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Social Media for Civic Education

Engaging Youth for Democracy

Amy L. Chapman

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There is no education without some form of media. Much contemporary writing on media and education examines best practices or individual learning processes, is fired by techno-optimism or techno-pessimism about young people's use of technology, or focuses exclusively on digital media. Relatively few studies attend – empirically or conceptually – to the embeddedness of educational media in contemporary cultural, social and political processes. The **Palgrave Studies in Educational Media** series aims to explore textbooks and other educational media as sites of cultural contestation and socio-political forces. Drawing on local and global perspectives, and attending to the digital, non-digital and post-digital, the series explores how these media are entangled with broader continuities and changes in today's society, with how media and media practices play a role in shaping identifications, subjectivations, inclusions and exclusions, economies and global political projects. Including single authored and edited volumes, it offers a dedicated space which brings together research from across the academic disciplines. The series provides a valuable and accessible resource for researchers, students, teachers, teacher trainers, textbook authors and educational media designers interested in critical and contextualising approaches to the media used in education.

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*For Jerry
who has encouraged the project and the writer all along*

PREFACE

I knew about 15 years ago that I wanted to write a book. At that time, this is not the book I would have imagined writing. Fifteen years ago, social media was a presence in our lives; today, it has become omnipresent, with serious implications for individuals and society. There has never been a more important time to understand how social media operates and to learn how it can be used for manipulation and social change.

From hashtag movements to cyberterrorism, social media is solidly in the civic sphere. Social media has the power to inform, mislead, rile, connect, and provoke a swell of support and an avalanche of harm. A failure to acknowledge this power only strengthens that power: when we are passive receivers and do not question what we consume, we are setting ourselves up to be confused, manipulated, and hurt. This is true on both the individual and collective levels. How we, as individuals and communities, engage as civic actors is influenced by social media. It is dangerous for all if we are unaware of this.

At the same time, social media has great potential as both a connector and a disrupter. People find meaningful relationships through social media, particularly those who are marginalized or those for whom finding connection may be difficult. Social media can challenge the status quo, providing a free and accessible space in which anyone can push against oppressive systems, illustrate injustice, and engage in civic action. Both sides of this social media coin are intentional: whether someone wants to help or harm; connect or belittle; challenge the system or support hegemonic structures; these choices are made by the individual users and by the underlying algorithms which run social media. If social media use is

ubiquitous, and if it functions as part of civic life, learning about, with, and through social media is an imperative of civic education. Young people, who are already civic actors as much as they are social media users, need support in learning about social media and its place in the civic sphere.

This book explores how teachers are teaching civics with social media and what more must be done in order for civic education to allow young people to combat the harms of social media to leverage it for true civic action and social change. It is imperative that young people understand the power for good and the power for harm—both to themselves and to the community—that exists at their fingertips. We are not doing nearly enough to support young people in understanding their use of social media, and in doing so in ways which are intentionally civic minded. At best, this is a lost opportunity; at worst, it is a threat to democracy. The teachers in the study that is the base of this book knew this and worked diligently to teach their students with and about social media. They also knew that there was more to be done. This book shares their experiences and the meaning they made from their work, and it aims to push the fields of educational technology and civic education further to prepare young people to inherit democracy. This is the imperative of our time.

New York, NY

Amy L. Chapman

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Writing this book was not a solitary effort, but the circle was intentionally small. Nonetheless, there are many people to acknowledge and thank, because those closest to me furthered my thinking about this work throughout.

This book exists because of my editor, Linda Braus, who invited me to think about whether this research might be a book-length project. Linda has been a true partner in this project from the start. Unfailingly kind, supportive, clear, and thoughtful, Linda has provided feedback and suggestions that made the book better. More than that, Linda's way of being made the experience of writing the book better. Many thanks, Linda: you are a gift!

My gratitude to Antony Sami, production editor at Springer, whose communications and support from the beginning of this project have been superb. Antony and Linda have provided such clarity about the publishing process that it allayed any anxiety that I had. In doing so, they created the space for me to do deep thinking and spend my time writing. To the editors of the Palgrave Studies in Educational Media Series: thank you for your support and careful reading of this manuscript.

The study that is the crux of this book was conducted at Michigan State University for my dissertation. My thanks to my dissertation committee, particularly my advisor, Christine Greenhow, and methods expert Kyle Greenwalt, who put so much work into this study with me. The teachers who participated in this study gave generously of their time, a limited resource for all teachers. I am grateful for all that they shared which allows

us all to think more deeply about our teaching and learning practices around civic education and social media.

I have been teaching since 2004, a great privilege of my life. Knowing and caring about students is the best part of the job, and it has been a joy to walk alongside so many for so long. This book is better because of their inquisitiveness, and the world is better for it, too.

My thinking has evolved thanks to rich conversations with bright people who research social media in education, particularly my great friend and colleague Spencer Greenhalgh. There is no one I would rather be with in the trenches of social media research than you. Who you are makes it possible to see and understand the manipulative and ugly sides of social media and to still see the world as good.

We all stand on the shoulders of giants. Careful readers may notice that some of the chapter titles and pseudonyms are homages, to scholars (Lowe and Laffey, Chap. 2; boyd and Ellison, Chap. 8), to giants (Thurgood Marshall, Chap. 6; Aaron Sorkin, Chap. 8; Fr. Greg Boyle, S.J., Chap. 9), and to my friends. While there is much to thank them for, as it pertains to this book, my closest friends are teachers, active members of communities, and leaders who themselves think deeply about the questions of social media and civic life. This work is more expansive and thoughtful because of our many conversations which have pushed my thinking around technology's impacts on individuals and the community, civic responsibility, teaching students from different socioeconomic backgrounds, navigating complex relationships, justice, and peace. My love and gratitude to Kori Oliver Schimpf, Rebecca Stern Nickles, Gwendolyn Crews, Meghan Devine, and Janet Stephens. Next round is on me.

When Linda raised this book as a possibility, I told only one person: Jerry Sloan. Jerry is a writer with whom I have been having conversations about social justice, structural inequality, and our role in societal change for more than 15 years. He also thinks I can do just about anything. This is patently untrue, of course, but everyone should have someone in their lives who thinks so highly of you that it's not really believable and yet somehow convincing. This would have been a different book had it not been for you, Jerry.

My family could not be more civically or community-oriented. My parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins have made it the norm to participate in civic life, to care deeply about our community, and to make a conscious effort to work for the common good. There are no exceptions, but I want to particularly thank my mom, Cheryl Sankey Chapman,

who instilled in us a sense of responsibility to our communities and who modeled for me what it was to step in and lead, and my dad, Beau Chapman, who could not be more invested in the health of our local and national communities. Their discussions and work have fostered my own passion for civic action.

My sister, Emily Marotta, is generous, kind, enthusiastic, and usually right. The possibility and hope that lives throughout this book is my homage to her.

Emily tries to make the world a better place every day, and my brother-in-law, Anthony Marotta, lives by the adage “do the right thing.” This book is framed by those two ways of proceeding: grounded in hope and possibility as well as needing to be deeply thoughtful about what is right. My nephews, Chase and Colin, give me great hope that civic education will always support them (and all students) to be as passionate, as thoughtful, as active, and as inquisitive as they are now. Each of these relationships informs my work, and thus each has informed the writing of this book.

Though my interest and participation in civic life has been formed by my family, teachers, friends, students, and experiences in a world which has changed so much and yet not enough in recent decades, *The West Wing* still accurately captures my paradoxical relationship with being a civic actor, teacher, researcher, and human being all too well. Whatever you think about social media and its role in our democracy, as much as any other, this question continues to frame it for me:

“Are you telling me I can still flummox this thing with something I bought at Radio Shack?”

—Toby Ziegler

What’s next?

18 May 2022

Amy L. Chapman

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Reclaiming Civic Education

Civic education in the United States has a long history. American democracy relies on an informed, active, participatory citizenry, and the presumption has long been that young people learn how to engage in civic life in school. Horace Mann, in 1842, gave a speech about civic life in which he noted that most citizens did not know what was required of them and many were corrupt (Mann, 1842). He further spoke about the need for greater learning and teaching about civic matters and noted that while all governments require intelligence and morality in their rulers, in the United States, a country in which everyone is a ruler, all citizens must have intelligence and moral character (Mann, 1842). Mann also noted that citizens are not born with the requisite knowledge and morality to successfully participate in American democracy, but they are certainly capable of achieving it through education (Mann, 1842). While participation in civic life can be learned outside of the classroom, in the United States there has been a focus on teaching civics, primarily in social studies classes, since the 1890s (Hahn, 1999). John Dewey argued that schools were a microcosm of society, and a place where young people first learned how to interact in community; thus, it was the responsibility of the school to model democracy for those in it (Dewey, 1897), and schools continue to be seen as the primary and most appropriate setting in which young people learn what it is to be in community (Parker, 2003; Payne et al.,

2020). Further, the general consensus in the United States continues to be that it is the school's responsibility to prepare students to be active and informed democratic citizens (Elam & Rose, 1996).

Despite these long-held aspirational goals, civic education has not been recognized as a priority in the United States for decades. The relative value we place on civic education can be seen in the way that it is funded: per pupil in 2019, the United States spent \$54 on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) education, compared to \$0.05 on civic education (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Perhaps consequently, the amount of time students spend in history and social studies classes, where civics is most frequently taught, has been declining since the late 1990s (Hanson et al., 2018). In a recent survey which asked respondents how to improve American society, improving civic education was the only potential reform which was supported by the majority (Luntz, 2020). Recent political and world events have brought the shortcomings of civic education into sharp relief, and some work is now being done to improve civic education (Educating for American Democracy, 2021). However, while we know that young people use social media for civic engagement (CIRCLE, 2021a), we have largely neglected how civic education can support youth civic participation via social media, in favor of more traditional approaches to civic education.

YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Many, including scholars and teachers, have been and continue to be concerned by the apparent lack of interest among youth in civic activities (Educating for American Democracy, 2021; Putnam, 2000). For their part, youth, when asked how they would define a good citizen, most frequently respond with one quality, often obeying laws or voting (Sherrod, 2003). However, limiting an understanding of civic engagement to voting only leaves the possibility of misunderstanding the ways in which youth understand their civic roles in society and the ways in which they choose to exercise them.

For decades, researchers and others have been concerned about what they see as a declining participation in civic life from youth (Educating for American Democracy, 2021; Putnam, 1995, 2000). Those concerned about this declining participation cite decreases in youth consumption of traditional or legacy news sources as well as a decline in traditional forms of civic engagement, such as belonging to a political party, writing letters

to elected representatives or newspapers, and voting, as potential contributing factors (Bennett et al., 2012). More recently, the picture appears more nuanced. While youth are engaging with traditional forms of civic engagement and media less often, it could be that this is not a decline but rather a reorganization of youth civic engagement given new media and technology affordances which have changed the way in which youth understand and use both knowledge and action (Bennett et al., 2012). This hypothesis is supported by the recent uptick in youth voting (CIRCLE, 2021b) and civic engagement via social media (CIRCLE, 2021a). At the same time, however, civic education has not shifted to support the ways in which young people are engaging in the civic sphere (Bennett et al., 2012). Instead, civic education remains largely ineffective in preparing young people to participate in civic life (Educating for American Democracy, 2021).

Further, young people have been telling us for decades that there was a gap between their civic education and how they wanted to participate in civic life. In 1968, high school seniors who had taken one (or more, though very few respondents had taken more than one) civics course were more likely to be interested in politics, to be knowledgeable about government and its functions, to show more interest in accessing political information on their own and discussing that information with others, to have tolerance for others, and were more likely to feel politically efficacious (Langton & Jennings, 1968). However, the correlations between completion of civics courses in high school and any greater interest or aptitude for civic engagement were extremely weak for all measures (Langton & Jennings, 1968). In other words, by 1968, there was already a disconnect between civic education and civic participation.

Civic education was understudied in the United States from the late 1960s until the 1990s; then, as now, there was a heightened concern about youth civic preparation (Bennett et al., 2009). In the late 1990s, a large study of youth civic education found that nearly 80% of students reported that they had no intention of engaging in traditional political processes which were taught in schools, such as joining a political party or writing letters to the editor of newspapers (Torney-Purta et al., 2001). However, 59% of those students responded that they would fundraise for a cause and 44% reported that they would march for one (Torney-Purta et al., 2001). However, those methods of civic engagement favored by students were not discussed or supported in schools (Torney-Purta et al., 2001). The knowledge and skills required for these changing ways of

participating in civic life had, in some ways, grown and changed from the models that had existed for decades, and civic education had not kept up with these changes.

This same pattern has continued to the present day. Despite calls for renewed attention to civic education from scholars and the public, a recent systematic review of civic education in the United States over the last decade showed that little has been done to understand or teach civic education differently than in previous decades (Fitzgerald et al., 2021). Although teachers and researchers alike have called for reconceptualizing civic education and consequently revisiting civic education pedagogies, particularly for students who are marginalized (Ginwright, 2010), these calls have largely gone unanswered (Fitzgerald et al., 2021). In both theory and practice, civic education remains focused on outdated approaches which minimize young people's contributions to their communities (Payne et al., 2020), maintain inequitable access to civic learning (Atkins & Hart, 2003; Kirshner, 2015), and ignore calls to see civic participation more broadly to include ways in which young people are already engaged in civic life (Fitzgerald et al., 2021).

CURRENT PRACTICES IN CIVIC EDUCATION

When civic education research resumed in the 1990s, it illuminated the qualities of schools and classrooms which promote the development of civic knowledge, skills, and action (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008). These studies, taken together, provide a broad picture of what civic education in the United States looks like, and more importantly, how content, pedagogical approaches, and classroom climate can make civic education more robust.

Climate

Classroom climate is a critical factor in the success of civic education (Campbell, 2005; Gibson & Levine, 2003; McIntosh et al., 2007; Pasek et al., 2008; Torney-Purta, 2002). Several studies have examined the impact of classroom climate on civic education. Classrooms were evaluated for how open (to what extent students were encouraged to express opinions and whether disagreeing opinions were respected) they were, and pedagogies were assessed as being traditional (based on lectures and textbooks) or not. Students were grouped into four categories: *both*,

students who reported high levels of openness and traditional instruction; *neither*, students who reported low levels of openness and traditional instruction; *interactive*, students who only reported high levels of openness; and *lecture*, students who only reported high levels of traditional instruction (Torney-Purta & Wilkenfeld, 2009).

Students who reported learning in open classrooms scored higher across all twelve measures used to assess civic knowledge, attitudes, responsibilities, and behaviors (Torney-Purta & Wilkenfeld, 2009). There were no measures on which students who only used traditional methods of learning scored higher than those who came from open classrooms, and those who neither had open classrooms nor traditional instruction represented approximately 25% of the sample (Torney-Purta & Wilkenfeld, 2009). Students were more likely to have greater civic knowledge if they attended schools which had a more open and democratic climate (Torney-Purta & Wilkenfeld, 2009). Conversely, students who were learning in classrooms which were less open or more teacher-centered felt less confident about understanding and analyzing political information and experienced less political efficacy compared to students who learned in more open classrooms (Syvertsen et al., 2007).

Some of these studies have also found that teaching civic knowledge and skills in contexts that are understandable to students and which speak to their own experiences is important (Gibson & Levine, 2003; Niemi & Junn, 2005; Pasek et al., 2008). The creation of a school culture which encourages students to question, debate, and practice civic engagement fosters students' sense of belonging and connectedness, which in turn promotes civic participation (Chapman et al., 2021; Chapman & Miller, 2022).

Content

Another key component of civic education is the content of instruction. For decades, research has shown that civic education includes very little variety in the topics which are taught (Educating for American Democracy, 2021; Hahn, 1999; Lopez et al., 2006). These topics were often limited to the U.S. Constitution, wars and military heroes, or the American form of government (Lopez et al., 2006). In contrast, only 11% of the students reported that civics classroom topics included discussion of contemporary problems or issues for the United States today (Lopez et al., 2006). While this type of content is undoubtedly important, the focus on these topics

alone suggests a more traditional approach to civic education. Students who are more interested in a broader understanding of participation in civic life would be better supported if the civic education curriculum included the history and practice of other forms of civic engagement, such as protests, conservation efforts, or civil debate. Consequently, the topics and the manner of approaching them seem to best fit a smaller number of students, leaving the majority as lesser prepared citizens.

Pedagogies

How civics is taught is as important as what is taught. A recent report on civic education pedagogies, “The Republic Is (Still) at Risk,” identified ten approaches which prepare students to be informed, engaged citizens (Levine & Kawashima-Ginsberg, 2017). Each of these pedagogies was participatory and focused on the intertwining of knowledge with practices which support civic engagement. These included student participation in school government, service learning, news media literacy, and simulations of democratic processes (Levine & Kawashima-Ginsberg, 2017). This report extended prior research which had found that participatory pedagogies, such as the use of classroom discussion or current events or other issues (Gibson & Levine, 2003; McDevitt et al., 2003; Parker, 2003; Syvertsen et al., 2007); discussion of contested topics has been shown to increase student interest in politics (Hess & Posselt, 2002; Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 1996; Niemi & Junn, 2005; Syvertsen et al., 2007); and teaching civic knowledge and skills in contexts that are understandable to students and which speak to their own experiences (Gibson & Levine, 2003; Niemi & Junn, 2005; Pasek et al., 2008) were more effective at supporting students’ civic development.

Even though there is clear evidence that students learn more effectively and develop an interest in civic and political life if they have the chance to debate contested topics in an open and encouraging classroom (Hahn, 1999; Hanson et al., 2018; Niemi & Junn, 2005), few of the teachers or students reported the use of these pedagogical approaches in their classrooms or school (Hahn, 1999; Hanson et al., 2018). Although teachers’ intentions were to stress critical thinking with their students (Torney-Purta et al., 2001), they reported that their classes usually consisted of the transmission of facts to their students through lectures, textbooks, and worksheets or discussion (Education for American Democracy, 2021;

Hanson et al., 2018; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). As a result, most civic education is focused on knowledge acquisition, limiting students' opportunities to engage in civic activities or to see themselves as civic actors.

State Standards

However, much of civic education was not aligned with these best practices, and the gap between young people's civic engagement and mainstream civic education persists. Forty-two states and Washington, D.C., require one course related to civic education prior to high school graduation, though courses which include civics topics count toward this requirement (Hanson et al., 2018). The standards for these courses vary, though most focus on classroom instruction, knowledge building, and discussion activities (Hanson et al., 2018). Some state requirements do include more participatory strategies: 26 states and Washington, D.C., mention simulations and 11 states mention service learning (Hanson et al., 2018). Despite its historical importance and the fact that schools are largely relied upon to provide civics education, the requirements to learn and succeed in civics seem thin and uneven. Further, though decades of research indicate that more participatory pedagogies and practical experience engaging in civic activities are critical for effective civic education, these are not the approaches which are prioritized in state standards.

OBSTACLES TO EFFECTIVE CIVIC EDUCATION

If we know what civic education approaches are effective, and how civic education can be improved, why has civic education not improved in the last several decades? There are a number of significant obstacles to effective civic education. Niemi and Chapman (1999) found that students who were good students in other school subjects were generally inclined to be attentive to several markers of civic engagement, including attention paid to the news, a sense of political efficacy in communicating with the government, a developed understanding of the functioning of the government, and general tolerance of the views of others. These findings indicated that students who were academically successful in other subjects were more likely to succeed in civic education courses, thus privileging students who do well in school to be the best prepared citizens (Bennett et al., 2009). An emphasis on academic success as a precursor for civic involvement and the findings of what topics are taught in civic education

classrooms are problematic for three reasons. First, academically successful students are not equally and evenly dispersed throughout schools, with more academically successful students coming from schools with high socioeconomic demographics (Hahn, 1999; Niemi & Chapman, 1999). Secondly, academic success in civic education courses has not been shown to correlate to increased civic engagement or civic action; knowing information about how the government and political systems work does not necessarily mean that one will act upon that knowledge in civic life (Hart & Gullan, 2010).

Evidence of further disparity between students exists, as not only academically strong students but also those who come from higher socioeconomic environments are more likely to be successful in civic education courses (Torney-Purta & Barber, 2004; Niemi & Junn, 2005; Bennett et al., 2009). Students who came from homes with a lower socioeconomic status scored significantly below the mean on civic knowledge and skills measures (Torney-Purta & Barber, 2004). Civic education is also not equitably offered across races: White students score considerably higher on civic assessments than do Black or Latino students (Hanson et al., 2018). There is also a disparity at the school level: schools with the highest outcomes for civic skills development were those in high socioeconomic areas (Niemi & Junn, 2005). These gaps are growing: on scores on tests of civic knowledge, the difference between affluent and impoverished students, as well as the gap between White and Black students, have been increasing significantly in recent decades (Hanson et al., 2018). Importantly, when these gaps are eliminated, and marginalized students receive civic education which is participatory and student-centered, they thrive (Atwell et al., 2017; Levine & Kawashima-Ginsberg, 2017; Levinson, 2012).

A further obstacle to robust civic education is that teachers lack a variety of resources to support it. These included content-related resources: teachers reported that if they had better materials, civic education could be improved (Torney-Purta et al., 2001). Another resource which teachers lacked was time allocated to teaching civics, which made it difficult to make civic education a priority (Hahn, 1999; Hanson et al., 2018). Teachers felt that they were inadequately prepared to teach civics and needed more specific professional development to teach it; this need was amplified when teaching students with special needs or who were learning English (Educating for American Democracy, 2021). Similarly, some teachers feared the potential controversy of teaching about diversity. Finally, a number of teachers cited school policies or school climates which

discouraged students from speaking out or having any power to be directly opposed to what they were trying to teach in civics (Hahn, 1999; Hanson et al., 2018). The variety in these obstacles provides a sense of how many factors are involved in providing impactful and long-lasting civic education to youth.

At the school level, many teachers felt the effects of school climate on civic education, noting that it was more difficult to teach about democracy and participation in civic life when the school culture was primarily concerned about order and quiet behavior (Hahn, 1999). It is important to note that schools and classrooms which had less democratic environments also used fewer interactive instructional methods and that these schools and classrooms were often in urban areas and served students from lower socioeconomic levels (Hahn, 1999). The result was that the civic education of students in higher socioeconomic groups was considerably different than the civic education of students in lower socioeconomic groups, a finding which has been seen across studies for decades (Atkins & Hart, 2003; Fitzgerald et al., 2021; Hahn, 1999; Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Kirshner, 2015; Levinson, 2012).

CREATING MORE INCLUSIVE AND PARTICIPATORY CIVIC EDUCATION

Like many other aspects of learning, civic education in the United States is seen as *preparatory* for one's life in the future, not a place to receive support and guidance in the ways in which one is already engaged in life (Chapman & Greenhow, 2021; Payne et al., 2020). Although schools are seen both as the site of civic education and as the first experience of community young people have outside of the family, young people are not seen as civic actors. Rather, civic education is built around the idea that students should participate in civic life when they are older. This is harmful in a few ways. First, it fails to recognize that students, as members of both their school and larger communities, are already able to engage in many aspects of civic life (Chapman & Greenhow, 2021). Further, young people do choose to participate in civic life, but often in ways which are not recognized (Castro & Knowles, 2017; Knight & Watson, 2014; Payne et al., 2020). Because these methods of civic participation are not recognized, they are often unsupported in schools (Chapman & Greenhow, 2021). Finally, this approach to civic education, which ignores the experiences and capabilities of children in favor of centering adults as experts who can

pass on knowledge, reflects the “banking” model of education described by Freire (1972), where children will receive what they need to become citizens from adults who know the world better (Payne et al., 2020). As Freire argued for education more broadly, this approach to civic education not only discounts all that young people bring to the civic sphere, it also reinforces traditional power structures by passing along what is already operative rather than encouraging new ways of seeing or structuring the world. Consequently, this approach to civic education maintains oppressive societal structures (Chapman & Greenhow, 2021). The impact of this conceptual approach to civic education further marginalizes young people, particularly those who are already vulnerable.

Further, civic education which centers on knowledge transmission from adults to young people for the latter’s future use often presents a one-dimensional lens to civic participation (Stepick et al., 2008; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). The ways in which those who are marginalized engage in the civic sphere may be different than those who are more privileged or affluent (Watts & Flanagan, 2007). Measures of civic learning indicate gaps by race: white students perform better on civic assessments than do Latino or Black students (Hanson et al., 2018). While the intersection of these issues has not yet been fully studied, there is a “civic engagement gap” (Levinson, 2012). At the same time, research has shown that diversity in civic education has positive impacts for all young people, especially those who are marginalized, including supporting later civic engagement (Diemer & Li, 2011; Ginwright, 2010; Lerner, 2004). Although factors outside of school also impact the civic engagement of the marginalized and vulnerable (Sánchez-Jankowski, 2002), schools have the ability to be agents of change in this regard (Hanson et al., 2018). It is appropriate and timely, then, to seek alternatives to adult-centered civic education which often does not include the ways in which young people or those who are marginalized engage in the civic sphere.

THE IMPERATIVE FOR NEW APPROACHES TO CIVIC EDUCATION

Taking these findings together, there is a picture of what civic education should look like in the United States. First, civic education in schools is important, in part because in the United States we expect civic education to occur in schools and in part because students who know the most about politics and government are those students who have taken courses in

government or civics (Patrick & Hoge, 1991; Niemi & Junn, 2005). However, academic success has not proven to be an indicator of future civic engagement (Hart & Gullan, 2010). How students are taught and the way in which the school or classroom climate functions contributes to or detracts from a student's learning about democracy and civic action (Hahn, 1999). Further, schools' reliance on traditional approaches for the teaching of civics seems to limit the ability of schools to prepare all students to be capable, informed, and active citizens (Bennett et al., 2009).

All of this supports the conclusions that civic knowledge without the ability to use or practice that knowledge does not lead to civic action, and the way in which schools are teaching civics does not match what students need in order to become active citizens (Bennett et al., 2009; Hart & Gullan, 2010). Thus, if the primary objective of civic education is to prepare students to be active and informed citizens, there must be additional or other ways of teaching civic knowledge and skills. What components are then necessary to better promote the potential civic success of the majority of students? Research has presented some evidence here, too. The more successful civic education practices include students helping to create discussion agendas, student participation in deliberations, and a variety of experiences in community involvement (Gibson & Levine, 2003; Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Niemi & Chapman, 1999; Torney-Purta et al., 1999; Torney-Purta et al., 2001).

Learning how a bill becomes a law and how the Articles of Confederation led to the Constitution are necessary topics to learn, but education which ends there does not equip students with either the breadth of knowledge or the variety of skills required to function in a twenty-first-century democracy. Civic engagement literature questions whether students should learn about civic engagement in school in the ways that they are actually participating in society; in other words, students should be learning and practicing civic roles in school settings in the ways in which they will use those skills out in the world as adults (Bennett et al., 2012; Chapman et al., 2021; Chapman & Miller, 2022; Haste, 2010). However, many young people today, who are engaged by co-created and co-curated knowledge and more personal connections to issues and activism, may see social media as a way to interact with the world in civics education courses (Bennett et al., 2009; Chapman & Marich, 2021).

Given that social media has changed the ways in which people access and interact with information and the ways in which they choose to act upon that information, and that some of the ways in which young people

can and do participate in political processes and issues occur on and through social media, we must be attentive to what is known about the use of social media in education. Moreover, social media may have certain characteristics and affordances that seem particularly synergistic with the kinds of actualizing citizenship activities we want youth to develop, such as the ability to search for and evaluate sources of information, an awareness of contentious topics and current events and the ability to discuss them, and exposure to a variety of ways to participate in civic life. In the next chapter, we explore further the relevant prior research on social media in education.

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CHAPTER 2

Is Twitter for the Birds? The Young and the Restless Don't Think So

This chapter addresses the relevance and identifies the affordances of social media, and explores why social media, specifically Twitter, is relevant for civic education. Most people use social media, including nearly all young people (Pew Research Center, 2018a; Pew Research Center, 2021). Social media functions as a place of civic participation and has affordances which support online and offline civic learning and engagement. Social media users are co-creators and co-curators of content, making social media an active and interactive space. Social media can disrupt or support hegemonic structures, maintaining or challenging power (Chapman & Greenhow, 2021). In short, social media is where people, particularly youth and people in power, are, and it is a space in which to apply civic skills in potentially meaningful and contributory ways.

SOCIAL MEDIA AS A CULTURAL SPACE

Social media platforms provide relatively low barriers for civic engagement. Because social media spaces are co-created by their users (Ellison & boyd, 2013). Further, to some extent, those spaces are co-curated; users are able to connect with other users and with streams of content of their choosing, though there are limitations to this which will be examined in greater detail later. Social media relies on the creation and sharing of user-developed content, whether that is original content or content created by

another which other users share across platforms. This content need not be explicitly civic in nature, but just as writing a letter to the editor of a newspaper has been seen as an inherently civic action regardless of the content of the letter, so, too, can social media posts be seen as a form of civic participation (Bennett, 2008). Just as membership in offline civic spaces often can be formal (e.g., citizenship, voter registration, or recognized membership in a civic organization) or informal (e.g., marching in protests, participating in boycotts), civic participation on social media can be more organized (e.g., Facebook groups) or less organized (e.g., hashtags). Greenhalgh and colleagues have argued that hashtags on Twitter operate as multiple *affinity spaces* (Gee, 2005, 2017) depending on the primary function of any user's interactions (Greenhalgh, 2021; Greenhalgh et al., 2020). These *hashtag communities* are, in effect, informal spaces defined by those who use a particular hashtag, for which there is no threshold or demarcation for membership. People can use a hashtag once or frequently; with great intention or incidentally; synchronously for social interaction or asynchronously to share content, resources, or ideas. In other words, much like in-person communities, spaces within Twitter function differently depending on the purpose of one's interactions.

Finally, social media presents an opportunity for social connection and interaction. Research has shown that people who are isolated can and do find communities and a sense of belonging on social media (Cannon et al., 2017; McInroy & Craig, 2015). Further, regardless of any feelings of isolation, there are people who initially met and only interact with each other via social media platforms (Tufekci, 2010). Across these areas, social media supports personal agency, where people have a sense that they influence their sharing and the space. Further, people believe that their contributions on social media matter: research has shown that students use hashtags intentionally to express themselves to others (Lerat & Kligler-Vilenchik, 2019). In these ways, social media reflects a truth of schools and of society at large in that users have to interact within a bounded system.

Just as schools and all levels of society have regulations and expectations, so too do social media spaces. These bounds are both up front (e.g., terms of service, features, functions) and operating in the background (e.g., algorithms). In this way, social media can be understood as Dewey (1916) understood schools: environments which shape young people's civic understanding and participation. We learn how to interact with others; we learn the boundaries of a system; we learn about how we can and should act within that system; and we learn about how our actions affect

the collective, and how the collective influences us. Where this model perhaps falls a bit short is that, while in some cases we learn in school how to push back against oppressive or unjust systems, learning how to do so is far from consistent. Further, while schools may teach *about* how to disrupt unjust systems, schools can, at the same time, operate as oppressive systems themselves.

All of this is equally true about social media spaces, where people interact with others, see how their actions impact others, see how they are impacted by what others share, and can push back on hegemonic systems and dominant narratives. However, this type of learning is informal at best and often underexplored or unexamined. In other words, students do not consider the ways in social media is both a civic teacher and civic space, and the adults who might help to scaffold this learning for them often either do not regard it as such or do not know how to support their students in understanding and using it in this way (Chapman & Greenhow, 2021).

SOCIAL MEDIA IN EDUCATION

When asked about their use of cellular phones, 90% of teens said that they use their phones to “pass the time” (Pew Research Center, 2018b). However, 84% of those surveyed teens also reported that they use them to connect with others, and 83% said they use them to learn new things (Pew Research Center, 2018b). While the perception may be that students are mindlessly distracted by the use of cell phones, this research shows that young people do use mobile phones meaningfully. Further, although the use of a cell phone and using social media are not synonymous—one can connect with others via cell phone without using social media and can use social media without a mobile phone—the survey inferred that students spent most of their time on cell phones on social media (Pew Research Center, 2018b).

These findings echo what has been theorized and found by scholars. Social media is used, and has been studied, for various uses and in diverse contexts, particularly in education (Greenhow et al., 2016; Van Osch & Coursaris, 2015). While much research has been done on the use of social media for learning, these studies have predominantly focused on higher education settings, examining how university students engage various social media platforms (Greenhow et al., 2020). In spite of many studies and conceptual research on teaching and learning with social media, few

studies have been conducted in K-12 settings (Chapman & Marich, 2021; Greenhow & Askari, 2017). Undoubtedly the ways in which social media could be leveraged as a tool to facilitate learning have not been fully explored, but the research which examines social media as a tool for learning in students in grades K-12 shows potential outcomes that are worth exploring further. More specifically, the use of Twitter to support civic education also shows promise, as detailed below.

SOCIAL MEDIA USE

Although the forerunners of today's social media were only developed in the mid-1990s, in this relatively short period of time, social media has become ubiquitous (Ngak, 2011). Eighty-one percent—a plurality of Americans—have used YouTube; well over the majority of people across age groups use some form of social media (Pew Research Center, 2021). As age is one of the factors which influences social media engagement on particular platforms (Blank & Lutz, 2017), Table 2.1 presents the percentage of the U.S. population who has reported using some of the more commonly used social networking sites (Pew Research Center, 2021).

As seen in the table above, nearly all young people in the United States engage in at least one, if not multiple social media platforms, often more than once per day (Pew Research Center, 2021); nearly 50% of teens report using social media “almost constantly” (Pew, 2018a).

There are a great variety of social media platforms, or social network sites, which exist in the world, often with different features and thus different affordances. According to the literature on social media in education, *social media* can be defined as “online applications that promote

Table 2.1 Social Media Use by Age

	<i>YouTube</i>	<i>Facebook</i>	<i>Twitter</i>	<i>Instagram</i>	<i>TikTok</i>	<i>Snapchat</i>
Youth under 18	85%	51%	32%	72%	N/A ^a	69%
18–29	95%	70%	42%	71%	48%	65%
30–49	91%	77%	27%	48%	22%	24%
50–64	83%	73%	18%	29%	14%	12%
65+	49%	50%	7%	13%	4%	2%

^aNote: Research was conducted separately for those under 18 and those over the age of 18. While Pew Research Center regularly conducts research on social media use for adults, its most recent survey of teen social media use took place before TikTok was created

users, their interconnections and user-generated content” (Greenhow & Gleason, 2014, p. 393). *Social network sites* can be defined as “a *networked communication platform* in which participants 1) have *uniquely identifiable profiles* that consist of user-supplied content, content provided by other users, and/or system-level data; 2) can *publicly articulate connections* that can be viewed and traversed by others; and 3) can consume, produce, and/or interact with *streams of user-generated content* provided by their connections on the site” (Ellison & boyd, 2013, p. 158).

The use of social media in education has been studied for over a decade, and most of the research findings have been positive (Greenhow & Askari, 2017). Social media can connect learners to their instructors and others outside of the classroom (Gao et al., 2012) and support learning in a number of ways, both inside and outside of the classroom (Manca, 2020). It has also been argued that social media has the potential to be a lever of societal change (Krutka & Carpenter, 2016), but also that the potential of social media to disrupt dominant narratives and push against oppression has not yet been fully realized (Chapman & Greenhow, 2021).

To better understand the potential of Twitter for civic education, we must first examine some of the features and affordances of some of the more common social media platforms. The focus of this book is the platform Twitter and its potential for civic education. However, there are numerous other social networking services which also could be considered as possible avenues and supports for youth civic engagement. The study presented in this book examined teachers’ use of Twitter for civic education, and each social media platform, it would be outside the bounds of this study to suggest how the findings presented here might be applicable, or not, to other platforms (van Dijck, 2013). However, given both the prior research on these platforms and on the prevalence of their use among youth, their utility or efficacy for civic education and engagement should be examined.

TWITTER

Twitter also encompasses all three of the characteristics of a social network site (Ellison & boyd, 2013). Each individual tweet is created by a specific Twitter user and each Twitter user is identified uniquely by a *handle* styled @username (for instance, my Twitter handle is @chapmaab). Each user has the option to add personal details to their profile (attached to their unique handle), including a header photograph, a profile picture, and a brief

description of themselves including geographic location. These profiles also include data supplied by Twitter, such as how many tweets each user has composed and the date that they joined the platform. Each of these aspects of a user's profile is unique to that user and created and curated by them.

Twitter allows users to create, interact with, and share short posts of up to 280 characters called *tweets* (Gleason, 2013); although these posts are short, they can contain a variety of other media and elements. These tweets make up the central feature of Twitter: a stream of user-generated content, called a *feed*. This feed, populated with tweets composed or retweeted by the accounts the user follows, serves as the primary way in which users see and interact with tweets. In addition to posting their own tweets and following the tweets of others, Twitter users can interact with the tweets of other Twitter users. There are four common ways in which this can be done: *liking* another user's tweet (connoting approval, interest, or agreement); *replying* to another user's tweet (similar to a mention seen above but in reply to a particular tweet); *retweeting* a tweet (copying someone else's tweet to your own feed); *quoting* a tweet (linking to a tweet with an additional post; the original tweet could be your own or another user's tweet).

Tweets can publicly articulate connections in two ways. First, Twitter users can opt to *follow* other Twitter users. As Gruzd et al. (2011) have explained, Twitter users are not required or necessarily expected to follow a Twitter user who follows them. Secondly, connections are made public on Twitter when a user specifically *mentions* one or more other Twitter users by adding another user's Twitter handle to the tweet, which informs that user of their inclusion on the tweet and draws the attention of that user's followers to the tweet. Finally, many tweets employ one or more *hashtags*, a word or phrase which follows a # symbol and which serves to organize tweets by topic (boyd et al., 2010; Lewis, 2014). In addition to grouping together tweets, hashtags can also serve a rhetorical purpose, functioning as labels or commentary on an individual tweet rather than seeking to connect one tweet to a broader group of tweets (Bruns et al., 2016; Greenhalgh et al., 2017).

Twitter is a platform that is widely used by adolescents and young adults. According to the Pew Research Center (2021), 42% of people ages 18–29 use Twitter; the Pew Research Center data for teens supports this finding, also. Pew Research Center found that 33% of teens aged 13–17 use Twitter, but teens in the upper end of that bracket, 15–17, are more

likely to use Twitter; 43% of 17-year-olds reported using Twitter (Pew Research Center, 2015). Secondly, educational research has found that the affordances of Twitter for education include how teachers and students use Twitter for educational purposes. For instance, Gao et al. (2012) found that the use of Twitter changes who the participants are in a learning setting. Specifically, the use of Twitter broadens the reach of the instructor, whether to students who are less inclined to participate verbally in class to people who are not physically present in the class (Gao et al., 2012). Further, Twitter can serve as a back-channel in educational settings, allowing learners in a lecture-format class to participate by live-tweeting, allowing learners to discuss, ask questions, and receive immediate responses from instructors (Gao et al., 2012). In these ways, Twitter encourages participation from those who might not otherwise participate. This is potentially an affordance which is significant for civic education: finding alternative means of civic participation may increase overall civic engagement.

Twitter also has the ability to connect learners in the classroom with a variety of people outside of it. Gao et al. (2012) found that classes which used Twitter were able to connect with Twitter users who were outside of their classroom and yet interested in what the students were studying. This brought lived experiences to learning and added to the authenticity of the learning experience, and students reported being excited by these interactions (Gao et al., 2012). Further, what students learn in the classroom is often practiced with people and in places outside of the classroom. Listening to and interacting with those people and becoming aware of those places can be an important part of taking what is learned inside the classroom and applying it to the real world. Another affordance of Twitter is that it allows students access to people who they may not have met or had access to without the platform, such as language-learners being able to speak with native speakers (Borau et al., 2009). Research has also shown that students who use Twitter are more likely to become involved in the wider community (Rinaldo et al., 2011). It is easy to imagine that students learning about civics could similarly find people on Twitter they would not otherwise interact with, including government representatives, student activists, leaders of social movements, and people who choose to express their civic views and encourage civic behavior on Twitter.

Another affordance of Twitter is that it can broaden the reach of learning, by encouraging learning outside of and beyond class times and by expanding the pool of learners and instructors as well as the roles that they

play. Tweeting about topics that are brought up in class promotes interaction between students, between students and the instructor, and between students, instructor, and other Twitter users, which may extend learning to real-life applications or other disciplines (Gao et al., 2012). Students who used Twitter as a part of their classes had discussions on class topics on Twitter outside of class; asked questions of and helped each other; and were more likely to ask questions and to engage more with their instructors (Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2010; Holotescu & Grosseck, 2009; Perifanou, 2009). Additionally, Elavsky et al. (2011) found that a topic which was mentioned briefly in class became a topic of conversation amongst the students on Twitter for weeks following the class. Further, when Twitter was used in educational settings, engagement (Ebner et al., 2010); deep learning (Ebner & Maurer, 2009; Wright, 2010); interpersonal connections (Junco et al., 2011; Kassens-Noor, 2012; Kop, 2011); and participation by students all increased (Junco et al., 2011). This type of interaction beyond the classroom was seen even when instructors only used Twitter to post classroom assignments, materials, or notices (Lowe & Laffey, 2011).

Lastly, while traditionally instructors are suppliers (or sometimes producers) of knowledge and students are consumers of knowledge, using Twitter allows those roles to become more fluid. Students can consume information from a variety of sources; they can also co-produce and curate knowledge in ways that are not usually seen in traditional classrooms (Gao et al., 2012). Instructors and other Twitter users can also play any or all of these roles. Research has shown that when students were able to co-create and contribute information and materials, they were more likely to be active students (Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2010; Perifanou, 2009). The use of Twitter in education also develops and maintains connections between students and instructors; these connections occur both inside and outside the classroom (Domizi, 2013; Junco et al., 2011; Lin et al., 2013; Lomicka & Lord, 2012; Wright, 2010).

THE RELEVANCE OF TWITTER TO CIVIC EDUCATION

Although there are many ways in which people engage with, on, and through social media, social network sites function as places of civic participation and have affordances which support online and offline civic learning and engagement. In one snapshot of the use of social media for civic participation, during the 2020 U.S. election cycle, of all people in the United States aged 18–29, almost half participated on social media for

civic engagement. Civic participation on social media during this time period varied as users described their experiences in society, designed and shared media, and created their own civic content (CIRCLE, 2021). This study is but one example of one particular age group of social media users who turned to social media as a space and means for civic participation.

While the types of media used to create and distribute information, or misinformation, to engage in boycotts or #hashtag movements, or to connect with other citizens varies, consistently people are using social media as a means of civic engagement. For instance, although Twitter is widely used for civic participation, its use in this regard is understudied in the educational research literature (Chapman & Greenhow, 2021; Chapman & Marich, 2021). For instance, people took to Twitter to connect to, participate in, or critique the demonstrations, protests, and uprisings known as the Arab Spring, the Occupy Wall Street movement, the Black Lives Matter movement, the #MeToo movement, and the #NeverAgain movement. In 2011 in Egypt, young people used Twitter to protest and organize activists who brought down the regime of President Hosni Mubarak (Pew Research Center, 2012). Also in 2011, young adults used Twitter to propel a suggestion in a magazine into the Occupy Wall Street movement (Preston, 2011). Between July 2013 and March 2016, both youth and young adults used 13.3 million Tweets to show solidarity with and participate in the Black Lives Matter movement (Pew Research Center, 2016). More recently, high school students who survived the school shooting in Parkland, Florida, in February 2018 began the #NeverAgain movement, which prompted the March for Our Lives in cities across the United States (Shear, 2018). Clearly, Twitter is being actively used by young people as both a method and a tool of civic engagement.

Scholars have theorized that social media, and Twitter in particular, provide an excellent space for youth civic engagement (Bennett, 2008; Gleason & von Gillern, 2018; Kahne et al., 2016; Kenna & Hensley, 2019). However, only a few studies have been conducted on the ways in which teachers and others support young people's civic engagement via social media (Greenhow et al., *in press*; Greenhow & Chapman, 2020). Social studies teachers have used Twitter to communicate with students and parents, to share resources, information, or activities, and as a space for discussion (Krutka & Carpenter, 2016). In out-of-school contexts, students used Twitter to blend online and offline civic learning and participation (Gleason & von Gillern, 2018). As a class activity, students live-tweeted (tweeting during the course of an ongoing event) during

presidential debates and political parties' National Conventions as a means of engaging in a Presidential election cycle (Journell et al., 2013). These and other studies, however, found that students were not taught *about* social media: in another study Carpenter and Krutka, few teachers who used Twitter in their classes reported teaching students about social media; in the Journell et al. (2013) study mentioned above, the teacher did not prepare students to engage in conversations on Twitter, which resulted in a small percentage of student tweets which lacked substance and were instead personal attacks on a particular candidate.

Although these studies signal that social media is being studied for its potential to support civic education, a disconnect remains between the ways in which many high school students in the United States are being taught civics and methods of civic participation and the ways in which youth are actually participating in civic life. While some students benefit from the traditional ways of teaching civics, there are other students whose civic imaginations remain uninspired by these ways. If the hope of civic education is to produce well-informed and active citizens, adjustments must be made in civic education. One of these adjustments could be to purposefully incorporate the use of social media into civics learning, particularly as there is evidence that youth are already using this media for civic engagement purposes.

APPLYING SOCIAL MEDIA TO PROBLEMS OF CIVIC EDUCATION

The inherently participatory structure of social media creates opportunities for civic learning and engagement (Jenkins, 2006). As shown in Table 2.2, research on education and social media suggests that the features and affordances of Twitter make it particularly promising for supporting the essential components of civics education identified earlier as currently lacking but important for developing active civic engagement among today's young people.

Civic engagement literature questions whether students should learn about civic engagement in school in the ways that they are actually participating in society; in other words, students should be learning and practicing civic roles in school settings in the ways in which they will use those skills out in the world as adults (Bennett et al., 2012; Haste, 2010). Most current civic education programs in the United States do not do this,

Table 2.2 Essential components of civic education and Twitter affordances

<i>Essential components of civic education</i>	<i>Twitter affordances</i>
Schools generally and classes which teach civics should be open and democratic, allowing for greater student input (Hahn, 1999).	Using Twitter increases student participation and engagement, even from students who usually do not participate (Junco et al., 2011).
Classes which teach civics should include current events and hotly debated topics (Hess & Posselt, 2002; Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 1996; Niemi & Junn, 2005; Syvertsen et al., 2007).	Twitter connects students to people outside of the classroom and to those they may not have had the chance to interact with (Gao et al., 2012). These can include people and movements which are current and being debated in the public sphere.
Civics classes should use participatory pedagogies: student-created discussion agendas, student debates, interactive experiences (e.g., mock Continental Congress) (Gibson & Levine, 2003; Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Niemi & Chapman, 1999; Torney-Purta et al., 1999; Torney-Purta et al., 2001).	Twitter is inherently participatory. Using Twitter in class expands the roles of participants in the learning community (Gao et al., 2012). Students who co-create and contribute information are more likely to be active students (Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2010; Perifanou, 2009). Using Twitter promotes continuing discussions of topics brought up in class outside of the classroom (Gao et al., 2012).
Giving specific and relatable contexts for civic education that are relevant to students' lives (Gibson & Levine, 2003; Niemi & Junn, 2005; Pasek et al., 2008).	Twitter connects students to people outside of the classroom and to those they may not have had the chance to interact with (Gao et al., 2012). These may include people and organizations with which students connect more authentically than traditional classrooms.
Schools and civics classrooms should prompt and include student involvement in the community, such as community service projects or helping with local elections (Gibson & Levine, 2003; Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Niemi & Chapman, 1999; Torney-Purta et al., 1999; Torney-Purta et al., 2001).	Students who use Twitter are more likely to be involved in the wider community (Rinaldo et al., 2011).
Civics classes should teach a variety of ways in which students can be civically involved (Torney-Purta et al., 2001).	Using Twitter connects students to civic participation beyond what may be taught in class (joining movements or boycotts, for instance). Also, the use of Twitter deepens students' thinking (Ebner & Maurer, 2009; Wright, 2010).

(continued)

Table 2.2 (continued)

<i>Essential components of civic education</i>	<i>Twitter affordances</i>
Civics classes should teach students how to search for and evaluate information from a variety of sources (Bennett et al., 2009).	Twitter connects students to people outside of the classroom and to those they may not have had the chance to interact with (Gao et al., 2012). Using Twitter in class expands the roles of participants in the learning community, particularly shifting the role of students from receivers of knowledge to co-creators of knowledge (Gao et al., 2012).

focusing instead on the foundations of American democracy and highlights of American leadership (Bennett et al., 2009). Further, many young people today, who are engaged by co-created and co-curated knowledge and more personal connections to issues and activism in contrast to older generations who are engaged by legacy news sources and more institutional connections to issues and activism, do not see the way they interact with the world in civics education courses (Bennett et al., 2009).

Horace Mann (1842) argued that all students needed to be well schooled in how to be active and productive citizens, and that understanding of the role of civic education in schools has not changed since Mann's time. At present, we are not meeting this standard (Chapman & Miller, 2022; *Educating for American Democracy*, 2021). Students may have significantly different approaches to how they develop civic understanding and practice civic skills than those supported by traditional civic education. For all students, particularly those who are not academically successful in other subjects or who come from lower socioeconomic environments, as well as for older citizens who are hopeful of passing on the rights and responsibilities of self-government to future generations, attention needs to be paid to the content, pedagogies, and expectations of civic education.

Consequently, civic education should attend to and include knowledge and skills education that takes into account and speaks to how young people can and want to engage in civic life. This must include media literacy, discussions of contemporary issues, and the use of social media, which all have impacts for both online and offline civic engagement. Twitter has numerous affordances for youth civic education and engagement. Twitter offers users a space to create and share their own content, to connect with others, and to connect with content (Ellison & boyd, 2013). In this way,

the very nature of Twitter asks users to create identities (profiles) and allows young people to interact (tweet) in the same way as those in power. Students learning about civics can find people on social media they would not otherwise interact with, including government representatives, student activists, and leaders of social movements. Because Twitter is a place for connection, voice, and action, it can also serve as a way to challenge existing oppressive systems (Chapman & Greenhow, 2021).

In order to do so, however, we must know how teachers enact civic education and support students' civic engagement with social media. Although social media presents great opportunities for youth civic learning and engagement, social media can also support hegemonic power structures (Chapman & Greenhow, 2021). Thus, we must know how teachers are teaching students about social media and consider ways in which teacher education programs can prepare in-service teachers to best educate students about the potential good, real constraints, and possible harm of social media. These issues will be explored in future chapters.

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CHAPTER 3

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: How Social Media Operates in the Civic Sphere

This book argues that using social media for civic education can have potential benefits, and research has shown that this is true. However, it would be irresponsible and shortsighted to ignore the threats to the civic sphere which are prevalent in social media. Both the very nature of social media—down to its design—and users in social media spaces can limit, distort, and manipulate information and civic participation. Further, there is a perception that because students have come of age in an era of ubiquitous social media use that they know how to use it more adroitly than do the adults in their lives. Both broadly and in the research presented here, this perception of “digital natives” has been shown to be inaccurate (Brown & Czerniewicz, 2010). This makes it all the more imperative that teaching with social media includes teaching *about* social media. If young people are to use social media, and to use it for civic participation, they must be fully aware not only of its potential for good, but also of its potential for harm. Understanding the complexity of social media in civic education and for civic participation requires understanding the design of social media; the impact of civic perspective-taking and political polarization; the role of critical media literacy; and the concept of digital citizenship. This chapter weaves these constructs together to provide a nuanced framing of the study to follow.

POTENTIAL FOR GOOD

The previous chapter made the theoretical case for the potential benefits of using social media for civic participation. From the Arab Spring in 2011 to continued hashtag movements, the sharing of information, and community organizing, it is clear that Twitter functions as a civic space. While the use of social media, and particularly Twitter, for civic education is understudied, there are numerous educational communities which use Twitter for community engagement. One robust example is the use of Twitter by teachers to engage in support and learning (see, among others: Carpenter & Krutka, 2014; Greenhalgh, 2021; Greenhalgh & Koehler, 2017; Greenhalgh et al., 2020; Rosenberg et al., 2016; Staudt Willet, 2019; Staudt Willet et al., 2017). However, the picture around social media use is not only rosy, and for Twitter to truly be an asset for civic education and civic engagement, we must consider how education addresses its more nefarious aspects.

THREATS TO CIVIC LIFE

While individual users have found Twitter to be a space for community and civic engagement, no social media platform is a neutral space (Krutka et al., 2020). We know that the very design of social media platforms impacts and can be harmful to civic engagement. After facing criticism in 2020 when users noticed that Twitter's image cropping algorithm was more likely to focus on White faces than on Black faces, the company invited researchers to investigate any potential bias in its algorithm (Hern, 2021). Subsequently, a researcher, Bogdan Kulynych, found that Twitter's algorithm preferenced faces which were lighter in color, younger in appearance, and thinner (Hern, 2021). Tellingly, the researcher who identified the bias noted that this was an intentional design, not a "bug," and Twitter's head of AI ethics candidly said that these biases functioned "the way we think in society" (Hern, 2021). In other words, the intentional privilege on Twitter of younger, whiter, and thinner faces was designed to mimic what was true in larger, offline society. Scholars have also found that social media reproduces marginalization that is found in broader society, particularly around gender, race, and socioeconomic status (Literat, 2021; Selwyn, 2014). These findings echo what scholars of color have identified as systems of oppression within offline citizenship (Busey & Dowie-Chin, 2021; Crowley & King, 2018; Johnson, 2019; Rodríguez, 2018; Sabzalian, 2019; Vickery, 2017).

There are further design issues with all social media platforms, including Twitter. Without careful attention and intention on the part of the user, Twitter’s algorithms can create echo chambers, where a user’s feed is populated only with messages from similar points of view (Dutton et al., 2017; Laybats & Tredinnick, 2016). When these are the only messages that one sees, they can both fortify pre-existing beliefs and convince users that what they are seeing is the predominant or only view, value, or knowledge (Dutton et al., 2017; Laybats & Tredinnick, 2016).

In addition to these design flaws, Twitter is a space in which bad civic actors operate to manipulate information and users. In examining Tweets around the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers found that both vaccine proponents and vaccine opponents shared misinformation, though in different ways (Jamison et al., 2020). Those accounts which were opposed to the COVID-19 vaccine actively spread misinformation, while those who were supportive of the same vaccine misrepresented medical information (Jamison et al., 2020). In addition to individuals who spread misinformation or disinformation, intentionally or otherwise, nation-states use Twitter as a battleground. As only one example, researchers are still trying to understand the scope and reach of Russia’s Internet Research Agency, which interfered via Twitter and other platforms, in the U.S. 2016 presidential election (Im et al., 2020). Such state actors also influence education via Twitter: a recent study examined 83 inauthentic, state-sponsored Twitter accounts which engaged with #edchat, a hashtag for educators (Krutka & Greenhalgh, 2021). The prevalence of these fake accounts, which were designed so that educators in the space largely would not recognize their inauthenticity, highlights concerns of anonymity and disinformation (Krutka & Greenhalgh, 2021).

ADDRESSING CONCERNS ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA: MEDIA LITERACY

These issues are particularly concerning for young people’s use of social media. While the perception that young people are “digital natives”—those who know how to use digital technology because they have grown up with its use all their lives—has been dispelled (Brown & Czerniewicz, 2010), young people are not provided with a robust education around how social media works and how to use it. This can lead to concerns about self-esteem (Michikyan & Subrahmanyam, 2012; Way & Malvini Redden,

2017), privacy (Hodkinson, 2017; Marwick & boyd, 2014), and misinformation and disinformation (Vaidhyanathan, 2018).

Media literacy has attempted to address these concerns, with an uptick in interest particularly in response to concerns about misinformation (Bulger & Davison, 2018; Chang et al., 2020; Roozenbeek & Van Der Linden, 2020; Tully et al., 2020). However, this work is often done in formal contexts, independent of social media (Literat, 2021). Separating media literacy education from the context in which it is practiced often means that what is learned does not transfer to the spaces in which it needs to be applied (Journell, 2019). In other words, students may learn media literacy concepts, but when scrolling through Twitter, they do not employ them. While very little research exists on examining students' media literacy learning via social media, research shows this is a complex picture, too. In a study which launched a media literacy campaign on the social media platform TikTok, researchers found that while young people had enthusiasm for learning about media literacy, others felt that a social media platform offering media literacy education was hypocritical, and attempts to moderate user content was met with distrust (Literat, 2021). Both in terms of content and in terms of pedagogy, different approaches are needed to prepare young people to use social media, and to use it for civic participation.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA INTO CIVIC EDUCATION

The very design of social media, including Twitter, can thus undercut some of the important aspects of civic education, and teaching media literacy alone may not provide enough support to counter this. However, social media provides an opportunity to engage two aspects of civic education that are important: civic perspective-taking and addressing political polarization. Recent research in civic education has shown the impact of political polarization on learning and civic engagement (Payne & Journell, 2019) as well as the importance of civic perspective-taking (Toledo & Enright, 2021). Social media is both a site of political polarization and a space to engage in civic perspective-taking to understand various perspectives and to come to one's own informed decisions. However, this is rocky terrain: teachers need support both in addressing controversial topics in class (Hess, 2009; Hess & McAvoy, 2015; Journell, 2011a, 2011b, 2012,

2017; Levy et al., 2016; McAvoy & Hess, 2013; Noddings & Brooks, 2017; Swalwell & Schweber, 2016; Zimmerman & Robertson, 2017) and in using social media (Chapman & Greenhow, 2021).

CIVIC PERSPECTIVE-TAKING

The importance of civic perspective-taking as an aspect of civic education is not new. Over one hundred years ago, John Dewey argued that schools prepare young people for civic engagement not only by what they teach, but because school is the place where students learn how to be a part of a community (Dewey, 1922, 1963). Dewey further argued that an important part of learning to be in society was the ability to hear and understand multiple perspectives on community issues (Dewey, 1902/1966). The importance of learning to consider multiple perspectives as part of the process of arriving at one's own understanding of an issue has received renewed research interest in recent decades. Building on prior literature, Toledo and Enright (2021) have defined civic perspective-taking as a "process wherein students examine multiple perspectives on public issues and form their own stances on these issues using fact-based reasons with a consideration for the public good," (p. 4-5; Bickmore & Parker, 2014; Hess, 2004; National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS], 2013; Selman & Kwok, 2010; Toledo, 2017, 2019, 2020; Torney-Purta, 2002; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). In other words, civic perspective-taking asks students to consider various positions on issues and to use evidence to support the position that they adopt for themselves. Civic perspective-taking also centers around the public good: the emphasis on this process is not merely about a stance on a particular civic issue which resonates with a student, but also asks students to think about how issues impact the community at large.

While this consideration of the public good is only one of seven components of civic perspective-taking, (uses academic vocabulary; supports opinions with reasons; writes in the persuasive genre; differentiates between facts and opinions; differentiates between public and personal issues; engages in civic perspective-taking with peers; considers the common or public good), it is the component which sets civic perspective-taking apart from other forms of perspective-taking (Toledo, 2019; Toledo & Enright, 2021). The emphasis on the public good orients students as members of a larger community and asks them to see the community's welfare as a necessary component of their decision-making process. We

know that students must engage with civics in ways that connect to their lives and their communities; this relevance to students' lived experiences is a critical aspect to cultivating the ability and desire to engage in civic life (Hess, 2004; Watras, 2010). Opportunities to meaningfully engage with civics content in ways that put that content into dialogue with students' lived experience must be curated and supported (Hauver, 2019; Lopez et al., 2006; Toledo & Enright, 2021; Torney-Purta, 2002; Torney-Purta et al., 2001), making civic perspective-taking an important aspect of our shared broader goals for civic education.

Specifically, civic perspective-taking can support critical aspects of civic education: it fosters civic thinking (Hahn, 2010; Mitra & Serriere, 2015; Torney-Purta & Vermeer, 2004), provides students with opportunities to engage with civic content that is meaningful to their own lives (Hess, 2004; Watras, 2010); and deepens students' understanding of the common good (Toledo & Enright, 2021). Researchers examined changes in students' civic perspective-taking, particularly on their understanding of the common good, following iterative lessons around COVID-19 (Toledo & Enright, 2021). They found that students' thinking about ways of understanding the common good which was connected to how they saw their community: local, state, national, global. Students often thought more locally: the community they envisioned when they were thinking about the public good was their local community. Some students understood the common good as more broad-reaching, to the state or national level. Throughout the lessons, researchers found that some students' understanding of the public good shifted over time, fluctuating between seeing the public good as relating to society broadly or to the students' local community only.

Including civic perspective-taking into civic education requires that teachers support students in exploring that there may concurrently exist more than one common good. This is not to say that any perspective should be labeled "the common good," but rather to acknowledge and help students to work through the complexity of societal issues where work which supports the wellbeing of a community may intersect in ways which require deep collective consideration. This speaks both to the importance of including civic perspective-taking as an aspect of civic education and of students' capacity to consider the public good in their civic decision making (Toledo & Enright, 2021). The practice of civic perspective-taking continually asks students to connect their lived experiences with civic content through the lens of the common good. Given that

students' lived experiences expand over time, and that what constitutes the common good can also shift in response to crises or better attention to societal needs, students need to learn the process of learning to consider multiple perspectives as an integral part of civic education.

CIVIC PERSPECTIVE-TAKING AND STUDENT AGENCY

Another important aspect of civic perspective-taking is that it fosters student civic agency. Civic agency is understood as “the capacity of human communities and groups to act cooperatively and collectively on common problems across their differences of view” (Boyte, 2007), and research on civic education has examined how we develop civic agency in students. Payne (2015) has also argued for a specific approach to civic perspective-taking which begins with being well informed and then leads to action. Specifically, Payne argues that young people need to be able to name the issues and stakeholders who are involved so as to collectively arrive at potential solutions to civic problems.

Another particular aspect of civic education and civic engagement has been found to support the development of students' civic agency: the concept of “audience” (Payne, 2015). Payne defines audience as “an opportunity to be heard” (p. 19), finding that preparing to share their ideas with others fostered students' civic agency. As students considered others' perspectives, they began to see themselves as part of the community as well. In effect, considering others' perspectives allowed young people to see that they, too, were part of society and worthy and capable of having their perspectives considered as well. Students who were tasked with understanding, sharing, and developing potential solutions to civic problems were less likely to rely on adults and to engage in deep thinking around how they might address the issue themselves (Payne, 2015). By thinking through the issue and their audience, and by preparing to speak about the issue, students were able to see themselves as civic actors, and to find their civic voice. Further, taking multiple perspectives and considering their audience allowed students to see issues which did not directly impact them as nonetheless their concern: by being attentive to the ways others could see the world, students saw that civic problems needed to be addressed by the entire community, including themselves (Payne, 2015). Being able to consider issues from another's point of view fostered student civic agency and deepened their sense of self efficacy as civic actors.

CIVIC PERSPECTIVE-TAKING AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Because one hallmark of social media is the creation of user-generated content (Ellison & boyd, 2013), there is often an aspect of perspective-taking in any social media post. However, because of the nature of any social media post (e.g., a user is sharing information), it largely falls to the consumer of social media to determine if what is shared is true. Putting this on us on the users of social media requires both intention and skill. As mentioned above, any social media platform can function as an echo chamber as a result of its design (Dutton et al., 2017; Laybats & Tredinnick, 2016). The posts that we engage with on social media—from the videos that appear next in our queue on YouTube to the tweets from accounts we do not follow which appear in our Twitter feeds—are not solely based on our choices. Further, in curating a social media space based on one’s own interests, one can in effect double down on this echo chamber, only seeing what is already appealing and disregarding or ignoring other types of content. While this may seem innocuous when one chooses to watch cute animal videos over sports replays, when considering others’ voices, information sharing, and other means of civic engagement, social media can limit one’s ability to engage in civic perspective-taking. Consequently, the very design of social media can be harmful to civic life.

Because social media is ubiquitous in our society, it would be foolish to ignore its potential impacts on civic life. At the same time, because it is ubiquitous, including how to use social media as part of civic education becomes even more critical (Chapman & Greenhow, 2021).

POLITICAL POLARIZATION

Arguably, civic perspective-taking is even more critical in times of intense political polarization, which itself is an important aspect of civic education. Both on and beyond social media, we are living in a time of intense political polarization, one which has been and is likely to continue to grow (Gusterson, 2017; Judis, 2016; Payne & Journell, 2019; Wilson, 2017). Civic education research has found benefits to incorporating the discussion of controversial topics in class (Gibson & Levine, 2003; Hahn, 1999; Hess & Posselt, 2002; Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 1996; McDevitt et al., 2003; Niemi & Junn, 2005; Parker, 2003; Syvertsen et al., 2007; Torney-Purta et al., 2001; Torney-Purta & Wilkenfeld, 2009). At the same time, teaching about controversial or political topics can be challenging (Hess,

2009; Hess & McAvoy, 2015; Journell, 2011a, 2011b, 2012, 2017; Levy et al., 2016; McAvoy & Hess, 2013; Noddings & Brooks, 2017; Swalwell & Schweber, 2016; Zimmerman & Robertson, 2017), particularly as how teachers incorporate controversial topics into class can be the object of intense scrutiny (McAvoy & Hess, 2013). Consequently, even though teaching about debated issues or prescient current events has been shown to be important for civic education, teachers often either avoid discussion of current events or topics which may be considered controversial or address these issues very carefully (Dunn et al., 2018; Journell, 2012, 2016).

Further, while the discussion of controversial topics, perhaps in conjunction with learning about civic perspective-taking, is seen as an important part of civic education, teachers must (and do) recognize who they are teaching in bringing up these topics. Students whose lived experiences intersect with controversial topics or current events, particularly those who are marginalized or vulnerable, may feel threatened during such discussions (Payne & Journell, 2019). The benefit of discussing controversial topics is to engage students in considering multiple perspectives so as to come to their own informed decisions; if students are at the center of these controversies, this approach to civic education becomes personal, rather than an exercise in civic perspective-taking. We know from literature that students who identify with groups who have suffered through historical injustices being taught in class, such as slavery or the Holocaust, experience negative personal feelings such as anger or shame (Epstein, 1998; Goldberg, 2017). One could see how this would also be true of students impacted by contemporary or ongoing political debates around contentious issues, including racism, immigration, and the rights of gender and sexual minorities.

While we know that discussion of political issues in schools can lead to harm for those who are in the ideological minority (Journell, 2012, 2017), this does not mean that we should avoid discussing them in classes and as part of civic education. These controversial topics are present in schools, whether they are formally and openly discussed in classes or present in informal spaces such as the lunchroom and hallways (Journell, 2012). More recent research as argued that teachers need to engage in a “pedagogy of political trauma” which supports students’ holistic wellbeing by processing traumatic historical or political experiences, engaging in robust civic education to cultivate civic engagement, and analyzing systems of oppression to as to foster critical and activist civic dispositions (Payne & Journell, 2019, p. 75; Sondel et al., 2018).

It is clear that contentious topics must be included in formal civic education. Research has shown that this is an effective pedagogy (Gibson & Levine, 2003; Hahn, 1999; Hess & Posselt, 2002; Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 1996; McDevitt et al., 2003; Niemi & Junn, 2005; Parker, 2003; Syvertsen et al., 2007; Torney-Purta et al., 2001; Torney-Purta & Wilkenfeld, 2009), and the benefits of engaging in civic perspective-taking as a means of coming to one's own informed decision are also clear (Toledo & Enright, 2021). It is equally clear that the way in which these topics are taught and discussed is critically important, both for the cultivation of civic perspective-taking and, more importantly, for the wellbeing of students. Payne and Journell (2019) argue that this calls for a *relational pedagogy*: an approach to civic education in which students' identities are interwoven into the discussion of these divisive issues so that students can put their personal experience into dialogue with current and historical events. This approach includes, concretizes, and humanizes students' experiences, not only as part of class but as part of civic perspective-taking, which promotes students' agency and voice. Further, the researchers found that this relational pedagogical approach to civic education fostered civic action: by being able to speak about their experiences, students were able to see themselves as part of the community, and to discuss civic events and engage in civic participation as peers (Payne & Journell, 2019; Sondel et al., 2018).

APPLYING RELATIONAL PEDAGOGY: CRITICAL DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

It is neither possible nor advisable to ignore controversial topics or political polarization in schools. Research has found it important for students' civic development to engage with controversial topics (Gibson & Levine, 2003; Hahn, 1999; Hess & Posselt, 2002; Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 1996; McDevitt et al., 2003; Niemi & Junn, 2005; Parker, 2003; Payne & Journell, 2019; Syvertsen et al., 2007; Torney-Purta et al., 2001; Torney-Purta & Wilkenfeld, 2009), and in our current climate it is difficult to imagine students avoiding these altogether. Further, it is important for students to engage with multiple perspectives (Toledo & Enright, 2021). If these topics are to be included in civic education, teachers must be prepared to teach with them in ways which support students' overall wellbeing and civic education. Research has shown that when teachers create space for students to use their own experiences and identities in

discussion of controversial topics, they have an increased sense of being part of the community and an increase in civic agency (Payne & Journell, 2019; Sondel et al., 2018). In other words, when teachers apply a *critical lens* to controversial topics, students feel that they are included and welcomed as civic actors.

Thus, one way in which these topics might be approached is through *critical digital citizenship*. Before we address *critical digital citizenship*, we need a common understanding of *digital citizenship*. Digital citizenship is often reduced to being safe and polite in online spaces, or *netiquette* (Logan et al., 2022). In a sense, it is a misnomer: it is not about citizenship as much as it is about specific online behaviors. When we speak of citizenship in an offline context, the word takes on much more meaning, connotes expectations, rights, and responsibilities, and asks much more of us than merely refraining from harming others. Such an understanding also calls into account the underlying structures at play in online civic engagement. Asking people to be polite and calling it citizenship reinforces dominant power structures: there is no discussion of challenging any part of an oppressive system. In effect, this maintains hegemonic power structures: we do not teach about the underlying systems which impact our lives, and do not invite students to think about how they might change them. This could be compounded by traditional civic education which emphasizes nationalistic patriotism and obedience (Hahn, 2008; Westheimer, 2007).

In this way, *digital citizenship* can be a misleading and unhelpful term, which detracts from our ability to teach about it and from students' ability to use social media for civic participation. Using the term *digital citizenship*, even when what is meant is more than secure passwords and anti-bullying measures, conveys that civic participation which happens in online spaces is different—and perhaps less valid or real—than civic engagement in offline spaces.

And yet, as people interact with each other in online and offline spaces, so too does civic engagement happen online and offline, and sometimes in ways which blend the two. People encourage participation via social media as well as through mail, standing on a corner with signs, or phone calls. Calls for protests or marches start online, then move to in-person gatherings. Politicians interact with people online as a way of sharing the work that they are doing in government, and constituents can both reach politicians and hold them accountable via social media. Understanding digital citizenship as the ways in which people engage in civic life online is a much more helpful definition.

However, scholars have called for more diverse ways of understanding citizenship, including digital citizenship. Some seek to include a wider variety of means of civic participation (Choi, 2016; Kane et al., 2016). Female scholars of color have been even more specific, noting that traditional conceptualizations of citizenship are antithetical to their cultural practices or have actively worked against their liberation, (Sabzalian, 2019; Vickery, 2017). Further, Black women specifically have identified biases in online technologies which negatively impact their civic engagement (Benjamin, 2019; Buolamwini & Gebru, 2018; Kentayya, 2020; Noble, 2018). Although understudied, we also know that young people encounter and use social media differently based on their culture, economic background, and social context (Literat, 2021). For the benefit of all, we must look to new ways of understanding digital citizenship.

Critical digital citizenship is one such approach, applying critical pedagogy to this broader understanding of digital citizenship (Freire, 1972, 1974; Logan et al., 2022). Critical pedagogy questions traditional systems of power to break down barriers, promote social justice, and bring about liberation for all (Freire, 1972, 1974; Logan et al., 2022). Critical pedagogy also emphasizes the importance of empowering young people as agents of change (Freire, 1972). Critical digital citizenship asks us to examine the underlying power structures which operate in both online platforms and in society writ large, and to include those examinations in our civic education. Critical digital citizenship uses technology to emphasize the value of each person's lived experience to citizenship, a practice from which historically disenfranchised communities have often been excluded, in order to create systemic change (Garcia & de Roock, 2021; Mirra & Garcia, 2020). This approach to citizenship is inherently relational: by identifying what relationships exist between citizens and societal structures, we can begin to question whether those structures are the ones we want to uphold, and if not, how to dismantle or reorganize them.

As much as critical digital citizenship is centered upon the experiences of the traditionally marginalized to dismantle hegemonic power structures, at the same time it asks us to consider and critique digital technologies—including social media—as one such oppressive system (Chapman & Greenhow, 2021). While we explore the use of Twitter to lift up the voices of young people, we cannot disregard the potential for harm that exists within the very nature of social media. This does not mean that we should disregard social media as a potential tool for civic education and a space for youth civic participation; rather, it demands that we teach students about

social media and how to use it for civic engagement in ways which dismantle, rather than sustain, systems of oppression.

As we move into a discussion of the research around how teachers have incorporated Twitter into their civics teaching, it is imperative to keep these aspects of social media platforms and civic education in mind. Social media, and Twitter in particular, have great potential for civic education; this will be further detailed in the chapters that follow. That potential good is diminished if we neglect to understand and to prepare to teach students about the design of social media, how to use it, and the ways it can be used for civic engagement. Critical digital citizenship may prove one important and effective avenue to address issues of equity and inclusion, and should heighten our need to teach young people about the design and dangers of social media. These points will be further addressed in the chapters which follow.

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CHAPTER 4

The Study: Teachers' Use of Twitter for Civic Education

This study is an inquiry into the intersection of the two interests laid out in the first three chapters: how teachers are teaching with social media and how teachers are teaching civic education. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of high school teachers who had used or were using the social media platform Twitter, in their teaching of civic education. The study also sought to evaluate whether the teachers' use of Twitter in their civics teaching would align with the proposed model of constructivist civic education using Twitter. This chapter details the methods I used to understand how teachers were using Twitter to support students' civic education.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions framed this research:

1. What are the experiences of teachers who are teaching civics with Twitter?
 - a. What was the initial prompt that caused teachers to think about wanting to use Twitter in their classrooms?
 - b. After the initial prompt to use Twitter, what was the teacher's process of choosing to use Twitter in civic education?

- c. What are the teachers' objectives for students' civics learning (as a result of this lesson, students will be able to....?)
- d. Given what teachers experience when teaching civics with Twitter, what models do these experiences align with? To what extent are these experiences aligned or not aligned with the model of constructivist civics education with Twitter?

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study used a combination of two qualitative approaches to research: phenomenology and qualitative case study. The rationale for this combination of two methodologies was to honor the rich data obtained through participant interviews and to be able to address both the teachers' lived experience as civic educators as well as their pedagogical approaches to civic education. Phenomenology was chosen as a methodology because of its focus on examining a phenomenon of interest for meaning and experience from the point of view of several individuals (Creswell, 2013). Phenomenology allowed me to process the meaning of using Twitter in the teaching of civics, while qualitative case study allowed me to also evaluate and present their pedagogical choices and their reflections on those choices within individual cases and across the teacher-cases. It is important to note from the outset that there is a tension in using two methodologies within one study.

A phenomenological approach was chosen for this study because the research questions were designed to explore and better understand the lived experience of teachers who had used Twitter in their teaching of civic education. According to Smith and Osborn (2008), the main intent of phenomenological research is to uncover the meaning of the experiences of a phenomenon. Creswell (2013) adds that phenomenological research describes or interprets these experiences across several individuals. Phenomenological research seeks to determine the essential meaning of these lived experiences through the examination of the *lifeworld* of the person or persons being studied; the *lifeworld* is to understand a phenomenon of interest in the natural setting of the context of a person's life (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Because of its goals and focus, phenomenology does not rely on predetermined variables, using instead thick descriptions of lived experiences to understand the fullness of meaning of the phenomenon under study (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The goals of

phenomenological research also require interviews with people who have had the requisite experiences; thus, participants must be intentionally chosen for the study because they have the experiences under study and can describe those experiences thoroughly (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

A qualitative case study approach was also used in order to explore a question in depth in order to provide a detailed understanding of the issue across several cases (Creswell, 2013). This study used a qualitative case study method in order to include the data collected during the interviews which pertained to teachers' practice of teaching, in addition to developing an understanding of their lifeworld. (Creswell, 2013; Smith & Osborn, 2008). This approach required describing each case in detail and focusing on a single phenomenon of interest, in this case, high school teachers' use of Twitter in civic education (Creswell, 2013).

In order to answer the parts of my research questions which focused on the teachers' use of Twitter in class, I generated a thick description of what high school civics teachers who use Twitter in their classrooms actually do. An in-depth study of a particular issue or experience is the hallmark of qualitative case studies, which was appropriate in this exploratory study to understand if and how the use of Twitter in civics classrooms supports civic education. (Creswell, 2013). The broader approach of a qualitative case study was most appropriate to explore teachers' pedagogical choices.

SAMPLE POPULATION

A purposeful sampling technique was used in order to recruit participants who had the experience at the center of this study, namely social studies teachers who had used Twitter in civic education. Purposive sampling "involves searching for cases or individuals who meet a certain criterion "in order to provide a pool of individuals who are able to provide insight into the phenomenon of interest (Palys, 2008, p. 697). Using purposive sampling ensures that all participants have experience with the phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2013). The population of interest for this study was high school teachers who had used the social media platform Twitter with their students for the purpose of teaching civic education, and thus participants also needed to meet certain criteria. First, participants were required to be high school social studies teachers who are teaching civics. Specifically, to qualify as participants, teachers must have been members of a high school (grades 9–12 or 10–12) social studies department and teaching at least one class with an identifiable civics component (i.e., civics is

part of state, district, or departmental frameworks; is on the teachers' syllabus). Secondly, study participants must have been teaching for a minimum of three years. Where newer teachers need to focus on the development of lessons, refining their practice, and classroom management, teachers with at least three years of experience are more able to focus on trying and refining new ideas.

There were also criteria to ensure that participants were familiar with Twitter and used the platform with their students for civic education. Participants were required to be regular Twitter users themselves, defined as using Twitter at least once per week for at least one year. They also needed to have already used Twitter to teach civics. A further criterion was that participants had been teaching in a school where the majority of the student population fell into either a low or a high socioeconomic status. This was based on literature identifying differences in civic education among different socioeconomic status areas (Bennett et al., 2009; Gould et al., 2011; Hahn, 1999; Niemi & Junn, 2005; Torney-Purta & Barber, 2011).

Since the objective of this study was to examine the rich experiences of teachers who have used Twitter in civic education, the number of participants was based on the interviews themselves, ensuring that the teachers who were interviewed provided a diversity of experiences and a variety of perceptions. Teachers were recruited to participate in this study in a variety of ways. First, requests were made to professors of teacher education who also study social media to see if any of their former students might fit the criteria. Additionally, emails were sent to friends, college classmates, and former colleagues who are teachers or school administrators, asking if anyone in their school systems would match the criteria. I also contacted two civics education organizations, Generation Citizen and iCivics, and asked them if they knew of any teachers who fit the criteria and also to post messages on their forums, feeds, or pages inviting teachers to participate in the study. Relatedly, I reached out to Ed Tech Teacher, an organization which provides professional development for teachers, for potential participants. I contacted the chairpersons of both the Social Studies special interest group (SIG) of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and of the Tech Community within the National Council for the Social Studies, asking them to share the request for participants with their members.

I also tweeted my request for participants, including a link to my website which offered more information about the study, using the hashtags #SocialMediaEd, #CivicEd, and #MSUepet. These requests were

retweeted by colleagues. Finally, I reached out to individual teachers via email and Twitter who, based on prior presentations at conferences or their participation in the professional development communities on Twitter identified by the hashtags #sschat and #hsgovchat, seemed to meet the study criteria. The intention behind these various modes of searching for potential participants was to cast as wide a net as possible in order to find teachers who fit the sample criteria. When individual teachers responded to my requests for participation, we discussed whether they met the criteria for the study, and only those who met the criteria were interviewed. Through these methods, I was connected to a variety of potential participants. Overall, personal messages were the most effective in finding participants, whether from a person I directly contacted or who was contacted by someone I had reached out to.

RESEARCHER'S ROLE AND POSITIONALITY

Phenomenological research takes into account not only the lived experiences of the participants of the study, but also those of the researcher. In phenomenological inquiry, there are two approaches to this: bracketing, or epoché, and reflexivity (Bednall, 2006). Bracketing is the practice in which a researcher names and then sets aside their own personal experiences and conceptions about the phenomenon of interest, in order to center on what the data is saying. Some argue that as it may not be possible to entirely set one's experiences aside, the practice of reflexivity should be employed instead. Reflexivity refers to the researcher naming and understanding their own experiences and how those might impact their analysis of the data (Ahern, 1999). As a researcher, I choose a reflexive approach to provide transparency, to understand the lens through which the researcher approaches the work, and to be able to put the researcher's experiences and expertise into dialogue with the data.

My own civic education began when I was quite young. My parents took my sister and I into the voting booth with them from an early age, and when I was in elementary and middle school, my mother was elected to our town's board of education. I watched her run her campaigns and then participate in the life of our schools, having briefing books delivered every Friday, teachers calling our home during negotiations, talking at the dinner table about what education should be. I remember my own civic education including reading at least one newspaper daily from middle school through college; writing letters to elected officials and to the local

paper when I was in high school; and an eagerness and excitement to register to vote as soon as I turned 18. The first election I voted in was the contentious presidential election of 2000; the election I refer to often when talking or teaching about civics is the bond referendum in my hometown in which 115 people voted, total. I was one of them. I really do believe that my vote matters.

All of this description is to say that I have a deeply and long-held belief that civic engagement is important and that preparing for that engagement should begin early in life. During my undergraduate teacher education program, a professor told me that teachers need as many tools in their toolbox as possible because no tool works for every student. This resonated deeply with me, and so as a teacher I have tried to include as many ways to get students interested in what I was teaching as I could. Even though I did not teach a course on civic education, I tried to weave elements of civic education into my classes. My world history classes learned to identify every country in the world on a map, so that when the news brought up situations in those countries, or the United States was in conflict with one, my students would at least know where those countries were. My U.S. history classes got to see photocopies of an absentee ballot I had made in college, knowing I would want to talk about what a ballot looked like and that there were races beyond the presidential election to consider. However, as much as I think I did a decent job preparing students to be actively involved in civic life, I never had them actually engage in civic life as part of my classes.

In relation to my research questions, however, I am no longer an active member of the group I sought to study. While I was a social studies teacher, and while my license to teach history is still active, my current employment is not in social studies education. Thus, I am not now, nor was I ever, a member of a social studies class or even a group of high school teachers who use Twitter in their classrooms: I was not even on Twitter until after I left teaching. I have found that I personally have moved from writing letters to writing posts on social media, and in that way I am active on the platform I wish to study. Given all of this, I would say that my position is strongly to encourage people generally and young people specifically to be informed and active citizens, which is certainly a lens that I see this study through.

Threats to validity. There were two potential threats to validity which needed to be considered and checked during this study. Researcher bias, or the researcher's values, beliefs, and assumptions, can distort data

collection or analysis (Maxwell, 2013). In order to minimize this threat, I needed to acknowledge the value I assigned to both civic education and civic engagement. Further, I believe that social media can be an effective pedagogical tool. These preconceptions provided the basis for my interest in this research, but they also could have influenced data collection and data analysis in ways that could have bent the data to fit my preconceptions. Each of these points may have been an issue not only of researchers' bias but also of *reactivity*, or the influence a research may have on the participants. In particular, my beliefs may have influenced how I constructed my interview questions. The strategies I used in order to test the validity of my data collection and analysis, and mitigate researcher bias and reactivity, are described in the data analysis and rigor section below.

DATA SOURCES

Interviews. For this study, the primary data source was semi-structured interviews with teacher-participants. *Semi-structured interviews* utilize a set of predetermined questions, but the order of the questions is less important than establishing a connection with the person being interviewed (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Semi-structured interviews also allow the researcher to follow areas of interest rather than script and also allow respondents to introduce topics into the interview not thought of by the researcher (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Prior to conducting any interviews, I developed a number of prompts designed to explore teachers' experiences with Twitter in teaching civics (see Appendix 1 for interview prompts). The emphasis in each interview, however, was on understanding the experiences of each teacher, and thus the interviews unfolded in a conversational manner. This conversational manner was developed at the beginning of each interview, which began with a grand-tour question, which is the central question that gets to the heart of the study but which allows participants to have great freedom in how they choose to respond (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Spradley, 1979). For this study, my grand tour question asked about participants' experiences in using Twitter for civic education. Subsequent interview questions flowed in response to each participant's comments, rather than as a list of questions to be answered in order. The prepared interview questions were used as a guide; if there were questions at the end of the interview which remained unanswered, I asked those at the end of the conversation. In this way, the prompts served as a reminder near the end of each interview to ask questions about topics

of interest to this study that had not naturally occurred in our conversation, to ensure that I collected data necessary to answer my research questions. There were times in each interview where our conversation detoured away from any of the prompts; these detours provided rich information in some cases, while in others they served to build rapport with the respondent.

Interviews were conducted at a time convenient to the participant and were all conducted via videoconference. In order to honor participants' time and to limit the burden placed upon them by a lengthy interview, I had let the participants know prior to their agreement to participate in the study and again just prior to the start of the interview about the maximum length of the interview (one hour). Though I was, to the best of my ability, aware of the time throughout the interviews in order to not exceed this allotted time, in two cases the interview ran longer than one hour. In each of those cases, the teachers seemed engaged in the interview, wanted to continue the conversation, and did not express any concerns about the length of time of the interview. Interviews were recorded with permission using a feature of the teleconference platform, and the interviews were transcribed by a transcription service and checked for accuracy by me.

DATA COLLECTION

Once a teacher who met the study criteria agreed to be interviewed, I explained the study, provided and explained the consent form (which was also reiterated verbally at the time of each interview), and, if they were willing to be interviewed, we set up a date and time for the interview which was convenient for the participant. In three cases, people who had agreed to be interviewed decided not to participate in the study. Two participants did not indicate their reasons for withdrawing from the study; the third was dealing with health issues which prevented them from being available to be interviewed.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RIGOR

Data analysis of the interviews was conducted in two stages: first, open coding, and second, theory-based coding. *Open coding* is when data is separated into categories (codes) based only on what is seen in and understood from the data, rather than a priori codes that were established prior to the reading of data or theory-based coding (Saldaña, 2021).

Theory-based coding examines data and assigns codes to data based on a comparison to a particular theory (Glaser, 2012). Given the lack of research regarding the use of Twitter in civic education, it was important to begin data analysis with open-coding to explore themes that emerged from teacher interviews; this was also important from a phenomenological perspective, as phenomenology aims to understand the nature and meanings of a particular phenomenon. Further, phenomenology requires an openness to our daily experiences, as well as seeking to challenge preconceptions through conversation (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Data analysis was informed by this perspective as I returned to the raw data frequently to clarify the meanings of teaching civics with Twitter. It was also critical, given what was already known about teaching with social media and best practices in civics education, that the data be coded using theory-based coding to examine how the collective perceptions and experiences of the participants in this study connect with existing theory and knowledge.

THEORY-BASED CODING

This phase of data analysis used constructivism as a lens to both the social media in education literature and the literature around civic education as a guide for a five-part process of theory-based coding (Glaser, 2012; Saldaña, 2021). Codes were identified from the literature prior to this stage of data analysis, which began with a re-reading of the data while thinking of possible connections to prior literature. A second step of this coding process was to identify the categories which aligned, or did not align, with previous findings. For instance, two of the codes that emerged from the data were “life story,” which identified parts of the interview during which one of the teachers spoke about their personal or professional history, and “prompt,” which was used when a teacher explained how they started to use Twitter. During the third step, verbatim interview data was sorted into the categories identified in step two of the theory-based coding phase. The fourth step was to review the categories which were established to identify which of these categories do or do not help to explain the experiences of the participants. Finally, the fifth step of this coding process was to revise the initial categories in ways which shed light on teaching with Twitter for civics education, retaining aspects of the categories which were affirmed by theory-based coding and removing those which were not affirmed.

The phenomenological data analysis occurred iteratively, returning frequently to the data to ensure rigor. The first part of data analysis was to read through each transcript slowly to become familiar with the words of each participant (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Upon the second or third reading, copies of each transcript were notated and significant statements were highlighted that seemed to bring together an understanding of the meaning of the experience for each participant (Creswell, 2013). After multiple readings of the data, an initial write-up of each participant's experiences of the phenomenon was drafted (Creswell, 2013). These initial write-ups of each participant's case were revised multiple times, which allowed me to distill the participant's data into the meanings of teachers' experiences to understand the essential meanings of using Twitter for civic education. After initial drafts of each participant's experience were drafted and throughout the revising process, these experiences were examined and analyzed collectively for common meanings, which are presented as emergent themes of this data (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Finally, the meanings gleaned from each transcript were compared with the research on effective civic education to evaluate how the lived experience of each teacher compared with the literature base (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

The following is an example of this process as it was employed in this study. Each teacher's interview transcript data was read at least twice before notes were made. Upon the third reading, I highlighted transcript lines that included information about topics that pertained to my research questions, such as the teacher's personal history; the context of the school and the area in which they were teaching; how they came to use Twitter; and how they used Twitter with their students. Following this initial highlighting, I wrote up my initial findings in separate documents for each teacher. Through the process of peer review (explained below), returning to the data, and re-writing to clarify my understanding about each case, themes began to emerge. I wrote up the way that each teacher attended to this theme at the end of the draft of their case, initially keeping the aspects of the theme separated by teacher. Each teacher's case was then compared to prior literature. After each teacher's case had been revised at least twice, I began combining the writing from the cross-case themes to examine how teachers' experiences of those themes compared to each other.

CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

Throughout the process of data analysis, three measures were used to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the data analysis. First, I presented my analysis of the data to two experts in qualitative inquiry, who were familiar with the research project, for peer review (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Peer review is the process through which someone who is familiar with the phenomenon under study or the research project examines the data analysis and challenges the researcher's assumptions, usually over time (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is often used as a check on the researcher's bias (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

After I had written a draft of my analysis for a participant, the peer reviewers read the analysis and provided written feedback to me. After each draft for each case, I met with both of the peer reviewers to discuss the data analysis; through the questions posed by the peer reviewers, I clarified my thinking about each case (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Following each discussion with the peer reviewers, I returned to the data and re-read the transcripts (or in some cases re-watched the interviews) in order to develop a deep understanding of each teacher. Following my review of the data, I would return to the write-up of the analysis and edit it based on the conversations with the peer reviewers and my re-reading of the data. The edited version of the analysis was then returned to the peer reviewers, and we again discussed the revisions. This process was iterative, as each part of the process informed my thinking and understanding of each participant's case, and I returned to the data or the peer reviewers often throughout the period of data analysis (Berkowitz, 1997; Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009). This iterative process was repeated with each participant's case, and it served to ensure that the data analysis was robust but also that the analysis did not exceed what the data showed to be true. Pseudonyms were used for each teacher throughout the data analysis phase, as well as in the writing of the findings, to shield the identity of the teachers who participated in the study from the peer reviewer and other readers.

The second measure was that I pushed myself throughout the data analysis phase of the study to find in the data examples which contradicted or did not support the themes which were emerging from the data. This use of counterexamples, or disconfirming evidence, is a process through which researchers identify codes from within the data and then reexamine the data for evidence that contradicts or fails to support the previously

identified themes (Creswell & Miller, 2000). This process of finding counterexamples also attends to the complex nature of qualitative research and serves to provide a check on a researcher's reactivity (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The process of looking for counterexamples in this study was cyclical. Throughout the process of data analysis, I identified themes that seemed to emerge from the data. My next step was to re-read the data to identify any data that contradicted the emergent theme or when there was no data within one of the teacher-cases to support the theme for that teacher. For instance, one of the themes that emerged early on in the process was that four out of the five teachers were introduced by an influential peer to Twitter as an educational, rather than personal tool. Although this finding was clear in the experiences of four of the teachers, it was notably absent in one teacher's case. This process was repeated for each theme that emerged to counteract my reactivity.

The findings from this study will be presented across three chapters, first by sharing a thorough description of each teacher-participant, and then by presenting the main findings from both the phenomenological and case study research.

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#CivicEd: Teachers' Stories of Connection, Civics, and Social Media

This chapter shares the findings from the study by reviewing the experiences of the five high-school teachers who participated in this study. This chapter will describe each teacher, their context, and their reasons for using Twitter to teach civics.

DONNA CREWS: WOMEN'S ACTIVE CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Donna Crews was a white, female, married mother, and a high-school social studies teacher from rural Michigan. Donna had been teaching for 19 years and referred to herself as “almost the whole social studies department” at her school of 195 students in grades 9–12 (the English teacher in the school taught one social studies course). The school served a town with a population of 880; 843 of whom were white (2010 U.S. Census). Donna described the area as a rural farming community where many people lived throughout their lives.

Donna described herself as a “Twitter nerd” who began to use Twitter personally and with her classes following her training to become a teacher trainer through her state’s technology readiness initiative in 2013. Donna’s school was a pilot school for this initiative, which aimed to teach and encourage teachers to integrate technology and social media into their classrooms. She credited the person who trained her over a period of months through this initiative with “seeing how effective [Twitter] can

be” in the classroom. Donna’s excitement in using Twitter was matched by the enthusiasm and creativity of the teacher who trained her in integrating technology and social media in the classroom, which in turn prompted Donna to begin to use Twitter in her classroom shortly after she had joined the platform herself.

Donna was a Madison Fellow, a prestigious program which trained one person from each state to become an exemplary teacher of the Constitution (James Madison Memorial Fellowship Foundation, 2019). She felt that she was better educated than most civics teachers in her area because of the Madison Fellowship, and that made her feel like she had a responsibility to teach students in ways that would make them see their own civic engagement as a necessity. She also took great delight in these documents and the connections and activities that can be made with and through them, which became important when she designed ways to use Twitter in class.

Donna’s primary motivation for teaching was hope. She believed that her students had great capacity, and she saw teaching history as a way of introducing students to possibilities for life beyond what they might be imagining for themselves. Donna’s teaching was informed by the remote location of the school, which created a barrier between the people from her town and the rest of the world. Because of its geographic isolation, Donna felt that her town was poorly represented in both local and state governments. One of her goals in teaching was to show her students they had every right to be heard and that they were equally part of this democracy that she loved so much. Part of the meaning of teaching for Donna was in convincing her students that they mattered, that their futures were not already set for them, and that they had the right and power to share their own opinions.

Donna saw Twitter as a way to mediate the geographic isolation of her students. However, not all of Donna’s students were initially enthusiastic about using Twitter in class. Donna described thinking initially that the kids were going to be excited about using Twitter in class, and she was surprised to find that this was not the case:

I thought they were going to think, “Oh, this is really cool, our teacher is trying to use social media. This will be awesome. We’ll jump right in,” and it really hasn’t been. I think they feel a bit like I’m trying to overstep my boundaries.

Donna perceived her students' lack of interest in using Twitter for school purposes to their desire for their teacher not to encroach on what they view as their personal space.

Donna was also concerned about her students' technological proficiency. When she began using Twitter in her classes, Donna found that about half of her students already had Twitter accounts and were Twitter users. Donna perceived that these students, and even those who had not yet used Twitter, would demonstrate great facility with technologies and social media. However, she found that this was not the case:

They're really good at the things that they're really good at. They're really good at Snapchat, for example, but you go kind of further out into the world of technology beyond that and they're just completely puzzled. So, you do have to walk them through. I think you do have to give them some background so that they know what they're doing.

Donna had also seen instances where students' lack of proficiency created the potential for them to be exploited. As an example, Donna shared the story of a particular student who was an active Twitter user even before he became a student in her civics class. This student, who was trying to build up a business, showed Donna a direct message he had been sent offering him a number of followers in exchange for following another account, which was a phishing scam. Donna used this story to illustrate how students need instruction in social media, even if it is often assumed that if students know all they need to know about technology. Donna thought most teachers think students are highly proficient with and easily adapt to new technologies:

I go to technology conferences where it's like, "Oh, your students are so much more tech savvy than you are and you just throw something at them and it'll stick." And then I go back to my class and I throw something at them and they're like, "We don't get it." And I thought, "You know, I don't think they're as tech savvy as we think they are."

In response, Donna began her use of Twitter with her students by teaching them how to use the platform.

Donna also saw a connection between technology instruction and her students' civic engagement. Being taken advantage of by someone online was a corollary to not having one's voice heard politically, because in both

cases, a lack of awareness would lead to a lack of agency. For Donna, a lack of technological proficiency included a lack of awareness about how people operate online. This lack of awareness put students in positions where they did not have the skills to make informed choices. Similarly, being well-informed about civic and political issues allowed people to be more civically effective, as they knew the issues and could respond to them. For Donna, technological proficiency, particularly on Twitter, was intricately tied to civic engagement and participation.

Donna felt overall that Twitter was “really effective” and “a really good learning tool” for the teaching of civics because it helped her students to meet the objectives that she had for them: (1) learning current events and how to stay informed; (2) seeing themselves as valuable, both to their local community and to governmental officials; (3) seeing the relevance of the founding documents of American history (e.g., the U.S. Constitution) as connected to the contemporary United States; and (4) seeing themselves as members of a community beyond their immediate context. Donna chose to use Twitter because she saw how its affordances could support her students in meeting these objectives.

To achieve these objectives, Donna used Twitter with her students in a variety of ways. Students posted to Twitter using a school hashtag so that other students and members of the community could see their opinions. Donna asked her students to follow news stories and current events through other hashtags. She mentioned that she asked students to compare Donald Trump’s tweets with previous presidents’ communications, such as Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s Fireside Chats and Lincoln’s speeches. She would also ask students to

go back to a founding document or a piece of writing by one of the founders [of the United States] that is something that has a comparison. And then [asking], “Hey, how does this tweet from President Obama equate to this letter from George Washington?”

Each of these activities was intended to increase awareness of current events, connections to U.S. history, and student civic engagement, and perhaps most importantly to Donna, to show her students that they have important voices that can be used to contribute to U.S. society.

Another one of Donna’s primary objectives in using Twitter was for students to learn to communicate with government officials. Donna believed that if her students wanted to reach government officials, they

needed to use social media platforms those officials were using. For instance, she commented that the real-time nature of Twitter made it more likely for Twitter users to impact political outcomes, given the fast-paced nature of how the legislative process can work. Donna spoke about how she teaches about the possibility of her students making a difference in the legislative process:

There's not even time to send them a letter a lot of times, 'cause you hear about it, it's like committee, boom, it's on the floor, boom, it's done. So with Twitter, at least you can get them, because they've all got their phones laying on their desks in the chamber. They might be reading your tweet, you don't know what they're looking at. If it pops up at just the right time, it might make them reconsider.

Both Donna's purpose in showing her students how to interact with government officials and her invitation that they should interact with elected leaders were well served by using Twitter.

Donna's hopes for her students' civic education and engagement were well-founded. For her, the point of civics and civics education was not just to be informed, not just to be educated, not just to participate, but to be impactful. Donna wanted her students to know that being an engaged citizen matters, that their opinion on civic matters was valuable and worth adding to the conversation. In addition to learning about historical and current events, as well as interacting with government officials, Donna saw using Twitter as a way of teaching students to be active citizens while helping them learn how to be thoughtful and cautious as they used social media. Above all, Donna perceived that using Twitter has helped at least some of her students to become more active citizens and that makes it a worthwhile tool to use in her eyes.

JED STERN: RACISM AND HOMOPHOBIA

Jed Stern was a white, male, married father and had been a social studies teacher in one of the larger cities in Iowa for seven years. The district where Jed taught served nearly 11,000 students, of which 1700 students were served by two high schools. The student population in the high school in which Jed taught was predominantly white, with a significant population of English Language Learner (ELL) students from South America, Myanmar (Burma), and Malaysia. The student population in the

other district high school was predominantly Black. Jed's wife, Samantha, taught social studies in the other high school in the district, and Jed and Samantha taught some of the same classes and often discussed their lessons at home. Jed compared himself, his work, and his school to Samantha's experiences frequently, and he perceived her work as his benchmark for inclusivity. These parallel yet very different lived experiences of teaching for Jed and Samantha resulted in Jed feeling like he was supportive of his white and immigrant students while maintaining a sense of guilt over the de facto segregation of the two high schools in the district.

In the early 1900s, Blacks were only allowed into the city as strike-breakers, and those who came were required to live in a cordoned off area of 20 square blocks (Bray, 2015); that geographic divide between the neighborhoods of white and Black families largely remains. The integration of the school system was met with protests and riots in the 1970s, and due to the residential segregation, and to district policies which did not alter school zones, the school district remains largely racially segregated.

Jed's identity as a teacher and his pedagogical approaches were both informed by this history. Jed perceived that students who attended the predominantly Black high school in the district had a lesser experience than the students who attended the school where he worked. The district was trying to redraw the school district boundaries to desegregate the schools, though this had yet to happen.

Consequently, Jed's experience of what it meant to be a teacher had been impacted by the segregation that occurred within his district. He believed that Samantha had more authority to create lessons that explored Black history and connected it to their students' experiences because of her experience teaching in a school whose population was predominantly Black. (Samantha herself was white.) Jed spoke at length about teaching about Black history, particularly his attempts to connect events that happened in his city during the Civil Rights Movement. Jed felt that his students were isolated from the Black students in the same courses at Samantha's high school: beyond attending different schools or even living in different sections of the city, they had different educational experiences and were isolated from Black history at large. Jed seemed to feel some guilt over this fact, not because of any particular actions on his part, but because he was a part of a system that has broadly excluded Black history from having a robust presence in school curricula.

As he began his teaching career, however, Jed found that the biggest advantage of using social media was to build and maintain connections

with students. Jed was inspired to use Twitter in particular for this purpose by a colleague in the English department of his high school, a frequent Twitter user who had a great deal of success in building relationships with students using Twitter. Jed's use of Twitter contrasted with Donna's use of it. Where Donna found value in Twitter because of its content and access to governmental officials, Jed hoped using Twitter could bridge the racial divide between students in different high schools in his district. This hope remains unrealized, as Jed has neither heard from students nor seen on Twitter the ways in which they are connecting with their peers from the other district high school. Twitter seems to be another place where Jed's idealism was paramount: Twitter could provide a means of breaking barriers and connecting students from the different high schools, and this possibility was what fueled Jed.

Jed hoped that his students' use of Twitter would help to break down some of the barriers between Black and white students. As yet, this hope has not been realized, as Jed's only experience of using Twitter for the purpose of discussing Black history had been to examine relationships between the #BlackLivesMatter movement with the race riots of 1968 by looking at tweets from that hashtag. The inclusion of Black history into the Anglo-centric curriculum had not fostered connections between students across the two high schools in the district. In the future, Jed wanted to bring his students to visit Samantha's students who are taking the same course, hoping that if the students meet in person, they will continue and grow that connection via Twitter.

Jed also hoped Twitter could promote student connections to the wider community by showcasing student accomplishments. Jed used Twitter to post pictures of student work and to show his support for student accomplishments outside of the classroom, such as school sporting events. He shared that his students enjoyed seeing their activities posted on Twitter, which helped him to build relationships with students. Additionally, Jed thought that showing interest in students' out-of-school activities and expressing that interest publicly on Twitter could have a significant impact on student-teacher relationships, as well as the climate of the classroom or school:

even if it's like going to a volleyball game or a football game and just being like "hey, you won! Yay!" Just little things like that. I feel I can even build that relationship and improve that culture [of the classroom or school] and if [students] feel comfortable with it, eventually moving [Twitter] into the classroom.

Jed did this because it provided a way for students to be recognized for what they had done in ways that the students themselves could see and understand, and which was also shared by their parents, the district, and others in the community. Jed thought that this recognition built up the community and made students feel more included and valued. If his students felt supported and valued during extracurricular activities, Jed reasoned that they might feel the same about broader engagement in the community.

Another area in which Twitter had been a supportive tool for Jed and his students was in his work as the advisor for his school's gay-straight alliance (GSA). Jed wanted to connect his students with other GSAs around the state and prompted the students in the GSA to use Twitter to connect both to other school-based GSAs in Iowa and "an umbrella [GSA] organization for the state." Jed's focus was on creating a supportive community that fostered student growth for students who were marginalized, and Twitter enabled the GSA at Jed's school to connect with other GSAs genuinely in ways that it would have been unlikely able to do without it. From Jed's perspective, participation in an organization like a gay-straight alliance was a way of being civically involved. Through their involvement in the GSA, the students were trying to change and improve society, whether on the local, school level, or throughout the state of Iowa and beyond. Jed used this example to explicitly make the connection that students' civic engagement was supported through Twitter.

This understanding of civic involvement was woven throughout the ways in which Jed taught, interacted with students, and used Twitter, but it largely avoided the racial justice issues which seemed to drive Jed. Again, Jed's understanding of civic involvement provided insight into his guilt: his focus on changing the racial dynamics of his community were a justice issue *for him*, which he, and others who were similarly complicit, must work to change. This is not to say that Jed neglected teaching about civic participation; on the contrary, it was a critical part of his classes. In contrast to how he saw his own civic orientation, Jed wanted to meet students where they were and focused on relationship-building for the benefit of the community. This occurred across several domains, whether through his support of organizations like the GSA that provided support to marginalized students, promoting student accomplishments for community awareness, or maintaining or improving connections between students of different races.

Another one of Jed's objectives for using Twitter was teaching students *digital citizenship*, a concept which has two operative definitions in the literature. The first conceptualizes digital citizenship as "the norms of behavior with regard to technology use" (Ribble et al., 2004, p. 7). Jed believed that students needed to be taught how to use and participate meaningfully, including boundaries for participation. When interacting with the school, the class, or Josh, students were expected to be respectful, polite, and to share only content which was appropriate. For Jed, teaching his students how to appropriately behave online was an aspect of digital citizenship and thus a necessary component of civic education.

Although teaching appropriate social media etiquette was a concern for Jed, it was his secondary focus on digital citizenship. Jed's primary understanding of digital citizenship was more aligned with the understanding that digital citizenship "is the ability to participate in society online" (Mossberger et al., 2008, p. 1). Jed's view of citizenship encompassed a wide range of civic actions, and he saw Twitter as one space in which students can participate in civic actions. Jed understood digital citizenship as participating in online society, which meant being an active member of the community in online spaces. For Jed, digital citizenship was a parallel to offline citizenship, each existing as spaces where people can practice their rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Although Jed used Twitter less often with his students than he expected to or would have liked; however, the ways in which he used Twitter met his objectives of furthering his connections with students and the community. Jed believed that if students felt that they were included in and valued by the community, regardless of any factors which had marginalized them, they would become civically engaged. To further this goal, Jed used Twitter as a way of making connections between communities of students and of connecting students to current events and relating those events back to their town. These uses were in service of convincing students that they were valued. Jed believed that if he broke down the barriers that kept students from feeling fully part of the community, as well as teaching them the skills to be informed by current events, that they would eagerly participate in civic life on their own terms.

CHARLIE STEPHENS: COMBATING FAKE NEWS

Charlie Stephens was a male, married, father who taught middle- and high-school social studies in Iowa. He has been teaching for 25 years, and near the middle of his career was named Iowa's Teacher of the Year. The community in which Charlie taught had slightly fewer than 2000 residents; 43 out of the 51 high-school seniors in the class of 2018 graduated from high school. Charlie was one of two social studies teachers in the district, and he taught grades 8–12, including an elective called The Big History Project, which was a year-long course which integrated science and social studies by exploring the development of Earth and its people from The Big Bang to Agriculture to The Future. Charlie said that “a lot of schools are using [the Big History Course] to replace their traditional world history class,” and he felt that The Big History Project provided a better way to teach world history than other curricula he had used.

Like other participants in this study, Charlie's initial choice to use Twitter with his classes was sparked by his being introduced to the social media platform at an opportune time. Nine years ago, Charlie's school began providing all students with laptop computers. At the same time, Charlie was engaged in discussions in his master's program about using social media in the classroom. Knowing that his students would soon all have the ability to access the internet in class, in The Big History Project class, Charlie was teaching about “claim testers,” four methods by which students in the course were taught to critically evaluate assertions (Big History Project, 2019). These “claim testers”—intuition, empirical evidence, logic, and authority—were used throughout each unit to teach students critical-thinking skills (Big History Project, 2019). Charlie thought Twitter could be a space in which his students could “claim test” assertions:

Hopefully a student will see a tweet and they will have to think about it. Does it sound like it actually is true? Could it happen? Who's telling me this information? Is there any evidence to back it up? So not believing everything that they see on Twitter as being true.

Charlie wanted to use Twitter as a way of asking his students to apply the skills that they were learning in their Big History Project class about evaluating the veracity of information to current events.

Charlie's ability to connect his school's adoption of technology for every student with some of the overarching themes of The Big History Project class showed a thoughtfulness and attention to student learning. Charlie valued The Big History Project because of its approach to teaching, and his choice to use Twitter showed that he was trying to connect what he valued for student learning with both contemporary issues and with the direction in which his school was moving technologically. Charlie also felt a sense of pride about using Twitter with his students. Initially, it seemed that Charlie was using Twitter as a novelty; however, upon further reflection, this proved to be untrue: Charlie's use of Twitter for civic education was focused and aligned with the values and skills he wanted to instill in his students through The Big History Project course. For Charlie, the point of using Twitter was to provide a space where students could practice some of the skills that they were learning in The Big History Project course in ways which were more contemporary than some of their units of study and which might prove useful to them throughout life. As a result, Charlie was really happy with his use of Twitter: it helped his students to meet the objectives that he had for them.

It is unsurprising, then, that Charlie spent almost all of our conversation framing his responses around his use of Twitter with his students. Charlie initially thought that the school's transition to providing all students with laptop computers would facilitate his students' use of Twitter for class purposes. However, Charlie said that initially the district blocked certain websites on these school-provided computers, and as a result, using Twitter was not "quite working out the way [he] wanted it to." At the point at which it became clear that the school computers would not allow students to access Twitter, Charlie had already committed to using the platform with his students, and so in order to get around this, he asked students to use their smartphones to access Twitter. Charlie talked about his process of bypassing the school's computers to access Twitter in this way:

The school policy was that our server would block that particular website [Twitter] on our schools' one-to-one computers. So as far as me using it all the time, isn't quite working out the way that I would like it to. But students that have their own cell phones with them, since basically everybody does and they can get onto Twitter using their data plan, and we use it that way.

It may seem from this quote that Charlie had little concern for the rules, but in other parts of our conversation, it became clear that he followed the spirit, if not the letter, of this rule. Charlie spoke about the boundaries that he had set up between himself and his students on Twitter. Charlie did not follow his students' accounts. Although this meant that he did not see how they interacted with each other, or whether they responded to his prompts, Charlie believed that maintaining this boundary was important for his students' safety and privacy. He wanted them to have the experience of using the platform because of what they can learn and experience through it, but he did not want them to be unsafe. Charlie perceived, based on conversations with his students, that most of them were active Twitter users, but as he did not follow them, he was not actually sure of how many were using Twitter.

Charlie used Twitter primarily in three ways: as a source of discussion starters; as a means of accessing current events; and as a medium to critique the accuracy of information. Charlie primarily used Twitter as an additional and contemporary space in which to teach students the skills of evaluation as outlined by his Big History Project class. Charlie used Twitter as a source of discussion prompts: he found posts on Twitter that he thought would spark discussion and then his students discussed them orally in class. Additionally, Charlie set up a class Twitter account, from which he posted questions on Twitter for students to answer on the same platform. Charlie said that the students who had Twitter accounts were responsive to this method of replying to questions, but those who did not have accounts were not asked to open one, and so they were left out of this activity entirely. However, Charlie gave considerably more time and attention to the other ways in which he used Twitter, making it seem as though his Twitter posts for student discussions on the platform were intended to be bonus ways in which students could interact with each other and the course's content, rather than required coursework.

Charlie used Twitter as a place where students could access information which they could then analyze in class for veracity and bias. In particular, he wanted his students to be able to identify "fake news." Charlie found that his students lacked awareness about current events, and he wanted to use Twitter to provide students with a way in which they could access and evaluate news quickly and remotely. Throughout each unit of The Big History Project, students were taught skills to evaluate claims and identify bias in the assertions that people made. These skills were repeatedly taught and practiced throughout the units of The Big History Project course.

Charlie described the questions that frame his teaching of fact checking as learning to identify whether a claim could be true, the source of the information, if the source has any reason to misrepresent the truth, and if there is any reason beyond the one source to believe the claim.

Charlie's objectives for his students were not solely for learning source evaluation or increasing news consumption; rather, Charlie saw both of these activities as directly related to civic engagement. Charlie believed being informed of current events was a crucial aspect of being an active member of society, and the emphasis he placed on students' awareness of current events and the development of source evaluation skills were offered in support of his students becoming informed and active citizens. One of the reasons that Charlie chose to use Twitter with his students was so that they could see and practice the skills that they were learning in his class in a way and in a space which they could continue to use long after they have left his class. Being an active citizen was important to Charlie, which for him meant being well-informed; this was why he focused so much attention on current events and source evaluation.

Though his style of teaching with Twitter initially seemed rather *laissez-faire*, Charlie's use of Twitter was thoughtful, and he spoke about his use of Twitter with interest and care. He wanted his students to use the platform for specific reasons related to civic engagement. For Charlie, Twitter provided a way in which students could access news, which combined with their learning of how to evaluate sources that would help his students to differentiate between fact and opinion. More than anything we discussed, Charlie saw being informed and having the ability to assess the veracity of information as imperative to civic engagement. Charlie's use of Twitter was tightly focused on helping students pay attention to current events and learning how to assess information so that they could act appropriately based on real information. He saw this as important and tied to civic participation. Charlie believed that Twitter was helpful, useful, and beneficial to his students.

WILL DEVINE: PREPARING FOR ADULTHOOD AND MAINTAINING PRIVILEGE

Will Devine was a white, male, married, father who had been teaching for 24 years, the last 16 of which he had spent at a small public high school in a Westchester county suburb of New York City. The community where

Will taught had about 8000 residents, the vast majority of whom were white and affluent. Will's high school had 569 students, for whom there are high expectations: 100% of the 2018 class graduated and 99% attended college; in 2018, 228 (40%) of the students took 503 Advanced Placement exams across 26 subjects; 94% of them scored above a 3 (out of a possible 5 points). Will taught both social studies and special education, teaching both "mainstream" social studies classes and some special education social studies classes.

Will lived about 45 minutes away from the community in which he taught; he could not afford to live where he teaches. Unlike Donna and Jed, who lived in the communities in which they taught, and as a result, felt connected to the experiences of their students, Will's orientation to teaching connected to his perceptions of his students' privilege. Will thought that his students were largely unaware of the advantages they had, and therefore he saw his role as teaching them how to use some of that privilege for good. Will did not ask his students to reflect on their own privilege or to think about how to change the systems at play that contribute to that privilege. Will's perception was that he was teaching his students to be active and responsible citizens by teaching them how to use that privilege responsibly.

Overall, Will deeply enjoyed being a teacher, because he was confident in his abilities and because he felt like he could teach students practical skills that would help them to become active citizens in adulthood. His primary motivation for teaching was this sense of vocation: his skills as a teacher met what his community needed, and because he was a capable teacher doing good work, he felt contented and even joyful that he was able to shape and prepare students well for adulthood, part of which was teaching his students how to be active and responsible citizens. Will remained optimistic that his students could make a difference in the world, even though the nature of that difference might be unclear. Where this connected with their privilege was in how both Will and his students saw active civic engagement: there were no barriers to student civic participation except in their not knowing how to participate. Unlike Donna's students, who lived in a remote and rural area which brought a sense of isolation, or Jed's students, who lived in a context of considerable racial tension, both of which created barriers to civic participation for some students, Will's students, at least in his view, lacked only logistical knowledge of how to participate or an awareness of their own civic agency. Will believed that what they needed, and what he enjoyed providing for them,

was the practice of learning how to use their privilege for the good of society.

The high school in which Will taught provided each student with a laptop computer, a decision with which he disagreed. He was not trying to limit technology in school mindlessly: he described himself as “pretty technologically advanced” and “not anti-technology.” Rather, Will “spoke out against giving every kid a laptop” because he saw that as a disservice “for the younger kids that are still sort of intellectually immature.” Will thought that having constant access to a computer presented “a very hard temptation” to avoid classwork which younger brains are developmentally unable to resist. However, Will found that when technology was used for particular purposes, he found it to be a valuable tool for use in the classroom. This value was dependent upon why the technology is being used: the ways in which Will used Twitter in class were also designed for specific purposes, as he used it to teach students how to contact governmental officials and to be well informed of current events. He also only used Twitter with his 11th- and 12th-grade students because he perceived that his younger students lacked maturity.

It was with all of this context that Will spoke about using Twitter with his classes. Will’s priority for his students was his need to prepare them to be adult members of society; for him, teaching students in ways that encouraged them to flourish in the world as adults was part of the essence of Will’s role as a teacher. Will was passionate about using Twitter in the teaching of civics because it represented how he believed students should be engaged with the wider world, and that they should advocate on their own behalf. Will’s primary purpose for using Twitter with his students was to teach them about reaching out to government officials. He described his intentions this way:

I don’t think at this point, if I were to ask a basic kid in the hallway right now, “How would you get in contact with a congressman?” I don’t think they would know how. But if I showed them [the elected official’s] Twitter account, I think it makes it a lot easier.

Will said that he could show his students that they have a “direct link” to government officials through Twitter, that is, “not snail mail, and it’s almost automatic...it gets done almost right away.”

However, when he began to use Twitter with his students, Will noticed that even the students who had their own Twitter accounts did not know

how to use the platform well. Like Donna, Will was surprised that his students “were just very superficially aware” of how to use Twitter and what it could do. He found that in needing to teach about the basics of using the platform more than he had initially thought he would, Will was able to show his students “some of the cool features and the different people they can connect to.” Through his teaching of how to use Twitter, Will asked his students to follow news outlets to bring information into class. Will used the news that showed up in his students’ Twitter feeds informally, calling their attention to breaking news and history-making events. In this way, his students’ lack of knowledge about Twitter worked to Will’s advantage, as he was able to teach them more about how and why to use the platform.

Will saw 12th graders as having “one foot in adulthood,” and so they were “more civic minded, more so than [students in] any of the other grades.” Learning how to harness that civic mindedness in order to use it for good was one of the reasons that Will chose to use Twitter with his classes: he was able to show them how to connect with elected officials, organizations, companies, and other accounts in ways that are appropriate and responsible. Will’s students learned how to be civically involved because he asked them to be civically involved. In using Twitter in this fashion, and by requiring students to tweet to particular people, Will showed his students how to use Twitter to connect with people in power and also showing both the students and leaders that student voices should be heard and valued.

Will used Twitter in his classes with juniors and seniors for two reasons: the content areas of those classes (U.S. History and Participation in Government and Economics) were easier to connect to Twitter, and he felt that only upperclassmen were ready to handle that responsibility of both civic engagement and technology. Will started using Twitter with his 12th grade *Participation in Government and Economics* class because the curriculum for that class was “very project-based [with] a lot of independent learning.” In preparation for his students’ imminent entrance into the world as adults, Will tried to teach them ways to be active citizens. One of the ways Will used Twitter with his students was to encourage “them to use Twitter to contact government, senators, even local officials.” As a way of teaching his students how to use Twitter and how to reach out to people appropriately, Will created a class Twitter account to which each student had access. Will asked his students to use Twitter through the class account because he “didn’t want them going rogue.”

Whether it was because of the class Twitter handle or something else, Will's classes received responses to their tweets. Will said that after his class watched a documentary by former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich, the class "tweeted to him, and [Reich] tweeted us back." Encouraged by having received a response, one of Will's students tweeted to Reich and asked him to watch the movie with them in class, to which Reich again replied with regrets that he was unable to do so because he was traveling. Similarly, Will's students connected over Twitter received responses from Harry Reid, former Senator from Nevada and Senate Majority Leader, and from two of President Obama's speechwriters. Will reported that the class felt these experiences were "pretty cool," though Will thought it was the very essence of how Twitter should work. According to Will, Twitter greatly reduced the barriers to his students' initiating contact and also to people responding. Additionally, Will believed that elected officials were more likely to respond when his classes' tweets: "a congressman is gonna respond to a high school kid." For Will, this ease and potential effectiveness were some of the reasons why teaching students to use Twitter for civic purposes was worthwhile.

LEO OLIVER: COMMUNITY AND CARE

Leo Oliver was a white, male, married father from Chicago, Illinois, who had recently left teaching after more than 20 years to work for an educational consulting company. Throughout his career, Leo taught all grades from 9 to 12 and mainly taught elective classes. Leo began teaching at a Catholic junior high school in Chicago, but three years later took a position at a new high school that was just opening. Working at a new high school gave Leo the opportunity to help create the culture of the school, which he described in this way:

Because I opened the school, you had to create the values. You had to create the culture. Everything could be rethought. And I got used to being in that environment of "invent it, do it, and then it works." You know, I look back now like what a unique experience that was.

For the remainder of his career, Leo took new positions which allowed him to co-create the culture of the school, including teaching at another new high school and departmental leadership roles. Leo saw his identity as

a teacher as someone who was a change agent and defined himself as a person who had an effect on an entire school.

Leo started exploring Twitter after a friend of his had started using it in his classroom. Initially, Leo liked Twitter for personal use because he started to develop a strong professional learning network with social studies teachers throughout the country. This example illustrated how Leo understands teaching: constructivist at his core, he saw collaboration as making work better, and he wanted to provide students with as many ways to interact with other students as possible so that all students feel engaged in the process of learning. Leo's personal use of Twitter and other technologies was reflective of his desire to be collaborative. He familiarized himself with as many different ways of interacting with and presenting material as possible so that his students could have as many options to connect with other students as possible.

An important part of Leo's teaching was the inclusion of a range of voices in his classroom, which he believed taught students how to respect and to engage with those with whom they disagree. Leo created opportunities for his students, through many different strategies and technologies, to interact with people, including their parents, experts, and students in other schools. Leo described additional reasons for doing this as:

I wanted it to open up the playing field. I believe it's easier when you're totally transparent. Let everyone know what you're doing. When that parent who's upset about politics gets mad because you're this or that or skewed one way or the other, you're gonna want the community to be able to say, "No, that's not true."

Leo asked for the active participation of parents and other important adults in the community and in students' lives, texting and tweeting with them to ask for their opinions. Students were required to contact "five adults who are not in this school" at the beginning of class to ask for their thoughts on the topics of the day. Students usually included parents as some of their five adults, and "all of a sudden, parents felt involved" in class. The responses were displayed (with permission) on a secure website to use as prompts for an in-class discussion. Leo also shared the website with parents, noting that including parents in this way created "an open and free space for conversation" allowing Leo and his students to comfortably discuss anything from any perspective.

For Leo, learning had to be connected to life in meaningful ways. He “truly believe[d] with all of my heart that very little of the work that we do in school has anything to do with actual life. And that’s my fundamental problem.” Further, Leo felt that the type of work that students often were asked to do in schools communicated that their work lacked value; as Leo put it, “what’s the point of all this work if you get a worksheet and you throw it in the garbage when you walk out? What’s the life expectancy of your work?” He believed that treating student work as meaningful and important would lead to students taking it seriously. To support this, student work was tweeted to lawmakers and industry leaders; parents and other community members were asked to weigh in on student debates; and students shared their work on Twitter for comment from others around the world.

To foster learning that was meaningful and valued, Leo began to reframe how he saw his teaching:

So as far as the way that work connected them or changed them in my classes is that I gave them a chance to pursue their passion. I stopped trying to say, “How should I have them prove this to me?” And I just said, “What would qualify as evidence of learning?” And gave them the option to say show me evidence that [they] learned. And then I don’t care what it is. But why not say yes? I was so busy saying no. Why not say yes to something different that they’re going to be excited about?

Leo was always willing to learn and use new pedagogical approaches in support of student learning. Leo said that “75%–80%” of his students were Twitter users, a greater percentage than other participants in this study observed. Leo thought his students would be more “comfortable” if they were given the choice of using Twitter rather than requiring it of them, in contrast to other teachers in this study and to the literature on the use of Twitter in classrooms, which suggests that it is more effective when students are required to use the platform (Gao et al., 2012; Junco et al., 2011; Junco & Cotton, 2013). Those who wanted to try Twitter but who did not want to create an account were encouraged to work with a partner who was a Twitter user. In teaching with Twitter this way, Leo felt that he was reaching students where they were: those who already had Twitter accounts could learn how to use them for civic purposes and those who did not could still learn how to use Twitter without feeling like they were being required to use the platform beyond class.

Leo was clear about their need to incorporate evidence of their learning of history topics and content in their work. Over time, students were better able to show their understanding through creative projects than through papers or tests. Leo also found that student choice in assignments increased student engagement, and students who were more engaged were also willing and often excited to share their work, often via Twitter. This allowed students to get feedback as well as validation that their work was valuable and worthy of their time because others had taken the time to watch or listen to it. Leo understood the connections between student engagement and external validation of student work in this way:

If you give them options and show them the possibility that's out there, the first time you have a kid who gets a thousand views of their video, that class goes nuts. And all they want to do is make something that people want to see and consume.

When students were given choices about how they demonstrated their learning, their engagement with that work increased; sharing their work online further increased that engagement because it validated their work as meaningful beyond their classroom.

The considerable freedom Leo's students had allowed them to construct their learning in ways that made sense to them, which he felt increased their civic participation. An example Leo offered in support of this was when a student who had always struggled in Leo's class asked if he could write a song instead of writing a paper about the Industrial Revolution. The student made the argument that "the chorus of a song is like the thesis statement of a paper," and the result was "the first A [the student] ever got in a history class." For Leo, this was a moment when "I know he learned everything"; allowing the student freedom of expression helped him to construct his learning in a way that made sense to him and which provided him with a way of demonstrating his learning effectively.

Sharing these creative projects online had a greater reach than any paper likely would have and was a means of participating in the civic discourse. For instance, the student who wrote and sang the Industrial Revolution song posted it in various places online, where it now has thousands of hits. Leo argued that people outside of the class were more likely to want to interact with his students' work if they showed what they have learned in ways that people were going to want to read, watch, or hear. As he said:

You always have the option to write a paper. Some of you will choose it 'cause it's where you're comfortable. But Tweet it out. When was the last time you read a four-page essay on Twitter? When was the last time you watched a four-minute video? You'll watch a four-minute video. You're not reading a four-page essay.

Beyond thinking that a more creative approach would be more accessible, Leo believed that a video or other creative project could be just as, if not more, effective at meeting the goals of civic education than an essay.

Each of these approaches related to Leo's understanding of citizenship. Leo's teaching focused on preparing students to be informed, engaged, and civil members of society. An important aspect of Leo's understanding of citizenship was that the incorporation of the phrase "digital citizenship" into the lexicon has been a disservice to the overall way in which people understand citizenship. As he said,

We make a mistake by declaring digital citizenship when really we're just talking about citizenship. So much of citizenship is digital. Stop making the distinction. Call it citizenship. And realize that we can't look at traditional citizenship versus online citizenship.

Leo saw no distinction between online and offline citizenship, and this framed his teaching because he wanted his students to see ways of participating in society both online and offline.

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(Digital) Citizenship: Dissenting from Indifference

Now that we have come to know the teachers who participated in this study, we can turn our attention to the study's findings. This chapter and the next will report on the cross-case analysis of this study, examining the teachers' stories together to look for common meanings, understandings, and experiences. Additionally, these two chapters will put the findings from this study into dialogue with prior research around digital citizenship, best practices in civic education, and the use of social media for learning.

Most teachers spoke about *digital citizenship* during their interviews, but they spoke about it both more broadly and more deeply than it is often referred to in the literature. The teachers felt a responsibility to teach students about civic life in all the spaces which it happened, whether that was formal or informal, in person or online, organized or ad hoc. Teachers felt that there was no real dichotomy between online and offline citizenship, and they also felt that the term *digital citizenship* was detrimental to encouraging students' civic participation. Thus, the first theme which emerged from this study was that teachers should prepare their students to participate in civic life in both online and offline spaces. As the teachers did not see a meaningful difference in civic participation based on the spaces in which it occurred, I have termed this first theme (*digital citizenship*).

(DIGITAL) CITIZENSHIP

One of the lines of inquiry guiding this study is: *what are the teachers' objectives for students' civic learning?* A common objective across all five of the teacher-participants was teaching citizenship. Each of the five participants for this study spoke about *citizenship* as a focus of their teaching, often speaking about how citizenship was understood and practiced in both online and offline spaces. While only some of the teachers specifically used the term *digital citizenship*, each of the teachers discussed aspects of citizenship in online spaces. This chapter will provide a brief synthesis of how the teachers in this study conceived of citizenship and how their teaching of citizenship aligned with their objectives. Following this synthesis, I will connect the teachers' understanding of citizenship with the literature on digital citizenship.

As was mentioned briefly in earlier chapters, there are two definitions of *digital citizenship* in the literature. The first, put forth by Ribble et al. (2004), defined *digital citizenship* as the standards of behavior expected during the use of technology. To further explain these standards, Ribble et al. (2004) identified nine categories of behaviors that play a role in digital citizenship: (1) *etiquette*, or online standards of behavior; (2) *communication*, or online exchange of ideas and knowledge; (3) *education*, or teaching and learning about technology and its uses; (4) *access*, or unlimited online participation by members of society; (5) *commerce*, or buying and selling in online spaces; (6) *responsibility*, or taking responsibility for actions; (7) *rights*, or freedoms and protections granted to everyone in an online space; (8) *safety*, or physical safety in online environments; and (9) *security*, or online strategies to protect people and data. This understanding of digital citizenship is focused on behaviors, in contrast to the one offered by Mossberger, Tolbert, and McNeal (2008), who understand digital citizenship as “the ability to participate in society online” (p. 1). Both of these definitions are important in understanding how the participants in this study understand the term *digital citizenship* and what relevance it has to their teaching of civics.

Broadly, the teachers in this study thought of citizenship as informed participation in society, much more aligned with Mossberger et al.'s definition of digital citizenship but also extending beyond it. However, teachers did feel that teaching students about online safety was a necessary component of civic participation. Specifically, the teachers' objectives for teaching citizenship within civics education encompassed four of the nine

dimensions outlined by Ribble et al. (2004): (1) *safety*; (2) *etiquette*; (3) *communication*; and (4) *access*. For instance, two of the teachers in this study, Donna and Charlie, thought about *safety* in relation to citizenship; Donna recognized that not all students knew how to use social media, and so she taught her students about how to use the technology safely, while Charlie spoke about appropriate boundaries between adults and minors. Three of the teachers, Donna, Jed, and Will, spoke about *etiquette* as a component of citizenship, by which they meant how students behaved toward others online; this was reflected in their teaching their students how to behave appropriately, such as teaching students how to write to political leaders. Four of the teachers thought that *communication* was an aspect of citizenship, whether reaching out to political leaders (Donna, Will, and Leo) or reaching out to other people in the community (Donna, Jed, Will, and Leo). All of the teachers thought that *access* was an aspect of communication, whether access to political leaders (Donna, Will, and Leo); access to accurate information (Donna, Jed, Leo, and Charlie); or access to their community (Donna, Jed, Will, and Leo).

Although these two definitions of *digital citizenship* do not explicitly take into account a person's need to be a well-informed citizen, for most of the teachers in this study, accurate knowledge was also key to civic participation and thus to citizenship. While teachers were attentive to aspects of the safety-focused understanding of *digital citizenship*, safety, etiquette, communication, and access were not the ends but the means of digital citizenship. They framed pathways of civic participation, rather than providing boundaries for online engagement. Teachers' understanding and teaching of digital citizenship went well beyond these components, as did their expectation of students' online civic participation.

Moreover, each of the teachers saw these aspects of citizenship in both online and offline spaces as fluid, rather than conceiving of offline citizenship and digital citizenship differently. For instance, Leo thought that the distinction between digital citizenship and offline citizenship was non-existent; he also felt that speaking about digital citizenship detracted from seeing that citizenship takes place concurrently in online and offline spaces and that the same people can be engaging in civic actions on and offline concurrently. For instance, in including others' points of view in his classroom, Leo was also demonstrating for students how to engage in debates while showing respect and cordiality toward those who hold opinions different than their own. He shared his thinking about this:

I believe in civil discourse and I think that we've lost so much of that. Like we can't talk to each other kindly when we totally disagree. So this was my way of showing this is how it's gonna happen. These are your parents. Just ask them to be respectful of your classmates, and they did. It was kinda nice.

Leo used this activity to teach students how to have meaningful exchanges on social media, showing that civil discourse is a requirement of civic conversation, regardless of the space in which that conversation occurs.

Further, using the term *digital citizenship* allows people to minimize, discount, or dismiss entirely civic engagement that happens online, which Leo felt was limiting and neglectful.

Similarly, Jed did not value distinctions between the places where citizenship occurs. *Digital citizenship* was a concept Jed thought about in relation to his teaching of civics, but, unlike Leo, he clearly made a distinction between expectations for online student behavior and his understanding of citizenship. Jed feared that his students would not behave online in ways that aligned with the behaviors identified by Ribble et al. (2004); Leo believed that his students would act appropriately online. However, this difference expanded, rather than limited, Jed's civics teaching: he included teaching students how to participate online, including how to do so politely and safely, as part of his classes. Jed's understanding of citizenship was broad, encompassing a variety of civic actions, and his expectations of student behavior in online spaces mirrored similar expectations he had for his students in offline spaces. For instance, Jed also liked to post news stories to his Twitter feed on the weekend, so that kids were thinking about history and connections even when they were not in class, another way in which Jed saw citizenship as happening and moving between online and offline spaces. This was perhaps most clearly seen in his work with the Gay-Straight Alliance, where the students in his GSA used Twitter to connect with other GSAs whom they then engaged with in person.

Donna also did not see a distinction between online and offline citizenship. Donna's primary concern was that her students were civically active, and her use of Twitter to encourage this was intended to provide her students with another tool which could help them to more easily and more expansively participate in civic life. Donna saw both the possibilities of civic engagement on Twitter, particularly with elected officials who could be reached quickly through the platform, and also as a tool which broke down the barriers of physical isolation that existed for her students because of their geographic location. Donna worked diligently to provide her

students with knowledge and tools through which they could be civically engaged so that they felt that they had the right and the responsibility to do so. Donna believed her students have a duty as members of U.S. society to be civically engaged, and she as a civics teacher had a duty to prepare them to do that. Donna did not use Twitter in class because she thought citizenship existed online differently than it did offline; it was not a replacement for other civic behaviors. Rather, Donna's use of Twitter in class was grounded in increasing civic participation by adding to the ways in which students could be effectively involved in civic life. For Donna, participation in civic life was not an option, and so she worked diligently to convince her students of its importance and their importance to society while also equipping them with the tools to be effectively and civically engaged in both online and offline spaces.

Will also saw Twitter as a tool which could increase his students' civic engagement. For Will, Twitter was one space in which one could follow and participate in political conversation, and which, particularly during increased periods of political awareness and excitement, could help students to take a greater interest in civics. As Donna was driven in her Twitter use by the geographic isolation of her students, Will was driven by his belief that he needs to prepare his students for adulthood. Again in a way similar to Donna, Will saw Twitter as an efficient platform for connecting students to the wider society and as an effective tool through which they can communicate to elected representatives and others in order to advocate for themselves or others. Will saw Twitter as a tool which could increase civic engagement and participation, as a way of participating in society but not at the exclusion of other ways of doing so.

This was also true for Charlie, who believed citizenship as it exists on Twitter is not divorced from citizenship that exists offline. Charlie's intentions for using Twitter with his students centered around developing their interest in being attentive to current events and their ability to know when they are watching "fake news" or being deceived by news or governmental sources. Charlie wanted his students to trust their ability to gauge information, which was a skill applicable to both legacy and online news sources. For Charlie, this was one of the additional benefits of using Twitter for civic education. He wanted his students to be attentive to current events and to be able to evaluate whether information that they come across, on social media, legacy media, or through other sources, is accurate. In teaching his students to evaluate claims and to identify "fake news" from real news, Charlie thought that using Twitter would provide a more

accessible medium through which they can see information about current events. Charlie saw this as a lifelong skill; he hoped that his students would continue to use Twitter, continue to follow the news, and continue to think about the source and possible bias in sharing information. Distinguishing digital citizenship from other types of citizenship was not helpful for Charlie in his teaching of civics.

This finding—that these teachers did not see real distinctions between digital and traditional citizenship—should prompt an expansion of the common understanding of the term *digital citizenship*, from online safety to encompassing all of the ways in which people act in the civic sphere using online means. Based on the teaching of the participants in this study, teaching students about *digital citizenship* should include things like communication and access—just as civic education has long taught students how to communicate and access governmental officials, experts, and the community through offline means (letters to the editor, calls to the offices of elected officials). Additionally, as was seen most clearly in Donna’s case, students need to be taught to use digital tools, both for and beyond civic engagement. To assume that students know how to use these tools, and know how to use them without being hurt, manipulated, or taken advantage of, is shortsighted and inaccurate, as Donna knew. This will be explored in greater detail later in this book.

Further, this finding calls into question the usefulness of the framework developed by Bennett and his colleagues, which sought to understand online civic participation (Bennett, 2008; Bennett et al., 2009; Bennett et al., 2010; Bennett et al., 2012). Bennett and his colleagues theorized that there are two types of citizenship, termed “Dutiful” and “Actualizing” (Bennett, 2008; Bennett et al., 2009; Bennett et al., 2010; Bennett et al., 2012). *Dutiful styles* of citizenship view civic participation as a *duty or responsibility* and respond to that responsibility through conventional civic actions such as participation in a political party or civic organizations, writing letters to elected officials and to the editors of newspapers, and voting. In contrast, *Actualizing Citizenship* stems from a belief that civic participation is a citizen’s *personal* contribution to society, and corresponding actions could include participation in marches, protests, boycotts, or online movements, such as #ArabSpring, #MeToo, and #BlackLivesMatter movements, and voting. Bennett and his colleagues theorized that many young people today have an “Actualizing Citizenship” style; thus, while traditional measures of civic engagement show low rates of youth participation, they argued that young people are actually engaging in civic action

in other ways, especially through the internet and social media, that are more representative of an “Actualizing Citizenship” style.

Bennett’s framework outlined distinctive types of citizenship, which differed in the ways they accessed and used information; the types of civic practices in which they engaged; and the groups to which they would belong. The teachers in this study did not observe or teach to these distinctions; rather, these teachers’ use of Twitter for civic education blended elements of both *Actualizing* and *Dutiful Citizenship* perspectives. Further, although each of the teachers in this study used Twitter and found it beneficial for civic education, none of them wanted to exclude the more traditional practices or legacy media sources identified by Bennett as part of the *Dutiful Citizenship* model (Bennett, 2008; Bennett et al., 2009; Bennett et al., 2010; Bennett et al., 2012).

There are several examples of the teachers in this study incorporating aspects of both *Actualizing* and *Dutiful Citizenship* styles. The teachers were attentive to newer forms of civic engagement, such as following streams on Twitter as a way of keeping up with current events and participatory media creation. Both of these represent elements of the *Actualizing Citizenship* style: rather than receiving news from legacy news sources such as newspapers, Bennett argued that people with an *Actualizing Citizenship* style connected to news through what they shared and what they viewed in their feeds through social media (Bennett, 2008; Bennett et al., 2009; Bennett et al., 2010; Bennett et al., 2012). To varying degrees of success, teachers in this study attempted to do this, and thus were including methods and preferences that Bennett would argue were aligned with the *Actualizing Citizenship* style.

At the same time, teachers were also using legacy media sources to encourage traditional civic participation such as communicating with political leaders, aligned with the *Dutiful Citizenship* style. All five of the teachers in this study supported or encouraged legacy media consumption, either by sharing news stories from traditional news sources (Josh and Toby) or by using tweets as discussion prompts (rather than having students tweet in response to them; Abbey, Josh, Matt, Sam, and Toby). All of the teachers also used text-based knowledge transmission, central to a *Dutiful Citizenship* style: from the use of primary sources to the use of electronic texts (Bennett, 2008; Bennett et al., 2009; Bennett et al., 2010; Bennett et al., 2012). Importantly, all five of the teachers were supportive of traditional forms of civic participation, as evidenced by four teachers’ concerted efforts to teach their students how to reach out to politicians or

focus on teaching students how to identify and refute “fake news” in order to better prepare them to vote in future elections.

The fact that the teachers in this study included methods of teaching, information gathering, and civic engagement that were attentive to both *Actualizing* and *Dutiful Citizenship* styles is noteworthy. Teachers taught in ways that attended to both types of citizenship because they thought their students would benefit from both traditional and newer ways of accessing news, of learning about the U.S. government, and of participating in civic life. The ways the teachers in this study taught, which blended *Actualizing* and *Dutiful Citizenship* styles together, represent the complexity of citizenship as it is understood and practiced (or not) among young people today. In attending to various types and practices of citizenship, the teachers in this study were trying to meet their students where they were, indicating, perhaps, that citizenship is more fluid, and less binary, than Bennett’s model suggests.

In this way, each of the teachers did not recognize the clear distinctions of the *Actualizing* and *Dutiful Citizenship* model: they attended to some elements of each perspective, ignored other elements of each perspective, and in some cases blended some of the elements of both perspectives. For instance, each of the participants encouraged personal civic participation, an element of *Actualizing Citizenship*, but they did not encourage students to participate in boycotts, marches, or protests, another element of *Actualizing Citizenship*. The most common specific action that these teachers were trying to promote was for their students to reach out to government officials, which is an element of *Dutiful Citizenship*. One of the ways in which teachers blended elements of *Actualizing* and *Dutiful Citizenship* was in their use of current events, using online sources of news for debate and discussion. An additional element of *Actualizing Citizenship* is the co-creation of information via sharing news over social media; an element of *Dutiful Citizenship* is the use of legacy news sources for information. Teachers in this study wanted their students to connect to online news sources or to find current events and news on Twitter, but they asked their students to share those stories or information through in-class discussion, rather than online. For instance, teachers’ specific attention to particular hashtags were not to ask students to participate in those streams but rather to help students to learn what was happening and to connect current events to the history that they were studying in class.

Further, the participants of this study are also focused on meeting students where they were. These participants viewed Twitter as an effective

tool for civic engagement and a wide variety of forms of civic participation, primarily for its ability to contact public figures and government officials; its ability to sustain interactions with peers, parents, members of the community, and political leaders; and its access to current events in real-time. None of these participants was teaching his or her students that civic participation occurred only in online spaces, and none discounted any of the behaviors Bennett and his colleagues ascribed to *Dutiful* Citizenship. In fact, because teachers used elements from both perspectives as well as instances of blending elements from both perspectives, it not only negates the distinction raised by Bennett's framework but also further articulates how citizenship unfolds in both online and offline spaces fluidly. Teachers in this study showed how students could move between online and offline spaces for civic participation, and this could have been extended. For instance, students could connect to protests online by following hashtags, and then join an in-person protest based on their online interaction. Teachers supported students' civic participation, which they saw going beyond the common use of *digital citizenship* and beyond the distinctions between *Dutiful* and *Actualizing Citizenship* (Bennett, 2008; Bennett et al., 2009; Bennett et al., 2010; Bennett et al., 2012).

Overall, the participants in this study did not see in practice the distinction between civic participation in digital or face-to-face spaces. The distinctions theorized by Bennett and his colleagues between *Dutiful* and *Actualizing Citizenship* did not capture the hybrid nature of the way in which these teachers are teaching, nor did it seem to attend to the many variables at play for their students based on those students' contexts. Similarly, teachers found the concept of *digital citizenship* to be limiting. These teachers did not use Twitter mainly because their students are already using it, or because their students are actively civically engaged online, or because they want to encourage only personal or online civic participation. Rather, they used it because Twitter provided ways to reduce isolation, break down barriers of communication, and connect to people and current events in real time.

Although each of the participants in this study believed that they need to teach their students at least some of the behaviors associated with Ribble et al.'s (2004) definition of digital citizenship, the participants did not see those behaviors as falling solely under the purview of digital citizenship; they conceived of digital citizenship as resembling citizenship in offline spaces, to the point where Leo thought that the term *digital*

citizenship offered a false dichotomy between the ways people practice citizenship in online and offline spaces.

Further, the participants of this study are also focused on meeting students where they were. These participants viewed Twitter as an effective tool for civic engagement and a wide variety of forms of civic participation, primarily for its ability to contact public figures and government officials; its ability to sustain interactions with peers, parents, members of the community, and political leaders; and its access to current events in real-time. None of these participants was teaching his or her students that civic participation occurred only in online spaces, and none discounted any of the behaviors Bennett and his colleagues ascribed to *Dutiful* Citizenship. In fact, because of these teachers' use of elements from both perspectives as well as instances of blending elements from both perspectives, it is easy to see how these teachers would equally support students who held *Dutiful* and *Actualizing Citizenship* perspectives (Bennett, 2008; Bennett et al., 2009; Bennett et al., 2010; Bennett et al., 2012).

In short, teachers in this study found the notion of *digital citizenship* as separate and distinct from offline citizenship to be misleading and unhelpful. While prior literature has often equated digital citizenship with ways in which one behaves well and safely in online spaces, the concept of citizenship and civic participation in offline contexts is not limited to good or safe behavior. Therefore, true civic participation in online spaces must go beyond good behavior to active civic engagement. In fact, civic life now is blended, occurring in both online and offline spaces, often in fluid ways. Understanding digital citizenship as etiquette in online interactions limits teachers' ability to teach about it. We have the ability to act in the civic sphere using digital tools; failing to teach about the ways in which young people can engage in civic life using these online tools is a shortcoming of civic education.

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Nurturing a Capacity That May Well Be Limitless: Supporting Student Worth as a Matter of Civic Urgency

The second main finding of the study centered around students' inherent worth: the value and dignity that students had as human beings. The teachers in this study were concerned about their students' self-worth and viewed this as having an impact on their students' civic education and on their civic participation. Teachers felt that students did not consider themselves to be worthy of participating in civic life because they believed that their students felt that they were not yet seen as members of the community. Consequently, the students felt that they did not have either a right or a responsibility to participate in civic life. Further, teachers felt that this lack of self-worth was reinforced by the structure of civic education and that by not valuing students as civic actors. Consequently, teachers felt that instead of preparing students for later civic participation, civic education may diminish students' later civic engagement.

Teachers used social media to encourage students to see their own value as civic participants, primarily by having them interact with experts, elected officials, and members of their communities. The teachers believed that the way to address students' feelings of unworthiness was by having students participate in civic activities that were real; the teachers saw social media as a way to do this.

STUDENT WORTH

As mentioned in the previous chapter, citizenship was a common objective across all five teachers. Although “student worth” may not be characterized as or fit the language of educational objectives, for four of the five teachers in this study, it was a critical component of their teaching of civics. Civic engagement is often spoken about in the literature as consisting of rights and responsibilities, and, as stated earlier in my literature review, a component of civic engagement is *civic attachment*, the feeling or belief that an *individual matters* to the group (Flanagan, 2004; Flanagan & Faison, 2001). Part of civic education, therefore, is teaching students that their participation in society is meaningful and matters. In this study, four of the five participants approached civic education, or education more broadly, from the perspective of teaching their students that they had not only a *responsibility* but also a *right* to participate in civic life.

For instance, it was clear that Donna valued her students; the ways in which Donna taught were grounded in this appreciation of who her students were. Donna felt that her students were limited based on their geographic isolation, whether because those who grew up there tended to remain there into adulthood; because historically students had not thought broadly about future vocational choices; or because people from Donna’s area were easily ignored by elected officials. For each of these reasons, Donna wanted to teach students in ways that gave them options to overcome these limitations. For example, when her principal asked her to design two new elective courses for students, Donna chose to develop courses on current events and women’s history, so that students would know what was going on in the world and also feel represented in it. In describing the creation of her women’s history course, Donna shared that her “passion” for women’s history was to show the young women in her community that there were possibilities available to them beyond marriage and motherhood. For Donna, this was about each student making the choice that was right for her: if students chose to remain in their hometown and raise a family, Donna fully supported that. She only wanted them to intentionally choose that path rather than seeing it as the only one available to them.

Her community’s geographic isolation influenced how Donna spoke about civic education: she saw civic participation as one way for the students in her isolated area to reach beyond geographical boundaries and participate in the wider world. Throughout our conversation, Donna

focused her attempts to increase her students' civic engagement through the lens of how that engagement could show her students that they were important beyond their local community. This view also privileged the use of Twitter for Donna: by using Twitter for civic engagement, her students were able to connect with and impact the world beyond their town. Finally, well beyond the value of civic participation was the value of the students themselves: Donna wanted her students to know that they have worth and importance beyond any boundaries that exist because of where they live or who they are.

All of these uses for Twitter point to Donna's desire to have her students see themselves as members of a country with a long history which is still evolving and of which they were an important part. From the local community through to the federal government, there was no aspect of civic life to which Donna's students should not be attuned, and they had the right and responsibility to share their thoughts, whether with their local community via a school hashtag or more widely by directly tweeting to elected officials. This was another way in which Donna used Twitter to connect students to history and the present while communicating her hope that they can and should be active citizens.

Jed also modeled being an advocate for those who are marginalized: much of our conversation focused on people in his community who needed help in seeing themselves as equal members of the community. Jed saw fostering relationships between students as a significant part of this advocacy, whether by bringing students together across his community in ways which are difficult, given the way the districts have been drawn, or helping students in the school's gay-straight alliance to connect with other similar groups at other schools. Jed's reasons and expectations for using Twitter in class were fostering these connections, between himself and his students, and between his students and other members of the community. Jed saw this relationship-building as the foundation of being an effective teacher. Whether it was the gay-straight alliance using Twitter to keep up with members of other GSAs around Iowa or African-American students seeing a white teacher make connections between the Civil Rights Movement and the #BlackLivesMatter movement, Jed advocated for the inclusion of all people into the community.

Across all of these examples, Jed's intent was to make students who felt ostracized or separated feel included, valued, and important, not only through school programs but also through supportive relationships with teachers. In using Twitter to showcase students' work and extracurricular

accomplishments, Jed was working to build a culture of support and encouragement around those students. As he noted,

Especially with high-school students, it's not like parents are, you know, excited to get to put [student work] on their fridge. Our district, it does use social media as well. So they'll tweet it to everybody that follows the district.

Jed wanted his students to make connections, feel supported, and see themselves as members of a larger community. For Jed, being in relationship with others; advocating for those who are marginalized; including a plurality of voices into the conversation; and learning how to understand information in order to make well-informed opinions were all ways in which to engage civically.

Leo also saw teaching as being at the service of helping his students to see themselves as citizens who needed to participate in the life of their community and that they were already capable of doing this. One way that Leo engaged students with the community was by asking them to engage in meaningful work which would be shared with others. He wanted his students to feel that they were not just doing work just to keep them busy, but rather that what they were doing in class mattered beyond the scope of class. Further, Leo wanted his students to know that what they did was important and valuable, both because he believed that to be true and because he wanted them to produce work that matched those expectations. Showing students' work to others was one way to demonstrate to his students how valuable their work was. The processes through which they created, shared, received feedback, and revised their work was the method through which Leo taught them that what they thought and produced is worthwhile, and because of that, they needed to be active members of society.

One example of how Leo supported student worth was by advocating for students to find and share their voice through multiple modalities. As an example, he described a "quiet kid" who chose to make a video about Adam Smith and Karl Marx; she posted the video on YouTube, where it had, at the time of our interview, over 300,000 hits. Leo related this back to his overall purposes of engaging activities that promote value in student work in this comment:

And she's just this quiet kid. So it was kinda cool to give her an audience outside of her class that she felt comfortable with. All I really wanted was

products that meant something to the kids that have a life cycle beyond like them to me to recycle bin. That just seemed so pointless.

This anecdote showed everything that was critical to Leo as a teacher: providing students with options so that they could choose ways to engage with material and present in ways that were comfortable and meaningful to them and which can be viewed, valued, and responded to by others.

Leo's focus on student worth had impacts on both student learning and on his teaching. Leo felt that he became a better teacher when he began to give his students more freedom in how they showed evidence of their learning. Leo's teaching changed because when he "knew my kids better," he "spent more time helping them rather than telling them everything." Through this creative process, he observed that students were more proactive in their learning because they found that in doing their projects they needed to learn skills or information in order to do them well. Leo's shift to providing students with time and space to construct their learning in ways that were meaningful and relatable to them changed his students' approach to learning; it also changed Leo's approach to teaching.

In many instances, Will spoke about his hopes and concerns for his students in the same way as some of the other participants in this study, but in Will's case, the meaning of those words was different because of the vastly different context in which Will taught. A primary objective for Will as a teacher was to prepare his students for adulthood, and he saw his students' civic engagement as a way that his students could be productive adults. Similar to Donna, Will used Twitter to help them to understand how this might be possible for his students. Like Donna, Jed, and Leo, Will wanted his students to feel like they mattered: he wanted them to make a difference and to believe that they could and should reach out to political officials and other leaders and expect a response. Unlike the other participants in this study, Will and his students were not marginalized, and so it is easy to believe that there was no inherent deficit which they needed to overcome in order to be heard or feel included or respected. However, while Will's students may have had significant advantages that the students of the other participants do not enjoy, Will's students may have needed just as much convincing as any other students that they had worth. Further, the sincerity of Will's beliefs about the value his students had was genuine.

Overall, it was clear that all but one of these teachers were focused on helping his or her students to feel that their ideas and work were worthy of respect and attention, that each of them mattered to the group (society) as individuals. Donna, Jed, Will, and Leo each taught their students that the students' opinions and work had value, going to great lengths to not only communicate this value to the students themselves but also to the wider community. Additionally, these teachers felt that it was an important part of their role to convince their students that they could and should participate in civic life because their opinions and work mattered. Finally, each of these saw Twitter as a way to both share and validate student work. They believed by sharing student work or student ideas via Twitter, students could feel connected to and validated by others.

REVISITING EFFECTIVE CIVIC EDUCATION METHODS

This finding of the importance of recognizing students as members of their communities who are already able to participate in civic life has impacts for civic education. As previously discussed, the most effective methods for teaching civic knowledge have been shown to be participatory, in which students created discussions, held debates, or engaged in interactive experiences (Gibson & Levine, 2003; Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Niemi & Chapman, 1999; Torney-Purta et al., 1999; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). Civic skills, such as the ability to evaluate sources and debating issues, were best learned through specific and relatable contexts that students understood and the use of current events in class (Gibson & Levine, 2003; Hess & Posselt, 2002; Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 1996; Niemi & Junn, 2005; Pasek et al., 2008; Syvertsen et al., 2007). Finally, civic action was best learned through involvement in the community (Gibson & Levine, 2003; Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Niemi & Chapman, 1999; Torney-Purta et al., 1999; Torney-Purta et al., 2001).

Teachers in this study reported engaging in some of these methods deemed effective for teaching civics, specifically participatory activities such as discussions, practicing source evaluation through specific and relatable contexts, and the use of current events, while others remained elusive. For instance, Leo's beliefs about the value and efficacy of more creative assignments as measurements of civic learning aligned with what prior research had identified as effective civic education: he thought that these creative projects were more relatable to students' experiences (Gibson & Levine, 2003; Niemi & Junn, 2005; Pasek et al., 2008); more

participatory and student-created (Gibson & Levine, 2003; Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Niemi & Chapman, 1999; Torney-Purta et al., 1999; Torney-Purta et al., 2001); have greater involvement with the community (Gibson & Levine, 2003; Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Niemi & Chapman, 1999; Torney-Purta et al., 1999; Torney-Purta et al., 2001); and demonstrate a variety of ways to be civically involved (Torney-Purta et al., 2001). Teachers focused on these methods particularly because they were concerned with ways in which students could participate in civic life immediately so as to develop skills that could be used throughout life. Additionally, teachers were attentive to using teaching methods which would support students' effective civic engagement, as a way of increasing interest that could be sustained over a lifetime. Each of these pedagogical approaches recognized that students were already able to engage in the civic sphere and gave them opportunities to do so.

CONSIDERING SOCIAL MEDIA IN K-12 EDUCATION

The concept of student worth also expands our understanding about teaching with social media in K-12 education generally, and in secondary civics education specifically, both of which are under-explored terrain in the current social media in education literature (Greenhow et al., 2020; Greenhow & Askari, 2017; Manca & Ranieri, 2013, Manca & Ranieri, 2016). Moreover, educational research on how and why educators use Twitter specifically found four dimensions of learning with Twitter: who participates in learning, when learning happens, what is learned, and how learning happens (Gao et al., 2012). This study aligns with Gao et al.'s conclusions: (1) that Twitter expands the pool of learners and instructors; (2) expands learning content; and (3) fosters interactive learning. Adding student worth into this mix sheds light on why these factors may be important.

Taking this first dimension of learning with Twitter, that Twitter expands the pool of learners and instructors (Gao et al., 2012), researchers noted that using Twitter connected students to a variety of others who were interested in their course of study, including peers, practitioners and professionals in their fields, and interest groups. Similarly, the teachers in this study wanted their students to reach out to others via Twitter, including their parents (Jed and Leo); members of their local community (Donna, Jed, and Leo); political leaders (Donna, Jed, Leo, and Will); and to other students, in their own class or school, or outside of their district (Jed, Leo, and Charlie). In some cases, these connections were explicitly

made to include others in the class's community of learners, such as when Leo had students reach out to their parents and other adults to ask their opinions on the day's topics. In other cases, the connections to learning were less explicit, such as when Jed and Leo shared student work on Twitter in hopes that the community would see, and perhaps comment on, student accomplishments. Regardless, each of these connections potentially expands the learning community.

Moreover, in each of these experiences, students were situated as members of the community, of value to those with whom they were interacting. Twitter did not only pull new people into the learning community; it brought students into the greater community as equal members. At the same time that value was placed on interactions with others with whom the students interacted on Twitter, teachers also emphasized the value that the students offered in those interactions. In a way, Twitter offered a community space in which students were equal participants to all others who gathered there, whether they were students from another state or country, subject matter experts, or elected officials. In these interactions, students were expected to be polite, but not deferential. Teachers worked hard to ensure a healthy balance for their students in this space, where students could share their learning and opinions, connect with people who represented them in the government, and be in dialogue with others in a genuine and meaningful way.

The second dimension of learning with Twitter that it expands learning content (Gao et al., 2012) argues that using Twitter broadens the information to which students are exposed, by allowing students to contribute and share information, examples of key concepts, and news stories related to class content. This study supports this earlier finding in several ways. One example of extending learning content through Twitter was Donna's making connections between tweets from modern-day presidents and the founding documents of the United States. Another example was Leo's invitation for students to engage in creative work in response to assessments, which connected civics content with a variety of creative skills. Additionally, Will's outreach to public figures to participate in his class, such as the Curator of the Smithsonian and former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich, brought new voices and analysis of history to Will's students. A last example from this study of how Twitter expanded learning content was Leo's use of Twitter to connect students with people around the world experiencing history-making events, which provided those students with a perspective on those events that they otherwise would not have had.

In each of these instances, the students played an active, rather than passive, role. They were finding and engaging with new content and making connections in organic ways. Teachers honored students' inherent worth by allowing them to have creative responses and to engage with material and people in ways which were guided by teachers but driven by students. This, in turn, supported students' civic engagement: by giving them the freedom to participate in ways of their choosing, teachers were telling and showing students that they were worthy of doing so.

The third dimension of learning with Twitter was that Twitter fostered interactive and collaborative learning (Gao et al., 2012). Using Twitter increased the time and space that students could spend working together with peers, instructors, or interested others outside of class or asynchronously. In some classes, students were learning how to communicate with political leaders by actually reaching out to them (Donna, Jed, Leo, and Will). Students were asked to interact with family and community members (Donna, Jed, Leo, and Will), and in some cases members of the community were invited to interact with students (Donna, Leo, and Will). In some cases, students connected with other students across the state, country, or world and learned with them (Jed and Leo). Students also interacted with a variety of people specifically to ask questions during history-making events (Donna and Leo). Finally, some of the teachers used Twitter to foster discussion outside of class (Jed and Charlie).

Related to the finding in the civic education literature that effective civic learning should be participatory (Gibson & Levine, 2003; Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Niemi & Chapman, 1999; Torney-Purta et al., 1999; Torney-Purta et al., 2001), this dimension of learning with Twitter situates students as collaborators. In this way, learning with Twitter, particularly in the ways in which such learning was structured by the teachers in this study, brings students into the center of civic participation and conversation, rather than asking them to learn about it in the abstract or watch things unfolding from the outside. This collaborative and participatory approach to civic education honors students' inherent worth and recognizes them as civic actors.

As to the fourth dimension, that Twitter supports informal learning or fosters reflective things, the teachers in this study did not use Twitter for these purposes (Gao et al., 2012). Although previous studies discuss the benefits of social media for informal learning (e.g., Greenhow & Askari, 2017) and the connections between formal and informal learning that social media can help bring about, these connections were not discussed

by the teachers in this study. Teachers in this study did not use Twitter for informal learning out of concerns for privacy, both their own and also the privacy of their students. This aligns with the teachers' and administrators' well-founded concerns over privacy (Warnick et al., 2016). Out of their concern for privacy, the teachers in this study did not conceive of Twitter as a tool for informal learning.

While teachers had reasons or systemic limitations for not using Twitter for informal or reflective learning, doing so should be a consideration for civic education in the future. As a means of connecting formal and informal learning, Twitter could provide an excellent means of connecting what students do inside the classroom and what they do outside of it. This may, in turn, allow students to see civic participation as both more fluid and more connected; that they are worthy to engage in the school community, in the larger community, and that they have the means to participate across contexts.

A finding of this study was the importance of Twitter in showcasing student worth. Teachers in this study perceived that one of the reasons young people do not participate in civic life is that they feel unworthy of doing so. The common approach to civic education, of preparing students to be part of a community when they reach the age of 18, reinforces this lack of worth. The teachers in this study recognized that young people are already members of a community, not merely preparing to be initiated into society. Young people can, and do, participate in civic life, and the teachers in this study felt that civic education should recognize what they were already doing and support them in further civic engagement. The teachers in this study used Twitter to teach students that they could already play a role in the civic sphere while at the same time providing support so that students were encouraged and guided in their civic participation.

Civic education should attend to questions of student worth. Young people can be discounted or even demonized for engaging in civic actions, which may impede their continued civic participation. Both because of this and beyond it, student voices are often marginalized, both within schools and in the larger civic sphere. This, too, can inhibit further civic engagement. Understanding the role that student worth can play in civic engagement is significant not only because of the intrinsic value of student worth to student growth and development but also because of the related benefits to effective civic education of students seeing themselves as worthy of participating in society.

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CHAPTER 8

With a Little Help from Friends: Teaching About, with, and Through Social Media

This chapter offers recommendations for teacher preparation to teach civic education with social media. Based on a third finding from the study, this chapter discusses how teacher education and professional development might support teachers in understanding how new and veteran teachers might begin to incorporate social media into their civics teaching. This chapter also explores why and how students need guidance in using social media. Despite often being perceived as being proficient at using social media, the teachers in this study found that young people needed guidance in how to use it, both generally and for civic purposes. This chapter also includes a discussion of the aspects of social media that can be manipulative or harmful. Students are often unaware of the more dubious parts of social media, such as the ways it can manipulate users into only seeing posts they might agree with (echo chambers) or in which social media become a vehicle for spreading disinformation. This chapter concludes with ways in which students can be supported in learning and using social media for civic purposes. I argue that teachers who want to use social media in the classroom should teach students about the more problematic aspects of social media, such as misinformation and echo chambers.

SCAFFOLDERS: THE RIGHT TOOL AT THE RIGHT TIME

Each of the teachers in this study were scaffolded into their use of Twitter, though this happened differently across the five cases. In four out of five cases, teachers were prompted to use Twitter in their classrooms because they had been introduced to Twitter by an influential peer, though there is variation in this commonness that is representative of the complexity of coming to use Twitter for civic education. The influential peer appeared differently in each case: a technology trainer; a colleague; connections during graduate school; and in the case of Will, his own interest. Most of the teachers approached Twitter in the context of how it could be used in the classroom (rather than as a personal social media tool), though again, here, their intentions and experiences varied.

A common experience for the teachers was that their introduction to Twitter occurred *after* the teachers had objectives for their students in mind. This enabled the teachers to connect the potential uses of Twitter for education generally with some of the specific objectives they had for their students. As a result, they constructed their own knowledge about how Twitter could be useful for civic education, often with the help of slightly more capable peers. In Donna's case, it was the trainer at a professional development program; following this training, Donna wanted to use Twitter after "just seeing how effective it can be." The trainer had connected Twitter to three of Donna's objectives for students: it provided access to people who hold a range of opinions; it connected users to what is going on in the country; and it provided users with access to political decision-makers in real-time. Donna used Twitter with her students because it helps her to achieve these objectives; she connected Twitter to the way she exercised her civic responsibilities, and so she ascribed to it considerable importance and value for civic education.

Jed was also introduced to Twitter through a personal connection, although in his case it was a colleague in another department at the school in which they were both teaching. Jed had been interested in using social media generally during his teacher education program in college, but he did not have specific uses in mind for it. Upon starting his teaching career, Jed began to value pedagogies which would develop student-teacher relationships because he saw the benefits of these relationships to his students and to their learning in class. Around the same time, Jed met a teacher in the English department at his school, who was already a frequent Twitter user. This colleague said that he used Twitter with his class particularly for

the purpose of building community with his students. This rationale resonated with Jed, who started to try Twitter with his own students. Jed continues to find value in using Twitter to build community among his students, their parents, and the broader community, whether through tweeting about their sports accomplishments, their in-class work, or in connecting his school's gay-straight alliance with other GSAs in Iowa.

Leo also came to use Twitter through a personal connection, although his initial objectives, that Twitter helped him to meet, were not for his students but for himself. Talking to his friend who was already using Twitter for education caused Leo to want to explore using Twitter to develop a professional learning network. As soon as Leo started using Twitter, he got connected to other social studies teachers, and with them he developed #SSChat, an online community which continues to exist. Within this community, Leo started crowdsourcing lessons, using Google Docs to share resources and collaborate on lesson plans. Through this process of developing lessons with other teachers, Leo realized that he wanted to have his students connect to others as he had been able to do, and so he began connecting his students with the students of some of his collaborators. One of the fruits of these collaborations was that Leo began to use Twitter with his students for civic education. Even though Leo's initial objectives were for himself and not for his students, his initial prompt to use Twitter was a personal connection that related to his objectives.

Charlie's introduction to Twitter came at the intersection of two events: his classes for his master's program and his school's transition to providing every student with their own laptop computer. Charlie explained that he did not decide to use Twitter because his school was improving the computer access for its students, but that change, combined with the discussions he was having in his educational master's program, prompted him to want to try using Twitter with his students. At the time, one of Charlie's objectives for his students was to spark discussion among them, and the conversations he was having in his master's program combined with his students' increased access to the internet made him think that Twitter might provide a way in which he could start discussions in class. Although this connection is more about Charlie making sense of conversations with peers in his master's program rather than a specific invitation to Twitter from a friend, it is still an example of how Twitter appeared to be the right tool introduced at the right time for Charlie.

Will's use of Twitter with his students resulted from his choice to use it personally; he thought the features that were unique to Twitter could be useful or interesting in his teaching of civics. Thus, Will was self-scaffolded into his use of Twitter; although his introduction to the platform did not come via an influential peer, he was still prompted to use Twitter and scaffolded his use of the platform for his classroom himself. Will did not discuss how long he was using Twitter personally before using it with his students, but it is clear that over time Will found that Twitter had potential for use in the teaching of civics.

TEACHERS AS SCAFFOLDERS FOR STUDENTS' SOCIAL MEDIA USE

As much as the teachers in this study needed prompting and guidance from others to use Twitter in their classrooms, so too do students need guidance in using social media, and particularly in using it for civic participation. There is a disconnect between the ways in which many high-school students in the United States are being taught civics and methods of civic participation and the ways in which youth are actually participating in civic life. While some students benefit from the traditional ways of teaching civics, there are other students whose civic imaginations remain uninspired by these ways. If the hope of civic education is to produce well-informed and active citizens, adjustments must be made in civic education. One of these adjustments could be to purposefully incorporate the use of social media into civics learning, particularly as there is evidence that youth are already using this media for civic engagement purposes.

Further, there is a misconception that because students are nearly all on social media, they know how to use it well or for the purposes of civic engagement. Though the perception that the young understand how to use social media because they were born into a world where it already existed, prior research and the teachers in this study have found that to be untrue (Brown & Czerniewicz, 2010). Perhaps the clearest example from this study was Donna's student who had been an active user but without her guidance still would have fallen for a phishing scam. Donna had seen cases in which students not only lacked technological proficiency, but were exploited because of their lack of awareness of the way social media worked. Students do not only need to know the basics of how to use social media; they need to know that social media is not neutral.

SOCIAL MEDIA IS NOT NEUTRAL

Given the number of studies on the use of social media for learning, it is not unsurprising that there are some which argue that the platform either does not support or, in fact, hinders learning. What a user sees when they open Twitter is chosen and presented based on algorithms (Huszár et al., 2022). In spite of much recent debate in the last few years that voices on the political right have been censored and by design are not as often seen on the platform, recent research showed the opposite to be true. In six out of seven countries studied, including the United States, the tweets of elected officials from parties on the political right were amplified by the algorithm more often than those officials on the political left (Huszár et al., 2022). Further, looking at U.S. news sources, those sources which were right-leaning were amplified more than those which were left-leaning (Huszár et al., 2022). Two things about this are notable: first, that the Twitter algorithm does not equitably promote tweets holding different perspectives and, second, that the public perception of the way in which the algorithm works is used in incorrect or manipulative ways.

Such a finding is also important because Twitter, as a social media space, functions differently than earlier platforms others had. Social media had initially been a largely reciprocal space: for instance, on Facebook, for two people to be connected, they both needed to agree to that connection through a friend request (Ellison & boyd, 2013). On Twitter, one is neither required nor obliged to follow accounts or users which follow you. While this may appear to offer greater freedom to users—which it in fact may—navigating these connections has become more complex (Ellison & boyd, 2013). Additionally, while often billed as a very participatory space, the number of accounts which produce new content is small compared to those who consume it (Manca & Ranieri, 2013, 2016). Although aimed at social media more broadly, a further criticism has been that much of the content which is shared is self-serving in nature, rather than informational or a sharing of viewpoints or topics which are meant to prompt broader discussion (Kirshner, 2015). As seen above, social media mirrors society's power structures (Selwyn, 2014), often in ways which perpetuate injustice or marginalization (Literat, 2021). Specifically, it must be noted that the nature of Twitter does not amplify the tweets of young people and those in power in the same ways, which limits the voice of young people and is a barrier to full civic engagement using Twitter.

POTENTIAL FOR HARM AND PRIVACY CONCERNS

Students enter into education as whole human beings, with lived experience and ways they have come to understand the world. Education is at its best when they are seen that way, when those experiences are acknowledged, and when students are treated with inherent dignity and worth (Chapman et al., 2021). Social media has been shown to support students' identity development, expression, and sense of belonging and connection (boyd, 2014; Ito et al., 2009; Literat & Kligler-Vilenchik, 2019; Wargo, 2017). This study has shown that civics teachers thought that this type of whole child education also supported students' civic education. However, the converse is also true. Some of those experiences that students bring into learning spaces are difficult, challenging, or traumatic, and these, too, have implications for students' civic learning and expression (Payne & Journell, 2019). Social media can also have negative impacts on students' self-concept (Michikyan & Subrahmanyam, 2012; Way & Malvini Redden, 2017). Relatedly, although research has shown the value of incorporating multiple perspectives into civic education (Toledo & Enright, 2021), students may have learned that some perspectives are either wrong or inappropriate to discuss (Payne & Journell, 2019). Consequently, asking students to participate on social media may expose them to multiple perspectives, but it might also expose them to content or images which are personally hurtful or which conflict with what they may have learned outside of school.

Finally, multiple teachers in this study thought about how using Twitter for education inserted them into students' lives in ways that were different from typical classroom interactions. Prior research has also raised the issue of privacy concerns when teachers incorporate the use of social media into education (Hodkinson, 2017; Marwick & boyd, 2014). While not a negative feature of Twitter per se, this comingling of professional and personal spaces and identities must be considered. Leo wanted to bring in parents' voices into the classroom and wanted to increase the connection between home and school in a very transparent way. Jed wanted students to feel supported and encouraged by the community, including him. Both of them wanted increased engagement with their students because they thought it better supported the students. Donna and Charlie wanted to find a balance between using Twitter and respecting students' privacy. They recognized that students felt that social media was a space apart from

school, and neither Donna nor Charlie wanted to take that away from students. Rather, they both wanted students to engage more thoughtfully and intentionally on social media.

It seems that there is value in a blended approach: student worth could be supported through teachers' use of Twitter, which meant that both needed to be connected to their students through the platform. At the same time, students need to learn about social media and how it can be leveraged for change, but also how it can be manipulative. These issues could be discussed in the abstract, but it seems safer and more thorough if teachers engage with students on Twitter—while staying within the boundaries which every teacher in this study established (engaging for school purposes, being transparent and clear; not engaging with students on topics unrelated to school). If teachers can see how students are interacting—and indeed model interactions and engage with them—then discussions about what students see on Twitter, fake news, algorithms, and using Twitter as an agent of change become less abstract.

TEACHING ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA IS CRITICAL TO CIVIC EDUCATION

Taken together, these findings indicate that teaching young people *about* social media is vitally important. Social media operates as part of the civic sphere. We are limiting our students' potential as civic actors if we do not teach them about the ways in which social media works, including the ways in which it can manipulate users, spread misinformation, or cause harm.

Incorporating social media into civic education requires teaching students how to use social media, including its design and potential for harm (Greenhow et al., 2022). Understanding how social media creates echo chambers, how what is seen can be manipulated by both users and the platforms' algorithms, and the spread of misinformation, disinformation, and deep fakes is now as much an issue for civic education as understanding the three branches of government. To ignore either sets individuals and the country up for a poorly informed and easily manipulated citizenry. Only once students know how social media works and how to use it with intention and care, they are then prepared to use it for civic participation.

These concerns are not reasons to avoid using social media in education; just the opposite. Ignoring issues or events which have harmed students does not increase their capacity or inclination to learn; it certainly does not make them feel that they are being seen, known, and valued (Chapman et al., 2021). Choosing to ignore multiple perspectives is certainly not a best civic education practice, and Toledo and Enright (2021) have rightly argued that it is unethical. Classrooms do not function as a microcosm of society in which young people learn how to be in community if that community does not recognize who they are or functions as an echo chamber. These are reasons for teachers to see teaching *about* social media as necessary for students' civic engagement. Further, if teachers are going to teach with social media for civic education, their teaching must be thoughtful, intentional, and well-planned.

Teachers were scaffolded into their use of Twitter, whether introduced by a peer, or through peer-to-peer conversations in a professional development or graduate school context, or through their own initiative, as a tool which could be used in the classroom, and this introduction came at a time when the teachers had already done some thinking about what they wanted their students to be able to know and do. Thus, teachers were introduced to Twitter as a tool which could meet objectives they had identified for their students. Teachers could serve in a similar capacity for their students, acting as scaffolders so that students can learn and practice how to use Twitter and how to leverage its affordances for civic engagement. The following chapter will extend this argument to examine how teachers and students can use social media to disrupt oppressive hegemonic systems.

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The Margins Don't Get Erased by Simply Insisting that the Powers That Be Erase Them: Social Media as a Disrupter

Most of the teachers in this study wanted to use social media with their students to disrupt unjust systems in their communities. Although the teachers were not as successful in changing these inequitable systems as they would have hoped, this chapter presents social media as a potential challenge to those unjust systems. Applying the work of the teachers in this study more broadly, civic education is often traditional, functioning to maintain systems which are currently in place (Apple, 1996; Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993; Fitzgerald et al., 2021). Civic education itself is also impacted by these unequal systems: schools in more affluent areas have stronger civic education programs (Fitzgerald et al., 2021; Hahn, 1999). Consequently, new pedagogical approaches are needed to support young people in critical citizenship work, which seeks to make systemic change to oppressive systems (Chapman & Greenhow, 2021; Logan et al., 2022). Further, students who are marginalized or vulnerable can find community and connection via social media, and social media can serve as a tool for civic participation and activism which promotes individual and community thriving. This chapter will also discuss how teachers can support students in using social media for social justice-oriented civic participation.

CIVIC EDUCATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE CONCERNS

There are inherent inequalities in civic education, which have persisted for decades and appear to be increasing (Fitzgerald et al., 2021; Hahn, 1999; Hanson et al., 2018). Academically successful students are not equally and evenly dispersed throughout schools, and both the IEA study (Hahn, 1999) and Niemi and Chapman's (1999) study showed that more academically successful students came from schools with high socioeconomic demographics. This "civic education gap" has not only increased in the last 20 years, and further research has found that disparities between children of different races to be as significant as the earlier research around socioeconomic disparities (Hanson et al., 2018).

In national civic assessments (NAEP), research has shown significant differences between the civic understanding of Black, Latino, and white students. White students score the highest on measures of civic understanding, and scores for both Black and Latino students are considerably lower, falling between the 10th and 25th percentile of the scores of white students (Hanson et al., 2018). Over a span of 16 years (1998–2014), the difference in median scores on national civic assessments between white and Black students increased, though the gap between white and Latino students decreased slightly over the same time period (Hanson et al., 2018). The gap in civics assessments is also wider than the gaps between the same groups in either math or reading (Hanson et al., 2018).

It is important to note here that just as academically successful students are not evenly distributed among all schools, students of all races are also not evenly distributed among schools in the United States. A long history of racial segregation in housing has resulted in neighborhoods which are not racially diverse (Rothstein, 2015); this *de jure* segregation has, in many areas, also perpetuated intergenerational poverty (Reardon, 2016). As a result, public schools are also often not diverse, based on race or income, as they are largely and often made up of the population from the surrounding neighborhood (Rothstein, 2015). Thus, the gap between Black, Latino, and white students is not because those students are in the same classes receiving the same civic education but responding differently; rather, it is that schools whose populations are largely made up of students who have historically been marginalized are not providing, or do not have the resources to provide, equivalent civic education for their students.

These findings are both appalling and deeply troubling for American democracy. In a system of government which relies on the informed and

active participation of many, schools are failing to provide civic preparation equal to the task of inheriting democracy for wide swaths of the population. Further, gaps centered on racial and economic differences only serve to continue to perpetuate the lack of equity in political representation for historically minoritized groups as well as continuing to minimize voices which have long been ignored or suppressed. These inequities exist in sharp contrast to the ideals and purpose of American democracy.

STUDENTS WHO ARE MARGINALIZED OR VULNERABLE

Perhaps unsurprisingly, these gaps in civic education which exist between students of different races and income levels correspond to a civic engagement gap (Fitzgerald et al., 2021; Levinson, 2012). Just as civic education is not equally and equitably offered to all students due to historical and ongoing marginalization, the opportunities for civic engagement by marginalized students are similarly impacted by structural oppression (Atkins & Hart, 2003; Kirshner, 2015; Sánchez-Jankowski, 2002). As a result, young people who are marginalized or vulnerable—often around racial or economic lines—participate in the civic sphere (in traditional ways in which this is measured) less than white or more affluent students (Fitzgerald et al., 2021). An important caveat is that historically disadvantaged students engage in civic life in ways which are often not measured (e.g., translating for members of their community; Stepick et al., 2008; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015), these types of civic engagement are also often not supported in civic education in schools (Kirshner & Ginwright, 2012).

This picture sounds bleak, but research has also shown ways in which schools and teachers can foster all students' civic education and include support for a wider range of civic engagement. While there is a wide variety of such activities, such as examining civic issues through a critical lens (Hipolito-Delgado & Zion, 2015), inquiry-based learning (Hipolito-Delgado & Zion, 2015), and transformative relationships with adults (Chapman & Miller, 2022), scholars have argued for the potential of social media as a lever of change for civic education for marginalized youth (Durham, 2019; Garcia et al., 2019). While many young people can and do engage in both civic learning and civic action through social media, historically disadvantaged youth are more likely to do so through out-of-school methods such as social media (Fitzgerald et al., 2021).

Another component of civic learning which has been effective civic education has been community involvement. From service learning (Bringle & Clayton, 2012) to facilitating conversations about social justice which promote understanding and change (Aldana et al., 2012) to grassroots organizing (Checkoway & Aldana, 2013), working *with* members of the community has been shown to be an important means of civic education. Research has shown that people can form community on Twitter, even among accounts with whom they interact only as consumers of others' posts (Gruzd et al., 2011). Twitter also has played a role in the types of community involvement which engage young people, such as through hashtag movements (Pew, 2012, 2016; Preston, 2011; Shear, 2018). The use of social media in education presents a real opportunity to teach and support youth in engaging in social change.

At the same time, coming of age in the twenty-first century has not been easy. Opportunities for young people, particularly those who come from historically marginalized communities, have been limited. In the last 20 years, we have been living in a time of increasing social inequality in the United States, which in turn has had political and economic implications (Kaltmeier & Breuer, 2020). For young people, this social upheaval has not been the only disrupter to their transition to adulthood. Sociocultural and identity factors, such as race, gender, class, and sexual orientation, have also influenced educational and employment prospects (Loader et al., 2014). This context is critical to thinking about how we reform civic education. The experiences of marginalized youth, as well as the need to understand, navigate, and change our politically polarized culture present an opportunity to reimagine civic education as centering on the experiences of those who have been historically excluded from civic life—including young people—as a way of countering social injustice. That civic education needs to be reformed is an idea accepted across the political spectrum (Vasilogambros, 2021); that this should be done by centering on historically marginalized voices is not (Fitzgerald et al., 2021).

CIVIC EDUCATION OFTEN PERPETUATES A MORE TRADITIONAL WORLDVIEW

Civic education in the United States has largely functioned to maintain a traditional worldview. Most civic education focuses on providing students with information about the U.S. system of government and military

successes (Lopez et al., 2006), and due to these priorities, a lack of time and resources (Hanson et al., 2018) and the importance accorded to civic education compared to STEM fields (U.S. Department of Education, 2019), mainstream civic education has neither changed nor supported societal change. Going back decades, research has shown that the field of civic education has deliberately avoided examining civic life more critically, favoring instead a more traditional and informational approach which celebrates the American style of government (Apple, 1996; Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993). More recently, a systematic literature review of the research on civic education from 2009 to 2019 found that little research on ways to support the civic education of marginalized populations, calling for further research on pedagogies which might be effective with those who are currently being underserved in regards to their civic education (Fitzgerald et al., 2021). We also know that civic education calls for active civic participation but often does not offer students ways in which to practice acting in the civic sphere (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008).

Despite its critically important function of maintaining democracy, civic education provides students with limited information without providing them with opportunities to meaningfully engage with and use that knowledge to become the active citizens we need, a system which disproportionately impacts those who have been historically and systemically disadvantaged. What seems to have been lost in maintaining this traditional approach to civic education is that one can know how their country is governed, love that country, and want it to fulfill its earliest and highest ideals by promoting the thriving of all at the same time. Consequently, civic education celebrates the promise of America without acknowledging that that promise has yet to be fulfilled for some—and that it is our collective job to address that unfulfilled promise.

APPLYING SOCIAL MEDIA TO PROBLEMS OF CIVIC EDUCATION

One of the ways in which the literature bases of civic education and social media in education intersected through the study that is the center of this book was in the way that the concept of *openness*, central to effective civic education, was bolstered by the open nature of social media. Civic education is most successful when classrooms are *open* and *democratic*; this openness described a school and classroom climate in which students felt

comfortable asking questions or challenging what teachers are teaching; where discussion of controversial topics was encouraged; where learning occurred through active discussions and debates; where disagreements between students were allowed or encouraged; and that are safe spaces where students can think and question without fear of being shut down or being humiliated (Hahn, 1999). Students from classrooms with these open characteristics scored higher on measures of civic knowledge and civic skills than students from more *closed* classrooms (e.g., classrooms in which the climate did not encourage or allow disagreement or discussion of controversial topics) (Campbell, 2005; Gibson & Levine, 2003; McIntosh et al., 2007; Pasek et al., 2008; Torney-Purta, 2002).

Similarly, the use of social media in education has been shown to break down barriers to learning (Manca & Ranieri, 2013; Manca & Ranieri, 2016). Manca and Ranieri in their review of the research on Facebook as a tool for learning and teaching (Manca & Ranieri, 2013, Manca & Ranieri, 2016) found three main educational affordances of this social media: (1) it combined learning and information sources; (2) increased one's community of learners; and (3) expanded the contexts of learning. In particular, their review showed that social media supported some of the primary methods through which an open classroom climate is practiced: discussion, interaction, and collaboration among students as well as between teachers and students. These affordances could provide students with a safe space to ask questions, discuss controversial topics, disagree with peers or instructors, and raise minority opinions, all of which are components of an open classroom climate which is supportive of effective civic education.

The question then becomes: did the teachers in this study use this previously identified affordance of social media to create or maintain an open civic classroom climate? There is evidence that they did. The teachers in this study used Twitter to create or maintain an open, democratic classroom climate, as advocated in the civic education literature, and the ways in which they did this resonated with what previous research has found. For instance, they used Twitter to expand the contexts of learning beyond the classroom walls and enhance their students' connection to the community or the larger society. Each of the teachers in this study used Twitter to break down barriers and to promote student thought, student voice, and student agency, hallmarks of open and democratic classrooms.

This finding is important because a lack of openness in the classroom or school climate has been one of several common problems identified in the

literature as impeding the success of civic education. In previous civic education literature, these climates which hindered effective civic education had policies which prevented discussion or discouraged students from speaking (Hahn, 1999). Each of the teachers in this study used Twitter in some way for discussion, whether as a prompt in class or as an out-of-class activity. Although the teachers in this study did not have difficulty with either classroom climate or fostering student discussion, it is possible to see how a teacher who was working in a school which did not promote student discussion could benefit from using Twitter as a means to have students debate topics and share their ideas.

CRITICAL DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP: USING TWITTER TO DISRUPT UNJUST SYSTEMS

Social media have further ways to support civic learning and participation in young people. In particular, Twitter can be both a means and a place for critical civic participation. Theorists and researchers have shown that adding a critical lens (Pope, 2014; Seider & Graves, 2020)—one through which we examine the experience of all, but particularly of those whose experiences have been excluded—and justice-oriented citizenship (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) provide insight on the ways in which civic education can be reformed. At a time when young people have access to engaging in the civic sphere at their fingertips through social media, it is imperative that we understand and teach in ways which promote student civic engagement through this critical lens (Chapman & Greenhow, 2021; Fitzgerald et al., 2021; Logan et al., 2022).

Further, it has been argued that social media can serve as a disruptor or a tool which allows people to engage in social change (Durham, 2019; Fitzgerald et al., 2021). As previously mentioned, teachers and educational technology scholars have been arguing for a turn toward understanding and implementing *critical digital citizenship* as a way of engaging young people as civic actors in ways which acknowledge the potential harms of social media while also leveraging its affordances for social change (Logan et al., 2022). Critical pedagogies honor the experiences and personhood of students and provide them with approaches to challenge unjust systems (Freire, 1972, 74; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Applied to ways in which youth engage online, critical digital citizenship frames young people's use of Twitter and other social media as a means of challenging dominant power structures (Logan et al., 2022).

Although research in this area is nascent, this study and others have found that both teachers and students hope to use Twitter and other social media platforms to disrupt oppressive systems (Chapman & Greenhow, 2021; Xenos et al., 2014). One such study indicated that broadening our understanding of civic participation provided evidence of considerable youth civic engagement (Sloam, 2014). Specifically looking at the role social media played in protest movements, Sloam found that young people used Twitter to share information about their protests and to voice their own opinions about what they were protesting. Further, the young people who were protesting online brought those protests from the digital civic square to the physical one, employing the blended online/offline critical digital citizenship discussed by the teachers in this study. Consequently, Sloam (2014) argued, being able to use Twitter in this way deepened young people's civic participation. Similarly, another study showed that as students' social media use increased, so too did their engagement with politics (Xenos et al., 2014).

While the teachers in this study were not ultimately effective in engaging students to use Twitter to challenge hegemonic systems, that this was one of their intentions speaks to the potential of Twitter to foster this type of civic education and civic engagement. Several of the teachers in this study observed that their students were marginalized: Donna's students were isolated due to their rural geographic location; Leo believed many of his students went unheard due to their age; and one of Jed's desires was to use Twitter to establish and maintain relationships between his school's predominantly white students and the students who attended the other district high school, who were predominantly Black. Will provided a notable counterexample: from his place of comparative privilege, he did not see a need to disrupt any system, and so his use of Twitter, meant to prepare his students for adulthood, also functioned in ways which maintained their privilege. The results of this study are particularly promising as the results showed that social media use was more impactful upon a young person's civic engagement than was their socioeconomic status (Xenos et al., 2014). While such results need to be repeated, this research points to the possibility of social media as an effective way of encouraging and hearing historically marginalized voices.

Civic education often is limited by presenting only traditional understandings of citizenship and functions to maintain the societal systems which are already in place. As we work to reimagine what civic education can and should be, we would do well to consider any reform from a critical

digital citizenship lens. By intentionally seeking out ways to include historically marginalized voices, and by incorporating Twitter as one pedagogical approach, we are better equipping all students to inherit our Republic. However, doing this well will require teachers to be prepared to teach with and about social media. These points will be further addressed in the chapter which follows.

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CHAPTER 10

Conclusions: My Liberation Is Bound Up with Yours

This book has argued that using Twitter as a pedagogical approach within civic education provides opportunities which are currently underused, particularly for those whose voices are often unheard. Civic education sees students as potential or future citizens, and consequently focuses on preparing them to understand the American system of government. Civic education could be so much more: by recognizing that young people are already civic actors, and that learning more about that role requires both knowledge and practice, civic education could foster lifelong active civic participation. Teaching with Twitter provides both a site for civic action and an opportunity to increase students' understanding of how social media works and the role that it already plays in the civic sphere. Research, including the study presented in this book, has shown both some promise of how such teaching has been done and ideas about how it might be done even more robustly in the future. This chapter offers some conclusions about the imperative of teaching about and with social media in civic education.

CONSEQUENCES OF MEDIOCRE CIVIC EDUCATION

Effective civic education is critically important to the health of any nation with a participatory government. Civic education provides support and development for civic participation, which is itself a pathway to

representation and power (Hanson et al., 2018). In a nation with a long history of disenfranchisement, oppression, and inequity, we have a responsibility to support the civic education and engagement of all students. And yet we know that civic education could be far more robust and that it is most inadequate for those whose political voices are often already marginalized. While civic education should be improved for all students, maintaining traditional approaches to civic education only serves to maintain hegemonic power structures, which in turn maintains oppressive systems. Inclusive and expansive civic participation is both necessary for and the goal of the American democratic Republic, but it continues to be an ideal which has not yet been fully realized. Therefore, we must seek new approaches to civic education which support civic engagement in young people, particularly those whose voices have been historically suppressed.

The uptick in research and calls for improvement in civic education have been fueled by recent world and political events (Educating for American Democracy, 2021). Two decades ago, civic education research foreshadowed these events. In a landmark study of civic education in 28 countries, including the United States, roughly 10% of students in five countries (Australia, England, Finland, Sweden, and the United States) were described as “alienated” (Torney-Purta & Barber, 2011). These students, at age 14, did not trust government institutions and had very negative opinions of immigrants and ethnic groups (Torney-Purta & Barber, 2011). Students with these characteristics were identified more than a decade before the Brexit vote, the 2016 U.S. presidential election, and the rise of nationalism in other countries in which similar sentiments played a role. This nationalism has only grown since 2016, in and beyond the United States, powered by a fear of all types of diversity (Gusterson, 2017; Judis, 2016; Wilson, 2017). Such findings invite questions about the role of civic education in helping students to feel that they and others who are not like them are both important parts of the community.

In pluralistic, self-governing societies, where the nature of government depends upon the collective supporting the wellbeing of all, feeling “alienated” runs contrary to the system of government which, as we have seen, can have deleterious effects on society. If the civic education of 20 and 30 years ago had been more participatory and inclusive, would the world be in its current state? Such a question perhaps puts too much pressure on civic education, but at the same time, if we learn how to be citizens through our belonging to the society of school (Dewey, 1897), then how we act as adults in the larger society must have its roots in our civic education.

POSSIBLE PATHWAYS: THE POTENTIAL OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR CIVIC EDUCATION

We ignore the impact of social media at our own peril: it is already impacting civic life. At the same time, students do not know how to use social media merely as a function of being young; like any other tool or skill, they must be taught how to use it in order to fully understand and make the most of it. Young people are already acting in the civic sphere, but the ways in which they are doing so have been largely unsupported by the civic education that they receive in schools (Fitzgerald et al., 2021; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). Teachers and scholars have been calling for new approaches to civic education to address these gaps, including the use of social media as a pedagogical tool (Durham, 2019; Payne, 2015; Payne et al., 2020). Social media, particularly the platform Twitter, offer affordances for civic learning and civic engagement, such as the ability to connect with others outside of the school, to engage with various viewpoints, and to practice civic skills (Durham, 2019; Gao et al., 2012). It seems like we have arrived at the right moment to see learning *about* social media as a necessary topic to study in civic education, as well as a potential space for civic engagement.

The research on the use of Twitter in education has mostly examined how Twitter is used in higher education settings or by teachers for their own professional development (Greenhow et al., 2020). The research on Twitter for civic education is even further limited, and largely theoretical. Though there have been studies which have shown the benefits of the use of Twitter for youth civic engagement (Loader et al., 2014; Sloam, 2014; Xenos et al., 2014), the use of Twitter in K-12 classrooms for civic education is largely understudied (Chapman & Marich, 2021; Greenhow et al., 2020).

The purpose of this study was to examine high-school social studies teachers' use of the social media platform Twitter in order to understand how a teacher's context, objectives, and experience factored into their reasons and practices of using Twitter to teach civics. The five teachers who participated in this study came from different contexts, had different objectives, and dealt with different issues, but taken together, their experiences provided a vibrant picture of teaching civics with Twitter. The analysis of these cases revealed common themes: the importance of teachers'

initial prompts to use Twitter and their process of incorporating it into their teaching; the teachers' conceptions of citizenship as occurring fluidly in both online and offline spaces; and the use of Twitter to reflect and support student worth.

These findings add to the prior literature base through its examination of high-school teachers' use of Twitter as a pedagogical approach to civic education. While the teachers in this study varied in how and why they used Twitter with their students, each of the teachers used Twitter to support students' inherent worth. Most of the teachers saw student worth because they felt that their students needed to see themselves as civic actors and to be recognized as such by the community. Further, most of the teachers in this study used Twitter because of their conceptualization of citizenship and civic education. Teachers observed that the civic sphere is a blend of online and offline spaces, and they felt that Twitter could help their students to navigate that fluidity well. These findings have implications for future theoretical work, as well as for research and teaching practice.

IMPLICATIONS

This study has implications for educational theory, research, and practice. This study contributes to two fields of educational theory and research: civic education and social media; in particular, it updates the literature base on civic education to include how social media can be used for civic education, and it increases the body of literature on the use of Twitter in K-12 education, a subfield which is currently limited. This study also contributes to the conceptualization of the use of social media in education more broadly and also offers a strong critique of Bennett's framework of citizenship within the field of education and advocates for using a critical digital citizenship framework instead. Finally, this study has implications for teacher education programs in both social studies teaching methods and educational technology. In terms of teaching practice, this study showed how Twitter is currently being used in civics education classrooms, which provides a lens into how teachers are thinking and teaching about citizenship. Each of these implications is explored in the sections which follow.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY

Based on the experiences of the teachers in this study, some work should be done to revise the framework of citizenship with new media developed by Bennett and his colleagues (Bennett, 2008; Bennett et al., 2009; Bennett et al., 2010; Bennett et al., 2012). The teachers who participated in this study conceived of citizenship more broadly than the binary categories of *Actualizing Citizenship* and *Dutiful Citizenship* theorized by Bennett. The teachers also thought that civic engagement, as seen in particular civic actions, was more fluid than Bennett had conceived. Given the common concern over low levels of youth civic participation and this study's finding that citizenship exists in both online and offline spaces concurrently and in similar ways, further theoretical work should be conducted in order to better account for the breadth of understanding of citizenship as experienced by the teachers in this study.

This reframing of a theoretical understanding of how social media supports civic education should be grounded in *critical digital citizenship*. The concept of critical digital citizenship requires further development, and it is an important theoretical framework through which to further our understanding of how people learn with social media. This study showed that the participants in this study used Twitter in their classes in focused and particular ways; part of their success with the platform may be tied to how its use was tied to their objectives. One of the objectives for most of the teachers in this study was to address issues of marginalization which they saw in their communities. While three of the five teachers in this study, and theorists and researchers beyond this study (Logan et al., 2022; Sloam, 2014; Xenos et al., 2014), have argued that social media could provide a platform for marginalized students' voices, the teachers in this study had not yet been able to leverage Twitter for that purpose. Future research should further explore how critical digital citizenship, applied to the use of social media as a pedagogical tool in classrooms, impacts students' civic learning and engagement.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

In addition to future theoretical work, this study has several implications for future research on civics education and social media. The findings of this study have implications for initial and ongoing development of teachers as well as implications for future research on other tools for civic

education which blend online and offline forms of citizenship, the effects of technological tools on student civic participation, and the effects of technological tools on student worth and of increased student worth on civic participation.

This study's findings pertaining to the prompt and process of teachers' choosing to use Twitter have implications for future research in teacher education. One of this study's findings was that teachers used Twitter as a means of convincing students of their worth and agency, particularly in the civic sphere. We know about the critical importance of the relationship between teachers and students, particularly in adolescence (Chapman et al., 2021; Chapman et al., 2023). The teacher-student relationship can be transformative, particularly around issues of student worth, but creating these types of relationships is intentional (Chapman et al., 2021). Future research should evaluate the effects of social media on student worth should be assessed, as well as what other tools, activities, or elements of school culture could foster students' sense of self-worth. Research should be conducted which evaluates the effect of student worth on civic engagement. Finally, teacher education programs and teacher professional development should include means of supporting students' inherent worth in the classroom. It would be important for this research to be approached through a social justice lens; issues of student worth are often bound up in students' identities and the need to be seen, known, and valued for who they are (Chapman et al., 2021).

This study's findings pertaining to the prompt and process of teachers' choosing to use Twitter have implications for future research in teacher education. One of this study's findings was the key role played by a slightly more technologically savvy peer in a teacher's adoption of Twitter. Additionally, a teacher's introduction to Twitter came at a time when the teacher had specific objectives for student learning or goals for student connection. A second, related finding was the process through which teachers chose to use Twitter, considering both student preferences and the affordances of Twitter in making their decisions about how to use the social media platform.

Similarly, another implication of these findings is the need for further research on the teaching of and about social media in teacher education and professional development programs. Given the finding that teachers' adoption of Twitter was connected to their awareness of what they wanted to do with their students, future research could evaluate the best ways in which to prepare pre-service teachers to be effectively introduced to social media for use in the classroom and to incorporate it thoughtfully into their

teaching practice. Further, what supports should be in place in teacher education around the use of social media for learning? There is a parallel research implication for teacher professional development: how might teachers be supported most effectively through professional development in their incorporation of social media into the classroom? Can this be designed in order to include an exploration of teachers' objectives? Answering any of these questions should come through a critical digital citizenship lens, so that as teachers learn about using social media in their classrooms, they are best prepared to address its less virtuous aspects with their students. Further, applying a critical digital citizenship lens to teachers' use of social media in the classroom broadens the type of civic actions which can be supported through formal civic education.

This study's findings also have implications for research into the student experience of civic education with social media. One of this study's findings pertained to the goals that teachers have for students, namely: teaching civics in ways that incorporated both online and offline experiences of citizenship. Further research should be done to examine the ways and tools that teachers are using to teach citizenship in ways that blend online and offline civic practices (one example: civic education games; see Chang et al., 2020 for more information). Research should also be done to assess the effectiveness of these blended practices on student civic knowledge and civic participation, both during their time in school and later into adulthood. A critical digital citizenship lens can be applied here, as well, to best understand the ways in which such approaches can work toward systemic change.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

This study also has several implications for civics teachers and for any teachers who are interested in using social media in their classrooms. One of the common themes which emerged from this study was that the participants came to use Twitter in their classes because they were introduced to Twitter by peers who were also using the platform in their classrooms. Importantly, the participants in this study also had ideas about what they wanted to do in their classrooms when they were introduced to Twitter. Teachers who are curious about using social media in their classrooms should find a colleague or peer who is already using social media for educational purposes; this person could help the teacher to learn the social media platform as well as provide support as the teacher begins to implement its use in his or her own classroom. Additionally, teachers should

reflect upon their goals for their students as they consider adopting social media in their classrooms. A second finding of this study was that teachers' process of choosing to use Twitter considered both their students' social media preferences as well as the affordances of Twitter and their alignment with the teachers' intentions for using social media in class. Teachers who want to use social media in their classrooms should reflect on both their students' preferences and the affordances of any social media platform they consider.

The objectives of the teachers who participated in this study also have implications for other teachers. Based on this study's finding that teachers are incorporating elements of both online and offline citizenship into their teaching, teachers should think broadly about the civic skills and civic actions they teach. The teachers in this study did not think it beneficial to separate online and offline civic practices, choosing instead to see them as parts of the whole that made up civic engagement. Other teachers might consider doing the same as a way of inviting all students to find ways to participate in civic life.

Finally, the teachers in this study were concerned about student worth. Young people matter to their community, and teachers used Twitter as a tool to convey students' value to and impact on the community and students' the civic sphere. This is a practice that other teachers could adopt and could also serve as a prompt for teachers to think about other ways that they could attend to student worth through their teaching.

LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations which may have implications for future research. Each of the participants in this study had positive experiences with using Twitter for civic education, and each participant intended to continue to use Twitter in their classrooms. Although qualitative research does not aim to generalize its findings about a phenomenon (Hoyt & Bhati, 2007), there is no counterpoint in this study to the participants who support using Twitter in their classrooms. Therefore, a limitation of this study is that it did not include the voices of teachers who have used Twitter for civic education and who no longer do so because it did not work for them. Having these voices in this study would have presented a fuller picture of what it means to teach civics with Twitter. Including these voices should be a consideration of future research. Another limitation of this study is that there are aspects of civic education, such as democratic

values and knowledge of the U.S. Constitution, which are not addressed in Bennett's model (Bennett, 2008; Bennett et al., 2009; Bennett et al., 2010). Because this study focused on the aspects of civic education that Bennett did address, this study does not address all of the complexities of civic education. Finally, despite an awareness of the potential threats to validity and the steps taken to avoid them referenced in Chap. 4, it is possible that not all of these threats were entirely avoided. In spite of reviewing my data analysis with two other researchers, it is possible that my analysis was influenced by my positionality about civic education, social media, or the importance of youth civic participation.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the study presented in this book contributes much to the conversation happening around rates of youth civic participation and offers directions for future research and suggestions for ways in which the use of social media could be incorporated into civic education. Civic engagement and civic participation among young people have recently been areas of interest and concern. By examining how high school social studies teachers were using the social media platform Twitter to teach civics, this study showed that teachers were prompted to use Twitter by an influential peer at a time when the teachers could see the affordances of Twitter as beneficial for the goals they had for their students. Teachers chose to use Twitter after consideration of their students' social media preferences because the affordances of Twitter aligned with their objectives, particularly incorporating both online and offline citizenship and increasing student worth.

The results of this study have important implications for researchers and practitioners. This study's findings show the importance of the manner in which teachers are introduced to and supported in using social media in education. Teachers who participated in this study also conceived of citizenship broadly, in ways that incorporated online and offline civic learning and civic action which are fluid. This understanding of citizenship and its application to teaching have implications for connecting with a wide range of students. Importantly, the study's findings add to the literature base of the use of social media in K-12 education. This study also showed that teachers were using Twitter to attend to student worth, which is a new insight for this field.

Through the use of the social media platform Twitter, the teachers in this study sought to introduce their students to a variety of ways of

participating in civic life. Although the teachers used Twitter in ways that continued to align with some of the established best practices in civic education, in using Twitter, they broadened the ways in which they taught about citizenship, making it accessible and applicable to as many students as possible. This study showed that teachers were concerned with students knowing that they had a right and responsibility to participate in civic life, because their intrinsic worth made them valuable members of society. Overall, this study provides insights into how teachers are conceiving of civic education in ways that will meet their students where they are and guide them into civic participation.

This can then provide guidance for the remainder of the field of civic education. Civic education in the United States is in need of reform. This is apparent to people across the political spectrum, as well as to teachers and researchers (Vasilogambros, 2021). After decades of spending educational resources on other subject areas (U.S. Department of Education, 2019) and years of increased political polarization (Payne & Journell, 2019), civic education is in need of attention, revision, and reimagination. What those reforms should be is a matter of some debate.

Throughout this book, I have argued that teaching with and about the social media platform Twitter should be considered as a valuable pedagogical approach to teaching civics. Not only is Twitter a place where students can learn *in vivo* about civic engagement, they can participate on Twitter as civic actors, recognizing the role that young people play in the community *already*, rather than seeing them as citizens-in-training. Further, young people do not know how to use Twitter, or any technology, simply as a function of their age. Teaching with Twitter affords teachers the opportunity to teach about *Twitter* as well. Given the role that Twitter and other social media sites already play in civic life, understanding how these platforms operate is necessary not only for using them well, but for living in a world in which civic life unfolds in both online and offline spaces.

This is the crux of what civic education must be. Those living in any participatory style of government, but particularly those in a democratic Republic “need to know democratic things and do democratic things” (Payne, 2015, p.22). Walter Parker (2008), whom Payne is paraphrasing in her quote, argued eloquently for the important role that diversity plays in civic education:

Diversity matters in both knowing and doing, in both enlightenment and engagement, in both revealing the world and solving its problems. Without

the diversity afforded by a varied social environment—such as a school—growth is stunted, idiocy encouraged, civic consciousness narrowed, and decisions impoverished. Diversity and shared problems are the essential resources schools afford to the education of democratic citizens. (p. 76)

Diversity and shared problems certainly exist in schools, but schools could foster greater inclusivity and conversation could be by opening the school up through social media. Social media, which already is a site of civic engagement and thus part of the civic sphere, can offer a place for student civic learning and youth civic engagement. Supporting young people in their engagement with others on social media is essential for their knowledge and wellbeing; doing so for civic purposes is imperative for our democracy.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

I'd like to thank you once again for being willing to participate in the interview aspect of my study. As I have mentioned to you before, my study seeks to understand how teachers and students are teaching and learning about civic education with Twitter. The study also seeks to understand why teachers use Twitter and if and how it is an effective tool for civic education. The aim of this research is to document the possible process of civic learning with Twitter. Our interview today will last approximately one hour during which I will be asking you about your teaching, your decision to use Twitter in class, and the outcomes you hope to see as a result of using Twitter in class. Are you ok with me recording (or not) our conversation today? If yes: Thank you! I will need you to fill out this consent form indicating that I have your permission to audio record our conversation. Please let me know if at any point you want me to turn off the recorder or keep something you said off the record. If no: Thank you for letting me know. I will only take notes of our conversation. Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions? If any questions (or other questions) arise at any point in this study, you can feel free to ask them at any time. I would be more than happy to answer your questions.

Grand Tour Question

Thinking about your experience of teaching civics and of using Twitter to teach civics, can you describe what that has been like?

Related to Research Question 1

- What grade levels and subjects do you teach?
- How long have you been teaching?
- How long have you been teaching at your current school?
- Can you describe your experience using technology with students?

Related to Research Question 1a, 1b, and 1d

- What gave you the initial idea of using Twitter to teach civics?
- How did you move from the idea of using Twitter to thinking through to actually using Twitter in your classroom?
- Can you describe how you use Twitter with your students?
- How do you introduce Twitter to your class?
- Has using Twitter with students worked out the way you thought it would?
- What are the most important aspects of civics that you want your students to learn?
- What examples of being a good or active citizen do you include in your teaching?
- Does it seem to you that your students are interested in civics? What makes you think so/not?

Related to Research Question 1c

- In thinking about using Twitter to teach civics, what do you hope that your students get out of that experience?
- What do you hope students will be able to do because they are using Twitter?
- How do you think using Twitter as part of civics education benefits students?
- Have there been any challenges or barriers in using Twitter with your students?
- When you teach civics, what do you hope your students are learning?
- When you teach civics, what do you hope your students do with what they learn?

- Are there ways in which students are able to interact with civics content or civics practices in ways they would not have had you not used Twitter? Please describe.

Related to Research Question 1d

- Why do you think using Twitter might be effective specifically for teaching civics?
- Did you find that anything about your teaching changed when using Twitter?
- Did you find that anything about your way of interacting with students changed when using Twitter?
- Did you find that anything about the way in which students interacted with each other changed when using Twitter?
- Do you think your students understand citizenship differently after using Twitter?

Final Prompts to Push Past Saturation

- What surprised you during the time when your students were using Twitter for class?
- If you were to talk to other civics teachers about using Twitter with students, what would you most want them to be aware of?
- What about teaching civics with Twitter have we not talked about yet?

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