HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS’ CIVIC KNOWLEDGE AND
SENSE OF CIVIC IDENTITY: A QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF
EXPERIENTIAL CIVIC LEARNING PROGRAMS

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Abstract

This study reviewed both current and historical literature in an effort to define experiential learning both generally and specifically in the context of civic education, examined the role of the school, investigated barriers to success, reviewed current experiential learning programs, and makes recommendations. The study examined three research questions that address the relationship between civic knowledge and civic identity: Is an increase in high school students’ civic knowledge, whether gained through experiential or traditional civics education programs, associated with an increased sense of civic identity? Does experiential civics education predict higher levels of civic knowledge than traditional civics education? Does experiential civics education predict higher levels of civic identity than traditional civics education? To answer these research questions, 592 high school students were given pre- and post-tests to measure for civic knowledge and civic identity. Of this group, 301 students received only traditional civics education while the remaining 291 participated in an experiential civics learning program. Results were analyzed to determine whether or not statistically significant relationships existed between variables. Findings suggest that statistically significant positive relationships exist between civic knowledge and civic identity as well as between experiential learning and increased civic knowledge and increased civic identity. After peer review discussion of the research, Post-hoc data analysis explored interactions between the variables and the differing demographic groups. The Post-hoc analysis found an interaction between civic identity (social responsibility) and gender as well as between civic identity (political efficacy and social responsibility) between ethnicity and socio-economic status. These findings may help civics educators in their pedagogical approach of teaching the subject.

Key words: civics education, civic engagement, pedagogy, etc.
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Chapter One: Introduction

This study highlights a widely recognized issue in contemporary American high school civics education, and investigates whether experiential civics education offers a solution to increasing civic knowledge, and if it may lead to higher levels of civic identity. This study outlines the problem of practice, the significance of the problem, and proposed a solution to the problem. It provides a brief overview of the theoretical frameworks that underpin the research design and outlines the research questions and hypotheses that were investigated.

Statement of the Problem and Significance

Importance of civic education. In 1787, Thomas Jefferson said in a letter to James Madison, “above all things I hope the education of the common people will be attended to, convinced that on their good sense we may rely with the most security for the preservation of a due degree of liberty” (Jefferson and Burton, 1958). Fleming (2011) writes that “a curriculum for democracy is a curriculum for civic participation” (p. 48). Koch (2005) notes the importance of citizenship education, noting that “democratic political practice is premised on the principle of an informed citizenry engaging in a commitment to democracy…” (p. 160). In 1986, the president of the American Federation of Teachers, Albert Shanker, underscored the importance of civic education in teaching citizenship in a speech entitled Education and Democratic Citizenship: “How can we fail to build a world in which the rights due to every human being from birth are respected? In order to build this world…we must teach democracy” (Shanker, 1986). Further underscoring this importance, Georgia’s Governor Nathan Deal issued an unprecedented charge to the State Board of Education in a letter dated August 15, 2013 to review civic education in the state along with associated curriculum, resources, and pedagogies. Highlighting the need for experiential civic education practices in a recent Political Psychology
article, Kahne, Crow, and Lee (2013) state, “do not depend on whether students take a U.S. government course but instead depend on the kinds of civic learning opportunities students have in their civics classes and elsewhere in the curriculum” [italics added for emphasis] (p. 14). Civic education is vitally important as a tool to prepare future citizens for the duties of citizenship—a necessary foundation to preserve the very democracy of which they learn—one created for the people, by the people, and of the people.

American civic education is failing. Delli Carpini, and Keeter (1996, cited by Matto & Vercellotti, 2012) examined the decline in civic knowledge from one generation to the next, noting “post-Baby Boom generations exhibit lower rates of knowledge about the processes of politics than preceding generations” (p.728). Westheimer and Kahne (2004) shared evidence of decreased knowledge with the results of a study by the National Constitution Center that found “only 38% percent of respondents could name all three branches of the government,” while a separate poll revealed that “59% of all Americans could name all three Stooges” (p. 242). The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE, 2011) used voter turnout in presidential elections as an indicator of civic engagement. They reported that civic engagement among eligible adult voters was lower in 2010 (at 51.4%) than it was in 1974 (at 54.0%) (CIRCLE, 2011). Kahne and Sporte (2008) linked civic knowledge to continued civic participation as students transition into adulthood. This study sought to further explore the relationship between civic knowledge and civic identity, which serves as an indicator of continued civic participation (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

Evidence of decline. American high school graduates’ understanding of basic civic tenets continues to decline (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2011). Periodically, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), a branch within the U.S. Department of
Education, conducts tests to determine the level of student academic achievement in different areas. One of their reports, the National Assessment of Educational Progress Civics 2010 (NCES, 2011), served as a foundation for this study. In fact, the NCES (2011) study showed that 36% of high school seniors failed to achieve a basic understanding of the U.S. political system. This represents a two-percent decline in civic knowledge among high school seniors since the 2006 NCES study (p. 35). This is illustrated below (Figure 1) illustrates the decline since 1998. It shows the percentage of high school seniors failing to achieve even basic level of understanding of issues related to the foundations and workings of the U.S. political system and the role that citizens need to play in a democratic society (Lutkus, Weiss, Campbell, Mazzeo, & Lazer 1999).

![American High School Students' Lack of Proficiency in Civics](image)

*Figure 1. American high school students' lack of proficiency in civics.*

More than half of American high school graduates enter into adulthood without an understanding of basic civics—and this is a time when they gain the right to vote and
responsibilities of citizenship (NCES, 2011). Three decades ago, United States Secretary of
Education Terrell Bell remarked in his report to the National Commission on Excellence in
Education (1983), *A Nation At Risk*, that "if an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose
on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed
it as an act of war" (p. 5). Based on the statistics presented in the NAEP Civics 2010 (NCES,
2011) report, the American democracy is seriously threatened—not by foreign invaders—but
rather by a systemic failure of the educational institution.

The NCES (2011) report documents a downward spiral in student understanding of
civics. US Department of Education (2006) data suggested that the pedagogical methods used in
high school civics are simply deficient. In his study, Doug Feldman (2010) cites research
conducted by Riedel and his colleagues with high school students, finding that “as many as two-
thirds of the students involved in a traditional civics course felt a strong disconnect from the
curricular material being presented and its usefulness in their immediate surroundings,
particularly as to their ‘obligation’ to be a civic participant” (p. 30).

**Reasons for decline.** This study reports that, based on the literature, the underlying
factors that contribute to this decline include insufficient curriculum and pedagogy (Ives &
Obenchain, 2006), a lack of common national standards (Llewellyn, Cook, & Molina, 2010), and
a narrowing curriculum that is assessment-driven (Kahne & Westheimer, 2003a, 2003b).
According to Llewellyn and colleagues (2010), “political engagement is not a priority for
schools” (p. 792). We can hypothesize that these contributing factors are merely symptoms
related to the political response given for an educational problem.

**Political response to an educational problem.** United States Secretary of Education
Arne Duncan commented on the state of the US educational system, admitting, “The US came in
23rd or 24th in most subjects. We can quibble, or we can face the brutal truth that we’re being out-educated” (Dillon, 2010). As Secretary Duncan highlighted, the US education system, in general, is in a state of decline. Much debate has occurred regarding the state of education in America. It has become much more of a political issue than an educational one. Westheimer and Kahne (2004a) added the subtitle “Political Choices and Pedagogical Goals” to their article “Educating the ‘Good’ Citizen,” as a reflection of their “belief that the narrow and often ideologically conservative conception of citizenship embedded in many current efforts at teaching for democracy reflects neither arbitrary choices nor pedagogical limitations but rather political choices with political consequences” (p. 1).

There have been a myriad of political responses to the issue of faltering student achievement overall, including Clinton’s Goals 2000: Educate America Act (Gewertz, 2012), No Child Left Behind (US DOE, 2006), and most recently, the Race to the Top (Johnson, 2012). No Child Left Behind (NCLB) placed emphasis on reading, writing, proficiency in English, mathematics, and science, and mandated evaluation of the progress of the student in each of the areas through standardized testing (US DOE, 2006). The Obama administration’s Race to the Top provided competitive grants to school districts that focus on STEM, or science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (Johnson, 2012). Yet, legislation has introduced specific assessment measures in specific subjects, leaving other important areas unaddressed.

The legislative mandates have placed their greatest emphasis on the content areas of reading, mathematics, and science and the measure of achievement is through the instrument of standardized testing (Feldman, 2010, p. 29). Because the areas of ‘focus’ for each program have become the capstone of the student educational plan, other areas, such as civics in the high school classroom, are not receiving the emphasis given in the past. For example, in a speech at a
national conference, Rick Theisen, former president of the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS), said, "NCLB has done more harm to social studies education than anything else" (GreatSchools, 2008). He tied NCLB mandates to testing: what is tested is what is taught; and what is taught is what is funded. Social sciences are not tested.

**A lack of social science education.** In a publication for the American Youth Policy Forum, Boston (2005) highlighted the impact of legislative interventions, such as No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top, describing “the disturbing imbalance and obsession with academics,” noting that such “emphasis on academic performance has overpowered the nation’s responsibility to help our children become engaged and productive citizens of our community” (p. 122). Walling (2007) cited the Civic Mission of Schools report, and noted, “The movement for high-stakes testing has had a huge impact on education nationally: schools are under unprecedented pressure to raise student achievement, which is now measured by standardized examinations of reading and mathematics” (p. 285). Walling (2007) cited civic education scholar Margaret Stimmann Branson’s remarks to the Idaho State Civic Learning Summit: “Although No Child Left Behind legislation speaks of ’core learning,’ only reading and mathematics are used as measures of schools' success. Science is a poor third. And civic education is forgotten” (p. 285).

Godsay, Henderson, Levine, and Littenberg-Tobias (2012) released the results of a national survey of state civic education requirements, revealing that only “39 states require at least one course in American government or civics” (p. 1). The report disclosed that only nine states have graduation requirements that include the passage of a social studies test (Godsay, Henderson, Levine, Littenberg-Tobias, 2012, p. 2). Kahne and Westheimer (2003a) stated “civic education is getting inadequate attention and is actually being cut back in some states as pressure
to raise scores in math, reading, and science mounts” (p. 8). Simply put, these authors are saying the mission of education follows the money and civic education is not a priority for investment (Godsay, Henderson, Levine, Littenberg-Tobias, 2012; Kahne & Westheimer, 2003a).

Impact of current legislation on classroom practices. Lewis and Williams (1994) were prophetic when two decades ago they said, “educators are being held accountable for what learners know and are able to do…the pressure for accountability has caused educators to design competency-based measures of learning and experiential techniques for assessing learning outcomes” (p. 5). Llewellyn, Cook, and Molina (2010) wrote, “teachers pointed to long lists of content and assessments as the reason why essays and tests took precedence over interactive lessons that may encourage students to engage in democratic reform, such as running meetings and even civil protest” (p. 801). Assessment driven curriculum leads to a more narrow focus on behalf of the educator not out of desire, but out of necessity, according to Kahne, Chi, & Middaugh (2006).

Ives and Obenchain (2006) cited assessment driven curriculum as a negative consequence of a “high-stakes testing policy,” as it forces teachers to “focus on the recall of basic information over in-depth understanding as well as focusing primarily on information that teachers believe will be tested” (p. 63). Some schools are even carving out more time in their schedule for “score boosting drills in reading and math,” taking time away from civics, art, and physical education (Feldman, 2010, p. 29). Kahne, Chi, and Middaugh (2006) asserted that while “some educational practices and contexts promote the skills, knowledge, and dispositions that support a democratic society,” the same research “also suggests, however, that schools are not doing all they could” (p. 388). Wade and Yarbrough (2007) stated that a democracy lacking in participation is a democracy at risk. White, Marsh and McCormack (2011), citing Kincheloe,
“calls much of social studies teaching and learning the ‘non-conceptual, technical view of social studies teaching’ ” (p. 35).

The disconnect between the learner and the curriculum and lack of participation is directly linked to relevance of the instructional material or teaching methodologies. Kahne, Chi, and Middaugh (2006) found that “although experienced-based curricula appear desirable, substantial evidence indicated that they are not commonly found in classrooms” (p. 403). Battisoni and Beaumont (2006) reported that civic education teachers are not given proper tools nor are they adequately trained to use techniques, such as an experiential learning program, in the context of their instruction and therefore “rely on conventional teaching methods” (p. 244).

**Summary of the problem of practice.** The combination of insufficient curriculum, a ‘teach to test’ mentality, and ineffective pedagogy may yield results that could eventually lead to students being ill-equipped to assume their role as a citizen. The continued under-education of students in civics will have lasting implications on the American democracy for generations as students leave the public education system with little or no understanding of how their government works or what role and responsibility they have in it (Ives & Obenchain, 2006).

**Solutions.** Over the past decade, research centering on civic education, and more specifically, experiential civic education, has gained prominence. Many studies including Kahne and Westheimer (2003b) cite varying “pedagogies and curricular strategies for supporting the development of democratic citizens” (p. 57). Ives and Obenchain (2006) suggest that instruction using experiential methods promote high order thinking skills more than does traditional instruction (p. 61). Lay and Smarick (2006) suggest that the use of simulations is not new to the field of civics education and can be an effective teaching strategy (p. 132-133, 143).
Experiential Learning

As educators seek out the best methods wherein to teach civics to their students, many heed the century old advice of John Dewey and embrace the philosophy that experience and education are inseparable (Lay & Smarick, 2006, p. 132). This concept is called experiential learning. This view of teaching is supported by Schachter (1998) in his summary of all the early twentieth Century American Political Science Association (APSA) task force reports that “inveigh against rote learning; the practice of having students memorize passages from constitutions and textbooks met universal disdain” (p. 631).

Gaps in the literature

Current and historical research suggests the solution is pedagogical and curricular in nature, but the efficacy of these tactics is understudied. While much research is available on the varying types of pedagogical approaches available to assist in the teaching of civic lessons, there is a deficiency of research on the effectiveness of such approaches (Battisoni & Beaumont, 2006; Feldman, Pasek, Romer, and Jamieson, 2007; Lay & Smarick, 2006; Llewellyn, Cook & Molina, 2010). Despite many studies on civic education and engagement in the past several decades, Dudley and Gitelson (2003) identified a need for additional research, saying, “we still know relatively little about what knowledge, both qualitatively and quantitatively, is necessary and desirable for an informed and active citizenry” (p. 266). This influences this research study by providing insights into a gap in the literature, a lack of studies that examine the efficacy of a particular approach.

Significance of the Study

The study has both scholarly and practitioner value. It intends to contribute to the scholarly conversation regarding civic education and the effectiveness of pedagogical approaches
in teaching curriculum. It tested pedagogical approaches in hopes of offering insights to current educators. Practicing educators are the beneficiaries of this study as additional research on the effectiveness of experiential civic education may lead to emergent best practices for engaging and appropriate pedagogy. Students also benefit as they will be involved in the learning process and retain more of the knowledge and have a stronger sense of civic identity that leads to civic participation. Ultimately, the country benefits from research that produces and understanding of how to reverse the decline of the civic knowledge deficit and by producing knowledgeable and engaged citizens.

Research Overview

**Purpose.** The literature reviewed in the previous section indicated that civic knowledge among high school students continues to decline because civics education does not appear to be a priority for schools. Furthermore, traditional textbook and lecture based pedagogies are irrelevant to students and therefore ineffective as teaching techniques in civics education. Given the continued decline of civic knowledge among high school students and the potential long-term affect such lack of knowledge can have for American democracy, the purpose of this quantitative study is to examine the effect of experiential civic education programs on high school students’ civic knowledge and their sense of civic identity.

**Definitions.** The following definitions will be employed in describing this research project:

- **Traditional civic education,** for the purpose of this study, consists of classroom instruction using lecture, textbook readings, and rote memorization as the primary pedagogical method of teaching.
**Experiential civic education**, for the purpose of this study, builds from Conrad and Hedin’s (1982) definition:

educational programs offered as an integral part of the general school curriculum, but taking place outside of the conventional classroom or using non-traditional methods (simulations, mock experiences, etc.) [italics added], where students are in new roles featuring significant tasks with real consequences, and where the emphasis is on learning by doing with associated reflection. (p. 58)

**Civic knowledge** is “concerned with the content of what citizens ought to know; the subject matter” (Branson & Quigley, 1998).

**Civic identity** is defined as the sense of one’s readiness and willingness to assume citizenship responsibilities and the belief that one can make a difference (Youniss, 2011).

**Civic engagement** is defined as participation or involvement in “any activity, individual or collective, devoted to influencing the life” of the public and can include volunteering, voting, involvement in political groups, etc. (Levine, 2007).

**Propositions.** The study was built upon two propositions that served as both a foundation and guide to the research questions and hypotheses under investigation:

Proposition 1: Increased civic knowledge, whether gained through experiential or traditional civics education programs, predicts an increased sense of civic identity.

Proposition 2: Civic knowledge acquired via transformative learning is related to a heightened sense of civic identity.

**Research questions and hypotheses.** Framed by these propositions, this quantitative study addressed the following research questions and corresponding hypotheses:
Q1  Is an increase in high school students’ civic knowledge, whether gained through experiential or traditional civics education programs, associated with an increased sense of civic identity?

H1: Increased civic knowledge predicts an increased sense of civic identity.

H1₀: Increased civic knowledge does not predict increased civic identity.

Q2  Does experiential civics education predict higher levels of civic knowledge than traditional civics education?

H2: Experiential civics education predicts higher levels of civic knowledge than traditional civics education.

H2₀: Experiential civics education does not predict higher levels of civic knowledge.

Q3  Does experiential civics education predict higher levels of civic identity than traditional civics education?

H3: Experiential civics education predicts higher levels of civic identity than traditional civics education.

H3₀: Experiential civics education does not predict higher levels of civic identity.

**Study population.** To investigate the relationship between current pedagogical practices and their impact on civic knowledge and civic identity, a convenience sample was utilized. There are two proposed organizations involved in the study: the State YMCA of Georgia and the Cartersville City School System. The State YMCA of Georgia offers ‘youth in government’ programs as a part of its mission. Such experiential learning programs include a model state legislature and a model United Nations program for middle and high school students in public, private, and home schools. The Cartersville City School System is located just north of Atlanta.
with four schools, 4,200 students, and approximately 270 teachers (Cartersville City Schools, 2013).

**Theoretical Framework**

At the foundation of this study are two theoretical perspectives: civic identity theory (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Yates & Youniss, 1998; Youniss, 2011) and transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2000). Each offers useful lenses for both the development of the study and the future interpretation of results.

**Civic identity theory.** A number of studies (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Youniss, 2011; Popkin & Dimock, 1999) posited that increased civic knowledge is linked to an increase in civic identity development, and therefore an increase in students’ sense of civic efficacy. This study attempted to measure a number of factors that lead to civic knowledge and identity and examine the impact of specific learning settings on those measures. Accordingly the study relied on an understanding of how high school students construct a sense of civic efficacy, which is ultimately tied to civic identity. Built on Erikson’s (1950, 1998) eight stages of development theory, the Civic Identity Theory (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Yates & Youniss, 1998; Youniss, 2011) suggests that “a prime task of late adolescence is the development of a social identity that embraces an orientation towards civic and political participation.” Specifically, Erikson (1950, 1998) highlighted adolescence as a key period for the development of identity.

**Civic engagement.** Civic identity is but one part of a continuum of civic development. The aim of civic education and civic identity development is the product of civic activity more broadly referred to as civic engagement. Kahne, Crow, and Lee (2013) support the concept of a civic development continuum stating that “the clearest implication of these findings is that civic learning opportunities promote civic and political engagement” (p. 13). Levine (2007) defines
the term civic engagement as “any activity, individual or collective, devoted to influencing the life” of the public and can include volunteering, voting, involvement in political groups, etc. Kahne, Crow, and Lee (2013) assert that “studies of civic education’s effect on political [civic] engagement can provide a valuable complement to other models of factors that promote civic and political participation” (p. 2).

**Transformative learning theory.** Transformative learning theory describes learning that takes place and among learners who experience the opportunity to engage in coursework and interactions which prompts complex understandings (Mezirow, 2000). At the center of the proposed study is the relationship between pedagogy and learning, and more specifically, the influence certain pedagogical approaches have on student learning outcomes. This study used experiential learning as a proxy for transformative learning in civic education as have others (Gallagher, 1997; Hallows & Murphy, 2010; Taylor, 1998).

Learning by doing (experiential learning) involves the active engagement of one’s mind to transform knowledge acquired through memorization and working memory to knowledge that becomes embedded in one’s long-term memory (Roberts, 2003). Using experiential learning as the pedagogy in courses (specifically civics) as a means to encourage student retention of knowledge has greater long-term effects on society than merely the student’s passing of a test (Menezes, 2003).

The experiential approach to teaching is certainly not new, but it allows the educator to be innovative in the delivery of the content. Simulations and other such activities have been used for decades to allow the participants more engagement in their course of study (Lay & Smarick, 2006, p. 132). Conrad and Hedin (1982) state that such “experience serves as both the source of knowledge and as a process of knowing…Education is of, by, and for experience” (p. 69).
Finkel (2003) asserts that much research based in social psychology supports the notion that “civic education programs that use active methods—not only role playing but also other types of dramatization, group decision-making exercises, and the like—will exert more potent effects on individual orientations”...specifically, “more intensive programs featuring more frequent sessions should yield more powerful effects than do one-time exercises” (p. 142).

While the purpose of this study and the research questions are best viewed through the lenses of civic identity theory (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Yates & Youniss, 1998; Youniss, 2011) and transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2000), additional theories were considered. Service Learning Theory is “the integration of service with academic skills and content and -structured reflection on the service experience” (Wade & Yarbrough, 2007, p. 367). Boyte (2003) defines this view of civic education in “communitarian terms as tak[ing] the form of service or service-learning courses, aimed at teaching values, such as responsibility and care for others” (p. 88).

Certainly, service learning is another effective means of teaching students the importance of civic engagement and their personal responsibility as citizens. The focus between experiential learning and service learning in this context can be summed to a decision between civic education and civic engagement. The Service Learning Theory did not fit the study. For the purposes of this study, it is believed that increased civic knowledge produces increased civic identity and leads to greater civic engagement. A research diagram (Figure 2) is provided below as an illustration.
Fig. 2. Research Diagram.

**Evaluation and Application of Theories**

Naturally, not all experience or activity produces learning. Even Dewey himself recognized there is a difference between “activity and intelligent activity” with the primary difference being delayed action until “observation and judgment have occurred” (Hedin, 2010, p. 110). Further, for the maximum educational effect, the information must be processed by the learner (transfer of knowledge) rather than dictated by the educator (Estes, 2004). Moore (2010) cites Perkins and Salomon’s finding “that transfer does occur, but only when someone calls the learner’s attention to the connections and encourages her to examine them repeatedly” (p. 10).
For the purposes of the study, experiential learning as a proxy for transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2000) served as an appropriate lens through which to investigate the relationship between varying instructional approaches on student learning outcomes such as civic knowledge. Finkel (2003) asserts that much research based in social psychology supports the notion that “civic education programs that use active methods—not only role playing but also other types of dramatization, group decision-making exercises, and the like—will exert more potent effects on individual orientations”...specifically, “more intensive programs featuring more frequent sessions should yield more powerful effects than do one-time exercises” (p. 142). Likewise, civic identity theory (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Yates & Youniss, 1998; Youniss, 2011) provides a framework through which to explore the relationship between increased civic knowledge and increased civic identity (Yates and Youniss, 1998).

Conclusion

At the center of this investigation is the question of the effectiveness of one pedagogy (experiential learning) over another (traditional textbook based lecture instruction) and the impact of instructional methodology on the development of civic knowledge and the formation of civic identify. With the textbook-based lecture serving as the control, this study implemented an intervention using experiential learning methods to determine the difference of effectiveness (if any) there may exist between the pedagogical approaches to civics instruction and the desired outcomes of increases in civic knowledge and in civic identity. Using civic identity theory (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Yates & Youniss, 1998; Youniss, 2011) and transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2000) as the theoretical underpinnings for the research grounds the study in both established development and civic engagement literature as well as in the current debate surrounding effective pedagogical practices.
Practically speaking, knowing the extent of effectiveness of various pedagogical approaches can help shape educator training programs as well as lead to best practices in instruction (Ives & Obenchain, 2006; Levine, 2006; Syvertsen, 2008). This study also has research and theoretical significance in that it adds to the limited body of existing scholarly work on the topic of civic education and its role in the development of civic knowledge and civic identity (Battisoni & Beaumont, 2006; Crocetti, Jahromi & Meeus, 2012; Dudley & Gitelson, 2003).
Chapter Two: Literature Review

American high school graduates’ understanding of basic civics tenets continues to decline (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2011). Even late-night television hosts have found fodder in American’s lack of knowledge. As Fredrickson and Ostrowski (2010) highlighted, the viewers had no shortage of laughs at the responses and “that the American public is poorly informed with regard to even the basic political institutions and most well-known political players” (p. 1).

There are many underlying factors that contribute to this reality, including a lack of common national standards, political responses to educational problems, insufficient curriculum and pedagogy, and a narrowing curriculum that is assessment driven (Llewellyn, Cook & Molina, 2010; Ives & Obenchain, 2006; Kahne & Westheimer, 2003a, 2003b). Chief among these, according to Llewellyn, Cook, and Molina (2010), is the lack of social science education course because “political engagement is not a priority for schools” (p. 792).

This chapter provides a foundation for an investigation of the topic through a thorough interrogation of the literature. The review sought to help provide insight to the following questions. What is civics education? Why is it important? What role do schools play in civics education? How is the subject traditionally taught? What previous studies have examined the relationships between civic education and civic engagement? What is experiential learning? What traits are associated with experiential learning settings? What are transformational learning settings? How have they been explored in previous research? Additionally, the theoretical framework for the study was discussed along with recommendations from the review of the literature.
Terminology Explication

Several key terms are critical to better understand the nature and scope of the study proposed. These include….

**Civic Education.** Torney-Purta and Lopez (2006) defined civic or citizenship education as:

the process of acquiring (1) knowledge about American polity, politics and government, and about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship; (2) skills in understanding political communication and civic participation; and (3) the dispositions or motivations necessary to be engaged, not merely passive participants. (p. 5).

Political theorist William Galston (2001) wrote, “civic education concerns itself with the formation of individuals who can effectively conduct their lives within, and support, their political community” (232).

Lopez and Kirby (2007) noted that traditional civics courses include units on the U.S. Constitution, Congress, political parties, elections and voting, state and local government, as well as studying governments of other countries and international organizations such as the United Nations (p. 2) Boyte (2003) asserted traditional civic education has “been long enshrined in the American school curriculum in civics courses” with “the focus on the state, on the one side, describing departments of government, processes of legislation and the like…on the other side, the focus is on the individual, who is conceived as the bearer of rights” (p. 88).

**Civic knowledge and civic identity.** Torney-Purta and Lopez’s (2006) definition of civic education offers insight as to how civic knowledge and civic identity are framed in this study. Civic knowledge refers to what is known about the American political processes, governmental institutions, and processes along with the rights and responsibilities associated with citizenship
as well as the skills to understand and participate in the process. The concept of civic identity builds on Torney-Purta and Lopez’s (2006, p. 5) definition as “the dispositions and motivations necessary to be engaged, not merely passive participants” as it entails the establishment of individual and collective senses of social agency, responsibility for society, and political-moral awareness (Yates & Youniss, 1998; Youniss, McLellan & Yates, 1997).

There is a lack of standardization in how these concepts are articulated. Kahne and Westheimer (2003b) share this social insight on the view of many about civic education:

A strikingly large number of school-based programs embrace a vision of citizenship devoid of politics. This is particularly true of the community service and character education initiatives that have garnered so much recent attention. These programs aim to promote service and good character, but not democracy. They share an orientation toward developing individual character traits (honesty, integrity, self-discipline, hard work), volunteerism, and charity and away from teaching about social movements, social transformation, and systemic change (p. 36).

The concept of social responsibility and volunteerism is gaining in popularity and can be found on many campuses in the form of service-learning activities.

Another school of thought would resonate with the words of Fleming (2011) on civic education, “a curriculum for democracy is a curriculum for civic participation” (p. 48). Of course, broadly defined, civic participation would include voting, running for public office, and other forms of ‘connection’ within their communities, not only with politics (Menezes, 2003; Putnam, 1996). Downs (2012) asserts that “‘civic literacy’ requires adequate knowledge of basic political and social institutions and affairs as a necessary, if not sufficient, condition of citizenship” (p. 344). In a speech, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan (2011) remarked,
“when it is done well, civic education equips students with the skills they need to succeed in the 21st century – the ability to communicate effectively, to work collectively, to ask critical questions, and to appreciate diversity.”

The founding fathers wanted a responsible and educated citizenry who would not only give back in service to their communities, but one that would also accept the burden of participation, which is why they created a representational democracy (Education & Loflin, N.D). Therefore, for the purposes of this study, the term civic education shall be defined as shared by Gibson and Levine (2003) defining civic education as “the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that will prepare young people ‘to be competent and responsible citizens’” (p. 10). More specifically, Youniss (2011) identifies the chief aim of civic education is “more than acquiring a set of facts, learning about rights and obligations, and becoming an informed voter,” but moreover it is “coming to know how to function in a democratic system and working to sustain it for oneself and for others” (p. 102).

**Learning experiences.** The literature reviewed showed interchangeability with the terms ‘service learning’ and ‘experiential learning’. While both terms, particularly in the field of youth development, have been determined successful methodologies through empirical research and both pass Dewey’s (2007) litmus test that ‘all genuine education comes through experience’, the two represent very different pedagogical approaches and desired outcomes.

**Service Learning.** Kahne and Westheimer (2006) shared that “educators and policy makers have stepped up efforts to promote young people’s participation in political and civic affairs through service learning curriculum and community service activities that provide youth with readily-accessible opportunities to make a difference in their communities” (p. 289). Mintz
and Liu (1994) offered the following definition the methods of service-learning based on The National and Community Service Act of 1990:

Service learning: (a) provides students with opportunities to learn and develop through participation in service experiences organized by collaborating schools and communities; (b) meets actual community needs and allows students to apply newly-acquired skills and knowledge to real-life situations; (c) enhances learning by extending classroom learning into the community; and (d) fosters a sense of caring for other people.

Service-learning is similarly defined by the National Service-Learning Cooperative (N.D.) as a teaching and learning method that connects meaningful community service experience with academic learning, personal growth, and civic responsibility. The premise of service learning seems to have roots that connect legitimate service to one’s community within the context of a class; the foundational hope is that the student will associate their experience with the needs of the community thereby leading to a form of community activism.

There are many samples of successful service learning projects at work in communities all across the United States: The Hampton Experience in Virginia (Carlson, 2006), the Student Voices Project in Philadelphia and other urban centers (Ives and Obenchain, 2006), and Civic Innovations (Freeland and Lieberman, 2010) along with others. Each of the above unique programs, in the words of Carlson (2006) referring to the Hampton Experience, “provides an example of service learning programs and the positive effects on both the community and youth participants” (p. 104).

The use of service learning in the context of the civics classroom has been linked to positive outcomes such as academic achievement (Kunin, 1996; S. Lee, Olszewski-Kubilius, Donahue, & Weimholt, 2008; Schmidt, Shumow, & Kackar, 2007; Flanagan and Levine, 2010).
In fact, Schmidt (2008) cited positive outcome in relation to service regardless of whether the service was voluntary or required (p. 127). While it is outside of the scope of this particular study, there has been some research (Menezes, 2003) that established “participation in such experiences during adolescence and young adulthood as a good predictor of political engagement during adulthood” (p. 432).

It should be noted, however, that Prentice (2007) highlighted the need for additional empirical studies on service learning as predictor of future civic involvement because of conflicting conclusions (p. 137). Youniss (2011) also warned that "with such variation [in definitions of service], it is not possible to say that service as a generic term can or should have positive effects on citizenship development" (p. 101). Milner (2008) suggested that “the US often relies on a Tocquevillian idea that nonpartisan civil society is the seedbed for political participation; civic engagement programs for young people often emphasize service rather than political knowledge,” and further added, “this is an inadequate approach, especially if the goal is to increase the political participation of youth who can be categorized as ‘potential political dropouts’” (p. 2).

**Experiential learning.** Hahn (2001) cautioned that to best equip students for citizenship, “civic action needs to be connected to deliberation, discussion, and decision making” (p. 19). Kahne and Westheimer (2003b) cited the limitations of service learning, stating, “while programs that emphasize service and character may be valuable for supporting the development of good community members, they are inadequate for the challenges of educating a democratic citizenry” (p. 35).

This word of warning embodies the concept of experiential learning, attributed to Dewey, who places at the heart of the educational process the lived experience. An experience wherein
the student is involved in a ‘dual process’ that includes understanding and influencing their environment and being influenced by that experience, what he referred to as trying and undergoing (Ord, 2009). Kahne and Westheimer (2003b) suggested that the effectiveness of a democratic citizen is enhanced by the skills needed for civic participation; therefore, opportunities to connect knowledge to problems in society are necessary to make the best decisions.

It was during the turn of the twentieth century that experiential learning moved to the center of educational practice and discussion (Hedin, 2010). According to Dewey, the chief aim of education was for the student to understand and make reflection upon experience through the use of critical thinking skills (Estes, 2004). In short, Ord (2009) surmised that experience for Dewey is “both a means for, and an end to education” (p. 498). Kahne and Westheimer (2003b) found that many schools provide opportunities for their students “to know” but few opportunities for them “to do” in the context of civic learning (p. 58).

Further, for the maximum educational effect, the information must be processed by the learner rather than dictated by the educator (Estes, 2004). Therefore, as Hedin (2010) suggested, experiential learning must be “intentional” to ensure that learning occurs (p. 115). Oros (2007), shared the importance of experiential learning as a pedagogical choice for the classroom: “One study in the natural sciences found that students retain 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear, 30% of what they see, 50% of what they see and hear, 70% of what they say, and 90% of what they do and say together” (p. 295). This suggests that experiential learning produces a higher retention rate than does other methods.

The Association for Experiential Education (AEE) provides the following definition of experiential education, which facilitates principles of student focused learning as, “a philosophy
that informs many methodologies in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities” (AEE, n.d.).

**Service learning and experiential learning in the context of civic education.**

Mark Smith (1980), in Creators Not Consumers, characterized youth work as “learning by doing” and identified three assumptions upon which experiential learning is based: 1. People learn best when they are personally involved in the learning experience, 2. Knowledge has to be discovered by the individual if it is to have any significant meaning to them or make a difference in their behavior, 3. A person’s commitment to learning is highest when they are free to set their own learning objectives and are able to actively pursue them within a given framework. While Dewey (2007) protested the rigid nature of traditional curriculum, it is important to note that he did advocate its use—just the use of one that is student-centered in pedagogical approach.

While it is a relatively small issue embedded in a larger issue, the existence of two differing and often conflicting theoretical and practical frameworks regarding civic education is not helpful. Boyte (2003) identifies “civics” and “service” as the two terms…“the first focuses on educating students about the formal political process…and the second, ‘service’ (also referred to as community service or service learning) is associated with communitarian political theory” (p. 85). This is a problem within the field that has historical roots. Schachter (1998) fairly assesses the historical stage in terms of consensus on the purpose of civic education saying, “even a cursory glance at the early materials shows that our century contains no period when the scope and content of elementary and high-school civics satisfied academic political scientists” (p. 631). However, using the 1908 APSA report, Youniss (2011) refocuses the discussion and reminds the scholarly community that “civics classes were to be designed, not to produce
political scientists or historians, but for ‘preparing the young for taking their place in the community and leading useful lives’” (p. 99).

**Statement of Problem and Significance**

**Importance of civic education.** Pereira (2004) shared thoughts from Chief Justice Warren as he wrote for the Court, “Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments. Compulsory school attendance laws and the great expenditures for education both demonstrate our recognition of the importance of education to our democratic society … It is the very foundation of good citizenship” (p. 2). It is essential for a citizen to know how to read, write, and perform mathematic functions as well as those understand how government works (Galston, 2003). Parker (2005) supported this interconnectedness of curriculum stating, “Without historical understanding, there can be no wisdom. Without geographical understanding, there can be no social or environmental intelligence. And without civic understanding, there can be no democratic citizens and, therefore, no democracy” (p. 4). Even Meier and Ravitch (2006), educators who often disagreed about the purpose and philosophical underpinnings of the American educational institution agreed, saying that schools must "educate the citizens who will preserve the essential balances of power that democracy requires, as well as to support a sufficient level of social and economic equality, without which democracy cannot long be sustained" (p. 36). Niemi and Junn (1998) concluded that “the civics curriculum has an impact of a size and resilience that makes it a significant part of political learning” (p. 145). There is general consensus surrounding the reasons for and knowledge needed (Meier & Ravitch, 2006; Niemi & Junn, 1998; Pereira, 2004).

**American civic education is failing.** Galston (2001) emphasized that “the renewed attention to civic education is more than an academic trend…it reflects as well broader concerns
about the condition of US civic culture, especially among the young” (p. 219). The decline is well documented. Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) found a decrease in civic knowledge from one generation to the next and reported that “post-Baby Boom generations exhibit lower rates of knowledge about the processes of politics than preceding generations” (p. 728). Experts also link the knowledge to civic action. For example, an expert panel hosted by the American Political Science Association that found “citizens participate in public affairs less frequently, with less knowledge, and enthusiasm, in fewer venues, and less equitably than is healthy for a vibrant democratic polity” (Alex-Assensoh, 2005, p 1). Galston (2001) acknowledged this trend stating, “as far back as solid evidence can be found, at any given historical moment, young adults have tended to be less attached to civic life than are their parents and grandparents” (p. 219).

Kirlin (2003a) cited the work of Putnam (1996 and 2000) and traced decline in a variety of measures of political engagement including voting, serving as an officer or member of a local organization, attending community meetings and writing letters to elected officials; participation in these activities has declined between 10 percent and 42 percent over the past twenty to thirty years. (p. 4)

Whether in terms of civic knowledge or civic activity, cross-sectional and generational analysis suggests that older Americans consistently outperform younger citizens (Feldman, Pasek, Romer, & Jamieson, 2007; Keeter, Zukin, Andolina, & Jenkins, 2002; Putnam, 2000; Milner, 2008). Keeter’s (2002) study, reported that “over half of Americans between the ages of 15 and 25 are completely disengaged from civic life, with only about one-fourth attentive to government and public affairs and one-third following the news through television, radio, or newspapers” (p. 76).
Hinde (2008) asserted that a “lack of access to civics education results in grave consequences such as students deficient in the fundamental knowledge necessary for informed civic participation will struggle to achieve critical perspectives of society and culture” (p. 77). The continued under-education of students in civics will have lasting implications on the American democracy for generations (Ives & Obenchain, 2006). Boston, Pearson, and Halperin (2005) further assert the significance of the program and importance of a solution saying that “if we do not plan now to prepare our youth to take on the mantle of citizenship, we leave the future of democracy hanging in the balance” (p. 10).

**Lack of national standards.** One of the main factors contributing to the failure in civics education is that there is no standard national curriculum. Even with the “standards movement” in the late 1990s, little more than voluntary national standards and state specific standards in civics and other areas of content were enacted (Hahn, 2001, p. 15). In fact, as early as the 1970s, the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) understood that the lack of standards had negative implications. Therefore, they offered curriculum guidelines, placing an emphasis on action fueled by knowledge (Hahn, 2001). The “Common Core Curriculum” standards, met with resistance in many states, represent a return to a discussion about national standards. Boston, Pearson, and Halperin (2005) emphasize that “because education is the constitutional responsibility of the states, it is state policy that must provide the framework for revitalizing civic education and civic engagement” (p. 26). Because of this state centered policy base, solutions are often grounded in local programs and initiatives.

**Evidence of decline.** Galston (2003) stated “the evidence that we have failed to transmit basic civic knowledge to young adults is now incontrovertible” (p. 29). This is supported by the National Assessment of Educational Progress Civics 2010 (NCES, 2011) study that reported
36% of high school seniors failed to achieve a basic understanding of the U.S. political system. The same report noted a decline in civic knowledge between grades eight and twelve (NCES, 2011, p. 1). Boston, Pearson, and Halperin (2005) reflected on the current state of civic knowledge saying, “sadly, too few students know what they need to know, and they are not acquiring the first-hand experience needed to undertake a life of active citizenship” (p. 7).

More than half of American high school graduates come of age and gain the full rights and responsibilities of American citizenship without a basic understanding of civics or how their government works (NCES, 2011). The statistics demonstrate a downward spiral in student understanding of civics. US Department of Education (2006) data suggested that the pedagogical methods used in high school civics are simply deficient. The statistics are grim. Half of American high school graduates do not have a basic understanding of how the government works (NCES, 2011) and “as much as two thirds of students involved in a traditional civics course felt a strong disconnect from the material” according to Feldman (2010). Feldman (2010) suggests that there is a disconnect between the material and pedagogical methods, further supported by declining US Department of education data (2006).

**Reasons for decline.** The self-evident demands of citizenship in a modern democracy provide much justification for the position that social science education can be as important as is science and mathematics. Verba, Schlozman, & Brady (1995) posited that the low level of priority given to civic education may be directly linked to declining civic knowledge and participation in adults. Certainly, with a topic as broad as the failure of civic education, there is a guarantee of many causes. The extant literature can be grouped by three major themes that could be linked to this decline: a political response to an educational problem, a lack of social science education, and an irrelevant curriculum that leads to a pedagogical disconnect for students.
Political response to an educational problem. Dillon (2010) highlights United States Secretary of Education Arne Duncan commented on the state of the US educational system, admitting, “The US came in 23rd or 24th in most subjects. We can quibble, or we can face the brutal truth that we’re being out-educated.” Much debate has occurred regarding the state of education in America. It has become much more of a political issue than an educational one. Westheimer and Kahne (2004a) referenced the highly narrow scope in which citizenship has been described, particularly noting the political conception of key civic ideas and pedagogical choices that are perhaps partisan in nature. Accountability is the word. Those who favor accountability would suggest that someone should be held responsible for educational failure. Mann (1996) traced the historical roots of political responses to the educational problem as early as with President George H.W. Bush’s AMERICA 2000, “whose focus was on English, mathematics, science, history, and geography” (p. 47). Ives and Obenchain (2006), citing Abrams and Maduas, noted continued development of the accountability movement in the 1990s, otherwise known as the “standards based movement”, with the focus of aligning with the Clinton administration’s Goals 2000: Educate America Act (p. 62). In 2001, the Bush administration introduced legislation aimed at addressing such endemic issues—the No Child Left Behind Act, which created a federal mandate for the adoption of standards (Ives & Obenchain, 2006). The Obama administration then introduced Race to the Top (RTTT), providing competitive grants to school districts that focus on STEM, or science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (Johnson, 2012).

Despite the problems that could be attributed to a lack of a single standard, standardized curriculum initiatives have been met with resistance. Kunin (1996) explained, “the idea of standards continues to gain momentum because it is a commonsense assumption that in order for
children to achieve, we must define what they need to know and then determine how to measure whether or not they know it” (p. 153). The No Child Left Behind Act and Race to the Top placed the greatest emphasis on the content areas of reading, mathematics, and science, measuring achievement through standardized testing (Feldman, 2010). The result is that educational accountability hinges on high-stakes testing. On high-stakes testing, DeWitt and Freie (2005) understand that such tests “necessarily creates pressure on teachers to have their students to pass the test…that, in turn, promotes a climate in which passing the test becomes the primary purpose of the social studies course” (p. 244).

Levine (2006) warned that “civic education is threatened in an era of strong standards and accountability measures [as] educational institutions tend to devote time and other scarce resources to academic subjects that are tested with high-stakes exams—mainly reading, math, and science” (p. 20). Boston, Pearson, & Halperin (2005) commented that

America’s recent preoccupation with reshaping ‘academics’ and raising academic performance has all but overpowered a task of equally vital importance: Educating our young people to become engaged members of their communities, not just as wage earners and taxpayers, but as citizens—people who participate in the civic life of their communities. (p. 7)

In this test driven climate, subjects that are not in the tested areas such as math, science, and English are marginalized or completely abandoned (Shiller, 2013, p. 69). Boston, et al (2005) stated that “surveys and assessments reveal we are not teaching our young people the knowledge they need to act responsibly and effectively as citizens” (p. 10). Hinde (2008) warned that “lack of access to civics education results in grave consequences: students deficient
in the fundamental knowledge necessary for informed civic participation will struggle to achieve critical perspectives of society and culture” (p. 77).

_A lack of social science education._ Kahne and Westheimer (2003a) found that “civic education is getting inadequate attention and is actually being cut back in some states as pressure to raise scores in math, reading, and science mounts” (p. 11). Levine, Lopez, and Marcelo (2008) suggested that even though research “shows the benefits of civic education, less time is spent on social studies.” In a New York Times article, Dillon (2010) reported the results from a recently completed study by the Center on Education Policy (2006) found that

… 71% of districts reported cutting back time on other subjects to make more space for reading and math instruction. Social studies was the part of the curriculum that was most frequently cited as the place where these reductions occurred. (p. 3)

Simply put, the literature seems to agree that, civic education is not a priority for schools.

In fact, Kahne and Westheimer (2003b) noted that the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the so-called ‘Nation’s report card’ only assesses civics knowledge every ten years, contrasted with the annual assessment of math and reading. Citing the CIRCLE report, Walling (2007) pinpoints the cause for decline of civic education as a “lack of institutional commitment to formal civic education” (p. 285). This is however, not a new issue for civic education. Schachter (1998) cites the rhetorical question from the APSA’s 1908 Committee of Five: “Is it not a curious fact that though our schools are largely instituted, supported and operated by the government, yet the study of American government in the schools and colleges is the last subject to receive adequate attention?” (p. 631).

Boston, Pearson, and Halperin (2005) reported, “There is now strong evidence that we have allowed the crucial processes and learning indispensable to productive citizenship to
become marginalized… in too many schools today, hands-on experience that might teach and train young people in the vital tasks of citizenship remain untaught, unexperienced, and untested” (p. 7). The recent focus by the U.S. Department of Education has been on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) so as to make students more globally competitive (Shiller, 2013). However, Boston, Pearson, and Halperin (2005) suggest that:

… because coverage of curricular content is not timely, neither student nor teacher performance can be measured by standardized tests. Students suffer twice over, both in terms of weak or absent policy support for instructional commitments and, in consequence, a weakness in the very instructional foundation that would enable them to build toward ‘citizenship.’ Furthermore, many young people simply don’t experience civic engagement—in any form (p. 9).

Walling (2007) cited civic education scholar Margaret Stimmann Branson’s remarks to the Idaho State Civic Learning Summit: “Although No Child Left Behind legislation speaks of 'core learning,' only reading and mathematics are used as measures of schools' success. Science is a poor third. And civic education is forgotten” (p. 285). Situating civic education within the same frame of reference as the consensus “core” subjects has the exciting potential to align basic educational priorities within a much broader spectrum of both short- and long-term national needs. (Boston, Pearson, and Halperin, 2005).

An irrelevant curriculum and pedagogical disconnect. Most states require the study of civics or US Government in the high school curriculum and Kahne, Chi, and Middaugh (2006) found “approximately 90 percent of all high school students enroll in at least one civics or government course” (p. 391). Ord (2009) invoked Dewey’s view regarding curriculum relevance: “A curriculum which acknowledges the social responsibilities of education must
present situations where problems are relevant to the problems of living together…” (p. 507). It is the responsibility of the teacher to engage students and facilitate lessons and activities that cause students to think because of their relevance to the lives of the students (Estes, 2004). Baldi, Perie, Skidmore, Greenberg, and Hahn (2001) found “rather than having substantial opportunities for simulations or other experiential approaches, 90 percent of U.S. students reported in the recent International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement study (IEA) that they most commonly spent time reading textbooks and doing worksheets” (p. 403). Stanley (2005) suggested that educators are faced with a tough pedagogical decision—that of “transmission or transformation” (p. 282).

When the pedagogical approach used to present civics to students is bureaucratic, rather than appealing to issues with which students can relate, the response is boredom, both on the part of both the student and the teacher (Llewellyn, Cook, and Molina, 2010). A student-centered approach is required; one that employs the use of experiential learning, and therefore “acts as a bridge between political science (the discipline) and the political world” (Sloam, 2010, p. 329). Kahn and Westheimer (2003b) found that “as students developed the abilities to participate they saw their participation in civic affairs as more plausible...” The authors observed, “In this sense, each student’s identity as an engaged, democratic citizen followed his or her capacity to be one” (p. 61). Pedagogical style and classroom processes matter to student outcomes (Niemi & Junn, 1998; Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002; Torney-Purta, Losito, & Mintrop, 2001).

**The Role of the School**

Kahne and Westheimer (2003a) cited the 1820 Thomas Jefferson letter to William Jarvis which said,
I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves, and if we think [the people] not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education. (p. 8)

One of the most prominent historic goals of American education has been to prepare youth to become future citizens (Hahn & Torney-Purta, 1999). Dudley and Gitelson (2003) posited that “if political knowledge is a necessary precondition to civic engagement it follows that, as political thinkers from Jefferson to Dewey have assumed, more and better education is the solution” (p. 265). Torney-Purta and Lopez (2006) recognized the importance of the school because “education takes place primarily in the classroom,” adding, “but [education] is contextualized through participation in the community” (p. 5).

O’Brien (2004) citing the North Carolina Civic Education Consortium illustrated the importance of the school: One cannot ignore the strong influence parents and family have on youth citizenship development; however, schools are in a unique position to improve the state of civic education (p. 75). Benninga and Quinn (2011) asserted that when reviewing the expected learning standards for students, it becomes clear that public schools are prime settings to foster the knowledge and behaviors required for responsibilities of American identity and citizenship (p. 104). Torney-Purta (2002) posited, “Schools achieve the best results in fostering civic engagement when they rigorously teach civic content and skills…” (p. 203).

School is the place where political identity and efficacy is developed (Battisoni and Beaumont, 2006; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004b) and plays a significant role in improving civic involvement in students (Llewellyn, Cook, and Molina, 2010). Nugent (2006) went so far as to say that education (via the school) “is the single greatest influence on young people’s access to
social and political life” (p. 229). Kahne and Sporte (2008) highlighted “recent studies that testify to schools’ potential to advance civic and political development along with indications that schools are not doing all that they can to promote the democratic purposes of education have furthered interest in civic education” (p. 747).

The Carnegie Corporation and the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) partnered to conduct a study and release a report in 2003 entitled The Civic Mission of Schools (Levine, 2006, p. 18). Matto and Vercellotti (2012) referenced this report stating that it “emphasizes the importance of schools in developing civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes, noting that schools are the only institutions with the capacity and mandate to reach virtually every young person in the country” (p. 728). This mission represents a responsibility on the part of each school to improve young people’s knowledge of politics and social issues; their skills in working with others to address public problems; their attitudes of tolerance, patriotism, and concern for the common good; and their likelihood of participating in diverse ways, from voting and volunteering to protesting and organizing their communities. (Levine, 2006, p. 18)

Kahne and Westheimer (2003a) recognized that “while the work of preparing citizens for democracy must include more than the schools, the schools are the public institution best positioned to affect the vast majority of young people” (p. 8).

**Timing is critical.**

Given the critical level of influence that the school has on the lives of America’s youth particularly in light of compulsory education, it behooves educators to make wise use of their time with their students. Battisoni and Beaumont (2006) highlighted the importance of time as
“the identity-forming years of young adulthood may be an especially potent period for political development” (p. 242). Citing a Niemi and Junn study based on the 1988 NAEP civics assessment, Galston (2007) shared findings that reveal “significant effects from the amount and timing of civic course work, the variety of topics studies, and the frequency with which current events are discussed” in the civics classroom (p. 638).

**Solutions**

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan (2011) addressed a solution in a recent speech stating,

…civics instruction needs to be more engaging and interactive, both inside and outside of the classroom. It's no secret that many young people find civics and government instruction to be dusty and dull. It's time to revitalize and update civic education for the twenty-first century.

Based on the extant research, educators should employ the methodology of experiential learning in the context of civic education. Youniss (2011) captured the full possibility of civic education, stating that it

…can be more than acquiring a set of facts, learning about rights and obligations, and becoming an informed voter. It is coming to know how to function in a democratic system and working to sustain it for oneself and for others. (p. 102)

Youniss, McLellan, and Yates (1997) suggested that “by offering youth meaningful participatory experiences, we allow them to discover their potency, assess their responsibility, acquire a sense of political processes, and commit to a moral-ethical ideology” (p. 629). This aligns with Conrad and Hedin’s (1982) definition of experiential learning,
Educational programs offered as an integral part of the general school curriculum, but
taking place outside of the conventional classroom or using non-traditional methods
(simulations, mock experiences, etc.) [italics added], where students are in new roles
featuring significant tasks with real consequences, and where the emphasis is on learning
by doing with associated reflection.  (p. 58)

O’Brien (2004) suggested, that the “benefits of such opportunities [such as the Student Voices
program] are documented in both state and national quantitative research on youth civic
engagement” (p. 75).

There are many strategies a civic education teacher can employ from experiences like
participating in a Model United Nations or Model Youth Legislature to re-enactments,
simulations, and role-playing activities (Conrad and Hedin, 1982; Freeland and Lieberman,
suggested that

…structured classroom debates (SCDs), whereby teams of students debate in class an
issue prepared in advance, provide an important tool for helping our students to develop
their critical-thinking skills and also can help professors to encourage productive
classroom participation beyond the few students who often dominate classroom
discussion. (p. 293)

Boston, Pearson, and Halperin (2005) posited that youth’s personal “development grows
exponentially when they are able to ‘test drive’ the learning that happens in classrooms by
applying those ideas in the real world” (p. 7).

Kirlin (2001) conducted a study that compared participants in the California YMCA
Youth & Government program (a sister program to the State YMCA of Georgia’s Youth in
Government program) to the general United States population. Kirlin’s (2001) study found a statistically significantly difference in the level of activity of participants compared to the general US population on the nine self-reported participation measures: registering to vote, voting, contacting elected officials, making campaign contributions, volunteering for a political campaign, protesting or marching, attending a meeting of a local board of council, working informally with others on a community issue and being a member of a board or commission.

Dudley and Gitelson (2002) referenced Niemi and Junn’s analysis of the 1988 NAEP civic assessment data, finding that lead them to conclude that recent civics course work alone raises political knowledge by 4%...when this recent coursework is combined with curriculum that covers a wide range of topics and a pedagogical approach that utilizes discussions of current events, the increase in political knowledge reaches 11%, after controlling for gender, ethnicity, home environment, and interest in government. (p. 179)

Boston, Pearson, and Halperin (2005) asserted that “academic endeavor and civic engagement must each inform and challenge the other, just as each must support and question the other; the relationship between these two arenas of endeavor must be brought into vital balance” (p. 10).

The experiential approach to teaching is certainly not new, but it allows the educator to be innovative in the delivery of the content. Simulations and other such activities have been used for decades to allow the participants more engagement in their course of study (Lay and Smarick, 2006). Conrad and Hedin (1982) stated that such “experience serves as both the source of knowledge and as a process of knowing…Education is of, by, and for experience” (p. 69).

Finkel (2003) asserted that much research based in social psychology supports the notion that “civic education programs that use active methods—not only role playing but also other types of
dramatization, group decision-making exercises, and the like—will exert more potent effects on individual orientations”...specifically, “more intensive programs featuring more frequent sessions should yield more powerful effects than do one-time exercises” (p. 142).

Programs such as the Frederick County Youth Service League place students in city council and commission meetings alongside adult leaders addressing pertinent issues for their area (Kahne & Westheimer, 2003b). Civic Innovations in Staten Island depends on community partners to help address the needs of disadvantaged youth and adults in partnership with a local college (Freedland & Lieberman, 2010). The Constitutional Rights Foundation (CRF), a national leader in civic and law related education, developed an innovative curriculum emphasizing the study of local government and civic participation in the context of US government courses. In the CRF curriculum, knowledge regarding how government works (how a bill becomes a law, etc.) received extensive attention, and the curriculum was designed to align with state standards (Kahne, Chi, & Middaugh, 2006). Boyte (2003) highlighted “the civic education partnership initiative called Public Achievement, for instance, has shown how civic education can help young people learn the skills and habits of power tied to civic responsibility and productive action” (p. 94).

Hahn and Torney-Purta (1999) suggested indicators of quality civic education programs. According to the pair, civic education should be cross-disciplinary, participatory, related to the lives of students, conducted in a non-authoritarian environment, and presented by teachers who are aware of the challenges of social diversity. Menezes (2003) found that the benefits of participating in such programs are

… dependent upon factors such as the organizational structure of associations…and the significance and quality of the experience, that is, experiences should be meaningful from
the point of view of the participant and enable him/her with lasting genuine and challenging opportunities for 'action' balanced with systematic occasions for personal integration. (p. 432-433)

**Gaps in the literature**

While much research is available regarding the varying types of programs available to assist in the teaching of civic lessons, there is a deficiency of research examining the effectiveness of such programs (Battisoni & Beaumont, 2006; Feldman, Pasek, Romer, and Jamieson, 2007; Lay & Smarick, 2006; Llewellyn, Cook, and Molina, 2010). This provides an important opportunity for studies to examine the impact of formal civic education and related school-based experiences (Galston, 2001). Feldman et al (2007) suggested that “beyond these general guidelines [Civic Mission of School’s six promising approaches], however, there has been minimal research on the specific classroom practices that best facilitate future political involvement” (p.78). Additional research along these lines can inform educators, administrators, and curriculum directors the impact of particular interventions and differing pedagogical approaches may have on student learning outcomes. Additionally, prior to chartering a school or student improvement plan, there must be effective tools to assess existing measures (O’Brien, 2004).

Although the preparation of citizens is a stated goal of many schools’ mission statements and a primary concern of many citizens, knowledge as to whether and how schools actually fulfill the democratic aims of education remains quite limited (Galston, 2001). Existing models of educational intervention focus on the role of the school in the development civic commitments, knowledge, skills, and participatory habits (Niemi & Junn, 1993; Youniss, McLellan & Yates, 1997). Unlike many of the models described above, educational models often
focus on youth during adolescence—a critical time for civic and political identity development (Erikson, 1998; Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1997; Youniss, 2011). Further, Kahne, Crow, and Lee (2013) noted a shift in youth preference to informal and expressive politics and highlight the need for this to be “studied empirically whether varied curricular approaches do or do not align with and, potentially, further or counter such trends” (p. 438).

**Theoretical Framework**

At the foundation of this study are two theoretical perspectives: civic identity theory (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008a; Yates & Youniss, 1998; Youniss, 2011) and transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2000). Each offers useful lenses for both the development of the study and the future interpretation of results.

**Civic identity theory.** A number of studies (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Popkin & Dimock, 1999; Youniss, 2011) posited that increased civic knowledge is linked to an increase in civic identity development, and therefore an increase in students’ sense of civic efficacy. The Civic Identity Theory (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008a; Yates & Youniss, 1998; Youniss, 2011) is built on Erikson’s (1950, 1998) eight stages of development theory. Kahne and Sporte (2006) suggested that “a prime task of late adolescence is the development of a social identity that embraces an orientation towards civic and political participation.” Youniss, McLellan, and Yates (1997) proposed developmental analysis in constructing civic identity because,

- Participation in organizations and movements provides experience with normative civic practices and ideologies, and shapes youth's emerging identities in a long-lasting form;
- participating in high school government and partaking in social-political reform share in starting youth on a developmental path toward constructive citizenship.” (p. 629)

Furthermore, Sherrod, Flanagan, and Youniss (2002) suggested that
… when young people are the focus, the question becomes a developmental one: What are the ways that people under the age of 18 get engaged in these civic behaviors and what other opportunities besides electoral politics do they have to experience themselves as members of a polity, to link to others in their community? (p. 264)

Youniss, McLellan, and Yates (1997) also clarified that “identity is not given, but must be constructed” (p. 630).

Organizations can help create a ‘civic identity’ during adolescence and that participation in organized groups during adolescence “introduces youth to the basic roles and processes (i.e., organizational practices) required for adult civic engagement” (Youniss, McLellan & Yates, 1997, p. 624). Battisoni and Beaumont (2006) wrote, “the primacy of social and collaborative aspects of political experience suggest that political identity, efficacy and other aspects of engagement may emerge most vibrantly when linked to the types of collective endeavors and shared interactions that can occur in educational settings” (p. 242).

**Transformative learning theory.** Transformative learning theory describes learning that takes place and among learners who experience the opportunity to engage in coursework and interactions which prompts complex understandings (Mezirow, 2000). At the center of the proposed study is the relationship between pedagogy and learning, and more specifically, the influence certain pedagogical approaches have on student learning outcomes. This study will use experiential learning as a proxy for transformative learning in civic education as have others (Gallagher, 1997; Hallows & Murphy, 2010; Taylor, 1998).

**Experiential learning.** Ives and Obenchain (2006) conducted an in-depth study in high school classes and found that experiential education can promote high order thinking skills more
than does traditional instruction without sacrificing low order thinking skills. Citing a Niemi and Junn study, Lay and Smarick (2006), stated that:

students are more knowledgeable in environments where teachers utilize interactive methods, as opposed to only test-taking, memorization, and lecturing (1998). These findings are reinforced by the experience of Koch who incorporated a simulation of a congressional campaign into her American government course; Koch’s students unanimously praised the simulation activity (1991). (p. 133)

Conrad and Hedin (1982) Many studies have found participation in experiential learning programs had a positive impact on learning and intellectual development for students and related positively to both academic and civic outcomes (Benninga & Quinn, 2011; Conrad & Hedin, 1982; Gibson & Levine, 2003; Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006; Solomon, Watson, & Battistich, 2001). Further, Ponder & Lewis-Ferrell (2009) found “the effects of an active citizenship project, numerous in just this one classroom, offer a strong support for courses grounded in citizenship education…with educational benefits and student growth” (p. 134).

As Galston (2007) shared “recent findings suggest that formal, classroom-based civic education provides an effective means of teaching civic knowledge [which is] contrary to longstanding scholarly consensus concerning the dim prospects for civic education” (p. 639).

Therefore, as Dudley and Gitelson (2003) posited, “accepting the futility of education may not be necessary, however…[as] recent research demonstrates that civics instruction can have an impact on political knowledge after all” (p. 265). Given the positive outlook for civic education, Westheimer & Kahne (2004b) recognize the central role of the public school in helping to shape citizens and suggest the conflict between traditional academic priorities and current narrow
emphasis on test scores is “clearly worthy of attention” (p. 263). Also, the topic is worthy of investment in the form of additional teaching tools and resources to educators.

**Teaching Tools.** In *The Civic Mission of Schools*, Levine (2006) recommended the following principles:

1. deliberately and intentionally work to improve “civic outcomes such as students’ propensity to vote, to work on local problems, to join voluntary associations, and to follow the news”;
2. explicitly advocate participation without trying to influence students’ positions on issues or parties;
3. offer active learning opportunities, ranging from “independent or collaborative research projects to simulations, mock trials and elections, service-learning projects, and participation in student government” and other such participatory programs;
4. emphasize the essential ideas and principles of constitutional democracy as expressed in our nation’s founding documents; and
5. connect those ideas to current problems and opportunities (Levine, 2006, p. 21).

This study examines these principles in action through the Youth in Government programs of the State YMCA of Georgia.

**Conclusion**

Robert Maynard Hutchins (1952) wrote that “the death of democracy is not likely to be an assassination from ambush; it will be a slow extinction from apathy, indifference, and undernourishment” (p. 80). Benninga and Quinn (2011) best summarized the sentiments of this research: “if we take seriously the charge to educate for American citizenship, standards in the social studies should become more meaningful, both through appropriate school assessments of
necessary content and through school-sponsored civic activities that involve the majority of students in meaningful service activities” (p. 109). The review of the literature provides renewed hope in the resurgence of civic education and the efficacy of the use of experiential learning strategies in the context of civic education.

**More Research Needed**

Battisoni & Beaumont (2006) suggested that:

If improving the overall legitimacy, vibrancy, and inclusiveness of American democracy, as well as promoting the full development and empowerment of citizens themselves are understood as definitive goals of civic education efforts, it is critical to develop a larger body of research that can increase our understanding of how and why people develop a wider range of core political competencies. (p. 246)

Lay and Smarick (2006) were confident that the use of experiential learning in civics has a positive impact, but that “objectives must be clearly outlined and the expectations reasonable” (p. 143). Using this methodology of instruction should create a dynamic educational experience for the student and teacher and will make remarkable progress in filling the cracks in the democratic foundation of America.

The hypotheses that experiential education in the context of a high school civics class can have a positive effect on a student’s civic knowledge and sense of civic identity is proven through current research and literature as reviewed herein. Even so, it is the recommendation of the researcher and of those reviewed (Feldman et al, 2007; Lay & Smarick, 2006; Llewellyn, 2010) that additional qualitative and quantitative research be completed specifically investigating and testing the hypothesis so as to establish a pattern. Dudley and Gitelson (2003) “point to a number of excellent studies on civic education and civic engagement over the past four decades,
[but] we still know relatively little about what knowledge, both qualitatively and quantitatively, is necessary and desirable for an informed and active citizenry” (p. 266).

Another area of research revealed by recent literature is the notion of a civic opportunity gap. That is, as Matto and Vercellotti (2012) highlighted, “gaps in exposure to [civic] opportunities due to economic and social status” (p. 729). This is a developing area of additional research that is worthy of continued exploration. Kirlin (2003) added that “concepts about how civic skills relate to broader questions of civic engagement, civic socialization, and political participation differ between disciplines. A cross disciplinary approach is likely to be the most fruitful for getting more complete answers, especially as it relates to the process of civic skill acquisition for adolescents” (p. 22). Studies of particular interventions (Hart, Donnelly, Youniss, & Atkins, 2007; Kahne, Crow, & Lee, 2013; McDevitt & Kiousis, 2004; Metz & Youniss, 2005) and cross-sectional studies (Keeter, Zukin, Andolina, & Jenkins, 2002; Torney-Purta, Amadeo, & Richardson, 2007) support the efficacy of varied pedagogical approaches.

**Pedagogical development and curricular design.** Bennett (1999) suggested we need “more research on how young people learn and we need to apply improved understanding of the psychology of learning to designing more effective civic education experiences” (p. 756). Kincheloe (2001) called for an understanding of critical pedagogy ideas where the classroom is a laboratory for the empowering pursuit of democratic goals. As the psychology of learning is better understood, more effective pedagogical strategies may be developed and employed in the classroom experience.

McBeth & Robison (2012) suggested that the most effective pedagogies take the following into consideration: “1) students learn best through encountering the same concept in multiple ways, 2) most learning occurs outside the classroom, and 3) context is everything” (p.
Westheimer & Kahne (2004b) found thoughtful analysis requires that those who design curriculum and those who study its impact be cognizant of and responsive to these important distinctions and their political implications (p. 265).

As in the case with other experiential civic learning programs, curriculum and pedagogy have enormous implications on outcomes (Kahne, Chi, & Middaugh, 2006; Westheimer & Kahne, 2007; Kahne & Westheimer, 2003). Kirlin (2003) wrote,

Ultimately, this research is useful not only for understanding factors in political participation, but also for encouraging political participation. Thus, civic definitions must eventually be linked to pedagogical, curricular, and program design elements and subsequently made available to teachers and program developers. (p. 24)

Kahne and Sporte (2008) reminded their readers about the impact of research stating, “one of the most important results of this study is that what happens in classrooms can have a significant impact on students’ commitments to civic participation” (p. 19).
Chapter Three: Methodology

Purpose and Problem

The purpose of this quantitative, quasi-experimental study was to explore the relationship between experiential civic education programs, high school students’ civic knowledge, and their sense of civic identity. Specifically, this study aimed to address the observed decline in civic identity found in the general population by examining transformative learning potential of experiential civic education and whether it increased civic knowledge at the secondary level.

Research Propositions, Questions, and Hypotheses

Two propositions served as a foundation for the study:

Proposal 1: Increased civic knowledge, whether gained through experiential or traditional civic education programs, predicts an increased sense of civic identity.

Proposal 2: Civic knowledge acquired via transformative learning is related to a heightened sense of civic identity.

These propositions guided the development of the research questions and hypotheses:

1. Is an increase in high school students’ civic knowledge, whether gained through experiential or traditional civics education programs, associated with an increased sense of civic identity?

2. Does experiential civics education predict higher levels of civic knowledge than traditional civics education?

3. Does experiential civics education predict higher levels of civic identity than traditional civics education?

Corresponding hypotheses were proposed, along with their null hypotheses:

H1: Increased civic knowledge predicts an increased sense of civic identity.
H1₀: Increased civic knowledge does not predict increased civic identity.

H2: Experiential civics education predicts higher levels of civic knowledge than traditional civics education.

H2₀: Experiential civics education does not predict higher levels of civic knowledge.

H3: Experiential civics education predicts higher levels of civic identity than traditional civics education.

H3₀: Experiential civics education does not predict higher levels of civic identity.

This chapter presents the methodology used, including the study participants, instruments, and procedures. The analysis process utilized is also discussed.

**Research Design**

Considering the research questions, the study sought to understand the degree to which a specific pedagogical approach predicts increases in civic knowledge, and the degree to which civic knowledge predicts increases in civic identity in high school populations in suburban Georgia. The questions were quantitative in nature and were measured using existing instruments.

**Quasi-experimental approach.** The study employed a quasi-experimental research design. The design included one independent variable at two levels (pedagogical group: experiential, traditional education) and two dependent variables (civic knowledge, civic identity), see Table 1.
Table 1.

Variables and Study Groups

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<tr>
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<th>Experiment Group</th>
<th>Control Group</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Independent Variable</strong></td>
<td>Experiential Pedagogical Group</td>
<td>Traditional Pedagogical Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependent Variable 1</strong></td>
<td>Civic Knowledge Scores</td>
<td>Civic Knowledge Scores</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dependent Variable 2</strong></td>
<td>Civic Identity Scores</td>
<td>Civic Identity Scores</td>
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Creswell (2012) recommended a quasi-experimental approach when using an intact group that does not allow for the random assignment of participants to groups, as would be expected in a true experimental model. Because this study relied on participation from high school students within school settings, random assignment was impractical beyond our capacity. Creswell (2012) believed that true experimental research is often difficult in school settings. The study design did not control which students were assigned to the experiential pedagogical group rather than the traditional education group, but did allow for comparison between changes in the level of civic knowledge or civic identity after participation in their assigned course.

**Quasi-experimental design limitations.** Quasi-experimental design presents some limitations. When random assignment to test hypotheses is unrealistic, convenience samples can be used (Creswell, 2012). This study could not control the variance between instructional styles of individual teachers within the traditional civic education setting, nor the specific curriculum utilized. However, it assumed that the general structure of the courses were relatively consistent within the sample when contrasted with the experiential learning experience. Despite these
limitations, the study design allowed for real-time investigation of the research questions in a live environment.

**Research sites.** The study took place in the state of Georgia. The nature of the quasi-experimental research design required two sites within the study. Site 1 offered the experimental treatment (experiential civic education) at facilities contracted by the State YMCA of Georgia for the purpose of hosting ‘youth in government’ programs. Site 2 was the control setting, and offered traditional civics education in civics/social studies classes at Cartersville High School within the Cartersville City School System just north of Atlanta, Georgia.

**State YMCA of Georgia.** Students from across the state participate in the youth development programs of the State YMCA of Georgia. These students are generally representative of Georgia’s high school student population in age, socio-economic status, ethnicity, and gender. The experiential civic education programs offered by the State YMCA of Georgia consist of government simulations wherein students assume the roles of governmental leaders. For example, in the model state legislature, students serve as state senators and representatives, lobbyists, members of the judiciary, members of the press, and in executive offices as Youth Governor, Lt. Governor, and Speaker of the House. Legislative students propose legislation that they research for debate. The proposed legislation follows the legislative process through committee to debate on the floor of the House or Senate, and then possibly to the Youth Governor’s desk to be signed into law or vetoed. The underlying premise of the program is ‘learning by doing’ and easily meets accepted definitions of experiential learning.

**Cartersville High School.** The site for the traditional civic education control group was civics/social studies classes (to include general education, honors, and AP Government classes) at Cartersville High School within the Cartersville City School system. Cartersville High School
is located just north of Atlanta, Georgia. The school system has four schools, 4,200 students, and approximately 270 teachers (Cartersville City Schools, 2013).

Civics education takes place in civics/social studies classes that take place during the school day. Classes take place within a traditional school setting. While each educator has his or her own preferred approach in teaching the subject matter, many educators use a textbook and lecture-based (Finkel, 2002) methodology and some even resort to the memorization of definitions and worksheets.

**Sampling Strategy**

This study employed a nonrandom convenience sampling strategy. Creswell (2012) supported convenience sampling selection because “they are available, convenient, and represent some characteristic the investigator seeks to study” (p. 145). Convenience sampling is an effective way to gather data and generate conclusions and recommendations quickly.

Participants included a convenience sample of 592 high-school students, aged 14-18 years and are enrolled in grades 9-12 at the research sites. Using a convenience sampling method, 291 students received the treatment by participating in the experiential civic education program, while 301 students did not receive the treatment, comprising the control group.

**Sampling Procedure**

**Power analysis.** The target population was Georgia high school students, which according to the Georgia Department of Education, totaled approximately 480,000 (GaDOE, 2013). Using the Raosoft Sample Size Calculator, to gain a confidence level of 98% and margin of error of 5%, the recommended sample is 541. Therefore, the sample of 592 was adequate to provide statistical significance so that results could be generalized to the entire target population.
Convenience sample. The study relied on a convenience sample. Students received no incentive for participation in the study. The treatment group was composed of high school students enrolled in experiential civic education programs (YMCA Youth and Government programs sponsored by the State YMCA of Georgia). The students who attended Youth in Government programs did so as a part of a high school class as a co-curricular activity. For this study, 291 students, the total participation of the program under investigation, took part in the experiential civic education program and received the treatment as a part of the participant group.

The comparison group was composed of 301 high school students enrolled in traditional civic education courses at Cartersville High School, but who were not participating in the experiential civic education program. Cartersville High School assigned sections of civic education courses to the researcher and allowed access to conduct the pre- and post-tests. Lopez and Kirby (2007) noted that traditional civics courses include units on the U.S. Constitution, Congress, political parties, elections and voting, state and local government, as well as studying governments of other countries and international organizations such as the United Nations (p. 2). A review of the available syllabi for civics courses of Cartersville High School aligned with this definition.

All students who attended the program were asked to complete a pre-test and a post-test that included measures of both civic knowledge and civic identity. The same instrument was used for both pre- and post-tests so as to judge potential growth from the baseline established in the pre-test.
**Instruments**

This study employed reliable measures of civic knowledge and civic identity, the dependent variables. Interval data was collected from students’ pre- and post-educational instruction using a subset of a standardized test and questionnaire data.

**Civic knowledge.** Civic knowledge was assessed using a subset of questions from a standardized test developed by the US Department of Education, the National Assessment of Educational Performance (NAEP) Civics Test. The NAEP is a national assessment that periodically measures student achievement based on national probability samples. It is the only method by which states can validly compare the academic progress of all their students against common high standards.

The multiple-choice questions selected from the NAEP Civics test encompassed the history and principles of the U.S. Constitution, as well as how the legislative process works. The NAEP instrument allowed the researcher to determine what impact the independent variable (participation in civic experiential learning programs) had on the dependent variables (student knowledge in civics and level of civic identity). In this study, twenty select questions from the NAEP Civics test were used to determine mastery of standards. The full set of questions is included in Appendix A. A sample question is presented below:

Federalism: A way of organizing a nation so that two or more levels of government have authority over the same land and people.

Which fact about American government reflects the above definition of federalism?

a) Power is divided among legislative, executive, and judicial branches.

b) Private organizations in the United States do much of the work that is performed by local governments in other countries.
c) Citizens in the United States are subject to both state and federal laws.

d) Citizens in the United States have a right to protection from intrusion into their private affairs.

*The correct answer is C. (NCES, 2011)*

While there was no empirical data on the overall validity and reliability of the NAEP Civics Test, the American Institute for Research has, since 1995, maintained an independent expert panel, the NAEP Validity Studies (NVS) panel. The NAEP assessment is an instrument widely used for many items including gauging college readiness (Sparks, 2012), determining mastery of standards (Fleming, 2012), identifying achievement gaps (Robelen, 2012) as well as school resource and teaching gaps (Lee, 2012), and for many other evaluation-based decisions that impact education. Therefore it was an accepted and valid measure of civic knowledge.

**Civic identity.** Civic identity was assessed using scores from the three questionnaires: the Social Responsibility Scale (SRS) (Berkowitz & Lutterman, 1968), the Citizen Duty Scale (CDS) (Campbell, Gurin and Miller, 1954), and the Political Efficacy Scale (PES) (Brady, Verba & Schlozman, 1995). Civic identity is a broad construct that can be operationalized through any civic action. The researcher believed the three scales chosen to measure civic identity encompassed voluntarism (SRS) (Berkowitz & Lutterman, 1968), likelihood or willingness to vote (CDS) (Campbell, Gurin & Miller, 1954), and sense of voice (PES) (Brady, Verba & Schlozman, 1995). These three scales incorporated many of the major civic actions associated with civic engagement as defined by Levine (2007).

**Social Responsibility Scale (SRS).** The SRS (Berkowitz & Lutterman, 1968) is a self-report questionnaire that measures an individual's traditional social responsibility; i.e., the
willingness of an individual to help other persons even when there is nothing to be gained for himself. The SRS includes eight items and yields a total social responsibility summary score. Possible responses to items range from “strongly disagree” (a score of 1) to “strongly agree” (a score of 7). Anderson and Cunningham (1972) wrote that the SRS “was constructed by combining items from the Harris scale with new test items developed by Berkowitz and Daniels. This pool of test items was subjected to several item analysis tests, using college students as a sample” (p. 25). For the current study, internal consistency will be calculated using Cronbach’s alpha scores to provide a reliability estimate for this measure in the current sample.

**Citizen Duty Scale (CDS).** The CDS (Campbell, Gurin and Miller, 1954) is a self-report measure to determine feelings of obligation in citizen voting behavior in elections. The CDS includes four items and yields the likelihood of an individual’s willingness to vote. Possible responses to items range from “strongly disagree” (a score of 1) to “strongly agree” (a score of 4). For the study proposed, internal consistency will be calculated using Cronbach’s alpha scores to provide a reliability estimate for this measure in the current sample.

**Political Efficacy Scale (PES).** The PES (Brady, Verba & Schlozman, 1995) is a self-report measure that assesses how much influence the respondent feels he or she has over local and national government, and more specifically, if they were to log a complaint whether it would be addressed. The PES includes four items and has been shown “to be a strong predictor of political involvement” (Brady, Verba & Schlozman, 1995, p. 346). Possible responses to items range from “none at all” (a score of 1) to “a lot” (a score of 4). For the current study, internal consistency is calculated using Cronbach’s alpha scores to provide a reliability estimate for this measure in the current sample.
Table 2.

*Overview of Instruments*

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<tr>
<td>What it measures</td>
<td>Civic Knowledge</td>
<td>Willingness of an individual to help other persons even when there is nothing to be gained for himself</td>
<td>Feelings of obligation in citizen voting behavior in elections</td>
<td>How much influence the respondent feels he or she has over local and national government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of items</td>
<td>20 items</td>
<td>8 items</td>
<td>4 items</td>
<td>4 items</td>
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<tr>
<td>Score Ranges</td>
<td>1 – 7</td>
<td>1-4</td>
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**Demographic data.** In addition to collecting specific measures of civic knowledge and civic identity, basic demographic data will be gathered from research participants. This information was used to establish how representative the sample is of the larger population. It is important to note that answering the demographic data questions is optional on the pre and post test, but the requested information will include grade level, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status determined by Title I status. A complete list of questions is included in Appendix A.

Title I status is tied to participation in free or reduced lunch programs. Under the guidelines of National School Lunch Program, “children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the poverty level are eligible for free meals. Those with incomes between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals, for which students can be charged no
more than 40 cents. For the period July 1, 2012, through June 30, 2013, 130 percent of the poverty level is $29,965 for a family of four; 185 percent is $42,643” (USDA, 2012).

**Pre- and post-test scoring.** It is important to note that pre- and post-test scoring is not intended to report the performance of individual students. Instead aggregate groups will be analyzed.

**Ethical Considerations**

While this study did not collect information that would place anyone at risk, it did involve minors. Therefore, IRB protocol of both Northeastern University and Cartersville City Schools was followed to ensure that research participants that are minors were protected. No remuneration was offered for participants of this study.

**Consent Process.** In order to conduct this research study, parental permission was obtained. Parental permission (opt out) was a part of the registration process for both YMCA Youth in Government programs and for those in the traditional civic education courses. Informed consent was with event registration with the participant group. Each parent had to provide permission for his/her child to participate in State YMCA of Georgia programs. Parents were notified on the electronic registration form their student would be participating in the research study to determine the educational benefits of such participation. Parents were given the opportunity to opt their child out of the research. Additionally, parents were provided a phone number to call the researcher who was available to answer all of their questions prior to granting consent.

Informed consent forms were sent home to each of the participants in the comparison group who would be taking the pre- and post-test as a part of their civics course. With this form, parents were notified their student would be participating in the research study to determine the
educational benefits of experiential learning programs. Parental permission was required and parents were asked to return a signed permission form to their child’s teacher prior to the research study. Additionally, parents were provided a phone number to call the researcher who was available to answer all of their questions prior to granting consent. The consent forms can be found in Appendix B. As the study population included minors under the age of consent in Georgia, parents had an opportunity to opt out of the research on behalf of their child(ren). Students whose parents “opted out” of the research received no treatment and were not be penalized for such exclusion.

**Risks.** There were no likely risks associated with participation. Because the focus of the research is at the organizational level, it was unlikely that any participant would face any harm by participating. The anonymous nature of the pre- and post-tests limits risks, as does the use of a unique identifier for each individual. The unique identifier was known only to the researcher. Once the data was recorded any information that could be used to identify a student to the responses given on a pre- or post-test was destroyed. As the researcher was looking for broader educational trends and the influence of varying teaching methodologies on student performance as a whole, individual data was not considered as much as was that of the whole participant group as a class.

**Confidentiality.** Only the researcher(s) had access to the data. Participants’ part in this study was anonymous to the researcher(s), although each participant was assigned a unique identifier so as to link pre- and post-test responses to an individual to exclude responses from those who did not participate in both tests. At this point in time, there are no plans to use the data in the future, but if the data is used, the same confidentiality protocols will be used and participants will only be referred to via group data.
Data was stored electronically on the researcher’s laptop and backup media. The researcher was the only one privy to the data and associated information. All other files will be retained for at least three years following the end of the study, maintained through electronic backups. The researcher will also follow any further protocol established and recommended by Northeastern University’s Institutional Review Board as well as that of the Cartersville City Schools for the comparison group.

**Data Collection**

Once Northeastern IRB permission was granted, the researcher implemented the pre- and post-test at a State YMCA of Georgia Youth in Government program. The pre-test was given to each group prior to any sort of instruction so as to establish a base-line level of knowledge and civic identity. The students enrolled in the experiential civic education program participated in an intense three day simulation and were given the same 40 question test (as a post-test) to determine the effect of their participation on their civic knowledge and level of civic identity. Similarly, the comparison group in the traditional civic education class was given the same 40 question test (as a post-test) to determine the effect of their class on their civic knowledge and level of civic identity.
Table 3.

Overview of Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Experiential Education</th>
<th>Traditional Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informed Consent</td>
<td>Receive parental consent for</td>
<td>Receive parental consent for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>participation</td>
<td>participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish Baseline</td>
<td>Pre-Test</td>
<td>Pre-Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogical Approach</td>
<td>Experiential Education</td>
<td>Traditional Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure Level of Change</td>
<td>Post-Test</td>
<td>Post-Test</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each student was assigned a unique identifier which they recorded on the answer sheet of both their pre- and post-test. This unique identifier helped the researcher ensure that study participants took both the pre- and post-test. The data from those who did not complete both the pre- and post-test was discarded.

Students were given a 40 question pre-test (consisting of 4 demographic questions, 20 questions selected from the NAEP Civics test, as well as the Social Responsibility Scale, Citizen Duty Scale, and the Political Efficacy Scale). The same test was given as a post-test as well. The results derived from the pre- and post-tests provided interval data for further analysis in consideration of the research questions. The data was collected using a “Scantron” answer sheet provided to students for each administration of the test.

The pre- and post-tests were administered by professional educators who volunteered to assist with the administration of the test. Students were allotted 30 minutes to complete the test during each administration of the pre- and post-test. At the completion of the 30 minute testing
timeframe, the professional educators collected the tests from the students and sealed them in an envelope labeled appropriately (pre-test or post-test).

Similarly, students in the comparison group in the traditional civic education program were administered the pre- and post-test over the period of a four weeks (consisting of five classes a week each lasting 50 minutes) to allow for instructional time to pass between administrations of the assessments. The pre- and post-test for the comparison group was administered by professional educators whose classes have been assigned to participate in the investigation. Students were allotted 30 minutes to complete the test during each administration of the pre- and post-test. At the completion of the 30 minute testing timeframe, the professional educators collected the tests from the students and sealed them in an envelope labeled appropriately (pre-test or post-test).

At the conclusion of all testing, the completed Scantron sheets were graded using an automatic Scantron grading machine. The individual scores from the pre-test and post-test of both participant and comparison groups were entered into a database where they were analyzed.

**Data Analysis**

**Preparation.** Item data from the questionnaires were entered into SPSS. All entered data were verified for accuracy. All data were screened for missingness, and none were present.

**Analysis.** Prior to conducting inferential analyses, the linear relationship between the variables (civic identity and civic knowledge) were displayed using a scatterplot to test underlying assumptions of the statistical techniques and to identify outlying data points. After removing multivariate outliers, the scatterplots indicated the assumption of a monotonic relationship between the variables was met; thus, in the absence of outlying data
points, the relation between civic identity and civic knowledge (hypothesis 1) was examined using Pearson’s r Correlational analysis.

Due to the potential unequal balance between students included in the experiential education vs. traditional education groups, initially non-parametric ANCOVA analyses were planned to test all remaining hypotheses. Specifically, Quade’s rank analysis of covariance test (Quade, 1967) was planned to test hypotheses 2 and 3 using educational program (experiential, traditional) as the grouping variable and pre-test scores as a covariate to control of initial group differences in the dependent variable (civic knowledge, civic identity). Quade’s test is a commonly used alternative to parametric ANCOVA, provides ranks for dependent variables and covariates, and uses unstandardized regression residuals from the ranks as the dependent variable in the ANOVA. The assumptions for Quade’s test are that the covariate variable values are not fixed, and the marginal distribution of the covariate is similar in each group. If the covariate distribution assumption was not met after examining the group descriptive statistics, the Wilcox nonparametric ANCOVA approach (Wilcox, 2005) was planned as a test for hypotheses 2 and 3.

However, after examining the data, it was found that the number of students included in the experiential vs. traditional education groups was comparable (291, 301 respectively), reducing concerns about the need to perform non-parametric ANCOVAs. Thus, parametric ANCOVAs were conducted to test hypotheses 2 and 3 given that they are a more powerful statistical procedure than non-parametric ANCOVA procedures (Maxwell & Delaney, 2004).

**Limitations**

As previously discussed, limitations to the current study design included using a convenience sample of students with a potentially unequal group size, inability to provide random group assignment, lack of control over variation in teacher instructional styles, and
traditional education program material not streamlined. Another possible limitation with a quasi-experimental design was ensuring the participant and comparison groups share enough similarities (socio-economic status, gender, ability, ethnicity, etc.) so the results could be generalized and not skewed by confounding variables such as socio-economic status, gender, etc.

Lastly, the study was limited in that it examined one specific experiential civic learning program. For broader and more generalizable results, future research should include other experiential learning programs.
Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between experiential civic education programs, high school students’ civic knowledge, and their sense of civic identity. Specifically, this study aimed to address the observed decline in civic identity found in the general population by examining transformative learning potential of experiential civic education and whether it increased civic knowledge at the secondary level. This section describes the descriptive and inferential statistics conducted in order to answer the proposed research questions and to test the study’s hypotheses.

The first section uses descriptive statistics to describe characteristics of the research sample as well as to describe measures of central tendency for the two major variables of interest in the study. The survey instruments utilized were previously established in other studies (Crawford, 2010; Fagin Jones, 2004; Hofstetter, Zuniga, and Dozier, 2001) as was the internal reliability of the associated instruments. Inferential statistics were used to address the research questions and each of the hypotheses. Specifically, Pearson’s correlation coefficient (r) was used for hypothesis 1 to test for correlation, and parametric analysis of covariate (ANCOVA) was used to test hypotheses 2-3. Results of these statistical analyses are presented. Finally, the chapter ends with a summary of the results. All data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 19 (SPSS, Inc., 2010).

Descriptive Statistics

The researcher first conducted descriptive analysis to look at the data before analyzing the relationships between variables. This analysis began with a review of the demographic description of the sample. Next, as part of this descriptive analysis, measures of central tendency
were calculated for each of the major variables of interest in this study: civic knowledge and civic identity. Skewness and kurtosis were also computed to check for normality in the data set.

**Sample overview and demographics.** The population for this study consisted of high school students from all over the state of Georgia. The study population consisted of 652 individuals. Students in both comparison and control groups were assigned unique identifying numbers so to protect their individual identity. Of the study population, 54 tests were excluded from analysis and removed from the sample (36 because of partial responses and 18 due to students not completing both pre- and post-test). A total of 598 tests were completed.

Additionally, six respondents were excluded from analyses used to test hypotheses 1-3 because they were identified as multivariate outliers (i.e., had Mahalonobis distance values > 13.816) during preliminary data screening. This left a final sample size of 592 responses used to test the study’s hypotheses (301, or 50.8%, in the control group and 291, or 49.2%, in the comparison group). This final sample size represents an 89.8% response rate. The response rate obtained allows for a 5% margin of error.

**Grade, race, and gender.** Table 4 outlines the major demographic characteristics of the participants in this study. The majority of participants, 433 (73.1%), were in 9th grade. There were 84 participants in 10th grade (14.2%), 51 in 11th grade (8.6%), and 24 in 12th grade (4.1%).

Consistent with the demographics of the state of Georgia schools, a majority of the participants in this study were white (58.6%) while the next predominate group was Black/African American (19.9%). The sample consisted of 83 Hispanic participants (14.0%) and only three Asian/Pacific Islander participants (0.5%). Forty-one students (6.9%) self-identified as “other”. In terms of gender, there were slightly more females than males participating in the study (52.9% female and 47.1% male).
Table 4  
Descriptive Statistics for Major Demographic Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade (n = 592)</td>
<td>9th Grade</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>73.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10th Grade</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11th Grade</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12th Grade</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity (n = 592)</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>58.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (n = 592)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>47.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>52.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free and Reduced Lunch (n = 592)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>58.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Program (n = 592)</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>50.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experiential</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>49.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Free or reduced lunch status.* Of the total sample, 248 students (41.9%) reported receiving free or reduced lunch. The remaining 344 students (58.1%) indicated they did not receive free or reduced lunch.

*Descriptive analyses of major instruments.* As part of the descriptive analysis, the mean and standard deviations for each of the instruments were computed. Skewness and kurtosis were also measured to see if the variables were normally distributed. Results are presented in Table 5.
The skewness value associated with the civic knowledge scale was -0.353, while the kurtosis value was -0.979. The skewness value associated with the social responsibility scale was -0.332, while the kurtosis value was -0.109. The skewness value associated with citizen duty scale was -0.419, while the kurtosis value was -0.729. The skewness value associated with political efficacy scale was -0.733, while the kurtosis value was -0.356. Given that all skewness values were less than 2 and all kurtosis values for less than 7, assumptions of normality were met (West, Finch, & Curran, 1995).

Table 5.

Skewness and Kurtosis of Variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civic Knowledge Scale</td>
<td>-0.353</td>
<td>-0.979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Responsibility Scale</td>
<td>-0.332</td>
<td>-0.109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen Duty Scale</td>
<td>-0.419</td>
<td>-0.729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Efficacy Scale</td>
<td>-0.733</td>
<td>-0.356</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inferential Statistics

There were two underlying propositions upon which this study was built and provided guidance to the researcher:

Proposition 1: Increased civic knowledge, whether gained through experiential or traditional civics education programs, predicts an increased sense of civic identity.

Proposition 2: Civic knowledge acquired via transformative learning is related to a heightened sense of civic identity.

The research was framed by these propositions, and addressed the following research questions:
Q1  Is an increase in high school students’ civic knowledge, whether gained through experiential or traditional civics education programs, associated with an increased sense of civic identity?

Q2  Does experiential civics education predict higher levels of civic knowledge than traditional civics education?

Q3  Does experiential civics education predict higher levels of civic identity than traditional civics education?

Inferential statistics were used to determine whether or not to reject the null hypotheses. This section outlines each of those hypotheses in order. Scatterplots were used to display the visual relationship between variables for hypotheses 1. Additionally, Pearson’s r was used to test the correlation between variables for hypothesis 1. To address hypotheses 2-3, Parametric ANCOVA was utilized. The ANCOVA analysis relies on the following three assumptions which were examined prior to conducting the ANCOVAs:

- **Linearity:** It is assumed that there is a similar linear relationship between the pre-test scores and the post-test scores in each level of the independent variable (i.e., those in the experiential education and in traditional education). This assumption was tested by examining the Pearson’s r correlation between each of the pre-test scores and each of the post-test scores. Positive, statistically significant correlations provided support that this assumption was met.

- **Homogeneity of Variance:** ANCOVA assumes that the variance of the dependent variable is similar in each of the groups defined by the independent variable(s). This assumption was examined in each model by taking the group (i.e., either experiential education or traditional education) having the larger covariate variance and dividing it by
the group with the smaller covariate variance to obtain a ratio. A ratio less than 10:1 was taken as support that this assumption was met (Levy, 1980).

- Homogeneity of Regression: ANCOVA assumes that homogeneity of regression exists, in this case that the correlation or slope of prediction between the dependent variable (civic knowledge, civic identity) and the covariates are equal for all levels of the independent variable or factor (educational program). In other words, for each level of the independent variable, the slope of the prediction of the dependent variable from the covariate must be equal. This assumption was examined in each model by testing the interaction between the covariate and the independent variable. A statistically non-significant interaction was taken as support that this assumption was met.

**Hypothesis 1.** The first hypothesis concerns the relationship between civic knowledge and civic identity, stating:

H1: Increased civic knowledge predicts an increased sense of civic identity ($>x$, $>y$).

H10: Increased civic knowledge does not predict increased civic identity ($r=0$).

**Scatterplot.** The first step in determining whether or not a correlation existed was to produce a scatter plot, examining the results for linearity between civic knowledge and civic identity. The scatterplots for hypothesis 1 are shown below in Figures 3, 4, and 5.
Figure 3. Scatterplot of relationship between Civic Knowledge and Social Responsibility Scale.

Figure 4. Scatterplot of relationship between Civic Knowledge and Citizen Duty Scale.
Pearson’s $r$ correlation analysis. Next, Pearson’s $r$ was calculated to determine the degree to which civic knowledge was statistically correlated with civic identity. As Table 6 shows, Pearson’s $r$ correlations were calculated for civic knowledge and the three scales of civic identity resulting as follows: 0.453 for the political efficacy scale, 0.491 for the citizen duty scale, and 0.184 for the social responsibility scale (statistically significant at $p < 0.001$ level).

Table 6.
*Civic Knowledge and Civic Identity Pearson’s $r$ Correlations (N=592)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Min</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-SRS</td>
<td>0.184*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-CDS</td>
<td>0.491*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-PES</td>
<td>0.453*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Correlation is statistically significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).

A number of statistically significant relationships can be seen in the above analysis. The highest correlations, as reflected by Pearson’s ($r$), were found between civic knowledge and the civic identity scales of citizen duty ($r = .491$) and political efficacy ($r = .453$). Using Cohen’s
conventions, these correlations represented a medium to large effect size (Cohen, 1992).

Additionally, there was a relationship between civic knowledge and the civic identity scale of social responsibility though the correlation was not as strong, representing a small-medium effect size ($r = .184$).

When considering the first hypothesis, this analysis shows that civic knowledge had a statistically significant positive relationship with civic identity scales of political efficacy and citizen duty. These results suggest that the null hypotheses should be rejected for hypothesis 1, and that civic knowledge has a statistically significant positive correlation with civic identity among Georgia high school students.

**Hypothesis 2.** The second hypothesis concerns the relationship between educational program and the levels of civic knowledge among high school students, stating:

H2: Experiential civics education predicts higher levels of civic knowledge than traditional civics education ($M_1 > M_2$).

H2$_0$: Experiential civics education does not predict higher levels of civic knowledge ($M_1 = M_2$).

**Parametric ANCOVA.** An ANCOVA was conducted to determine whether there were significant differences in civic knowledge between the students in the two educational programs (traditional and experiential), controlling for the existing civic knowledge established for the groups in the pre-test. However, prior to conducting this analysis the assumptions of linearity, homogeneity of variance, and homogeneity of regression were examined. With regard to linearity, a statistically significant Pearson’s r correlation between pre-civic knowledge scores and post-civic knowledge scores indicated that this assumption was met ($r = 0.316, p<0.001$). With regard to homogeneity of variance, the variance ratio obtained by dividing the level of the
independent variable with the largest covariate variance by the level of the independent variable with the smaller covariate variance was 1.40 indicating that this assumption was met. Finally, with regard to the homogeneity of regression assumption, a statistically significant interaction was found between pre-civic knowledge score (PreCKS) and the independent variable educational program (EdProgram: experiential or traditional) suggesting that the assumption of homogeneity of regression was not met, $F(15, 448) = 2.754, p< 0.001$. However, simulation studies indicate that ANCOVA is robust to violations of this assumption providing accurate results even when violated (Levy, 1980). Thus, given this evidence, a parametric ANCOVA was conducted to test hypothesis 2. Results indicated significant differences between the groups, $F(1, 592) = 557.518, p< 0.001$, partial $\eta^2=.486$, controlling for existing civic knowledge in the two groups (see Table 7).

Post-test civic knowledge scores (PostCKS) revealed a 6.635 point difference in civic knowledge for the experiential education group (16.184 post-test score) and the traditional education group (9.549 post-test score). These results reject the null hypothesis 2 and support the hypothesis that experiential civics education predicts higher levels of civic knowledge than traditional civics education after controlling for existing civic knowledge.
Table 7.

**ANCOVA: Impact of Education Program on Civic Knowledge.**

**Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable: PostCKS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PreCKS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EdProgram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. R Squared = .538 (Adjusted R Squared = .536)

**Hypothesis 3.** The third hypothesis concerns the relationship between educational program and the levels of civic identity among high school students, stating:

H3: Experiential civics education predicts higher levels of civic identity than traditional civics education ($M_1 > M_2$).

H3<sub>0</sub>: Experiential civics education does not predict higher levels of civic identity ($M_1 = M_2$).

*Parametric ANCOVA.* Analysis of covariance was conducted to determine whether there was significant differences in civic knowledge between the students in the two educational programs (traditional and experiential), controlling for the existing civic identity established for the groups in the pre-test. As there were three scales of civic identity, parametric ANCOVA analyses were performed for each scale:
Civic Identity-Political Efficacy. Prior to conducting the ANCOVA testing the impact of experiential education on civic identity political efficacy, the assumptions of linearity, homogeneity of variance, and homogeneity of regression were tested. With regard to linearity, a statistically significant Pearson’s r correlation between pre-civic identity-political efficacy scores (PrePES) and post-civic identity-political efficacy scores (PostPES) indicated that this assumption was met ($r = .226, p<0.001$). With regard to homogeneity of variance, the variance ratio obtained by dividing the level of the independent variable with the largest covariate variance by the level of the independent variable with the smaller covariate variance was 9.19 indicating that this assumption was met. Finally, with regard to the homogeneity of regression assumption, results indicated significant differences between the groups, $F(1, 591) = 682.677, p <0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = .537$, controlling for existing civic identity (political efficacy scale) in the two groups (see Table 8). However, as noted above, ANCOVA is robust to violations of this assumption (Levy, 1980). Thus, given this evidence, a parametric ANCOVA was conducted to test hypothesis 2.
Table 8.

ANCOVA: Civic Identity—Political Efficacy.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects
Dependent Variable: PostPES Post-PES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>3111.326a</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1555.663</td>
<td>375.423</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>1793.431</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1793.431</td>
<td>432.803</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PrePES</td>
<td>220.603</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>220.603</td>
<td>53.237</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EdProgram</td>
<td>2828.845</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2828.845</td>
<td>682.677</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>2440.673</td>
<td>589</td>
<td>4.144</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>83821.000</td>
<td>592</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>5551.998</td>
<td>591</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. R Squared = .560 (Adjusted R Squared = .559)

Post-test political efficacy scores revealed a 4.383 point difference in civic identity (in terms of political efficacy) for the experiential education group and the traditional education group. These results reject the null hypothesis 3 and support the hypothesis that experiential civics education predicts higher levels of civic identity than traditional civics education after controlling for existing civic identity.

Civic Identity–Citizen Duty. As with the other scales assumptions of linearity, homogeneity of variance, and homogeneity of regression were examined prior to data analysis. With regard to linearity, a statistically significant Pearson’s r correlation between pre-civic identity-citizen duty scores (PreCDS) and post-civic identity-citizen duty scores (PostCDS) indicated that this assumption was met ($r = .100, p < 0.001$). With regard to homogeneity of variance, the variance ratio obtained by dividing the level of the independent variable with the largest covariate variance by the level of the independent variable with the smaller covariate
variance was 2.57 indicating that this assumption was met. Finally, with regard to the homogeneity of regression assumption, results indicated significant differences between the groups, $F(1, 592) = 458.315$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = .438$, controlling for existing civic identity (citizen duty scale) in the two groups (see Table 9).

Post-test citizen duty scores revealed a 4.732 point difference in civic identity (in terms of civic identity) for the experiential education group and the traditional education group. These results reject the null hypothesis 3 and support the hypothesis that experiential civics education predicts higher levels of civic identity than traditional civics education after controlling for existing civic identity.

Table 9.

**ANCOVA: Civic Identity—Citizen Duty.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>3391.962$^a$</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1695.981</td>
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<td>.000</td>
<td>.443</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>EdProgram</td>
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<td>.438</td>
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<td>Error</td>
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<td>589</td>
<td>7.232</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>592</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
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<td>591</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. $R^2 = .443$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .441$)
Civic Identity-Social Responsibility. Prior to conducting this analysis the assumptions of linearity, homogeneity of variance, and homogeneity of regression were examined. With regard to linearity, a statistically significant Pearson’s r correlation between pre-civic identity-social responsibility scores (PreSRS) and post-civic identity-social responsibility scores (PostSRS) indicated that this assumption was met \( (r = .262, p < 0.001) \). With regard to homogeneity of variance, the variance ratio obtained by dividing the level of the independent variable with the largest covariate variance by the level of the independent variable with the smaller covariate variance was 1.19 indicating that this assumption was met. Finally, with regard to the homogeneity of regression assumption, results indicated moderate differences between the groups, \( F(1, 592) = 16.212, p < 0.001 \), partial \( \eta^2 = .027 \), controlling for existing civic identity (social responsibility scale) in the two groups (see Table 10).

Table 10.

*ANCOVA: Civic Identity—Social Responsibility.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tests of Between-Subjects Effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependent Variable: PostSRS Post-SRS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PreSRS</td>
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<tr>
<td>EdProgram</td>
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<tr>
<td>Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) R Squared = .093 (Adjusted R Squared = .090)
Post-test social responsibility scores revealed a 1.333 point difference in civic identity (in terms of social responsibility) for the experiential education group and the traditional education group. These results reject the null hypothesis 3 and support the hypothesis that experiential civics education predicts higher levels of civic identity than traditional civics education after controlling for existing civic identity.

Post-Hoc Data Analysis

During the course of research additional questions can arise. When these questions cannot be answered by analysis of the data collected in the original research, an opportunity for additional research emerges. However there are occasions when the data gathered can answer additional questions outside of the scope of the a priori research questions. This study posed such an opportunity to further explore data already collected during the course of research. During the peer review discussion of the research, additional questions arose regarding possible interactions between various demographic groups and educational program on civic knowledge and civic identity (operationalized through the scales of social responsibility, citizen duty, and political efficacy).

Demographic variables to be analyzed. The instrument asked respondents to self-identify on a number of demographic questions including gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. The initial data was only used for reporting the responses as descriptive statistics and as indicators that the study composed a representative sample. Post hoc analysis of the data suggested during the peer review process allowed the researcher an opportunity to investigate trends or statistically significant differences between the demographic groups.
Gender. Does one gender display a statistically significant difference between the two educational programs as it relates to civic knowledge and civic identity (operationalized through the scales of social responsibility, citizen duty, and political efficacy)?

Civic Knowledge. Regarding civic knowledge, the effect of the intervention does not depend upon gender. F(1,592)=0.758, p=0.384, partial η2= 0.001. The female participants (traditional group mean = 9.2993, experiential group mean = 15.8434) demonstrated no statistically significant difference than their male counterparts (traditional group mean = 9.6364, experiential group mean = 16.6720) concerning civic knowledge.

Civic identity (social responsibility). Regarding civic identity operationalized as social responsibility, the effect of the intervention had a different effect based on gender, F(1,592)=13.138, p<0.001, partial η2= 0.022. The profile plot below (Figure 6) shows a positive interaction between the females (traditional group mean = 30.051, experiential group mean = 30.302) and the males (traditional group mean = 28.797, experiential group mean = 31.400). The male participants in this study demonstrated a larger effect due to the intervention than did the female participants.
Civic identity (citizen duty). The model, F(1, 592) = 0.111, p = .740, partial η² = 0.000, shows that gender has no significant effect on civic identity (operationalized by citizen duty). There was no interaction between educational pedagogy and gender: females (traditional group mean = 13.556, experiential group mean = 18.341) and the males (traditional group mean = 13.398, experiential group mean = 18.035).

Civic identity (political efficacy). When testing the interaction between educational program and gender, there was no statistically significant effect, F(1, 592) = 2.425, p = 0.120, partial η² = 0.004. Females (traditional group mean = 9.056, experiential group mean = 13.704) and males (traditional group mean = 9.625, experiential group mean = 13.750) demonstrate little
to no difference in effect between the education groups in level of civic identity (operationalized by political efficacy).

**Ethnicity.** Does one ethnic group display a statistically significant difference between the two educational programs as it relates to civic knowledge and civic identity (operationalized through the scales of social responsibility, citizen duty, and political efficacy)?

**Civic knowledge.** Regarding civic knowledge, the effect of the intervention does not depend upon ethnicity. F(3,592)=0.629, p=0.597, partial η2= 0.003. The Caucasian participants (traditional group mean = 9.936, experiential group mean = 16.308) demonstrated no statistically significant difference than their peers who self-reported as belonging to other ethnic groups with regard to civic knowledge: Other (traditional group mean = 8.829, experiential group mean = 15.952), Hispanic (traditional group mean = 9.082, experiential group mean = 15.566), African American (traditional group mean = 8.904, experiential group mean = 16.259), and Asian/Pacific Islander (traditional group mean = 10.982, experiential group mean not reported due to no self-identifying participants).

**Civic identity (social responsibility).** Concerning the effect of the intervention and ethnicity on civic identity (operationalized by social responsibility), there was a statistically significant interaction, F(3,592)=3.861, p<0.01, partial η2= 0.020. The most dramatic interaction was with the African American participants (traditional group mean = 27.890, experiential group mean = 30.941) while other ethnic groups demonstrated lesser effects of interaction: Caucasian (traditional group mean = 30.567, experiential group mean = 30.877), Hispanic (traditional group mean = 27.564, experiential group mean = 29.202), Other (traditional group mean = 30.119, experiential group mean = 31.863) and Asian/Pacific Islander (traditional group mean = 32.257, experiential group mean not reported due to no self-identifying participants).
participants). The profile plot of this intervention (Figure 7) shown below highlights the difference between the African American participants in the two educational groups (traditional and experiential).

**Figure 7.** Profile Plot: Ethnicity and Civic Identity—Social Responsibility.

Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: PRE-SRS = 26.1402
Non-estimable means are not plotted

*Civic identity (citizen duty).* The model, F(3,592)=1.023, p=.382, partial $\eta^2=0.005$, shows that ethnicity has no significant effect on civic identity (operationalized by citizen duty). There was no statistically significant difference demonstrated among the various ethnic groups.
Civic identity (political efficacy). When testing the interaction between educational program and ethnicity, there was a very small effect, $F(3,592)=1.696$, $p=0.167$, partial $\eta^2=0.009$, for some participants ethnic groups. When measuring civic identity in terms of political efficacy, the most dramatic interaction was with the African American participants (traditional group mean = 8.653, experiential group mean = 13.652) while other ethnic groups demonstrated lesser effects of interaction: Caucasian (traditional group mean = 9.618, experiential group mean = 13.673), Hispanic (traditional group mean = 9.367, experiential group mean = 14.019), Other (traditional group mean = 9.699, experiential group mean = 13.852) and Asian/Pacific Islander (traditional group mean = 9.011, experiential group mean not reported). The profile plot of this intervention (Figure 8) shown below highlights the difference between the African American participants in the two educational groups (traditional and experiential). The gap that appears between the traditional education groups closes among African American students who participate in the experiential program.
Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: PRE-PES = 8.6959
Non-estimable means are not plotted

Figure 8. Profile Plot: Ethnicity and Civic Identity—Political Efficacy.

**Socio-economic status.** Does one socio-economic group display a statistically significant difference between the two educational programs as it relates to civic knowledge and civic identity (operationalized through the scales of social responsibility, citizen duty, and political efficacy)?

**Civic knowledge.** Concerning civic knowledge, the effect of the intervention does not depend upon socio-economic status. F(1,592)=0.209, p=0.647, partial η2= 0.000. The participants that received free lunch (traditional group mean = 9.242, experiential group mean =
demonstrated no statistically significant difference than their peers who did not receive free lunch (traditional group mean = 9.681, experiential group mean = 16.255) regarding civic knowledge.

**Civic identity (social responsibility).** With regard to the effect of the intervention and socio-economic status on civic identity (operationalized by social responsibility), there was a statistically significant interaction, $F(1,592)=9.121$, $p=0.003$, partial $\eta^2= 0.015$. The most dramatic interaction was with the participants who received free lunch (traditional group mean = 28.376, experiential group mean = 30.813) while little to no effect was demonstrated in those participants who did not receive free lunch (traditional group mean = 30.287, experiential group mean = 30.747). While there was no significant difference between the participants who did not receive free lunch, the gap that existed between the students in the two socio-economic classes was closed by those in the experiential group as demonstrated in Figure 9.
Civic identity (citizen duty). The model, F(1,592)=0.853, p=.356, partial η²= 0.001, shows that socio-economic status has no significant effect on civic identity (operationalized by citizen duty). The participants who received free lunch (traditional group mean = 13.315, experiential group mean = 18.285) demonstrated no statistically significant difference than their counterparts who did not receive free lunch (traditional group mean = 13.611, experiential group mean = 18.163) concerning civic identity (citizen duty).
Civic identity (political efficacy). When testing the interaction between educational program and socio-economic status, there was a statistically significant effect in civic identity operationalized through political efficacy, \( F(1,592)=5.44, p=0.020, \text{ partial } \eta^2= 0.009 \). The most dramatic interaction was with the participants who received free lunch (traditional group mean = 8.886, experiential group mean = 13.685) while little to no effect was demonstrated in those participants who did not receive free lunch (traditional group mean = 9.743, experiential group mean = 13.742). While there was no significant difference between the participants who did not receive free lunch, the gap that existed between the students in the two socio-economic classes was closed by those in the experiential group as demonstrated in Figure 10.

\[ \text{Figure 10. Profile Plot: Socio-Economic Status and Civic Identity—Political Efficacy.} \]
Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine quantitatively the effect of experiential civic education programs on high school students’ civic knowledge and their sense of civic identity. The literature and extant research suggested solutions to the problem of practice presented, but the efficacy of those solutions was understudied. Specifically, a range of pedagogical approaches are recommended to assist effective teaching and learning in civics education, but there appears to be no research measuring how effective each is (Battisoni & Beaumont, 2006; Feldman, Pasek, Romer, and Jamieson, 2007; Lay & Smarick, 2006; Llewellyn, Cook, and Molina, 2010). This study adds empirical data to the extant research regarding pedagogical interventions in order to help reduce the gap found in the literature.

The study examined theoretical constructs and presents opportunities for current civic educators to implement different pedagogical approaches in their civics education classrooms.

Based on the gap in the literature, the following research questions were proposed:

Q1 Is an increase in high school students’ civic knowledge, whether gained through experiential or traditional civics education programs, associated with an increased sense of civic identity?

Q2 Does experiential civics education predict higher levels of civic knowledge than traditional civics education?

Q3 Does experiential civics education predict higher levels of civic identity than traditional civics education?

Additionally, corresponding hypotheses were proposed:

H1: Increased civic knowledge predicts an increased sense of civic identity (>x, >y).
H2: Experiential civics education predicts higher levels of civic knowledge than traditional civics education (M1 > M2).

H3: Experiential civics education predicts higher levels of civic identity than traditional civics education (M1 > M2).

Chapter one outlined the purpose of this study. Chapter two provided a review of the literature, using civic knowledge (Levine, 2007; Torney-Purta, 2001), civic identity (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Yates & Youniss, 1998; Youniss, 2011), and transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000) as the theoretical frameworks guiding the research.

Chapter three detailed the methodology of the study. To address the research questions and hypotheses, the researcher employed pre- and post-test assessments of with two groups of Georgia high school students—one group who participated in an experiential civics education program and another who received only traditional civics classroom instruction. A total of 592 students completed both pre- and post-tests. The instrument used for the pre- and post-tests included a basic demographic section, a section of select multiple choice questions taken from the NAEP Civics (NCES, 2011) test to measure civic knowledge, and three self-report Likert scale instruments that measured civic identity: Social Responsibility Scale (SRS) (Berkowitz & Lutterman, 1968), the Citizen Duty Scale (CDS) (Campbell, Gurin and Miller, 1954), and the Political Efficacy Scale (PES) (Brady, Verba & Schlozman, 1995). Once responses were gathered, they were entered into SPSS for data analysis. Chapter four presented the full analysis of the data as well as post-hoc data analysis. This chapter discusses the findings, as well as their implications, in greater detail.
**Brief Summary of Findings**

**Hypothesis 1.** The first hypothesis (and its corresponding null hypothesis) concerned the relationship between civic knowledge and civic identity, stating:

H1: Increased civic knowledge predicts an increased sense of civic identity (\( > x, > y \)).

H1\(_0\): Increased civic knowledge does not predict increased civic identity (\( r=0 \)).

Results indicated a number of statistically significant relationships. The highest correlations, were found between civic knowledge and the civic identity scales of citizen duty (\( r = .496, p \text{ value} < .001 \)) and political efficacy (\( r = .498, p \text{ value} < .001 \)), suggesting that a moderate to strong statistically significant relationship exists between civic knowledge and the two scales of civic identity. Additionally, there was a small to medium statistically significant relationship between civic knowledge and the civic identity scale of social responsibility though the correlation was not as strong, representing a small effect size (\( r = .157, p \text{ value} < .001 \)). Based on these findings, the null hypothesis for hypothesis 1 was rejected. Therefore, increased civic knowledge seems to predict an increase in civic identity.

**Hypothesis 2.** The second hypothesis and corresponding null hypothesis concerned the relationship between educational program type and the level of civic knowledge among high school students, stating:

H2: Experiential civics education predicts higher levels of civic knowledge than traditional civics education (\( M_1 > M_2 \)).

H2\(_0\): Experiential civics education does not predict higher levels of civic knowledge (\( M_1 = M_2 \)).

Results indicated significant differences between the groups, \( F(1,592) = 557.518, p < 0.001 \), partial \( \eta^2 = .486 \), controlling for existing civic knowledge in the two groups. Post-test
civic knowledge scores revealed a 6.635 point difference in civic knowledge for the experiential education group and the traditional education group. Based on these findings, the null hypothesis for hypothesis 2 was rejected. Therefore, experiential civics education seems to predict higher levels of civic knowledge than traditional civics education.

**Hypothesis 3.** The third hypothesis and corresponding null hypothesis concerned the relationship between educational program and the levels of civic identity among high school students, stating:

H3: Experiential civics education predicts higher levels of civic identity than traditional civics education ($M_1 > M_2$).

H30: Experiential civics education does not predict higher levels of civic identity ($M_1 = M_2$).

As there were three scales used for civic identity, separate ANCOVA analyses were conducted for each scale. For the Political Efficacy Scale, results indicated significant differences between the groups, $F(1, 592) = 682.677, p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = .537$, controlling for existing civic identity (political efficacy scale) in the two groups. Post-test political efficacy scores revealed a 4.383 point difference in civic identity (in terms of political efficacy) for the experiential education group and the traditional education group.

For the Citizen Duty Scale, results indicated significant differences between the groups, $F(1, 592) = 458.315, p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = .438$, controlling for existing civic identity (citizen duty scale) in the two groups. Post-test citizen duty scores revealed a 4.732 point difference in civic identity (in terms of civic identity) for the experiential education group and the traditional education group.
For the Social Responsibility Scale, with regard to the homogeneity of regression assumption, results indicated moderate differences between the groups, $F(1, 592) = 16.212, p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = .027$, controlling for existing civic identity (social responsibility scale) in the two groups. Post-test social responsibility scores revealed a 1.333 point difference in civic identity (in terms of social responsibility) for the experiential education group and the traditional education group. Based on the findings from each of the scales independently and as a grouping, the null hypothesis for hypothesis 3 was rejected. Therefore, experiential civics education seems to predict higher levels of civic identity than traditional civics education.

Discussion

Research Question 1. The findings of the first research question indicated a positive relationship existed between increased civic knowledge and increased civic identity regardless of the educational delivery method through which the civic knowledge was gained. In other words, the more an individual understands the political process, the more likely he or she will feel empowered to participate in that process. This finding underscores the importance of civic education as well as the increased priority this subject should have in school curriculum offerings. This is particularly essential as other studies (Kahne & Sporte, 2008; Kahne, Crow, & Lee, 2013; Niemi & Junn, 1998; Sherrod, Flanagan, and Youniss, 2002; Torney-Purta, Losito, and Mintrop, 2001) reported that civic identity has been linked to increased civic participation manifested through voting, community service, and advocacy. Youniss (2011) appropriately reminds both political and educational leaders that “civics classes were to be designed, not to produce political scientists or historians, but for ‘preparing the young for taking their place in the community and leading useful lives’” (p. 99).
In Georgia, where this study occurred, and in many other states, there is even greater need for students to understand the political process as adjusted election schedules allow high school seniors of legal voting age to cast ballots in primary elections just weeks before the student graduates. This is no longer an issue that can be deferred, but rather one where the impact is now one of immediacy. Of course, that is only if high school seniors feel connected enough or interested enough to even exercise their right to vote.

**Research Question 2.** The findings of the second research question indicated a significant positive relationship between experiential civic education and increased civic knowledge. In short, students that interacted with the curriculum in an active manner through participation in simulations, in-class debates, etc., had a deeper understanding of the subject matter and retained the information better than those who did not. Certainly the usefulness of experiential learning has been proven throughout the literature, but this study’s findings add support for its use in civic education as a successful pedagogical approach.

Ives and Obenchain (2006) suggested that instruction using experiential methods promotes more higher-order thinking skills than traditional instruction (p. 61). Finkel (2003) asserted that much research based in social psychology supports the notion that “civic education programs that use active methods—not only role playing but also other types of dramatization, group decision-making exercises, and the like—will exert more potent effects on individual orientations” (p. 142) Specifically, he noted “more intensive programs featuring more frequent sessions should yield more powerful effects than do one-time exercises” (p. 142). In this sense, the most successful curricular approach is one that creates a long-lasting impression on the student, not merely providing information, but rather modeling the information through active participation in context.
**Research Question 3.** The findings from the third research question indicated a significant positive relationship between experiential civic education and increased civic identity. Naturally, the more one understands an issue or a process, the more inclined he or she feels to address the issue or engage with the process. This study’s findings confirmed those of Kahn and Westheimer (2003b), who found that “as students developed the abilities to participate they saw their participation in civic affairs as more plausible…” observing, “…in this sense, each student’s identity as an engaged, democratic citizen followed his or her capacity to be one” (p. 61). Kahne, Crow, and Lee’s (2013) work also supported this concept. They stated that “the clearest implication of these findings is that civic learning opportunities promote civic and political engagement” (p. 13). Kahne and Westheimer (2003b) cited varying “pedagogies and curricular strategies for supporting the development of democratic citizens” (p. 57). Kahne, Crow, and Lee (2013) further asserted the importance of studies such as this one addressing civic identity and civic engagement, because they “can provide a valuable complement to other models of factors that promote civic and political participation” (p. 2).

The analysis of the data shows, as civic knowledge increased so did the confidence and civic identity of the students. This was highlighted by significant relationships identified with the Citizen Duty Scale (CDS) (Campbell, Gurin and Miller, 1954) and the Political Efficacy Scale (PES) (Brady, Verba & Schlozman, 1995). Students who participated in the experiential civic education program were more likely to vote, among other expressions of citizen duty, and also more likely to feel as if their government leaders would listen to their concerns.

Of the three components of civic identity examined in this study, the Social Responsibility Scale (Berkowitz & Lutterman, 1968) that had the weakest relationship with civic knowledge. There are a number of potential reasons for this weak relationship, but perhaps the
most obvious is that the Social Responsibility Scale (Berkowitz & Lutterman, 1968) is more closely aligned with the service learning embodiment of civic engagement. Kahne and Westheimer (2006) shared that “educators and policy makers have stepped up efforts to promote young people’s participation in political and civic affairs through service learning curriculum and community service activities that provide youth with readily-accessible opportunities to make a difference in their communities” (p. 289). Therefore, a likely explanation for the weak relationship is that there is little connection between civic knowledge and communitarian expressions of civic identity (such as was measured through the Social Responsibility Scale).

**Post-hoc data analysis.** During the course of the peer-review discussion of the research, an additional question was brought to light: was there an interaction between various demographic groups and educational programs on civic knowledge and civic identity (operationalized through the scales of social responsibility, citizen duty, and political efficacy)? Post-hoc data analysis revealed a number statistically significant relationships when the demographic variables were taken into consideration. Table 11 (below) demonstrates those variables (indicated by “X”) where there was a reportable interaction among the demographic groups.

Table 11.

*Descriptive Statistics for Major Demographic Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Socio-Economic Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civic Knowledge Scale</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Responsibility Scale</td>
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<td>Citizen Duty Scale</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Efficacy Scale</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Items where there was no interaction based on demographics. The demographic variables of gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status demonstrated no interaction with educational program in terms of civic knowledge or civic identity operationalized through the citizen duty scale. Additionally, there were no statistically significant relationships to report for civic identity operationalized through the political efficacy scale and gender. The interactions are graphically noted above in Table 11.

Civic identity—political efficacy. The data did not reveal any statistically significant relationships between civic identity (operationalized through political efficacy) and gender. However, for the variables of ethnicity and socio-economic status, the models indicated a positive relationship. The profile plot (Figure 6) shows what, Levinson (2004, 2005, 2007, 2009) calls the civic achievement gap, between Caucasian (traditional group mean = 9.618) and African American (traditional group mean = 8.653) participants in the traditional education groups. This achievement gap significantly reduced in the students who participated in the experiential program (Caucasian experiential group mean = 14.019, African American experiential group mean = 13.652). The same interaction was present when looking at the socio-economic status of participants. While there was little difference between the participants who did (group mean = 8.886) and did not (group mean = 9.743) receive free lunch, Figure 8 highlights that participation in the experiential program helped close the gap between the two groups (received free lunch group mean = 13.685; did not receive free lunch group mean = 13.742).

Civic identity—social responsibility. The social responsibility construct of civic identity presented the weakest results when looking at group data in the original study. However, when taking into account the demographic variables, this construct was found to be statistically
significant in all three demographic areas analyzed: gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. Analysis of the interaction of gender and educational program variables produced a cross-over interaction illustrated in Figure 6. The effect was stronger for males (traditional group mean = 28.797, experiential group mean = 31.400) than for the females (traditional group mean = 30.051, experiential group mean = 30.302).

With regard the effect of the intervention and ethnicity on civic identity (operationalized by social responsibility), the most dramatic interaction was between the African American participants (traditional group mean = 27.890, experiential group mean = 30.941) and the Caucasian participants (traditional group mean = 30.567, experiential group mean = 30.877). Figure 7 demonstrates what Levinson (2004, 2005, 2007, 2009) termed the civic achievement gap between the Caucasian and African American students. The African American participants in the experiential group surpassed their Caucasian peers in closing the civic engagement gap.

The last and most significant interaction (Figure 9) was found in students who were on free lunch. There is a gap between those students in the traditional educational group who received (group mean = 28.376) and did not receive (group mean = 30.287) free lunch. The gap is not present in students in the two socio-economic groups who participated in the experiential learning program. Once again, experiential education helped close the civic achievement gap.

Implications and Recommendations

Experiential pedagogical approaches. This data supports the assertion that pedagogical approach and classroom processes matter to student outcomes (Niemi & Junn, 1998; Sherrod, Flanagan, and Youniss, 2002; Torney-Purta, Losito, and Mintrop, 2001). This is particularly true for at-risk students where the civic achievement gap is already present (Levinson, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2009). Students who took part in experiential learning
demonstrated greater civic knowledge. With this in mind, it is recommended that civics educators embrace student-centered pedagogical methods such as simulations, participation in mock government programs, and in-class debate and discussion of current topics. The Civic Mission of Schools (Levine, 2006) offers six promising approaches that could easily serve as a guide for an educator that include: 1) teach the content without using only rote facts, 2) include moderated discussions of current events in the classroom (certainly, there are civic lessons that can be gleaned from the Ferguson, MO. headlines), 3) lessons and programs should allow for application of the knowledge obtained, 4) find and participate in extracurricular programs that can support in-class curriculum such as the YMCA Youth in Government programs described in this study, 5) encourage student participation in school governance, and 6) use simulations of democratic processes and procedures (voting, trials, how a bill becomes law, etc.).

**Importance of civics education.** Based on the results, it is recommended that elected officials and school administrators take note of the results of this study and others that highlight a link between civic knowledge and civic activity. Higher priority should be placed on civic education so that it is given equal standing with mathematics, science, and English. The results support the need for strategic investments into civic education to be made so there are resources for schools to incorporate experiential learning opportunities for students. Furthermore, for civic education to be taken seriously, there needs to be a formalized tool for assessment to determine whether or not students are achieving the desired outcomes for this important curriculum.

**Recommendations for Georgia.** Civic education in Georgia will be more effective if it includes experiential education components in pedagogical approach and delivery of the curricular content. Specifically, the following recommendations are proposed for civic education in Georgia: 1) civic education would be best delivered using experiential learning as
the primary method in Georgia classrooms; 2) since civic identity is formed during adolescence, it is recommended that educational requirements be broadened to include civics/government in all grades K-12, rather than a few select grades; 3) As the Georgia High School Graduation Test is scheduled to phase out at the conclusion of the 2014-2015 school year, it is recommended that the civics assessment be replaced with another similarly-weighted assessment; and 4) establish a support network for civics educators (with appropriate funding) to ensure they have the classroom resources and appropriate training to teach this important topic to Georgia’s most valuable assets—her students!

**Limitations and Future Research**

A number of limitations must be noted in this study regarding the scope of the research. Recommendations for future research are therefore presented. First, this study was limited in that it examined only one experiential civic education program. There is an opportunity for future research to examine additional experiential civic education programs to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the efficacy of pedagogical approaches on civic outcomes.

Another limitation for this study was that the control group was from a single high school rather than a statewide sample, as was the experiential civic education group. While both groups were similar in size and demographic composition, it is possible that the results of control group are representative of that school’s individual civics education curriculum and educational program, rather than representative of the entire state’s curriculum. Future research could incorporate a broader sample in the control group. Additionally, a national sample for both the experiential and control groups would provide helpful data to give insights into individual state performance versus the national aggregate.
Another area for continued research would take a longitudinal approach, seeing how a group of students who participated in experiential civic education programs actually participate civically as adults. A study with this focus would be appropriate in that it would examine action rather than just intention. Such a study would allow an experiential learning program to understand its lasting community impact, document the benefit of such programs, as well as potentially help identify what type(s) of experiential civic education programs lead to certain types of civic behavior in adulthood.

Post-hoc data analysis revealed there is a civic achievement gap between students from varying demographic backgrounds (gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status). Additional quantitative and qualitative studies should further examine the results to experiential civic education in addressing (and closing) the civic achievement gap.

Finally, there is an opportunity for research that explores exactly which components of experiential civic education programs yield specific civic results. In this regard, a ‘recipe for success’ could be developed with a deeper understanding of cause and effect. Data from such studies could lead to the creation of a new youth civic development theory and could certainly drive a research agenda. Furthermore, additional quantitative and qualitative research should be conducted as both add unique and helpful perspectives to the research narrative and the scholarly conversation.

**Conclusion**

Civic education is more than a course in the course requirements list, standing between a student and graduation. Relegating civics curriculum to a ‘check in a box’ on a checklist for graduation does a huge disservice to students and democracy. When viewed in proper perspective, the value of civic education is easily found. Civic education is a form of political
socialization wherein the young are taught how to lead the sacred democracy they will shortly inherit by seeing it modeled for them and by participating in it. Civic education is vitally important to maintaining the balance of our society, a balance that was created for the people, of the people, and by the people.

Basic educational principles have taught us that engaging students with the curriculum in an experiential manner leads to a deeper understanding of such curriculum. The student will seldom forget something from the lived experience, or, if forgotten quickly comes to recall just as does riding a bicycle. And the evidence suggests that learning this knowledge leads to an increase in their participation in these systems. Certainly, the problems within the U.S. educational structure are vast and all components are worthy of investigation. However, very few studies have the demonstrated long-term impact of civic education. Our students deserve the very best in civic education, but our democracy demands it!
References


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Levinson, M. L. (2004). The Civic Achievement Gap: Why poor and minority students are disproportionately disengaged in civic life—and what can be done about it.


Appendix A: Assessment Instruments

Civic Knowledge Assessment (NAEP, 2010)

Demographic Information—Optional Response

1. **What is your gender?**
   a. Male  
   b. Female

2. **What is your ethnicity?**
   a. White/Caucasian  
   b. Black/African American  
   c. Hispanic  
   d. Asian/Pacific Islander  
   e. Other

3. **What is your grade?**
   a. 9  
   b. 10  
   c. 11  
   d. 12

4. **Are you currently receiving free lunch?**
   a. yes  
   b. no

Please select the correct answer from the choices provided.

5. **Which of the following does the national (federal) government of the United States do that state and local governments do not?**
   a. Run public schools  
   b. Print money  
   c. Remove state governors from office  
   d. Choose members of city councils

6. **The Constitution requires that the President's nominations to the Supreme Court be approved by the Senate. This is an example of**
   a. legislative supremacy  
   b. federalism  
   c. checks and balances  
   d. judicial review

7. **The number of electoral votes each state is allotted is based on the state's**
   a. size  
   b. representation in Congress  
   c. average income  
   d. number of years as a state

8. **What idea is part of American democracy?**
   a. Every citizen has the right to have a job.  
   b. The law applies to everyone equally.  
   c. All children must get a high school education.  
   d. People who do not vote lose their right to protest against unfair laws.

9. **In the United States, what occurs when state and national laws are in conflict?**
   a. The state law is enforced.  
   b. The national law is enforced.  
   c. The state decides which law to enforce.  
   d. The public holds a referendum to decide which law should be enforced.
10. The following two questions refer to the quotation below, which is from the Supreme Court's decision in Marbury v. Madison (1803). "It is emphatically the province and duty of the judicial department to say what the law is. . . . A law repugnant to the constitution is void."

   In Marbury v. Madison (1803), the Supreme Court argued that it had the authority to ___________.
   a. overturn laws it found unconstitutional
   b. overturn previous court decisions
   c. grant Presidents special powers in times of crisis
   d. make laws

11. The decision in Marbury v. Madison (1803) argues that the judiciary should serve as
   a. a check on the power of the military
   b. a check on the power of Congress
   c. an independent lawmaking body
   d. an institution that enhances the power of the President

12. In the United States, what occurs when state and national laws are in conflict?
   a. The state law is enforced.
   b. The national law is enforced.
   c. The state decides which law to enforce.
   d. The public holds a referendum to decide which law should be enforced.

13. What happens to most of the bills introduced in the House of Representatives?
   a. They become laws.
   b. They are passed but then vetoed by the President.
   c. They are passed by the House but not by the Senate.
   d. They are never sent by committees to the full House.

14. Imagine that Congress is considering severe cutbacks in the Social Security program. Which of the following national interest groups would be most concerned about and opposed to such a policy?
   a. Mothers Against Drunk Drivers
   b. American Association of Retired Persons
   c. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
   d. American Bar Association
15. People who claim that lobbying is a positive force in American politics often argue that lobbyists play an important role by______________________.
   a. supplying members of Congress with information and helping to draft legislation.
   b. giving Supreme Court justices information they need to make decisions in difficult cases.
   c. giving everybody equal power in the political process
   d. limiting access to public officials

16. Federalism: A way of organizing a nation so that two or more levels of government have authority over the same land and people.

   Which fact about American government reflects the above definition of federalism?
   a. Power is divided among legislative, executive, and judicial branches.
   b. Private organizations in the United States do much of the work that is performed by local governments in other countries.
   c. Citizens in the United States are subject to both state and federal laws.
   d. Citizens in the United States have a right to protection from intrusion into their private affairs.

17. The First Amendment guarantees people in the United States the right to
   a. own property  b. own firearms  c. speak freely  d. a fair trial

18. Which of the following is a true statement about the United States Constitution?
   a. It created a democratic socialist state.
   b. It established a parliamentary government like that in Great Britain.
   c. It proclaimed that the government was based upon the consent of the people.
   d. It allowed a totalitarian government to function.
The following questions refer to the voter registration card pictured below:

19. To register to vote in this state, a person must
   a. own a home in the state
   b. be over 21 years old
   c. have a valid address and telephone number
   d. have lived in the state for the past 30 days or more

20. From the form, what can be inferred about voting requirements in this state?
   a. People who cannot read or write can still vote, since they are allowed to have people fill out the registration form for them.
   b. People who do not have a specific address may still register to vote, because they must prove only that they live in one of the 50 states.
   c. People who cannot come to polling places on election day are effectively prevented from voting.
   d. People who are serving a criminal sentence can vote if they register.
21. What are the three parts of the national (federal) government of the United States?
   a. President, Governor, Supreme Court
   b. President, Congress, Supreme Court
   c. Congress, State Legislature, Supreme Court
   d. Congress, Mayor, Supreme Court

22. Why is it important to have the right to a trial by a jury if you are arrested and accused of a crime?
   a. To help make sure that you do not go to jail if you are innocent
   b. To help make sure that your lawyer does a good job defending you
   c. To help make sure that you are not tried twice for the same crime
   d. To help make sure that you tell the truth when the judge asks you questions about the crime

23. The Bill of Rights was added to the Constitution of the United States to
   a. ensure that the federal government would be run by a system of checks and balances
   b. set up two parties that would share control of the federal government
   c. establish and protect various civil liberties
   d. guarantee that large states would not overpower smaller ones

24. Which of the following is a function of local (city or town) government?
   a. Hire police officers
   b. Establish and support armies
   c. Build churches
   d. Build interstate highways

Social Responsibility Scale (Berokwitz & Lutterman, 1968)

Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements by selecting your response.

1. It is no use worrying about current events or public affairs; I can’t do anything about them anyway.
   A. Strongly Disagree  B. Somewhat Disagree  C. Have No Opinion
   D. Somewhat Agree    E. Strongly Agree
2. Every person should give some of his/her time for the good of his/her town or country.
   A. Strongly Disagree   B. Somewhat Disagree   C. Have No Opinion
   D. Somewhat Agree     E. Strongly Agree

3. The United States would be a lot better off if there weren’t so many elections and people didn’t have to vote so often.
   A. Strongly Disagree   B. Somewhat Disagree   C. Have No Opinion
   D. Somewhat Agree     E. Strongly Agree

4. Letting your friends down is not so bad because you can’t do good all the time for everybody.
   A. Strongly Disagree   B. Somewhat Disagree   C. Have No Opinion
   D. Somewhat Agree     E. Strongly Agree

5. It is the duty of each person to do his/her job the very best s/he can.
   A. Strongly Disagree   B. Somewhat Disagree   C. Have No Opinion
   D. Somewhat Agree     E. Strongly Agree

6. People would be a lot better off if they could live far away from other people and never have to do anything for them.
   A. Strongly Disagree   B. Somewhat Disagree   C. Have No Opinion
   D. Somewhat Agree     E. Strongly Agree

7. At school I usually volunteer for special projects.
   A. Strongly Disagree   B. Somewhat Disagree   C. Have No Opinion
   D. Somewhat Agree     E. Strongly Agree

8. I feel very bad when I have failed to finish a job I promised I would do.
   A. Strongly Disagree   B. Somewhat Disagree   C. Have No Opinion
   D. Somewhat Agree     E. Strongly Agree
Citizen Duty Scale (Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954)
Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements by selecting your response.

1. It isn’t so important to vote when you know your party doesn’t have a chance to win.
   - A. Strongly Disagree
   - B. Somewhat Disagree
   - C. Have No Opinion
   - D. Somewhat Agree
   - E. Strongly Agree

2. Many local elections aren’t important enough to bother with.
   - A. Strongly Disagree
   - B. Somewhat Disagree
   - C. Have No Opinion
   - D. Somewhat Agree
   - E. Strongly Agree

3. So many other people vote in the national elections that it doesn’t matter much to me whether I vote or not.
   - A. Strongly Disagree
   - B. Somewhat Disagree
   - C. Have No Opinion
   - D. Somewhat Agree
   - E. Strongly Agree

4. If a person doesn’t care how an election comes out, s/he shouldn’t vote in it.
   - A. Strongly Disagree
   - B. Somewhat Disagree
   - C. Have No Opinion
   - D. Somewhat Agree
   - E. Strongly Agree

Political Efficacy Scale (Brady, Verba, & Schlozman, 1995)
Please indicate your opinion for each of the following statements by selecting your response.

1. If you had some complaint about a local government activity and took that complaint to a member of the local government council, do you think that he or she would pay:
   - A. No attention at all
   - B. Very little attention
   - C. Some attention
   - D. A lot of attention

2. If you had some complaint about a national government activity and took that complaint to a member of the national government, do you think that he or she would pay:
   - A. No attention at all
   - B. Very little attention
   - C. Some attention
   - D. A lot of attention

3. How much influence do you think someone like you can have over local government decisions?
   - A. None at all
   - B. Very little
   - C. Some
   - D. A lot

4. How much influence do you think someone like you can have over national government decisions?
   - A. None at all
   - B. Very little
   - C. Some
   - D. A lot
Appendix B: Informed Consent

Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies, Doctor of Education Program

Name of Investigator(s): Dr. Al McCready and Doctoral Candidate Randell E. Trammell

Title of Project: HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS’ CIVIC KNOWLEDGE AND SENSE OF CIVIC IDENTITY: A QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF EXPERIENTIAL CIVIC LEARNING PROGRAMS

Request to Participate in Research
We would like to invite your child to take part in a research project. The purpose of this research is to examine the effect of experiential civic education programs on high school students’ civic knowledge and their sense of civic identity.

The study will take place as a part of the State YMCA of Georgia Youth in Government program and will take about 1 hour in total. If you decide to allow your child to take part in this study, your child will take a pre-test and a post-test with questions regarding items on civic knowledge and civic identity, each test lasting 30 minutes.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your child for taking part in this study.

There are no direct benefits to your child for participating in the study. However, your child’s answers may help us to learn more and better understand civic education outcomes using varied teaching methods.

Your child’s part in this study will be handled in a confidential manner. Any reports or publications based on this research will use only group data and will not identify you or any individual as being of this project.

The decision for your child to participate in this research project is up to you. Your child does not have to participate and can refuse to answer any question. Even if your child begins the study, you may withdraw him/her at any time.

Your child will not be paid for your participation in this study.

To OPT OUT of this study for your child, simply select the “opt out” option on the registration page for the State YMCA Youth in Government program.

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to call Randell Trammell, the person mainly responsible for the research, 404-626-0540. You can also contact Dr. Al McCready, the Principal Investigator, at 203-698-2699. If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

Thank you.
Randell E. Trammell
Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies, Doctor of Education Program

Name of Investigator(s): Dr. Al McCready and Doctoral Candidate Randell E. Trammell

Title of Project: HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS’ CIVIC KNOWLEDGE AND SENSE OF CIVIC IDENTITY: A QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF EXPERIENTIAL CIVIC LEARNING PROGRAMS

Request to Participate in Research
We would like to invite your child to take part in a research project. The purpose of this research is to examine the effect of experiential civic education programs on high school students’ civic knowledge and their sense of civic identity.

The study will take place as a part of the civics education course your child in which your child is currently enrolled and will take about 1 hour in total. If you decide to all your child to take part in this study, your child will take a pre-test and a post-test with questions regarding items on civic knowledge and civic identity, each test lasting 30 minutes.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your child for taking part in this study.

There are no direct benefits to your child for participating in the study. However, your child’s answers may help us to learn more and better understand civic education outcomes using varied teaching methods.

Your child’s part in this study will be handled in a confidential manner. Any reports or publications based on this research will use only group data and will not identify your child or any individual as being of this project.

The decision for your child to participate in this research project is up to you. Your child does not have to participate and can refuse to answer any question. Even if your child begins the study, you may withdraw him/her at any time.

Your child will not be paid for your participation in this study.

In order for your child to participate, parental permission is needed from you. Please fill out and submit the detachable portion below to your child’s teacher by _______________.

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to call Randell Trammell, the person mainly responsible for the research, 404-626-0540. You can also contact Dr. Al McCreary, the Principal Investigator, at 203-698-2699. If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

Thank you.
Randell E. Trammell

*********************************************************************************
Your Child’s name: ________________________________________
(check one) DO __ does __ does not have
my permission to participate in the research study on civic knowledge and civic
identity.

___________________________________   _____________ __
Parental Signature       Date