

**The scaling of civic education:
Connections between beliefs and practices**

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Abstract

State constitutions and national rhetoric profess the importance of the enculturation of youth into American democracy, arguing that civic education encourages participation in the institutions and processes of government. Public schools take up much of the obligation for the provision of such education.

There are two shortcomings to this arrangement. First, students may not learn necessary civic knowledge. Second, even if they do learn civic knowledge, such knowledge may not serve its intended purpose if students do not observe and practice civic habits. Research has pointed to startling declines in the provision of civic knowledge and in performance on knowledge assessments. Further, little is known about opportunities for youth to practice democracy in schools.

This dichotomy between assessing civic knowledge and stressing the importance of civic habits causes problems in scaling opportunities to practice democracy. We argue that fluctuating purposes of civic education and of what it means to participate complicate providing opportunities in schools with consistency and with access for all students.

We study K-12 practitioner beliefs about democracy. In the absence of a robust curriculum and the fact that schools are organizations in which students function, K-12 practitioners model power, authority and governance and, hence, impact the acquisition of knowledge along with the opportunities to practice civic habits for their students. Relying on an innovative Q-sort and interviews of participants in public school districts and organizations responsible for shaping education, we investigate the nuanced views of adults who make policy, administer, teach and staff our schools about democracy and decision making.

Introduction

State constitutions and national rhetoric profess the importance of the enculturation of youth into American democracy, arguing that civic education encourages participation in the institutions and processes of government. Public schools take up much of the obligation for the provision of such education.

There are two shortcomings to this arrangement. First, students may not learn necessary civic knowledge. Second, even if they do learn civic knowledge, such knowledge may not serve its intended purpose if students do not practice civic habits. Research has pointed to startling declines in the provision of civic knowledge and in performance on knowledge assessments.

The dichotomy between assessed civic knowledge and achieving the purpose of the aforementioned rhetoric continues even as states refine their stated goals for social studies and civics. We argue that the enculturation into the cultural and political communities in which students will live and operate is greatly affected by the modeling they observe and work in while they are students in schools and not just the result of being in social studies and civics classes. Yet little is known about the beliefs related to democracy of the adults who operate and lead schools. We argue that fluctuating purposes of civic education and of what it means to participate complicate providing opportunities in schools with consistency and with access for all students and, hence makes enculturation of students into democracy very difficult to bring to scale in a school, school district or state.

We study K-12 practitioner beliefs about democracy relying on an innovative Q-sort of participants in public school districts and organizations responsible for shaping education to find similarities and differences in the beliefs of educators and policy makers in public schools related to democracy and decision making. Schools are organizations in which students function for a minimum of ten years for approximately 6 hours a day. The K-12 practitioners in these schools and leadership positions practice and model power, authority and governance throughout the time students are in school. Hence, the efforts of the social studies/civics teachers and the power, authority and governance of the school come together to affect both the rhetoric and the results of enculturation of the youth into a democracy. Achieving the desired results of youth participating in a cultural and political democracy to scale with consistency will be more than increasing civic standards at the state or district levels.

The Civic Mission of Schools

Historically, civic education has been an important goal for public schools, especially in the United States. References to the importance of civic education for the sustenance and structure of government and governance in the United States can be traced back to George Washington's Farewell Address (Washington 1796). Washington's argument was premised on the idea that in order to achieve and maintain the common good, the government of the United States had a primary interest in citizens with good public character. Further, institutions of public education could become the primary vehicle through which young citizens encounter lessons in public character. Whether one looks at the Horace Mann Schools in Massachusetts of nearly 200 years ago or the goals expressed in the mission statements of schools of the past 20 years, civics was and is a goal for students. Usually, the goal statement involved a desire for the students to learn civic knowledge, civic skills and civic dispositions. The goal of students leaving schools with a civic disposition, propensity to behave democratically, is widely labeled as critical. Respondents in the 32nd Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll conducted in 2000 expressed a belief that schools have a civic mission. In the 2000 survey, the respondents ranked the statement "To prepare people to become responsible citizens" as the number one purpose of schools (Rose and Gallup, 2000).

But in a post-NCLB America, standards and assessments direct, guide, or inform the formal curricula of schools. The emphasis upon one school discipline or another has been in flux for many years. At least since 1983 the Nation at Risk Report was released and most likely since the initiation of the "space race" the emphasis upon math and reading has been increasing. The emphasis upon these two disciplines has continued with the implementation of the 2001 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, "No Child Left Behind." This emphasis translated to increases in financial and time resources. The time committed to schools has been relatively stable for several decades and since time and funding committed to math and reading has increased, hence, some disciplines had less time and money. Since social studies and civics did not receive emphasis over this period, the time and funding for these disciplines have diminished (Duncan, 2012; Godsay, Henderson, Levine, & Littenberg-Tobias, 2012; Kahne & Middaugh 2008; Walling 2007).

While court cases and state laws have reaffirmed general interest in promoting civic education in public schools (e.g. Pauley v. Kelly 1979), educational researchers Soder, Goodlad and McMannon (2001) have called for a resurgence of the primacy of civic education, arguing that one of the primary goals of education is the enculturation of youths into a social and political democracy. Yet, as Robert W. Hoffert argues, often we ignore this vital connection between public education and democracy. Hoffert presents two reasons for the dismissal of this link, it either baffles us or is satisfied by "patriotic mantras offered by pedagogical recipes focused on forms of participation" (Hoffert 2001; pg. 26). The researchers offer a third reason; notions of what it means to be a citizen and participate in

social and political democracies are changing. This change increases the opportunities for participation while simultaneously increasing the demands on citizens both in terms of learning appropriate forms of and means to participation as well as in the act of participation itself.

Changing notions of what it means to be a citizen or participate in social and political democracies stem partly from tensions within practitioners' and researchers' conceptions of civic education. For some scholars, civic education is more closely aligned with community engagement and living (e.g., Strom and Stoskopt, 1983); while for others, there is an explicitly political component (e.g., Lennon, 2006). For some, civic education may be about creating a sense of civic duty based on emotional or symbolic ties (e.g., the American National Election Studies, 1992); while for others, it may be more about creating a sense of responsibility to the members of society (e.g., Dalton, 2009). Educators are expected to navigate among these various conceptions as they provide civic education for their students.

There are two shortcomings to the provision of civic education primarily through public schools. First, students may not learn necessary civic knowledge. Second, even if they do learn civic knowledge, such knowledge may not serve its intended purpose if students do not observe and practice civic habits. Research has pointed to startling declines in the provision of civic knowledge and in performance on knowledge assessments. Further, little is known about opportunities for youth to practice democracy in schools. As Campbell (2006) notes, scholars have not done a terribly good job narrowing down the concept of civic education or understanding how schools may nurture such learning. Regardless, public schools have taken up much of the obligation for the provision of such education, begging the question, within a school, who teaches civics?

The Translation of Mission to Standards

Civics, like other topics, is made important when assessed and the results made public. Thus, the broad civic mission must be translated into testable or assessable content. Each of the fifty states has a curriculum standard that has been classified as Power, Authority, and Governance; forty-nine states have a standard classified as Civic Ideals and Practices; forty-five states have a standard classified as Real World Application. Forty states require at least one course in government (Godsay, Henderson, Levine, & Littenberg-Tobias, 2012).

In 2000, 34 states had an assessment in the area. Of these 34, twenty-one states require schools to administer an exam in social studies/government. Additionally, since 2000, nearly every statewide social studies assessment shifted to a multiple-choice format. Nine of the 34 states require students to pass the exam in order to graduate. The exam in seven

of these nine states is of multiple-choice format. Only New Mexico and Ohio have exams required for graduation that are multiple choice, short answer and essay (Godsay, Henderson, Levine, & Littenberg-Tobias, 2012). Thus, much of the actual assessment of civic education is rooted largely in an assessment of content recall and limited understanding. There is movement in some states to assess more than the acquisition of content knowledge. In 2012, the Tennessee legislature adopted a new format for assessment of civics. The legislation mandated that the new assessment could not be a standardized, multiple-choice test. The assessment had to be project-based, “involv[ing] student-driven projects that are both central to the curriculum and rooted in the ‘real world,’ involving complex tasks based on challenging questions or problems” (Wilson, 2013).

Translating Standards to Outcomes

Previous research has investigated how civics curricula (history, social studies, government, etc.) impacts students’ political development. Early research in education found that classroom instruction had very little impact on political knowledge and an even smaller impact on efficacy or participation (e.g., Langton and Jennings, 1968; Morrison and McIntyre, 1971; Beck, 1977). Torney-Purta and Richardson (2002) argue that these studies may have led to the low priority civic education was given compared with other areas of study, including math, science and reading.

More recent research has indicated an unequal, but positive relationships between curricular study of civics and political knowledge (e.g. Niemi and Junn, 1998; Nie and Hillygus, 2001; Syversten, Stout and Flanagan, 2009). Niemi and Junn (1998) found that the relationship between the study of civics and political knowledge is more pronounced among those students who are traditionally less enfranchised, economically disadvantaged and/or minority students. They find that the positive impact of civics education is diminished substantially among those students who come from politically active communities and families (Niemi and Junn, 1988). In 2003, Gimpel, Lay and Schuknecht found that diffuse support for the political system begins with experiences at school; that is, a strong civics education in high school translates into higher general support for government and political systems. Finally, much of the recent research on the impact of civics education on participation concludes that more active forms of education that include participation and engagement as part of the curriculum are more effective (Kahne and Middaugh, 2008; Syversten, Stout and Flanagan, 2009).

There is some evidence that differences in schools and districts may impact engagement, both civically and more generally. Schneider and Buckley (2002) for example, find that when parents can select the school their child will attend, the students are able to form

closer bonds with fellow, like-minded students. As a result, these children tend to become more engaged socially and politically. Schmuck and Schmuck (1990) find that parents, students, and employees of all types are typically fairly engaged in smaller districts where the district forms a key component of the individual's identity. However, the question remains as to whether and for how long students know and are able to put civic lessons into practice.

We contend that schools are organizations in which power, authority and governance are modeled daily and school-wide. In the United States, schools are the only organization in which people are mandated to participate for a minimum of ten years, often longer. In 2010, the percentage of students age 7-17 enrolled in public or private school was approximately just over 97 percent (NCES, 2012). Organizational membership affects political attitudes, information about public issues, social networks, norms of participation, and civic skills (Olsen, 1982, Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995).

Sizer and Sizer (1999) argue that the students are watching the organization called school. The students are watching everyone. For example, Dr. James Lowham was a math teacher in a public high school for more than twenty years. While he never taught in a civics classroom, he modeled civic concepts every day. Only a few teachers outside of a math classroom teach math, for example, science teachers may need to teach some concepts in mathematics or the wood shop teacher may need to review fractions. But the math teachers have nearly exclusive authority about when and how math concepts are taught and modeled. The social studies/government teachers have a similar role with regards to the teaching of content knowledge. But many outside of the social studies/government classroom model concepts of power, authority and governance. To a far greater degree than in mathematics, science or other disciplines, everyone in school modeled and shaped civic behavior. Students learned who had power, what power the person had, who made decisions that directly impacted their lives. Students learned the governance model of the various classrooms and the school. Students learned different norms of participation, behavior, involvement. Much of this civic learning took place outside of the civics classrooms of the school.

In terms of citizenship and democracy, typical public education decision-making structures isolate faculty, staff, students and parents from decision-making processes, maintaining their status as subjects rather than participants in the system. In typical K-12 education systems, the senior administration and board members set goals and directions while faculty, staff, and sometimes school administration are directed to follow. The end result of such a system may be that faculty, staff, administration, students and community members may be ill prepared for active and full participation in democracies in part because they are rarely given the opportunity to participate. In part this may be because as Smith (1999)

notes “As agents of the secular state, public schools, bureaucratically organized and controlled, stress the pragmatic, the instrumental, the universalistic. There is little place here for the development or support of the sacralizing functions of ritual, and this is nowhere more true than in the area of socialization” (p. 260). Thus, for Smith, schools can do little more than introduce content.

States have standards and assessments of many content areas, including social studies and government. History is replete with references to the importance of civic knowledge and participation. The public believes it is important. Every state, except Iowa, requires at least two years of social studies/civics. It is easy to conclude civic knowledge and dispositions are important.

However, there is a dissonance between the identified importance of civic dispositions and knowledge and the behaviors of young adults. This study builds off this tension between democratic and decision-making beliefs of the adults who make policy, administer, teach, and staff our schools and the learning that happens in the civics classes. The beliefs of the adults guide their behavior and their behavior becomes the model for the students to observe - behavior that directly affects students in their everyday school life. Little is known about the beliefs of policy makers, administrators and teachers related to power, authority, and governance; little is known about the beliefs of those from whom our students learn civics. We argue that fluctuating notions of what it means to participate civically complicate providing opportunities in schools to observe and practice civic dispositions with consistency and with access for all students.

We study K-12 practitioner beliefs about democracy. In the absence of a robust curriculum, these beliefs shape the acquisition of knowledge and the opportunities to practice civic habits. Relying on an innovative Q-sort and interviews of participants in four public school districts, we investigate the complicated relationship between democratic beliefs and opportunities for civic participation.

Methodology

To examine potential differences in viewpoints and belief structures among those involved in education, we developed a Q-sort (Stephenson 1953, Brown 1980, Brown 1993). The Q-sort asked participants to sort a sample of 36 statements about education and about democracy in public education (see Table 1). Participants were asked to sort these statements quasi-normally from -5 for most disagree to +5 for most agree. The quasi-normal distribution forced participants to carefully consider which statements represent their strongest beliefs, allowing them to more clearly differentiate those statements that provoke strong reactions from those that provoke milder responses. While each participant

was asked to sort statements so they followed quasi normal distribution, they were explicitly informed that they should deviate from the distribution if doing so would better represent their beliefs.

We created our Q-sample of 36 statements by applying four viewpoints on democracy to public education, schools, and decision-making. For each topic (the far left column of Table 1), we present a series of statements that correspond to a viewpoint on democracy, which are organized into two dimensions. The first dimension, the Distribution of Power, relates to theoretical expectations about involvement in decision-making. Thus, the statements under this dimension relate to who participants feel should be appropriately involved in the process of decision-making. Under this dimension, the researchers utilized two logical viewpoints, elite and participatory. An elite theory of democracy posits that power should be in the hands of a small number of privileged leaders, in part, because the masses are rarely equipped to contribute to policy making. The main role for the masses in such a viewpoint is the election of officials, the elite, who make actual decisions and policy. A participative viewpoint on democracy argues that all individuals who have some stake or interest in the outcomes of a decision should be able to participate, or at the least, have their interests directly represented, in a decision making structure. The modern version of the participatory viewpoint is a response to dissatisfaction with both the outcomes and the processes that tend to subjugate individuals.

The second dimension, the Distribution of Responsibility, relates to theoretical expectations regarding the scope of policy outcomes. Thus, the statements under this dimension relate to what participants feel education decisions should be made about. Under this dimension, the researchers utilized two logical viewpoints, neo-liberal and communitarian. A neoliberal viewpoint on democracy argues that little to no interference from government is the optimal form of decision making. Markets and open competition, not governments, should make most decisions, particularly about socially controversial subjects because only competition is able to effectively overcome the inherent self-interest of individuals. A communitarian perspective on the proper scope of policy outcomes in a democracy, on the other hand, argues that decisions should be made for the public good and that often, only governments are able to adequately understand the scope and impact of such decisions.

These two dimensions, distribution of power and distribution of responsibility, are properly orthogonal because the first dimension relates to who should make a decision and the second dimension relates to the normative beliefs about the content of those decisions. For a Q-sort, it is not necessary, nor in this case is it expected, that these viewpoints be mutually exclusive. The researchers are not interested in testing the particular viewpoints on democracy, but rather, we are interested in understanding what participants believe

about democracy and public education. Some statements in our Q-sample run deliberately counter to that viewpoint's theoretical perspective to possibly elicit a negative response on the negative valence of the statement. The researchers have modified and revised statements several times for improved clarity and communication.

As opposed to traditional surveys, Q-sorts encourage participants to re-rank and re-evaluate statements as they evaluate new statements from the Q-sample. Thus, statements within the Q-sample are thought of as inter-related. That is, researchers analyze and understand a participant's perspective by analyzing the entire ranking of statements; each statement only has meaning in relation to how a participant ranks all the other statements (Vogel and Lowham 2007). Thus, as a methodology, Q-sorts sit nicely between traditional surveys and semi-structured interviews. Q-sorts are "sensitive to context [and] amenable to statistical analysis" (Vogel and Lowham 2007; pg. 21).

At this point in the study, 48 respondents have participated in the Q-sort. These participants were selected from four different organizations, the Collaboration Leadership Team (CLT)¹, Natrona County School District #1, Laramie County School District #1, and the Wyoming P-16 Council. The CLT is a national organization devoted to the training and use of collaborative decision-making, primarily in the educational arena. The CLT focuses on training districts to use a participatory and inclusive model of decision making, thus providing a potentially very different modeling of civic behavior. CLT conference participants included school board members, district and school level administration, teachers, classified and professional staff, union employees for both administrator and teacher unions, university faculty, and educational consultants from Wyoming, Wisconsin, Colorado and Maryland. Conference participants were contacted in person during their 2010 Summer Retreat. Twenty-nine percent of the sample is primarily identified with the CLT (14 people).

During summer 2010, the researchers visited each school district and delivered a number of Q-sort packets to various employees in the two districts, including school board members, district and building administrators, classified and professional staff, and union representatives. Each participant was asked to complete their own Q-sort then to distribute their remaining packets to other individuals involved in education in the district who might have perspectives different than their own. Thus, the sampling process for the districts is a modified snowball sample where researchers devolve control over the sampling process to the participants themselves. Thirty-nine percent of our sample was from NCSD#1 (19

¹ At the time of the Q-sort, The CLT was known as the Collaborative Leadership Trust. The group changed its name in 2012.

people); 18.8 percent of our sample was from LCSD#1 (9 people).² The school district participants included building administrators, district administrators, teachers, union officers and employees, classified personnel, and board members.

The final organization included in the sample of participants is the P-16 Council. This council is comprised of people appointed by the Governor of Wyoming for the purpose of coordinating and improving transitions between school levels and outcomes of education for all ages (pre-kindergarten to baccalaureate). The Council includes teachers, administrators, employers, university faculty, union leaders, a representative from community colleges, and a representative from the state Department of Education. We felt that including members of the P-16 Council allowed for the representation of viewpoints from the state of education that are outside traditional district structures but are important contributors to or beneficiaries of public education in the state. Each member of the P-16 Council was mailed a Q-sort packet and asked to mail their results back; 12.5% of our sample (6) was from the P-16 Council, including a K-12 teacher, the executive director, a member of the university faculty, and a union official.

We extracted six unique perspectives using a cluster analysis that grouped respondents together based on squared Euclidean distance between their complete statement rankings.³

Results

On an individual level, participants presented a range of beliefs across most dimensions (see Table 2). Of the 36 statements, participant opinion on 14 statements had a range of nine or ten, meaning that individuals were both strongly supported and disagreed with these statements. Participants held divergent views in every content area. There were only six statements that had a range of five or less, meaning there was relative consensus on these statements.

To analyze the perspectives of the participants, we averaged values across all individuals in each of the six clusters. To interpret each perspective, we considered all statements with an average absolute value of 2.5 or greater to be important for understanding the cluster's beliefs. We considered statements with lower average scores to reflect low intensity or low

² There is some overlap between participants in NCSD#1 and the CLT. There were four employees of NCSD #1 who attended the CLT annual conference.

³ While the choice of clustering algorithm and distance measure can make an important difference in which individuals cluster together and how particular clusters form, the researchers elected to utilize the complete linkage algorithm and squared Euclidean distance measure. This combination of algorithm and distance measure maximized the differences in belief structures.

consensus within the cluster. Overall, there is little question about the importance of the civic mission of public schools in the United States. Following the literature, all clusters believed strongly in the mission of public schools enculturating youth into social and political democracies. This was however, the only statement on which clusters agreed. The following descriptions represent the perspectives across individuals within a particular cluster (see Table 2).

Middle of the Road: This is the largest and the most diverse in terms of positions/backgrounds and experiences, and has the fewest common beliefs. This cluster believes that schools should facilitate the unique development of students [2].⁴ Part of that development includes ensuring the development of student's voices as well as ensuring students know how to exercise it [5]. Additionally, this cluster believes that school boards should be open decision making bodies – they should not make decisions in closed sessions [25] and should seek input from the community [26]. In general, this cluster seeks to broaden participation in decision making; they believe that all individuals who have a stake in a decision should be allowed to participate [36].

Process Focused: This cluster holds strong beliefs about the process of democracy. By comparison, this cluster feels strongly about four of the five statements about democracy. At most, other clusters only feel strongly about two. Further, this cluster appears to hold fairly strong anti-elitist tendencies, yet, they do not necessarily hold strong opinions about who should be included.

This cluster views democracy as process of decision making, not a way of obtaining a preferred outcome [10]; democracy should also do more than protect individual rights [11] and that it ought to strive to make decisions in the common good [24]. Interestingly, they also believe that democracy does not require people to be treated equally when making decisions for the common good [12]. This cluster, is, thus interested in the process of decision making. When making decisions in conflict, this cluster believes that parties should explore those disagreements to find common understanding [20], and that the market of public opinion should not always determine the outcome [19].

This cluster also appears to hold strong anti-elitist opinions. As with other clusters, they believe that district decision making should not occur in closed sessions [25] and that parents and the community should have a role at the district level [26]. Unlike some other clusters, this need for openness may stem from their belief that school boards do not always make decisions in the common good [28]. This cluster feels that power should extend past senior district administration and that decision making should include non-elites [31, 35].

⁴ For reference, statement numbers are in parentheses.

Finally, this cluster appears to believe that schools have an important role in enculturating students with their responsibilities to their communities after graduation [16] and that part of that responsibility includes the exercise of one's own voice [14]. Despite their belief that democracy ought to make decisions in the common good, members of this cluster do not believe that public education has the responsibility to prepare students to make decisions in the common good.

Common Good and Equal Treatment Cluster: This cluster believes that schools should facilitate the unique development of students [2] and prepare students to exercise their voice [14] to help make decisions for the common good [8]. Part of this preparation includes a belief that people ought to be treated equally when making decisions for the common good [12]. This cluster also appears to distrust school boards – they should make decisions in open sessions [25], seek out community and parental [26] input in the hopes of improving decision quality [28].

While the Common Good/Equal Treatment cluster and the process focused cluster appear to have much in common, this cluster seems to be in direct conflict with the Process Focused in terms of whether or not democracy requires equal treatment of people when making decisions. Further, while both clusters believe in the importance of the “common good,” they emphasize it differently. This cluster believes strongly that public education has an important role to play in preparing students to make decisions in the common good whereas the process focused cluster was more neutral about this responsibility.

School Board Neutral Cluster: In comparison to the other clusters, this cluster is most defined by their neutrality on school boards. Every other cluster believes, at the very least, that school boards ought to make decisions in open session and seek input from community members and parents. Several clusters hold stronger beliefs about school boards. This cluster is relatively neutral about them.

This cluster believes schools should facilitate the unique development of each student [2]. Part of that development includes preparing students to make decisions in the common good [8] and a belief that students have responsibilities to their communities upon graduation [16], including the exercise of their own voices [14]. This belief in preparing students for civic practice also includes the belief that schools should provide opportunities to participate in decision making while in school [6].

This cluster also believes that democracy is a process of decision making that does more than protect individual rights [11] and produce their desired outcome [10]. Along with this belief in process, they believe that power does not always come from having more people on your side [33] and that inclusion in the decision making process is good [35]. In a decision making process, this cluster believes that conflict requires students to seek out

opinions different from their own [18], explore those differences in an effort to develop their own opinions [20], and not rely on leaders and elites to form their views [17].

Common Good Focused Cluster: This cluster has a strong belief in decisions serving the common good [24], recognizing that sometimes these decisions are more than protecting individual rights [11]. They believe schools should prepare students to participate in decision making for the common good [8], in part by providing opportunities for students to participate while in school [6]. This cluster believes school boards should be open bodies by making decisions in open sessions [25] and by seeking input from community members and parents [26].

Broadly Distributed Participation Cluster: This cluster believes that decisions should be made in the common interest. However, they are more interested in to whom power and participation is extended. They believe it should be distributed broadly [32] – to non elites [35], past senior administration [31], to anyone who believes they have a stake in the decision [36] and to students. It is important to note that this is the only cluster that believes students have a legitimate role to play in district level decision making [30]. This is supported by their belief in providing opportunities to participate in decision making [6] and their belief in the importance of students developing and exercising their own voices [14]. The development of students' voices and participation includes the idea that conflicting opinions should be explored to find common ground [20] and that students should befriend differences in opinions [18].

This cluster's broad distribution of power may stem from their distrust of school boards. This cluster believes that school boards should make decisions in the open [25] and seek input [26] – in part because they do not always make decisions in the common good [28]. This cluster believes that schools should facilitate the unique development of students [2], importantly, for this cluster that includes the idea that schools should prepare students to be economically productive [3].

Discussion

All clusters believe that public education has an important role in civic education. Further, each cluster believes civic education includes understanding of their responsibilities as citizens. This finding is supported by past surveys of the general populace; Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa polls over the last 33 years indicate strong support for the civic mission of schools (CCMS, 2012).

Interestingly, no clusters were homogenous by role. Teachers, or those with experience as teachers, were in every cluster. Administrators, or those with experience as administrators, were in every cluster. Policy makers, or those with experience as policy makers, were in all

but one cluster.⁵ This indicates that there is very little predictability of civic beliefs based on roles.

While there are beliefs shared among the clusters, there are critical differences with regards to who holds power, how decisions are made, and who participates. Only one cluster (Broadly Participative) believes that students have a legitimate role to play in district policy and two additional clusters believe that students should have the opportunity to participate as members of a decision making body (Broadly Participative Common Good, School Board Neutral). These three clusters represent one-third of the individuals in our sample. We certainly are not claiming representativeness or generalizability; but we feel that it is important to note the wide dispersion of beliefs about participation, even within one organization. There are also areas of substantial disagreement. In particular, we note the differences between the Process Focused and Common Good/Equal Treatment clusters in their beliefs about whether or not democracy requires the equal treatment of people. Thus, while educators view enculturation of youth into a democracy as important, they do not have standards or widely held common beliefs for such enculturation. As such, it is highly probable that there are wide variations in what is provided to students both through the civics classroom and through school operations to prepare with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to become fully engaged participants in our democratic society. This variation exists even within one school district or organization.

Further, while this variation is expected, given the weakened core civic culture in a post-1960s American (Walling, 2007), we believe it is important to acknowledge that the behaviors and beliefs that faculty, staff and administration may model in schools is inconsistent and may vary from the behaviors and knowledge students learn in civics courses. This variation may be further complicated by the increase in political participation and activity that may be divisive and prevents people from engaging in their communities (Walling, 2007).

No cluster was comprised of members from one school, school district, or policy maker organization; nor was any one organization unified in one of the clusters. Yet, policy makers, administrators, faculty and staff model and express their theory of governance, authority and governance in their every-day decisions. This modeling of civics goes on daily in schools for the ten or more years students attend school.

The civics content students learn in the classroom is usually about issues of state and federal government, history, broad concepts of power, authority and governance (CCE, 2009). While some students have access to civics education that includes some action or

⁵ There were no policy makers in the Broadly Participative cluster.

experiential learning, it is likely still somewhat divorced from the modeled power and governance structures those students observe everyday. Further, what they learn from modeling is very local – it is about the exercise of power and authority in a way that directly impacts their lives.

Thus, students exist between two sets of tensions regarding civic education. The first tension is between the different beliefs about power, authority and governance as modeled by the people who populate schools and school districts. Students see a series of mixed messages about who should be involved in their daily “politics.” Some people model the belief that students do not have any place in the decision-making process, others believe that they should, and still others say perhaps students should not be involved in the decision, but they should be consulted. Thus the modeling of power, authority and governance is full of mixed messages.

The second tension is between the curriculum and practice. In a civics classroom, students are expected to learn abstract concepts of power and authority; they are expected to learn pros and cons of particular forms of governance; and they may even learn about their civic responsibilities when they become eligible for participation. Yet, their perceptions of and reactions to the practice of power and authority are shaped by the school and the behaviors and beliefs they see modeled in their daily lives. The dissonance between civic knowledge taught in the civics classroom and the civics as practiced in schools is not resolved by more knowledge (Nyhan & Reifler, 2010). Schools are one of the first organizations outside of the home in which many children function. They become enculturated to the school both through modeling and through instruction. When the professed and the practiced differ, the first held is the strongest held and rarely changed by knowledge (Nyhan & Reifler, 2010).

Certainly, we are not arguing that these tensions should be resolved by the imposition of standard beliefs. As we scale out of schools and school districts and into the practice of civics in a whole system, we expect to find conflicting opinions about power, authority, and governance. This is particularly true in regards to the tension between people’s different beliefs about democracies. However, we feel that it is important to note and be aware of the impact those differences may have on the beliefs and practices of students, particularly as those modeling behaviors are inconsistent across the student body or within a district. Since there is significant variation amongst students in terms of their exposure to civic education in the classroom (Kahne, 2005), modeling behaviors in school districts become potentially one of the important influences on the development of civic character. Schools and policy makers must become more aware of the effect of the beliefs of adults, the result of modeling and the importance of understanding the interaction between standards and operation of a school.

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Table 1. Q-Sort Statements,

	Distribution of Power		Distribution of Responsibility	
	Elite	Participatory	Neoliberal	Communitarian
Statements about Education				
Goal of Education	1. The main goal of education is to prepare students for the demands of higher education.	2. The goal of education is to prepare each student to facilitate his/her unique development.	3. Schools should seek to prepare students to be economically productive.	4. Education should ensure that students understand their responsibilities as citizens.
Civic Education	5. Public education should support and reinforce the culture and leadership structure of America.	6. Schools should provide students the opportunity to participate as members of a decision making body.	7. Schools do not have a responsibility to provide civic education for students.	8. Public education ought to prepare students to make decisions for the common good.
Democracy	9. Democracy correctly allows those with more knowledge, skills, and means to have greater influence on decisions.	10. Democracy is not about getting what you want; it is a process of decision-making.	11. Democracy should be more than a means of protecting individual rights.	12. Democracy requires that people be treated equally when making decisions for the greater good.
Knowledge of Rights	13. Graduates should be able to recite the introductions to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.	14. A student should leave school knowing he/she has a voice and how to exercise it.	15. The fundamental right that students leave school with is freedom.	16. Students have only limited responsibilities to their communities upon graduation.
Managing Difference	17. In contentious situations, students should support leaders and rely on them to inform their views.	18. In contentious situations, students should invite opinions different from their own.		

Understanding Difference			19. In contentious situations, the market of public opinion should determine the proper outcome.	20. In contentious situations, differences of opinion should be explored to find common understandings.
Statements about Decision Making				
Governance Structure	21. As leaders, senior district administrators should set standards and rules for managing schools.	22. Parents and community members ought to have limited input regarding governance decisions.	23. School-based management is the ideal form of governance for educational institutions.	24. Any decision-making structure should make decisions in the interest of the broader community.
School Boards	25. School boards should make decisions concerning their K-12 system in closed sessions.	26. School boards do not require input from the community to make good decisions.	27. School boards are too removed from the daily practices of schools to understand what policy is best for a particular school.	28. School boards always make decisions for the common good.
Role of Students	29. Only certain students have the knowledge and skills to participate in district level decision-making.	30. Students have a legitimate role to play in district level decision-making.		
Power in the Process	31. Power in the decision-making process should begin and end in the hands of senior administration.	32. Decision making power should be distributed broadly throughout the community.		
Use of Power			33. Power comes from having more people on your side.	34. Power should be used to ensure the fewest people are hurt by a decision.

Participation	35. Only those leaders who are highly educated and well informed should make decisions regarding district policy.	36. Individuals who believe they have a stake in the outcomes of a decision should be allowed to participate in making the decision.		
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Table 2. Individual and Cluster Scores.

Questions		Statistics for Individuals		Means for each Cluster					
		Range is 5 or less	Range is 9 or 10	Mean is +2.5 or greater			Mean is -2.5 or less		
		Mean	Range	Middle of the Road	Process Focused	Common Good and Equal Trtmnt	School Board Neutral	Common Good	Broadly Participative
Civic Mission of Schools	4. Education should ensure that students understand their responsibilities as citizens	3.33	4	3.33	3.60	3.00	3.67	3.00	3.57
Mission of Education	2. The goal of education is to prepare each student to facilitate his/her unique development.	3.04	8	3.75	0.60	3.50	3.67	1.50	4.14
	1. The main goal of education is to prepare students for the demands of higher education.	-1.02	9	-1.25	1.00	-1.50	-2.00	-0.67	-0.14
	3. Schools should seek to prepare students to be economically productive	1.7	9	2.33	1.6	2.17	0.67	0.83	2.71
What does Civic Education Entail	14. A student should leave school knowing he/she has a voice and how to exercise it.	2.85	5	3.33	2.80	2.67	2.67	1.83	3.57
	8. Public education ought to prepare students to make decisions for the common good.	2.25	9	1.50	2.40	2.83	3.00	3.17	2.43

	16. Students have only limited responsibilities to their communities upon graduation.	-2.08	7	-1.58	-3.20	-1.17	-4.33	-2.33	-2.29
	15. The fundamental right that students leave school with is freedom.	0.35	9	-0.75	0.80	0.67	0.67	0.67	1.57
	5. Public education should support and reinforce the culture and leadership structure of America.	1.10	8	1.25	0.60	1.67	-1.00	1.17	2.00

Student Opportunities to Participate	6. Schools should provide students the opportunity to participate as members of a decision making body.	2.10	7	2.17	2.20	1.17	3.00	2.67	2.86
	30. Students have a legitimate role to play in district level decision-making.	1.40	7	1.92	1.40	0.83	1.33	0.50	2.71
	29. Only certain students have the knowledge and skills to participate in district level decision-making.	-1.25	9	-1.17	-2.20	0.50	-0.67	-2.33	-2.14

Inclusion - Breadth	36. Individuals who believe they have a stake in the outcomes of a decision should be allowed to participate in making the decision.	1.96	7	2.58	2.00	0.67	2.33	1.83	2.57
	32. Decision making power should be distributed broadly throughout the community.	1.10	9	1.33	2.00	-0.67	2.33	0.83	2.57
Inclusion - Role of Elites	35. Only those leaders who are highly educated and well informed should make decisions regarding district policy.	-2.10	9	-2.08	-2.60	-1.00	-3.33	-1.33	-3.43
	31. Power in the decision-making process should begin and end in the hands of senior administration.	-2.79	7	-2.33	-2.80	-1.83	-4.00	-2.50	-3.29

	9. Democracy correctly allows those with more knowledge, skills, and means to have greater influence on decisions.	-0.90	9	-2.00	-0.80	0.17	-2.33	0.17	0.14
	21. As leaders, senior district administrators should set standards and rules for managing schools.	-0.17	7	0.50	-0.60	-0.67	-0.67	0.67	-0.43

Decision Making - Process	20. In contentious situations, differences of opinion should be explored to find common understandings.	2.46	5	1.92	4.20	1.83	2.67	1.50	3.14
	17. In contentious situations, students should support leaders and rely on them to inform their views.	-1.58	6	-1.42	-2.40	-1.17	-3.33	-1.67	-1.43
	18. In contentious situations, students should invite opinions different from their own.	2.13	5	2.00	1.80	1.67	2.67	1.67	3.29
	19. In contentious situations, the market of public opinion should determine the proper outcome.	-1.96	6	-1.83	-3.40	-1.50	-0.33	-1.83	-2.43
	33. Power comes from having more people on your side.	-1.42	9	-1.00	-0.60	-1.17	-2.67	-2.50	-2.00

Decision Making - School Boards	25. School boards should make decisions concerning their K-12 system in closed sessions.	-3.85	4	-4.33	-3.60	-3.83	-1.67	-3.17	-4.71
	26. School boards do not require input from the community to make good decisions.	-3.02	10	-4.08	-2.60	-3.00	-2.00	-2.67	-4.00
	28. School boards always make decisions for the common good.	-2.83	5	-2.42	-2.80	-3.17	-2.33	-2.33	-3.86

	27. School boards are too removed from the daily practices of schools to understand what policy is best for a particular school.	-0.08	9	-0.25	-0.60	-0.33	1.67	-0.83	0.71
	23. School-based management is the ideal form of governance for educational institutions.	-0.17	9	-0.42	0.40	0.83	-1.00	-0.83	-0.14

Beliefs about Democracy	11. Democracy should be more than a means of protecting individual rights.	2.46	5	2.17	3.00	2.00	3.00	2.83	2.29
	10. Democracy is not about getting what you want; it is a process of decision-making.	2.10	9	1.17	3.40	1.50	5.00	2.00	2.29
	12. Democracy requires that people be treated equally when making decisions for the greater good.	0.02	10	-0.83	-3.40	2.67	1.00	1.83	0.43
	24. Any decision-making structure should make decisions in the interest of the broader community.	2.21	8	1.50	3.00	1.33	2.33	4.17	3.29
	34. Power should be used to ensure the fewest people are hurt by a decision.	0.52	9	0.75	1.40	-0.50	0.67	-0.83	0.57