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# What Type of Citizen Am I? Examining the Development of Preservice Teachers' Civic Identities

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## Abstract

This study advances our understanding of the role social studies methods courses can play in supporting pre-service teachers' development of their awareness of civic identities. Specifically, this study examines the use of interactive civic activities in developing preservice teachers' awareness of how their civic identities shape their social studies instruction. We analyzed data from preservice students' written memos, class activities, and conversations. Findings show that different instructional activities elicited differences in pre-service teachers' reported civic identities. Additionally, we found that identities were fluid relative to the issues presented, with students identifying with multiple identity types depending on their knowledge of and orientation to the social issues. Findings indicate that further research is needed to investigate a possible relationship between perceptions of civic identities and socio-political climates, exploring the intersection between place-based theories of learning and civic identity development in preservice teachers.

***Keywords:*** *Civic identity, citizenship types, pre-service teacher education, social studies instruction*

## Introduction

Research suggests that civic engagement enhances important academic outcomes for youth across the grades in elementary, secondary, and postsecondary schooling in the United States (Astin et al., 2006; Bridgeland et al., 2006; Prentice & Robinson, 2010). Specifically, Hurtado & DeAngelo (2012) found a significant correlation between children's civic and academic engagement. Cress (2012) found that a focus on civic engagement increases a range of important academic knowledge and skills, such as knowledge of subject-area content (Gallini & Moely, 2003), critical thinking (Cress, 2004), communication skills (Cress, 2004), as well as emotional intelligence (Bernacki & Jaeger, 2008). This relationship between civic engagement and positive academic outcomes is bi-directional; high-quality, interactive social studies teaching has also been shown to increased civic engagement (Kahne et al., 2006; McDevitt & Kiousis, 2006; Syvertesen et al., 2009). Given the symbiotic relationship between civic and academic engagement is so fruitful, we are even more

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concerned that research shows that Black and Latine students (Blas, 2019), as well as students living in poverty, are far less likely to encounter high-quality interactive social studies teaching (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008). Thus, the lack of high-quality interactive social studies (and civics) instruction ought to be framed as an issue of justice in schooling, being the most effective way to ensure that all students in the U.S. develop skills, knowledge, and dispositions fundamental to being civically engaged. Developing those skills, knowledge, and dispositions at an earlier age is critical since research has documented a decline in feelings of civic efficacy between high school and college (e.g., Fry & Bentahar, 2013). In this article, we claim that elementary social studies and civics instruction is especially important in building civic engagement, cultivating the fruitful relationship between civic and academic engagement early.

The need for early exposure leads us to ask -- how might a teacher education social studies methods course support the development of preservice teachers' capacity to engage in interactive social studies instruction and foster civically engaged students? Researchers have noted the reduced time for social studies, in general, and civics instruction, in particular, in elementary schools in the U.S. (Burroughs et al., 2005; Good et al., 2010; Heafner et al., 2006; Lintner, 2006; Rock et al., 2006). We hypothesize that the reduction in time for social studies coupled with the increased risk of controversy has led teachers to resort to more traditional (less interactive) instructional strategies, including reliance on lectures, textbooks, and worksheets. In preservice elementary teacher education, there is an additional concern that the lack of past interest in teaching social studies together with a dearth of meaningful social studies clinical placements (among other factors) create additional barriers to reversing this concerning trend (Good et al., 2010).

Not only do we need more instructional time dedicated to social studies, but we also need to ensure that the instruction is learner-centered and interactive (Hess, 2009; Levinson, 2012; McDevitt & Kiousis, 2006), composed of active learning-focused experiences that teach students civic education content as well as develop agency. The lack of emphasis on social studies content in high stakes testing in elementary school leads to higher levels of autonomy for schools and teachers in this diverse curricular space. In their research on citizenship education, Willemse and colleagues (2015) claim that "this [autonomy] increases the need for schools and teachers to become aware of how they conceive citizenship and citizenship education [CE], decide how they want to teach CE and reflect on their existing practices and roles" (p. 120). If this is true for in-service teachers, we argue it is also important for pre-service teachers. Kaplan and colleagues (2014) call for

teachers to focus on four design principles in their roles as identity agents for their students: promote relevance of content, engage students in identity exploration through personal reflection activities, foster a safe classroom environment, and design activities through which students can examine their own identities. We argue that preservice teachers cannot take up this call without a better understanding of their own identities, and for those teaching social studies, understanding their civic identity is crucial. Additionally, we claim that preservice teachers need interactive instructional experiences when learning about civic identity if we expect them to be capable of utilizing those strategies themselves in their own teaching. We believe these calls for identity development also necessitate meeting preservice teachers where they are in the development of their identities, better understanding their needs, and fostering their development *vis-à-vis* preparation for interactive social studies instruction.

Through this study, we focus on better understanding the role of individual and collaborative interactive activities in a social studies methods course can play in developing preservice teachers' perceptions of their civic identities and understanding of how those identities could impact their social studies instruction. This research will better enable teacher educators to understand preservice teachers' needs and prepare them to engage in skilled, interactive social studies instruction. Toward these aims, this study investigates the following research questions:

1. How do interactive activities grounded in Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) civic identity typology in a social studies methods course help preservice teachers develop awareness of their civic identities?
2. What connections do the preservice teachers make between their reported civic identities and their future social studies instruction?

## Literature Review

Elementary teachers must be positioned to teach social studies as a constellation of disciplines, not merely cover content topically for other disciplines. Thus, teacher education needs to prepare preservice elementary teachers to teach knowledge, skills, and dispositions foundational to those disciplines, especially history due to the emphasis on local, state, and national history in the elementary grades. Over the past decades, research trends in teacher education have focused on the need for preservice teachers to develop different forms of knowledge used in teaching (e.g., Ball & Bass, 1999; Shulman, 1986), instructional practices (e.g., Grossman & McDonald, 2008;

Grossman et al., 2009; Kazemi et al., 2007), and even moral character (e.g., Narvaez & Lapsley, 2008; Lapsley & Woodbury, 2016). We do not challenge the contributions of these bodies of research; however, in this paper, we argue for an increased focus on preservice teacher identity development within disciplinary contexts in teacher education, in particular, to build capacity for social studies instruction. Our review of the literature lays out our argument for why preservice teachers' civic identity development must be a purposeful part of the social studies methods course curriculum in teacher education. To begin, we highlight the crucial relationships between teacher identities and teaching. Then, we review the specific importance of civic identities and the relationship of those identities to pre-service teachers' professional identities. Finally, we present our theoretical framework that integrates Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) typology of civic identity with an interactive civics activity-based instructional approach (Littenberg-Tobias, 2015) in a social studies methods course for preservice teachers.

**Relationships Between Teacher Identities and Teaching**

Teachers' professional identities are shaped by a variety of factors, including personal and professional histories (Flores & Day, 2006). Teachers' identities are influenced by as well as influence the knowledge they use in their professional lives, with this knowledge being directly impacted by political and social forces (Britzman, 1991). Based on the relationship between teachers' personal and professional identities, and the ways in which political forces impact identity, we believe that teachers' personal civic identities, perspectives, and knowledge likely influence their professional identities and how they teach civics in classrooms. The importance of understanding teachers' civic identities has been established by prior research. For example, over the past decade, two case studies have examined the experiences of teachers working in international schools (Alviar-Martin, 2011) and the civic identity development of high school teachers (Obenchain et al., 2016). In addition, a mixed-methods study examined in-service teachers' beliefs and classroom goals alongside the Westheimer and Kahne (2004) framework (Patterson et al., 2012). Finally, most recently, researchers have used Westheimer and Kahne (2004) civic identity types to describe the development of preservice elementary teachers' social justice orientations to teaching (Fry & O'Brien, 2015) and their understanding of the construct of a good citizen in which they found that pre-service teachers adopted a more Personally Responsible model of citizenship than a Justice-Oriented one (O'Brien & Smith, 2011).

This study seeks to extend prior research in two important ways. First, we aim to focus specifically on a case of elementary pre-service teachers developing awareness of their own civic identities through interactive activities and their conceptualizations of civic identity during a social studies methods course. We believe it is important to understand elementary pre-service teachers' civic identities specifically to provide quality methods course experiences and to help them shape these identities. Second, this research was conducted during the aftermath of the 2016 election. As referenced, we believe context plays a particularly important role in how civics is taught and learned in schools. We conducted this study during a time of extreme political polarization in the U.S. following the transition between President Barack Obama and Donald J. Trump presidencies. Trump's stances and policies reversed many of those of Obama, highlighting the extreme differences in ideology between voting blocks in the U.S. (Johnston et al., 2017; Pew Research Center, 2016a, 2016b) that could be found in other public spaces across the country, including public schools (Rogers et al., 2017). This study centers on this socio-political context as the participants were examining their civic identities in their methods course.

**Civic Identity Development in Social Psychology**

In this article, we consider specifically civic identities and the relationship of those identities to pre-service teachers' professional identities. Civic identities are developed in different ways, and through experiences that are situated within specific sociopolitical contexts. Specifically, we define civic identities as (a) how one defines citizenship and participation in civic life (Rubin, 2007) and (b) the civic knowledge one has and how they enact that knowledge (Enright, Toledo, Drum, & Brown, 2022; Toledo, 2020). As we considered civic identities, we reflected on the ways in which individuals' multiple identities affect their professional identities, specifically as teachers: the decisions they make, the content they teach, and the perspectives they include or do not include. Through this study, we advance the claim that teacher education can learn from research in educational psychology, in particular to learn more about the development of students' civic dispositions and identities. Although beyond the purview of this study, we believe that a better comprehension of how (pre)teachers' identities influence their social studies instruction will advance our understanding of how instructional interactions between teachers and their students help develop those students' civic identities in social studies.

**Civic Identity Development and the Theory of Mind**

Part of the civic identity development that takes place in elementary classrooms has to do with theory of mind (Peterson et al., 2012; Slaughter, 2015; Wellman & Cross, 2001). Theory of mind, or "the explicit understanding of how human behavior is governed by mental states of belief, intention, memory and desire" (Peterson et al., 2012, p. 469), includes people's capacity to infer another is thinking. This skill is crucial to civic identity development, in general, and civic perspective-taking, in particular, because it lays a foundation for people to understand that their own opinions or beliefs may differ from others on a variety of topics.

Researchers have defined elements associated with theory of mind that are central to civic engagement and identity development (Wellman & Liu, 2004): (a) diverse desires, or the capacity to know that others may like and want different things; (b) diverse beliefs, or the capacity to understand that others can hold different beliefs about the same thing; (c) knowledge access, or the capacity to understand that people who have seen or experienced something have knowledge of that event or experience while those who have not seen or experienced it does not; (d) false belief, or the capacity to understand that people take action based on what they think, even if perhaps they are mistaken or misinformed; (e) hidden emotion, or the capacity to understand that people may conceal their emotions intentionally with their facial expressions; and (f) sarcasm, or the capacity to understand that people sometimes say the opposite of what they actually mean in an attempt to provide humor or levity.

**Table 1**

*3 to 7-Year-Old Children Pass Rates on Theory of Mind Tests (from Slaughter, 2015)*

| Test | Theory of Mind Concept Assessed | Percentage of Children Who Pass |
|---|---|---|
| Diverse desires | Different people may want and like different things | 92 |
| Diverse beliefs | Different people can hold beliefs about the same thing | 87 |
| Knowledge access | People who see something also know about it; if they do not see, then they do not know | 85 |

We considered each of these six elements to be related to civic identity development to some degree. However, the first three were crucial in considering how students' civic identities may be built in classrooms: (a) diverse desires, (b) diverse beliefs, and (c) knowledge access. Slaughter

(2015) looked across multiple studies conducted with American, Australian, and European children between the ages of three and seven and determined what percentage of children were able to engage with each of these elements (see Table 1). This established that as early as pre-K, children may begin to develop key pieces of their civic identities. Additionally, other research indicates that children as young as four years old showed evidence of engaging in identity development and perspective-taking (Marvin et al., 1976) (see Table 1).

We also examined empathy, a concept closely related to civic identity. Research defined empathy as one's affective response to another's emotional state, or an understanding of what another person may be feeling (Eisenberg et al., 1994). For example, someone who was to watch a sad movie and in turn feel sad themselves would be experiencing empathy. Empathy, and in turn aspects of civic identities, involves both a cognitive (e.g., understanding of others' emotions or thoughts) and affective (e.g., shared emotional state or thought pattern) component. Piaget (1926) described empathy as thinking that involves envisioning the world and situations that arise within it from the eyes of another. Researchers in psychology (Batson et al., 1997; Lee & Ashby, 2001) have researched the concept of empathy with individuals of various ages. In terms of a trajectory of how empathy develops in children by age, Eisenberg and colleagues (1998) state that empathy begins to develop in the second and third years of life and tends to increase across early childhood. The research we conducted to examine educational psychology connects back to research directly in civic education. Researchers have evidence that children's civic dispositions and understandings begin to develop long before they reach their teenage years (Rubin, 2007) and the ways that young children think about civic issues may be inherently different from the ways their older peers consider these issues (Barton & Levstik, 1997; Schweber, 2008). This signals the importance of understanding teachers' identities and how they impact their instruction -- teachers' own civic dispositions influence their students' identities based on what is taught, or not taught, in classrooms. Therefore, as teacher educators, we must examine our preparation programs to find opportunities for preservice teachers to learn about their own identities and dispositions in the context of their teaching and content areas.

## Conceptual Framework

We draw from civic identity and social psychology research to construct our framework for developing preservice teachers' civic identity awareness, which we will examine in this section.

We utilized an interactive civics activity process to support students in the development of their civic identities (see Figure 1). Three elements went into developing this framework. First, we use Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) typology of civic identity to structure the learning experiences and provide civic identity content in the social studies methods course at the core of this study. Second, we draw from Littenberg-Tobias's (2015) conceptualization of interactive civic activities, highlighting the importance of the instructional approach within that methods course to shaping learning opportunities for preservice teachers. Third, we examine the development of the preservice teachers' perspectives using the first three constructs in the theory of mind: diverse desires, diverse beliefs, and knowledge access (Wellman & Liu, 2004). Figure 1 displays a visual of our framework.

**Figure 1**

*Interactive Civics Activity Process*


**Selecting a Typology of Civic Identity**

Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) typology of civic identity types emerged from their research on ten programs that participated in the Surdna Foundation's Democratic Values Initiative to advance democratic citizenship education. The typology represents three generalized "visions of citizenship" that emerged from their research: the personally responsible citizen, participatory citizen, and justice-oriented citizen (p. 2). Westheimer and Kahne defined the personally responsible citizen as an individual who contributes to society by obeying existing laws, contributing to civic initiatives (e.g., recycling or donating blood), and acting with integrity within their community. Taking a more active leadership role to improve society, their second type is the participatory citizen seeks to care for others in need by organizing initiatives (e.g., environmental clean-ups or a food drive). This more active civic leader has an operational understanding of

governance and social organization. They seek to contribute by participating in existing structures and systems, often through leadership roles. The third type is the justice-oriented citizen who challenges the status quo structures and systems to improve society. This type of citizen questions the root causes of injustice, seeking to better understand the foundations of unjust systems. This type of citizen has a more advanced understanding of social change and complex systems as well as skills they use to organize against injustice.

We chose Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) typology of civic identity for our framework for civic identity development of preservice elementary teachers for three main reasons. First, Westheimer and Kahne's research shared a geo-national context with our own research - studies completed in the United States. This ruled out other typologies from meaningfully different national contexts and political cultures (e.g., Bellamy, 2008; Pakulski & Tranter, 2000; Petrovska, 2019; Tranter & Donoghue, 2007). Second, their typology used direct, familiar language that we felt the preservice teachers could understand and relate to with their experience. We felt that was especially critical given the focus of the methods course was on teaching preservice teachers to develop social studies instructional practices, and there was limited time to teach highly specialized language as content. Since elementary teachers are trained as generalists, in comparison to secondary teachers who specialize in a content area, we did not want to assume they had an advanced background in civics content knowledge. This constraint ruled out other civic identity frameworks with highly specialized language from psychology (e.g., Petrovska, 2019), identity studies (e.g., Bellamy, 2008; Hart et al., 2011), or sociology (e.g., Tranter & Donoghue, 2007). Third, prior research studies in teacher education utilize Westheimer and Kahne's typology (Fry & O'Brien, 2015; Patterson et al., 2012), allowing us to build on prior work in this conceptual space.

**Supporting Civic Identity Development Through Interactive Civic Activities**

The social studies methods course at the center of this study utilized interactive social studies activities to model their use for preservice teachers. We use Littenberg-Tobias's (2015) conceptualization of interactive civic activities: "classroom activities where students discuss issues with one another and engage in hands-on activities" – including, but not limited to, discussions, simulations, and engagement in civic acts, such as letter-writing campaigns (p. 11). Littenberg-Tobias notes three characteristics that meet the definition of interactive activity, citing other research in defining these characteristics. First, the activity is learner-centered, shifting the responsibility of engagement to the student (Pederson & Liu, 2003). Second, the activity requires

that students communicate with others in writing or verbally to support their processing of that learning and contribute to a community discourse (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Putnam & Borko, 2000). Third, an activity is only considered interactive if it engages students in "authentic forms of civic participation that expose students to the types of civic activities they might engage in as adults" (as cited in Littenberg-Tobias, 2015, p. 12; Finlay et al., 2010; Levine & Higgins-D'Alessando, 2010). In this study, we extend this third characteristic to include the practices that social studies teachers engage in as professionals.

Since research claims social studies instruction that is high-quality and interactive can result in more civic engagement (Kahne et al., 2006; McDevitt & Kiousis, 2006; Syvertesen et al., 2009) as well as academic engagement (Hurtado & DeAngelo, 2012) in students, this model provides a proximal representation of the type of social studies instruction that, as researchers and teacher education faculty, we want to see in our preservice teachers' classrooms. Furthermore, modeling interactive activities in social studies instruction is critical since research documented that Black and Latine students, as well as students living in poverty, have less exposure to interactive social studies instruction (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008), and thus, are less likely to benefit from the documented positive outcomes as well.

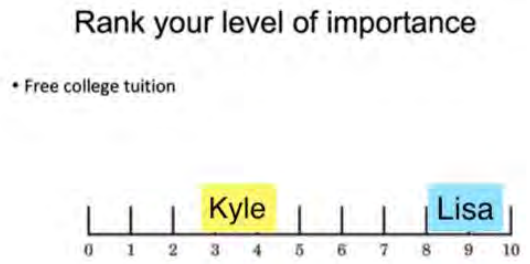
**Structuring Interactive Civic Activities to Develop Diverse Desires, Beliefs, and Knowledge Access**

The theory of mind (Peterson et al., 2012; Slaughter, 2015; Wellman et al., 2001) was used to guide the construction of the interactive civic activities focusing on civic identity development in the social studies methods course at the center of this study. As discussed in the literature review, theory of mind is "the explicit understanding of how human behavior is governed by mental states of belief, intention, memory and desire" (Peterson et al., 2012, p. 469). Also referred to as mind reading, this ability takes on an important role in civic identity development since the capacity to infer what another thinks or believes is critical to civic discourse. Fostering awareness of the first three elements associated with the theory of mind (Wellman & Liu, 2004) is central to the development of students' civic identities: (a) diverse desires, (b) diverse beliefs, and (c) knowledge access. In alignment with our argument about the importance of modeling key components of engaging social studies teaching for preservice teachers, the interactive civic activities in the social studies methods course focused on fostering awareness of these three elements as well. Awareness

was developed through readings, reflections, discussions, and other engaging activities, such as the diverse beliefs sorting activity (see Figure 2) and subsequent class discussion.

**Figure 2**

*Diverse Beliefs Sorting Activity*




## Method

### Context

This research was conducted at a western U.S. public university with Very High Research Activity (formerly known as R1) and high undergraduate activity distinctions. The university is a transitional Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) that serves over 20 thousand students. Data were collected across three semesters in a social studies methods course, with data from 99 preservice teachers (i.e., students in social studies methods courses).

### Data and Analysis

We used a combination of content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) and grounded theory (Charmaz, 1983; 2000) in our data analysis to examine how preservice teachers' civic identities developed over the course of a semester during social studies methods courses. Working within these two complementary and well-established qualitative traditions allowed us to examine data thematically and to identify key themes related to civic identity and civic thinking within the data. More details about these processes can be found in the data analysis subsection.

### Participant Selection and Characteristics

Data was collected in the form of written memos, class work samples, and observations from small and whole group discussions over the course of three semesters from a single instructor's social studies methods course. At the beginning of three different semesters, all the students enrolled in

the social studies methods course were asked to participate in the study, which would allow researchers to collect coursework. Those students (i.e., participants) were undergraduate students enrolled in either elementary or secondary teacher education programs. They were mostly traditional college-age students (i.e., 18-24 years old). There was substantial racial/ethnic diversity, reflective of the demographics of the Hispanic Serving Institution where the study took place, and nearly equal representation between men and women.

The researchers chose to collect data from the complete population rather than engaging in sampling. All students enrolled in the social studies methods course were given the opportunity to participate in the research study, and 99 out of 101 students chose to participate in our research. There are no known distinguishing characteristics separating the two students who opted out of the study from the participants. During the consent process, the students were made aware that their participation in the research would grant them no special privileges or compensation, and their decision to decline to participate would not result in any adverse actions. Students' rights and study details were outlined in consent documents that were approved by the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The analysis of the data occurred after the students had received their course grades to rule out any influence the analysis process could have on student assessment.

**Data Collection**

The students were invited to consent to the collection of observational data, their written memos, and class work samples. Data were collected both in person as students submitted written work or memos, and virtually as students completed coursework in online environments using digital learning platforms. A total of 99 students across three semesters engaged in five activities related to the Westheimer and Kahne (2004) citizen types: (a) an individual reading of the article before class; (b) small group discussions on the reading and its themes; (c) a mini-lecture on citizen types and examples of characteristics of each citizen type; (d) a whole group activity in which students used color-coded cards with their names on them to demonstrate their citizen identity and how deeply they cared about different public issues (see Figure 2), and (e) a written memo in which students reflected on their engagements with the reading and described their civic identities and how those identities related to their future identities as teachers. The written memo doubled as an activity and formative assessment of the students' learning. Observational data from the discussions, mini-lecture, and whole group activity were collected in the form of video recordings and instructional memos. Students' reported perspectives on their civic identities and relationship

to their teaching in whole class discussions, through which data were collected. The written memos served as a third data point to triangulate our findings from the observational and interview data.

**Data Analysis**

We used content analysis to identify and make meaning of the uses, roles, and relationships of words, themes, and concepts in the written data. First, we used conventional content analysis to derive our coding categories directly from the raw data, an inductive strategy (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Then, we followed with a directed content analysis strategy in which we used an existing civic identity framework to identify related themes in the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Additionally, we utilized a constructivist approach to grounded theory as a data analysis technique. This approach to grounded theory supported our efforts "…to pursue varied emergent analytic goals and foci instead of pursuing a priori goals and foci such as a single basic social process" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 180).

We conducted a two-stage cycle of inductive and then deductive coding of all three data sources (Miles et al., 2014). In stage one, we did a round of open coding (Maxwell, 2012) to flag key themes in the data related to students' civic identities to examine relationships between codes. For example, we examined how students self-identified as citizen types in their written memos and how they described their civic thinking or actions in small and whole group discussions. We proceeded with a round of selective coding in which we refined the codes identified in the open coding by searching for the key themes across data sources (Maxwell, 2012). This coding strategy allowed us to triangulate the findings. We did this by analyzing each of the three data sources separately and then comparing the findings across those sources. The triangulation process confirmed that the findings for each data source were consistent with the others. For example, during triangulation, we were able to examine how key themes in written memos were present in our observational data and *vice versa*. In stage two, we engaged in deductive coding (Miles et al., 2014) utilizing Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) citizen types as thematic codes that we searched for in our three data sources. To establish interrater reliability, we (the two co-authors/researchers) each independently coded a subset of the data and then compared our code schemes to one another to reconcile any differences in understanding of the codes and data. We found that we aligned at a very high rate with one another, and we were easily able to reconcile the couple of instances we were not aligned.

## Findings

The majority of pre-service teachers self-identified as personally responsible citizens (Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Participant Reported Pre-Service Identity Types with Examples from Data*

| Westheimer & Kahne Citizenship Type | Number of Pre-Service Teachers' Identity Types | Common Themes in Written Memos and Discussions | Example from Data |
|---|---|---|---|
| Personally responsible citizen | 70 | Identified as personally responsible citizens; sometimes based lack of time to be more involved, or a lack of confidence in understanding socio political structures | "I would like to be the person who is active and takes charge, but I'm not."<br><br>"The other citizens deal a lot with calling issues out that deal with public injustices and they have a lot to do with politics. That is not where I am strong or even comfortable." |
| Participatory | 8 | Identified as participatory citizens; described leadership qualities that allowed this | "A participatory citizen is an active member of the community and enjoys helping those in need. I feel like this fits me because I try to be involved in the community by volunteering and communicating with other members of my community in school and work."<br><br>"I used to organize food drives and blood drives for my school and was good at leading groups to do the same." |
| Justice oriented | 8 | Identified as justice-oriented; described deep commitments to fighting for social justice; "progressive values," commitment to deep engagement with social issues. | "I truly desire advocating for those that have been silenced to have opportunities."<br><br>"I have always tried to pursue most issues from a 'why' philosophical perspective in order to create solutions."<br><br>"I am always questioning the system. I am not content with the status quo." |
| Other | 13 | Identified as multiple citizen types; identified connects and disconnects with multiple citizenship types. | "I do not believe that I am exclusively just one type of citizen. I personally think that I draw out a few characteristics from all three of the different citizen types. I also admit that there are characteristics in each citizen type that I know I don't align with."<br><br>"I feel that I do not fit into any one category. As far as my actions go, I feel that I identify as a personally responsible citizen; however, in my thoughts and feelings I identify as more of a justice-oriented citizen." |

Each semester, 50 percent of the class or more ranked every single issue at a seven or higher for their personal care for every issue. As Westheimer and Kahne (2004) indicated, this was the type of program that students likely saw most frequently in schools, which may have influenced pre-service teachers' selections of this identity type. This was also confirmed by students in their discussions and memos. Table 2 displays our participants' reported pre-service teacher identity types with examples from our data sets.

**Pre-service Teachers' Civic Identity Apprenticeships**

By and large, the participants reported in class discussions and memos that they identified with the model of personally responsible citizenship (see Table 3). 70 of the 99 students identified as personally-responsible citizens. However, perhaps even more noteworthy was that the next most common identification was "other" - students who felt that they were a "blend" of different citizen types, or that they were not clearly aligned with just one type of citizenship.

**Table 3**

*Participants' Reported Identity Types by Course Section*

| Semester | Personally Responsible | Participatory | Justice Oriented | Other | Total Participants |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fall 2018, Section 1 | 13 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 16 |
| Fall 2018, Section 2 | 21 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 25 |
| Spring 2019, Section 1 | 9 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 13 |
| Spring 2019, Section 2 | 9 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 12 |
| Fall 2019, Section 1 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 12 |
| Fall 2019, Section 2 | 13 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 21 |
| | 70 | 8 | 8 | 13 | 99 |

**Connections Between Civic Identities and Teaching Dispositions/ Other Identities**

Pre-service teachers made clear and distinct connections between their self-reported civic identities and how these identities may influence how they teach social studies content. One pre-service

teacher, Trevor, identified as a justice-oriented citizen. He noted that this identity would influence how we taught social studies, saying, "In how I teach social studies and civics in the future, I believe that the question, 'Why?' will be at the root of most of my inquiries. For example, rather than discuss directly what happened in the civil rights movement, I would prefer to ask, 'Why did the Civil Rights Movement occur?' [My classroom] will be primarily inquiry-based."

Here, Trevor saw the connection between justice-oriented citizenship and inquiry-based teaching and learning, a central tenet of the social studies methods class. In a small group discussion, Trevor elaborated on this. "Justice is a piece of inquiry, because you are allowing students to make their own connections and form their own arguments. You are giving them the tools, the compelling question, but they are going to be the ones making their own interpretations. That is justice."

Another student spoke to the possible tension between her identity as a personally-responsible citizen and how she would teach students social studies in her own future classroom:

> I could see that my lack of being a participatory or justice-oriented citizen could affect the way that I teach civics. I may unconsciously not teach practices or activities that promote solving problems or getting to the source of problems since I have seen myself as a personally responsible citizen (Jocelyn, written memo).

Here, Jocelyn identified the possibly problematic nature of teachers' civic identities impacting their instruction, and how they taught students.

> I would say I am a personally responsible citizen. However, I would like to be a participatory citizen, I feel like I have done things that fall into this category. I act responsibly in my community, work and pay taxes. I follow the laws and donate my time to those in need. It may influence my teaching because I want to help kids be responsible, but I need to aim higher (Courtney, written memo).

Here, Courtney spoke to the need to "aim higher" to push students to a type of civic thinking and identity fulfillment beyond her own.

Justin described that he would like to become more justice-oriented and engaged with his community to set a positive example for his future students:

> This could affect my way of teaching social studies, because if I preach about going out to the community and helping out, but do not really do it myself, I would be a hypocrite. (Justin, written memo).

Justin discussed not only the disconnect between his own civic identity and how he wanted to teach students, but the tension between his identity and how he wanted to teach students social studies. Jill felt this same tension:

> I guess you could say I "do the bare minimum." I feel that with children, leading by example is incredibly important and by me simply going with the flow of the community and not really taking a stance or going out of my way in big ways could possibly hinder the children from doing so as well (Jill, written memo).

Other students made connections between their other personal and professional identities and their civic identities:

> I lie somewhere between participatory and justice-oriented. I would like/ strive to be justice-oriented. As an undergraduate in philosophy, I loved the critical assessment and look beyond the micro systems to see the broader scope/ holistic causes (Bonnie, written memo).

**Mismatch of Civic Identity Labels and Pre-Service Teacher Traits**

Pre-service teachers' conceptualizations of their own identities did not always match the civic traits/ ways of thinking that they displayed. One pre-service teacher, Jenny, described herself in a class discussion as a personally responsible citizen.

> Out of all three, I definitely fit the mold of the personally responsible citizen. I was raised to always contribute within my household, which in a way is the first "community" I was exposed to. Not contributing or giving back meant that I was lazy and not a good daughter, although that isn't the best mind set, it did make me be self-aware (class discussion, 5/6/19).

However, that same day, Jenny displayed justice-oriented civic traits. In a small group discussion, she told her group that, "Part of our role as teachers is to make sure our students are protected. Everything that is going on with Trump right now, kids will come up and talk to me about that. They will ask about the wall, or deportation. I just tell them, 'It's unfortunate that it's that way.' I don't know if that is showing my bias, but I can't not say anything because it's a social justice issue."

Here, Jenny exhibited justice-oriented citizen traits. Later, Jenny reiterated another justice-oriented disposition. When talking about the teaching force, she said, "We need more diversity. No offense, but it is a bunch of white people. As a person of color, I see the need for more [teachers] of color. I have all these little brown kids, who I might be the first brown teacher they had. I might also be

the only [teacher of color] one at the school, which makes it hard for me". Here, Jenny spoke to the social justice issue of diversifying the teaching force for the benefit of students having teachers who "look like them," and for teachers to have colleagues who look like them (Bristol & Goings, 2019; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

**Fluidity of Civic Identities**

In addition, several students indicated that they identified with multiple types of civic identities depending on either their connection to a civic issue or their knowledge about a civic issue. One pre-service teacher named Adam said in a class discussion, "I feel like I am sometimes a participatory citizen and sometimes I am justice-oriented. It kind of depends on [the issue], like how much I know about it, or am connected to it.

Cindy echoed this same sentiment. "For me I am both [indicating personally responsible and participatory] or maybe even all three? Some things I care a lot about, like when we talked about gun control, as a teacher, it's always going to be something because of the school shootings. Other things, like marijuana. I don't partake, so I just… feel disconnected maybe. I am kind of all of these."

Adam and Cindy spoke to the possible fluid nature of civic identities and indicated that perhaps one's civic identity shifts and changes from issue to issue, or even from context to context. Other students spoke to this same phenomenon: "I don't think we can be just one, consistently. It goes all over the map, for me. Some things I could care less about, others I am all in, like all in. And I would organize for those things, or start to think of the root cause," said Julia.

Students wrote about this in their memos as well:

> I do not believe that I am exclusively just one type of citizen. I personally think that I draw out a few characteristics from all three of the different citizen types. I also admit that there are characteristics in each citizen type that I know I don't align with (Madison, written memo).

These data, alongside the sizable number of students who considered themselves a blend of different citizen types in their memos, speak to the possible fluidity of civic identities, particularly in young professionals, still determining their roles in society.

## Discussion

This study confirms that preservice teachers do not arrive at their social studies methods courses with a *tabula rasa* regarding civic identity. Their prior exposure to citizenship models across

contexts and influencers amount to more than prior experience with civics; that exposure adds up to an apprenticeship of sorts. Traditional preservice teachers in university-based teacher education programs, a description that represents all the participants in this study, are being inducted into citizenship as they are becoming professional teachers. In other words, they are at critical junctures in their civic identity development as well as professional identity development. They have proximal exposure to civic education as children, then adolescents, and now early adults. They are beginning to vote, can legally run for office, and are, in general, viewed as full citizens in their national, state, and local contexts. In the case of developing professional teachers, their early exposure to civic education creates templates for how preservice teachers view their own civic identities. This study advances the argument that social studies methods courses need to consider these templates for civic identity and the apprenticeships that have fostered the development of those civic identities, in particular when preparing preservice teachers to teach social studies.

Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) conceptualizations of citizenship offer a starting place to begin to conceptualize civic identities to support this work in social studies methods courses. However, as found in previous work on preservice teacher identity development (e.g., Fry & O'Brien, 2015), this research indicates that civic identity may be more fluid, and that perhaps, the teachers and students in our school may shift between these identities based on the civic issue at hand and their connection to the issue. As Adam had mentioned, for some individuals it may be that they exhibit personally responsible civic involvement or traits when it came to issues that they were less connected to, and that they may exhibit participatory or justice-oriented citizenship traits when it came to issues they were more connected to or knowledgeable about. Additionally, a sizable number of students identified as "in-between" different citizenship types, or noted that they connected to different citizen identities depending on the focal public or social. This indicates that this framework may need to be reconceptualized as a more fluid framework.

Providing students a space to consider and engage with their civic identities proved to be beneficial to supporting students in their civic and professional identity development. By offering multiple ways for students to consider and debrief their civic identities, from individual reading and memo writing to small and whole group discussions and activities, the methods course provided a space that students utilized to problematize civic identities and to consider connections between their civic identities and other lived experiences. Moreover, the activities and assessments in the course allowed students to consider pieces of their identity that many of them had not before in ways that,

according to their memos and class discussions, may substantially impact their future as teachers. As Westheimer and Kahne (2004) indicated, civic education programs that promoted personally responsible citizenship were most common in schools. Based on this claim, it was likely that many pre-service teachers were exposed to this type of civic development program in schools as they engaged in practicum experiences, or even as students themselves, which may have influenced pre-service teachers' selections of this identity type. For example, one student in the methods course affirmed, "When we grew up, it was always "character counts" type stuff. Talk to others with respect, follow the rules. I was raised to be more of a personally responsible citizen by both my parents and my teachers" (Jessica, written memo, 11/26/18). For this to change, public schools would need to shift to more critical civic thinking and learning.

## Limitations and Implications

One limitation of this work is how the framework was used. The original purpose of the Westheimer and Kahne (2004) framework was to identify civic programs in schools. Here, the framework was used by teachers to consider their own identities based on these categories. It may be that a more specific, fluid framework would lend itself more-so to this type of identification. However, this research allowed us as researchers and these students to understand civic identities and their connections to teaching dispositions, which provided useful data in beginning to think about civic identities and their connection to teaching social studies. Future research may focus on adapting the Westheimer and Kahne framework to update it for use with pre-service and in-service teachers to help teachers better understand their civic identities and how these identities connect to their teaching practices.

Another possible limitation may be the contentious political climate that surrounded this study's data collection and analyses. However, we believe the political climate allows us to speak to a specific (and important) historical context that researchers in the future will need to understand. We believe future research should continue to examine pre-service teachers' civic identities with a consideration of larger sociopolitical contexts and how those contexts may influence civic identities and civic thinking.

## Conclusion

This study examined the ways that pre-service teachers conceptualized their own civic identities through a variety of individual and collaborative data. Our findings speak to the fluid nature of civic identities, and the justice-oriented thinking and traits many pre-service teachers displayed, regardless of their self-identification as other citizen types. The sociopolitical issues that surrounded greater society influenced their thinking and were often brought up in the classroom. We plan to continue to research how pre-service teachers think about civic identities, with the next step being the development of an updated framework specifically for the purposes of reflecting upon one's own civic identity for use in social studies methods classrooms.

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