The Impact of Deliberation Lessons on Students' Self-Efficacy Concerning

Civic Skills of Deliberation and Civil Discourse

by

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ABSTRACT

This action research study explored the impact of Street Law's deliberation lessons on students' self-efficacy in the We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution program (WTP). The study occurred at an Arizona high school and was grounded in cooperative learning, constructivist, and self-efficacy theories. A sequential Quantitative → Qualitative MMAR study was used to have qualitative findings complement the quantitative analysis by offering a deeper understanding of the indicated changes in self-efficacy. Pre- and post-surveys served as the quantitative data, while focus group interviews, student work samples, and open-response questions provided qualitative data. The WTP students participated in four deliberation lessons designed by Street Law. These lessons were implemented to assess whether they could enhance students' confidence and skills in engaging in deliberative processes and civil discourse. The study results indicated a significant increase in students' confidence in deliberation and civil discourse following the deliberation lessons (p=0.03). This finding suggested that incorporating structured deliberation activities could effectively enhance students' self-efficacy in engaging in meaningful discussions and participating in civil discourse. The study contributed to the growing body of literature on civic education and civic skills by demonstrating the effectiveness of using deliberation lessons to increase students' confidence in deliberation and civil discourse. The findings of the study underscored the value of providing students with opportunities to learn, practice, and develop the civic skills necessary to engage in American democracy as informed and participatory citizens.

DEDICATION

"The practice of democracy is not passed down through the gene pool.  It must be taught and learned by each new generation." – Sandra Day O'Connor

My passion for history and civics is owed to my teachers.  Teachers who sparked interest with creative and engaging lessons. Teachers that encouraged critical thinking and set high expectations for success; whose classrooms were always welcoming places to learn, make mistakes, and ask questions.  Classes that posed academic challenges that tested my abilities, while also strengthening confidence in my capabilities and broadening my interests.  Classes like the We the People (Comp Gov) program.  It changed the trajectory of my senior year, collegiate studies, chosen profession, and became the inspiration for this research.

To the teachers who became mentors -- weaving their own love of learning into the art of teaching. Thank you for leading by example and modeling what it means to be a teacher.  Your endless support has made me a better educator and student of history all over again.  It has been the greatest honor to teach alongside you.

With complete admiration and endless gratitude: I dedicate this to Lisa Adams, Justine Centanni, David Dotts, and Tim Smith.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Ratified in 1787, the United States Constitution established a deliberative democratic framework. An intentionally slow, multi-step legislative process would ensure laws were only passed after thoughtful consideration and reasoned compromise. However, the last decade of American politics has favored candidates, representatives, and bureaucrats who disparage this form of *productive* deliberation. Representing both ends of the political spectrum, these individuals are unwilling to foster cooperation or reach a mutual understanding, with political party loyalty, threats of upcoming elections, and special interest groups financing the resistance. (Carsey & Layman, 2014; Gutmann & Thompson, 2010). Social media companies and news outlets have fortified and exacerbated this behavior by reporting and magnifying the presence and positions of those who most vehemently disagree (Sims et al., 2021). Yet, political polarization is inherently American. As old as feuds in the Federalist papers and the "Bloodless Revolution" of 1800. However, as it exists today, polarization is not productive or purposeful. The current lack of civility within government institutions has spilled over into civilian interactions.

Paired with mis- and disinformation, the anonymity and unaccountability of the internet can leave the American people with a lack of understanding of the rules of engagement. Recent events like the COVID-19 pandemic, Black Lives Matter protests, the 2020 presidential election, and the January 6th insurrection have compounded this division. In May 2023, seeking to temper the tension and improve civil discourse at Princeton, university president Christopher Eisgruber acknowledged the importance of empathy, mutual respect, and careful listening. He emphasized that free speech and inclusivity are not contending values, "Democracy requires both, so too does education" (Svrluga, 2023). If we expect politicians and citizens to deliberate and compromise, we must teach and promote these virtues with renewed urgency to the next generation.

In 2014, Kentucky teacher and journalist Paul Barnwell wrote a piece for *The Atlantic*, "My Students Don't Know How to Have a Conversation" (Barnwell, 2014). Written pre-Covid, Barnwell was already wary of his students' reliance on screens taking away from their ability to engage in 'real-time talk' with their friends and peers. Barnwell referred to this phenomenon as a lack of conversational competence. Barnwell believed that for students to be proficient conversationalists, teaching students ***how*** must be taught in American schools (2014). According to Angel (2020), conversation can be divided into four types: dialogue, diatribe, discourse, and debate (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*The Four Types of Conversations*
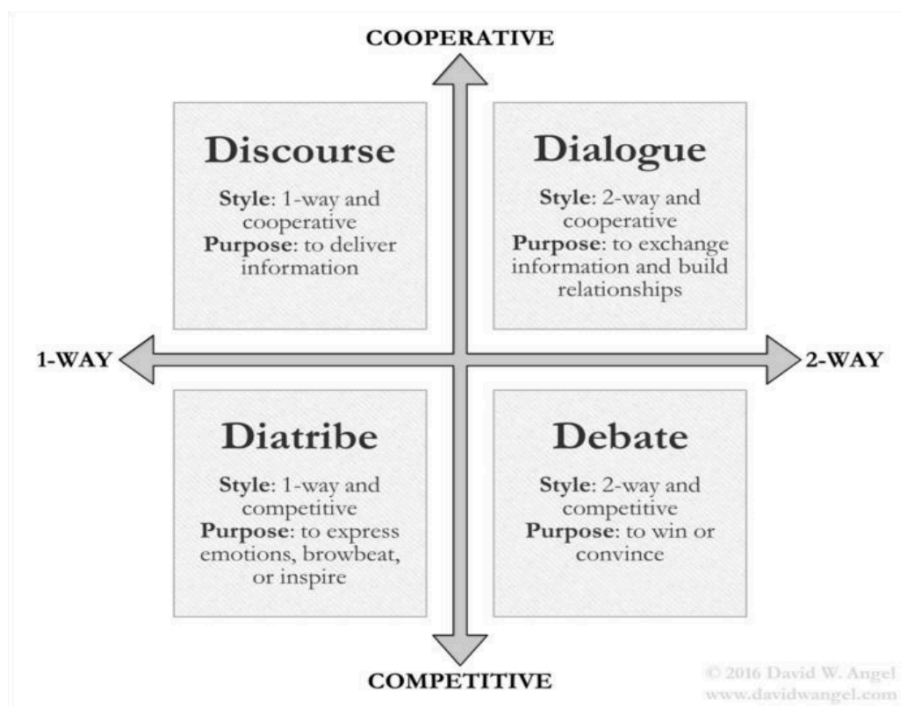


*Angel (2020)*

Discourse and dialogue are both cooperative forms of conversation in which information is delivered or exchanged in one-way or two-way interactions (Angel, 2020). Further, Cionea (2011) distinguished six different types of dialogue: persuasion, inquiry, information seeking,

negotiation, deliberation, and eristic. Some teachers want students to engage in conversation by utilizing discourse *within* inquiry often by analyzing a variety of sources and reflecting on new understandings individually and with peers.  Students discuss the newly discovered information and apply what they've learned to the inquiry question – which may not have one right answer (*Civil discourse: An American legacy toolkit*, 2024). This deepens their learning through civil discourse by learning the difference between mere dialogue and deliberation.  This awareness and practice seek to build capacity for civil discourse by providing students with opportunities to engage in deliberations - in which students must take and defend *both* sides of an argument.

I have been a high school civics and government teacher since 2014. The last ten years have demonstrated increasing hostility and divisiveness in politics, the news, social media, and the American electorate. These tensions and their repercussions have transcended the high school government classroom.  It has become far more challenging to navigate controversial discussions due to students' lack of interpersonal, cooperative, and deliberative skills to engage in those conversations thoughtfully and productively.  As a result, I began brainstorming ways to better teach the American government's structure and principles while instilling the skills needed to participate in it.  Based on observations of students in my government classroom, I decided to focus my dissertation research on civic skills, specifically the civic skill of deliberation and discourse in the classroom. In the rest of Chapter 1, I will explain the national and local context of civic education and introduce the problem of practice I observed in my classroom.  In Chapter 2, I will discuss the theoretical frameworks and existing literature guiding this study, followed by methodology in Chapter 3.  The results of this study will be analyzed and presented in Chapter 4 and my findings, and implications for practice and policy discussed in Chapter 5.

**An American Tradition of Civic Education**

Educational reformer John Dewey (1859-1952) observed the critical connection between community-supported civic education and an informed, engaged citizenry.  Dewey argued that

from the 18th century onward, "…to form the citizen, not the 'man,' became the aim of education" (1916, p. 90). Education is the foundation of democratic practice. President Franklin D. Roosevelt believed that the most important responsibility placed on schools was to "make worthy citizens." Democracy is a way of life; children deserve and require a democratic education (Crittenden & Levine, 2018, Center for Civic Education, 2003, Faller, 2018). Sherrod et al., (2002) observed that it is easier to influence and change civic habits and values when people are young. Kathleen Hall Jamieson, director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center, agrees, adding, "The classroom is both the training ground for democracy and the incubator of its leaders" (Jamieson, 2013). The first woman on the Supreme Court, Sandra Day O'Connor, acted upon these sentiments: "...American public schools were founded to teach young people to be citizens. We realized long ago that the practice of democracy wasn't something passed along through our DNA - it must be taught anew with each new generation" (Kinney, 2011). Harnessing the power of the classroom, she founded iCivics in 2009, out of growing concern for a lack of understanding about American government and the relative disengagement that follows. The goal was to transform civic education for every student with innovative and engaging resources, using games to teach civic knowledge and civic skills. Ninety-five percent of iCivics teachers have noticed more engagement from their students; increased interest in politics and current events; more openness to civil classroom conversations about current events; and more knowledge about how the American government works (iCivics, 2024). iCivics' new pre- and post-game assessments showed an average increase in students' civic knowledge (26%) and dispositions (38%) (iCivics, 2024).

In 2019, ten years after the creation of iCivics, a national framework for history and civic education was needed. Scholars and educators from iCivics, Arizona State University, Harvard University, and Tufts University sought to "harness philosophical, ideological, and geographical diversity to develop a balanced national-consensus framework and proposed plan of action"

(*Educating for American Democracy,* 2019). The result is the inquiry-based content framework - the *Educating for American Democracy Roadmap* which seeks to rebuild civic education - the requisite knowledge, dispositions, and skills - as a foundation of American civic strength. My research reflects these goals by teaching collaborative decision-making with classroom deliberations, seeking to strengthen students' ability to deliberate and tolerate divergent views.

Scholarship that uses the phrase "civic education" often refers to the processes that affect people's beliefs, commitments, capabilities, and actions as members of communities (Crittenden & Levine, 2018). The umbrella of civic education often features three major prongs: civic knowledge, civic dispositions, and civic skills. According to the Education Commission of the States, as of 2017, students in eight states must pass the civics test to receive a high school diploma (*Education Commission of the States,* 2018). Meanwhile, 14 states do not have a specified civics graduation requirement at all (*High School Graduation Requirements*, 2023). The Civics Test in each of these states assesses historical and civic knowledge included in the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) naturalization test, which immigrants must pass to become legal U.S. citizens. Thus, while there has been a renewed emphasis on civic *knowledge*, issues still arise concerning students' civic skills and dispositions. Despite a significant portion of literature devoted to civic skills, limited scholarship defines or agrees on what civic skills encompass. Teachers and civics curriculums generalize civic skills in a normative sense, what *should* students know, and in an empirical sense, what *do* students know? (Kirlin, 2003). Civic skills are both cognitive and participatory; having further been categorized as 1) organizational skills, 2) communication skills, 3) collective decision-making skills, and 4) critical thinking skills (Hamilton & Parsi, 2022; Vinnakota, 2019). They enable civic participation in the democratic process (Comber, 2005). For this research study, I chose to further define and focus on the specific civic skills of deliberation and discourse.

**National Context**

Today, while all 50 states have educational standards for civics and/or government, only nine states and the District of Columbia require a full year of American government or civics for high school graduation (Shapiro & Brown, 2018). A 2003 Shanker Institute study, Educating Democracy: State Standards to Ensure a Civic Core, found civics standards in many states consisted simply of a list of people, events, and dates to be memorized with little to no emphasis on civic competence and critical thinking skills (Gagnon, 2003). Democracy and Education professor Sarah M. Stitzlein believes teaching students that "good dissent challenges the status quo, criticizes accepted views, and puts forward principled alternatives" provides students opportunities to learn how to express their views, listen carefully, and respond appropriately (2014). Students must learn the art of civic inquiry – to think critically, analyze sources, determine credibility, and substantiate both written and verbal claims with evidence. Civic inquiry has become increasingly difficult due to disagreements over what content should be taught, laws limiting the discussion of controversial topics in the classroom, and lack of proper funding and teacher training specific to civic education (Hess & McAvoy, 2014).

In 2001, to ensure the United States could compete with other industrialized nations in the 21st Century, there was a push for education initiatives related to Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) programs. As a result, STEM programs receive over $2.95 *billion* each year from the federal government, while K-12 civic education funding and support is an abysmal $4 *million* (Spaulding & Nair, 2020) Distributed on September 17, 2023, the Annenberg Civics Knowledge Survey found promising increases in the public's knowledge of American government. In 2019, only 2 in 5 American adults (39%) correctly named the three branches of government, whereas in 2023 (Figure 2) 66% could (The Annenberg Public Policy Center, 2023).

**Figure 2**:

*Knowledge of Three Branches*

**Knowledge of Three Branches**
(% of respondents who named number of branches)

No Branches

17%

One Branch

7%

10%

Two Branches

66%

All Three
Branches

Source: Annenberg Constitution Day Survey 2023
ASAPH Survey, Aug. 2023
N=1482, MOE=+/-3.5%
©2023 Annenberg Public Policy Center
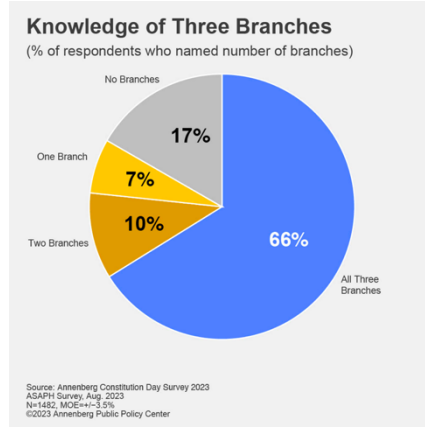
Yet, when asked about the rights protected by the First Amendment, only 5% of the U.S. adults surveyed could correctly name all five First Amendment rights while 30% could name three or four of the rights. Three-quarters (77%) named freedom of speech, less than half (40%) named freedom of religion, a third (33%) named the right to assembly, just over a quarter (28%) named freedom of the press, and less than 1 in 10 (9%) knew the right to petition the government (Figure 3).

**Figure 3**

*Knowledge of First Amendment Protections*

**Knowledge of 1st Amendment Protections**
(% of respondents who named each protection)

Freedom of Speech — 77%
Freedom of Religion — 40%
Freedom of Press — 28%
Right of Assembly — 33%
Right to Petition — 9%
Right to Bear Arms (Second Amendment) — 22%

Source: Annenberg Constitution Day Survey 2023
ASAPH Survey, Aug. 2023
N=1482, MOE=+/-3.5%
©2023 Annenberg Public Policy Center
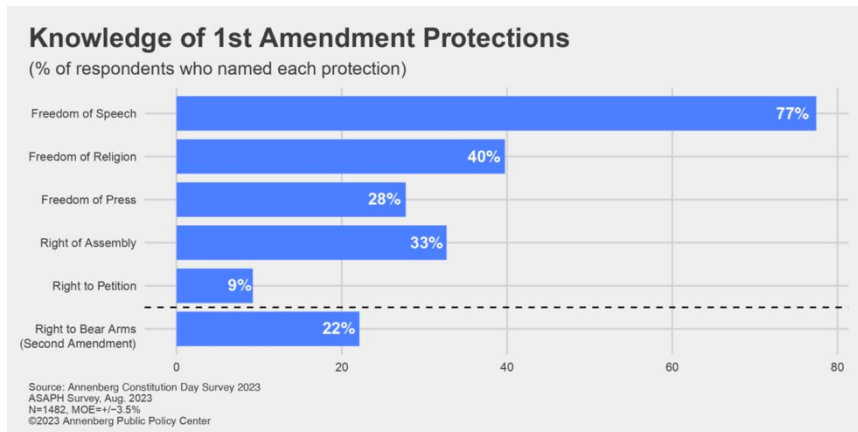
When asked to list the five rights protected in the First Amendment, 1 in 5 respondents (22%) listed the right to bear arms as a First Amendment right. Additionally, over half of those surveyed (53%) think the First Amendment's protection of freedom of speech means that social media companies like Facebook must allow Americans to express themselves without limitation (The Annenberg Public Policy Center, 2023).

Over half of those surveyed (51%) disapprove of the Supreme Court (Figure 4). Then, survey respondents were asked if the president and Supreme Court differ on whether an action by the president is constitutional, who has the final responsibility for determining whether it is constitutional – the president, Congress, or the Supreme Court? Fifty-four percent correctly said the Supreme Court, 21% said Congress, 4% said the president, and 21% said they were unsure or didn't know.

**Figure 4**
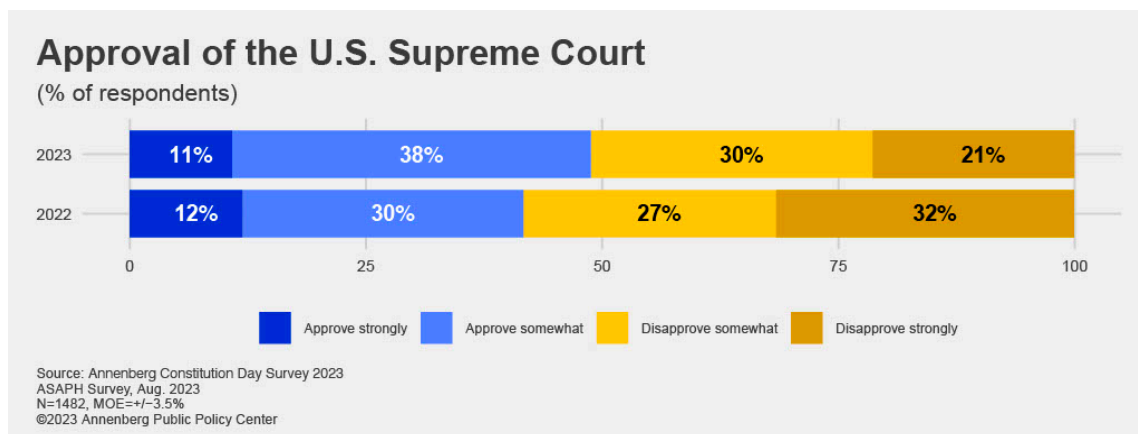


*Approval of the U.S. Supreme Court*

The American Bar Association's 2023 Survey of Civic Literacy found that 85% of respondents believe civility is *worse* than it was 10 years ago (Survey of Civic Literacy, 2023). The lack of civic knowledge paired with incivility directly impacts the American electorate and reveals the need to teach children the civic knowledge and civic skills necessary to effectively / productively engage in democracy. However, the discrepancy between civic knowledge and skills

poses additional questions about the connection between K-12 civics education and future citizens' political knowledge, efficacy, engagement, and voter turnout. Individual states plus private and non-profit organizations have begun to promote, fund, and research this for themselves.

Championed by Chief Justice Warren Burger, the Center for Civic Education (CCE), a nonprofit, nonpartisan educational organization, was established on the Bicentennial of the ratification of the Constitution in 1987.  The CCE developed dozens of programs and initiatives, one of which is the We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution program and the corresponding We the People curriculum (Hart, 2002). We the People (WTP) focuses on the history and principles of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights - the teaching and learning of civic knowledge. Since its inception, more than 75,000 teachers and 30 million students have participated in the WTP program.  In April 2013, the Progress of Education Reform offered "Six Proven Practices of Civic Learning That Promote Student Civic Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions" (Guilfoile & Delander, 2014). They spotlighted the WTP program as fulfilling "Proven Practice #1 and #6" based on the curriculum's provision of "instruction in government, history, law, and democracy," (Proven Practice #1) and the encouragement of student participation in "simulations of democratic processes and procedures," (Proven Practice #6) with the use of the simulated congressional hearing (Guilfoile & Delander, 2014). Teachers receive training and professional development on the WTP curriculum along with guidance on the use of primary sources and Supreme Court case analysis in the classroom. As a result, teachers are empowered with the skills to lead thought-provoking class discussions by creating an open class environment, teaching critical thinking skills, and supervising collaborative small group work among students (Owen et al., 2020).

The culminating project, or summative assessment, of the WTP curriculum is a simulated congressional hearing.  The WTP curriculum and the simulated congressional hearing model have

proven significantly effective in increasing the knowledge of civics and government more than traditional lecture and rote memorization methods (Owen et al., 2020). As a performance-based assessment, students demonstrate their mastery of content knowledge through the writing, speaking, and listening skills they have learned throughout the WTP program.  They are ultimately formally evaluated in the categories of evidence, analysis, understanding, application, and discussion.

Research conducted by Georgetown University for the U.S. Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse found that WTP students scored 36% higher than their peers not enrolled in WTP and 30% higher on average than college students on a comprehensive test of political knowledge (Owen et al., 2020).  WTP students also scored higher concerning civic attitudes and dispositions including respect for the rule of law, political attentiveness, civic duty, community involvement, commitment to government service, and the norms of political efficacy and political tolerance. Additionally, WTP students practice and improve their civic skills: the ability to analyze issues, debate, persuade, and achieve group consensus (Owen et al., 2020). I am seeking to add to the research surrounding civic education by providing instruction and learning opportunities to increase my We the People students' confidence in the civic skill of deliberation.

**State Context**

Founded by the Arizona Bar Foundation in 1978, the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services promotes access to justice for all Arizonans by committing to preparing Arizona's youth for civic responsibility. The Foundation provides training, funding, and competition organization for programs such as Project Citizen, Mock Trial, and We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution. These efforts have created a valuable connection between the legal community and hundreds of schools in Arizona, supplementing the requirements of the Arizona History and Social Science standards.

In 2015, Arizona became the first state in the nation to pass the American Civics Act, which requires high school students to pass the citizenship test before graduation (Faller, 2015). Since then, 19 other states have followed suit (*High School Graduation Requirements,* 2023*).* Along with California, Georgia, New York, and Virginia, Arizona created a "State Seal of Civics Literacy" program in 2018 to recognize and reward students for achieving a high level of proficiency in American civics (*Seal of Civic Readiness Frequently Asked Questions*, 2024). And most recently in September 2020, Arizona officially established Sandra Day O'Connor Civics Day, in which a majority of classroom instruction is devoted to civics (Arizona H.B. 2625). These efforts have tried to recalibrate the focus and funding of education to be more inclusive of civics at the state level.

**Local Context**

I have taught social studies for the past twelve years at a large, suburban high school in Arizona. The school has approximately 3,000 students, with a senior class averaging 600-700. The school has a strong social studies department, boasting more than 17 faculty members and over twenty-course offerings, half of which are honors or Advanced Placement. The WTP social studies program, the curricular focus of this study, has been part of a storied history at the school since its inception in 1987. I have a personal connection to the WTP program as a former participant and a teacher. As a result, I have a unique advantage in experiencing the program from both perspectives.

**Problem of Practice and Intervention**

The WTP curriculum and program teach students valuable skills - including researching, working cooperatively in groups, and public speaking (Owen et al., 2020). Yet, in recent years, my students have struggled to master cognitive and participatory civic skills related to deliberation and discourse. The lack of skills impacts student achievement in the classroom and the competitive WTP program (described in detail in Chapter 3) and impedes the civic skills

required of effective and responsible citizens. I designed an academic intervention research study for the WTP students by implementing deliberation lessons that focus on the instruction and use of deliberation in the government classroom.

Using quantitative data from surveys and qualitative data from focus group interviews and student work, this study sought to evaluate the effectiveness of those deliberation lessons on student confidence as it relates to the civic skill of deliberation in a 12th-grade AP Government class. This study contributes to a growing body of research on the teaching and learning of civic skills. The following research questions guided the study:

1. How and to what extent does the use of deliberation lessons impact students' self-efficacy in cooperative learning?

2. How does students' self-efficacy in their deliberation and civil discourse skills compare pre- and post-intervention?

3. How do students perceive the effectiveness of the deliberation lessons in improving their deliberation and civil discourse skills?

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

In this chapter I will define and provide background regarding civic education more broadly.  Then I will discuss academic literature on civics learning and conclude with theoretical frameworks.   I employed three theoretical frameworks: cooperative learning theory, constructivist learning theory, and self-efficacy.

**Civic Education**

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy defines civic education as "all the processes that affect people's beliefs, commitments, capabilities, and actions as members or prospective members of communities" (Crittenden & Levine, 2018). More narrowly, it encompasses deliberate programs of instruction and is often a form of citizen preparation. CivXNow defines it as the lifelong process that makes people into "active, responsible and knowledgeable members of their communities" (iCivics, 2022). Acknowledging that civic learning occurs in families, religious congregations, associations, political campaigns, websites and other venues in addition to schools. CivXNow argues that civics is typically related to political science, law, American history, and experiences like community service (iCivics, 2022).

In March 2020, the National Academy of Education held a workshop on Civic Reasoning and Discourse in which they presented history as a form of civic reasoning and contextual thinking.  History is a disciplined way to analyze the pursuit of civic ideals in the context of real circumstances, power and politics. (Lee et al., 2021).  The history of civic education in America can be traced back to our origins but can also be looked at through the themes of purpose, access, and curriculum.

*Purpose and Access*

Early American education lacked a formal system and proper funding, so local schools were dependent upon tuition, churches and charitable organizations, or property taxes.  Many

children were often excluded because of income, race or ethnicity, gender, or geographic location (Kober & Rentner, 2020). By the 1780s, some states had established publicly funded schools, however, the concept of free public education did not begin to take hold on a wider scale until the 1830s. The Founding Generation of Americans contended that the success of the newly born democracy would depend on the education of its citizens to ensure that future citizens would understand political and social issues, participate in civic life, vote, understand and protect their rights and freedoms, and resist tyrants and demagogues (Kober & Rentner, 2020). Horace Mann built upon this idea in the 1830s with the Common Schools Movement - seeking to educate all children regardless of social or economic status, religion, or gender. The goal was to "teach the basic mechanics of government and imbue students with loyalty to America and her ideals" (Crittenden & Levine, 2018). Educator John Dewey furthered this belief by theorizing that civics education would encourage students to find interest in learning and through that learning, previous barriers like race, class, and ethnicity could be transcended (Crittenden & Levine, 2018). Despite these ambitious goals, critics of American civics education (Westheimer, 2004; Gutman, 1987; Boyte, 2010; Beaumont, 2011) argue that it has been used by dominant groups to maintain power and control - teaching American exceptionalism by subjugating those students who didn't comply with or fit the narrative. Thereby perpetuating American history in a way that maintained the status quo and further alienated students by gender, race, ethnicity, or citizenship status.

In the 1982 case *Plyler v. Doe*, the US Supreme Court explained that American public education helps to maintain the fabric of society by "sustaining our political and cultural heritage," while teaching students the ability to "live within the structure of our civic institutions" (Beadie & Burkholder, 2021). Further, educating citizens on the rights, powers, and protections that are guaranteed to *others* as much as themselves, is a controversial aim. Historically, civic education has focused on two aims: socializing newcomers to existing norms and essential knowledge of American history and tradition ors challenging the diversity of the American

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citizenry with debates about civic equality.  These dichotomous aims are evident throughout American history with Indian boarding schools, English-only instruction, school segregation, and bans on ethnic studies courses.  Interestingly, the rise of fascism in Europe paired with the threat of Communism during the Cold War, exposed the reality of a divided nation and led many to see the value in educating *all* of America's children together. Civics education became synonymous with assimilation and "Americanization" at the expense of individual children's identities and experiences - despite progressive efforts toward racial egalitarianism and educational self-determination.  The power dynamics of America's past shaped the evolution of civic education over time (Lee et al., 2021).  Teaching tolerance, cultural pluralism, and discussing minority rights came to threaten those who already possessed civic and political power. Tension then began to rise between state sovereignty over education and the federal government's oversight toward equitable education for equal citizenship.

The National Department of Education was established in 1979, with greater federal funding and control over education at the state level.  While seemingly driven by an effort to address the vast inequality in American schools, the result of this increased federal involvement led to standardized testing and comparison of American children to others around the globe. Civics education came to be less about American history and knowledge of government, and more about students' ability to compete with others in a global economy. The 2018 Brown Center Report on American Education found that No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policies of both the Clinton and Bush Administrations forced educators to put more emphasis on math and reading at the expense of social studies and civics education (Hansen et al., 2018). Civic competence and participation were absent when civics was being taught, in favor of rote memorization of notable people, events, and dates.  It did nothing to increase students' potential to be actively engaged citizens.

In 1998, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Civics Assessment was conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics to measure civics knowledge, skills and dispositions critical to the responsibilities of American citizenship (NAEP, 2022). In 2022, 7,800 eighth graders were given the NAEP civics assessment.  For the first time since the test was first administered, the civics score for eighth graders decreased by 2 points compared to 2018. Predicting that remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic may have potentially impacted the results, survey questionnaires were distributed to students asking about their learning format during the pandemic.  Seventy-four percent of students recalled learning remotely during the 2020-2021 school year.  Of those students learning remotely, 73% of students indicated they had a teacher available to help them with civics schoolwork every day and all students said they participated in real-time video lessons with their teacher every day (NCSS, 2022).  In the years to come, it will be worth noting if the 2022 report is an anomaly or the start of a more concerning decline in civic education.

### Civics Standards, Frameworks, and Curriculum

To establish uniform criteria for states to use in their social studies standards, the College and Career Framework for Social Studies State Standards came about in 2009 with the Common Core State Standards initiative. The lack of civic knowledge and civic skills at the expense of English Language Arts and Math became evident and led policymakers to ensure civic learning was included at the local, state and federal level (Gould, 2011). Critics of the standards argued that civics education has been consistently underfunded and undervalued, leading to a push for a third "C" to be included - *College, Career, and Citizenship Readiness*.  As a result, in 2013, the Innovation Lab Network, states that pilot, scale and improve student-centered approaches to public education, put forth a *State Framework for College, Career, and Civic Life*.  This framework outlines the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that schools can focus on to prepare students for citizenship, postsecondary learning and work (Council of Chief State School

Officers, 2010). Civics knowledge and skills cannot be taught in other subject areas or simply learned by integrating character education in public schools (NCSS, 2013).

The C3 Framework makes frequent reference to the norm of deliberation, which they define as discussing issues and making choices and judgements with information and evidence, civility and respect, and concern for fair procedures (NCSS, 2013). Dimension 2 of the C3's Civic Readiness component is, "Participation and Deliberation: Applying Civic Virtues and Democratic Principles." It highlights the teaching of civic principles (e.g., consent of the governed, separation of powers) and civic virtues (e.g., honesty, cooperation) in civics education but makes a separate note that principles such as equality, freedom, liberty, respect for individual rights, and deliberation apply to "both official institutions and informal interactions among citizens" (NCSS, 2013, p.33). In the "Suggested K-12 Pathway for College, Career and Civic Readiness Dimension 2, Participation and Deliberation," by the end of Grade 5, individually and with others, students are expected to: Use deliberative processes when making decisions or reaching judgements as a group. By the end of Grade 8, individually and with others, students are expected to compare deliberative processes used by a wide variety of groups in various settings. And finally, by the end of Grade 12, individually and with others, students will use appropriate deliberative processes in multiple settings. Dimension 4 of the C3 Framework is "Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action." This final dimension of the C3 Framework provides guidance on how students can demonstrate their learning. Taking informed action supports actionable civic learning and helps prepare students for their civic participation as adults (NCSS, 2013).

Launched in March 2021, *The Roadmap to Educating for American Democracy* created an inquiry-based content framework for history and civics education across four grade bands (K–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12). It is organized by major themes, key concepts and guiding questions to strengthen and deliver equitable civic learning opportunities nationwide (Educating for American

Democracy, 2021). A national shift in focus toward civics education for all students means a step toward greater civic engagement.  Acknowledging there may be various reasons for decreased civic engagement, schools are a "promising lever to reverse the decline and spur greater engagement among young people" (Campbell, 2006, p.56).

Recent discussions surrounding civic education have become political. A February 2022 article from *Inside Higher Ed*, quipped, "Goodbye Red Scare, Hello Ed Scare" (Friedman, 2022). Across the country, the content of civics curriculum is up for debate, often resulting in a dispute related to civic knowledge rather than civic skills. Introduced on January 30, 2024, Arizona Senate Bill 1380 would prohibit public K-12 schools from using any instructional material that "contains any matter reflecting adversely on persons on the basis of race, ethnicity, sex, religion, disability, nationality, sexual orientation, or gender identity" (SB 1380).  Language like 'reflecting adversely' is up for interpretation by politicians, community members, parents, students and teachers and has led English and Social Studies teachers to question their lessons and resources out of an abundance of fear (Will, 2023).  Laws in Texas and Tennessee permit teachers to discuss current events or controversial issues in the classroom, so long as multiple perspectives of the event or issue are presented.  This led some teachers to shockingly present both pro- and con- perspectives on historical events like slavery and the Holocaust (Mockaitis, 2021).

Between March 2021 and March 2024, 33 laws implementing educational "gag orders" have passed in 19 states: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Mississippi, New Hampshire, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Utah, and Tennessee, and Texas (PEN America, 2024). These "discriminatory censorship laws" (Feingold & Weishart, 2023) seek to control what books can be read, what curriculum educators can teach, and what content students should learn.  Alternatively, other states like Illinois and Massachusetts, have passed laws protecting more inclusive pedagogy

and curriculum (Feingold & Weishart, 2023).  The inherent danger of educational policies made at the state and local level, is the potential creation of two different school systems: classrooms committed to a curriculum based on critical thinking and inclusivity or a censored and sanitized curriculum based on exclusion (Feingold & Weishart, 2023). Regarding civics education, this has led to outrage on both ends of the political spectrum proclaiming the civics curriculum is either too patriotic or too critical with no tangible solution for teachers to implement in their classrooms.

Oftentimes, concern about civics knowledge results in vague or undefined content standards with skill standards that lack specification.  Furthermore, can you have meaningful and identifiable learning outcomes when many states do not even have a civics test? As of 2018, students in eight states must receive a passing score on the civics test to receive a high school diploma (*Education Commission of the States, 2018*).  The Civics Test in each of these states assesses historical and civic knowledge included in the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) naturalization test, which immigrants must pass to become legal U.S. citizens. If students' purpose in learning civics is memorization to prepare for the test, they are less likely to develop meaningful civic skills (Litvinov, 2017). Thus, If the test mirrors the USCIS assessment, it has little relevance to measures of civic engagement or applicable civic knowledge. This was proven to be correct in a September 2023 study that found that status with mandated civics tests did not significantly affect youth (18-24) voter turnout.  They concluded the lack of efficacy of civics test policies when it comes to youth voter participation (Jung & Gopalan, 2023). Researchers argue these results should not cause policymakers to question funding and support of civic education as it relates to civic engagement and voter turnout but lead to further evaluation of *how* civics is being learned that could better translate into actionable, measurable outcomes.

Moreover, Lin, (2015) argues, if a state only requires a semester-long, high school civics course that focuses on the structures and functions of the U.S. government, the state is depriving the students of an opportunity to develop and practice civic engagement skills during the years in which they are approaching full legal citizenship. If we expect future citizens to "engage in critical, measured reflection and discussion with those whose perspectives are different from their own," we need to teach students to learn to do the same (Hess & McAvoy, 2014). Students need agency in the learning process and opportunities for civic efficacy. But, how do we cultivate civic agency that is politically efficacious if we do not provide students with opportunities to engage with people whose background, experiences, and opinions are different from their own? In a 2014 study, students who participated in organized deliberation over political issues had better perspective-taking abilities than those who did not (Avery et al., 2014, p. 853). Social media and media literacy have proven to be an even greater challenge to this goal. It is impossible to separate 21st-century skills and media literacy standards from civic readiness goals: "They reflexively demonstrate the cogent reasoning and use of evidence that is essential to both private deliberation and responsible citizenship in a democratic republic" (Council of Chief State School Officers and National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010, p. 3). With a generation of students who are, by and large, unable to detect bias or fact vs. fiction in the media (Wineburg et al., 2016) civic education must cultivate the skills of historical analysis, reflective inquiry, and critical thinking so that all students and future citizens can evaluate competing claims, deliberate with others, engage in civil dialogue, and advocate effectively for justice.

In 2005, The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) studied the "Effects of Civic Education on Civic Skills," in which they used the average treatment effect to report the effects of studying various civics topics on civic skills. They used a multivariate model that controls for gender, age, attitudes and experiences, to study the impact of an experience on treated and untreated groups. They acknowledge that students may

misremember what they have learned or that the survey questions do not effectively evaluate civic skills as intended. The results were divided into five skill categories: cognitive, communication, group discussion, and news monitoring. Concerning group discussion skills, studying topics related to civics had strong effects on the frequency of students' discussions of political affairs with parents, peers, and teachers. Group discussions provide exposure to diverse viewpoints and populations and are necessary to make group decisions, understand perspectives, and aid in collective decision-making (Hurtado et al., 2001).

This will require new approaches to teacher education and professional development, additional course offerings, improved pedagogies, and refined standards. Fewer teachers are encouraging or facilitating robust deliberations of civic issues in American K-12 schools. This is because teachers often lack the content knowledge or classroom management to moderate deliberations for fear of community or administrative complaints and criticism (Barber et al., 2021). The control teachers have over the learning environment is essential for student engagement in civics. If we hope to increase voter turnout, interest in politics, political efficacy, civic knowledge and civic virtue, then students need classroom environments where they feel safe, comfortable, and encouraged to deliberate controversial topics (Ehman, 1980; Hahn, 1998; Niemi & Junn, 1998; Torney-Purta et al., 2001).

In 2020, the Civic Reasoning and Discourse panel suggested that this could be achieved by a mixed-methods approach working across disciplines to research the interplay between student comfort, confidence, and experience as it relates to classroom discourse. What are physical and social emotional elements that encourage collaboration? Can open classrooms alone create significant change in students' civic efficacy as it relates to deliberation and discourse? Can open and supportive classrooms potentially disempower students? Can these changes have a significant impact in one teacher's classroom, or must collaboration and support of classroom discourse be pedagogically adopted and supported by the entire school community? Various

civic-based classroom activities, such as mock elections and legislative role-playing games, have been successful in improving students' self-efficacy (Levy, 2011).

**Civil Discourse**

According to the Center for Ethics and Human Values at Ohio State University, civil discourse is the practice of deliberating in a way that seeks to expand knowledge and promote greater understanding (2024). While the word civil can often be associated with politeness, in this regard it relates to *civic* discourse - which seeks to promote mutual respect, build trust, and identify common ground (*Civil Discourse for Citizenship,* 2024).  Engaging in civil discourse allows for greater understanding by challenging initial beliefs, building new knowledge, and working toward group consensus.

According to the Institute for Civility in Government, civility is "claiming and caring for one's identity, needs, and beliefs without degrading someone else's in the process (*What is Civility?* 2023). After the 2010 midterm elections, the Center for Political Participation noted the high degree of incivility in the form of personal attacks, slander, ridicule, debates that degenerated into name-calling shout-fests, unserious discussions about ideas and their consequences, and name-calling in attack ads (Center for Political Participation 2010). Further, social media outlets allow users, often cloaked in anonymity, to be rude, profane, and threatening without any consequences for incivility (Center for Political Participation 2010). While educators can be responsible for teaching civility in the classroom, civility is a responsibility we all bear. Civility must first be modeled by the adults in students' lives.

Social studies education professor James Moore (2012) believes restoring civility in schools is paramount to maintaining a viable democracy.  He stresses that social studies teachers must teach students *how* to participate in the political process by allowing students to discuss current and controversial issues in a deliberative way that enhances civility and values knowledge. Moore further defines civility as "a moral imperative linked with other democratic

virtues, such as respect for differing opinions, listening skills, self-control, rationality, and tolerance, that must form a foundation for acceptable public discourse" (Moore, 2012, p. 141). Greek Philosopher Aristotle agreed with this sentiment when he observed, "when citizens are civil to one another, despite their political disagreement, they reveal that these disagreements are less important than their resolution to remain fellow citizens. Citizenship, therefore, requires civility" (Moore, 2012, p. 143).

Civility becomes stronger when diverse peoples see themselves as part of a larger national community - or in this case, classroom communities. Despite growing incivility in the American population, I seek to create a positive, supportive, civil environment in my classroom each day. This intentional environment challenges this shift by modeling and fostering civility and discourse among students. If the United States expects competent and responsible citizens to be informed and thoughtful, participants in their communities, who are involved politically, and exhibit moral and civic virtues - then teachers must skillfully facilitate civil, controversial classroom discussions, that will increase student civility, knowledge, and tolerance for dissent. These skills must be taught in the classroom through a process of learned behavior (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013).

In a "Dangers to Democracy" survey from the University of Chicago, as of June 2023, 12 million American adults, 4% of the voting-age population, believe that violence is justified to restore Donald Trump to the White House. Additionally, one in five Americans still believe the 2020 election was stolen. A 2016 survey of 1,631 people found that 86% of respondents were "aware that they are not well-informed regarding" the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution (Owen & Quigley, 2016, p.1). And in 2019, the Annenberg Civics Knowledge Survey found that only 2 in 5 American adults (39%) correctly named the three branches of government (Rozansky, 2019). Moreover, the 2023 American Bar Association Survey of Civic Literacy found that 85% of respondents believe civility is worse than it was 10 years ago (*Survey*

*of Civic Literacy*, 2023).  This concerning data has not only fueled my personal classroom and curriculum concerns, but has led to initiatives in civics education, civic readiness, and civic literacy nationwide.

**Theoretical Frameworks**

*Cooperative Learning*

Cooperative learning is "the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning" (McCartney et al., 2013; Johnson et al., 2013). Cooperative learning is often governed by rules to aid group interaction and is closely monitored by the teacher, whereas collaborative learning expects students to share authority and responsibility for learning among group members (Zambrano et al., 2019). Cooperative *and* collaborative learning are both instructional techniques used to increase student achievement and learning outcomes by developing team skills, sharing knowledge, engaging in dialogue, and creating meaning around new knowledge (Zambrano et al., 2019). There are many commonalities related to student achievement and engagement among the two learning styles and both theories will be referenced in this study.  According to Johnson & Johnson (2013), student interaction can happen directly or indirectly, such as, when individuals directly communicate via oral, written, or electronic channels or when individuals indirectly act in a way that promotes the goal accomplishment of the whole group. Cooperative learning can be hindered by social loafing, social pressure, group conformity, the free-rider effect, and the sucker effect (Zambrano et al., 2019).  These challenges to cooperative learning can be avoided if clear and explicit instructions are used to guide learners to work cooperatively.

Social interdependence theory is closely related to cooperative learning and "exists when the outcomes of individuals are affected by each other's actions" (Johnson & Johnson, 2005, p.287). Social interdependence theory assumes that cooperative efforts are based on intrinsic motivation generated by interpersonal factors and a joint aspiration to achieve a significant goal

(Johnson et al., 1998). Social interdependence is the established, shared identity that is fostered among the learning group. Students must work together, encouraging and facilitating other's *efforts* to learn to achieve the learning goals (Smith et al., 2005). Johnson & Johnson (2013) propose five elements necessary for maximizing the collaborative potential of groups: positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face promotive interaction, interpersonal and small group skills, and group processing. Regarding positive interdependence and individual accountability, group work can be structured to require individual contributions to achieve a collaborative goal while also holding students accountable for the work they contribute. This further legitimizes the need for students to work together and necessitates that students in the group get to know one another in such a way that they trust, accept, and support one another by communicating accurately and unambiguously and resolving conflicts constructively (Johnson & Johnson, 1990). Experience with these elements inspires attitudes and values that students transfer and apply to real-world situations beyond the classroom (Johnson et al., 2013). Lastly, student achievement in cooperative groups increases when students are provided opportunities to learn from and improve upon these essential elements of collaborative work by completing group processing evaluations (Johnson & Johnson, 1990). Human beings are wired to work together, and it is this interdependence that motivates students to work cooperatively toward achieving a common goal (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). Student learning cohorts that receive instructions on how to collaborate, outperform groups that were not prepared (Zambrano et al., 2019). Additionally, learners with *prior* group learning experiences can allocate effective communication patterns to efficiently complete a task, exchange elaborated explanations and constructive activities, and effectively distribute high task demands amongst themselves and monitor their contributions (Zambrano et al., 2019).

However, many students and educators are resistant to collaborative learning because they lack effective strategies to perceive the benefits of the strategy (Chen, 2021). Despite

existing research promoting the connection between prior collaborative experience in similar tasks and the transferability of skills to new and complex learning tasks (Zambrano et al., 2019). If teachers are not confident or comfortable with managing student learning groups, cooperative learning will not be an effective classroom strategy (Johnson et al., 2013). Teachers must be willing to constantly adjust and refine cooperative learning in their classrooms. Cooperative learning opportunities must be structured so that students are positively interdependent, and individually accountable, they promote each other's success, use appropriate social skills and process how they can improve (Johnson et al., 2013). Once these foundational elements are established, teachers can then monitor and intervene in less effective groups. Productive groups are able to engage in discussion where students "construct and extend conceptual understanding of what is being learned and develop shared mental models of complex phenomena" (Johnson et al., 2013, p. 16). Additionally, group members hold one another accountable, provide feedback, and give support to one another, but perhaps most importantly, individual students observe the exceptional knowledge, attitude, and behavior of fellow group members and seek to emulate that same level of excellence themselves (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). If the classroom environment is constructivist and cooperative learning opportunities are implemented, interdependence and accountability are essential to a student-engaged approach (Smith et al., 2005).

Researchers at the Cooperative Learning Center at the University of Minnesota completed an extensive, collective analysis of more than 754 studies from 1897 to 2005 that compare students working cooperatively, competitively, and individually (Smith et al., 2005). Regarding social interdependence, it was determined that the research can be broken down into three major categories: effort to achieve, positive interpersonal relationships, and psychological health. Regarding effort to achieve, a meta-analysis completed by Johnson & Johnson (2005) indicated that social interdependence studies found that students in cooperative groups were more willing to take on difficult tasks and persist despite difficulties, demonstrated higher-level

reasoning, critical thinking, and metacognitive thought, in addition to their ability to transfer

learning from one situation to another. Additionally, the analysis indicated that cooperative

learning promotes higher individual achievement than competitive or individualistic learning

(Smith et al., 2005).

Regarding positive relationships and social support, Johnson and Johnson (2005) found

that positive interdependence and promotive interaction led to "frequent, accurate, and open

communication..." among group members which further allows for understanding of multiple

perspectives leading to increased empathy and self-confidence which leads to productive

collaboration (Johnson & Johnson, 2005, p. 310). The positive relationships among group

members increase motivation to learn and commitment to goal achievement, personal

responsibility, and willingness to listen (Johnson & Johnson, 2005).

In relation to psychological health and self-esteem, Johnson and Johnson found

cooperative experiences are necessary for healthy development (2005). In comparison to

competitive and individualistic experiences, cooperative experiences lead people to feel known,

accepted, and liked, their contribution to the group effort is recognized, and their individual

efforts are complementary to those of others within the group (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). "When

people clearly perceive positive interdependence, individuals realize that their efforts are required

for the group to succeed, that it is not possible to get a free ride" (Johnson & Johnson, 2005, p.

314). However, there must be individual accountability to properly measure individual

contributions to cooperative efforts, otherwise, there is an increased likelihood of lessened

responsibility for the outcome (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). More research is needed to determine

the impact of negative interdependence on individual responsibility in cooperative groups.

In *Fostering Civil Discourse Within the Democratic Classroom,* Crosby (2018) argues

that if teachers expect students to communicate civilly, especially with those whose opinions are

different from their own, they must be provided opportunities to cooperate, collaborate, and

compromise in the classroom.  A democratic classroom creates an environment in which students can engage in effective and respectful relationships; where they can think critically, and participate in thoughtful, tolerant discourse.  Productive and meaningful civil discourse can be achieved through cooperative learning (Yoshino, 2014).

**Structured Academic Controversy & Deliberative Democracy.**  Academic Controversy - also known as Cooperative Controversy, Structured Controversy, and Structured Academic Controversy (SAC) - is a type of cooperative learning technique (Johnson et al., 1996). Students working in groups of four are divided into twosomes, they take turns representing two opposing viewpoints and attempt to reach a consensus (Jacobs, 2010).

In 2018, Crocco et al., studied discussions in high school classrooms.  They observed that students were able to voice their opinions and listen appropriately to opposing viewpoints, but oftentimes did not reflect or reassess their position after considering alternative perspectives. Crocco et al., (2018) concluded that students were engaged in discussion but that this discussion was not a deliberation. According to Parker & Hess (2018) the core idea of deliberation is group decision-making - communicating to make a collective decision - to weigh alternatives in discussion with others. (Parker & Hess, 2018; Levine 2018; Parker, 2021). Deliberation is key citizenship behavior representative of 'we the people' in democracies, but a key factor must be present. For discussion to be productive, or deliberative, group members must be willing to listen and learn and open to the possibility of changing their opinion (Levine 2018).  More importantly, students gain the most from deliberations in groups of which they are a part (e.g., clubs, sports teams) or classroom simulations in which students are motivated to engage in a real scenario (Levine, 2018). If we expect American citizens to be involved and contributing members, discuss important topics, make informed decisions, and come to a consensus despite disagreement - then we must provide opportunities for deliberative democracy in classrooms as part of deliberative pedagogy (Levine, 2018). Having students engage in classroom deliberation improves students'

reasoning skills, abilities to achieve consensus, support claims with evidence, and consider alternative perspectives (Hess, 2009; Kuhn & Crowell, 2011).

According to Crittenden and Levine (2018), the core of civic education may be learning to talk and listen to other people about public problems.  The most promising pedagogy is to discuss current events with a moderator with a requirement to prepare in advance.  These moderated discussions of current, controversial issues increase students' knowledge of civic processes, interpersonal skills, and interest in politics (Kawashima et al., 2014). Structured Academic Controversy (SAC), provides structure for the moderated classroom discussions as suggested by Kawashima et al.  SAC, otherwise known as deliberative democracy, or constructive controversy, builds upon Johnson & Johnson's (2007) research and study of cooperative learning by focusing on the action of discourse and deliberation within cooperative learning opportunities.  The democratic process in the United States is a deliberative one, based on collective decision-making from an engaged and informed electorate. In a 2020 study conducted by the Deliberative Democracy Lab at Stanford, researchers Fishkin & Diamond, discovered that informed and moderated discussion that transcends partisan identities led to depolarization and *empathy* among participants (2021).  Fishkin et al., (2021) observed the possibility of deliberation as an antidote to partisan polarization. If new generations of citizens are never taught to engage in productive discourse, then participation in our democracy is threatened.

Constructive Controversy has roots in Lewin's (1935) field theory of Structure-Process-Outcome which proposes the structure of a situation determines the process of the interpersonal interactions which determines the outcome. As Figure 5 (Johnson & Johnson, 2007, p.423) illustrates, teaching disagreement in the classroom can result in two outcomes: constructive controversy or concurrence seeking.

**Figure 5**



| Structuring Disagreement | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Constructive Controversy** | | **Concurrence Seeking** |

**Resulting Interaction Patterns**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Presenting, Advocating, Elaborating Position and Rationale<br>2. Being Challenged by Opposing Views | | 1. Presenting, Advocating, Elaborating Position and Rationale<br>2. Majority Pressures Dissenters to Conform to Majority Position and Perspective |

**Internal Reactions**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Uncertainty, Cognitive Conflict about Correctness of Own Views; Disequilibrium<br>2. Epistemic Curiosity, Information Search | | 1. Conflict Between Public Compliance and Private Belief<br>2. Ignore, Avoid Opposing Information |

**Resulting Behavior**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Adaptation To Diverse Perspectives; Reconceptualization, Synthesis, Integration Resulting In Consensus Consisting Of Best Joint Reasoned Judgment Reflecting All Points Of View | | Quick Compromise To End Conflict; Consensus On Majority Position, Often False Consensus Due To Members' Publicly Agreeing While Privately Disagreeing |

*Constructive Controversy as a Means of Teaching*

Consensus building is often the focus of cooperative learning, while constructive controversy advocates dissensus and conflict to practice inquiry and foster greater understanding. In constructive controversy, students present a position, attempt to persuade others with valid information, practice active listening by gathering new information to engage in discourse - the formal exchange of reasoned views with the goal of informed, collective action (Johnson & Johnson, 2014). These skills are reminiscent of Civic Learning Outcomes in which students use civic knowledge and civic values to demonstrate proficiency in civic *skills* (Hamilton & Parsi, 2022). Deliberative democracy in the classroom provides students of diverse backgrounds the

opportunity to come together and work through different viewpoints about issues of common concern. Teaching students the value of critiquing ideas and not the people behind them.

The Deliberating in a Democracy project has used constructive controversy to teach students how to engage in positive political discourse (Avery et al, 2006). It was designed to promote the teaching and learning of democratic principles and the skills of civic deliberation among a new generation (*Deliberating in a Democracy*). Deliberating in a Democracy has been used with students around the world in Azerbaijan, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Serbia, Romania, Russia and the United States. Deliberating in a Democracy uses the SAC method design for their classroom deliberation lessons. The deliberation topics, lessons, and procedures are available in the form of lesson procedures on the Deliberating in a Democracy website, complete with corresponding YouTube video illustrating the ten steps to conducting a Deliberating in a Democracy lesson. A 2009 independent evaluation of Deliberating in a Democracy conducted by the University of Minnesota revealed that 77% of students reported a greater ability to state their opinions and 72% said they developed more confidence in talking about public issues, while 88% of students agreed or strongly agreed that deliberations increased their understanding of democratic issues (*Deliberating in a Democracy)*.

While SAC can be used in a variety of subject areas, the social studies classroom is a perfect environment for students to discuss and engage in deliberation. However, social studies education has also been the center of contention at the national level due to recent concerns regarding the teaching of critical history. Encouraging students to think critically has been viewed as 'woke' or social-justice education, rather than problem-posing education, which seeks to equip students with the necessary skills to engage in inquiry-based learning in which students *discover* knowledge. This contrasts with the banking model of education in which the teacher possesses the knowledge, and students are passive receptors of knowledge (Freire, 1970). This requires use and understanding of dialogic teaching in which there is an ongoing dialogue

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between teacher and student. Dialogic education develops students' thinking and knowledge by stimulating thinking, advancing understanding, expanding ideas, and building and evaluating arguments. It empowers students for 21st-century learning and democratic engagements while being collaborative and supporting, conferring social and emotional skills. (Alexander, 2020; Chui & Teo, 2021). Yet, despite these benefits, teachers often lack the training or administrative and community support to engage in dialogic teaching in their classrooms.

In May 2021, Arizona Senate Bill 1532 threatened to fine teachers $5,000 for allowing classroom discussion on controversial topics, which further encourages teachers to avoid teaching hard history and having challenging, yet curriculum-relevant conversations in the classroom (Pitzel, 2021). Despite the multitude of benefits of SAC, teachers can be resistant to its methods. With the added job obligations on teachers and increased content coverage and state testing, teachers have little time for professional development, trying new approaches in their classroom, or spending several days implementing something like SAC (Johnson & Johnson, 2007). An analysis of the 2001 Civic Education Study found that in more racially diverse US classrooms, students were less likely to report classroom discussions (Baldi et al., 2001). Managing productive deliberation in diverse classrooms is challenging even for experienced teachers and creating an environment conducive to this is challenging, especially in a 40-to-60-minute class period. When controversial issues are discussed, many students avoid expressing dissenting viewpoints out of a strong desire for peer approval and social acceptance (Stitzlein, 2021). Creating a classroom environment in which students are encouraged and feel safe to express their opinion allows for students to learn from one another and construct knowledge themselves.

*Constructivism*

Constructivism is founded in psychological research which posits that individuals are constantly determining their own reality based on lived experience (Olusegun, 2015, Candra & Retnawati, 2020). There are two types of constructivism, Piaget's individual or cognitive

constructivism and Vygotsky's social cognitive constructivism (Powell & Kalina, 2009).

According to Powell and Kalina (2009), both theories lend themselves to classroom environments in which inquiry is the basis for learning facilitation. This is done in an accepting and attentive classroom environment where the teacher guides the student through cooperative learning to individually discover or make meaning of new knowledge. Learners then become more engaged in the learning process by applying their existing knowledge and real-world experience, they hypothesize what will happen based on their prior knowledge and experience and eventually draw conclusions (Olusegun, 2015). According to constructivist learning theory, students become active agents in the process of knowledge acquisition when they discover and transform information, check new information against old, and revise rules when they no longer apply (Olusegun, 2015). Additionally, students learn by processing new information together with what they already know.

Students become agents in their own learning in classrooms that make a conscious shift away from teacher-led instruction. Instead of pouring knowledge into passive students, constructivist classrooms encourage active engagement, involvement, and ownership of learning by the students (Smith et al., 2005). In a traditional classroom, there is a strict adherence to curriculum and textbook learning, the teacher disseminates information to the students, and learning is based on repetition (Olusegun, 2015). In a constructivist classroom, the learning is interactive; the teacher engages in dialogue with students by building upon prior knowledge and helping students construct their own knowledge. The process of learning is just as important as the product, knowledge is seen as dynamic and ever-changing, and the pursuit of student questions and interests are valid – often freely explored in small learning groups. Once teachers are confident and familiar with the characteristics of constructive classrooms, the use of conversation, discussion, and inquiry to engage students becomes more effective (Powell & Kalina, 2009).

Candra & Retnawati (2020) found a strong correlation between constructivist learning environments and positive learning outcomes specific to civic education. A meta-analysis of constructivism learning implementation concluded that constructivism "prioritizes the active role of students in constructing meaningful knowledge, making connections of ideas, and linking ideas with new information" (Candra & Retnawati, 2020, p. 842). Constructivist learning strategies were also supported by another recent study when an inquiry-based learning design was used to test students' workplace communicative competence and collaborative mindset (Chen, 2021). The mixed-methods study (Chen, 2021) used a questionnaire of learning engagement and satisfaction, summative project assessment, bi-weekly reflective journal writing, and focus group interviews. This study implemented the 5E learning cycle, which has often been associated with hands-on, constructivist pedagogy (Chen, 2021). The 5E model allows students to learn a new concept through a series of five stages of cognitive learning: engagement, exploration, explanation, elaboration, and evaluation (Chen, 2021). Students are engaged with a challenge, explore the issue, explain what they initially learned, apply that new knowledge, and evaluate their learning process (Chen, 2021). The study concluded that the implementation of a project-based learning model using the 5E constructivist approach was beneficial to promoting students' learning engagement and workplace habits of mind - the attitudes or behaviors that impact an individual's problem-solving abilities (Chen, 2021). Habits of mind are ultimately a combination of intelligent behaviors, cognitive processes, and thinking skills which can be applied to organized learning (Costa & Kallick, 2000). When students learn and practice these skills and processes, they gain confidence. The confidence learned from constructivist inquiry, also increases student confidence in the content - especially when students are engaged in the inquiry process using critical thinking to construct their own learning rather than working to identify a singular correct response.

Carpenter et al., (1989) studied the impact of constructivist learning environments on elementary school math lessons. Twenty-first-grade teachers conducted constructivist teaching

and learning math practices, while twenty were assigned to a control group. At the conclusion of the study, students in the experimental, constructivist group exceeded in math skills, understanding, problem-solving, and *confidence* in their problem-solving abilities. By gaining confidence in the constructivist process of solving math problems, students were able to transfer the process skills in such a way that increased their confidence in math (Carpenter, 1989). A constructivist classroom environment coupled with the use of small learning groups leads one to consider the interrelatedness of constructivism and cooperative learning theory on student confidence and achievement in the classroom. I sought to use the theories of cooperative learning and constructivism to measure student confidence in civic skills of deliberation and civil discourse after participating in *Deliberating in Democracy* lessons.

Cooperative Learning Theory, constructivist learning theory, and self-efficacy are often interrelated. For cooperative learning to take place, learning opportunities must be structured so that students "are positively independent, individually accountable, promote each other's success, appropriately use social skills, and periodically process how they can improve the effectiveness of their efforts" (Johnson & Johnson, 2005, p. 16). This is a gradual process, however, because cooperative learning can take many forms, formal and informal, and serve as the basis for other types of learning, such as problem-based learning, team-based learning, collaborative learning, and peer assisted learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). Cooperative learning maximizes student learning, helps to maximize retention, and ensures mastery of difficult or complex concepts. These academic implications are also supported by the benefits of cooperative learning on psychological health, improved interpersonal relationships, and positive attitudes toward learning (Smith et al., 2005).

### Self-Efficacy

Canadian American psychologist Albert Bandura developed theories related to social learning, social cognition, and self-efficacy. Grounded in social cognitive theory, Bandura (1977)

defined self-efficacy as the extent to which a person believes they are capable of completing a task. The level of self-efficacy refers to its dependence on the difficulty of a certain task, the transferability of self-efficacy beliefs between activities, and the certainty regarding the accomplishment of a given task (Bandura, 1977). An individual's self-efficacy beliefs may change depending on the time, place, or context. For example, a student may have high self-efficacy for algebraic equations but not for a research paper. However, self-efficacy does not measure a person's *actual* capability. An individual's judgments of self-efficacy can potentially affect a person's choices, efforts, and persistence. If a person believes they are capable, they are more likely to expend greater effort and persist longer than those who are unsure of their abilities.

Additionally, research has suggested that people tend to overestimate their capabilities (e.g., Pajares, 1996.). Bandura (1997) contended that these overestimations of ability could actually increase an individual's effort and achievements during challenging tasks. Examining students' own performances offers the most reliable guides for gauging self-efficacy (Schunk & Meece, 2006). Adolescents' self-efficacy can influence their academic performance, friendships, and career path because of its impact on a person's social, emotional, and behavioral development. Self-efficacy can also be influenced by personal, social, and environmental variables as well (Bandura, 1997). Students often measure efficacious feelings based on the social comparison of other students' achievements - students who observe peers learning a task often have positive feelings toward their own ability to learn (Schunk & Meece, 2006). In addition to their perceived ability, students also weigh their prior successes with the perceived difficulty of the learning task, amount of effort required, time involved, help received, and emotional responses (Schunk & Meece, 2006). Students who experience success at a particular task may enhance their self-efficacy in similar tasks in the future (Bandura, 1997).

Additional research suggests that self-efficacy highly correlates with achievement and is an essential component of academic success (e.g., Hsieh et al., 2007). Students with high self-efficacy for learning a new skill or performing a task, participate more willingly, work harder, achieve at high levels, and maintain commitment when they are faced with challenges (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2006, p. 9). A 2022 study examined students' self-efficacy beliefs as they relate to self-assessment. Yan et al., (2022) found that students with higher self-efficacy in self-assessment were more likely to conduct positive self-assessment behaviors. Additionally, students' lack of confidence in using self-assessment was associated with lower self-assessment accuracy. Students' self-confidence in their learning abilities also influences their self-assessment evaluations. Ramdass and Zimmerman (2008) explored this further when they examined middle school students' self-efficacy in mathematics and noted that students with high levels of self-efficacy set higher goals, used more effective self-regulatory strategies, monitored their work more efficiently, persevered when faced with challenging academic tasks, and evaluated their performance more accurately compared to students with low levels of self-efficacy (p.21). Regarding group work, communicative self-efficacy can be considered, which is when an individual has a positive belief regarding their discourse skills - an individual's abilities to communicate their own words, thoughts, and feelings to others (Lawrence et al., 2016). Bandura suggests that this can be developed in students with successful performance outcomes, observing the task-specific success of others, verbal persuasion and emotional enthusiasm. When it comes to focus group participation specifically, a 2006 study (Zorn et al., 2006) noted that adult participants demonstrated and reported increased confidence and motivation toward participating in public discussions related to biotechnology - a shift in communicative self-efficacy. Researchers hypothesized that this heightened efficacy could have been a result of the opportunity to observe and perform a task successfully, observe other people also performing successfully, receive encouragement, and experience enthusiasm because of participating.

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Lawrence, Snow, and Taylor (2016) sought to extend this thinking to adolescents. They argue that communicative self-efficacy is an important link between discussing controversial issues and an individual's level of civic engagement because confidence in discourse skills is critical to managing conflicting perspectives and developing solutions to community problems in future citizens. Lawrence, Snow, and Taylor tested this hypothesis by using the *Word Generation* literacy program with middle school students to teach controversial issues through classroom discussions and writing. Paired sample *t*-tests indicated that students who participated in these lessons reported higher communicative self-efficacy than control students. Concluding that students' engagement in controversial issues can enable them to feel successful in real or simulated decision-making processes that may shape their confidence to participate in a broad real-world context. If students have more control over the learning process, it can raise their self-efficacy in the process.

**Summary**

Cooperative learning, constructivist learning, and self-efficacy theories support the We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution simulated congressional hearing model; they are methods to increase student achievement and practice essential civic skills in the classroom. In social studies classrooms, there is a pedagogical shift away from lecture and direct instruction and toward student-centered learning strategies like cooperative, constructive, inquiry-based learning (Nagel, 2008). This has great implications for increased student achievement but will require a greater shift in mindset from teachers and students (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). A shift toward cooperative learning and SAC can be done if students and teachers have a conceptual understanding of the essential components of cooperative learning, concrete examples of lessons and strategies, and repeated implementation in classrooms and schools over an extended period (Stahl & VanSickle, 1992). Ultimately, cooperative learning and constructivism serve to promote the *social* aspect of social studies and civic education. When a social learning community is

formed, students work cooperatively and systematically to acquire new knowledge and abilities individually and as a group (Stahl & VanSickle, 1992).  By implementing these methods, I sought to improve upon the civic skills of deliberation and civil discourse students learn by participating in the WTP congressional hearing model.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Action research has gained popularity in educational studies because it bridges a critical

gap between academia and classroom application by bringing about more informative results and

immediate and direct application (Mertler, 2020).  Action researchers identify a problem, design

and implement an intervention, assess the effectiveness of the proposed solution, and propose a

plan for what comes next (Mertler, 2020).  Meant to be cyclical and recursive, action research

allows teachers to analyze and interpret the teaching and learning taking place in the classroom

and use that information as a basis for future planning and decision-making (Mertler, 2020). I

designed an action research study to assess the effectiveness of deliberation lessons on student

confidence in the civic skills of deliberation and civil discourse.  I chose a mixed methods action

research study because it provided a pragmatic approach to and comprehensive understanding of

cooperative learning, student confidence, and civic skills in the classroom.  This study is

important to me because I wanted to improve upon the cooperative learning and inquiry-based

learning opportunities in my classroom by addressing limitations and providing actionable

solutions related to the learning and mastery of civic skills - deliberation and civil discourse. This

chapter will discuss the research design, the intervention, data collection, and data analysis.

**Research Design**

According to Ivankova (2015), mixed methods research has become a popular approach

"due to its ability to address the research problem more comprehensively" by highlighting the

meaningful integration of qualitative and quantitative methods (pp.4-5).  By collecting

quantitative and qualitative data, I sought to use mixed methods analysis to construct a complete

picture of cooperative learning and student confidence in civic skills by pairing student survey

data with student work samples and focus group interviews.  After receiving IRB approval

(Appendix F), this mixed-methods action research study utilized pre-post surveys, focus group

interviews, and coded, qualitative analysis of student work from the deliberation lessons. These materials included classroom activities in the Deliberating in a Democracy and Street Law, Inc. curriculum (described below). I hope that the integration of the skills from these lessons will transfer to my students' future endeavors as participatory and engaged citizens who can form an opinion, listen to alternatives, and ultimately work toward a consensus with those who think differently.

**Setting**

The study was conducted at a large, suburban public high school in Arizona. The school district includes six high schools, enrolling approximately 13,000 students and employing 1,000 teachers and staff (School Website). The high school includes grades 9-12, enrolls approximately 2,800 students, and employs 200 teachers and staff. Of the 2,800 students enrolled in the high school, 56% identify as White, 24% as Hispanic, 8% as Asian or Pacific Islander, 6% Black, 2% Native American, and 4% identify as two or more races/ethnicities (Great Schools School Profile). Approximately 13% of students come from low-income families and the four-year graduation rate is 96% (Great Schools School Profile). I have taught Social Studies at the school for the past 12 years and the AP Government and the We the People program for 10 years. This action research study took place in my AP Government class during the fall semester of 2023.

At my school site, the WTP program is conducted in tandem with the AP United States Government and Politics course. Each year, students in their junior year, who have completed American History, are eligible to participate in the class and program senior year. The class uses the WTP curriculum to guide civics instruction and the WTP program provides students an opportunity to learn, practice, and demonstrate civic skills. This is done by employing the format of a congressional hearing as the summative assessment. To prepare for this, students are taught the six units of study in the WTP textbook before being divided into six small, cooperative groups, one for each unit. Once in these groups, the students become experts in their

corresponding unit of study by composing a four-minute testimony responding to a question from their unit, and preparing potential follow-up questions asked of them by a panel of judges - serving as congressional committee members.  Each year, the national Center for Civic Education (CCE) composes congressional hearing questions for elementary, middle, and high school students (Center for Civic Education, 2021). WTP teachers can use these questions to guide assessment of student learning in class or to prepare for competition.  The CCE coordinates district and state level competitions in all 50 states, in which the congressional hearing format is evaluated in a more competitive nature, with the possibility of WTP teams advancing to a national competition held in Washington D.C., each year.

At my school site, we compete in the WTP district and state level competitions.  Students typically spend nine weeks researching and working collaboratively as an expert panel in their small, cooperative group. They compose a four-minute prepared statement and prepare for possible follow-up questions from judges in the simulated hearing.  The foundation of this work takes place during the AP Government class period each day, but most students will spend a notable amount of time outside of class working individually and cooperatively to prepare.

**Participants**

Action research often uses non-probability sampling to study a school, classroom, or teacher-learning situation with the goal of understanding and improving teaching and learning (Johnson, 2019). In determining who will participate, convenience sampling involves a selection of whoever happens to be available (Mertler, 2020). As a teacher-researcher, I used convenience sampling (Mertler, 2020) because I chose to study the effectiveness of deliberation lessons with the students in my classroom. However, I only implemented the intervention with my AP Government students, which demonstrates the use of purposive sampling by including a specific group of students.  Purposive sampling identifies individuals who are believed to be

representative of a given population (Mertler, 2020). These methods helped avoid variability in my data set if I had chosen additional teachers and classrooms to participate in the study.

Students enrolled in my AP Government class also participate in the We the People (WTP) program - by learning the curriculum and preparing for competition. The entire class of 24 WTP students completed four deliberation lessons as part of the planned intervention. Each student elected to enroll in the course upon course registration during their junior year. I did not select individual students to enroll in the course or participate. All students in the class were invited to participate in the study and student completion of the surveys and participation in the focus group interviews was voluntary. I only collected data from the students and families who returned signed consent and assent forms to participate in the study.

The goal of the pre- and post- survey was to help answer RQ1 and RQ2 and determine the effectiveness of the deliberation lessons. The students enrolled in my WTP class served as the participants in this study and completed both the pre- and post- surveys. The use of the pre-survey was to better understand students' self-efficacy toward cooperative learning, constructivism, and deliberation prior to introducing the deliberation lessons. Twenty-three students completed the pre-survey. Thirteen students were female, 10 male, and 8 students identified as White, 8 as Asia, 4 as Bi/Multi-Racial, 1 Hispanic, 1 Black, and 1 American Indian. Regarding Mother's Education, sixteen of the students' mothers had completed a master's degree, doctoral or professional degree. Additionally, sixteen students had fathers who have completed a master's degree or higher. Seventeen of the 23 students were enrolled in 3 or more Advanced Placement courses.

**Role of the Researcher**

Action research is any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers, principals, counselors, or other stakeholders to understand how their schools operate, how they teach, and how well their students learn (Mills, 2013). As an educator-researcher, I chose to examine the

teaching and learning practices in my classroom. I teach AP Government in tandem with the WTP curriculum and utilize their resources to assess and prepare students for the competitive component of the course and program. I evaluate student achievement and academic progress both in terms of content knowledge and skill attainment. The Deliberating in a Democracy and Street Law intervention resources used were assignments and activities that were completed during class time, meant to supplement and enrich the current learning practices. I created, distributed, and analyzed the surveys, and arranged and supervised the focus group interviews, in addition to curating and modifying the resources needed for the planned intervention. I was mindful of my proximity to the problem of practice and the participants in the study; however, I believe that the efforts to evaluate classroom practices will benefit student learning outcomes in addition to informing my instructional practice, and therefore, the conduction of action research was worthy of my consideration.

**Intervention**

Since 1987, my school site has maintained a 12th-grade government course section that utilizes the WTP curriculum and congressional hearing model as a method of instruction and assessment. Developed by the Center for Civic Education, the We the People program's culminating activity is a simulated congressional hearing in which students work in small groups to evaluate, take, and defend positions on relevant historical and contemporary issues (Center for Civic Education, 2021). Inquiry-based learning environments like WTP, increase students' critical thinking, collaboration, and communication skills which equip students with job-transferable, 21st-century, *civic* skills (Chen, 2021).

The WTP congressional hearing model is based on the tenets of cooperative learning, the merits of which are well-established within educational scholarship (Johnson, D. W. et al., 2013, Smith et al., 2005, Stahl, R. J., & VanSickle, R. L., 1992). The effectiveness of the congressional hearing model in content knowledge attainment has also been well documented by the Center for

Civic Education (CCE, 2021). However, I found that my students lacked the civic and cooperative learning skills of deliberation and civil discourse necessary to initially engage in meaningful group work. I hypothesized if this was due to a lack of formal instruction teaching students how to work cooperatively, a consequence of isolation and virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, or a combination of both. This study sought to determine whether implementing lessons specific to deliberation and civil discourse would improve students' confidence in these skills.

Citizens must be willing and able to express and exchange ideas among themselves and their representatives in government, however, deliberating civic issues is not natural behavior; it requires instruction and practice (*Deliberating in a Democracy,* n.d.). To achieve this aim, I used resources from Deliberating in a Democracy and Street Law's classroom deliberation lessons in the intervention. Founded in 2004, Deliberating in a Democracy was part of an initiative led by the Constitutional Rights Foundation, Street Law, Inc., and the U.S. Department of Education. Founded on the tenets of deliberative pedagogy and SAC, the deliberation lessons provide an alternative to classroom debates by shifting students' focus from 'winning' classroom discussions to understanding alternative positions, building consensus, and formulating historical syntheses (National History Education Clearinghouse, 2018). A key element of this is when students are tasked to present a position, listen to the opposing position, *repeat back* what is understood about the opposing point of view, and deliberate toward group consensus. Each lesson is designed to follow this format. I chose to use these deliberation lessons and activities because of what I noticed my students were lacking and because they were created to foster the deliberation and civil discourse we hope to see exhibited in our democracy.

Deliberating in a Democracy has introductory resources that explain the difference between debate, discussion, and deliberation. They also provide deliberation guides, blank activity worksheets, and student reflection documents. Each of these was used in conjunction

with the resources provided by Street Law which also include deliberation norms, deliberation note guides, self-assessments, and feedback reflections.  The methodology includes assigning positions for deliberation, reversing positions, and debriefing the deliberation while adhering to rules and norms set by the group. The deliberation lessons utilize the principles of SAC to teach deliberation and cooperative learning skills. Classroom lessons on deliberation seek to ensure conflicting views are heard, understood, and valued. The lessons are intentionally solution-based and consensus-building activities that require direct instruction and sustained and regular opportunities for practice (*Deliberating in Democracy*, n.d.). Deliberation goes beyond discussion and debate because students must learn how to express, exchange, and consider alternate viewpoints to find a solution or come to a consensus (*Street Law*, 2022).

**Timeline and Procedure**

The preparation for the intervention began in July 2023. After obtaining school district and site approval, students and their parents or guardians completed the required consent forms. Students were then sent the pre-intervention survey via their student emails. The introduction of the deliberation lessons began in August and continued through November. During this time, random sampling was used to place students in six different small groups, numbering four students each.  Over six class periods or approximately 300 minutes of class time, students received direct instruction on deliberation and participated in four deliberation activities. Focus group interviews and the post-survey were conducted in November after the completion and conclusion of the deliberation lessons.

**Table 1**

*Timeline and Procedures of the Study*

| Time Frame | Actions | Procedures |
| --- | --- | --- |

| Time Frame | Actions | Procedures |
|---|---|---|
| July 2023 | Distributed Consent and Assent Forms Distributed Pre-Survey | Student and parental consent Send pre-survey to students |
| August - November 2023 | Data Analysis Conducted Intervention: Students completed four deliberation activities in small groups | Code / analyze pre-survey Facilitate deliberation activities Analyze & code student work |
| November 2023 | Distribute post-survey Conduct Focus Group Interviews | Send post-survey Conduct focus group interviews |
| December 2023 - January 2024 | Data Analysis | Code / analyze post-survey Code / analyze interviews |

Before the start of the deliberation lessons, I provided direct instruction using the resources provided by Deliberating in a Democracy and Street Law, Inc. This included defining deliberation, its purpose, and the process and rules for deliberation in the classroom. Over nine weeks, the 24 WTP participants completed four deliberation lessons and activities. For each deliberation lesson, students were randomly divided into six groups, with four students in each group. As part of the lesson, students worked together to complete the deliberation activity, and then worked independently to fill-out the corresponding worksheet and reflection. These provided students an opportunity for both self- and group reflection from one deliberation lesson to the next. Four rounds of deliberation lessons were conducted, and a total of six deliberation lessons were used: 1) Is the United States Democracy Healthy? 2) Should the Electoral College be Abolished? and 3) Should Democracies Enact Laws that Require their Political Representation to Match their Gender, Racial, and Ethnic Composition? The final round allowed students the choice between 1) Should the United States Government Pass a Flag Desecration Amendment? 2) Should Hate Speech be Banned in Our Democracy? Or Should the Federal Government Pass an Assault Weapons Ban?

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**Table 2**

*Schedule of Deliberation Lessons*

| | *Student participants completed a pre-survey before the start of the intervention.* |
|---|---|
| Class Periods | Process |
| 1 | Teacher-led direct instruction on Deliberation and Civil Discourse in the classroom using *Deliberating in a Democracy* and *Street Law* deliberation guide and teaching materials |
| 1 | Students participate in Deliberation Lesson #1 <br> Students reflect & debrief Deliberation Activity #1 |
| 1 | Students participate in Deliberation Lesson #2 <br> Students reflect & debrief Deliberation Activity #2 |
| 1 | Students participate in Deliberation Lesson #3 <br> Students reflect & debrief Deliberation Activity #3 |
| 1 | Students choose topic and participate in Deliberation Lesson #4 <br> Students reflect and debrief Deliberation Activity #4 |
| | *Student participants complete focus group interviews & post-survey after the intervention.* |

**Data Collection**

In this MMAR study, I collected both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data came from the pre- and post- surveys, while qualitative data came from open-ended questions on the surveys, student work samples, and focus group interview responses. Table 3 includes the research questions guiding the research study and the methods of data collection associated with each RQ.

**Table 3**

*Research Questions and Method*

| Research Question | Methods |
|---|---|
| 1. How and to what extent does the use of deliberation lessons impact students' self-efficacy in cooperative | • Pre- and Post-Surveys <br> • Student work |

| | |
|---|---|
| learning? | • Semi-Structured Student Focus Group Interviews |
| 2.  How does students' self-efficacy in their deliberation and civil discourse skills compare pre and post intervention? | • Pre- and Post-Surveys |
| 3.  How do students perceive the effectiveness of the deliberation lessons in improving their deliberation and civil discourse skills? | • Student Work<br>• Open-Ended Survey Questions<br>• Semi-Structured Student Focus Group Interviews |

### *Quantitative Data*

As the teacher-researcher, I was concerned with measuring the change in students' confidence in deliberation and civil discourse skills before and after the intervention.  I sought to measure this change in confidence using quantitative data collected from pre- and post-intervention surveys (Appendix A).  The pre-survey was utilized to assess students' self-efficacy in the civic skills of deliberation and civil discourse prior to the intervention to determine a baseline measurement.  The surveys were developed and designed electronically using Qualtrics, and a link to the pre- and post-surveys was sent to student emails for completion.  This was done after the school day so as not to interfere with classroom learning or influence the students' voluntary responses. The post-survey was sent to the students upon the completion of the deliberation lessons, prior to the focus group interviews.  Both surveys took approximately ten minutes to complete and could be completed on a student's cell phone, tablet, or computer.  The surveys included demographic questions for descriptive statistics and both a four-point and five-point Likert-scale were used to assess students' self-efficacy as it related to cooperative learning, constructivism, and deliberation (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Questions on the pre and post-survey were created based on Developing Indicators and Measures of Civic Outcomes (Chi et al., 2006), Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (Moely

et al., 2002), 21st Century Skills Instrument (21CSI) (Sahin et al., 2019), Cooperative Learning Process Scale (Atxurra et al., 2015) and the Instrument for Measuring Students' Confidence with 'Key Skills' (Bray et al., 2020).  A 5-point Likert scale and 4-point Likert scale (Lavrakas, 2008) were used for survey questions, with response choices as follows: 1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *Neutral/Unsure*, 4= *Agree*, and 5 = *Strongly Agree,* and 1=*Not confident at all,* 2=*Somewhat confident*, 3=*Confident,* 4=*Very confident.*

The survey questions related to the construct of cooperative learning with a specific focus on the civic skills of deliberation and civil discourse.  The first construct measured students' confidence in cooperative learning. A question that represents this construct is, "I am confident in my ability to learn in small, cooperative groups." The second construct dealt with constructivism, students' ability to make meaning of their own learning.  Survey questions seeking to measure this asked, "I am in control of my own learning," and "I learn from other students in this class."  I also sought to measure students' confidence in civic skills of deliberation and civil discourse by asking, "I can discuss controversial or difficult issues in a civil manner." (See Appendix A for the complete pre- and post-survey.)

*Qualitative Data*

**Focus Group Interviews.**  After the intervention, participants were invited to take part in the focus group interviews.  Focus group interviews became prevalent in academic social research in the 1980s and are often used to examine a variety of viewpoints on the topic in focus (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The focus group interviews were conducted to capture a more comprehensive view of the student experience by encouraging participants to reflect on their learning and the deliberation lessons by articulating and clarifying their thoughts beyond the choices on a survey. The qualitative data collected from the focus group interviews was used to answer RQ 3: How do students perceive the effectiveness of the deliberation lessons in improving their deliberation and civil discourse skills?

Two focus group interviews were conducted on November 30th, 2023, outside of class time. All participants had completed the appropriate consent and assent forms before participating in the interviews. I used purposive sampling to select the students I thought would provide quality, yet varied, perspectives on the deliberation lessons (Mertler, 2020). Ten students were chosen, with five students in each group. Both interviews were conducted in person and audio recorded using Zoom's recording feature. Zoom provided the initial transcription of the interviews and then I created a separate document whereby I began verifying the transcription. The interview questions were narrowed to ten questions to avoid fatigue and each question focused on a construct related to cooperative learning, constructivism, and deliberation (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

The first interview question concerned the benefits and limitations of the WTP program's cooperative learning format, "Before this year, have you ever been taught the skills to work in cooperative groups?" The second construct of interview questions focused on student confidence in deliberation and discourse, "In what ways do you believe the deliberation lessons have influenced your confidence in engaging in civil discourse, expressing your opinions and considering opposing viewpoints?" and "To what extent do you feel the deliberation lessons have increased your confidence to engage in discussions about current events or societal issues in a respectful and informed manner?" The third and final construct related to how cooperative learning, deliberation and discourse could be improved, "Take a moment and reflect on your experience during the deliberation lessons in class. What aspects of the deliberation lessons were most effective in enhancing your confidence in deliberation?" and "To what extent do you feel the deliberation lessons have increased your confidence to engage in discussions about current events or societal issues in a respectful and informed manner?" All remaining focus group interview questions can be found in Appendix B.

Acknowledging my proximity to the research, two teachers who are familiar with the WTP program at my school site, served as the moderators. I composed the script, the interview questions, and set up the recording for each group. The moderators introduced the focus group topic and facilitated the interchange between the group participants. Both moderators were mindful of following the script and order of questions while creating and maintaining an atmosphere in which participants were encouraged to discuss personal viewpoints, perspectives, and experiences. The goal of the focus group was to contribute to methodological triangulation by analyzing the qualitative and quantitative data together to corroborate findings, determine any weaknesses, and increase validity and reliability (Mertler, 2020).

**Student Work.** The final set of qualitative data was collected from student work samples. As students participated in the deliberation lessons, each student individually completed a corresponding deliberation guide. The first page provides students the definition and reason behind deliberation, plus the deliberation procedures. Students were tasked with reviewing expected deliberation norms and were encouraged to develop norms unique to their group. The second page of the guide provided students with a space to take notes for both rounds of the deliberation: Reasons to support the deliberation question and reasons to oppose. The third page of the deliberation guide provided questions to prompt free discussion within the deliberation groups and two questions to help debrief the discussion: "Was your group able to reach consensus on any part of the deliberation question? If so, what do you think allowed you to reach consensus? If not, what do you think prevented you from reaching consensus?" and "Whose problem is this to solve? How should they solve it? What role, if any, should you play?" The final aspect of the deliberation guide is the post-deliberation self-assessment and feedback. Students rate their ability to deliberate based on the norms and answer three reflective questions evaluating their individual and group achievement from the lesson. I collected these after each deliberation

lesson and began coding them by each portion of the lesson, hoping to compare this data to both the survey and focus group responses.

**Data Analysis**

Action research identifies a problem, designs and implements an intervention, assesses the effectiveness of the proposed solution, followed by a plan for what comes next (Mertler, 2021).  As a teacher-researcher, this meant identifying a problem in the local context of my classroom and performing several cycles of initial research to develop an intervention to address the problem.  Ultimately, this micro-level research and intervention, will speak to a larger, national context that seeks to improve civic education on a broader scale.  Therefore, the goal of this MMAR study will connect the frameworks of cooperative learning, constructivism, and self-efficacy to deliberation and discourse in the high school government classroom.  According to Ivankova (2015) mixed methods research has become a popular approach "due to its ability to address the research problem more comprehensively" by highlighting the meaningful integration of qualitative and quantitative methods (p.4-5).

I chose to study cooperative learning in the WTP class by using a Mixed Methods Action Research (MMAR) study.  MMAR studies rely on the complementarity of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis.  Using both qualitative and quantitative methods allows for a comprehensive analysis of the problem of practice.  I collected quantitative data and qualitative data using the sequential Quan→ Qual MMAR study design by interpreting how quantitative results help confirm or generalize qualitative findings (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The data was then analyzed through the frameworks of cooperative learning, constructivism, and self-efficacy to identify codes and themes.

**Table  4**

*Visual Diagram of an Explanatory Sequential Design*

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| Strand | Procedure | Product |
|---|---|---|
| Pre-Intervention Quantitative Data Collection | • Pre-Survey (n=24); Demographic Data, Survey with Cooperative Learning, Constructivism and Deliberation Constructs (Appendix A). | • Demographic Data (Quant)<br>• Numeric Data (Quat)<br>• Open-Ended Pre-Survey Questions (Qual) |
| Pre-Intervention Quantitative Data Analysis | • Descriptive and inferential statistics | • Identifying initial trends to inform focus-group questions.<br>• Arithmetic mean |
| Post-Intervention Quantitative Data Collection | • Post-Survey (n=13); Demographic Data, Survey with Cooperative Learning, Constructivism and Deliberation Constructs (Appendix A). | • Demographic Data (Quant)<br>• Numeric Data (Quat)<br>• Open-Ended Pre-Survey Questions (Qual) |
| Post-Intervention Quantitative Data Analysis | • SPSS Software | • Descriptive Statistics<br>• Inferential Statistics |
| Post-Intervention Qualitative Data Collection | • Two focus groups (n=10)<br>• Open-ended Post-Survey questions | • Numeric Data (Quant)<br>• Open-Ended Post-Survey Questions (Qual)<br>• Focus Group Transcripts (Qual) |
| Post-Intervention Qualitative Data Analysis | • Coding<br>• Theme Analysis | • Qualitative Data Codes and Themes |
| Interpretation of Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis | • Synthesized analysis of quantitative and qualitative data.<br>• Explanation of Quant results<br>• Discussion of focus group interview. | • Interpretation of Quantitative and Qualitative findings<br>• Implications for current and future research |

I chose an explanatory sequential MMAR design because it would combine the benefits of quantitative and qualitative data, which allows for a more complete analysis of the effectiveness of the deliberation lessons in improving students' self-efficacy in deliberation (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). I analyzed the quantitative data from the pre-survey and used it to inform the questions for the focus group interview.

### Quantitative Data Analysis

The data was downloaded from Qualtrics and transferred to Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) software for analysis. To establish reliability for the survey, a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated for each construct in the pre- and post-survey (Cronbach, 1951, Ivankova, 2015). The reliability of cooperative learning survey items was .71, constructivism survey items was .80, and deliberation survey items was .92, all demonstrating reliability.

The pre-survey was conducted on Qualtrics, and the data was downloaded for analysis into SPSS. In comparing the results from the surveys pre- and post- intervention (Table 4) I used a paired samples *t*-test to determine if there was a statistical difference between means of measures (Salkind, 2020). This t-test was performed to evaluate whether there was a difference between the confidence of students' skills in cooperative learning, making meaning of their own learning, and deliberation before and after they participated in the deliberation lessons.

**Table 4**

*Survey Questions by Construct*

|  | Pre- | Post- |
|---|---|---|
| Cooperative Learning | n=24 | n=13 |
| *Cooperative Learning Degrees of Agreement* | | |
| I assume shared responsibility for cooperative work. | 9.23 | 9.08 |
| I value contributions of others for cooperative work. | 9.32 | 9.25 |
| I make an effort to understand the thinking of people from different backgrounds (cultures, religions, ideologies, and lifestyles) | 9.32 | 9.25 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| I respond well to new and diverse perspectives | 9.18 | 9.08 |
| I listen while others are speaking by demonstrating active listening (eye contact, nodding, moving toward the speaker) | 9.27 | 9.18 |

*Cooperative Learning Measure of Confidence*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| When there is tension in a group, I can help mediate a path forward. | 2.45 | 2.64 |
| After completing work, I can reflect about what went well and what could have improved. | 2.6 | 2.82 |
| I never hesitate to speak up if I have a question or something to say. | 3.23 | 3.50 |

| **Constructivism** | **n=24** | **n=13** |
|---|---|---|

*Constructivism Degrees of Agreement*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| I learn more from working with other people than when I work alone | 8.18 | 8.50 |
| I consider information from a variety of perspectives when developing new ideas. | 9.14 | 9.08 |
| I am willing to go beyond my basic knowledge to expand my own learning. | 9.45 | 9.42 |
| After working with others, I can develop new and innovative ideas. | 9.0 | 9.0 |
| I am in control of my own learning | 9.05 | 9.0 |
| I learn from other students as much as I learn from the teacher or class materials. | 8.45 | 8.25 |
| I learn from other people with backgrounds, views, experiences that are different from my own. | 9.41 | 9.08 |
| I ask for clarification when I do not understand something | 7.09 | 6.75 |

*Constructivism Measure of Confidence*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| I can cooperate (rather than compete) with others | 3.35 | 3.45 |
| I can be taught new ways to learn and process information | 3.15 | 3.18 |

| **Deliberation** | **n=24** | **n=13** |
|---|---|---|

*Deliberation Degrees of Agreement*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| I possess the necessary communication and interpersonal skills to deliberate in a small group. | 9.10 | 8.91 |
| I have been taught the necessary communication and interpersonal skills to deliberate in a small group. | 8.82 | 8.83 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| I can overcome conflict and learn from opposing viewpoints | 9.05 | 8.92 |
| I am confident in my ability to engage in respectful deliberation with my peers. | 9.15 | 9.36 |

*Deliberation Measure of Confidence*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| I can read materials carefully for comprehension. | 2.95 | 3.18 |
| I can focus on the question I am being asked. | 2.95 | 2.91 |
| I can evaluate, take, and defend a position - even if it is different from my own belief. | 2.80 | 3.36 |
| I can ask relevant and appropriate questions when learning new information | 2.75 | 2.91 |
| I can listen carefully to what others are saying with the purpose of understanding before I respond. | 3.15 | 3.18 |
| I can summarize what another person said to make sure I understood correctly. | 2.80 | 3.18 |
| I can speak clearly and with confidence. | 2.70 | 2.64 |
| I can clearly articulate my thoughts and ideas in writing. | 2.95 | 3.18 |
| I can encourage others to speak | 2.47 | 3.09 |
| I can refer to provided readings to support my ideas | 3.25 | 3.18 |
| I can research additional information to both support and refute my opinions. | 3.2 | 2.91 |
| I can apply my life experiences and background knowledge in a logical way. | 3.10 | 3.18 |
| I can cite evidence and substantiate my opinions with sound reasoning. | 3.20 | 3.18 |
| I can remain engaged and respectful when controversy or tension arises. | 3.30 | 3.09 |
| When there is tension in a group, I can help mediate a path forward. | 2.45 | 2.64 |
| I can overcome hesitancy and reluctance to discuss difficult issues. | 2.60 | 2.82 |
| I can cooperate (rather than compete with others) | 3.35 | 3.45 |
| I can listen to conflicting perspectives and identify where they agree and disagree. | 3.05 | 3.09 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| I can create and support a positive environment conducive for deliberation | 2.90 | 3.0 |
| I can admit when I am wrong and accept constructive criticism | 2.79 | 3.09 |
| After completing group work, I can reflect about what went well and what could be improved. | 2.79 | 2.82 |
| I can be taught new ways to learn and process information | 3.15 | 3.17 |

*Qualitative Data Analysis*

In this section I will discuss the analysis of the qualitative data collected. Open-ended questions on both the pre-and post- surveys, student work samples, and focus group interviews served as the qualitative data in this study. The open-ended questions allowed for students to elaborate beyond the Likert-scale questions. Data from the qualitative findings was used to answer RQ2 and RQ3. Student definitions of civil discourse and their deliberation note-taking and debriefing worksheets were analyzed and coded.

Grounded theory coding is the process of defining what the data is about by interrogating, sorting, and synthesizing the qualitative data (Flick, 2014). By categorizing qualitative textual data into clusters of similar entities, or conceptual categories, I sought to identify consistent patterns and relationships between variables and themes (Given, 2008). I used open coding (Flick, 2014) which allowed me to classify certain expressions and concepts into categories and then codes based on their properties and dimensions. Open coding allowed me the opportunity to interact with the data by examining responses line by line or word by word. Coding also helped to identify and determine connections between data and theoretical perspectives previously discussed. I discovered that by waiting several hours or even days between coding sessions, I was able to do several things: confirm my initial coding, see phrases and wording in a new light and adjust coding, or identify areas that I had missed on the initial read. In grounded theory, axial coding (Flick, 2014) is used to make connections between codes. As I was reading

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through the initial codes and themes from the interview transcripts, open-ended survey responses, and student work samples, I began using theoretical coding in which I reviewed the qualitative data codes for phrases, concepts, and words related to cooperative learning constructivism, and self-efficacy. While focusing on addressing RQ3: Which aspects of the deliberation lessons' design and implementation were effective in developing students' self-efficacy in their ability to deliberate?" it was also helpful to group and code responses related to RQ1 and RQ2 as well.

The final component of the deliberation lessons was the reflection questions: What is one positive reflection you had from today's deliberation? One improvement I can make in our next deliberation is to… and One improvement we can all make in our next deliberation is to… I read, recorded, and coded each student's response to these questions for each of the four rounds of deliberations we conducted in class. When analyzing the collection of students' deliberation guides, I focused on these final reflection questions to help determine students' self-efficacy in deliberation and what aspects of the deliberation lessons, if any, were effective in helping them deliberate.

First, I used inductive coding (Flick, 2014) to divide the student work samples according to each deliberation lesson. Then, I read through the samples and used manual, open coding based on the student responses to the question. Afterward, I read through a different set of deliberation worksheets and determined if the codes I had come up with matched, or if new and additional codes were needed. Next, using axial coding, (Given 2008) codes were grouped according to each deliberation and each reflection question. Originally, I had over 60 codes and had to narrow them down and make broader categories. Combining the codes in the broader categories helped me better understand students' responses to positives from the deliberation, individual improvements, and group improvements. The codes from student work can be found in Appendix D.

I used the theoretical frameworks of cooperative learning, constructivism, and self-efficacy to help guide the coding process, as I developed 50 codes from the focus group interviews. The codes and themes from the focus group interviews can be found in Appendix C. As I was combing through the data, I realized that many of the students' responses also spoke to themes in RQ1 about cooperative learning and RQ2 regarding students' self-efficacy toward deliberation skills. So I began to group the codes according to the RQ best supported by the coded response. At the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year, prior to introducing the deliberation lessons to the class, I had the WTP students participate in a classroom activity. I would read controversial statements to the class (i.e., Assault rifles should be permitted in this country, or Vaccine mandates should be required of everyone). One side of the argument was 'pro' for those in agreement with the statement, while the other side was 'con' for those who disagreed. I have done it for years and it has always been interesting to watch the students move, and in some cases even, switch sides. After completing the deliberation lessons, a student reflected on the contrast between deliberation and debate by referring to this class activity: "There's a difference between deliberating about current issues and debating current issues. Before we did these lessons, I was much more used to the whole debate side. Whereas here, we're actually talking about evidence and why this is an issue." Students distinguishing between debate versus deliberation would appear in the focus group interviews as well.

**Data Reliability and Validity**

The quantitative data in this action research study included the pre- and post- surveys. I ensured validity by aligning the survey questions with both the research questions and conceptual frameworks. I also made a concerted effort to remind students to complete the survey outside of class, rather than using class time to complete the survey. I think this outside of class element, did result in fewer post-survey responses for the group, but I cannot be sure.

Despite threats to validity and reliability in collecting the quantitative data, I was mindful of my proximity to the research and participants when it came to the qualitative data. I made a concerted effort to limit my direct involvement in the focus group interviews while students were participating. I believe this helped preserve the reliability and validity of the findings because I had two teachers, familiar with the students and the WTP program, serve as the focus group facilitators. I believe this both created familiarity for the students and elicited more honest answers than if I had conducted the focus group discussions myself. I used the conceptual frameworks guiding this study and the research questions when creating the focus group questions. I wrote the focus group script and worked with both focus group facilitators to help prevent major discrepancies between the two groups. This was ensured when listening to the recording of each group and noting no divergence from the script or focus group questions.

Student attendance may pose a threat to validity as every student was not present to complete each deliberation lesson. Additionally, two students left the class halfway through the semester, which lowered the overall total to 22 students. My role as the teacher-researcher may have presented a threat to validity. Even though I had other teachers conduct the focus group interviews, my students may have been influenced throughout the intervention because of my proximity and the student's desire to provide answers that would result in a favorable response.

A key component of a MMAR study is the triangulation of data to enhance the credibility and validity of the study. In this study, I triangulated data from the survey responses, focus group interviews, and student work samples (Figure 6). Triangulation of evidence helps to paint a more complete picture of the chosen evidence by developing "converging lines of inquiry" (Yin, 2018, p. 127). Yin (2018) also explains the limitations of only relying on interviews, or experiments or histories without examining additional sources that support the perspective, data, or narrative.

**Figure 6**

*Triangulation of Quantitative and Qualitative Data*
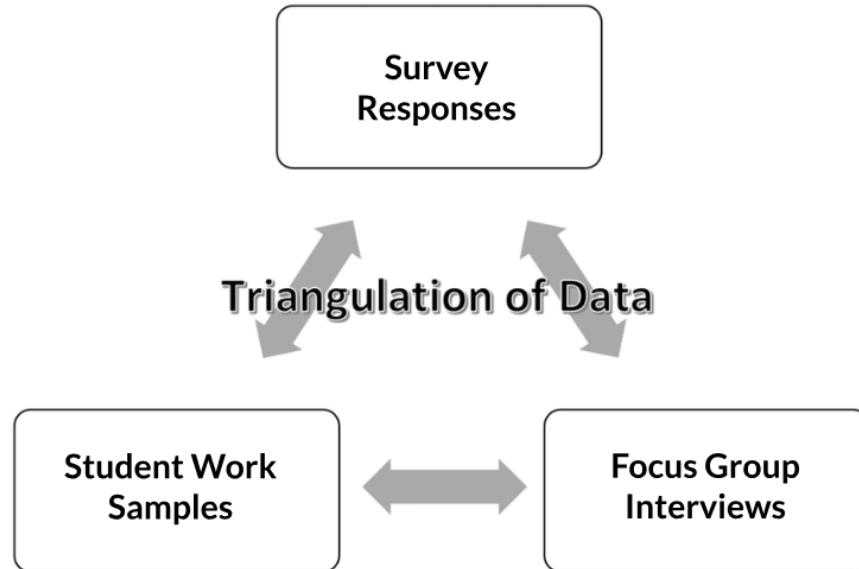


Contrasting the quantitative data from the surveys with the qualitative data in the open responses, student work, and focus group interviews helped to develop a comprehensive understanding of the study.

**Conclusion**

The goal of this action research study was to determine if the use of deliberation lessons increased WTP students' deliberation and discourse self-efficacy.  Both quantitative and qualitative data was used to answer the following three research questions; (1)  How and to what extent does the use of deliberation lessons impact students' self-efficacy in cooperative learning?, (2) How does students' self-efficacy in their deliberation and civil discourse skills compare pre and post intervention?, (3) How do students perceive the effectiveness of the deliberation lessons in improving their deliberation and civil discourse skills?

The review of civic education literature and the theories guiding this study suggest that students need to be provided with classroom opportunities to work collaboratively with peers, make meaning of their own learning, and practice interpersonal, civic skills of deliberation and discourse.  Therefore, incorporating these opportunities for students to learn and practice civic skills could be valuable for the future of civic education. In Chapter 4, I will discuss the findings from the use of the deliberation lessons.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The goal of this action research study was to assess the influence of deliberation lessons on high school WTP students' self-efficacy toward cooperative learning and the civic skills of deliberation and civil discourse. A quasi-experimental design was selected because as the teacher-researcher I would not be able to select random participants, and studied the students enrolled in my WTP government class. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the quantitative data included pre- and post- surveys (Appendix A) and qualitative data included open-ended survey questions, student work samples, and focus group interviews (Appendix B). In this chapter, I will present the results of the study according to the three research questions. After analyzing the quantitative and qualitative data, three themes emerged: the application and adaptability of cooperative learning skills, the re-evaluation of deliberation and civil discourse skills after they become familiar and are used frequently, followed by a discovery of the effectiveness of perspective-taking.

**Table 5**

*Themes by Research Question*

| Research Questions | Themes |
|---|---|
| RQ1: How and to what extent does the use of deliberation lessons impact students' self-efficacy in cooperative learning? | • Application & adaptability<br>• Effective communication |
| RQ2: How does students' self-efficacy in their deliberation and civil discourse skills compare pre and post-intervention? | • Re-evaluation of skills<br>• Frequency and familiarity |
| RQ3: How do students perceive the effectiveness of the deliberation lessons in improving their deliberation and civil discourse skills? | • Perspective-taking |

**RQ1: How and to what extent does the use of deliberation lessons impact students' self-efficacy in cooperative learning?**

Cooperative Learning Theory, as discussed in Chapter 2, was developed by Johnson and Johnson at the University of Minnesota. They have a variety of different pedagogical approaches as to how cooperative learning could look in a variety of different classroom settings and self-efficacy is the students' belief in their ability to excel at a particular task (Bandura, 2006). As a result of this study, I found that based on prior knowledge and experience, students' perceptions of cooperative learning were both positive and confident. However, even though there was no statistically significant correlation between the deliberation lessons and increased student efficacy in cooperative learning, a theme of application and adaptability emerged. Evidence to support my assertions for RQ1 will be presented below.

*Quantitative Support*

Eight Likert survey items assessed students' perceptions of self-efficacy as it relates to cooperative learning. These items asked questions about valuing others' contributions, individual contributions to cooperative work, and working cooperatively rather than competitively. Likert scale responses were converted to numbers for the purpose of calculating descriptive statistics. Two Likert scales were used: one to measure agreement (4 = *Strongly Disagree*, 5 = *Disagree*, 6 = *Neutral/Unsure*, 7= *Agree*, and 8 = *Strongly Agree)* and the other to measure degrees of confidence (1=*Not confident at all,* 2=*Somewhat confident*, 3=*Confident,* 4=*Very confident*).

According to the analysis of the pre- and post- surveys for the WTP participants, there was an increase in the number of students who would *choose* to work in small, cooperative groups. On the pre-survey, 22% of students (n=23) said it was unlikely they would work in small groups when given the choice to work in groups or work alone. On the post-survey, 85% of students (n=13) responded that they would likely choose working with others rather than working

alone. While this does show a change in attitudes, it is worth noting how students answered the other questions. The other survey questions measuring cooperative learning demonstrated a decrease in confidence from the pre- to the post-survey, except for two items directly related to the deliberation lessons: "When there is tension in a group I can help mediate a path forward," and "After completing group work, I can reflect about what went well and what could have been improved." These survey items showed an increase in the mean closer to "Very confident" on the Likert scale. This is likely due to the intentional preparation and practice of the deliberation lessons which required students to learn to work through tension within their groups and work toward group consensus.

When completing the deliberation guide, students were asked to reflect on the deliberation process, evaluate the group dynamic, and rate their individual achievement. It seems students felt *less* confident engaging in cooperative work overall because of the new and specific style of SAC that they were asked to grapple with. On the pre-survey, 80% of students agreed that they shared responsibility for cooperative work, valued the contributions of others for cooperative work, and could cooperate rather than compete with others. It also appears students felt positive and confident in answering these questions because they were applying their prior knowledge and experience with cooperative learning - thinking they knew what it was and believing they had the skills to participate effectively. However, after introducing deliberation (in comparison to debate or discussion) and walking students through the importance of listening, empathy, and responsiveness, their collective attitude changed and that is reflected in the pre- and post- survey responses.

The post-survey responses revealed that students felt less efficacious in their cooperative learning abilities based on their *new* interaction with cooperative learning in the form of deliberation. One of the greatest assertions that can be made from this is an understanding of student learning and self-assessment. In the pre-survey, students answered the questions based on

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their previous experiences with cooperative learning.  Before they participated in the deliberation lessons, the pre-survey results showed that students believed they understood and were confident in the skills required for cooperative learning.  When evaluating the cooperative learning survey constructs, the average mean *decreased* between pre- and post-survey.  However, just because students' self-efficacy in a skill *decreased*, does not mean that they were not practicing and adapting these skills in a new situation where they feel less confident, which is what I believe happened before and after the use of the deliberation lessons.  The application of cooperative learning skills to a new situation, the deliberation lessons, made students feel less confident in their ability to adapt a familiar skill to a new and unfamiliar situation.

### *Qualitative Support*

Approximately three weeks into the Fall 2023 semester, my WTP students were working through Unit 6 in the WTP book, which poses the question, "What Challenges Might Face American Constitutional Democracy in the Twenty-first Century?" I asked students to consider civil discourse and answer the following: Explain what is meant by civil discourse.  Why is it important? How might civil discourse be promoted in schools, the media and political life? Prior to presenting this question to the students, I wondered if they would be able to demonstrate their understanding of civil discourse when placed in their WTP cooperative groups, but first I needed to identify if the students could define civil discourse, identify its purpose, and determine ways to promote it.

When defining civil discourse, students used the word 'exchange' twenty-two times. The use of this word implies an understanding of civil discourse as a moment when someone provides information and is willing to listen or receive new or different information from what was presented.  The second most-used term in the students' definition of civil discourse was the word 'respect' - 17 times.  This acknowledges student understanding and application of the word civil as being respectful.  These two themes match the duality of civil discourse as defined by Archon

Fung, professor of Citizenship and Self-Government at the Harvard Kennedy School. He writes

that civil is often associated with being nice and polite, but the deeper and more meaningful

understanding of civility comes from the Latin *civilitas* – relating to citizens. Which means that

civility, is about acting in ways that are vital for both group projects and good citizenship

(Delaney, 2019). In comparing student responses to this definition, I was able to confidently

determine that students can correctly define civil discourse and identify or describe an example.

When asked about its importance and how to better promote civil discourse, students believed

that civil discourse was equally essential for individuals to compromise as well as serving as an

essential principle of a healthy democracy. Table 6 features some of the student responses.

**Table 6**

*Student Definitions of Civil Discourse*

| | |
|---|---|
| Definition of Civil Discourse | Exchange of ideas in a debate. Respectful and thoughtful exchange of ideas. Friendly debate between citizens. Polite exchange of ideas and perspectives. Allowing everyone to speak and share an opinion. |
| Importance of Civil Discourse | Allows for the exchange of ideas and perspectives. Enhances political understanding. Challenges individuals to be well-informed. Essential for democracy. Important for a healthy democracy. Necessary for compromise and harmonious living. Increases the chances of finding mutually acceptable solutions. Important for forming new ideas and solving community issues in a democratic way. |
| Promotion of Civil Discourse | Bigger push to not take things out of context. Having more neutral stances. Clubs, organizations, and committees. Social media. Town halls. Hearing everyone's voice and paying attention to speakers. Assuring healthy communication and boundaries. Programs similar to Competitive Government in schools. Unbiased news and presenting various perspectives in the media. Encouraging communication with individuals from other political parties. |

Mock civil discourses in schools.
Class debates in schools.
Acknowledging alternative perspectives in the media.
Listening to other viewpoints in political life.
Encouraging students to become involved and informed in civic
issues early on.
Clubs and organizations.
Socializing and finding common ground.
After-school clubs like political debate.
Class discussions on issues.
Online posts where everyone can participate.
In-person held discussions in communities

*Note.* This table includes direct quotes from students' definitions of civil discourse.

Over the course of nine weeks, the WTP students completed four different deliberation lessons. Each of these lessons was modified from Street Law's Deliberation Lessons which use SAC to encourage students working in small groups to deliberate often contentious points of controversial issues. Prior to starting any of the lessons, I asked students to define the words debate, discussion, and deliberation. Students were easily able to demonstrate their understanding of debates and discussions - both formally based on their experiences in school and informally based on their interactions with family and friends. They struggled to articulate a distinction when it came to deliberation, but eventually came to the consensus that we were actually deliberating what it means to deliberate - by working toward group consensus. This was an important step in setting up the reasons for conducting the deliberation lessons and helping to clarify in students' minds that they were not participating in a contentious debate nor a leisurely discussion.

Each deliberation lesson comes with background reading related to the topic plus pro and con sources. Students completed these readings ahead of class so that class time could be devoted to deliberation on the topic. The students were randomly assigned to groups of ~4 students. Once in their small, cooperative groups, the students worked together to discuss the provided norms that would guide their deliberation and determine if any additional norms will be added. Because several of the norms deal with listening and empathy, I used Street Law's

provided resources to remind students of the importance of both while deliberating. Students were asked to complete a Listening Inventory to self-assess their listening skills. When we were considering each of these skills, some of the students responded that they do often think about their response to someone's point instead of listening to what is being said. As a group, we defined 'active listening,' and what it means to be an active listener. Next, I asked the students to define empathy, and we brainstormed why empathy is important when engaging in deliberations. For the first deliberation, empathy was viewed by the students as being respectful - whereas, by the last deliberation, students demonstrated a better understanding of empathy when discussing controversial issues in which the deliberation groups were working to understand and empathize with multiple different perspectives.

The deliberation lesson starts by having students review the provided deliberation norms with their group:

- Read the material carefully.

- Focus on the deliberation question.

- Listen carefully to what others are saying.

- Understand and analyze what others are saying.

- Speak clearly and with confidence.

- Encourage others to speak.

- Refer to the reading to support your ideas.

- Use life experiences and background knowledge in a logical way.

- Remain engaged and respectful when controversy arises.

- Cooperate (rather than compete) with one another.

- Approach the deliberation with an open mind.

- Create and support a positive environment for deliberation.

Students did not add many of their own norms to the first deliberation lesson, but by the time the fourth and final deliberation was conducted, students had added no interrupting, no talking when others are talking, cell phones away, and being mindful of using polite and kind language. These additions came because of students' increased understanding of the rules of engagement for the deliberation process, identifying issues with earlier deliberations, and feeling empowered to determine ground rules prior to the start of the deliberation.

After discussing norms, the next step in the deliberation process is assigning the pro and con side of the topic for deliberation. In each cooperative group, I would randomly assign two students to each side of the issue. Students were then given ten minutes to discuss and prepare the pro or con side of the issue by recording their points on the handout provided. After the ten-minute period, students were then tasked with presenting the most compelling reasons for or against the deliberation prompt.

When first observing this exchange, students were timid, hesitant, or abrupt - not entirely sure of how to engage and progress. Questions to prompt discussion were included on the student handouts, and I often reminded students to use the questions to help guide their deliberation. After the initial presentation of pro and con evidence, the students were tasked to switch sides, which required them to consider the side they were just opposing and reframe the position. The first time we did this, the students were hesitant to defend a point they had just challenged, especially because the students were used to a more traditional debate format where there is a clear winner. It was interesting to note these first conversations of students expressing sentiments like, "this is hard!" or "I don't want to argue the other side." It was also difficult for some students to develop a point from the other perspective that hadn't already been shared by the opposing group in the first round of the deliberation. But, a student observed, "After you argued one side and then switched, it made your argument stronger, your *second* argument stronger, because you could then understand the other side." A fellow student agreed, "You had just found

all of this evidence, and argued for those views.  So then when you went to the other side, it was easier to understand where they were coming from." When reflecting on this process a student concluded, "It does open you up to where the people you disagree with normally are coming from, and that's a valuable skill."  When given the choice to pick the deliberation topic, students self-selected topics they were drawn to, and most likely had a strong view on already.  This gave them the chance to see the other side.

The final segment of the deliberation requires the students to drop their assigned position and determine if they can reach common ground on the issue.  Students were asked if they changed their mind at all, if they considered a new perspective, and if they felt listened to during the process.  This reflection is done with the use of a rubric based on the norms of deliberation. Students are asked to self-assess their role and that of their group overall with a score of 3 = very well, 2 = well, and 1 = not well.  When reviewing students' initial self-evaluation and group-evaluation after the first deliberation, it was interesting to see quite a few "3" s for scores and very few "1"s - both for the individual and the group.  If there happened to be more scores of "1" or "2" it was typically on the group evaluation side, rather than the individual.  In comparing these self-evaluation scores to how I observed students engaging, there seemed to be a disconnect from what I observed versus what the students thought of the deliberation.  I thought this could be for a variety of reasons.  Were students comparing this experience to group work they have done in other classes - if so - then they maybe did think that their adherence to the norms was done "very well" - worthy of a 3.  Since many of the pre-established norms are seemingly straightforward, "Did you listen?" "Did you understand?" "Were you respectful?" - I think many students, as honors or gifted students, believed that as seniors in high school they already do these things well.

After coding the responses from student work samples and the focus group interviews, the themes of application and adaptability emerged. These themes align with the core tenets of

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cooperative learning theory: positive interdependence, individual and group accountability, promotive interaction, appropriate use of social skills, and group processing (Johnson & Johnson, 1991, 2005). These elements are part of the final component of the deliberation lessons – the self-assessment. Students are asked to reflect on the positives from the deliberation experience, their individual improvements, and ways the group can improve. When reviewing student work from the four deliberations in class, effective communication, increased confidence, and collaboration were emerging themes. Because of the structured nature of the deliberation lessons, individual students expressed the need to speak with confidence and to clearly convey their ideas. As the teacher-researcher during the lessons, I was serving as the "guide on the side," which meant students had to take initiative to ensure equal and active participation, adherence to the group norms, and time on task. This was reflective in the group improvement reflection. Students expressed the need for more effective communication to allow for greater collaboration and a desire for improved focus and efficiency. These trends from student work samples were also supported by student responses in the focus group interviews.

When asked about previous experiences with group work in other classes, one student reflected, "From this class, I've seen how with group work, it requires a lot of open communication also. Where[as] for other classes before I took this, it was mostly that I'm saying stuff just to get a grade. Whereas now, it has to be way more than that." The students also mentioned the importance of communication, listening, and accountability. Some students were frustrated that their conversations during previous group work experiences were often superficial or one-sided and lacked thinking beyond the work required for the assignment; one student mentioned, "In other classes, I felt like group work is very surface level. In this class, it's just so different. It's so much more collaborative and you must work so much, so tight together." When asked whether they thought this was an important skill, one student related cooperative work to the importance of compromise, "I think, like you see it today, like a lot of our politicians aren't

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able to compromise with each other on things.  I think a lot of that comes back to practice.

They're not actually having conversations."  Ultimately, students felt they were better

communicators because of the practice opportunities afforded by the deliberation lessons.

*Summary*

The structure and purpose of the deliberation lessons fulfills each component of

cooperative learning theory as evidenced by the individual role of each student involved, the

encouragement of other students throughout the process to reach group consensus, the

interpersonal skills of eye contact and active listening, along with the group reflection at the

conclusion of the deliberation.  The structure and the role each student undertook improved

student confidence in the ability to communicate, apply and adapt previous experiences, mediate

tension, to speak up, and to self-reflect on the experience.

**RQ2: How does students' self-efficacy in their deliberation and civil discourse skills**

**compare pre- and post-intervention?**

Chapter 2 introduced self-efficacy theory.  Perception of self-efficacy concerns an

individual's belief in their capabilities to produce or demonstrate a desired outcome (Bandura,

1997).  There is not a one-size-fits-all measure of perceived self-efficacy, which can make it

challenging to quantify students' beliefs about their own abilities in a meaningful and consistent

way (Pajares, 2006).  Yet, if students see other students, comparable to themselves, experiencing

success, it strengthens an individual student's efficacious feelings about their own capabilities.

This also applies when students are encouraged, or persuaded, to have positive self-efficacy about

a skill or task.  When they are persuaded to believe in their capabilities, effort increases and skill

development is promoted (Bandura, 1994).  These elements of self-efficacy were evident in

students' re-evaluation of skills before and after the intervention.

When asked on the pre-survey how students stay informed about the news, students

responded that Instagram, news outlets online, or news alerts on their phones provide 56% - 70%

of their interaction with current events.  Fifty-six percent of students sometimes engage in discussions with friends about the news, politics, or current events, while only 34% often engage in discussions with family.  Both categories would increase on the post-survey, with 77% of students sometimes engaging in discussions with friends, and 54% of students sometimes engaging in discussions with family.

In comparing the results from the pre- and post- surveys, it can be noted that there was a decrease in the average mean for 24 of the 45 questions.  This can be a result of students overestimating their confidence in the pre-survey, which is supported by much of the academic self-efficacy literature (Bandura, 1997, Pajares, 1996).  Another possibility is that students initially *thought* they were confident in their deliberation and discourse abilities but discovered otherwise after participating in and reflecting upon the deliberation lessons.   There was no significant difference pre- and post- for the cooperative learning or constructivism survey constructs.  However, there was significant evidence (p=0.03) that there was a positive change in students' self-efficacy scores concerning their deliberation skills after participating in the deliberation lessons.

When it came to listening, an essential skill of deliberation and civil discourse (Morrell, 2018) there was no measurable change for "I can listen carefully to what others are saying with the purpose of understanding before I respond." After the deliberation lessons, students felt more confident that they could listen to "conflicting perspectives and identify where they agree and disagree," but there was a decrease in student's assessment of their active listening abilities pre- and post-. Again, this may be due to students' prior experiences with active listening and how those experiences contrast with the listening required in the deliberation lessons that would lead students to feel differently, or less confident, about their active listening skills.

The final question on the pre- and post- surveys asked students to assess their communication skills as they relate to the deliberation lessons completed in class, "I possess the

necessary communication and interpersonal skills to deliberate in a small group." This was a question I was hoping to see positive change from the pre-survey to the post because it would indicate that after completing the deliberation lessons, students now feel they possess the necessary skills to deliberate. I feel this decrease could be attributed to Bandura's (1997) understanding of self-efficacy as it relates to social-cognitive theory (Artino, 2012). When surveyed, many individuals overestimate their academic capabilities (Pajares, 1996). This is often believed to be beneficial in the long run, because if a student believes they are capable, then this overestimation can actually lead to increased effort and motivation - even when the task or skill is challenging or difficult.

The open-ended response question at the conclusion of the post-survey, asked students to describe, "Any changes in your attitude towards and confidence in deliberation skills after participating in the deliberation lessons." Some of the student responses are included below:

- I am more confident in my deliberation skills after participating in the lessons in class because I have more experience and knowledge in these skills.

- I am a better and more confident listener, especially when someone is speaking about an issue I have opposition with.

- I feel more confident on deliberation. I know what to do and the deliberation experience was very smooth.

- I feel more confident about deliberation after working on it in class. It was uncomfortable at first, but now it seems more familiar.

In summary, when evaluating the pre- and post- survey data, it initially seemed that students' skills decreased. This was due to a re-evaluation of their skill capabilities. When students began completing more of the deliberation lessons, they indicated their familiarity and confidence increased, especially when it came to evaluating, taking and defending a position,

asking relevant questions, encouraging others to speak, summarizing points, overcoming

hesitancy to discuss difficult issues, and admitting to being wrong.

This measure of overconfidence may be explained by the Dunning-Kruger effect in

which lower-performing students overestimate their confidence in their abilities (Dunning,

2011). This was first observed in a survey conducted by College Board in 1976-1977, in which

one million high school students were surveyed and 70% of the students self-assessed their

leadership abilities as higher than average (Dunning, 1989). I wonder if this is also associated

with the negative connotations associated with the disagree options (Morrell, 2018). Would a

student admit that they do not learn from other people with backgrounds, views, experiences that

are different from their own? Given the emphasis of cooperation and collaboration, did the

wording of the questions influence students to overestimate their willingness to work

cooperatively?

**RQ3: How do students perceive the effectiveness of the deliberation lessons in improving**

**their deliberation and civil discourse skills?**

In Spring 2022, Ohio State University's Center for Ethics and Human Values started a

Civil Discourse for Citizenship program. They define civil discourse as, "the practice of

deliberating about matters of public concern in a way that seeks to expand knowledge and

promote understanding" (*Civil Discourse for Citizenship*, 2024). They emphasize the need to

develop mutual respect, build trust, and identify common ground - in both individual

conversations and democracy at large. In completing the deliberation lessons, students

deliberated about matters of public concern, expanded their knowledge, and promoted

understanding of multiple perspectives.

*Quantitative Findings - Deliberation*

Initially, it was disheartening to see a decrease in the average mean of student responses

to the question, "I possess the necessary communication and interpersonal skills to deliberate in a

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small group."  However, I think this relates to what was observed in the cooperative learning constructs as well.  When it came to certain skills, on the pre-survey students felt they were confident based on prior experiences. However, on the post-survey when it came to the deliberation constructs, there were specific skills that students indicated an increase in their self-confidence.  On the pre-survey, 80% of students said they were confident or very confident in their ability to "Evaluate, take and defend a position - even if it is different from my personal belief." On the post-survey, this measure increased to 90%.  I believe this is a result of the perspective-taking component of the deliberation lessons.  This quantitative data complemented the qualitative evidence.

Students also felt they were more confident in their ability to ask relevant and appropriate questions when learning new information, summarize what another person said to make sure they understood, and when there is tension in a group, they could mediate a path forward.  One specific component of the deliberation process and reflection is whether students encourage other students in their deliberation groups to speak.  On the post- survey, 82% of students were confident they could encourage others to speak, up from just 42% on the pre-survey.  When asked whether they were confident in their ability to overcome a hesitancy to discuss difficult issues, only 55% of students felt they were confident in their ability compared to 72% post- deliberation lessons.  Lastly, 90% of students were confident they "Can admit when I am wrong and accept constructive criticism," up from 67% on the pre-survey.  These skills specific to the deliberation lessons indicate an increase in student confidence to overcome hesitancy or tension and admit when they're wrong and seek to improve.

**Table 7**

*Pre- and Post- Survey Results for Deliberation Responses*

| Question | Pre-Survey | Post-Survey |
|---|---|---|

*4 = Strongly Disagree*, *5 = Disagree*, *6 = Neutral/Unsure*, *7= Agree*, and *8 = Strongly Agree*

| | n=23 | n=13 |
|---|---|---|
| I possess the necessary communication and interpersonal skills to deliberate in a small group. | 9.1 | 8.91 |
| I have been taught the necessary communication and interpersonal skills to deliberate in a small group. | 8.82 | 8.83 |
| I can overcome conflict and learn from opposing viewpoints | 9.05 | 8.92 |
| I am confident in my ability to engage in respectful deliberation with my peers. | 9.15 | 9.36 |

1=*Not confident at all,* 2=*Somewhat confident*, 3=*Confident*, 4=*Very confident*.

| | n=23 | n=13 |
|---|---|---|
| I can read materials carefully for comprehension. | 2.95 | 3.18 |
| I can focus on the question I am being asked. | 2.95 | 2.91 |
| I can evaluate, take, and defend a position - even if it is different from my own belief. | 2.8 | 3.36 |
| I can ask relevant and appropriate questions when learning new information | 2.75 | 2.91 |
| I can listen carefully to what others are saying with the purpose of understanding before I respond. | 3.15 | 3.18 |
| I can summarize what another person said to make sure I understood correctly. | 2.8 | 3.18 |
| I can speak clearly and with confidence. | 2.7 | 2.64 |
| I can clearly articulate my thoughts and ideas in writing. | 2.95 | 3.18 |
| I can encourage others to speak | 2.47 | 3.09 |
| I can refer to provided readings to support my ideas | 3.25 | 3.18 |
| I can research additional information to both support and refute my opinions. | 3.2 | 2.91 |
| I can apply my life experiences and background knowledge in a logical way. | 3.1 | 3.18 |
| I can cite evidence and substantiate my opinions with sound reasoning. | 3.2 | 3.18 |
| I can remain engaged and respectful when controversy or tension arises. | 3.3 | 3.09 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| When there is tension in a group, I can help mediate a path forward. | 2.45 | 2.64 |
| I can overcome hesitancy and reluctance to discuss difficult issues. | 2.6 | 2.82 |
| I can cooperate (rather than compete with others) | 3.35 | 3.45 |
| I can listen to conflicting perspectives and identify where they agree and disagree. | 3.05 | 3.09 |
| I can create and support a positive environment conducive for deliberation | 2.9 | 3 |
| I can admit when I am wrong and accept constructive criticism | 2.79 | 3.09 |
| After completing group work, I can reflect about what went well and what could be improved. | 2.79 | 2.82 |
| I can be taught new ways to learn and process information | 3.15 | 3.17 |

### *Qualitative Findings - Deliberation*

On the pre-survey, students were asked several open-ended questions to better gauge their responses to the Likert scale questions. When asked what they enjoyed most about discussing political or government related issues, 48% of students (n=24) responded they enjoy others' opinions, perspectives, thoughts or perspectives. The students also wrote that these discussions leave them feeling more informed and help them to better understand both what is going on and how others feel about an issue. One student specifically noted, "I enjoy being able to hear the opinions and perspectives of people outside my demographic and have educated debates and discussions about a topic without being hostile." This aligns with what students enjoyed most about discussing political current events. On the post-survey, 70% of the students (n=13) indicated that they enjoy hearing other people's ideas and seeing different perspectives.

When asked what students least enjoy about discussing political or government-related current events, 30% of students wrote that they do not enjoy these discussions when they are emotionally charged, defensive, heated, aggressive, or argumentative. Similarly, when asked why they do not like to work in cooperative groups, 43% of students responded, "I don't like

confrontation or tension in a group." These sentiments carried over to the post-survey as well, with half of the participants (n=13) mentioning they least enjoy how discussions about political or government-related current issues can result in disagreements that are argumentative or tense and hostile environments. Staying consistent with the pre-survey, 46% students still felt they do not like cooperative work because of confrontation or tension in a group.

On the post-survey, students were asked to, "Describe any changes in your attitude towards and confidence in deliberation skills after participating in the deliberation lessons we did in class." Students who described a positive change in their confidence toward deliberation skills noted two causes for the change: familiarity with the experience of deliberation and having to defend both opinions. One student acknowledged that they are a more confident *listener* after participating in the lessons. Another student admitted their attitude and confidence did not change, but they valued deliberation now more than they did prior to introduction of the lessons. While the open-ended survey response question was insightful in determining the effectiveness of the deliberation lessons, it was limited and influenced the wording of questions in the focus group interviews.

When completing the deliberation lessons, the students were asked to reflect on their experiences. Both as a review of what they just learned and what went well or could be improved prior to the next deliberation. The lesson's Post-Deliberation Self-Assessment and Feedback section is divided into four sections. In the first section, students rate their ability and their group's ability to fulfill the norms of deliberation. The students select 3 = very well, 2 = well, and 1 = not well. Some of the categories include "Read the material carefully," "Focus on the deliberation question," and "Listen carefully to what others are saying" ('Handout D,' Appendix E). The second section asks students to describe a positive reflection from the deliberation. The third section prompts, "One improvement I can make in our next deliberation is…" followed by the fourth, which asks "One improvement we can all make…"

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When analyzing the second section, students' positive reflections from the deliberation, I coded student responses into three positive takeaways: active listening, engagement, and respectful communication. They achieved consensus and agreement while remaining open-minded and exploring diverse perspectives. They also specifically mentioned a judgment-free atmosphere and gaining confidence in presenting positions they didn't always agree with. This allowed for thoughtful responses and learning by gaining new understanding. The biggest *individual* takeaways from the deliberation lessons were incorporating more research and evidence, better listening, and summarizing points clearly and concisely. Students were also aware of needing to talk more or less, encouraging others to participate, being less argumentative or competitive, and being more open-minded.

The individual improvement question elicited a variety of responses due to individual student's reflections. Some students felt that they needed to speak less and stop interrupting the other students in their group. Many of these students also commented that they needed to be less competitive and listen more actively rather than focusing on their own response. While other students observed that they needed to be more assertive and speak up. Several of these students noted that when they did speak, they needed to speak with more confidence. Both the eager and more reserved students were mindful of the need to refer to the provided readings and outside research, while also making their responses better organized and concise.

The final reflection question asked students to reflect on how the group could improve for the next deliberation: "What is one improvement we can all make in the next deliberation?" Students listed the typical challenges of cooperative group work: staying on topic, taking it seriously, and being mindful of their "words, tone, and voice." They also noted the need to cite evidence by referencing sources and presenting either the pro or con point of view with more confidence. One of the deliberation norms is, "Encourage others to speak." This was mentioned multiple times on both the individual and group improvement responses.

Lastly, group improvement slightly differed from the way individuals could improve after each lesson. It was enlightening to see that students were more critical of their individual performance than they were of their group - especially because the deliberation groups changed each round. This is a limitation that should be considered. If student groups had remained the same for each deliberation, would students have been able to identify more specific or more critical improvements specific to their group dynamic. Critiques of the group often related to many of the drawbacks of cooperative learning that Johnson and Johnson (1988, 1989) address in their research. Students made note of unequal or unbalanced participation and engagement, challenges to maintaining focus and improving the overall discussion with better evidence and analysis. Many of these observations can be made about citizens and democracy (Johnson & Johnson, 2016). Students' own definitions of 'civil discourse' connect to these themes:

- Allows for the exchange of ideas and perspectives.

- Enhances political understanding.

- Challenges individuals to be well-informed.

- Essential for democracy.

- Important for a healthy democracy.

- Necessary for compromise and harmonious living.

- Increases the chances of finding mutually acceptable solutions.

- Important for forming new ideas and solving community issues in a democratic way.

Prior to their participation in WTP and the completion of the deliberation lessons, a student mentioned their unique upbringing which caused them to view things from different perspectives. He believed this helped shape his participation in the deliberation lessons:

It wasn't until COVID when I really started reading the news and being informed about politics. And that allowed me to see how my grandparents are all immigrants from Cuba, so they have very traditional, conservative views that carried on over to my parents. And

as I was able to form my own beliefs and become more informed about current events

happening in the country and the world, I got to see two very different viewpoints

forming in my family's head and then my own.  That allows for interesting discussion.

Building off of this student's comment about viewpoints, a student admitted, "Sometimes

I would overlook opposing viewpoints because they might be frustrating to deal with or maybe

not exactly flattering."  She felt that being able to dig into this research and find additional

reasons to support her own viewpoint is something she would not have been able to do had it not

been for the deliberation lessons.

A different peer emphasized the role evidence played in the deliberation lessons by using

it to "to show why my argument's right, you also have to use it to counteract.  But you have to

analyze it well enough in order to demonstrate why there's disagreement between the opposing

side."  When asked why students disliked or avoided previous controversial conversations,

students considered the pressure to 'win' an argument, appease friends, and supply evidence to

support their position. "It was tough when I was trying to argue a belief that I had, but I didn't

know why I had it.  I didn't have any evidence to explain why I felt that way. And it was difficult

because I didn't want friendships to be ruined."

Other students credited their upbringing for their attitude toward a challenging

conversation.  "I also think I tend to just give up on arguments pretty easily because that's what

my parents were like and how I was raised."  Building off that idea, another student felt that the

powerful opinions in her family taught her to stand down and not argue because the beliefs had

been held for so long.  She concluded this was less of a detriment to her ability to engage in

conversation, and more of an asset because "I think that affected me in the sense of like being

sensitive to the fact that like other people do have opinions and you should give them their

opportunity to speak and not judge them and listen to them."  However, another student

experienced more contention and engagement in his home growing up: "I think I'm maybe a

pretty argumentative person, like, I argue with people, but like, I think that's just how I was raised. I think upbringing definitely has a lot to do with, like, how someone is as a person, like argumentative wise."

In addition to speaking about their upbringing, the students were asked if they believed their race, ethnicity, gender, or age impacted their abilities to engage in controversial conversations. One of the female students did feel that her gender impacted how *others* viewed her abilities and contributions, more so than how she viewed her own, "Being a girl, I found it a little bit difficult. Because there were a lot of times, during the deliberations, where I kinda felt like my view or my argument was pretty strong, but whenever I would be arguing with some guys they would kinda downplay it or just act as if I was serious enough - that was frustrating."

The format and structure of the deliberation lessons required students, at some point during the deliberation, to present one side of the argument and then, switch, and defend the opposing side. After this experience, students felt that it added to and increased their confidence because the side-switching meant that, unless a student personally shared their belief, it was easier for a student to argue both sides of the argument without being judged for their personal opinion.

I feel like it's definitely a confidence boost to be able to get an issue like hate speech or something like that that's more controversial and in class, being able to discuss that with your peers, even though you know they might not agree with you. I think that's a big confidence boost to be able to argue about an issue freely expressing your own opinion without being judged or being looked down on for expressing your own opinion.

A fellow classmate agreed, "So I think for me, hands down. It just made it me so much more comfortable being able to have to argue both sides."

Other students felt it not only made them more confident in these skills to use them in class but to apply them outside of a high school setting: "This activity definitely made me more

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confident, because although I might not use all of these deliberation skills on a day to day basis with my friends, I know in the future, when I go to college and when I have to talk to adults, I have a better background on how to communicate." Another student acknowledged, "I personally never really deliberated with anyone before this class because I never felt confident enough and I felt like I didn't know enough information that I could have an argument or a stance. I feel like with this class, I now know how to find information, accurate information. Now I do talk to people about stuff like this." Three other students mentioned that their biggest takeaway from the deliberation lessons was the consideration of a variety of opinions. One student realized, "...the ideas aren't either extremely one side or extremely on the other. There is a medium and I feel like it made it more enjoyable to listen to the conversation when I realized that."

Applying it beyond the classroom, a student expressed, "I have more knowledge about how the actual government works and why we're so gridlocked. That allows me to give some explanation to my own family who isn't as knowledgeable in those subjects." Three of the focus group students felt that the preparation and background research required to participate in the deliberation helped them to inform their own opinions, while also encouraging them to listen to the facts presented in favor of the opposing viewpoint. Yet, despite these positives, a student acknowledged the grim reality of the greater impact of these lessons and the skills learned from them:

> The deliberations made me able to have a polite discussion with other people about these issues, but I can't say with full confidence that, like the outside world would respect what we have learned through this. So it's hard because as much as you want to treat other people with kindness, if they don't give it back to you, it's hard to keep a discussion going.

Building off this point, other students began to chime in. "I think it's really difficult to actually have an informed discussion with someone who just doesn't want to." Herein lies the sad truth of civic skills like deliberation and discourse and the need to teach and practice them nationwide. A different student was more hopeful, "If you can say to yourself you understand where a person is coming from and you know that you've listened to them and tried your best to understand, that's better than just not even hearing them out and just going your own way." The students were able to identify aspects of the lessons that increased their confidence and familiarity with the skills of deliberation. However, those skills are only as beneficial as the people they interact with who have practiced or respect the deliberative process.

RQ3 sought to evaluate the effectiveness of the deliberation lessons, and which aspects of the lessons were most effective in developing students' self-efficacy in their ability to deliberate. One student noted,

> I would say hands down, the most beneficial aspect was having to argue both sides because people can get so stuck in their ways, like myself included, that like, I only want to believe one way, but when you are forced to believe the other way and find the information, you kind of like flip a switch in your brain. You're like 'Oh, I could see how people believe that.'

More than I would have expected as the teacher-researcher, students appreciated the process of reading and researching additional information related to the deliberation topic. They felt it provided more insight, helped shape their opinion, and enhanced their argument. A student felt that after this preparation, "I found myself reading an article when I came to my own conclusion, or my own opinion and I go to class and other people would bring up this thing like I'd never thought of before like that night before. It's just really interesting." Students felt that flipping sides was the most beneficial aspect of the deliberation lessons. They felt that in preparation to argue both sides,

Taking the other side and really researching, that is something that's very valuable.  It forces you to learn about the other side and really…If you don't argue the other side, you never really look into it.  You can't really understand it at all.  I think that's really important.

Another student added, "I had never really talked to people about this kind of stuff, because I had never really worked on anything in this way before of like, switching sides, and talking back and forth about issues.  I think it's very. It's very helpful." Because the deliberation lessons take place in groups of four, in which the students pair up to present one-side of the argument.  A student brought up the benefits of being able to work with an additional person, and not have to present or think through an argument entirely on their own. "I also really like being able to like work with someone.  It's not like you can piggyback off of what they say, but kind of having that support and having that other opinion kind of really help to be able to form my own in a sense.  So I really like that."  One of the students acknowledged that because of how they experienced arguments in their own family growing up, that they give up pretty easily in arguments today.  However, after participating in the deliberation lessons, the student felt that "this has helped, I think, change that.  So that's good."  Reflecting on their interactions after the deliberation lessons, a student added, "I feel like my discussions with others have been a lot more respectful.  And I've been engaged and actually willing to listen to their viewpoints and where they're coming from."  After completing the more contentious assault weapons deliberation, after taking sides, a student noticed, "We discussed our personal beliefs and were able to find common ground.  So I feel like that has translated into my discussions with other people as a priority to try to reach some agreement, so it's not just hostile."

One of the final focus group questions had to do with the norms students were given and developed as a group prior to each deliberation lesson. Since the deliberations took place in the first nine weeks of the school year, many of the students in the WTP class did not know each

other very well.  So, when I placed them in random groups, one student felt the norms became really important.  "Personally, the last thing I would ever want to do is offend someone.  So, I think establishing that this is like a safe environment.  We're arguing both sides, even if you don't believe in this, you should value and listen to the other person." She would go on to add that today, people are too often afraid to express their own opinion because of what others are going to say - because of the polarization." Another student agreed.  Stating if an actual discussion is taking place, norms must be established or "respect is thrown out the window."  This student even acknowledged that the discussion and creation of norms rather than the adherence to them sets an important tone adding, "You need to respect the other person that's talking.  Like there needs to be a level of deference to that.  And I think if you don't establish norms and none of that's there, what happens is people feel like they can't actually express how they feel."

When it came to addressing controversial or political issues, a student said they had never known how to argue for a perspective they disagreed with: "Before WTP, I talked to my sister a lot about politics in general.  But we have similar views, but she's very like…she doesn't like considering the other side, and now I'm like, you really need to be able to deliberate stuff like that." These interviews provided valuable insight related to the learning occurring in cooperative groups as a result of SAC provided by the deliberation lessons.  It can be concluded that the practice of perspective-taking methods influenced the effectiveness of the deliberation lessons, and students' efficacious feelings toward deliberation and discourse in the government classroom.

**Summary**

At the conclusion of the deliberation lessons, one of the students in the focus group explained, "There's a difference between deliberating about current issues and debating current issues.  Before we did these lessons, I was much more used to the whole debate side.  Whereas here, we're actually talking about evidence and why this is an issue." A student built off of this point by adding, "to come to this class and talk about topics where there's a huge variety of

beliefs and talk to people my own age and have different upbringings, I think that's a valuable skill." Another student hoped that more people would be open-minded to using something like the deliberation lessons especially, "being able to research a topic and coming to your own consensus on it, and then being able to listen to somebody else, is the biggest part of it." Adding on, a student elaborated,

> The deliberations are all rooted in the evidence, and that's really the most important thing to learn. And that's lacking in society today, because it really is just more attacking the other person, like an ad hominem type argument happening. But I think if people turn their back towards the evidence, especially the people in Congress who are basing laws off of their constitutional powers, I just feel like that would really help resolve partisanism and just a lack of proper knowledge. There's a lot of people who are very disinformed, but it all goes back to the importance of evidence.

There were criticisms of the deliberation lessons and how they could be made more effective, "it was a little bit difficult because I think everyone in the class, I mean, I think at least most people share the same viewpoint. There weren't many people who were the two drastically different viewpoints so there wasn't much to argue on." This student was referring to the final portion of the deliberation in which the students drop their assigned sides and try to come to a consensus on the issue. When establishing norms, a student felt that during the first deliberation lesson, "people didn't really try keeping that deliberation aspect, especially if they didn't agree with what they were saying." However, this student went on to mention, "but throughout each time we did it, I feel like the tone got more respectful. People were staying on task more throughout the deliberation." Connecting her thought to this point, a student added "If I don't feel respected in a conversation it just creates disdain toward the other person. And then I just don't even want to hear their ideas. Which I know is bad, but when you feel disrespected you just shut off."

At the conclusion of the focus group interviews, the students were asked about any improvements they would make to the deliberation lessons used in class. Students asked to do more deliberation lessons and self-select the topics they wanted to talk about most. They felt this would adequately prepare them for deliberations in the real world if we had practiced more topics that had a stronger connection. Other students wanted direct instruction on the issue prior to researching on their own. They felt more historical background would have been a helpful introduction and then provide readings and additional research could better support or refute the initial information presented. Since these deliberation lessons were kept small and in cooperative groups, a student suggested opening the debate to the entire class at the conclusion of the small group portion. "Obviously, there's more knowledge because everyone has their own knowledge set. I think that could help just to like to bring more ideas to the table."

Each of the deliberation lessons we conducted in class were assigned for homework and completed that week in class. Sometimes students had 1-2 days to prepare. This left some students feeling that if they could have spent more time researching would have been helpful. They felt that if their peers had more information to bring to the table for the initial side of the argument, it would better supply the opposing team to both refute and defend their viewpoint. As is almost always the case with group work, the free-rider effect took hold and some students were more prepared than others (Johnson & Johnson, 1991, 2005). This was observed in each round of the deliberation lessons in class. This student felt that the other students who had not prepared didn't gain anything from participating, and it would have been more effective if they had been required to research specific things to bring to the next deliberation.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

*"I think that if Congress were to listen to the conversation we're having right now and the conversations that we've had in class, it would be so much different from what goes on there on a daily basis."*

-We the People Student

This action research study aimed to determine whether the use of deliberation lessons improved students' self-efficacy toward the civic skills of deliberation and civil discourse. This study was based on cooperative learning, constructivism, and self-efficacy theories. The use of deliberation lessons as an academic intervention led students to indicate increased confidence in the skills required for deliberation. The student participants in this study valued the opportunity to take, analyze, and discuss alternative perspectives, learning how to listen *and* communicate while taking control of their own learning. Despite some limitations, the conclusions from this study will help inform best classroom practices and contribute to the growing body of policy research related to civic education. I will provide an analysis of the findings and how they connect to the theoretical frameworks and support the existing literature while further defining civic skills. This chapter links this study's findings to theoretical perspectives, existing literature, limitations, and future implications for practice and research.

**Discussion of Theoretical Frameworks**

*Cooperative Learning Theory*

University of Minnesota professors of Educational Psychology and Curriculum and Instruction, David and Roger Johnson, have been at the forefront of cooperative learning theory for almost 50 years. This action research study supports their previous research (Johnson et al., 1998, 2005, 2007, 2013, 2016). The format and process of the deliberations fostered the cooperative learning skills of positive interdependence, accountability, interpersonal skills, promotive interaction, and group processing (Johnson & Johnson, 2016). This was confirmed by students' responses to the survey questions and the focus group interviews. For example, one

student noted, "You're gonna have to learn to cooperate with other people…this really focuses on you really have to work together as a team to do well." Another student added, "Outside of school, athletics has definitely made me learn to rely on other people because you're in a team sport, so I've learned to pull my weight through that, but never in school like this before." Also, in the post-survey, 100% of students indicated they liked working cooperatively in small groups because, "Collaborating allows us to share ideas," and 77% agreed that it helped them "learn to hear others' perspectives."

Structured Academic Controversy (SAC) and Deliberative Democracy are two types of cooperative learning pedagogies. Both approaches influenced the design and implementation of the study. Johnson and Johnson (1988) presented SAC as a method for classroom discussion in which students worked together to solve a problem rather than win an argument. The deliberation lessons in this study achieved this aim by having students work together to debrief the *process* of deliberation rather than the outcome. This opportunity to discuss controversial topics in a civil manner from multiple perspectives allowed students to be in charge of their own learning while simultaneously practicing the civic skills necessary to engage in the process of democracy. One student remarked:

> Everyone's viewpoint is valid. Even if you don't agree with that, you still have to acknowledge why people feel a certain way. It doesn't necessarily make them a bad person…but just to really just respect the fact that people have formed their points the way they did, I guess. But really just finding common ground and being respectful.

This quote exemplifies what Slavin and Cooper (1999) found: cooperative learning groups improved students' content knowledge and skill attainment while also building students' confidence in their ability to work toward consensus with diverse peers on complex tasks. By frequently engaging in the democratic process, the students internalized the values, attitudes, and behavior patterns required of citizens in a democracy (Johnson & Johnson, 2016).

*Constructivism*

Vygotsky's social cognitive constructivism and constructivist learning theory posit that students become agents in their learning when they discover and transform information, check new information against old, and revise rules when they no longer apply. As a result, students "construct" the meaning of their own learning (Olusegun 2015). The main goal of a constructivist learning environment is for the teacher to create and maintain a collaborative problem-solving environment, where students are allowed to make meaning of their own learning, and the teacher acts as a facilitator and guide (Powell & Kalina, 2009). The use of the deliberation lessons in the study intervention promoted the creation of this type of classroom environment.

After completing the deliberation lessons, 100% of students said they "learn from other people with backgrounds, views, and experiences that are different from my own," and 92% of students agreed that they could "overcome conflict and learn from opposing viewpoints." After participating in the deliberation lessons, students felt that perspective-taking was the most valuable takeaway. One student noted that by having to argue both sides, it "shows you this whole different way of looking." Another student agreed:

> I think just taking the other side and really researching [it], that is something that's very valuable. It forces you to learn about the other side and …if you don't argue the other side, you never really look into it. You can't really understand it at all, and I think that's really important."

The student's evaluation of perspective-taking is demonstrative of Atticus Finch's empathetic advice to Scout in *To Kill a Mockingbird,* "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view. Until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it" (Lee, 1960). Students are expected to have empathy for others, but we do not often consider structuring student interactions in a way that authentically fosters these virtues as skills necessary

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for accessing the curriculum. This disconnect has led to pushes for social-emotional learning in history classes with an emphasis on perspective-taking and point of view (Eisman & Patterson, 2022).

The deliberation lessons supported this goal because they engaged students as active learners, gave them a sense of ownership in the learning process, and allowed for meaningful opportunities to practice empathy.  Students navigated socially acceptable ways to exchange ideas, considered multiple perspectives, and worked collaboratively to mediate a path forward (Olusegun, 2015). When students reflected on the deliberation process, this demonstrated their knowledge construction process - exemplifying two facets of constructivism - students making meaning of new knowledge *and* the process by which that knowledge was constructed.

### Self-Efficacy Theory

Albert Bandura (1994) defined perceived self-efficacy as an individual's belief about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance.  An individual's self-efficacy beliefs determine how they feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave (Bandura, 1994).  A strong sense of efficacy means that individuals with high confidence in their abilities approach challenging situations or tasks head-on, rather than avoiding or shying away.  They will often commit to a decision and see it through with an assurance that often produces positive outcomes. This confidence is often a result of mastery experiences where students believe they can do something new if it is like something they have already done well (Bandura, 1997). Students in this study had prior experience with cooperative learning and as a result, had a positive baseline measurement of self-confidence in their ability to work cooperatively.  This positive affirmation was helpful in getting students to initially engage and continue participating in the deliberation lessons. However, it is possible for people to misjudge their self-confidence, which can lead to overestimation of capabilities (Bandura, 1994).  This action research study helps better explain each aspect of self-efficacy theory.

The qualitative data, from the focus group interviews and open-ended survey response questions, indicate that students did gain confidence and find positive benefits from participating in the deliberation process four separate times - increasing their confidence as a result of a mastery experience.  However, when it came to the evaluation of confidence in certain skills, the post-survey indicated no change or a decrease in student confidence.  The disconnect between students' self-confidence in the pre-survey measures and the *decreased* confidence in the post-survey measures, relates to Bandura's understanding of the complexity of self-assurance. Bandura (1994) linked this phenomenon to effort and ability.   Students with low confidence or inefficacious beliefs, attribute their feelings of failure to low *ability*.  This was confirmed by the post-survey data when some students indicated that they were only "Somewhat Confident," in cooperative and deliberative skills.  According to Bandura (1997) and Pajares (1996), students who are highly efficacious about their academic abilities, can attribute their failures to insufficient *effort* - as some of the students in this study admitted that they did not spend the appropriate time preparing for the in-class deliberations.

Yet, students with efficacious feelings about their cognitive abilities are more likely to overcome self-doubt, commit to the goal, and see it through (Bandura, 1997; Pajares, 1996). When students in this study were exposed to more frequent and varied cooperative learning opportunities to construct their own learning, the targeted skill of deliberation showed significant growth from pre- to post- survey scores.  This was seen in many of the "Very Confident" responses on the pre-survey, and a significant (p=0.03) change to confidence measures in the post-survey.  This was corroborated in student responses from the focus group interviews:

> I personally never really deliberated with anyone before this class because I never felt
> confident enough and I felt like I didn't know enough information to have an argument or
> a stance. I feel like with this class, I now know how to find information, accurate
> information. Now I do talk to people about stuff like this.

This analysis of efficacious feelings before and after the deliberation lessons, provides further insight into the complexity of measuring self-efficacy based on student self-assessment. Geiger et al. (2022) sought to investigate a similar question related to self-efficacy and civic discussions. They discovered that individuals who lack experience in discussing civic issues, often overestimate the discomfort they believe they will feel when they engage in a controversial conversation.  This forecasted discomfort lessened the more students engaged in civic conversations (Geiger, et al., 2022). A 2023 Italian study also focused on self-efficacy and civic engagement.  Manganelli et al., (2023) discovered that an open classroom climate, in which students felt a sense of belonging as a *citizen* of the class or group*,* ultimately helped foster positive citizenship self-efficacy - ultimately impacting their civic engagement.  Each of these studies, including my own action research, sought to answer the question: What elements of civic education increase students' confidence in skills that will translate to increased civic engagement?

**Discussion of Related Literature**

This action research study was guided by research studies and literature related to civic education, cooperative learning, constructivism, and self-efficacy.  There has been a noticeable increase in research related to civic education since I began this research study in 2021.  Civic education research has become more specified by further defining and distinguishing civic knowledge, civic skills, civic attitudes, and dispositions.

Effective civic education requires students to learn *both* rights and responsibilities, – what to know and how to act by perpetuating core values and challenging (Crittenden & Levine, 2018).  Scholars are still seeking to validate and define the difference between civic knowledge, engagement, attitudes, and skills.  The goals of civic education are also now caught in a game of tug-o-war between patriotic civil education - which emphasizes the memorization of facts, versus action civics - which emphasizes civic attitudes, dispositions, and skills (Anderson, 2023).

Predating the federal Constitution (which lacks discussion of a fundamental right to education), Article 3 of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 stated, "Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged" (United States, 1787). Worried the expansion of American territory would threaten the existence of republican government and civic virtue, the framers of the Northwest Ordinance established an early American understanding of civic education. Students in this study made this connection during the deliberation lessons in class this year, as one student described:

> Classical Republicanism, as we've learned from the class, ironically, stresses the importance of civic education, but also civic virtue, which is prioritizing the common good above your own beliefs. So through these deliberations, by considering other perspectives, the common ground you reach can benefit multiple people rather than just my own interests.

This student's astute observation supports Moore's (2012) study related to civility and civic virtue in schools. Moore (2012) felt there was a moral imperative linked with other democratic virtues, such as respect for differing opinions, listening skills, self-control, rationality, and tolerance, that must form a foundation for acceptable public discourse" (p. 141). A student validates Moore's connection of civic education to civic life:

> I think that the point of interacting with people is to connect with them. Otherwise, why else would we talk to people? And it's like you can't really connect with someone if you're not understanding them and if you're just disrespecting them and ignoring their ideas. So it's like you have to... If you have the goal of connecting with someone, then you have to understand them and listen on a deeper level.

In an effort to achieve what this student is describing, the Sandra Day O'Connor Institute has committed to research the effects of political socialization, the process through which "a person

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learns about politics, develops political opinions, and forms expectations for political participation" (Mumma, 2023, p. 3). A policy brief (Mumma, 2023) published by the O'Connor Institute in September 2023 sought to examine whether political socialization "trickles down" in families when parents influence their children or "trickles up" when children's political behavior influences their parents? The author found that there were *both* significant tickle-down (mother-to-child) and trickle-up (child-to-mother) relationships in civic engagement. The author believed this will help to identify gaps in political socialization and determine the best interventions by educators and policymakers while providing valuable data for how elected representatives can engage their constituents in a meaningful way (Mumma, 2023). This research is supported by responses from my focus group interviews in which students talked about being civically and politically informed by their parents, and on the post-survey after the deliberation lessons, where students indicated that they had more frequent conversations about news or politics with their families.

**Limitations**

Action research is beneficial because it can empower teacher-researchers, is often highly adaptable, and may provide immediate, actionable change. However, action research can also have limited generalizability, making the study difficult to replicate. It can often be complicated in structure, given the close proximity of the researcher to the participants, and there can be a risk of selection, social desirability, or cognitive bias (Cohen et al., 2017). There were several limitations in this action research study, including (a) the limited context and number of participants; (b) the difficulty in quantifying self-efficacy; and (c) the proximity of the research participants to the researcher.

The first limitation of this study involved the number of participants. This study was limited to the size of the students in my WTP class (n=24) for the 2023-2024 school year. Students in the study were all enrolled in Advanced Placement or Honors courses made up of

students who may be identified as "gifted." The results of this study may have been different with a larger sample size and the inclusion of a variety of learning levels.

The second limitation of the study involved measuring students' efficacious feelings toward deliberation and civil discourse. When asking students to evaluate self-efficacy on a Likert scale, social desirability bias is worthy of consideration (Paulhus, 1984). Did students potentially overestimate their capabilities to present themselves positively? Because cooperative learning and deliberation elements can be associated with positive interpersonal skills and social norms (Johnson & Johnson 1991 & 2016), were students influenced by this in their responses? While the results of this study were significant ($p=0.03$) when evaluating students' efficacious feelings toward deliberation, self-efficacy beliefs can vary between individuals (Bandura, 1997). It can also be challenging to account for every environmental factor or prior experience that could have influenced students' efficacy rating. A better measurement of students' self-efficacy could have been achieved using a retrospective post-pre-survey design in which data is only collected at the end and asks students to self-assess their confidence before and after the deliberation lessons (Mertler, 2020). This may have better focused students' reflection on the impact of the deliberation lessons, rather than evaluating their self-efficacy based on prior knowledge and experience.

The final limitation was my proximity to the study and the participants. I tried to mitigate this as best as possible by having students complete the pre-and post-survey outside of class time. I also had other teachers conduct the focus groups so that students perhaps would answer more honestly than if I had been conducting them. The impact of these adjustments is difficult to measure but is worth considering as a limitation of this action research study conducted by a teacher-researcher.

**Implications for Practice**

Based on the findings of this action research study, there are several implications for the teaching and learning of civics at the high school level.  The insights gained from conducting this study will have a lasting impact on my teaching approach in several ways: (a) highlighting the advantages of cooperative learning; (b) stressing the significance of active listening alongside verbal expression; (c) enhancing skill acquisition; and (c) recognizing the applicability of these skills beyond the classroom to benefit American citizenry.

I started the doctoral program at Arizona State University in Fall 2020.  Since I started my research, the world of education was drastically transformed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which corresponded with a mind-boggling period in American politics.  As a result of two generation-defining phenomena, a tremendous amount of research has been added to the topic of civic education: How to define it, standardize it, teach it, learn it, and fund it. Areas of civic and academic life adapted in response to the changing landscape.

In July 2023, my school site converted a former computer lab into the "collaboratory," a space redesigned to better accommodate group work and cooperative learning. This decision was made independently from my research study, but my WTP students benefited from the configuration of the room for their cooperative work.  Once the desktop computers were removed, the pairing of two, large trapezoid tables allowed for eight students to comfortably work together in a shared space. Fortunately, the space has been available for my use throughout this research study, however, I do not know how many teachers at my school site are aware of the computer lab's creative repurposing or know how to use its functioning layout to orchestrate cooperative group work already happening in their classrooms.  Consequently, having more collaborative spaces available may encourage the use of cooperative learning.  Paired with meaningful, relevant, and timely pedagogy, these spaces would provide an environment more conducive to deliberation and discourse than the traditional rigid rows of encumbered desks. I

plan to address the issue of flexible seating configurations with both my school and district leadership.

As a teacher-researcher, I learned a tremendous amount from implementing the deliberation lessons and watching students tackle them in class for four weeks. I felt prepared to implement them because of my preparation for this study; however, I could benefit from additional teacher training related to student deliberation specifically. I shared the benefits of using the lessons with teachers in my department and fellow civics educators. I hope to present my findings to my school and district administration, thereby illustrating the benefits of cooperative learning, the need for related and relevant professional development, the possibility of using deliberation in all grade levels and subject areas, and the need for funding to remodel and adapt outdated classroom spaces as cooperative and collaborative learning environments.

The intervention in this research study introduced Street Law's deliberation lessons to students in the WTP program. After witnessing the interactions of my students during the deliberation lessons and comparing those observations with the data from the surveys, student work samples, and focus group interviews, I can confidently recommend the use of deliberation lessons in all civics and government classes. Including deliberation lessons in the government curriculum will serve as a method to introduce, discuss, and assess both civic knowledge and skills. Despite the observed successes, students had suggestions for ways to improve the deliberation lessons. One student wanted more of a choice in the topic for deliberation because if students were able to pick the topic, it would "more adequately prepare you for deliberations with others in the real world and when you're considering candidates for whom to vote for." Another student felt that direct instruction related to the historical background of an issue would have been helpful because the provided deliberation readings "only have so much information in it." Other students wanted additional time to research. They felt this was especially important when switching sides and wanting to find new and additional information to support their new position.

To better mitigate one of the pitfalls of cooperative learning, a student suggested that the teacher should assign certain topics for students to research. She felt that this would not only make the deliberation lessons more effective, but it would also make sure everyone had something to gain from their participation because they had to come to class prepared.

However, students must be taught how to deliberate. They must be taught to distinguish between debate, discussion, and deliberation. As a result, the students compared their experience to that of current politicians, "we're just high schoolers learning about the constitution, learning how to deliberate better than the current people in government right now." A huge element of deliberation is the importance of listening. A student summarized this point when they said:

> I think that we need to have more people who are more open-minded toward the use of something like this, especially this being informed like being able to research a topic and coming to your own consensus on it, and then being able to listen to somebody else, is the biggest part of it.

These skills relate to recent work by Learning for Justice, formerly Teaching Tolerance, from the Southern Poverty Law Center. A 2017 Learning for Justice report, "Civil Discourse in the Classroom," agrees that when students learn to prioritize and critically investigate evidence in the classroom, they learn to focus their discussion on the content of the issue rather than emotions or the person in the discussion (Shuster, 2017). This focus on the discussion supports many speaking and listening skills mandated, but often not assessed, in state content standards and can be included as expected classroom routines. When these skills are taught, frequently re-visited, and reinforced, then they become habitual (Shuster, 2017).

Teachers do not often teach students how to elaborate or build off of each other's ideas or encourage other students to participate (Barker, 2015). This discrepancy is primarily due to the use of recitation as the predominant type of discussion facilitated in classrooms (Walsh & Sattes, 2015). The teacher initiates a question, the student responds, and the teacher evaluates the

contribution. This is often done as a way to check for understanding but does not elicit higher-order critical thinking. Moving forward, the next time I use a deliberation lesson in class, I will model the deliberation process and the expectations of how to engage with those in their deliberative group. By encouraging elaboration, students would be able to better make sense of others' ideas, interpretations, and experiences in light of their own (Barker, 2015).

A final implication for classroom practice is how the deliberation lessons connect to increased social-emotional learning (SEL) support. Street Law includes three SEL mini-lessons on empathy, listening, and group norms for the deliberations. Researchers at the University of Michigan and the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) have been studying the interrelatedness of civic learning and SEL, particularly for low-income, youth of color. They believe together SEL, and civics achieve three key goals: deep levels of self-awareness, collaborative problem-solving, and cultural competence (CASEL, 2024). This connection was supported by the results of my study. Students noted increased confidence in deliberation, their desire to continue working collaboratively, and the perceived safety in presenting and discussing multiple perspectives. Therefore, to better meet my students' SEL needs, I plan to utilize the Street Law SEL lessons before introducing cooperative learning activities. These SEL lessons will continue to be relevant to address future students' social-emotional development stunted by the COVID-19 pandemic and virtual learning (Hamilton & Gross, 2021). Despite their extensive report on students' social-emotional well-being, Hamilton & Gross (2021) argue that additional research is needed to measure the pandemic's impact on students' academic persistence, self-awareness, skillful communication, and collaboration with peers, and self-regulation.

**Implications for Policy**

The results of this study support the use of deliberation lessons as an effective method for teaching deliberative skills in civics and government classrooms. It also speaks to a larger change

for teachers, students, and policymakers in civic education curriculum and funding. Some of these changes have already occurred. Introduced in Chapter 1, the curricular website iCivics was founded in 2009, by former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor out of concern for a lack of civic education and engagement (iCivics, 2024). iCivics prioritizes funding, class time, and professional development with the goal of ensuring that every student receives a high-quality civic education. In 2018, iCivics founded CivXNow Coalition, representing more than 40 states working to affect policy change (CIVXNOW State policy menu, 2021). In March 2021, Louise Dube, the executive director of iCivics, said the goal of civics education is to have students understand history from multiple perspectives, be able to talk and discuss with others who disagree, and form a path forward" (Heim, 2021). iCivics is seeking to meet this goal by creating supreme court simulations in which students practice civil discourse and engage in a dynamic learning experience. Along with the support of 100 partner organizations, the first national Civic Learning Week was held March 6-10, 2024 and Congress' latest budget proposal for FY24, included an additional $50 million for American history and civics (iCivics, 2024). Inching the funding of civics and social studies education closer to that of STEM.

In 2019, four years after the passage of the American Civics Act, Arizona established the State Seal of Civic Literacy. To earn the diploma seal, students must earn a 3.0 or higher GPA, pass the Arizona Civics Exam, participate in three civic learning programs, two civic engagement activities, and complete a minimum of 75 hours of community service over the course of four years (Thompson, 2023). The three approved civic learning programs can include programs like Mock Trial, Model UN, National History Day, Project Citizen, We the People, which must be completed in addition to their traditional senior government class already required for graduation (Arizona Department of Education, 2019). Then, students must participate in two approved civic engagement activities; programs like the Girl Scouts, Key Club, Rho Kappa, YMCA Youth and Government fulfill this requirement. Upon completion of these requirements, the final component

is a written reflection which requires students to think back on their experience completing the State Seal of Civics Literacy (Arizona Department of Education, 2019).

At my school site, the WTP students and the class of 2024 will be the first to earn the State Seal of Civic Literacy.  However, it is important to note that in 2023, Penn State researchers Jilli Jung and Maithreyi Gopalan sought to determine the impact of state-mandated civics tests, specifically the Civic Education Initiative adopted by 18 states, on voter turnout among 18- to 24-year-olds. Their research reveals that the mere knowledge of facts fails to motivate first-time voters.  As a result, Jung and Gopalan (2023) suggested activities such as mock elections to teach civic skills, engage students in the political process, as well as give students specific information about voter registration and voting.

Outside of the required civics test, the Arizona Civics Seal components require both civic learning and civic engagement.  The Civics Seal is an enhancement to the civics curriculum, the elements of the seal fulfill Inquiry Element 6 on the Inquiry Arc: Taking Informed Action (Arizona Department of Education, 2019).

> To prepare students for civic life, students use their disciplinary knowledge, skills, and perspectives to inquire about problems involved in public issues, deliberate with others on how to define and address these issues, take constructive and collaborative action, and reflect on that action.

While the pass rate on the Arizona Civics Test has increased from 60 to 70% for the class of 2026, the test can still be administered to 7th or 8th-grade students (Arizona Department of Education, 2023). Meaning, that if a student passes the test in middle school, they have fulfilled the graduation requirement and are not required to take the test again in high school. While this test does establish a standardized measure of civic knowledge, adjustments could be made to better assess high school students' knowledge. However, the required civics test still does not assess or evaluate civic skills.  Additionally, the *Arizona History and Social Science Standards*

(2019) require students to explain, apply, and analyze deliberative and democratic processes and procedures. This research study provides a relevant example of how these standards can be evaluated with programs like WTP and curricula like the Street Law deliberation lessons.

A 2019 Pew Research Study asked respondents to evaluate the tone and nature of political debate in the United States. Eighty-five percent felt the political debate had become more negative because it was less respectful, fact-based, and substantive (Public Highly Critical of State of Political Discourse in the U.S., 2019). To transform political debate into respectful, factual, and quality discourse is complicated by how politicians, journalists, and average citizens have come to interact with one another. Seeking to change this, Khan Academy founder, Sal Khan, and National Constitution Center President, Jeffrey Rosen, joined together to teach the principles of democracy and civil dialogue to the next generation. Together, they developed Constitution 101 to model thoughtful, respectful civil dialogue - allowing students to consider multiple perspectives and reach their own conclusions. As a result, in a pilot phase of the study, 20% of students reported an increased desire to engage in difficult conversations (Khan & Rosen, 2023).

Difficult conversations are at the core of Street Law's deliberation lessons. In 2022, Street Law, Inc. received a $1.1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education for American History and Civics Education. As a result, the Talking About Local Current and Contested Issues in Schools (TALCCS) was created. Which seeks to support Maryland social studies teachers with professional development and curricula to help teachers guide their students through contested discussions. Preparing teachers to *guide* students through difficult conversations helps to quell the concerns of parents, teachers and administrators by helping to bridge the divide of polarization.

College and university spaces have also been making innovative adaptations to community spaces to better support collaborative learning (Papaioannou, et al., 2023). This

change in the physical space has been responsive to social and programmatic changes at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Princeton University, and American University to name a few. In October 2023, MIT started a two-year initiative called *Civil Discourse in the Classroom and Beyond*, which includes seminars where students discuss freedom of speech and practice skills for engaging in civil discourse. These programs are appropriately named, "Dialogues Across Difference." (Gurin, 2013). In 2022, the Center for Civic Education, the creators of WTP, developed new resources for educators and students with the "Civil Discourse: American Democracy Toolkit." (2024). They are hoping to provide innovative ways to foster civil discourse and civic education in the classroom using the inquiry model to study topics like factions, segregation, compromise and membership. The lessons utilize Structured Academic Controversy or the Paideia Program to engage students in meaningful discourse.

Not only are these skills essential for the future of a functioning democracy, and collaborative classroom, they are desirable workforce skills as well. LinkedIn Learning determined the ten most demanded skills for 2024: communication, leadership, teamwork, problem-solving, and research were four of those skills. Each of these can be taught and practiced by using cooperative learning and SAC in the social studies classroom by implementing the We the People program in tandem with Street Law's deliberation lessons. When promoting their materials to educators, Street Law looks to elevate teacher stories and voices in policy debates that impact the quantity of civic education Street Law can provide (Street Law, 2023).

**Conclusion**

When asked about the urgent need for a national civic framework, Paul Carrese, director of the School of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership at Arizona State University observed, "For the civic fabric of the country, the situation couldn't be graver than it is right now," (Heim, 2021). The future of our democratic republic depends upon the consideration of opposing viewpoints, cooperation and compromise to accomplish shared goals and solve

problems, and skillful and respectful communication to build consensus (Crosby, 2018). Schools and teachers should cultivate democratic classrooms where students learn how to develop effective and respectful relationships, think critically about multiple perspectives, determine how to make reasonable and ethical choices, and learn how to communicate civilly with those whose opinions differ from theirs.

The use of the deliberation lessons both supports civic learning skills of deliberation and civil discourse and lifelong citizen skills. The students in this action research study felt the lessons were beneficial in improving their own skills, the capabilities of fellow students, and the attitudes and dispositions of American citizens. The findings of this study were focused and narrowed to the specific civic skill of deliberation. While the research supports the benefits of deliberation in the classroom, I sought to look at a narrow application of Street Law's deliberation lessons with students in the WTP program. This was due to the conversational and cooperative nature of the WTP program's congressional hearing format and the desire to address a need in my classroom to improve student communication and collaboration. After completing the deliberation lessons, a student reflected:

> Today, everyone is just so extreme about their opinions. There's no middle ground and nobody's willing to listen. But if everyone was able to learn how to deliberate and to read the information and research evidence, then I feel like today's world would be very different and for the better.

The future of American democracy depends upon compromise and finding common ground. These outcomes are hopeless without civic lessons in the deliberative arts, in which students learn to listen as well as talk, criticize ideas rather than persons, understand multiple perspectives, and support claims with reasoning and evidence (Parker, 1997). These are challenging skills for students, teachers, and citizens to learn and practice, but a deliberative democratic future is a challenge worth accepting.

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APPENDIX A

PRE/POST SURVEYS

**Survey**

- Age
    - 17
    - 18
- Gender
    - Female
    - Male
    - Non-Binary
    - I prefer not to say


- Ethnicity
    - American Indian
    - Asian
    - Black or African American
    - Pacific Islander
    - White
    - Multi-Racial
    - I Prefer not to say
    - Hispanic / Latino / Spanish Origin


- Academically Gifted
    - Yes
    - No
    - I'm not sure


- Current number of AP / Honors Classes
    - 0
    - 1
    - 2
    - 3
    - 4
    - 5


- Parents' Highest level of education
    - Mother
        - High School
        - Vocational School / Two Year Degree
        - Bachelor's Degree
        - Master's Degree
        - Doctoral or Professional Degree
        - I'm Not Sure

- o Father
  - ▪ High School
  - ▪ Vocational School / Two Year Degree
  - ▪ Bachelor's Degree
  - ▪ Master's Degree
  - ▪ Doctoral or Professional Degree
  - ▪ I'm Not Sure

How do you stay up to date on current events? (Check all that apply):
- Radio
- Newspaper & Magazines
- Online Newspaper & Magazines
- Television
- Podcasts
- Twitter
- TikTok
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- Apple News Alerts
- Other:

How often do you engage in discussions about news related to government or politics with your friends?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

How often do you engage in discussions about news related to government or politics with your family?
- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

**Open Response**:

What do you enjoy most about discussing political or government-related current issues?

What do you least enjoy about discussing political or government-related current issues?

Please state your level of agreement in the following items
1 = Strongly Disagree      2= Disagree      3= Neutral      4= Agree      5= Strongly Agree

- I learn more from working with other people than when I work alone.
- I include others' perspectives when making decisions
- I assume shared responsibility for cooperative work
- I value individual contributions (of others) for cooperative work
- I try to understand the thinking of people from different backgrounds (cultures, religions, ideologies and lifestyles)
- I consider information from a variety of perspectives when developing ideas
- I respond well to new and diverse perspectives
- I go beyond my basic knowledge to expand my own learning
- After working with others, I can develop new and innovative ideas
- I am in control of my own learning
- I learn from other students in this class
- I learn a lot from other people with backgrounds, views, and experiences that are different from my own.
- I listen while others are speaking by demonstrating active listening (eye contact, nodding, moving toward the speaker)
- I possess the necessary communication and interpersonal skills to deliberate in a small group
- I have been taught the necessary communication and interpersonal skills to deliberate in a small group.
- Deliberative lessons in cooperative groups has allowed me to consider new perspectives, reaffirm my own thinking and construct new knowledge.

Deliberation teaches people how to cooperatively discuss controversial issues by carefully considering multiple perspectives and searching for consensus.

When considering preparation for, engagement in, or reflecting upon group deliberations, please state your level of confidence engaging in the following tasks.

1=Not confident at all      2=Somewhat confident      3=Confident      4=Very confident

- I can read materials carefully
- I can focus on the question I am being asked
- I can evaluate, take and defend a position - even if it is different from my own belief
- I can ask relevant and appropriate questions when learning new information
- I can listen carefully to what others are saying with the purpose of understanding
- I can summarize what another person said to make sure I understood correctly
- I try to understand and analyze what another person is saying before I respond
- I can speak clearly and with confidence
- I can verbally articulate my thoughts and ideas in small groups
- I can verbally articulate my thoughts and ideas in large groups
- I can clearly articulate my thoughts and ideas in writing
- I can encourage others to speak
- I can refer to the provided readings to support my ideas
- I can research additional information to both support and refute my opinions

- I can apply my life experiences and background knowledge in a logical way
- I can cite evidence and substantiate my opinions with sound reasoning.
- I can remain engaged and respectful when controversy arises
- When there is tension in a group, I can help mediate a path forward
- I can overcome hesitancy and reluctance to discuss difficult issues
- I can cooperate (rather than compete) with others
- I can approach deliberation with an open mind and am willing to listen to alternative perspectives
- I can analyze and evaluate alternative points of view
- I can listen to conflicting perspectives and identify where they agree and disagree.
- I can create and support a positive environment conducive for deliberation
- I can admit when I am wrong or need to improve and accept constructive criticism
- I can provide feedback on decisions and processes before, during and after group deliberations

**Post-Survey Open Questions**

How and to what extent did the deliberation lessons improve your ability to learn from others and construct new knowledge?

How and to what extent did the deliberation lessons improve your ability to communicate with students with diverse backgrounds, opinions and ideas?

Please describe any changes in your attitude towards and confidence in deliberation skills after participating in deliberation lessons we did in class.

APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

# Focus Group Interview Questions

1. Why did you decide to take We the People this year?

2. Prior to this year, have you ever been taught the skills to work in cooperative groups?

   If so, what specific skills were you taught?

3. Prior to this year, describe your experiences talking about current events, politics, or controversial issues with family, classmates, or friends.

   What makes them easy or enjoyable?
   What makes them challenging?

4. Take a moment and reflect on your experience during the deliberation lessons in class. What aspects of the deliberation lessons were most effective in enhancing your confidence in deliberation?

5. After your experience, how could the deliberation lessons be improved or made more effective?

6. In what ways do you believe the deliberation lessons have influenced your confidence in engaging in civil discourse, expressing your opinions and considering opposing viewpoints?

7. Reflecting on your participation in the deliberation lessons, was it helpful to make group norms for your deliberation? Why or why not? Did you stick to them? What happened if you didn't adhere to the norms?

8. Do you feel your upbringing, culture, ethnicity, gender or personality impact your confidence when deliberating with others? Why or why not?

9. To what extent do you feel the deliberation lessons have increased your confidence to engage in discussions about current events or societal issues in a respectful and informed manner?

10. Why is learning to deliberate and engage in civil discourse a valuable civic skill?

Closing Question:
- Is there anything else you would like to say regarding the deliberation lessons, cooperative learning, or civil discourse in the classroom?

   This concludes the focus group interview. Thank you again for your participation today.

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW THEMES

| Cooperative Learning | Confidence Before | Confidence After | Aspects of Lessons |
|---|---|---|---|
| Together, these codes emphasize the importance of fostering effective communication, mutual respect, empathy, and collaboration in interpersonal interactions and group dynamics. | | | |
| Effective Interpersonal Dynamics | Avoidance / Disengagement | Personal Growth Through Dialogue | Constructive Dialogue |
| <ul><li>Listening</li><li>Collaboration</li><li>Communication / Conversations</li><li>Initiative</li><li>Surface Level/One Sided</li><li>Compromise</li><li>Empathize</li><li>Accountability</li></ul> | <ul><li>Didn't have conflict</li><li>Didn't try to find additional sources</li><li>Previously not considering their own perspective</li><li>Impact of COVID</li><li>Background / Upbringing</li><li>Give-up / Stand down</li><li>Parents confidence in beliefs negatively affected child's</li><li>Gender differences / impact</li><li>Downplayed / disrespected other arguments</li></ul> | <ul><li>Argue w/o being judged</li><li>Future implications</li><li>Gain confidence because of both perspectives</li><li>No confidence due to lack of knowledge / familiarity</li><li>More confidence after listening to others opinions to form own</li><li>Be more formal</li><li>Cite evidence</li><li>Discovering nuances</li><li>Perspective</li><li>Research</li><li>Practice</li></ul> | <ul><li>Arguing both sides</li><li>Background reading</li><li>Post-reflection</li><li>New perspectives</li><li>Research</li><li>Understanding</li><li>Empathy</li><li>Evidence</li><li>Support from peer</li><li>Less-risk, more willingness</li><li>Personal Opinion</li><li>Build Upon one another</li><li>Determining use of evidence</li><li>Discovering the 'why'</li><li>Listening</li><li>Open-Minded</li><li>Informed</li><li>Priority to reach agreement</li><li>Listen</li><li>Connect</li></ul><br>Norms<ul><li>Safe environment</li><li>Comfortable</li><li>Polite</li><li>Respectful</li><li>Structure</li></ul> |

APPENDIX D

CODING FROM DELIBERATION LESSONS

## Codes & Themes from the Deliberation Lessons

Positives From Deliberation Lessons

- Respectful Communication (RC)
- Consensus and Agreement (CA)
- Open-Mindedness (OM)
- Confidence Building (CB)
- Active Listening and Engagement (ALE)
- Exploring Diverse Perspectives (DP)
- Active Participation (AP)
- Preparedness and Engagement with Reading (PRE)
- Learning and Knowledge (LK)
- Respect and Mutual Understanding (RMU)
- Staying On Topic and Focused (STF)
- Sharing Personal Experiences (SPE)
- Appreciation of Different Perspectives (DP)
- Collaboration and Working Together (CW)
- Effective Communication (EC)
- Use of Resources and Research (RR)
- Listening and Understanding (LU)
- Consensus Building (CB)
- Use of Evidence (UE)
- Open and Judgment-Free Atmosphere (OA)
- Agreement and Similar Thoughts (AS)
- Effective Rebuttals (ER)
- Use of Court Cases and References (CR)
- Critical Analysis (CA)
- Respect and Cooperation (RC)
- Utilization of Outside Information (OI)
- Organization (OR)

Individual Improvement

- Incorporate Outside Information (OI)
- Improve Argumentation and Reasoning (AR)
- Referencing Sources (RS)
- Confidence and Communication (CC)
- Conciseness (CN)
- Preparation and Organization (PO)
- Reading Comprehension (RC)
- Engagement and Interaction (EI)
- Extended Participation (EP)
- Reduced Verbal Participation (RVP)
- Staying on Task (ST)
- Encouragement of Others (EO)
- Reading and Preparation (RP)
- Thought Organization (TO)

- Listening (L)
  Confidence and Communication (CC)
- Interrupting (I)
- Use of Outside Evidence (OE)
- Conciseness (CN)
- Referencing Sources (RS)
- Clarity of Expression (CE)
- Improved Listening (IL)
- Shift in Focus (SF)
- Confidence in Communication (CC)
- Active Participation (AP)
- Reduced Competitiveness (RC)
- Improved Listening (IL)
- Open-Mindedness (OM)
- Providing Evidence (PE)
- Reduced Interruptions (RI)
- Research and Evidence (RE)
- Communication Style (CS)
- Open-Mindedness and Balanced Discussion (OM)
- Increased Participation (IP)

Group Improvement

- Improving Argumentation (IA)
- Enhancing Understanding and Analysis (UA)
- Maintaining Focus (MF)
- Extended Discussion (ED)
- Engagement and Communication (EC)
- Efficiency and Timliness (ET)
- Referencing Sources (RS)
- Encouraging Participation (EP)
- Communication and Tone (CT)
- Use of Evidence (UE)
- Confidence (CF)
- Open-Mindedness and Respect (OR)
- Balanced Participation (BP)
- Staying on Topic (ST)
- Seriousness and Engagement (SE)

APPENDIX E

DELIBERATION LESSONS

# Handout A—Deliberation Guide

## What is Deliberation?

Deliberation teaches people how to cooperatively discuss controversial issues by carefully considering multiple perspectives and searching for consensus.

## Why are we Deliberating?

Talking across differences helps create an informed citizenry, which is essential to a democratic society. By learning to weigh evidence, consider competing views, form an opinion, articulate that opinion, and respond to those who disagree, we expand our knowledge. We work cooperatively toward a policy that benefits our community.

## Deliberation Procedures

| 1 Introduction | 2 Careful Reading | 3 Clarification of Topic & Reading | 4 Prepare & Present Initial Positions |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 5 Reverse Positions | 6 Small Group Free Discussion | 7 Whole Group Discussion | 8 Self-Assessment & Feedback |

## Our Norms for Deliberating

- Read the material carefully.
- Focus on the deliberation question.
- Listen carefully to what others are saying.
- Understand and analyze what others are saying.
- Speak clearly and with confidence.
- Encourage others to speak.
- Refer to the reading to support your ideas.
- Use life experiences and background knowledge in a logical way.
- Remain engaged and respectful when controversy arises.
- Cooperate (rather than compete) with one another.

- Approach the deliberation with an open mind.
- Create and support a positive environment for deliberation.
- _____
  _____
- _____
  _____

# Handout B—Deliberation Notes

| **Yes** <br> Reasons to Support the Question | **No** <br> Reasons to Oppose the Question |
|---|---|
| • _____ <br> _____ <br> _____ <br> _____ Line # _____ | • _____ <br> _____ <br> _____ <br> _____ Line # _____ |
| • _____ <br> _____ <br> _____ <br> _____ Line # _____ | • _____ <br> _____ <br> _____ <br> _____ Line # _____ |
| • _____ <br> _____ <br> _____ <br> _____ Line # _____ | • _____ <br> _____ <br> _____ <br> _____ Line # _____ |
| • _____ <br> _____ <br> _____ <br> _____ Line # _____ | • _____ <br> _____ <br> _____ <br> _____ Line # _____ |

My final position is _____

Why?

# Handout C—Free Discussion & Individual Reflection

## Free Discussion

Drop your assigned role and talk about the question in your small groups. If possible, try to reach a group consensus on the question and find areas of agreement between the YES and NO viewpoints.

| Questions to Prompt Discussion | |
|---|---|
| • Does anyone have any questions about the topic or either side's viewpoint? | • I still have a question about … <br> • I'm wondering … |
| • What do each of us think about this question? | • I think that … <br> • I agree with _____ because … <br> • I disagree with _____ because … <br> • In my experience … |
| • Can we find **consensus** on the problem, the solution, or anything else about the topic? | • One point where the YES and NO sides agree is … <br> • An area of consensus might be … <br> • I'm not sure that's right. Can you tell me why you think that? |

## Free Discussion Debrief

Complete this section on your own after the small group discussion.

1. Was your group able to reach consensus on any part of the question? If so, what do you think allowed you to reach consensus? If not, what do you think prevented you from reaching consensus?

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. Whose problem is this to solve? How should they solve it? What role, if any, should you play?

   _____

   _____

   _____

# Handout D—Post-Deliberation Self-Assessment and Feedback

Rate yourself and the group on the ability to do the following *(3 = very well, 2 = well, 1 = not well)*:

| Our Norms for Deliberating | Me | Group |
|---|---|---|
| Read the material carefully. | | |
| Focus on the deliberation question. | | |
| Listen carefully to what others are saying. | | |
| Understand and analyze what others are saying. | | |
| Speak clearly and with confidence. | | |
| Encourage others to speak. | | |
| Refer to the reading to support your ideas. | | |
| Use life experiences and background knowledge in a logical way. | | |
| Remain engaged and respectful when controversy arises. | | |
| Cooperate (rather than compete) with one another. | | |
| Approach the deliberation with an open mind. | | |
| Create and support a positive environment for deliberation. | | |
| | | |
| | | |

What is one positive reflection you had from today's deliberation?_____
_____
_____

One improvement **I** can make in our next deliberation is to _____
_____
_____

One improvement **we all** can make in our next deliberation is to _____
_____
_____

Page 1 of 1

APPENDIX F

IRB APPROVAL

**ASU** Knowledge Enterprise Development

APPROVAL: EXPEDITED REVIEW

Juan Carrillo
Division of Teacher Preparation - Tempe
-
jfcarril@asu.edu

Dear Juan Carrillo:

On 4/10/2023 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

| Type of Review: | Initial Study |
|---|---|
| Title: | The Impact of Deliberation Lessons on Students' Confidence with Regard to Civic Skills of Deliberation with students participating in the We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution Program |
| Investigator: | Juan Carrillo |
| IRB ID: | STUDY00017073 |
| Category of review: | 7 |
| Funding: | None |
| Grant Title: | None |
| Grant ID: | None |
| Documents Reviewed: | • 3 Ds_Debate_Disc_Delib.pdf, Category: Resource list;<br>• Alison Rund IRB - Updated 4_10_2023.docx.pdf, Category: IRB Protocol;<br>• compulsory_voting_deliberation_materials_2019-05-13.pdf, Category: Resource list;<br>• deliberation_handouts_03-22-2019.pdf, Category: Resource list;<br>• electoral_college_hs_level.pdf, Category: Resource list;<br>• flag_desecration_amendment_hs_level.pdf, Category: Resource list;<br>• Focus Group Interview Questions (1).pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions |

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| | /interview guides/focus group questions);<br>• hate_speech_hs_level.pdf, Category: Resource list;<br>• Rund IRB Letter.pdf, Category: Other;<br>• street_law_deliberation_video.pdf, Category: Resource list;<br>• Student Assent Form - Survey and Interview (1).pdf, Category: Consent Form;<br>• Student Consent (18+).docx (2).pdf, Category: Consent Form;<br>• Survey and Interview Parental-Permission 2023 (2).pdf, Category: Consent Form;<br>• Survey Questions.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);<br>• Tempe Union High School District Mail - Research Request Permission.pdf, Category: Off-site authorizations (school permission, other IRB approvals, Tribal permission etc);<br>• TUHSD Research Request November 2022.docx.pdf, Category: Off-site authorizations (school permission, other IRB approvals, Tribal permission etc); |
|---|---|

The IRB approved the protocol from 4/10/2023 to 4/9/2025 inclusive. Three weeks before 4/9/2025 you are to submit a completed Continuing Review application and required attachments to request continuing approval or closure.

If continuing review approval is not granted before the expiration date of 4/9/2025 approval of this protocol expires on that date. When consent is appropriate, you must use final, watermarked versions available under the "Documents" tab in ERA-IRB.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,


IRB Administrator

cc:     Alison Rund
        Alison Rund