide a great amount of satisfaction. To be sure, Erin and Matt feel the best about their teaching, and therefore themselves as civics teachers, when they are delivering lesson plans that engage the students and have relevance to the students' lives.

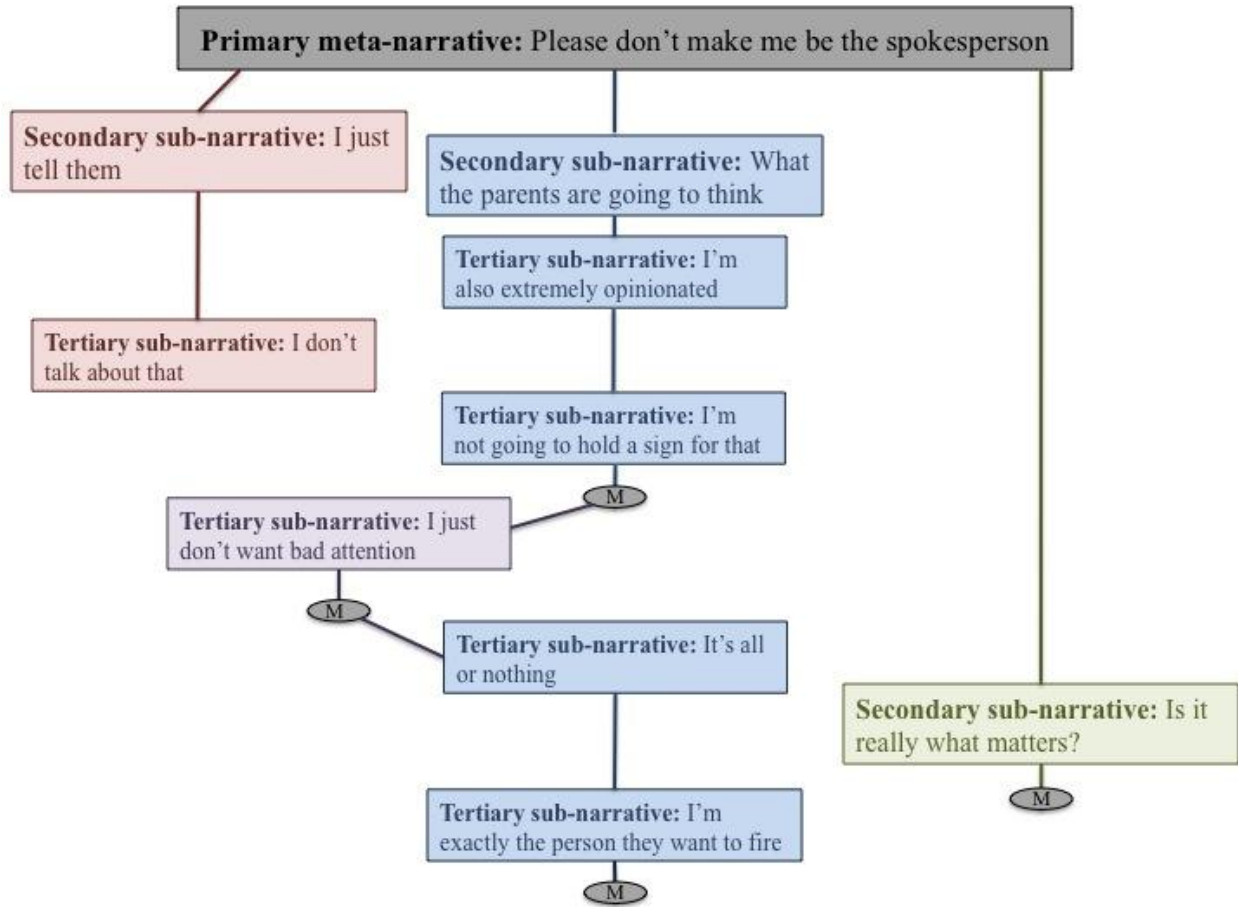


Figure 4-1. Please don't make me be the spokesperson

## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS

Here they come. And I'm not ready. How could I be? I'm a new teacher and learning on the job.

—Frank McCourt, *Teacher Man*.

### Introductory Remarks

Popular media is saturated with depictions of novice teachers struggling to survive their first teaching assignments and ultimately achieving great success with their rowdy and incorrigible, if not downright hostile, students. Oftentimes, the protagonists are idealistic second-career educators who find their teaching positions to be in less than desirable schools and classrooms. For instance, in the 1967 classic, *To Sir, with Love*, Sidney Poitier played an engineer-turned-teacher who throws out the textbooks in an attempt to reach his “unteachable” East End London students. Likewise, in the 1995 box office hit, *Dangerous Minds*, Michelle Pfeiffer, a former Marine, uses her underprivileged, inner-city California students’ experiences and language to help them understand literature. Both films end with the now beloved teacher leaving the school, much to the students’ emotional anguish. In other films, equally idealistic *first-career* teachers find themselves in similar settings, achieving similar results. For example, in the 1967 drama, *Up the Down Staircase*, Sandy Dennis played a rookie teacher who tries to apply the teaching theories she learned in college to her uncooperative students in a racially diverse high school. In the 2007 hit, *Freedom Writers*, Hillary Swank starred as a young and excited schoolteacher who finds herself in the unfamiliar territory of an “at-risk” classroom in a formerly high-achieving Los Angeles school, which recently implemented a racial integration plan. Using culturally relevant themes and student journals, she transforms all of her students into writers. Again, both films conclude with



an astonishing turn-around in student attitude and achievement and with the teacher emerging victoriously as inspirational role model to her students.

While the stories enacted in these films are heartwarming, they often have little basis in reality. To be fair, many are adaptations of books that are based on true stories. However, few match the experiences of everyday novice teachers who find themselves in far less extraordinary environments, struggling with far less exciting obstacles. That was certainly true for the two participants in my study, one of whom teaches in the same school she attended as a middle school student a decade earlier. Indeed, both participants faced far less intimidating student populations in far more welcoming school environments with far more resources, support, and teacher training than the teachers portrayed in these films. That is not to say that they did not confront similar feelings of vulnerability, self-doubt, and anxiety. As Pulitzer Prize-winning author Frank McCourt (2005) wrote in *Teacher Man*, “I’m a new teacher and learning on the job” (p. 11). Regardless of one’s education or preparation, this is a universal experience for novice teachers.

McCourt (2005) continued:

On the first day of my teaching career, I was almost fired for eating the sandwich of a high school boy. On the second day I was almost fired for mentioning the possibility of friendship with a sheep. Otherwise, there was nothing remarkable about my thirty years in the high school classrooms of New York City. I often doubted if I should be there at all. At the end I wondered how it lasted that long. (p. 11)

I would venture to guess that, looking back over 30 years in the classroom, most veteran teachers would hold similar sentiments. They might remember an extraordinary event or two – a couple of good stories – but most would say that there was nothing remarkable about their three decades in the classroom, and just about every single one

would wonder how it lasted that long. However, for novice teachers who just finished their first or second year on the job, every day probably seemed remarkable and every day probably has a story. This was true in my study in which my two participants shared countless narratives that allowed them to reflect upon their novice experiences, and in doing so, construct their emerging teacher identities.

But what about their emerging *civics* teacher identities? What do their narratives reveal about their commitment to teaching civics, the reasons they believe civics should be taught, or the degree to which they enjoy civics subject matter and learning activities? Do they even view themselves as civics teachers, or would it be fairer to say that their teacher identities are couched in the broader discipline of the social studies? These are important questions, particularly in light of civic education's historically precarious position in the public school curriculum, at least over the past 50 years. The Florida legislature's decision to mandate civics instruction in middle school, and to include it in the state's accountability system, is an important first step in improving the state's civic health. However, the middle school civics classroom is where "the rubber meets the road," if you will, and middle school civics teachers are behind the wheel. If their professional identities neglect the civic mission of schools, perhaps we are naïve to believe that pro-civic education legislation will realize its intended purposes. With this in mind, I will now reflect upon the lessons that I learned from Erin and Matt's stories and the understanding I gleaned from their experiences and perceptions, constantly considering with the ways in which they view the important task of educating the next generation of republicans.

## **Discussion of Findings and Implications**

In this section, I will explore findings across six categories – best practices for teaching civics, high-stakes testing, types of teacher, being evaluated, optimism about “next year”, and novice teacher identity – as they relate to novice social studies teachers’ emerging civics teacher identities and connect them to the corresponding literature. For each section, I will end with a focused discussion of the implications stemming from those findings.

### **Best Practices for Teaching Civics**

I asked the participants about their ideas of best practice in teaching civics. Through their responses to this question, I believed that Erin and Matt offered a glimpse of the type of instruction in which they typically engage their students and the types of instructional activities that help them to feel good about themselves as civics teachers. For Erin, the short answer was “anything that is applicable and engaging.” For Matt, it was “incorporating as much technology as possible” because it is relevant to students and keeps them engaged. Generally speaking, Erin and Matt feel the best about their teaching, and therefore themselves as civics teachers, when they are delivering lesson plans that they believe to be engaging and relevant, which they also believe is comparatively easy to do with the civics curriculum.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, CIRCLE and the Carnegie Corporation of New York held a series of meetings in 2002 that brought together some of the nation’s leading civic education scholars and practitioners to determine the state of young people’s civic learning and engagement and to offer recommendations. Their work is summarized in the 2003 report entitled *The Civic Mission of Schools*. The report is clear in its dismissal of stereotypical civics classes and urges schools to offer civic learning experiences that

encourage and increase young people's civic engagement. Specifically, the report lists "Six Promising Approaches to Civic Education":

1. Provide instruction in government, history, law, and democracy.
2. Incorporate discussion of current, local, national, and international issues and events in the classroom, particularly those that young people view as important to their lives.
3. Design and implement programs that provide students with the opportunity to apply what they learn through performing community service that is linked to the formal curriculum and classroom instruction.
4. Offer extracurricular activities that provide opportunities for young people to get involved in their schools or communities.
5. Encourage student participation in school governance.
6. Encourage student participation in simulations of democratic processes and procedures. (p. 6)

Neither participant referenced the report or the "Six Promising Approaches." However, in direct response to my question about best practices, Matt discussed his use of iCivics, a popular educational site for teaching civics through video games, as an example of a technology he likes to use in his classroom. These games represent digital "simulations of democratic processes and procedures," the sixth promising approach listed in the *Civic Mission of Schools* report. Additionally, throughout the interviews, both Erin and Matt referred to classroom discussion. When combined with their belief that classroom activities should be relevant to students, I feel confident that they were also implementing the second promising approach.

Even without reference to the report, the participants' insistence that classroom activities be engaging and relevant finds much support in the larger report itself, as well as the greater body of literature related to civic education, social studies education, and education in general. But why are Erin and Matt so convinced that engaging and

relevant learning activities are best? Research on novice teachers reveals that their perceptions of best practices or “what works” are often shaped by their educational background, beliefs about students, beliefs about subject matter, and messages from the school culture (Bullough, 1990, 1994; Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1992; Cornett, 1990; Grant, 2003; van Hover & Pierce, 2006). However, from her review of research on the professional growth of preservice and novice teachers, Dona Kagan (1992) concluded, “[t]he personal beliefs and images that preservice candidates bring to programs of teacher education usually remain inflexible. Candidates tend to use the information provided in coursework to confirm rather than to confront and correct their preexisting beliefs” (p. 154). She also concluded that teacher education programs neglect to acknowledge the centrality of conceptions of self to teacher development.

It is certainly difficult to pinpoint the exact origins of novice teacher beliefs about best practices. Many studies cite Lortie’s (1975) seminal piece on the “apprenticeship of observation,” arguing that novice teachers’ experiences with their own teachers have a considerable impact on their understanding of what it means to be a teacher and what good teaching looks like (Cook, 2009; Deal & White, 2005; Sugrue, 1997; van Hover & Yeager, 2004). Interestingly, neither Erin nor Matt spoke at length about good teachers or even good civic learning experiences that they encountered during their K-12 schooling. In fact, Erin spoke at length about *bad* teachers, leading me to think that she experienced a sort of “reverse-apprenticeship of observation” in which she now systematically employs the types of learning experiences that she *did not* encounter in her own education. Regardless of the origins of novice teacher beliefs about best practices, the implications for teacher education programs and early professional

experiences are quite obvious: they must pay attention to the centrality of conceptions of self to teacher development. In other words, such programs must encourage novices to make their personal beliefs explicit, which, in turn, will allow them to positively reconstruct the image of self-as-teacher (Bullough, 1994; Kagan, 1992).

I wish I could say that Matt and Erin's conceptions of best practices for teaching civics serve as a reflection of their commitment to the civic mission of schools. That would be a leap. It would also be disingenuous, as I believe that Matt and Erin would hold similar conceptions of best practices for teaching World history, geography, or even economics. Nevertheless, I am pleased that their conceptions find support in the literature related to best practices for teaching *civics*.

### **High-Stakes Testing**

As discussed in Chapter 1, the Florida Legislature adopted the "Justice Sandra Day O'Connor Civics Education Act" in the summer of 2010. In addition to other instructional mandates, the act requires the administration of an end-of-course examination in civics at the middle school level and the inclusion of results from this examination in determining school grades (CS/HB 105, Civics Education). Within this highly centralized, performance-based context, novice social studies teachers begin their careers in Florida. As they begin to work through the complex process of learning to teach, they do so in a context that requires content-specific standards and a fact-recall, multiple choice, end-of-course examination that directly affects student promotion and school rank.

It should therefore come as no surprise that a major substantive finding that emerged from my study is the role that high-stakes testing plays in teachers' sense-making processes. As mentioned multiple times throughout Chapter 4, both participants

spoke frequently and sometimes at length about the pending end-of-course examination for seventh grade civics, a subject that I never initiated during our interviews. Both spoke about the examination in a negative light, oftentimes bringing it up during a Complicating Action section of a narrative, and both indicated that it would affect their pedagogy. In other words, Erin and Matt believe that they will no longer be able to teach the interactive and engaging lessons they enjoy – ones that would be considered best practice – because, in their estimation, such teaching would not translate into test preparation. We can expect that their identities as civics teachers will be deflated during the coming years as the examination takes on increased importance for their students and their schools, and their pedagogy shifts in response.

Researchers have not ignored the likely influence of high-stakes tests on the instructional decision making of novice social studies teachers. Specifically, Stephanie van Hover, from the University of Virginia, has teamed up with other researchers in her state and one in Florida to conduct a handful of studies that focus on this very issue. As she and a co-author note, “How first-year history teachers perceive and respond to the high-stakes tests will, in a large part, influence how they conceptualize and develop their instructional practice and, possibly, determine whether or not they stay in the teaching profession” (van Hover & Pierce, 2006, p. 39). I would add that the tests exert a powerful contextual presence that collides with novice teacher identity development and interferes with the already messy work of trying to locate one’s professional self. As one participant in van Hover and Pierce’s study lamented, “I hate the [tests]. I loathe and abominate any measure of academic achievement that fails to weigh a child’s capacity for thought. . . . And the last thing I want to think about as I teach are the tests”

(p. 46). This statement is eerily reminiscent of Matt's declaration that he does not "want to be part of the monster" of standardized testing.

Other findings from van Hover and Pierce (2006) suggest that novice teachers begin in a sort of survival mode, oftentimes unconcerned with high-stakes tests. However, as the test dates near, they become a great deal more anxious about them, and, in response, their instruction shifts to more "drill and kill" measures aimed at quickly preparing the students. Although Matt and Erin never came so close to the end-of-course examination during my study, they certainly anticipated that such instructional shifts would occur in the future. Additionally, as both participants in the van Hover and Pierce study articulated, Erin and Matt believe that "next year will be different." What this means, in the context of either study, is difficult to determine. The good news is, studies by Yeager and van Hover (2006) and van Hover, Hicks, and Irwin (2006) illustrate that novice teachers are capable and oftentimes inclined toward S.G. Grant's (2010) conception of ambitious teaching, which I will now explain.

Testing critics argue that, within individual classrooms, teachers routinely plan and deliver rich and engaging lessons and that high-stakes tests stifle this creativity. Many see the relationship between teachers and tests as being defensive, a notion that assumes that teachers exist primarily in a reactive mode to educational policy. Interestingly, Grant (2010) argues that there is little evidence pointing to wholesale instructional change as a result of high-stakes tests and offers an alternative to the notion of defensive teaching. This alternative notion, which Grant refers to as ambitious teaching, "assumes that teaching is nuanced, complex, and contextualized both because of and in spite of social studies tests and the consequences they hold" (p. 49).



Grant explains that ambitious teaching develops when teachers know their subject matter well, when teachers know their students well, and when teachers know how to create the necessary space for themselves and their students in environments in which others may not appreciate their efforts. Although it remains to be seen, I predict that Erin and Matt will develop ambitious teaching over the next few school years as they work to provide the most meaningful instruction possible and preserve their teacher identities. They know their subject matter well, they know their students well, and I am optimistic that they will know how to persevere in the hostile environment that high-stakes tests naturally create.

The effects of high-stakes testing, particularly on instructional decision-making and novice teacher identity formulation, have strong implications for teacher educators. As van Hover and Pierce (2006) poignantly ask in the context of history education:

What is the responsibility of teacher educators to prepare their students for ambitious teaching in the age of high-stakes testing? What, exactly, does this type of teaching look like? Can we reconcile research-based notions of best practice, with their emphasis on deep coverage of key issues in history and historical thinking skills, with high-stakes tests that require superficial, fact-based coverage of many topics?" (p. 47)

In the context of civic education, I wonder if we can reconcile research-based notions of best practice, with their emphasis on deep instruction, discussion, and simulations, among other engaging classroom activities, with high-stakes tests that require superficial, fact based coverage of many benchmarks. This reconciliation should be viewed as one of the most pressing tasks for teacher educators today, especially if they hope to preserve even the smallest presence of the civic mission of schools in social studies classrooms. Because civic education legislation in Florida represents a double-

edged sword – increased civics instruction with high-stakes testing attached – this reconciliation has been necessary from the moment of the legislation’s passing.

### **Types of Teacher**

As discussed in the last section of Chapter 4, Erin is the type of teacher who really loves teaching, bounces between taking responsibility for her shortcomings in the classroom and sometimes placing the blame on students, and is perfectly comfortable not knowing all of the answers. She is also, to a considerable extent, very concerned with her students’ learning, especially as her school district begins a shift toward *mastery* of standards (rather than *teaching* of standards). Matt is a content-driven teacher. This passion for subject matter seems to affect everything he does in his classroom and everything he feels regarding his teaching and teacher identity. While he views teaching as much more than the transmission of knowledge, he firmly believes that teachers require a deep and full understanding of their assigned subject area.

In their study of teachers’ perceptions of professional identity, Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004) considered three categories of teacher professional identity, which served as their theoretical framework: teacher as a subject-matter expert, teacher as a pedagogical expert, and teacher as a didactical expert. Most teachers in their study saw themselves as subject-matter and didactical experts, which seems to be consistent with many secondary teachers, including the participants in my study. Further, most social studies teachers in their study saw themselves as subject-matter experts, which certainly matches my observations as a social studies teacher educator. The teachers in their study who perceived themselves as subject-matter experts “often clarified this by stating that without expertise in subject matter, one cannot be a teacher: they frequently wrote that subject matter is the basis for a teacher’s authority and for being taken

seriously by students” (p. 758). This quintessentially describes Matt’s teacher identity and philosophy surrounding it, as evidenced by an unequivocal statement he made: “I strongly believe the teacher has to be passionate and knowledgeable about content. And civics is something I already knew *a lot* about. . . . But I just feel content is so *important*, and the kids can tell.”

Erin, on the other hand, was forthcoming about her weaknesses as a subject-matter expert for civics. Unlike Matt, she is easily categorized as a didactical expert. In Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop’s (2004) study, “Teachers who perceive themselves mainly as didactical experts frequently clarified this by referring to conditions for student learning and lesson planning as important features of their work” (p. 758), which was consistently the case for Erin. Whenever I arrived for another interview and asked her what she wanted to talk about, her responses always included references to lesson plans, classroom activities, and her struggles to create learning experiences that best fostered her students’ understanding of the curriculum. That Erin was less concerned with her subject-matter expertise than Matt was consistent with the findings from Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop’s study. As they note, relatively more male than female teachers perceive themselves as subject-matter experts.

Of additional interest in Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop’s (2004) study are three categories of factors that might influence a teacher’s perceptions of his or her professional identity: teaching context, teaching experience, and the biography of the teacher. Teaching context consists of the ecology of the classroom and the culture of the school. For my study, the former always seemed more important for Matt while the latter – which includes expectations of the community, students, members of the school

board, and colleagues – was evidently important for Erin. As the authors acknowledge, “[s]chool cultures determine – probably to a large extent – the stories of individual teachers, i.e., the way they perceive their professional identity” (p. 753). Accordingly, they cannot be overlooked in narrative studies of teacher identity.

The second category – teacher experience – has obvious relevancies to any study of novice teachers, especially because “expert knowledge is more extended and better organized in memory than knowledge of a novice” (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004, p. 753), which means that novice teachers experience greater cognitive exertion. In turn, they are more likely to feel worn down, despite their younger average age. Still, as Featherstone (1993) reminds us, “By itself, experience cannot be counted on to teach very much. We learn not from *having* an experience, but from reflecting on it” (emphasis in original, p. 104). Returning to age, the generational cohort of a teacher is also a factor in the third category: biography of the teacher. Research in this category includes “life-cycle” studies that demonstrate, for example, that teachers’ tolerance toward students increases when they have school-age children themselves. This insight can be interpreted as an experience from private life that has a profound effect on a novice teacher’s professional life, since fewer novice teachers, such as the two in my study, have school-age children.

The implications of perceptions of professional identity – including the type of teacher one perceives him or herself to be – are important for teacher educators to consider. Not only are they useful for helping inservice teachers understand their self-image, which would potentially foster self-reflection and increased feelings of self-confidence (especially during the early years), they are also useful for preservice

teachers as part of their teacher education and orientation. If preservice teachers are provided opportunities to craft an identity prior to entering the classroom, they are more likely to feel confident in that identity once they enter the classroom.

The implications for the civic mission of schools are less obvious. In a perfect world, all teachers who are charged with the important task of educating the next generation of republicans would view themselves as subject-matter, pedagogical, *and* didactical experts. In reality, this is unlikely to be the case. If I could choose a type of teacher for the civics classroom, I would choose a civics subject-matter expert, because, in my experience, such teachers are extremely passionate about civic education and hold teaching philosophies that consider and reference the civic mission of schools. Matt is a subject-matter expert, but I would hesitate to call him a *civics* subject-matter expert. On the contrary, I would consider him to be an American history and government expert, which does not necessarily include an understanding of the important role that citizens play in the American polity or society in general. This helps to explain his difficulty articulating the importance of civic education when I asked, for example, why he believed the Florida legislature thought it wise to pass a civic education bill. Erin, as a didactical expert and as someone for whom World history was her first social studies passion, had similar difficulties.

### **Being Evaluated**

Being observed and evaluated by school administrators is a universal experience for teachers, and a particularly stressing experience for novice teachers. In Florida, new teachers can expect to have at least two classroom observations a year by an administrator and a formal evaluation at the end of the school year. Although the system likely differs a great deal across states, school districts, and even schools themselves,

the experience of being evaluated, including the feelings of vulnerability that it fosters, is likely similar for all novice teachers. For this reason, among others, it has been included in many studies of their experiences.

As one would expect, many novice teachers report feelings of anxiety and stress leading up to a classroom observation or evaluation meeting (Romano & Gibson, 2006). Neither Erin nor Matt directly reported such feelings, however, Matt's frustration with his administrator rescheduling his observations, and then only staying for a short time, signaled a level of annoyance with having to go through the trouble of preparing and worrying, only to be slighted by the administrator. Still, teachers report being far more annoyed when classroom observations are spontaneous (Romano, 2008), so despite the anxiety that precedes a planned visit by an administrator, novice teachers still appreciate having advance warning and time to prepare.

More relevant to my study, novice teachers oftentimes report frustration with the feedback they receive from administrators (Fry, 2007, 2009; Romano, 2008; Romano & Gibson, 2006). This frustration is present regardless of the nature of the feedback. That is, novice teachers are just as frustrated with positive feedback that leaves them with no constructive suggestions for improvement as they are with negative feedback that they might find either inaccurate, unconstructive, or both. Matt fell into the latter category, although calling his feelings "frustration" would be an understatement. In Matt's words, he was "livid." For him, the intersection of the type of teacher he views himself to be – a subject-matter expert – and the lukewarm evaluation he received in this area, factors heavily into his teacher identity. Considering the strong emotions that he shared during

our interview, I think it would be fair to say that retention of teachers like Matt is heavily influenced by their perceptions of their evaluation experiences.

A common theme among studies that examine novice teachers' experiences with teacher evaluation is frustration. Accordingly, induction programs would be wise to reform their approach to this important practice. At the end of her manuscript, Fry (2007) offers a list of suggestions for improving the induction experience. In the area of teacher evaluations, she recommends that administrators:

- Schedule post-observation conferences within a week of the classroom observation;
- Offer feedback on the teaching goals novices have self-identified;
- Offer constructive feedback about deficit areas; and
- Help beginning teachers brainstorm ways to improve their self-identified concerns. (p. 233)

Notably, two of these recommendations promote self-reflection by the novice, requiring him or her to identify goals and concerns. In the end, the administrator will still share his or her own concerns about deficit areas and offer constructive feedback, but a large part of the onus rests with the teacher. Such exercises have the potential to assist teachers in positively formulating their professional identities. Still, regardless of strategy, research on novice teachers consistently supports deemphasized teacher evaluation (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriquez, 2009; Griffin, Winn, Otis-Wilborn, & Kilgore, 2003; Romano & Gibson, 2006) and emphasized teacher development (Bullough, 1994).

These implications are just as helpful when considering ways to promote the civic mission of schools through teacher induction programs. At one point during his lengthy diatribe against the administrator who performed his evaluation, I asked Matt if the administrator had any background in civics or social studies. Before finishing the

question, Matt exclaimed, “No!” Naturally, in Matt’s mind, this invalidated her assessment of his content expertise even more. In my mind, this undermined the administrator’s ability to have a thoughtful dialog with Matt about civics instruction, as part of the larger realm of the civic mission of schools. Perhaps one great way to support the mission is to have mentors and administrators who understand and value it. Then, instead of giving teachers marks for their civics subject-matter expertise, or lack thereof, mentors and administrators can engage their novice charges in conversations about important civics knowledge, skills, and dispositions, and the ways in which teachers can responsibly foster those in their students.

### **Optimism About “Next Year”**

It is not uncommon for novice teachers to resolve “to be better next year.” During their first year or two, they learn some things about classroom management and about how to fulfill curricular expectations, but they also begin to reexamine priorities, to plan ways to increase their own competence in certain subject areas, and to work on ways to teach that are more interesting to themselves and their students (Featherstone, 1993). As I already mentioned in this chapter, for Erin, doing things better “next year” was more about adapting instruction in response to an end-of-course examination than it was about making her teaching more interesting for herself and her students. This might help explain why van Hover and Pierce (2006) named their manuscript on novice teachers’ perceptions of the impact of accountability reform (which included high-stakes testing) on their instructional decision making, “Next year will be different.”

However, there is a difference in thinking between Erin and the primary informant in the van Hover and Pierce (2006) study. In preparation for the examination, Erin



anticipated giving more worksheets and not allowing students to engage in so many activities. As she stated:

I will tell you that I have loved my opportunity to teach my curriculum before it's measured ((nervous laugh)) because now I'm like, "Okay, let's look standards based at everything I've accomplished this year and whether or not my kids did something really cool and fun and interactive and had a great time or if they provide ((nervous laugh)) accomplishment and mastery of a true standard.

On the other hand, the primary informant in the van Hover and Piece study anticipated delivering engaging lessons that would help students to think. Specifically, he stated:

Next year, I will have far more realistic expectations of my students' abilities and a far greater awareness of pacing. My thinking is this: If I prepare lessons that are efficient and engaging – lessons that uncover conceptions and teach kids HOW to think – then the scores will take care of themselves. This year has been spent figuring out what works and what doesn't...Next year will be different. (p. 46)

Needless to say, the presence of high-stakes tests had a profound impact on both teachers' instructional decision-making. The question that needs further exploration is this: "What *kind* of impact do high-stakes tests have on novice teachers' instructional decision-making?"

High-stakes tests notwithstanding, most novice teachers express true optimism about "next year," believing that both their lives and their instruction will experience a marked improvement (Cook, 2009; Fry, 2007, 2009; Tait, 2008). In my study, this was true for Erin and Matt, as both expressed hope for doing things better next year outside of the context of the end-of-course examination. Such feelings would certainly have a positive influence on their civics teacher identity and increase the likelihood that they will stay in the teaching profession, if not the civics classroom.

Returning to my previous comments on teacher evaluation, and the implications that my study and previous studies hold in that regard, I believe that an understanding

and acknowledgement by mentors and administrators of the centrality of “next year” in the minds of many novices would help them to provide more meaningful support. Rather than providing “unconstructive feedback,” they could talk to their novices about “deficits” with an optimistic outlook toward the following school year. Further, if the mentors and administrators were civics educators themselves, they could facilitate a discussion regarding the extent to which the novices felt they achieved important civic outcomes with their students, as well as strategies for improving in that area during the following school year.

### **Novice Teacher Identity**

The novice years of classroom teaching are easily characterized as a struggle to define one’s professional self (Dotger & Smith, 2009). In addition to learning on the job to transition their nascent preservice philosophies into daily practice, novice teachers find themselves engaged in the complex “integration of personal self and the ‘taking on’ of a culturally scripted, often narrowly defined professional role while maintaining individuality” (Alsup, 2006, p. 4). This is a tall order for a cohort that is often dealing with feelings of self-doubt and instability. Nonetheless, this identity work occurs at the intersection of their professional training, their own experiences as students, their former teachers whom they hope to model [or not model], and their understanding of the classroom teacher (Samuel & Stephens, 2000; Sugrue, 1997). As Dotger and Smith note, “The dissonance between these concepts places teachers in a position where they must organize and make meaning of their past, present, and future experiences in order to construct an individual and coherent professional identity” (p. 163). In my study, this dissonance was particularly obvious in Erin’s narratives.

Of all of Erin's narratives, the one in which her identity work and its accompanying dissonance was most evident was the one entitled, "Please don't make me be the spokesperson." In this impressively lengthy and complicated narrative, Erin articulated her anxieties about being a civics teacher and her desperate attempts at "practicing what [she] preach[es]." Through storytelling, she revealed that her civics teacher identity work is characterized by forces *inside* of her classroom, forces *outside* of her classroom (including fellow teachers, her students' parents, the community, and her husband), her understanding of what a good civics teacher should be and do, and the extra vulnerability she felt after having been named Novice Teacher of the Year for her school district. This is a complex intersection – one that extends far beyond professional training, experiences as students, the apprenticeship of observation, and understanding of what it means to be a classroom teacher.

With so many forces at play, it is difficult for novice teachers, or any teachers for that matter, to converge upon a stable, unified identity. This reality, as Zembylas (2003) observes, has prompted educators to turn to narrative research "to explore teacher identity formation as articulated through talk, social interaction, and self-presentation," which allows for "reconceptualizing the self as a form of working *subjectivity*" (emphasis in original, p. 107). Featherstone (2003) agrees: "[N]o one who lives through an experience as intense and as extended as the first years of classroom teaching imagines that he or she can be objective about it" (p. 95). Therefore, we can expect for our participants' narratives to be selective, chosen because they help them to make sense of their identities and to present a self that is desirable, if not also complex, changing, and uncertain.

Working from this perspective, I had to abandon the assumption that Erin and Matt would present singular civics teacher identities that might serve as windows into their experiences as novice social studies teachers. Such an assumption, according to Zembylas (2003), neglects “the messy meanings of teacher identity as it comes to be constituted through social interactions, performances, and daily negotiations” (p. 109). This became clearer throughout data collection, but specifically during data analysis, when I struggled to characterize my participants’ civics teacher identities. Alas, the best I could hope to accomplish would be to reach some understanding of the ways in which they *make sense* of those identities.

Partway through his first chapter of *Teacher Man*, McCourt (2005) offered this small window into his novice teacher psyche, illustrating the intersection of narrative, performance, and identity:

Instead of teaching, I told stories.

Anything to keep them quiet and in their seats.

They thought I was teaching.

I thought I was teaching.

I was learning.

And you called yourself a teacher?

I didn’t call myself anything. I was more than a teacher. And less. In the high school classroom you are a drill sergeant, a rabbi, a shoulder to cry on, a disciplinarian, a singer, a low-level scholar, a clerk, a referee, a clown, a counselor, a dress-code enforcer, a conductor, an apologist, a philosopher, a collaborator, a tap dancer, a politician, a therapist, a fool, a traffic cop, a priest, a mother-father-brother-sister-uncle-aunt, a bookkeeper, a critic, a psychologist, the last straw. (p. 19)

After rereading this section, I knew I had heard something similar during one of my interviews with Matt. The question was about his teaching philosophy, which he had

difficulty explaining. Still, it was easy to understand the gist and see parallels to McCourt's sentiments:

I believe enthusiasm, being an entertainer is all part of the job, you know – being that corny, being able to sort of mystify them, definitely brings to the table a level of interest that they don't get with other teachers. And they've even said things, they're like, even when it's something boring, "Our teacher still has a way of kind of making it fun and ridiculous." And it's not even that I'm that good of a teacher; it's just that I'm that ridiculous enough of a person and I just— cause the way I look at it is, okay, maybe I never put this in my philosophy paper, but it's become a "if it's not fun for me, it's not fun for them" state of mind.

Just as McCourt hesitated to call himself a teacher, Matt hesitated to call himself a *good* teacher. Instead, both narrated a complex identity that presented their teacher selves as performers who are simply trying to do the right thing.

This is consistent with Featherstone's (2003) vision of the novice teacher who "is constantly on stage and urgently needs to develop a performing self *with whom he or she can live comfortably*" (emphasis in original, p. 107). Although Featherstone's stage represents a more figurative conception of teaching context than McCourt's or Matt's stage, it brings us back to Erin and her struggle with her identity both inside and outside of her classroom. Further, it helps use to realize that formulating a teacher identity is not as simple as merely standing in front a classroom of students and being the teacher one strives to be. On the contrary, it is a complex negotiation between teacher and self that oftentimes fails to achieve a resolution (Cook, 2009).

As I will soon discuss, there is still much to be learned about novice teacher identity. Nevertheless, what we already know, in addition to what my study reveals, has important implications for teacher educators, schools, and teachers. First, as Cook (2009) argues, "[T]he primary site of struggle for beginning teachers is the self." Unfortunately, the self is almost always neglected in teacher education programs. For

this to change, Samuel and Stephens (2000) assert that designers of teacher education programs must address the following questions:

- Are student teachers afforded sufficient time, space, and curriculum input to develop critical conceptions of themselves as learners; their peers as future teachers; their lecturers' and mentor teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning; the school culture in which they practice; the teaching and learning practices of teacher colleagues and administrators; and their conceptions of themselves as teachers in a rapidly changing environment?
- Should teacher education institutions serve to reinforce and/or challenge student teachers' existing cultural conceptions of their role and identities as teachers?
- What should be the nature and content of the experiences that novice student teachers are presented with in their training in order to realize the development of critical reflective skills. (pp. 489-90)

These critical questions, among others, need to be addressed by researchers and teacher educators seeking to explore the competing influences on teachers' roles and identities and to adjust teacher education programs accordingly. To be certain, "As part of the charge for colleges and universities to take more responsibility for the beginning years of teaching, we need to embrace and practice comprehensive pedagogies in teacher education that address the whole teacher – the emotional, intellectual, and developmental processes of becoming" (Cook, p. 291).

Second, current trends in teacher evaluation (e.g., quantitative measures tying student achievement to teacher effectiveness) place unnecessary stress on all teachers and get in the way of more meaningful evaluation strategies that allow teachers to make sense of their developing selves. School leadership would be wise to downplay mainstream evaluation measures and encourage practices that help teachers, especially novices, to better understand their teacher selves. Third, teachers themselves must make it a priority to engage in identity work, making self-reflection a regular part of their workday. There is a strong need, according to Cook (2009), for

teachers to be “reflective, intuitive, empathetic, sensitive, adaptive, and resilient (p. 291). It is naïve to believe that such dispositions are to be fostered without deliberate and systematic attention to the teacher self.

### **Future Investigations**

It is important to do research on how novice teachers perceive their professional identities. Their perceptions, in addition to the factors that influence their perceptions, play strongly into their professional judgment and behavior, especially in the classroom. Moreover, the degree to which novice teachers develop positive professional identities most certainly influences the likelihood that they will remain in the classroom. The more we know, the more we can support our most vulnerable teachers. In turn, novice teachers will feel better about their professional selves and, presumably, stay in the teaching profession. This is just as true in the social studies as it is in the sciences, and it is just as true for civics teachers as it is for history teachers. Moreover, I would argue that the task takes on increased importance and immediacy for civics teachers who are likely to lack a strong philosophical understanding of the civic mission of schools, and therefore neglect to include that mission in their professional identities.

As I thought about the knowledge I would find most beneficial as a teacher educator, I looked to some of the authors whom I cited in this chapter. Regarding the type of teacher one views him or herself to be, I agree with the wonderings of Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004):

It remains unclear to what extent learning experiences regarding subject matter, didactical, and pedagogical aspects influenced the teachers’ perceptions of their professional identity. How such experiences influence teachers’ professional identity formation might be an important issue for future research. This may contribute considerably to our understanding of teachers’ professional images of themselves. (p. 762)

Indeed, throughout my study, both during data collection and analysis, I was curious about my participants' educational backgrounds and professional development experiences, and the degree to which those backgrounds and experiences influenced the ways in which they perceived their professional identity. It appeared that Matt's background as a history major factored heavily into his emphasis on subject matter, but I failed to see such an obvious connection with Erin.

I also agree with Dotger and Smith (2009) that we need "more scrutiny of the relationship between professional persons (i.e., teachers), the practical contexts (i.e., school-family communications) they will encounter, and the resulting impact on professional identity development" (p. 164). For example, in analyzing Erin's narratives, practical contexts, such as her personal history in the community and her perceptions of her students' parents, seemed to weigh heavily on her identity development, as did her relationships, both positive and negative, with her principal and other teachers at the school. Looking across a larger sample, I believe more powerful insights can be gleaned regarding this important intersection – insights that can help us prepare novice teachers for the potentially difficult identity work that awaits them.

Personally, I would like to investigate Erin and Matt's perceptions of their classroom practice toward the end of the 2011-2012 school year to explore the ways in which they feel their practice, and, in turn, their identity has *actually changed* (if indeed it has) in preparation for the end-of-course examination. This type of longitudinal research is precisely what we need in order to determine the true impact of high-stakes testing on teacher identity, teacher practice, and perhaps even student learning. It was one thing



for both participants to report their expectations that their instruction would change. It is another thing entirely, and more importantly, for their instruction to actually change.

Further insights into social studies teachers' conceptions of teaching civics and their sense making regarding their identities as civics teachers could be revealed through such additional data sources as lesson plans and formal classroom observations. Because my study was entirely subject driven, I resisted such data sources and their potential to betray the constructivist perspective I adopted, a perspective that values the perceptions of the participant over the researcher. Nonetheless, such data sources have immense value, particularly when one is concerned with teacher practice and student learning, and even when one, such as myself, is curious about how teachers' conceptions and identities are reflected in their practice. Given the focus of my study, I am profoundly interested in the ways in which teachers think about, acknowledge, understand, and instructionally embrace the civic missions of schools. Spending more time in classrooms would likely reveal important insights in this area.

### **Concluding Remarks**

I would like to end my discussion of my study on the same topic with which I began – the preservation of the American republic. Benjamin Franklin's famous response as he was leaving the Constitutional Convention in September of 1787 – A Republic, if you can keep it – remains the most poignant and concise summary of America's fragile experiment in republican democracy. It also, in my opinion, remains the primary reason for public education, even if the public fails to realize it. Indeed, America's ability to "keep the Republic" has always rested upon an educated citizenry,

and for this reason, civic education must be fully restored in American schools, albeit, in different form than the Founding Fathers would have envisioned it.

If educational stakeholders are to take this restoration seriously, they need to look beyond legislative mandates and accountability measures. Yes, making civics a mandatory part of the public school curriculum is a necessary step, and in an educational milieu that is marred with high-stakes testing, I suppose that including civics in accountability systems is a necessary step as well. However, in order for classrooms to fulfill the civic mission of schools, we must look at the teachers who are charged with teaching their students about republican government and the responsibilities of citizenship. If these teachers fail to recognize the value of such an education, surely they will fail to achieve the mission that inspires it.

APPENDIX A  
IRB PROTOCOL

## UFIRB 02 – Social & Behavioral Research

### Protocol Submission Form

*This form must be typed. Send this form and the supporting documents to IRB02, PO Box 112250, Gainesville, FL 32611. Should you have questions about completing this form, call 352-392-0433.*

<b>Title of Protocol:</b>	Novice social studies teachers' sense making of their emerging identities as civics teachers		
<b>Principal Investigator:</b>	Emma Humphries	<b>UFID #:</b>	
<b>Degree / Title:</b>	M.Ed./Doctoral Candidate	<b>Mailing Address:</b> (If on campus include PO Box address):  College of Education PO Box 117048 Gainesville, FL 32611	<b>Email:</b>
<b>Department:</b>	School of Teaching and Learning		<b>Telephone #:</b>
<b>Co-Investigator(s):</b>	None	<b>UFID#:</b>	<b>Email:</b>
<b>Supervisor (If PI is student):</b>	Elizabeth Washington	<b>UFID#:</b>	
<b>Degree / Title:</b>	Ph.D./Professor	<b>Mailing Address:</b> (If on campus include PO Box address):  College of Education PO Box 117048 Gainesville, FL 32611	<b>Email:</b>
<b>Department:</b>	School of Teaching and Learning		<b>Telephone #:</b>
<b>Date of Proposed Research:</b>	February 2011 – November 2011		
<b>Source of Funding</b> (A copy of the grant proposal must be submitted with this protocol if funding is involved):	Unfunded		
<b>Scientific Purpose of the Study:</b>			
The purpose of this study is to explore how two novice social studies teachers make sense of their emerging identities as civics teachers.			

**Describe the Research Methodology in Non-Technical Language:** *(Explain what will be done with or to the research participant.)*

The principal investigator will ask two novice middle school classroom teachers from north Florida to participate in three 45-60 minute, semi-structured, individual interviews to ascertain their sense making of their emerging identities as civics teachers (see interview protocols attached). Individual interviews, which will be conducted by the principal investigator, face-to-face in a quiet space that is convenient for participants, such as a local library study room. The interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed by the principal investigator.

In addition to the interviews, the principal investigator will ask the participants to use a blog to record their thoughts and reflections regarding any notable experiences teaching a new, yearlong seventh grade civics curriculum. The primary investigator will also ask participants for copies of lesson plans that correlate with the experiences about which they blogged. Blog entries and lesson plans will serve as probes for the second and third interviews.

**Describe Potential Benefits:**

The investigation will illuminate how novice social studies teachers make sense of their emerging identities as civics teachers as they teach a new, yearlong seventh grade civics curriculum that is being used across the state. There are potential benefits for social studies curriculum developers who seek to provide high-quality curricular materials for middle school social studies teachers in Florida who are being legislatively mandated to teach civics for the first time. Additionally, the investigation has potential benefits for social studies teacher educators who wish to prepare their students for future teaching in middle school civics classrooms.

**Describe Potential Risks:** *(If risk of physical, psychological or economic harm may be involved, describe the steps taken to protect participant.)*

No more than minimal risk.

Occasionally, the research participant may feel uncomfortable participating in the interviews or blogging about their experiences, but participation is voluntary and all data will be coded and anonymity assured. There are no perceived risks to the research participant. No person other than the principal investigator will have access to the data. The research participant will be assured that the collected data will not be used in any evaluation of performance. The principal investigator will use fictitious names in any written reports and omit references to the specific time during which the data were collected.

**Describe How Participant(s) Will Be Recruited:**

The Florida Joint Center for Citizenship (<http://www.floridacitizen.org/index.php>), which sponsored the new, yearlong seventh grade curriculum, holds a database of social studies teachers who are using the curriculum. The principal investigator has already accessed this database and identified seventh grade civics teachers who are in their first or second year of teaching. Once IRB approval has been obtained, the principal investigator will email these teachers to request their voluntary participation in the study. The principal investigator will then contact the volunteers she has selected for permission and scheduling of the interviews.

<b>Maximum Number of Participants (to be approached)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Age Range of Participants:</b>	<b>18+</b>	<b>Amount of Compensation/course credit:</b>	<b>None</b>
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with consent)					
<p>Describe the Informed Consent Process. (Attach a Copy of the Informed Consent Document. See <a href="http://irb.ufl.edu/irb02/samples.html">http://irb.ufl.edu/irb02/samples.html</a> for examples of consent.)</p>					
(SIGNATURE SECTION)					
Principal Investigator(s) Signature:					Date:
Co-Investigator(s) Signature(s):			None		Date:
Supervisor's Signature (if PI is a student):					Date:
Department Chair Signature:					Date:

APPENDIX B  
EMAIL RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Dear Participant:

My name is Emma Humphries and I am a doctoral candidate in Social Studies Education at the University of Florida. I am currently gathering data for a research project to explore how two novice social studies teachers make sense of their emerging identities as civics teachers. What I would like to do is interview you and another teacher in an individual interview setting, and then ask you to use a blog to journal about your teaching experiences. This would entail a time commitment of roughly five to ten hours total. No compensation is available, but I would appreciate your participation.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please reply to:

Emma Humphries

ekhumphries@ufl.edu

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Emma Humphries

APPENDIX C  
NARRATIVE INVENTORY

**COMPARING ERIN AND MATT**

Interview 1 Question	Narrative	Topics	Structure	Other comments
Tell me about your decision to become a teacher.	<b>Erin No. 3</b> – Well, I could always be a teacher, right?	Wanted to be Indiana Jones, high school human geography course, museum studies internship, talking to Mom, tried subbing, type of student she was	Good, but complicated structure; long meta-narrative, with about three sub-narratives	1 page. This is an awesome narrative. I definitely need to include it.
Tell me about your decision to become a teacher.	<b>Matt No. 1</b> – I always wanted to be a teacher	Always wanted to be a teacher...and a zoologist.	Good structure	1 paragraph. Very short. Awesome contrast to Erin's long response to this question.
Tell me about your decision to become a teacher.	<b>Matt No. 2</b> – Veterinary was not working out	Zoology and veterinary programs weren't working out, knew early on wanted to be a teacher.	Very good structure	1 paragraph. Again, very short. Not sure if I should use this one or Matt No. 1 to contrast to Erin's long response.
Tell me about your decision to become a <i>civics</i> teacher.	<b>Erin No. 4</b> – Civics was probably not a big love of mine	More of a geography person, not as big on history, online course, no one is qualified to teach it anyways, I am a learner, civics is real and relevant	Good structure O-A-CA-O-CA-E-R-C	1. 25 pages. Long narrative; I probed once at the end after she brought up civics being fun.
Tell me about your decision to become a <i>civics</i> teacher.	<b>Matt No. 4</b> – But I love civics too	Passion is American history, most people don't even know what civics is, I've always liked civics, I'm a political person	Good, traditional structure O-A-CA-E-R-C	1 paragraph. Very short. good contrast to Erin No. 4.
Tell me about the types of learning experiences that you consider best practice for civics.	<b>Erin No. 7</b> – Anything that is engaging and applicable to students' real lives	Engaging and applicable, combating apathy, being real with the students (showing her utility bill)	Good, but complicated structure. Meta-narrative with 3 sub-narratives: A-O-Sub1(CA Narrative)- E-Sub2(Eval Narrative)- Sub3(Res Narrative)-C	1.5 pages. I need to include this.

Tell me about the types of learning experiences that you consider best practice for civics.	<b>Matt No. 5</b> – The room was ssssilent	Technology, games, engaging, relevant	Incomplete structure A-O-CA-E	1 paragraph. Good contrast to Erin No. 4 in terms of length and structure, but also good comparison in terms of content.
Tell me about the types of learning experiences that you consider best practice for civics.	<b>Matt No. 6</b> – Kids love it	Videos (Frost-Nixon interview), media literacy	No CA	1 paragraph. I think Matt No. 5 offers a better compare/contrast to Erin No. 4. Can probably ditch this one.
Describe the experiences that you have had that you believe have prepared you to be a civics teacher.	<b>Erin No. 8</b> – My parents were very supportive of like my weirdo-gifted tendencies	Parents had different political backgrounds, Student apathy, penguins, doesn't feel most qualified, married to political opposite, can see the other side, still trying to figure it out	Good, but complicated structure; long meta-narrative, with about 3-4 sub-narratives	2.25 pages. Wow. So much good stuff in here. The privilege stuff (she brings it up at 2 separate times) makes me want to include it. Not much to compare with Matt, but good for Erin by herself.
Describe the experiences that you have had that you believe have prepared you to be a civics teacher.	<b>Erin No. 9</b> – I forgot about all these parts of government	FJCC workshop and online methods course, put civics on her radar, very helpful, she brings up EoC for first time, can't teach the way she was taught, compares herself to other teachers	Good, but complicated structure; long meta-narrative, with about 3-4 sub-narratives	2.25 pages. Brings up EoC at two different points in the narrative
Describe the experiences that you have had that you believe have prepared you to be a civics teacher.	<b>Matt No. 7</b> – The workshop was great	The content was too much, you lost us, appreciated the pedagogy part; then transitions to long soap box on importance of content	Good structure; first 2-layer narrative	1.25 pages. Good content comparison to Erin No. 9. It's interesting how this question leads Erin to talk about the EoC and Matt to talk about content.
Tell me about your political background.	<b>Erin No. 11</b> – Students are really, really conservative	Strong Democratic roots, really liberal/Democratic, married to conservative, open to other side, learning with students, don't care how students feel, what them to think,	Good, but complicated structure; long meta-narrative, with about 2-3 sub-narratives	3 pages. Long narrative. Talks a lot about who she is and how that influences her teaching.



		really conservative students, (responsibility to be) honest with students, modeling citizenship		
Tell me about your political background.	<b>Matt No. 8</b> – I’ve become more liberal	Was a Young Republican, became more liberal in college, more of a historical than political person, not reactionary	Weak structure	1 page. Good when paired with Matt No. 9
Tell me about your political background. PROBE: do you see yourself in your students	<b>Matt No. 9</b> – They don’t know what they’re talking about	Students conservative, but don’t know what they’re talking about. Want Matt’s opinion. Matt does not share his opinion.	Good structure	1 paragraph. Together with Matt No. 8, this narrative covers the same topic as Erin No. 11 does. For her, it’s one big messy narrative. For Matt, it’s clean-cut across two short narratives.
<b>Interview 2 Question</b>	<b>Narrative</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Structure</b>	<b>Other comments</b>
What support do you feel like you have in this school?	<b>Erin No. 14</b> – No one wants to collaborate	No collaboration, criticism from principal, hurts the kids	Good structure	1 paragraph. A pretty short narrative coming from Erin. Would be a nice content contrast to Matt No. 11
What support do you feel like you have in this school?	<b>Matt No. 11</b> – Support is awesome	Strong cohesion, no fear to ask for help, fantastic mentor-teacher, very supportive admin	No CA	1 paragraph. Good contrast to Erin No. 14, although she is speaking more directly to collaboration while he is speaking to overall support
Tell me about some notable teaching experiences you have had since we last met.	<b>Erin No. 15</b> – I don’t want to talk the whole time	In class reading, kids won’t do it, boring and dry, need easier way to get content,	Good structure A-CA-E-CA-E-CA-E-R-C	1 paragraph. Habitual narrative. Very short narrative for Erin.
Tell me about some notable teaching experiences you have had since we last met.	<b>Matt No. 14</b> – Not a snowball’s chance	Budget game, not an important standard, came up with a different activity	Decent structure A-O-CA-R-E-Secondary Sub (Res. Narrative)-Tertiary Sub (CA Narrative)-Secondary Sub (Resolution)-E-R-C	2.25 pages. Very long narrative for Matt, which is interesting considering that Erin had such a short one for this question.
How do you feel as a civics teacher?	<b>Erin No. 24</b> – Please don’t make me be the	Taking a public stand, teacher disclosure, fear	Another complicated meta-narrative with	6 pages. Incredibly long.

	spokesperson	community backlash,	multiple sub-narratives	
How do you feel as a civics teacher?	<b>Matt No. 18</b> – I almost feel like I am empowering these kids	Such a valuable subject, feels like empowering kids, real world, creating aware citizens, very opinionated, being a young teacher	No CA	.5 page. Not much to this. Not sure it qualifies as a narrative.
<b>Interview 3 Question</b>	<b>Narrative</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Structure</b>	<b>Other comments</b>
Tell me about a notable teaching experience you've had since we last met.	<b>Erin No. 25</b> – Complete Catastrophe	Survival Econ game, student competition and selfishness, worked fine for other teacher	Good, but complicated structure. Meta-narrative with 4 sub-narratives: A-O-CA-E-CA-E-Sub1(CA Narrative)-CA-E-Sub2(Eval Narrative)-E-Sub3(Eval Narrative)-E-Sub4(Eval Narrative)-E-R-C	4 pages. This is a quintessential Erin narrative.
Tell me about a notable teaching experience you've had since we last met.	<b>Matt No. 19</b> – That was interesting	Political spectrum survey, took a long time, too hard for students, will change it in the future	Great structure A-R-CA-E-R-E-C	1.25 pages. This is a great narrative.
How, if at all, have your views on teaching changed over the past school year?	<b>Erin No. 27</b> – I'm part of something bigger	Being part of something bigger, taking risks, crying in front of students	Poor structure	1.25 pages. Not sure it entirely qualifies as a narrative
How, if at all, have your views on teaching changed over the past school year?	<b>Matt No. 23</b> – Most of them have stayed the same	Dealing with bureaucratic stuff, becoming more pessimistic, having fun	Good structure	1 page. This and Erin No. 27 might not be work delving into
It's a year from today. How do you feel as a civics teacher?	<b>Erin No. 29</b> – I'm feeling really horrible	Feeling horrible, standards, class not rigorous enough	Decent structure	1.5 pages. Good comparison to Matt No. 24 – <i>Perhaps I should conclude Chapter 4 with the <u>content</u> of this narrative and Matt No. 24?</i>
It's a year from today. How do you feel as a civics teacher?	<b>Matt No. 24</b> – Freaked out	Stress, testing will change everything, don't know what's on the test, students will confuse amendments and articles	Decent structure	2 pages. Such an important topic – <i>Perhaps I should conclude Chapter 4 with the <u>content</u> of this narrative and Erin No. 29?</i>

**ERIN**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Narrative</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Structure</b>	<b>Other comments</b>
What kinds of civics learning experiences do you recall from your K-12 education?	<b>Erin No. 1</b> – Very minimal amounts	Not a lot of civics, 12 <sup>th</sup> grade government, civics activities because of gifted program.	Incomplete structure.	1 paragraph. Very short.
What kinds of civics learning experiences do you recall from your K-12 education?	<b>Erin No. 2</b> – They are privileged people	Students being privileged and apathetic.	Convolutd structure (all elements present)	1 page. Privilege topic.
So is this how you're learning a lot about yourself?	<b>Erin No. 5</b> – You're supposed to keep up with the news	Keeping up with the news, current events, kind of student she was.	Weak structure, if any	1 paragraph. Not quite a narrative. She's all over the place.
How would you describe the role of a civics teacher?	<b>Erin No. 6</b> – To teach the standards	Relevance of civics (as opposed to the subjects), citizenship, standards	Very poor	1.25 pages. Not quite a narrative. Traces of hypothetical narrative
You had mentioned earlier in the interview about being somewhat disappointed that you knew the background of these kids, you were prepared for them probably to be more conservative, but you were somewhat disappointed.	<b>Erin No. 10</b> – Disappointed that they were not more interested	Kids not really caring at first, but they're 12, kids being good citizens at schools.	Good structure	1 paragraph. Definitely shows how Erin struggles with her students' perceptions of civics.
Tell me about your political background (she then started talking about the Imperial Presidency lesson plan)	<b>Erin No. 12</b> – But it was hard. I taught it bad	Students could not attack each other's opinions, Erin felt she taught the lesson poorly, they're not ready yet, no critical thinking skills.	Good structure.	1 paragraph.
What was the stated purpose of the training you attended today?	<b>Erin No. 13</b> – What are we doing here	Training had no clear purpose, pre-AP civics, rigor, projects, Project Citizen, the type of student Erin is.	Convolutd structure	1 page. Not one fluid narrative. Would only include it because she talks about the type of student she was and how that affects the type of teacher she is.

How much pressure are you under to integrate reading and writing activities into your instruction?	<b>Erin No. 16</b> – That’s what history is	Kids don’t like to do homework, no collaboration, other teachers feel pressured, don’t understand why, grading, standards.	Decent structure. 2 layers	1.5 pages. Not sure that the content is quite there to warrant inclusion.
How do you feel on those days when you’re teaching reading and writing versus days when you’re doing engaging civics activities?	<b>Erin No. 17</b> – I like both	Enjoys teaching writing, doesn’t mind if it’s not her standard	No CA	1 paragraph.
How do you feel on those days when you’re teaching reading and writing versus days when you’re doing engaging civics activities?	<b>Erin No. 18</b> – Why can’t I teach that	Teaching English, covering other standards, teaching projects, group work, students evaluating students	Convolutd structure	1.25 pages. Not quite a narrative. All over the place.
How does it feel when you put yourself out there as this non-expert? Part of the crew, not the captain anymore?	<b>Erin No. 19</b> – It doesn’t bother me at all	Admitting she doesn’t know the answers/doesn’t know what’s coming next, Project Citizen	Convolutd structure	2.25 pages. This is quintessential Erin.
How did this issue of privilege play out through the project up to this point?	<b>Erin No. 20</b> – That doesn’t mean that privileged people aren’t allowed to try to solve their own problems	Gifted kids, students chose privileged people’s problems, will set it up differently next year	Good structure. 2 layers. Very clear evaluation.	1.5 pages. Privilege topic. Shows how she wavers in her sense making regarding student privilege.
How do you feel as a civics teacher?	<b>Erin No. 24</b> – Please don’t make me be the spokesperson	Taking a public stand, teacher disclosure, fear community backlash,	Another complicated meta-narrative with multiple sub-narratives	6 pages. Incredibly long, but awesome content.
Congratulations on making it so far in the curriculum!	<b>Erin No. 26</b> – I actually accomplished something	Happy about getting through curricula, not sure students grasped everything, simulations were tricky	Good structure. Strong CA	1 paragraph.
From a reading of the transcripts, I’ve noticed that the type of student that you once were – the type that’s always challenging teachers and expecting	<b>Erin No. 28</b> – Totally reflects the kind of teacher I am	Students will challenge you, with civics it is easier to be real with students, growing the	Decent structure. Multi-layer story	2.25 pages. Amazing content. Really good Erin stuff.

teachers to really know their stuff – seems to influence the type of teacher that you are. To what extent you agree with that.		whole student, bad teachers when I was a student, I walked out of class as a student		
As a civics teacher, what makes you tick?	<b>Erin No. 30</b> – I just love how pertinent it is	Relevance and applicability of civics, kids like it, kids participate more in her class, everyone is engaged.	Good structure. Weak CA	1 paragraph. Really gets to the heart of her identity as a civics teacher.
Is there anything else you'd like to talk about?	<b>Erin No. 31</b> – I'm glad we're done with economics	Project Citizen, nervous about compiling results, will plan it out better next year.	Great structure	1 paragraph. Might get to the heart of the research question – the idea that next year will be better.
	<b>Erin Blog No. 1</b> – Teaching Civics	Project Citizen, Rookie Teacher of the Year	Great structure	2 pages. Should use just because it's one of two usable blog posts from Erin.
	<b>Erin Blog No. 2</b> – Project Citizen	Logistics about Project Citizen	Poor structure	2 pages. Not really a narrative. Just a reporting.

## MATT

Question	Narrative	Topics	Structure	Other comments
Tell me about the experience in Dr. Morris' class (probe).	<b>Matt No. 3</b> – Those kids are brilliant	Internship, gifted students, current students not same level	Incomplete structure	1 paragraph. This narrative speaks to a sort of these with Matt regarding the way in which he views his students.
Is there anything else you could like to talk about?	<b>Matt No. 10</b> – They're not getting it	Content so important to me, need to make modifications, slothful kids, I blame parents	Good structure	1 page. Again, this narrative speaks to Matt's disappointment with his students
Tell me about your mentor-teacher.	<b>Matt No. 12</b> – I don't get stressed out	No mental breakdown, great mentor, teaching is hard	Weak structure	1 paragraph.

Tell me about some notable teaching experiences you have had since we last met.	<b>Matt No. 13</b> – I love that lesson so much	Imperial presidents lesson, tough vocabulary, leveled groups, they loved it! They were engaged	Good structure	2.25 pages. Has a corresponding blog post.
Did you ever get that deluge of parents phone calls you were worried about?	<b>Matt No. 15</b> – Your son cheated	Kid cheated, heated phone exchange with Mom, kid eventually admitted it, I felt vindicated	Fantastic structure!	1.25 pages. Interesting because this happened to him and he is a novice teacher, although he does not speak to that.
When are you happiest as a teacher?	<b>Matt No. 16</b> – When I see a lot of hands go up	Students engaged, asking questions	No CA	1 paragraph. Not quite a narrative
Can you tell me about your formal observation?	<b>Matt No. 17</b> – She loved it	Formal evaluation, admin only stayed for 20 minutes, she really liked it	Good structure	1 page. I think this might go well alongside the Matt No. 26 where he talks about his “satisfactory” evaluation.
How did you feel trying to explain political things to students?	<b>Matt No. 20</b> – I wanted to do my best not to sway them	Going over students’ heads, trying to be unbiased, no political agenda	Incomplete structure	1 paragraph. Not quite a narrative
How were you able to explain these political ideas to them?	<b>Matt No. 21</b> – You have to change your vocabulary	Being educated and having a better vocabulary, his weakness, keeps dictionaries in class	Very good structure	1.25 pages. Great structure. Again, seems to speak to his students’ lower abilities.
How do you feel about skipping over parts of the curriculum?	<b>Matt No. 22</b> – I’m a practical person	Internship experience, glossed over it, they’re just 7 <sup>th</sup> graders, will get to it in high school	Good structure	1.25 pages. Again, seems to speak to his students’ lower abilities.
Is there anything else you would like to talk about?	<b>Matt No. 25</b> – I really do enjoy it	Enjoy it, it’s exhausting, I’m a good teacher, I won’t kill myself, I could be better	Good structure. Many bounces between CA and evaluation	1 page. Really good stuff. Really gets at heart of how he feels as a teacher.
Is there anything else you would like to talk about?	<b>Matt No. 26</b> – I was livid	Formal evaluation, received mostly	Good structure	1.5 pages. This is huge and speaks directly to

		satisfactory (even for content), was really upset about it		my principal research question.
NA	<b>Matt Blog No. 1 – Technobabble</b>	Testing, reading only, caught up on grading, iCivics, student interest and engagement	Good structure	1.25 pages. Pretty good due to talk of testing and “students loving” something.
NA	<b>Matt Blog No. 2 – And the hits just keep on coming</b>	Reading testing stuff again, caught up on grading, entire week of instruction lost	Good structure	.5 pages. Combined with Matt Blog No. 1, makes a strong point about the hits that social studies instruction regularly takes.
NA	<b>Matt Blog No. 3 – Legislative Leviathan</b>	Disruptions over, teaching about Congress, legislative branch, student confusion, I’m just a bill video	Good structure	1.25 pages. Talks about an instructional hurdle that Matt was able to overcome.
NA	<b>Matt Blog No. 4 – Video Killed the Radio Star</b>	Another instructional disruption, teaching legislative branch	Poor structure	.5 pages. Not really a fluid narrative.
NA	<b>Matt Blog No. 5 – An Extraordinary Executive</b>	Teaching the executive branch, kids enjoying it, favorite topic to teach	No CA	1.25 pages. Not really a narrative. Just a happy reporting.
NA	<b>Matt Blog No. 6 – Presidential Purgatory- Right or Wrong</b>	Teaching Imperial Presidents, some scenarios to complex, explained things in layman’s terms	Strong structure	1 page. This can accompany Matt No. 13.
NA	<b>Matt Blog No. 7 – Let’s get criminal, criminal</b>	Teaching the judicial branch	Incomplete structure	.5 pages. Really boring. Not much of a narrative.
NA	<b>Matt Blog No. 8 – FCAT: My favorite four letter word</b>	Administering the test, Social Studies is not tested, not looking forward to social	Strong structure	1 page. Maybe combine with Matt Blog Nos. 1 & 2 to make a larger point about

		studies next year		testing?
NA	<b>Matt Blog No. 9</b> – My Executive Privilege	Being in total charge of class, not having to report to a boss	Incomplete structure	1 page. Not really a narrative. Pretty boring.
NA	<b>Matt Blog No. 10</b> – The Neo-cons and the Hippie Liberals	Teaching his favorite subject, political spectrum test	Good structure	1 page. Talks about teaching his favorite subject: political parties, elections, and pressure groups! Had a lot of fun.
Tell me the story of your first year as a civics teacher.	<b>Matt Blog No. 11</b> – What a long strange trip it's been	Chronological telling of his first year.	Interesting structure: long orientation and then 5 rounds of CA, evaluation, and resolution. No coda.	2.25 pages. I definitely want to include this and compare it to Erin's first- year narrative, if I ever get it from her.



APPENDIX D  
TRANSCRIPT OF MATT – BUT I LOVE CIVICS TOO

1 Well my passion honestly is American history. But I love civics too. I really do. I  
2 genuinely love civics. It's American history and then civics. Honestly, I would  
3 only take a job if it was American history or civics related. I know ((laughs)) it's so  
4 narrow in this job, people think I'm crazy, and I am. But I only wanted those subjects.  
5 My decision came down, you know, once we took your class and we realized  
6 Florida was changing. I mean, civics, most people don't even know what civics is. I  
7 mean I had all these parents, "What are you taking?" These kids come in and you  
8 know the beginning of the year: "Wait, where's geography? What's civics?" Their  
9 parents don't even know what civics is. But I first decided, you know, like when we  
10 were searching that summer, 2010, and I said, "I'll do, for sure do civics. I've always  
11 liked it." I mean I'm a political person myself. So.

APPENDIX E  
TRANSCRIPT OF ERIN – I DON'T WANT TO TALK THE WHOLE TIME

1 I'm like trying to think of something notably bad that was just like, "Oh, they did not  
2 get that." Well one day, like, some, we don't have a book so I can't send them  
3 home to read something and then apply it in the classroom. So any kind of like  
4 content reading that we do, we do it in class together. Like that sucks. No matter  
5 how— like I don't know how to make that good. Because whether they read on their  
6 own, like if it's totally quiet, and then we come back and discuss, like there's nothing  
7 that actually requires them to read, like, I have kids who are like, "No, I just won't  
8 read it." Because they're in a group and somebody else will read it. And they know  
9 that. And so they're really smart and they know that they get away, like they know  
10 how to manipulate it. And then if we all read it together, it's like boring and dry. And  
11 if I read it I can at least make it entertaining, but they hate listening to their teacher's  
12 voice for an hour and half. Like I don't want to talk the whole time. So, things like  
13 that, like I need to figure out how we can get the content easier, because it's not fun to  
14 sit up here and lecture it from PowerPoints either. So, I try to like mix it up where like  
15 some days they just have to take vocabulary words down, like, "Get the word, get the  
16 definition, and then we can move forward. I promise you this will be fun. Please just  
17 suffer through this. You don't have a book. How else can I give this to you?" Um, but  
18 good activities are always the ones where they actually get to do it. Like, the create-a-  
19 campaign project – so fun.

APPENDIX F  
TRANSCRIPT OF MATT – NOT A SNOWBALL’S CHANCE

**Primary meta-narrative – Not a snowball’s chance**

1 This is probably my highest criticism of the FJCC thing – that federal budget game.  
2 Forget it! Not a snowball’s chance. No way. I followed the directions...no. No way.  
3 Did it with them. I mean, I had them, they all had laptops, um, no way. That’s a nix.  
4 That is a complete nix. At least for my kids. It was awful. Talk about a nightmare. I  
5 mean, I had to go through, I went through, I did it on the screen, I made sure their  
6 computers were closed first. I tried everything. Cause I knew if they had the  
7 computers they’re not going to listen. So I closed, I went through the tutorial, the help  
8 section, everything, showed them. No. “Well, I don’t get it.” The whole thing, and  
9 then it was basically them just clicking buttons and trying to figure out. Oh, no.  
10 This is not. Fortunately I only had allotted for a half hour of time, so we just kind of,  
11 we went through it and I more or less, I ended up taking over and doing it, but it was  
12 just, it was too much, way too fast. And that’s what kind of surprised me most about  
13 that lesson, because there was no introduction to the budget. Now I know it’s one  
14 stand— here’s my take on it: It’s one standard. And it’s, it’s not the most important of  
15 standards. It’s, it’s valuable to know and understand, but these kids are too young for  
16 this.

**Resolution secondary sub-narrative – They loved it!**

17 And, so what I ended up going back and doing, we actually revisited this  
18 week, spent the whole week on the budget. We did the game, we talked about it. I  
19 basically broke it down and tried to bring it to their terms. I used, even the quote  
20 we were talking about values, that’s where we stemmed back from the values in  
21 the game, they had to pick three values, and we talked about— on Monday I  
22 showed them the budget from 2010. And what I did was, um, to, with the time  
23 that we didn’t spend on the game because that was just a colossal nightmare,  
24 I had them, I just, before I did anything, I asked, I explained to them, “Okay,  
25 the government is going to spend money and you guys, I want you all to  
26 pretend like you’re your own country. Now, what do you think the  
27 government should spend money on?” And they came up with lists for me. I

28 said, “Just list. There’s no minimum, no maximum. Just go and write for me  
29 everything you think the government, the federal government should be  
30 responsible for spending money on. And this is your own country. You  
31 decide, okay.” And it was funny cause we got to that and then they shared as a  
32 group and, you know, to me that was a far more valuable exercise, cause it got,  
33 you know, their heads turning and then I got to explain to them the differences in  
34 what we actually spend money on and what they don’t. Like, for example, a  
35 couple of groups had um churches. Religion. And having to just explain to them,  
36 “We don’t spend money on that in the federal government.” But it’s just, that to  
37 me what far more valuable. And to see something like that activity, I would have  
38 expected more in that curriculum, because they love when the kids come up with  
39 their own stuff, and this is what they were doing. They were their own country.  
40 To me it was a no-brainer. They had their own country and they loved it! They sat  
41 there, they wrote down, and you would be surprised how many came up with, and  
42 then we compared it to the actual 2010 budget.

**Complicating Action tertiary sub-narrative – You guys are right on!**

43 And *New York Times* had a great little Website, um, and it had a  
44 grade out with what we spent money on and percents and all that and then  
45 it had Obama’s 2011 proposal. And, uh, we compared how their budgets,  
46 um, related to the actual budget. So, and of course you can believe how  
47 many of them had defense down. Um, defense was, always at least a  
48 quarter. And I said, “You guys are right on. You’re right on. It’s  
49 about 26%.” Um, I had one exceptional group, I don’t know how they  
50 knew this – and they were early on so they didn’t tell anyone else –  
51 they included Social Security. And I was like, that’s when I was like,  
52 “What have you been doing?” It was like, “What?!?!?” And they were  
53 like, “Well, you know, don’t you get Social Security checks?” I was  
54 like, “Yeah,” you know, and they were amazed. They were like,  
55 “Wait, Social Security is the biggest expenditure?” I was like, “You  
56 got it! Now it is.” And then I take it to the next level and was like, “So

57 let me ask you guys: Social Security enacted by FDR. This is, you  
58 know, around the 1940s. Let me ask you, the, it wasn't always the  
59 biggest expenditure. Why do you think it is now?" Someone always  
60 got it. Someone always put together, I mean, I didn't even have to lead  
61 them, you know. "Well, people are, health care, and people are getting  
62 older so that means we need to dole out more funds." I was like,  
63 "Yeah, people weren't living to 80 back then! Not really, not the  
64 average American. They were dying off. They collected Social  
65 Security for another year and then peaced out." They're like, "Oh,  
66 that makes sense." I go, "Yeah."

**Return to Resolution secondary sub-narrative – They loved it!**

67 So, you know, it was really interesting to me see, and they were really, believe it  
68 or not, at first I was like, "This is going to be a snooze fest." They were really  
69 interested in the budget. They genuinely were. And, and I told them to, they got a  
70 kick out of this, I go, "You guys, I could not have timed this better." I said, "I  
71 want you to know I wrote a letter to DC and I asked them if they could hold up on  
72 the budget, because just so we can talk about this in civics class." But, I mean,  
73 talk about serendipity. It just kind of happened. I was like, "Alright. Week after  
74 Spring Break." I mean, this was planned back in early March, we'll do the budget.  
75 Hello! So we talked about the shutdown today and um, tied into that I introduced  
76 vocab.

**Return to primary meta-narrative – Not a snowball's chance**

77 Because, you know, that's what annoyed me. You're gonna go ahead and do this game,  
78 they don't even know what the words are! I mean, they can click the help, but you know  
79 how much? That game is way too complicated. So we went through today, I was like,  
80 "Go home and ask your parents what their monthly expenditures are." I see their heads  
81 just, "What?" So they, you know, we did a vocabulary exercise, we compared the  
82 budgets, um, we also, what did we do, we went, we actually went through the text today,  
83 just to kind of give them, um, for FCAT stuff, we were doing it for FCAT. But it worked.  
84 I treated it as a scavenger hunt. So anyways, budget game flopped.

APPENDIX G  
TRANSCRIPT OF ERIN – THE TYPE OF STUDENT I WAS TOTALLY REFLECTS  
THE TYPE OF TEACHER THAT I AM

1 And I find myself in the position a lot because I get nervous when I come into the  
2 classroom. Like, my kids so know when I'm teaching something I don't feel  
3 comfortable teaching. And ((laughs)) I've thought, there's a fork in the road, and you  
4 take one path or you can take the other. And you can be straight and be like, "This is  
5 what I know, I challenge you to find out more than me and report back to us," or you  
6 can be like, "No, no, no, that's not true. Or, no, no, no, you're mistaken, or  
7 whatever." And I'm like, that's so lame to me. Because you're just like, you're asking  
8 for it when you go down that road. So there are times when, cause that would have  
9 been, I would have been the student that was like, "I don't know anything about it,  
10 but I am going to find it out to disprove you." And I have those students. I so have  
11 them. And they have every right to, and I don't think there's anything wrong with me  
12 saying that like I don't know the answer to that. I'm like, "I don't know. Let's stop."  
13 And I just get on the computer and we Google it and we're looking at Wikipedia and  
14 trying to figure out what source that comes from so that we know if it's the truth, or if  
15 it's not, or whatever. And they're all like, "You use Wikipedia?" And I'm like, "Of  
16 course I do! I check the sources to make sure they're legit, but like, why wouldn't I?  
17 You're going to when you graduate from high school too." So just exposing that um,  
18 oh, the type of student I was totally reflects the kind of teacher that I am. I try really  
19 hard to not only combat that and my students like that, they're going to challenge  
20 you, and you either know it or you don't know it, which I think is pretty big and bold.  
21 Or, just be willing to like show that you are real, which I think is really easy in our  
22 curriculum. Like, if I was a World history teacher, I don't know how I would, you  
23 know, like they can talk all they want about the Renaissance, but like, what do you  
24 really know? Like, if you're not a Renaissance reenactor, or like, who are you?  
25 You're just reading my textbook to me. So when we do civics, it's so much easier to  
26 be like, "Here is my voter registration card, here is what it looks like, here are the  
27 numbers." Or when we talk about credit cards and finances: "Here is my credit card  
28 bill." And they're like, "That's not a fake one?" I'm like, ((laughs)) "There is my  
29 number, here is my name, no, this is my address, no it's not fake." But they're like,

30 “Really?” Or when I show them my utility bill, and so, I don’t know, I just, again,  
31 teachers are like, “What?” And I’m like, “I can print out a fake one, but they know,  
32 they’re not dumb.” They’re like, “Whatever, you’re a phony that’s fake. It’s not real,  
33 it’s not the same.” So I’m just so willing to be real because they just, they have so  
34 much respect for that. And you really – it’s sad and I don’t care about people who are  
35 like, “That’s stupid, I’m not going to go there” – you really do have to win them over,  
36 bottom line. You have to win them over. If they don’t believe you, believe in you, or  
37 buy into you, like, you’re done, they don’t care about you. Because that is definitely  
38 the student I was. If you’re going to stand up there and just be a talking head, like,  
39 “Pfft, whatever. Just give me the book and I’ll do the questions, cause I can do that,  
40 you don’t have to say it, like read it out loud to me.” But when you are real and show  
41 relationship or tell the anecdotal story or do whatever, even if it gets you off on a  
42 tangent, like who cares? Again, it’s 7<sup>th</sup> grade, it’s not a big deal ((laughs)). But like  
43 the whole experience, like growing the whole person is so much more important, um,  
44 so I think that’s definitely influenced me as a teacher. And also the fact that like, I  
45 didn’t, you know, I didn’t learn best in rows, you know, taking notes, reading from a  
46 book. So I try really hard to make what we’re doing something that’s going to, at  
47 some point at least— and next year I’m going to try to do it with every assignment  
48 that there’s student choice. That they’re allowed to be engaged in that topic in  
49 multiple ways and more than just one-way. And not just more than one way  
50 throughout the year, but like more than one-way every time. Like, how come you  
51 have to write a paper about it this time? Why can’t you always have an option to write  
52 a paper or create a diagram or act something out or write a song or perform something  
53 or make a PowerPoint or Prezi or all these other cool things I learned about in my  
54 class. I’m like, why not every single time just have student choice, cause then they  
55 just, again, they own it. And it’s not a talking head.

**Coda sub-narrative – But are you ready to walk out?**

56 I was just always a skeptic, like, “Hmmp, who are you? You don’t know as  
57 much as you think you do and I can tell. And if you don’t I am going to ask

58 you questions to either expose it or, like, when I was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, walk out of  
59 class.” Cause I tell them all the time, they’re like, “This is boring.” And I’m  
60 like, “But are you ready to walk out?” And they’re like, “No.” And I’m like,  
61 “Okay, then I’m good, because when I was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade at *this* school and my  
62 teacher turned around to write on the board, I grabbed my backpack and I  
63 straight walked out of class. Because she was my geography teacher and she  
64 said ‘Pomp-ee-ah New Gwinn-ee-ah’ and all these ridiculous things that I  
65 was like, ‘What?!?! You are my geography teacher and you can’t even  
66 pronounce names of countries.’ I remember doing a project on Zaire and in  
67 the middle of my project my country had a civil war and split into two  
68 countries and I was like, ‘What I am supposed to do?’ And she was like,  
69 ‘What? I don’t understand what you’re talking about. What’s happening?’  
70 And I’m like, ‘Oh my god! I can’t handle this!’ And I just grabbed my books  
71 one day and walked out of class. Because I was just like, I don’t know, like,  
72 ‘You don’t have any idea what’s going on, lady.’” And so, yeah, I’m sure I  
73 like owe her an apology letter and I’m sure she’s a first year teacher and I’m  
74 sure I haunted her dreams for many years, but, like I remember that and I’m  
75 like, “God, as long as you don’t want to leave ((laughs)) then I’m still above  
76 that.” And they’re like, “No, no, we’re not that bad.” And I’m like, “Okay,  
77 good.” So.



APPENDIX H  
TRANSCRIPT OF MATT – THEY'RE NOT GETTING IT

10. Content is so important to me, and it's just, these kids sometimes are just not  
11. getting it, and that's when I have to reevaluate what I'm doing and you know  
12. make the modifications. It's neat to see what they get and what they don't get, and  
13. I don't even know if these kids— I mean, I feel if I took this over to Asia, they  
14. would write their own Constitution. I mean, that's the truth. Or Finland or  
15. something, you know. With these kids there's a degree of slothfulness. You know,  
16. does society— I blame the parents ((laughs)). I blame the parents. I blame society.  
17. I think parents, there are some genuinely interested kids, but some of it is just too  
18. over their heads and they're just not ready for it yet. And that's when their age  
19. plays a factor in it, for me. But this is an introduction, and the introductory parts  
20. are great, but some of the things, like going through the Constitution and just  
21. trying to reach that higher-level order thinking, it's not there. Not for these kids,  
22. it's not there yet. I mean, even the civility strips activity that we did. And I like  
23. this activity, and I get it, even with the George Washington Rules of Civility, I cut  
24. the strips out, handed them out to everyone, and they were to underst— they had  
25. the most difficult time with some of them trying to figure out what they meant.  
26. And I always keep dictionaries, give them out to them, and still they're not quite  
27. getting there. And I would put it, you know, I would even go around to them and  
28. even eventually help them, you know, decode this word, decode that word, they  
29. see words they don't know and you lose them. And I'd say, "Okay, here's what  
30. it's saying." And it'd be in plain English. "What does that mean?" I mean this is  
31. at the most rudimentary level. In your own words. Forget it. They're just going to  
32. write down the same thing. They're not getting it. And you know, some really get  
33. this. But for some, thinking on their own, they're just not quite there. There are a  
34. handful of them, but they're not at that level yet. And I just don't know, and that's  
35. where I'm kind of stuck right now. Because I want to take it to that higher-level  
36. order thinking, but I can't yet. It's just not, it's just not happening. So.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Emma Kiziah Humphries was born in Hollywood, Florida to Gwyn and Phyllis Kiziah. She received her Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction in the School of Teaching and Learning of the College of Education at the University of Florida in the spring of 2012.

Emma graduated from South Plantation High School in Broward County, Florida in 2001. She subsequently earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science with a minor in secondary education at the University of Florida in 2004 and a Master of Education degree in social studies education from the same institution in 2005.

Emma began her career in education in 2005 as a social studies teacher, teaching American history, American government, and economics at Middleburg High School in Clay County, Florida. During her time at Middleburg High School, she served as county advisor to the YMCA's *Youth in Government* club and coached an honors American government class in preparation for the Center for Civic Education's *We the People* program.

Emma has co-authored professional journal articles and book chapters in the field of social studies education. She has presented her research at numerous state and national conferences, including the National Council for the Social Studies and American Educational Research Association annual meetings. During her four years in the doctoral program at the University of Florida, she taught four different courses for her department in social studies education and social foundations, including a new, distance learning course entitled "Methods for Teaching Civics and Government" that she developed.



In August of 2011, Emma assumed the position of Assistant in Citizenship at the Bob Graham Center for Public Service at the University of Florida where she has been tasked with helping the Center implement a three million dollar Knight Foundation grant to promote civic engagement on campus. Her career goals include teaching and mentoring preservice social studies teachers, publishing scholarship on civic education, and advocating for increased civics instruction and progressive social change in K-12 and undergraduate education.