FRAMING A MODEL OF DEMOCRATIC THINKING TO INFORM TEACHING AND LEARNING IN CIVIC EDUCATION

by

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To Lily, Maggie, and Sam

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Abstract

Recent efforts to improve civic education have focused on improving students' knowledge and engagement by increasing their exposure to history and civics content, implementing better state standards, improving teacher education, and instituting more service learning requirements. This dissertation argues that we must look beyond knowledge acquisition and behavioral indicators of engagement, broadening our attention to the thought processes necessary for democratic citizenship—that is, "democratic thinking." This study begins to identify and describe the cognitive components underlying problem solving and decision-making in a democracy, and sheds light on the range between novice and more sophisticated thought processes.

In an initial study using products of democratic thinking to uncover its components, I analyzed the work of political theorists and found four salient features of their thinking—(1) key democratic concepts and conceptual tensions, (2) formative knowledge, (3) public reason, and (4) deliberative decision-making. In a second study, I looked at democratic thinking *in action*, focusing on formative knowledge, or knowledge in use. Using the think aloud method, I analyzed the thought processes of eight political scientists' and eight high school students' as they grappled with the issue of bipartisanship in U.S. politics.

I found that members of both groups had existing theories that they employed when expressing their views. These ideas influenced the way both

scholars and students reasoned with new information. Far from being *tabula rasa*, students had working concepts and theories that played a central role in their thinking. However, compared to political scientists, students often employed superficial understanding of democratic concepts, lacking relevant knowledge that might enhance their understanding. Not surprisingly, sophisticated thinkers had more knowledge, but, more importantly, they *used* their knowledge to construct, support, and elaborate ideas and issues; to scrutinize and evaluate information; and to challenge others' assertions and arguments.

These findings have implications for curriculum specialists, teachers, and teacher educators. Social studies curriculum and instruction should provide opportunities for students to use their knowledge to reason about civic issues. Teacher education courses should focus on helping teachers develop research-based goals and instructional techniques that will equip students to use knowledge and information effectively.

Chapter 1

Introduction

The years following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks witnessed renewed interest in civic education among scholars, educators and policymakers in the United States (e.g., Albert Shanker Institute, 2003; Gibson & Levine, 2003; Office of the White House Press Secretary, 2002b; Soule & McConnell, 2006). For many, the attacks represented more than a strike against American lives and property; they represented a threat to American ideals and institutions. People became acutely aware of the tenuousness of such central features of American society as freedom and democracy, and therefore, more concerned with safeguarding them. Worried citizens turned their attention toward indications that citizens' commitment to democracy had faltered, such as people's scant knowledge of history, politics and democratic institutions, and their apparent disengagement from civil society and from political and electoral issues (e.g., Gibson & Levine, 2003; Rochester, 2003). With this perceived crisis in citizens' knowledge and engagement, people looked toward the schools, and in particular, civic education in the schools. According to one post-9/11 report on civic education, "The issue of defending our democracy was no longer an abstraction, the question of civic education no longer an option" (Albert Shanker Institute,

2003, p. 3). For many concerned Americans, the need for U.S. schools to renew their commitment to their historic civic mission became crucial.

Most scholars and policymakers seeking improvements in civic education have focused on enhancing students' civic knowledge and engagement by increasing their exposure to history and civics content (e.g., Albert Shanker Institute, 2003; U.S. Congress, 2003), increasing accountability measures (Gibson & Levine, 2003; Lopez & Kirby, 2007), implementing better state standards (e.g., Gagnon, 2003; Soule & McConnell, 2006), improving teacher education and professional development (e.g., Gibson & Levine, 2003; Office of the White House Press Secretary, 2002b), and instituting more service-learning opportunities and requirements (e.g., Gibson & Levine, 2003; Kirby, Levine, & Elrod, 2006). This focus on civic knowledge and engagement is understandable, as both are undoubtedly important aspects of democratic citizenship. However, in this dissertation, I argue that such a focus is insufficient. I contend that civic education should be "education for thinking," helping students develop what Kuhn (2005) calls "the cognitive capabilities that enable citizens to participate in the ongoing debate that democratic societies require" (p. 8). To effectively educate for thinking, we need to look beyond proxies for knowledge acquisition and behavioral indicators of engagement. Educators, researchers, and reformers must broaden their attention to include the thought processes necessary for democratic citizenship—to what some scholars refer to as "democratic thinking" (e.g., Csapo, 2001).

If civic participation entails thinking, then what are the cognitive components underlying the problem solving and decision-making necessary for democratic citizenship? What constitutes civic thinking about public issues?

This dissertation takes up these questions, beginning to identify and describe the components of thinking citizens engage in as they solve problems and make decisions in a democracy, and exploring the implications for teaching practice in civic education. Attention to thinking has already had a positive impact on teaching and learning in the disciplines of math, science and history. Cognitive research has provided a clearer picture of domain-specific thinking, shedding light on the range between novice and more sophisticated thought processes. Such understanding has enabled educators to design instruction to help learners develop more sophisticated levels of understanding and performance (Donovan & Bransford, 2005). This dissertation seeks to make a similar contribution in civic education.

This chapter begins with a section explaining and distinguishing between terms that I will use throughout the dissertation: civic education, social studies, and history and the social sciences, especially political science and its school-based versions, civics and government. Next, it describes current concerns over civic education and commonly proposed reforms. I argue that too many reformers have ignored cognitive research, focusing instead on proxies for content knowledge (i.e., increasing courses and instructional time) and behavioral indicators of civic engagement (i.e., increasing requirements for service-learning experiences). Since cognitive research has begun to inform

teaching and learning in the fields of math, science and history, I make a case for its value in reforming civic education. Finally, this chapter provides an overview of subsequent dissertation chapters, showing how each serves to address the three sets of research questions framing this dissertation:

1. Why the contemporary concern with civic education? What is civic education trying to achieve? What do scholars, educators and policymakers say are the problems with civic education in American schools?

2. What are the proposed remedies for the problems of civic education? What are the assumptions underlying those remedies? How might an emphasis on how people think contribute to civic education?

3. What does it mean to think democratically? What constitutes sophisticated democratic thinking? How does novice democratic thinking differ from sophisticated democratic thinking?

<div align="center">Definition of Terms</div>

In the present study, civic education refers to efforts to provide learners with the necessary knowledge, skills, and values required of what people variously call "competent" and "responsible" citizens. What are competent and responsible citizens? Scholars and educators who explicitly define such citizens (e.g., Gibson & Levine, 2003; Lupia & McCubbins, 1998) make it possible to glean several key attributes. They are:

1. *Informed and knowledgeable*, with a grasp and an appreciation of history and the fundamental processes of American democracy; and an

understanding and awareness of public and community issues;

2. *Able to reason*, with the ability to obtain information, think critically, and enter into dialogue among others with different perspectives; and the ability to predict the consequences of their actions;

3. *Engaged in their communities,* through membership in or contributions to organizations working to address an array of cultural, social, political, and religious interests and beliefs; and

4. *Politically active,* through participation in such activities as group problem solving, public speaking, petitioning and protesting, and voting.

Civic education, as I define it, does not necessarily have a bounded home in the school curriculum—that is, someone teaching math or science may find information from this dissertation as useful as someone teaching history or civics may. However, many people consider the subject of *social studies* the curricular home of civic education in the schools. Therefore, social studies plays a prominent role in this dissertation.

What is the school subject of social studies? Social studies emerged as a school subject in the first two decades of the 20th century, as part of "progressive" school reform efforts (Cremin, 1965; Halvorsen, 2006). In response to concerns about education, the National Education Association formed a Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education, and appointed a subcommittee to work on the school subjects related to society and social relations, the Committee on Social Studies (Halvorsen, 2006; Kliebard, 1995). This committee first introduced the idea of the school subject of social studies, as well as the

scope and sequence of courses that came to define the curriculum (Halvorsen, 2006; Ross, 2001). The report recommended an interdisciplinary approach to instruction in social studies, with an emphasis on "good citizenship" (Halvorsen, 2006; Kliebard, 1995). In 1921, the professional organization, the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), formed and became the leading organization for school social studies. NCSS accepted history and civics as a central part of the curriculum but saw civic issues as interdisciplinary in nature and, therefore, recommended an interdisciplinary instructional approach (Halvorsen, 2006; Smith, Palmer, & Correia, 1995). Today, NCSS continues to endorse an interdisciplinary approach to civic education as its central mission. They define social studies as:

> [T]he integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence…drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences. (National Council for the Social Studies, 1995)

Although many people consider social studies the curricular home of civic education, some people believe the proper education of citizens entails strengthening education in the separate social studies disciplines—that is, education in *history and the social sciences*. Probably the two most vocal proponents of their separate disciplines for civic education are those who emphasize instruction in history and those who emphasize instruction in civics

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and government.[1] For example, proponents of a stronger emphasis on history

argue that their discipline "teaches students how to be citizens, to understand

their world, and to comprehend America's relationships to other nations" (Puaca

& Executive Board of the Organization of American Historians, 2004). Those

advocating more and better instruction in civics and government believe that

these school-based versions of political science provide crucial content that all

citizens should know, such as the rights and responsibilities of citizens, and the

structure and function of government (e.g., Center for Civic Education, 2007).

Despite their differences regarding the appropriate vehicle for civic

education, social studies educators, history educators, and social science (i.e.,

civics and government) educators share a concern with providing quality

education to prepare youth for citizenship. This dissertation focuses on this

common concern. Specifically, it aims to provide a better understanding of the

thought processes underlying civic education, which can have positive

implications for efforts to reform civic education in the schools, whether through

instruction in social studies, history, or civics. The next section highlights current

concerns over civic education, before providing an overview of existing proposals

and efforts to improve it.

<p align="center">The Problem with Civic Education</p>

One year after the September 11 terrorist attacks, President George W.

Bush announced plans for a series of history and civic education initiatives meant

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[1] There are people who argue for more emphasis on other social science disciplines as well. For example, advocates for placing more emphasis on geography instruction (e.g., National Council for Geographic Education, 1998) argue that geography allows citizens to understand foreign policy and the places and people with which U.S. policymakers, military, and citizens interact.

to "improve students' knowledge of American history, increase their civic involvement, and deepen their love for our great country" (Office of the White House Press Secretary, 2002b). The announcement was the first of numerous calls to improve students' civic knowledge and engagement that would emerge over the next several years. For example, a year later, over 50 eminent scholars and educators from a variety of disciplines responded to growing concerns over citizens' increasing disengagement from civil society, political issues, and political and electoral processes by issuing a report recognizing the "civic mission of the schools" (Gibson & Levine, 2003, p. 8). The Albert Shanker Institute (2003) issued a report on civic education as well, calling upon Americans to "strengthen schools' resolve to consciously impart to students the ideals and values on which free society rests" (p. 4). Signatories of the report included over 100 "prominent Americans," including Bill Clinton, Diane Ravitch, Lee Shulman, E.D. Hirsch Jr., Henry Louis Gates Jr., Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., and David McCullough. More recently, retired U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor has taken issue with civic education, writing:

> Most young people today simply do not have an adequate understanding of how our government and political system work, and they are thus not well prepared to participate as citizens. This country has long exemplified democratic practice to the rest of the world. With the attention we are paying to advancing democracy abroad, we ought not neglect it at home. (O'Connor & Romer, 2006)

In the wake of the 9/11, people viewed test data on student knowledge or reports on students' lack of civic engagement with heightened concerns. For example, many people cited the results of the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in civics and government as evidence of students'

lack of knowledge (e.g., Albert Shanker Institute, 2003; Gibson & Levine, 2003; Milbank, 2002; *Putting History and Civics Back in the Classroom*, 2003). Assessment data showed only 26 percent of students in 12th grade scored at or above the "proficient" level, which the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) determined was the level all students should reach to demonstrate competency. What is more, 35 percent of 12th graders scored below even a "basic" level of understanding on the assessment (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999). People also used the results of the NAEP in U.S. history to level criticism at civic education in U.S. schools (e.g., Albert Shanker Institute, 2003; *Putting History and Civics Back in the Classroom*, 2003). The history NAEP results showed that only 11 percent of high school seniors scored at or above the proficient level and 57 percent of students scored below basic level (Lapp, Grigg, & Tay-Lim, 2002). More recently, critics used the 2006 civics and government NAEP results showing no significant increases in performance from the 1998 assessment for 8th and 12th graders (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007) to attack the current state of civic education (e.g., Fagan, 2007; Neal, 2007; Whitlock, 2007).

People concerned with civic education have also used statistical evidence on the lack of political engagement among young people to support post-9/11 calls for reform. For example, authors of the report on civic education, *The Civic Mission of the Schools* (Gibson & Levine, 2003)*,* cited that, between 1972 and 2000, voter turnout among young people under 25 slipped by 15 percentage points, whereas there was no decline in voter turnout among people 25 and

older. They also used evidence that young people were less inclined to stay informed about politics than their counterparts did in previous decades. From 1960 through 1976, 25 percent of 18- to 25-year-olds reported they followed politics, but by 2000 it was only 5 percent (Gibson & Levine, 2003). Even after the 2008 elections, when youth voter turnout rose four to five percentage points from 2004, and eleven percentage points from 2000, reformers remained critical of school-based civic education (Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 2008). Disparities in voter turn out between those with college education—who made up 70 percent of the youth vote—and those with no college education raised questions about students' preparation for citizenship in K-12 classrooms (Center for information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 2008a).

Those who find fault with the current state of civic education typically shine their critical light harshest on the social studies. Such criticism unites both conservative and liberal scholars and policymakers who agree the subject of social studies has failed to fulfill its promise to educate a competent citizenry. For example, a group of social studies critics dubbed "The Contrarians" contend that the interdisciplinary approach of social studies sacrifices knowledge at the expense of pedagogical methods, and that this is to blame for civic disengagement among youth (Leming, James , Ellington, & Porter-Magee, 2003). They argue that even before 9/11:

> Evidence kept accumulating that American kids were emerging from K-12 education and then, alas, from college with ridiculously little knowledge or understanding of their country's history, their planet's geography, their government's functioning, or the economy's essential workings. (p. i)

The Contrarians also reject any hope that social studies might be reformed, stating:

> [S]erious education reformers are well advised to put [social studies] on a raft and push it into deep water somewhere in the despoiled rain forest or maroon it on a glacier whose melting is caused by the excessive carbon dioxide emanating from prosperous societies. Put it somewhere far away and hope it will vanish. (p. i-ii)

Even scholars who are members of social studies organizations, such as NCSS, criticize the subject. NCSS member Ladson-Billings (2003), for example, criticizes social studies for its failure to address diversity and multiculturalism, an understanding of which is necessary for democratic citizenship. In the introduction to the book, *Critical Race Theory Perspectives on Social Studies,* Ladson-Billings writes,

> The failure of social studies to meaningfully engage students in dialogue about one of the nation's persistent social justice issues is not surprising. However, it is disappointing…The social studies can serve as a curricular home for unlearning the racism that has confounded us as a nation. Yet, we still find teachers continuing to tell us lies. (p. 8)

Even though the Contrarians and Ladson-Billings hail from different ends of the political spectrum, they both criticize school social studies for failing to live up to its promises to educate a competent citizenry.

Armed with data on the inadequate levels of knowledge and engagement thought necessary for competent citizenship, what do people propose we do about civic education? It is to this question that the chapter turns next.

Proposed Strategies to Improve Civic Education

Most scholars and policymakers offer proposals to reform civic education by seeking to increase students' civic knowledge and engagement. Probably the

most commonly proposed strategy is increasing students' exposure to the subjects and content thought most directly relevant to citizenship—civics, government and history (e.g., Albert Shanker Institute, 2003; Gibson & Levine, 2003; Leming, James, 2003; Soule & McConnell, 2006). For some reformers, this will be accomplished by decreasing social studies' alleged emphasis on thinking skills divorced from content (e.g., Leming, James, 2003; Rochester, 2003). Other reformers focus on content and course requirements in states' K-12 curriculum policies (e.g., Gibson & Levine, 2003; Lopez & Kirby, 2007; Soule & McConnell, 2006). They lament that schools do not give education in civics sustained, systematic attention on par with other subjects throughout the K-12 curriculum and, therefore, suggest increasing requirements. For example, the Center for Civic Education (2007) recommends at least 30 to 40 hours per year of specific attention to civics, government and democracy in K-7 classrooms, as well as 30 or more hours per year of attention to civic education in other content areas. They also recommend a one-semester course in eighth grade, 40 to 60 hours per year of sustained attention to social studies courses such as U.S. and world history in grades nine through eleven, and a one-year course in twelfth grade.[2]

Although increasing the amount of civics, government and history instruction in schools would be a welcome change for many reformers, others think that the accountability measures in the federally mandated No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act might prevent such changes (e.g., Gardner, N. A., 2004).

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[2] Most states do not have such rigorous requirements. Michigan, for example, requires some civics content in grades K-5 and one semester of civics or government in high school.

They argue that with NCLB's emphasis on instruction and testing in math and reading, other content has a tendency to fall off teachers' and administrators' radars.[3] Fully aware of the maxim that "if it isn't tested, it isn't taught" some reformers, therefore, recommend increasing accountability measures in civic education (e.g., Gibson & Levine, 2003; Lopez & Kirby, 2007; Soule & McConnell, 2006). This, they say, might include increasing the frequency with which the civics and government NAEP is given in the states and nationally. Reformers advocating this strategy tout the potential of the NAEP to assess instructional approaches, identify gaps in knowledge and performance among demographic groups, and hold policymakers accountable for the overall success of the schools (e.g., Gibson & Levine, 2003).

Other reformers argue it is necessary to improve the *quality* of the content that is being taught and assessed by focusing on the content of state standards (e.g., Gibson & Levine, 2003; Soule & McConnell, 2006). For example, Gagnon (2003) argues that existing standards are too vague or overly complex and too time consuming, leading to superficial coverage. Others contend that current state standards concentrate too much on the historical aspects of civic learning rather than on the relevance of citizenship and civic participation to students' lives (e.g., Soule & McConnell, 2006). Overall, many reformers agree that to improve civic education, policymakers, educators and researchers should work together to ensure that classroom instruction is guided by standards with a "civic core" (e.g., Gagnon, 2003; Gibson & Levine, 2003; Soule & McConnell, 2006).

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[3] Despite these beliefs, a recent study reveals that schools are not shifting away from teaching social studies directly because of NCLB (Center for information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 2008b).

Still, some reformers think that steps to increase content, institute accountability measures, and improve state curriculum standards may not be enough. They argue that the way to improve civic education is by instituting more service-learning opportunities and requirements for K-12 students (e.g., Gibson & Levine, 2003; Kirby et al., 2006). To be sure, there is a growing body of research that provides evidence for positive effects of service-learning on civic-related knowledge and skills, civic attitudes, intentions to serve in the future, and social capital (Billig, Root, & Jesse, 2005). Since only about half of all high schools currently offer service-learning opportunities, many people interested in improving civic education advocate increasing the availability of and funding for such programs (e.g., Gibson & Levine, 2003; Lopez & Kirby, 2007; Soule & McConnell, 2006). At the same time, service-learning advocates recognize that not all service experiences are equal. Many existing service experiences are isolated, one-time-only encounters that are disconnected from the curriculum and do not promote reflection and deep civic engagement (Gibson & Levine, 2003). Research suggests that service-learning is effective when it is implemented well, but when it is not, it is no more effective than traditional social studies coursework (Billig et al., 2005).

One critical element identified in successful service-learning programs is the knowledge and experience of the teachers facilitating them (Billig et al., 2005). Indeed, the teacher's crucial role does not escape the attention of most

people interested in reforming civic education.[4] Therefore, improving the

education and professional development of teachers is also a common

recommendation of civic education reformers (e.g., Gibson & Levine, 2003;

Soule & McConnell, 2006). Several reformers challenge teacher preparation

institutions to increase attention to civic education for pre-service and in-service

teachers, and policymakers to provide more support for professional

development programs (e.g., Gibson & Levine, 2003; Soule & McConnell, 2006).

Federal policymakers have responded to this challenge by making teacher

professional development a central feature of their recent funded initiatives to

improve civic education. Specifically, three federal programs focusing on civic

education in the schools include teacher professional development as a central

aspect of achieving their goals—the Teaching American History Grant program,

the National Endowment for the Humanities' (NEH) We the People program, and

the Presidential Academies for Teaching American History and Civics program.

These programs are significant because they have moved beyond *proposing*

ways to improve civic education to *enacting* measures intended to improve

teaching and learning. They aim to improve civic education by providing

teachers with professional development to enhance their knowledge of history

and civics, which presumably will improve the teachers' instructional practices

and students' learning.[5]

Together, current reform efforts emphasize providing more opportunities

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[4] Whereas people once believed that socioeconomic background was the most influential factor in student success, studies now show that schools in general and teachers in particular make a noticeable contribution to what children learn (Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005).
[5] I discuss these federal programs at length in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

and requirements for students and/or teachers to acquire civic knowledge and to engage in service-learning opportunities, and more measures to hold them accountable for their knowledge and engagement. If all the proposed reforms were successfully implemented, there would be increased requirements for civics and history instructional time and courses, more state and national assessments of students' civic knowledge, state standards with a stronger civic core, more requirements and opportunities for sustained and guided service-learning activities, and an abundance of professional development opportunities for teachers.   While I do not disagree that all of these changes could be important factors in improving civic education, I also argue they may provide little more than easily observable and measurable proxies for knowledge and engagement. I propose that educators and policymakers wishing to improve civic education should look beyond proxies for knowledge like standardized test scores and the number of courses taken on high school transcripts. They should move beyond the visible trappings of civic engagement like service-learning experiences and membership in civic associations. Further, they should not assume that providing teachers with more professional development naturally results in improved instruction and student learning. Rather, educators and policymakers should focus more attention on the thought processes underlying informed and engaged democratic citizenship. They should consider how students think with and about the information they encounter in courses and on standardized assessments. They should focus on fostering informed and responsible democratic thinking as students engage in service-learning activities, and assess

how the experiences change students' thinking. Finally, reformers should institute professional development opportunities that help teachers better understand and address students' thought processes. Attention to thinking has already had positive outcomes for educators aiming to improve students' understanding and performance in math, science and history education. It may hold similar promise for those aiming to improve understanding and performance in civic education.

Theoretical Framework

Civic educators, like all educators, are concerned with learning, and any concern with learning necessitates a concern with thinking. In their pioneering work on human thinking, Newell and Simon (1972) wrote:

> The study of learning…must start with a model of a performing organism, so that one can represent, as learning, the changes in the model…If the performance is not well understood, it is somewhat premature to study learning. (p. 8)

As Newell and Simon assert, we must understand performance before we can study learning, and one way of understanding performance is to identify and analyze the cognitive components that guide performance.

One promising area of research designed to identify and analyze cognitive components guiding performance is "expert-novice studies." Expert-novice studies began with DeGroot's study of chess masters in the 1960s, which attempted to understand how chess master were able to consistently outperform their opponents. Such studies attempt to understand the thinking underlying the skilled performances of experts, contrasting it with the thinking of novices who perform at less sophisticated levels. For example, researchers in math, science,

and history have described the cognitive aspects in their respective domains by studying the thinking of experts, those who "really understand" (Gardner, H., 1991, p. 7) and contrasting it with the thinking of novices. Expert-novice studies reveal that experts have domain-specific habits of mind that characterize sophisticated mathematical, scientific and historical thinking. Such habits shape experts' views of phenomena within their field *and* in new situations. These patterns of cognition and approaches to information differentiate disciplinary experts from novices, particularly scholastic learners, in significant ways (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000; Gardner, H., 1991). Those who truly understand—the mathematician, scientist, and historian—use disciplinary knowledge to frame problems they encounter within their field and, more significantly, to frame problems they encounter outside of their field, often shaping their worldviews. Experts appropriately apply their knowledge in new situations, whereas scholastic learners master the "literacies, concepts, and disciplinary forms of schools," but often fall back on immature, misconceived ideas when removed from the context of the classroom (Gardner, H., 1991, pp. 6-7).

Expert-novice studies inform educators by helping them picture the range of thinking from "naive" to "sophisticated," which can help them design instruction to assist students in achieving the understanding needed to move from school performance to performance in the world. Using the understanding of ways experts and novices approach problems, gather and organize information and produce "answers," teachers and scholars of math, science and history education

have sought ways to bridge gaps between experts' and novices' domain-specific thinking patterns. For example, studies on mathematical thinking reveal that mathematicians view computation, with which novices normally associate mathematics, as "only a tool in the real stuff of mathematics." Expert mathematical thinking actually involves "problem solving, and characterizing and understanding structure and pattern" of mathematical problems (Bransford et al., 2000, p. 164). Mathematics teacher and scholar of teaching Deborah Ball used research on expert mathematical thinking to guide instruction in her classroom. Ball went "beyond the boundaries of what is typically considered mathematics"— that is, simple computation—to develop "a [classroom] culture in which students conjecture, experiment, build arguments, and frame and solve problems—the work of mathematicians" (Bransford et al., 2000, pp. 164-166).

Similarly, in science education, Shirley J. Magnusson and Annemarie Sullivan Palincsar used scientific expertise to inform their teaching of elementary school students on the topic of light. They first identified the salient features of the scientific community's standards for understanding and communicating ideas (e.g. patterns in observations are stated as knowledge claims) and of the scientific concept of light (e.g. the angle of incoming light equals the angle of reflected light). Then, they designed instruction to bring students from their current understanding to more sophisticated understanding of the concept of light (Donovan & Bransford, 2005).

In history, Wineburg (1990) studied experts' and novices' reading of history texts and found that historians' tendency to scrutinize and question the

text they were reading characterized their historical understanding. As a high school history teacher, Bain (2000) used Wineburg's research on expert and novice thinking as a "teaching tool," using it "to fill in the cognitive details of such classroom activities as 'working with documents' or 'analyzing primary sources'" (p. 333). With a picture of expert and novice cognition, Bain and his students designed tools that students used to develop more complex definitions of history and to handle texts in a more sophisticated manner. In essence, Bain used research on expertise to help establish clear instructional objectives and design instruction to bridge the gap between his students' historical understanding and experts' historical understanding.

As teachers and scholars of teaching, Ball, Magnusson, Palincsar and Bain employed research on expert thinking in their work. Their purpose was not simply to produce school-savvy mathematicians, scientists or historians, but rather, to develop students' deep understanding and habits of mind so that they employ such thinking outside of school.

Such use of research on novice and more sophisticated thinking holds promise for civic educators. Those educating students for citizenship are also concerned with more than helping students master the concepts and literacies of school subjects (i.e., civics, government, and history). They want to prepare students to perform as informed, competent citizens in the outside world, and thus, want to help students develop the sophisticated thought processes that will help them do so.

Unfortunately, there is a dearth of cognitive research to help guide civic

education, with the exception of a few studies on students' understanding of political and social concepts (e.g., Adelson & O'Neil, 1966; Berti, 1994; Helwig, 1998), and even fewer on students' reasoning processes (e.g., Avery, 1992; Mosborg, 2002; Torney-Purta, 1994).[6] Although such research begins to offer civic educators a picture of student understanding, an important consideration in designing and carrying out instruction (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000), more research is needed—research that studies students' understanding of a wider range of concepts, across a wider range of grade levels, and that provides a clearer picture of how students reason about civic and political issues.

There is also little work on how more experienced, sophisticated thinkers engage in thinking about civic and political issues. Torney-Purta (1992) provides one exception with her study of how subjects with varying degrees of experience thinking about political issues—from novice to expert—thought about problem scenarios facing government officials. However, compared to fields like math, science and history, vague theoretical models of what constitutes the thinking embedded in civic education handicap civic educators and researchers.

Without a better understanding of the thinking citizens do when engaged with democratic institutions and issues, it is difficult to move forward with designing classroom instruction or teacher professional development that considers such thinking. Furthermore, by not including thinking practices in policies for civic education, reforms might miss key opportunities for innovation and improvement. Therefore, this dissertation seeks to fill a critical gap in educational research by providing an initial model of novice and more

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[6] Chapter 4 of this dissertation provides an extensive review of research on children's thinking.

sophisticated thought processes relevant to civic education.

Significance and Contribution

Civic education is, and always has been, one of the primary goals of U.S. public schooling. As Parker (1996) writes:

> The idea of educating children for democracy as opposed to say, educating them for authoritarianism or theocracy is central to the rationale for public education in the United States. It has not been the only rationale, to be sure . . . [y]et, the democratic mission has been resilient. (p. 3)

The resilience of the democratic mission of schools has been very clear since the September 11 terrorist attacks, as scholars, educators and policymakers have initiated, renewed, or strengthened efforts to reform and improve civic education in the schools.

Unfortunately, most of these efforts focus on proxies for civic knowledge and behavioral indicators of civic engagement, paying little attention to the thinking that can and should underlie informed, engaged citizenship. This dissertation offers a model of the thinking that underlies competent, responsible citizenship in a democracy. I agree with others who argue that "schools are best equipped to address the cognitive aspects of good citizenship" (Gibson & Levine, 2003, p. 12), but further contend that schools are only equipped to address these aspects if they know exactly what they are. We need to understand how sophisticated democratic thinkers organize, retrieve, and use information. We need to understand any differences that exist between novice and more sophisticated democratic thinkers so educators can design instruction to bridge the gap. Researchers in math, science, and history have already begun to

understand thinking in their fields. If civic education remains a primary goal of schooling in the United States, we can no longer afford to lag behind. In a government that rests on the decisions and actions of its citizens, understanding the democratic thinking that drives citizens' actions is essential if we wish to educate students to be sophisticated democratic thinkers.

<p style="text-align:center">Overview of Chapters</p>

Given the importance of improving civic education in the schools, the next chapter in this dissertation offers some historical perspective with which to view current reform efforts. It traces the history of civic education reform efforts from the Cold War era to the current post-9/11 era, aiming to better understand how cognitive research and civic education have converged in the past, and what lessons can be gleaned from past reform attempts. Such an understanding allows us a more informed appraisal of the current situation in civic education, and insight into how the research and experiences of past researchers and educators can guide us to more effective research and reform efforts today.

Three examples of recent reform efforts in civic education are the federal programs aiming to improve teaching and learning in civic education through professional development of history and civics teachers—the Teaching American History Grant Program, the NEH We the People program, and the Presidential Academies for Teaching American History and Civics program. What do these federal programs propose to do and what are the assumptions underlying them? To what degree does cognitive research influence the programs? Do they take into account the lessons that can be gleaned from past reform attempts? Chapter

3 addresses these questions, aiming to illuminate some of the assumptions underlying the recent federal programs, and to assess their potential to reform civic education in light of existing relevant research and lessons learned from past reform attempts.

I argue that all three policies emphasize the role of American history—especially a celebratory, nation-building version of American history—in students' civic education. They believe that such historical content knowledge will help ensure what they refer to as people's "civic memory," making American citizens more committed to the ideals and institutions of the United States. However, federal legislators fail to provide a convincing rationale for how the acquisition of historical content knowledge is going to contribute to improved citizenship. They imply that students will become more committed citizens by learning their nation's history, yet they ignore research on thinking that provides insight into *how* students might approach the historical content knowledge they encounter in the classroom. I argue that the absence of relevant research in the federal policies may result in failure to make any significant difference in teaching and learning.

One body of relevant research that federal policymakers might turn to consists of studies on children's thinking. Chapter 4 provides a review of such research, including an overview of results from standardized assessments of students' "factual" knowledge, studies of students' conceptions of fundamental democratic concepts, and studies of students' reasoning processes. I argue that, despite the important studies that exist, we need more research on students'

thinking relevant to civic education. Furthermore, I argue that we have virtually no research that provides a picture of sophisticated thinking relevant to civic education, meaning educators and policymakers are left with little to help them develop goals and instructional techniques to bring students to more sophisticated levels of thinking.

A study presented in Chapter 5 is an effort to fill this research gap. Using a modified grounded theory approach to analyze the work of political theorists influential in the field of civic education, I identify and describe cognitive components of what I call "democratic thinking." Treating the political theorists' texts as the products of domain-specific thinking, I uncovered four salient features of their thought processes: mental representations of key democratic concepts and conceptual tensions; formative knowledge, or knowledge in use; public reason; and deliberative decision-making. I argue that these were critical features of the thinking political theorists represent in their work, and that they were clearly interconnected and intertwined in the reasoning the scholars used in their publications. Moreover, I argue that the facets of thinking I identified were evident in the children's thinking described in Chapter 4.

While my study of the work of political theorists and the review of research on student thinking provided some useful categories of democratic thinking and suggestive differences between novice and more sophisticated thought processes, they did not provide a picture of democratic thinking *in action*. Chapter 6 introduces my empirical research and methods used to study thinking in action. The study focuses on one aspect of democratic thinking—formative

knowledge, or knowledge in use. By focusing on how subjects use knowledge, I address the knowledge component that many people feel is central to civic education, but view it within the context of the reasoning process. Indeed, I agree that knowledge is an important aspect of civic education but, in my preliminary study of sophisticated thinking, I found it is knowledge *in use* that is most important for democratic thinking.

Therefore, I use the think aloud method to study how eight civically and politically engaged political scientists and eight high school students reasoned about one controversial civic and political issue, the issue of bipartisanship. I addressed the questions:

2. How are the political scientists and students using knowledge?

   a. Do they draw upon existing knowledge when grappling with a public civic issue?

   b. What kind of knowledge are they using? Historical knowledge? Knowledge of current events? Knowledge from personal experience?

   c. Do they seek to acquire knowledge they do not possess? Where and how extensively do they look?

3. Are there differences in how the political scientists and students use knowledge? Similarities?

Chapter 7 reports one portion of my findings. It focuses on findings regarding the degree to which subjects used information and arguments that I provided them in the think aloud session, and the degree to which they moved

beyond the materials provided to use their own knowledge, conceptions and theories in reasoning about the issue. Furthermore, it describes the substance of said knowledge, conceptions and theories in order to provide insight into exactly *what* the subjects were using to reason.

Chapter 8, which presents the second portion of my findings from the study of students and political scientists, focuses on *how* subjects were using their knowledge, conceptions and theories to reason. Together, the results of the study provide important insight into how novice and more sophisticated thinkers reason about a civic and political issue, and the similarities and differences between them. This insight has implications for instruction in civic education, teacher education, civic education policy, and future research. I discuss these implications and conclude the dissertation in Chapter 9.

Chapter 2

The Role of Thinking in Civic Education Reform Efforts:
Lessons from the Cold War Era to 9/11

As discussed in Chapter 1, I propose that attention to the cognitive processes necessary for responsible democratic citizenship is a promising approach for civic education reform efforts. I do not suppose, however, that this is the first attempt to bring cognitive science to bear on civic education. This chapter is an attempt to better understand the role cognitive science has played in civic education research and reform efforts in the past. It addresses the questions: At what points and in what ways have cognitive science and civic education converged? What lessons can be gleaned from past efforts? What has been missing, overlooked, or underemphasized in past reform efforts? Addressing such questions will lead to a more informed appraisal of the current situation in civic education, and insight into the ways in which the research and experiences of past researchers and educators might guide us to more effective research and reform efforts in civic education today.

The story presented in this chapter begins in the Cold War era United States and brings us up to the current post-9/11 era. Though I acknowledge that the history of civic education before the Cold War is significant, there are several reasons that this bounded timeframe will provide a necessary and sufficient historical perspective for this particular dissertation. First, it was within the

context of the Cold War that the "cognitive revolution" began. Principals of the cognitive revolution largely agree that cognitive science became officially recognized in late 1956, when the Massachusetts Institute of Technology hosted the Symposium on Information Theory. The symposium brought together many of the leading figures in the communication and human sciences, including Allen Newell, Herbert Simon, and Noam Chomsky, all of whom became recognized leaders in the field of cognitive science (Gardner, H., 1985). From 1956 on, the science of studying human thought processes began its steady ascent, eventually overtaking behaviorism as the dominant research framework for understanding how human beings operate. Because this dissertation is concerned with the way cognitive science has and can inform civic education, it makes sense to take a focused look at the development of civic education beginning around the time when cognitive science became an "officially" recognized research paradigm.

A second reason to begin this story during the Cold War is the educational impact of one of the defining events of the era, the Soviet launch of *Sputnik*. When the Soviets successfully launched their satellite, *Sputnik I,* into orbit on October 4, 1957, the event shocked American citizens and deeply injured national pride. At a time when concerns over national security were already high, the seeming superiority of Russian scientists made citizens question the standards of academic achievement in American schools. Educators, policymakers and laypeople alike called for reforms in all areas of schooling, at first in math and science, but eventually in the domain of civic education as well.

Accountability became a watchword of the time, rousing educational leaders to begin developing ways to assess student achievement and academic improvement across the nation. This eventually resulted in the creation and administration of the first National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in 1969-1970, with "citizenship" as one of the first areas tested (Lehmann, 2004).[7] In addition, the *Sputnik* launch and the resulting public anxiety spurred the federal government, who had previously left educational matters to state and local governments, to give serious attention to school reform, leading to passage of the 1958 National Defense Education Act, the most comprehensive educational reform bill the nation had ever seen. For more than a decade afterwards, the federal government contributed an unprecedented amount of funding to support curriculum innovation, including in the area of social studies, the school subject with the central purpose of educating citizens (Dow, 1991). With government and public support behind them, some of the greatest minds shaping the new field of cognitive science—most notably Jerome Bruner— became involved in educational reform efforts, marking the first, and arguably the most pronounced, convergence of cognitive science and civic education we have seen to date.

Therefore, this chapter begins in the Cold War United States, when many people interested in improving civic education within the pro-Democracy, anti-Communist climate focused on teaching students "critical thinking" skills. However, as the next section of the chapter argues, following the establishment of cognitive science and its foray into the world of education in the 1960s, those

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[7] Science and writing were the other two subjects assessed in 1969.

interested in better understanding and developing learners' thought processes

saw the current emphasis on skills in civic education as insufficient. Using the

unprecedented amount of federal funds supporting curriculum reform in the post-

Sputnik period, "New Social Studies" reformers in the 1960s designed innovative

curricula that emphasized using the "structure of the discipline," an idea from the

work of cognitive scientist Jerome Bruner, as a framework for organizing and

making sense of factual information. Despite the quality of the curriculum that

was developed, however, the New Social Studies movement failed to achieve

what reformers envisioned—partly because they neglected to take into account

the political and social climate, and partly because they ironically neglected to

give enough consideration to the thinking of teachers and students. As the next

section of the chapter shows, concerns over the concepts and theories students

were developing outside the classroom versus what they were encountering in

textbooks and instruction, led to some effort in the 1970s to learn what was

happening in classrooms and what students were learning. Unfortunately,

people interpreted emerging information on what students knew and were able to

do as deficits in students' knowledge, which contributed to an overall sense that

the schools were failing to do their jobs. This culminated in the 1983 *Nation at*

Risk report that alerted the public to a crisis in education and led to a movement

for excellence in education, accountability and standards. As the final section of

this chapter argues, although the focus on content standards and accountability

in the late 1980s and 1990s did little to reflect existing cognitive research or to

encourage further research, such research nonetheless burgeoned throughout

the 1990s, providing new and valuable information about students' thinking and how they learn.

Tracing the history of civic education from the Cold War era to the post-9/11 era provides a useful historical perspective to view current reform efforts. The beginning of that timeframe marked the emergence of the "cognitive turn in education," the fruits of which we are now seeing in increasing numbers in the disciplines of math, science and history (Donovan & Bransford, 2005). It saw the creation of the NAEP program and increased federal involvement in education, both of which have grown over time to help shape the contours and controversies of the educational landscape in which we find ourselves today. Finally, although the particulars of the post-*Sputnik* era were unique, it was a period of crisis characterized by intense anxiety about perceived threats to national security and the democratic way of life, not unlike the post-9/11 era. In both periods, and at other times throughout the half-century separating them, perceived threats to the democratic experiment heightened concerns over the education of citizens, inspiring reiterations or clarifications of what citizenship and civic education mean in a democratic society, and impacting the research and reform agendas of the times. As this chapter will show, accountability measures, the federal role in education, and the political and social climate have significantly influenced the role and impact of cognitive research in civic education reform efforts over the last 50 plus years. Those involved in the reform efforts, researchers and educators who have attempted to blur the boundaries between civic education

and cognitive science, offer many important lessons, all of which can inform present-day efforts to improve teaching and learning in civic education.

Civic Education in the 1950s Cold War Era: Unquestioning Patriotism or Critical Thinking?

Although *Sputnik* heightened policymakers' and the public's concern over the state of education, increased disquiet about the American educational system was obvious by the mid-1950s. The rivalry between the two great "super powers" that emerged from World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union, and the accompanying ideological struggle between capitalism and communism set the tone for the entire post-war era (Evans, 2004). Inevitably, the threats posed by the USSR turned people's attention toward the schools, where the next generation of citizens, those who would carry the torch of scientific achievement and democratic ideals, was being molded. Many believed that the schools needed to dedicate themselves to rigorous academic training to ensure U.S. superiority and national security (Dow, 1991). For example, in his 1953 manifesto, *Educational Wastelands*, historian Arthur Bestor (1953) railed against the public schools, particularly progressive "educationists," for their failure to provide a rigorous liberal education that would prepare students for the challenges of the present and future. Though not all entirely agreed with Bestor's harsh criticism, it exemplified critiques of the schools that emerged in the Cold War era (Sizer & Schen, 1987).

In such a period of crisis, when the threat of the Soviet domination loomed heavy for Americans, civic education did not go unnoticed. In the preface to a

collection of essays on public schooling, Professor Frederick C. Gruber (1960) expressed the Cold War concern with civic education, stating:

> The perpetuation of and improvement of democracy depends upon the active, intelligent participation of all citizens…We are now engaged in a great global conflict, testing whether this nation and this [democratic] ideal can survive. If the American people no longer believe in it, democracy as we know it will die without the firing of a pistol shot. (p. 13)

As Gruber's quote nicely captures, Cold War anxieties in American society presented a paradox for those in the business of civic education who were torn between teaching unquestioning patriotism and critical thinking.

On the one hand, Americans' belief in democracy, their patriotic dedication to American ideology, was crucial. That notion seemed to demand that schools position themselves as non-subversive, democratic institutions promoting democratic values—something many schools tried to achieve (Butts, 1980). It suggested that the theme of the struggle over communism should dominate classroom instruction, representing an attempted "ideological purification" of American citizens. Such a mood threatened to hamper efforts to teach students to look critically at controversial issues (Evans, 2004). Indeed, in a 1959 review of the New York State Citizenship Education program, Professor Lawrence Howard (1959) reported that the goals of the program emphasized a U.S.-centric study of history and developing in students "enthusiasm for the American way of life and acceptance of civil responsibility" (p. 108). Although it is difficult to say if New York's citizenship program was representative of civic education programs across the nation in the 1950s, or of what was actually going on in classrooms, it

implies that teachers were under some pressure to promote unquestioning patriotism. One educator from Illinois claimed:

> Teachers have been subjected to attack because they are teaching their pupils to investigate critically certain controversial issues. At least by implication, some who have assailed them have wished for the schools to present only one side of a question. Others apparently want nothing taught about certain issues. By this stand they endorse ignorance. (Park, 1957, p. 15)

Ben-Porath (2006) calls such a tendency to emphasize social unity and to quell discussion of multiple viewpoints during times of perceived threat to national and personal security as "belligerent citizenship." She argues that although such a notion of citizenship can be necessary and healthy in a period of conflict, it comes at a high cost in the field of education, tending to emphasize uncritical nationalistic tendencies and to suppress multiple perspectives and critical thought.

On the other hand, the nature of the Cold War crisis may have slightly tempered such tendencies, for it was a struggle against the totalitarianism and suppression of individualism and critical thought that Communism represented. The enactment of democratic citizenship was just as crucial as a belief in it. As Gruber stated, the survival of American democracy in the face of Communist threat was dependent upon "the active, intelligent participation of all citizens." In that sense, Cold War sentiments also demanded that teachers not encourage unquestioning patriotism, but encourage students to inquire and think critically about controversial issues in democratic society. Inquiry and critical thinking about controversial issues would not only foster a "clearer grasp of and deeper faith in democracy" (Holmes, 1955), but it would also run directly counter to the

sort of teaching and educational aims associated with Communist ideology. For

example, after outlining the goals of the New York Citizenship Program, Howard

(1959) argued:

> Any program for creating enthusiasm for the 'American way of life' and the
> 'moral and spiritual values of the past' demands considerable elaboration
> and might be challenged as questionable on the grounds that our present
> needs demand an air of critical evaluation inconsistent with much self-
> praise. Taken collectively these goals seem hardly up to the demand of
> supplying the intellectual leadership necessary to prevent men from being
> relegated to robots. (p. 108)

An "air of critical evaluation" in classrooms such as Howard suggested was

decidedly pro-Democracy, and therefore, anti-Communist. As Professor

Marguerite Fisher pointed out in a 1959 study of teaching in Soviet schools, the

greatest weakness of schools behind the "iron curtain" was that there was "no

attempt to encourage independent or critical thinking" (p. 206). Fisher wrote,

"The teacher does not ask for opinions, debates or differences of interpretation.

The pupils repeat what the teacher has said or the information given in the

textbook" (p. 206). Following these arguments, if Communist education entailed

rote memorization and recitation, and stifled difference and debate, then

democratic education should emphasize critical thinking about controversial

issues.

Indeed, even if there was some pressure on educators to put "a chill" on

controversial issues during the Cold War period (Evans, 2004), critical thinking

about controversial issues still seemed to be a preoccupation of scholars and

civic educators in the Cold War era (e.g., Gathany, 1951; Irwin, 1948; Park,

1957). As one of several educators arguing for an emphasis on critical thinking

contended, "democracy is strengthened by critical examination rather than unquestioning acceptance" (Barth, 1960). Therefore, educators involved in civic education reform efforts focused much of their criticism on the lack of attention to critical thinking in existing practices. For example, Stanley Dimond (1953), who led a study of civic education in Detroit schools as part of the Detroit Citizenship Project, reported that the schools were teaching the ideals of American democracy effectively but gave insufficient attention to "critical thinking," a lack of which could supposedly make citizens vulnerable to totalitarian ideas (Halvorsen & Mirel, in press).[8] Likewise, researchers who were part of the Columbia University Citizenship Education Project (Columbia University Citizenship Education Project & Vincent, 1958) pointed out that improved methods in education focus not on "knowledge alone," but involve "critical thinking" (p. 23).

With such a concern over critical thinking, several institutions developed instruments for evaluating student competence in such analysis. These included the Test of Critical Thinking in Social Science developed by the American Council on Education in 1954 and A Test of Critical Thinking developed by members of the University of Illinois's Illinois Project in 1962 (Oliver & Shaver, 1962).

However, other social studies educators saw critical thinking as the linchpin for social studies reform as highly inadequate. As part of the Harvard University Social Studies Project that began in 1956, Professors Donald Oliver

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[8] A greater emphasis on critical thinking was only one of several recommendations, and in the end, Detroit Citizenship Education Study (DCES) educators actually emphasized the "emotional adjustment" of students above all else. In fact, upon studying the effects of their reforms, DCES researchers found some modest negative results in the area of critical thinking (Halvorsen & Mirel, in press).

and James Shaver (1962) reviewed existing tests designed to evaluate the competence of students to analyze political controversy critically. They found that most fell "under the rubric 'critical thinking,'" which, upon review, they found to be "disappointing" (p. 10-1). They found that most test designers characterized critical thinking as merely a list of general skills, borrowed from the scientific method in many cases, and that there was little if any indication of how the discrete skills they listed might relate to one another in the thinking process. For example, the Committee on Critical Thinking, sponsored by the American Council on Education, defined critical thinking as:

> (1) The ability to define a problem. (2) The ability to select pertinent information for the solution of a problem. (3) The ability to recognize stated and unstated assumptions. (4) The ability to formulate and select relevant and promising hypotheses. (5) The ability to draw conclusions. (p. 10-14)

Oliver and Shaver argued that this list implied that the skills make up a related sequence, but that the committee did not indicate what the relationship between skills was. Furthermore, they argued that the list was loosely based on the scientific method, which should be questioned as an "exclusive model for dealing with social and political issues" (p. 10-16). Most disappointing to Oliver and Shaver, however, was that developers of all the tests they evaluated discussed critical thinking without considering the central position of values in making political decisions or the relationship between values and the thinking process. They wrote:

> The authors…imply a relationship between good citizenship and critical thinking. If we assume that citizens should think critically in making political decisions, then it seems to follow that some basic questions about the components of the decision-making process should be raised. In other words, what things must an individual consider in arriving at an

intellectual decision? A major omission in the tests reviewed is their failure to deal with ethical issues. Political decisions in western democracies are made within the context of western political values. These values are not more or less common to all Americans but they often conflict. The decision-making process, then, must involve some strategy for dealing with these conflicting values. (pp. 10-19-10-20)

In Oliver and Shaver's view, critical thinking was not adequate to deal with the cognitive processes underlying desired citizenship behaviors because it did not consider all the components, including values, that go into the decision-making process in which democratic citizens must engage.

Oliver and Shaver were not the only reform-minded educators in the 1960s to move beyond critical thinking. They were part of a group of scholars and educators who were leaders in what became known as the "New Social Studies" movement. To be sure, those associated with the New Social Studies movement did not disregard the value of critical thinking. As one of the leaders of the New Social Studies, Edwin Fenton (1967), conceded:

Teachers in every field share responsibility for teaching the skills of inquiry. Physicists, historians and teachers of literature should all challenge their students to develop and test hypotheses—tentative explanations adopted provisionally to explain certain facts and guide the investigation of others—and to learn the rules of logic which govern the process. (p. 11)

However, like Oliver and Shaver, proponents of the New Social Studies regarded critical thinking as too general and vague. Instead, they believed the answer to improving instruction in social studies subjects was turning to the disciplines, each with its own unique method of inquiry, and its own set of problems and body of knowledge—something the emphasis on critical thinking seemed to miss entirely. Fenton argued:

Each discipline has its own peculiar elements. Historians cannot set up an experiment to determine the cause of the Civil War any more than physicists could determine whether or not the first atomic bomb would work by poking through dusty records in a library. Hence, although the responsibility to teach skills falls on every teacher, each discipline must work at the problem within its own framework, a framework determined largely by the structure of the discipline itself. (p. 11)

The idea of the "structure of the discipline" that Fenton mentioned emerged from the field of cognitive science in the late 1950s and was an idea popularized by one the leading scholars of cognitive science, Jerome Bruner. It became a central focus of a huge number of reform efforts throughout the 1960s, including those involving Fenton and other New Social Studies educators, which an unprecedented amount of federal funding supported. That period of intense scholar-led, federally funded reform efforts was a product of the educational climate resulting from the Soviet launch of *Sputnik* on October 4, 1957.

Structure, Concepts, and Inquiry: The New Social Studies Movement of the 1960s

During World War II, the Manhattan Project and other war-related research activities increased the social value of trained intelligence in American society, encouraging the academic community to participate in programs of social change in unprecedented numbers. Cold War concerns about the quality of instruction in U.S. public schools raised by the likes of Arthur Bestor prompted a growing interest among university professors in school curriculum and instruction. As a result, by the mid-1950s, a number of curriculum projects in mathematics and science were underway, but because policymakers were reluctant to become involved in school matters traditionally left to the states, leaders of the projects struggled to receive federal support (Dow, 1991).

The Soviet launch of *Sputnik* changed all that. The deep public concern about the quality of American education raised by the Soviets' lead in the space race prompted Congress to pass the National Defense Education Act in 1958, which authorized more than $1 billion for a range of school reforms, including curriculum projects. The National Science Foundation (NSF), which had already been funding math and science projects, rapidly increased its curriculum support. The cast of characters involved in the math and science curriculum reform projects was impressive. Physicist Jerrold Zacharias of M.I.T, mathematician Edward Begle of Yale, biologist H. Bentley Glass of Johns Hopkins, and psychologist Jerome Bruner of Harvard were just a few of the top-notch academics trying to improve instruction in the schools (Dow, 1991).

In September 1959, these and other scholars and teachers gathered at Woods Hole, New York, to review what participants had already learned from the existing curriculum projects. Jerome Bruner, co-founder and first director of Harvard's Center for Cognitive Studies and credited as one of the founders of cognitive science (Gardner, H., 1985), chaired the conference. His summary report, titled *The Process of Education* (1960), became a seminal piece that would make some of the ideas discussed at the conference the center of school reform efforts in all areas and would help bring about a cognitive turn in education (Dow, 1991).

Although the ideas emerging from the Woods Hole conference are not typically associated with civic education, it is important to note that the education of citizens in the post-*Sputnik*, Cold War era was an underlying goal for scholars

at the conference, or at least for Bruner himself. In the introduction to *The Process of Education*, Bruner (1960) wrote:

> What may be emerging as a mark of our own generation is a widespread renewal of concern for the quality of and intellectual aims of education—but without abandonment of the ideal that education should serve as a means of training well-balanced citizens for a democracy…The trend is accentuated by what is almost certain to be a long-range crisis in national security, a crisis whose resolution will depend upon a well-educated citizenry. (p. 1)

However, although Bruner's introduction implies that the ideas presented in his book somehow related to civic education, it never became a central idea in the text or in the reform efforts it would inspire.

Bruner related several ideas discussed by Woods Hole participants in *The Process of Education*, but there were two ideas that people most immediately took up: the structure of the discipline and students' readiness for learning. Bruner (1960), whose own work focused on the conceptual organization of information in cognition (Gardner, H., 1985), wrote that the dominant idea among participants at Woods Hole was that knowing the fundamental structures of the disciplines—the diverse disciplinary concepts, principles, generalizations and methods of inquiry—was critical for learning. Bruner claimed that knowing a field's fundamental structure could (1) make a subject more comprehensible by essentially winnowing it down to its key ideas and principles; (2) aid in retrieval of information by providing an organizing framework and patterns; (3) aid in application of ideas and principles in new situations; and (4) serve as a common thread for curricula from elementary through secondary school.[9] He referred to knowing the structure of the discipline as "a minimum requirement for using

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[9] Bruner was very explicit in stating that these were all ideas in need of research.

knowledge, for bringing it to bear on problems and events one encounters outside a classroom—or in classrooms one enters later in one's training" (pp. 12-13).

In discussing readiness for learning, Bruner (1960) argued that "any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development" (p. 33). This meant that educators should consider a child's cognitive developmental level when designing instruction. Bruner wrote:

> Research on the intellectual development of the child highlights the fact that at each stage of development the child has a characteristic way of viewing the world and explaining it to himself. The task of teaching a subject to a child at any particular age is one of representing the structure of that subject in terms of the child's way of viewing things. (p. 33)

After considering a child's current level of cognitive development, Bruner argued, educators should design materials to challenge the learner to reach the next level of cognitive development. Linking this idea back to the structure of the discipline, he then claimed that by both translating materials for a child and challenging him to advance, it becomes possible to introduce him at an early age to the fundamental ideas and principles of "any subject."

Although the idea of the structure of the discipline seemed naturally applicable in the school subjects of math and science, it would prove revolutionary in the social studies, which theretofore strove for an *interdisciplinary* approach to instruction for the purposes of civic education. Indeed, in a September 1961 *Saturday Review* piece titled, "Needed: Revolution in the Social Studies," historian Charles R. Keller argued that to catch up with the changes happening in math, science and other subjects, the integrated subject of social

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studies should be broken into the disciplines of "history and the social sciences."

He argued that courses should emphasize their unique disciplinary concepts and

methods of inquiry, and that colleges and schools should form partnerships. He

also argued that too many social studies educators emphasized the creation of

good citizens rather than the disciplines, and suggested that good citizenship

might be a product of learning to think and understand in the disciplines, rather

than the product of instruction aimed at promoting democratic citizenship

(Hertzberg, 1981).

As Keller was calling for a revolution in social studies, some social studies

projects, including the aforementioned Harvard Social Studies Project of Oliver

and Shaver, were already underway. Furthermore, massive federal government

support of social studies—or more accurately, history and the social sciences—

had already begun, an expansion of the support already extended to math and

science. In 1961, the NSF funded two new curriculum projects in anthropology

and sociology (Hertzberg, 1981). In 1963, they funded a newly founded

elementary social studies program at Educational Services Incorporated (ESI) in

Cambridge, Massachusetts, where Jerome Bruner and his colleagues first

conceived of what would become Man: A Course of Study (MACOS), another

federally funded project (Dow, 1991). In October 1962, the United States Office

of Education (USOE) also became involved, announcing "Project Social Studies"

and calling for proposals from educators, historians and social scientists to

improve research, instruction, teacher education and dissemination of

information. In July 1963, they reported that seven curriculum centers, eleven

research projects, and two developmental activities had been approved for funding, one of which was the Harvard Social Studies Project (Evans, 2004). All or most of the new projects, which became known collectively as the New Social Studies, emphasized the structures of the individual disciplines and their key concepts; discovery teaching and learning; using the modes of inquiry used by historians and social scientists; and the idea that "any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development" (Hertzberg, 1981)

By the mid-1960s, in fact, it was clear that many social studies educators were influenced by or using these Brunerian ideas, especially structure, inquiry and concepts. There were 12 Project Social Studies centers, and the NSF had added the High School Geography Project and MACOS to its list of funded projects by 1965 (Hertzberg, 1981). In 1967, Fenton published *The New Social Studies*, describing the movement and the projects utilizing the ideas.

However, people seemed to attach different meanings to ideas like structure, inquiry and concepts, sometimes to the extent that they were contradictory. Likewise, the ideas did not seem to penetrate the schools and classrooms as much as they penetrated educators' rhetoric (Hertzberg, 1981). For example, recounting his experiences with the New Social Studies, William W. Goetz (1994), who coordinated the adoption of a New Social Studies project in the school district where he taught, explained that implementation of Brunerian ideas "proved to be a chilling experience" (p. 100). He learned that "the jargon of revolution--structures and concepts--was not the stuff of teacher talk" (p. 101).

Far from creating a revolution in the schools, the elementary school teachers merely wove the new program into the existing "expanding environments" social studies program. While the New Social Studies emphasized using primary sources like those used by historians and social scientists, the teachers asked for a textbook series to use as a "springboard" for inquiry. Upon visiting classrooms, he found instruction was still organized around textbook readings, worksheets and recitations. Although Goetz saw more progress at the high school level, Brunerian ideas never entered the classrooms and the thinking of teachers to the extent that he had first envisioned.

Goetz was not the only one to find problems with implementation of the New Social Studies. By the late 1960s, just as publication and dissemination of New Social Studies materials was picking up steam, the *ideas* associated with the New Social Studies were running out of it (Fenton, 1991). People reflecting on the New Social Studies cite many reasons for its failure (e.g., Dow, 1991; Fenton, 1991; Goetz, 1994; Hertzberg, 1981), but four main reasons are salient: (1) inattention to teachers' thinking; (2) lack of consideration of the politics associated with curriculum issues; (3) a disregard for the forces transforming society outside the classroom walls; and (4) inadequate consideration of the needs of students within that transformed society.

First, people reflecting on the failure of the New Social Studies argue that the people running the project centers and trying to spearhead curriculum implementation may have fully understood the Brunerian ideas (i.e. "structure of the discipline" and "readiness for learning") underlying their projects, but many

teachers did not. The teachers who were expected to implement the curriculum were far removed from the culture and scholarship that produced it (Fenton, 1991). For example, leaders of the MACOS project learned that, for change to come about, the great mass of teachers expected to enact the curriculum had to be involved in the curriculum redesign process. They needed opportunities to discuss and work out their anxieties about teaching the new materials, and they needed to gain a better understanding of the scholarship informing design of the new materials (Dow, 1991). Instead, observers say, leaders of the workshops introducing the curriculum often just lectured to teachers and then expected them to go back to their classrooms and implement the materials. Workshop leaders did not adequately familiarize teachers with the research findings or theories that supported the materials. In addition, teachers lacked opportunities to see teaching of the materials modeled or to practice with the materials and receive feedback, opportunities that the New Social Studies curriculum leaders later saw as necessary for the teachers to change their teaching practices (Fenton, 1991).

Another reason that observers say the New Social Studies failed was that the project leaders neglected to adequately consider the politics of the curricula they wanted to implement. They did not recognize, as James M. Becker noted in the pages of *Social Education*, that educational change "seldom moves far ahead of public attitudes" (as cited in Hertzberg, 1981, p. 116). This was most evident in the story of MACOS, the elementary social studies project out of Cambridge, Massachusetts, which was closely associated with Bruner. Using a largely anthropological perspective, the curriculum's overriding question, was "What is

human about human beings?" As students addressed that question, the curriculum introduced them to cultures vastly different from American culture, and practices like polygamy and geronticide. The subject matter included in MACOS provided an easy target for the religious and political right, both of which had members who began reacting against the status quo in education in the early 1970s. Many religious Americans, particularly evangelical Protestants, began campaigns to make schools more responsive to the sensibilities of students from religious families, largely in response to 1960s Supreme Court decisions to ban school prayer and bible readings in schools (Mirel, 2002). At the same time, the political right moved to return educational matters solely to the hands of local communities and the states in response to the federal government's increased involvement and funding since *Sputnik* and throughout the 1960s (Dow, 1991). Reflecting that political context, MACOS met resistance from organizations like Citizens for a Moral Education in Florida, the John Birch Society and Citizens United for Responsible Education in Maryland, and a parent-led conservative group of citizens in Arizona.

Then, in 1975, the dispute over MACOS reached the floor of Congress when, in a meeting of the House Committee on Science and Technology that reviewed the NSF budget, Congressman John B. Conlan (R-Arizona) objected to the MACOS appropriation on grounds that federal subsidies for educational materials put the government in direct competition with the commercial textbook industry. He took the opportunity to also point out that the curriculum promoted beliefs and values not in accordance with those of parents and local

communities, as the parent-led group in his home state had demonstrated. As a result of the congressional investigation and negative publicity that followed, the NSF terminated several science and social studies curriculum projects and the sale of MACOS curriculum materials plummeted (Dow, 1991). As MACOS leader Peter Dow (1991) wrote:

> Reforms that appeared to be purely scholarly in their origins turned out to be profoundly political in their applications. Failure to comprehend this, and to design and implement MACOS in a way that was responsive to these political realities, doomed the course to premature demise" (p. 228).

People reflecting on the failure of the New Social Studies also argue that reformers not only failed to account for the political forces surrounding them, they failed to adequately account for the social forces, specifically the chaos and controversy that characterized the 1960s (Fenton, 1991; Hertzberg, 1981). By the early 1970s, American citizens had witnessed the assassination of John F. and Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr., escalation of the Vietnam War and the onslaught of a massive anti-war movement, and violent confrontations between blacks and whites in cities like Detroit, Chicago and Washington, D.C. (Gerstle, 2001). Fenton (1991) pointed out that New Social Studies curricula that had been developed in the post-*Sputnik* era to help the Americans beat the Soviets seemed archaic in the new social context.   Apparently, education needed to help students deal with the issues they faced in society, which many regarded as the appropriate education for citizenship.

Unfortunately, even though Bruner (1960) envisioned his approach as "a means of training well-balanced citizens for a democracy" (p. 1), and Keller saw

good citizenship as an indirect product of teaching students disciplinary thinking, most leaders of the New Social Studies movement failed to adequately explain how the disciplinary thinking they advocated could support the thinking necessary for citizenship. In some ways, this was similar to the mistake made by proponents of critical thinking in the 1950s, who, Oliver and Shaver pointed out, made a leap between critical thinking and good citizenship.

In fact, Oliver and Shaver, who people ironically considered part of the New Social Studies movement, were also early critics of the structure of the disciplines approach because of its failure to meet all the needs of civic education. They (1966) argued that the academic scholar as the "model of intelligent citizenry" was inadequate, largely because it failed to take into account how to deal with the immediate, controversial issues that citizens were faced with in society.

At the same time, Oliver and Shaver did not deny the valuable lessons from cognitive science; they also argued that students who were faced with these issues come to class with a "social theory" already in mind, writing:

> [The student] brings to the instructional setting a fairly stable set of interrelated personal constructs which affect how he reacts, both emotionally and intellectually to political and social events. Instruction must be seen, therefore, as a more challenging task than simply providing the tools of the academic; rather it is one of shaping, changing, and developing intellectual and emotional orientations already present. (p. 232)

In essence, Oliver and Shaver were emphasizing the point that educators had to account for student's thinking when designing instruction, a point Bruner made in *The Process of Education*. Unfortunately, it was also an idea so overshadowed

by the idea of the structure of the disciplines that it also led many to inaccurately believe that Bruner and his ideas ignored the needs of children.

Indeed, many new teachers entering the field in the late 1960s dismissed Bruner, instead promoting reformers like Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner (1969), who advocated "relevance" and argued that current reformers failed to recognize the vast changes happening in society (Goetz, 1994; Hertzberg, 1981). People scrutinized and attacked classroom instruction, for which textbooks often served as the proxy, for its failure to deal with the controversial issues facing students. For example, in a 1965 review of textbooks, Shaver found the "materials presented a picture of the socio-political world sufficiently unrealistic as to cause students to wonder about the gap between the image presented by their texts and that seen everyday in the newspapers and other mass media" (as cited in American Political Science Association Committee on Pre-Collegiate Education, 1971). In his 1967 book, *History and the Social Sciences*, Mark Krug emphasized the paradox between the "far-reaching demands made for civic education and the reality that one encounters in civics classrooms" (p. 200). He disparagingly noted that civic education in classrooms was limited to the study of the Constitution and the structure and function of government, and that textbooks—used as the cornerstone of instruction in civics classrooms—avoided controversial issues and any commitment to refinement and improvement of government. And echoing Oliver and Shaver's assertion that students' social theories had to be considered in instruction, Krug contended that the biggest problem with textbooks' non-treatment of such topics was that it erroneously

assumes that students are *tabula rasa* and are not aware of the existence of controversy and problems in society.

The enfranchisement of 18-year-olds in July of 1971 with the 26th amendment to the U.S. Constitution only intensified concerns about civic education. For example, Catherine Cornbleth (1971) pointed out, "Now that students will have immediate opportunities for political participation, it seems more important that they be prepared for efficacious, responsible participation than it was when civic education was primarily for future use" (p. 326). She voiced concerns about the effects that civic education practices might have on the youth voting population, arguing that people often attributed the "political cynicism and apathy among young people today" in part to "discrepancies between the distorted idealism of civic education programs and the realities of American society and politics" (p. 326).

So deep were concerns about the inadequacy of instruction in schools that scholars from the political science discipline also weighed in on civic education in the early 1970s. The American Political Science Association (APSA) formed the Committee on Pre-Collegiate Education in 1970 and, in 1971, released a report on the status of what they called "political science education" in the schools. Basing most of their criticism on analyses of school textbooks, the APSA (1971) bemoaned the lack of controversy and conflict in political science instruction, reporting, "Much of political science instruction in elementary and secondary schools transmits a naïve, unrealistic and romanticized image of political life which confuses the ideals of democracy with the realities of politics" (p. 437). The

committee (1971) characterized contemporary civic education instruction in schools as a failure, arguing:

> On the whole, instruction about civics and government fails to develop within students a capacity to think about political phenomena in conceptually sophisticated ways; an understanding of, and skill in the process of social scientific inquiry; or a capacity to systematically analyze political decisions and values." (p. 442).

One reason the APSA weighed in on "political education" in the schools was because, beginning in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, many political scientists had become interested in tracing the origins and development of adults' political choices, behaviors and attitudes. Such interest led to investigations of children's political understandings and attitudes, which gave rise to a distinct branch of political science called "political socialization." Political socialization research provided some insight into children's "naïve theories" and knowledge that could have become a more prominent aspect of New Social Studies reform efforts. For example, political scientist Fred Greenstein (1969) investigated the political knowledge of American children in grades four through eight and found, among other things, that young children had little knowledge of the roles and duties of political leaders and conceived of them as benevolent leaders.

In addition to political scientists, psychologists conducted some research on children's political thinking in the 1960s that could have helped inform civic education. For example, Joseph Adelson and colleagues (Adelson, Green, & O'Neil, 1969; Adelson & O'Neil, 1966) conducted interviews with 11-, 13-, 15- and 18-year olds to trace the development of their sense of community and their

idea of law. They argued that between 13 and 15, and refined between 15 and 18, adolescents acquire the capacity to imagine institutions abstractly rather than in terms of specific, discrete activities; a positive view of law and government, which stresses the administrative aspect, as opposed to the negative or coercive view; an appraisal of political events and laws in light of their consequences on the collectivity rather than on individuals; and a grasp of the nature and needs of the community. Robert Hess and Judith Torney (1967) conducted a questionnaire study of the political knowledge and understanding of children in grades two through eight, verifying several of Greenstein's findings and providing additional information about younger children's conceptions of government and law.

Despite the potential of such research to inform civic education, there is little to suggest that it played any role in reform efforts, perhaps because it was disseminated after the New Social Studies projects were already in the late stages of development. Indeed, the New Social Studies movement that emerged out of the burgeoning field of cognitive science may have failed partially because it did not adequately address students' thinking, especially their thinking about the controversial issues that surrounded them in society. However, in the 1970s, reports explicitly concerned with influencing civic education, and which provided some insight into students' knowledge, skills and attitudes, emerged (Berti, 2005). In some cases, such insight, perhaps too late, provided evidence to support the theories of Bruner and New Social Studies advocates. Yet, they also added to growing cynicism about the schools, and their failure to adequately

educate the nation's youth. When a *Nation at Risk* was released 1983 in

reaction to this prevailing opinion about U.S. education, it illuminated another

crisis in society by calling attention to the threats to U.S. domination posed by

other industrialized nations, especially Germany and Japan. Like in the Post-

Sputnik era, the perceived crisis spurred the federal government to become

involved in education, but this time, they became involved in curriculum matters

as never before (Kaestle, 2007).

From Measuring What Students Know to Knowing They Don't Measure Up: Civic
Education and the Rise of Accountability in the 1970s and 1980s

In 1969, American students took the NAEP for the first time, including a test

on citizenship. Like so many other reforms in education, the NAEP came about

partly because of the Soviet launch of *Sputnik*, after which time people

bombarded legislators with criticisms of American schooling. At the time, there

was no formal assessment program to measure the knowledge, skills and

attitudes of students across the United States, or the progress of education

nationally. Therefore, in 1963, Francis Keppel, the Commissioner of Education,

approached Ralph Tyler, the director of the Center for Advanced Study in

Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University, to inquire about the feasibility of

developing a plan for a periodic national assessment of student learning. Over

the next several years, work began on developing objectives, with input from

members of the disciplines and lay people alike, and based on the existing

school curriculum (Lehmann, 2004).   As originally conceived, the NAEP was

intended to collect information on the outcomes of education that might improve

decision-making in regards to the curriculum. It was intended to guide reform

efforts, not necessarily to hold states, schools, and teachers accountable for poor test scores (Selden, 2004; Taylor, 1975).

When developing objectives for the 1969-70 citizenship assessment, the Exploratory Committee on Assessing the Progress of Education (ECAPE) decided that, unlike the other assessments, the citizenship objectives would not be limited by school curricula that were in place at the time of the assessment. Instead, he NAEP took on the role of identifying important public objectives that were given too little attention in schools, as well as assessing how well students were achieving the objectives schools currently emphasized (Campbell & Nichols, 2004). However, for the 1971-72 school year, they added a social studies assessment, with objectives more closely aligned with what was being emphasized in school curricula. Around the time of the second assessment, administrative responsibility for NAEP transferred to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). It was under the direction of NCES that the results of the NAEP assessments, as well as trend reports, became widely available to educators and researchers who might use them to inform their work.

For the 1975-76 assessment, NAEP combined and revised the objectives from the first two tests for a combined citizenship/social studies test, just in time for the country's bicentennial. The report on the 1975 assessment (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1978) categorized results under the test's six objectives, which were designed to "assert that the foundation of a democracy is an alert citizenry aware of its rights and willing to shoulder attendant responsibilities" (p. xi). Specifically, their six objectives were

1. Show concern for the well-being and dignity of others
2. Support just law and the rights of all individuals,
3. Know the main structure and functions of their governments
4. Participate in democratic civic improvement
5. Understand important world, national and local civic problems
6. Approach civic decisions rationally. (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1978)

Based on the results of the assessment, the authors made several inferences about student knowledge and behavior, some of which they reported were less than desirable, yet encouraging. For example, the authors found that "students displayed a fair awareness and understanding of important world problems based on the exercises...in most instances the older students were more knowledgeable" (p. 44). Furthermore, they found, "Young Americans increasingly approach civic decisions rationally as they mature. While they are not particularly intent on keeping abreast of local, national and international affairs, they seem to become more discerning about how to gain relevant information and evaluate alternative viewpoints as they grow older" (p. 51).

However, authors of the NAEP report wrote less optimistically about the knowledge and attitudes students clearly lacked. Even though it was apparent that older students had a better understanding than their younger contemporaries, they reported that 17-year-olds still knew very little about the organization of federal and state governments, were confused by the system of checks and balances, and could not distinguish between the branches of government. Further, they wrote:

> A majority of students participated in or were desirous of taking part in democratic civic improvement. Among 13 and 17 year olds, however, the majority was a fairly slim one. The fact that 17 year olds are so near the voting age and did not show a greater interest in and a stronger desire to

participate in democratic civic improvement… will concern those who feel that the groundwork for good citizenship among adults must be laid among young people (p. 37).

What is more, in a study of trends over the course of the NAEP tests in citizenship and social studies from 1969 to 1975, the authors found overall *declines* in political knowledge and attitudes for all age groups assessed over the six-year period. Among 17- year-olds, political knowledge declined more than political attitudes, with knowledge of the structure and function of government showing the greatest decline.

Judith Torney-Purta and her colleagues (Torney-Purta, Oppenheim, & Farnen, 1975) found similarly discouraging results in the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement's (IEA) study of civic education in ten countries, including the United States. Their study began in 1967 with results first published in 1975, at the same time the citizenship/social studies NAEP was administered. The international civic education study, which began on the heels of similar studies in math and science, was designed to show how and to what extent civic education objectives—with the overarching goal to produce well-informed, democratically active citizens—were being reached across countries, as well as what other important influences existed in citizenship behavior. The study used school reports to design questions that would measure student knowledge about ten different topics, including knowledge of fundamental concepts and the nature of citizenship, and knowledge of social processes and institutions. The researchers found, across the countries studied,

that the "widely held objective of producing loyal, informed, critical and actively participating citizens was not successfully attained" (Torney-Purta, et al., 1975)

What was most interesting about the results of the IEA study, though, was that upon examining the results, the researchers found and were surprised that schools with a strong instructional emphasis on the acquisition of factual knowledge produced students who were in fact *less* knowledgeable and informed (Torney-Purta, et al., 1975).[10] Their conclusions seemed to support what Bruner and advocates of the New Social Studies had been arguing all along—that the transmission of knowledge alone would not help students become more knowledgeable. In addition, in support of reformers like Oliver and Shaver, Torney-Purta and her colleagues (1975) wrote of the effects of lack of exposure to controversial issues:

> Pre-adolescents often find it difficult to understand the purpose of political institutions because they have not yet discovered that different groups of adults may disagree about public policy. They tend to perceive adult society as monolithic and omniscient, and consequently see no reason for pressure groups, political parties, or institutions which serve as arenas where conflicts can be resolved and adjudicated. Schools need to address this issue. (p. 37)

By this time, the New Social Studies era was coming to an end, so not surprisingly, New Social Studies advocates failed to pick up on such information and use it to support the theories framing their reform efforts. In fact, there is little in subsequent literature of the late 1970s and early 1980s to indicate that scholars and researchers used information about students gleaned from the NAEP results and the IEA study to inform practice in civic education, even

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[10] Researchers found that students who attended schools where they engaged in discussions and were encouraged to share their opinions were more knowledgeable.

though both were specifically designed to guide curriculum reform efforts. One reason for the relative silence of curriculum reformers in the field of social studies at this time may be the state of "directionlessness" social studies professionals found themselves in following the decline of the New Social Studies (Evans, 2004). Whatever the case, rather that propose ways to use measures of students knowledge to positively inform curriculum and instruction, people more commonly used such information to express great alarm at students' "political illiteracy" and communicate their sense that schools might not be the best agents of political socialization (e.g., Butts, 1980; Ehman, 1980; Rodgers & Berman, 1980).

The sense that public schools were in a rut and not achieving the high standards that reformers from past decades intended them to was not unique to civic education during this time. The 1980s ushered in a time of high unemployment, inflation and foreign economic competition, and low public morale and faith in government (Hodgson, 1996). During such a time of economic and political discontent, along with fears that other industrialized nations were gaining the upper hand, there was an overwhelming sense that American schools were not doing their job. In 1983, the Department of Education National Commission on Excellence in Education captured American sentiments in a scathing report on American education, called *A Nation At Risk* (1983), which revealed serious deficits in U.S. education as compared to other modern societies. Of greatest concern were Germany and Japan, whose school

systems and student achievement levels were the envy of many Americans.

Equating education with a mechanism for national defense, the report read:

> Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world…We report to the American people that while we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the United States and the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people. What was unimaginable a generation ago has begun to occur—others are matching and surpassing our educational attainments.

According to the report, American society was at risk because their "preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation" was threatened. To combat the "rising forces of mediocrity" that had compromised America's preeminence and security, academic excellence became a priority for the education of citizens.

In the search for excellence in education, the curricular vehicle for civic education—social studies— came under serious attack. Having never fully recovered from the failure of the New Social Studies movement, social studies educators failed to define a similarly powerful movement for reform. As Evans (2004) argues, "Definitional dilemmas within the field appeared to be the major feature of social studies during the late 1970s and early 1980s, making the time ripe for alternative initiatives from outside" (p. 153).

Advocates of a history-centered curriculum seized the opportunity. Since the mid-1970s, there had been concern among historians that history teaching in the schools was declining. In 1975, for example, the Organization of American Historians issued an article in the *Journal of American History* called "The Status

of History in the Schools," in which the author, historian Richard S. Kirkendall, raised concerns over the apparent neglect or bastardization of history in schools across the country. He cited corrupting elements from the New Social Studies such as the replacement of the chronology approach with the "inquiry method" and the emphasis on "concepts rather than facts" (p. 564)— ideas that, ironically, arose from emphasis on the disciplines over an interdisciplinary social studies approach. In addition, he cited elements from the controversial issues approach, which emphasized "special problems in contemporary affairs" (p. 565). By failing to fully take hold in the schools, it seems, the reform efforts that were originally backed by strong and clear rationales by reformers themselves became woven into what others saw as a hodgepodge of social studies nonsense, which social studies professionals themselves could not disentangle.

In a 1984 book entitled *Against Mediocrity*, editors Chester Finn Jr., Diane Ravitch and Robert Fancher asserted that "the phrase 'social studies' should be banished from the high school curriculum" (p. 260) and replaced with a history-centered curriculum. They argued that only through the study of chronological history "can the student reasonably hope to know where and how he would like himself and his society to be in the future—or what is entailed in getting there" (p. 260). In the years that followed, Ravitch and Finn, Lynne Cheney, and Paul Gagnon published pieces arguing for a return to history and geography as the civic core in education (Evans, 2004). Their argument was only strengthened by the results of the first NAEP in U.S. history in 1986, which revealed that students had an abysmal knowledge of their nation's past (Ravitch & Finn, 1987). In 1987,

the Bradley Foundation of Milwaukee provided funds to create the Bradley

Commission on History in the Schools, a collection of reputable historians and

history educators who recommended a history-centered elementary curriculum

and no fewer than four years of history in grades seven through twelve (Bradley

Commission on History in Schools, 1989; Jackson, 1989).

Social studies educators responded in turn. Social studies advocates

Shirley Engle and Anna Ochoa (1988) conceded that history played a primary

role in social studies education, particularly in learning how social institutions,

including economic and governmental, and legal systems, the family, religious

institutions, and ideas and institutions of a democracy have come about.

However, they argued for a different kind of historical study than that allegedly

proposed by advocates of "traditional history." They wrote:

> The historical study needed by citizens in this connection is markedly
> different from that which ordinarily passes for the study of history.
> Historical study, which usually stops short of the real study of events in
> depth, is little more than the memorization of chronology of events.
> Instead the study indicated here is analytical in nature. It goes broader
> and deeper in the search for reasons and interrelationships. It focuses on
> the study of particular institutions of groups of institutions and on the
> problems, past and present, which relate to their development. Moreover,
> it looks at the value choices and value problems embodied in these
> institutions and their effect on less powerful groups and individuals. (p. 19)

In other words, they argued that the kind of history proponents of a history-

centered curriculum were apparently advocating was not enough to educate

future citizens. Ronald Evans (1989) argued that "general thrust of the revival" of

traditional history was "wrong headed," because the traditional approach to

teaching history had continued without interruption in most classrooms for years,

but that students found it boring and irrelevant, and resented that it was a

required course. Students' lack of historical knowledge was not for lack of exposure to history, but because of poor, didactic instruction.

The history-social studies debate raged throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, and has been written about by members of each side (e.g., Evans, 2004; Ravitch, 2000). In the end, the history advocates proved either more politically savvy or better aligned with the views of policymakers in Washington, for when the movement for excellence in education following *A Nation at Risk* culminated in the standards movement that would play out in the 1990s, the federal government endorsed content standards in history and civics—not in social studies (Center for Civic Education, 1994; Nash, Crabtree, & Dunn, 1997). What was muffled in the debates, however, was concern with students' thinking that had its roots in the 1960s and 70s. And unfortunately, there was a precipitous decline in research on students' thinking and political socialization in the 1980s (Berti, 2005). However, as others focused on the creation of standards and making teachers and schools more accountable in the 1990s, researchers influenced by cognitive science, who stood outside the debates, increasingly produced information about student thinking that could inform civic education.

The Quiet Pulse of Thinking in an Age of Accountability: Cognitive Research in the 1990s

In the 1980s and 1990s, the federal government, largely in response to the reaction against federal involvement in education in the 1960s and 1970s, cut back involvement and funding in several areas of education. However, because of the attention *A Nation at Risk* drew to the quality of students' academic achievement, the federal government's involvement in *curriculum matters*, which

had been almost taboo since the 1950s, became permissible and widely acceptable (Kaestle, 2007). As federal policymakers looked for ways to reform the educational system and hold it accountable for students' achievement, they developed ways to standardize, monitor, and compare education in the states. In 1987, they decided to adapt the NAEP for state-by-state comparisons and began developing frameworks for math, reading, science, U.S. history, geography, the arts and civics (Selden, 2004). Then, in 1989, President George H.W. Bush, and the nation's governors introduced an initiative to develop standards in all the core academic subjects, which they believed would make the United States "internationally competitive [and] second to none in the twenty-first century" (Nash et al., 1997).

When the standards movement was fully underway and the federal government granted support to organizations to develop standards, legislators did not include social studies as a core academic subject. Instead, the federal government supported standards in history and civics, paying little attention to the "integrated" subject of social studies. With federal approval and support, the Center for Civic Education developed the *National Standards in Civics and Government* and the National Center for History in the Schools created the *National History Standards* (Center for Civic Education, 1994; Nash et al., 1997). In effect, the federal government rejected social studies in favor of history and civics as appropriate content for the education of its citizens.

Content standards and standards-based curricula were at the forefront of work in civic education in the 1990s. In four short years, for example, the Center

for Civic Education used federal funds to publish an extensive content framework for civic education called *Civitas*, the *National Standards for Civics and Government*, and a content framework for studying the Constitution called *We the People* (Center for Civic Education, 1994, 1995; Quigley, Bahmueller, Center for Civic Education & Council for the Advancement of Citizenship., 1991). These were the culmination of work by minds such as Harry Boyte, R. Freeman Butts, Benjamin Barber and Ralph Nader. Echoing the overarching goals for civic education that had always remained consistent—to produce informed, responsible, engaged citizens—legislators and scholars alike focused on what students should know to reach those goals.

What content students should know to prepare them for their role as citizens became highly politicized with the development of the *National History Standards* in the mid-1990s. In 1994, before the *National Standards* were even released to the public, Lynne Cheney, who had been one of the vocal advocates of a history-centered curriculum in the history-social studies debates of the 1980s, delivered stinging criticism of them in a *Wall Street Journal* article entitled, "The End of History." Attributing the state of the *National History Standards* to the unleashing of "the forces of political correctness" and revisionist historians' "great hatred for traditional history," she argued the standards emphasized the flaws in America's past and glossed over its accomplishments (Cheney, 1994). The academic historians and history teachers who helped write the *National History Standards*, while eager to point out the fallacies in Cheney's criticism,

nonetheless attempted to reach further consensus by beginning to redraft the standards in answer to Cheney and other critics (Nash et al., 1997).

However, in the midst of these consensus-building attempts, Senator Slade Gorton (R-Washington) delivered a speech to the Senate on January 18, 1995, on behalf of a proposed amendment entitled, "National History Standards." The amendment would effectively deny federal certification and funding for the *National History Standards*. Indicating overwhelming bipartisan support for the amendment, the Senate passed a "Sense of the Senate" resolution by a vote of 99-1, essentially condemning the *National History Standards* by denying them approval or certification (Nash et al., 1997). Scholars and educators who had contributed to the standards were dismayed. As three contributors, Gary Nash, Charlotte Crabtree and Ross Dunn (1997) pointed out:

> The world's most powerful deliberative body had intervened in support of the most fervent critics of the standards to tell the nation's teachers and academic historians that its guidelines for schools had been written irresponsibly and malevolently (pp. 235-236)

The actions of the Senate led to a firestorm of accusations about the ill-wrought political motives of either side (e.g., Cheney, 1995; Nash et al., 1997). The passionate, seemingly incompatible views of both sides was one reason that, in 1995, the Council for Basic Education convened a bipartisan, purportedly dispassionate panel to review the *National History Standards*, offer suggestions for revision, and quell the debates (Council for Basic Education, 1996).

Ironically though, in the midst of the vehement debates, opposing sides of the history wars—both "liberal" and "conservative", "left" and "right"—envisioned the same goals for history instruction. Embedded in each of their agendas was

an effort to build an informed and educated citizenry, replete with the lessons that history has to offer. Only the means of achieving those ends differed significantly. The authors of the history standards contended that they wanted to point out America's blemishes to prevent cynicism. For example, Nash, Crabtree, and Dunn (1997) argued:

> [N]othing can serve patriotism worse than suppressing dark chapters of our past, smoothing over clearly documented examples of shameful behavior in public places high and low, and airbrushing disgraceful violations of our national credo such as the actions of the Ku Klux Klan or the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. If events like these are seen as mere footnotes to history, America's youth are unlikely to swallow the story, especially when they see around them systemic problems that eat at the national fabric. Sooner or later that will discover that a self-congratulatory version of American history sheds little light on how we got to the place we now occupy. (p. 16)

Opponents of the history standards, however, believed there was *too much* emphasis on the blemishes of American history, which would be detrimental to the central, patriotic aims of the history instruction. Hence, Cheney (1994) asserted, "We are a better people than the National Standards indicate, and our children deserve to know it" (p. A22).

Whether to instill pride or prevent cynicism, both opponents and proponents of the *National History Standards* had civic aims for the content they promoted. Both envisioned what America's future citizens should know and chose content accordingly. However, like the New Social Studies reformers, the historians involved in writing the standards failed to prepare for the politics surrounding the content they proposed. In this case, they did not foresee that policymakers were concerned with teaching the nation's heritage, not a scholarly version of history (Lowenthal, 2000). Moreover, although they could discuss the

civic purposes of what they were teaching after the history wars had subsided, they failed to provide a clear and early link between the historical thinking they were trying to represent in the standards and the thinking necessary for good citizenship.

In 1996, after the Council for Basic Education reviewed the *National History Standards* and offered recommendations, most viewed the revised standards as a marked improvement over the original (e.g., Diegmueller, April 10, 1996; Ravitch & Schlesinger, 1996). However, historian and educator Robert Bain (1995) argued that the history standards did not reflect the work of researchers in cognitive psychology that focused on students' thinking. He was referring to a recently emerged body of research that provided insight into students' historical understanding and conceptions, and the differences between students' thinking and the domain-specific thinking of experts (e.g., Seixas, 1994; Shemilt, 1987; Wineburg, 1990).

Indeed, an extensive body of research on students' historical and political understanding exploded throughout the 1990s, providing answers to questions about students' cognition that had lingered largely unanswered since the 1960s (e.g., Avery, 1992; Berti, 1994; Berti & Ugolini, 1998; Helwig, 1995). As policymakers in the 1990s supported the creation of lists of what students should know and be able to do, and tests that would measure and compare student ability to answer multiple choice questions on a test, a number of scholars were publishing rigorous and informative empirical research on students'

understanding of concepts that could provide a cognitive organizational framework for such lists of knowledge.

For example, in 1992, Helen Haste and Judith Torney-Purta edited a book that concentrated on how "political, economic, social, and moral issues of the public world are understood and interwoven with everyday private thinking" (p. 1), arguing that that was the only way to understand political beliefs and behaviors. Rather than concern themselves with determining content that would shape students' construction of their social and political world, as well as their beliefs about their nation, the scholars contributing to the book focused on how students' prior understanding would shape their construction (Haste & Torney-Purta, 1992). As Haste and Torney-Purta pointed out, the contributors each looked "at the frameworks of meaning that people bring to the task of making sense of their world." They continued, "Each framework is based on a 'theory' about how things work in the social and political world at both the institutional and personal levels." The term "theory," they wrote, "encompasses the idea that young people have knowledge, put it together in ways that seem meaningful, and use it to interpret and formulate explanations of what happens in the world" (p. 7). Essentially, the scholars were writing the students into the equation and, in effect, denying what seemed to be an underlying assumption that the students were *tabula rasa* and could be filled with information. Furthermore, they were denying an assumption that if learning outcomes were not ideal then the information must either be absent (i.e. missing in a teacher's instruction or in the curricula) or poorly represented (i.e. taught through social studies rather than

history, or vice versa). Rather, poor outcomes might be due to the students' prior understanding and theories when encountering information.

In the same year that Torney-Purta and Haste published their volume, researchers held an international conference in Madrid, Spain, to discuss ideas and research about cognitive and instructional processes in history and the social sciences. Two years later, in 1994, Mario Carretero and James F. Voss brought together the products of that conference to the United States in a book called, *Cognitive and Instructional Processes in History and the Social Sciences*. The collection of essays, the editors wrote, was "concerned with several questions pertaining to how individuals learn and process complex information about history and the social sciences and how instruction can facilitate such processes" (p. 2). The essays were concerned, in other words, with how people, particularly students, think. Scholars' questions included ones like: "How do students represent social and historical concepts?" and "How do such representations vary with grade and knowledge" (Carretero & Voss, 1994, pp. 1-2)? Concerned with ideas from history, economics and civics, most of the work in the volume was more or less relevant for civic education. An essay by Adrian Furnham (1994), for example, reviewed what little work (most of which had been conducted by scholars in Great Britain) had been done on students' thinking in relation to politics. Anna Emilia Berti (1994) conducted a study of children's understanding by reviewing textbooks for their treatment of concepts like state, government and governed, and democracy, and then interviewing students to understand their thinking about the very same concepts.

In 1995, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) began another study that would provide useful information on students' understanding of concepts. The first phase of the study collected information about civic education programs in 24 countries, including the United States. The second phase, which began in 1999, was designed to assess the civic knowledge of 14-year-olds across those same 24 countries. In the report of results on ninth graders in the United States, researchers reported, "The assessment items…were not designed to measure knowledge of a particular country's government but were designed instead to measure knowledge and understanding of key principles that are universal across democracies" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001, p. xv). Those principles consisted of concepts of "what constitutes democracy and what defines good citizenship, as well as their concepts of the responsibilities of government" (p. xvii). To understand students' understanding of concepts like democracy and citizenship, researchers had them rate a list of attributes for each, which were based on political theorists' discussions of the concepts (Amadeo, Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Husfeldt, & Nikolova, 2002).

By the end of the 20th century, then, a wealth of research had been produced that could inform instruction in civic education. In 2000, the National Research Council published a synthesis of cognitive research into a report, *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience and School.* The book outlined fundamental and well-established principles of learning derived from cognitive research: First, students come to the classroom with preconceptions about how

the world works and if their initial understanding is not engaged they may fail to grasp the new concepts and information. Second, students must have a deep foundation of factual knowledge but they must also understand facts and ideas in the context of a conceptual framework and organize the knowledge in ways that facilitate retrieval and application. Such principles suggested that the work on students' thinking that had flourished in the 1990s was critical in helping students learn in the field of civic education.

In short, by the beginning of the 21st century, the time seemed ripe for applying cognitive research to civic education. What is more, a half-century of research and reform efforts could provide valuable lessons to inform such work: First, as reformers of the late 1950s and 60s emphasized, focusing on skills at the expense of knowledge and values is insufficient for civic education. A focus on skills ignores the democratic values that come into play when grappling with issues in a democracy, and ignores the unique problems and knowledge in different domains. Second, the New Social Studies advocates learned that cognitive research could yield powerful ideas for education, but they also learned that those ideas do not so easily transfer into the classroom. It is important to take into account teachers' thinking, and not to assume that providing teachers with information will change their teaching behaviors. Third, it is crucial to consider and be prepared for the political implications of the reforms you are introducing, and to be ready and able to communicate with policymakers. In the New Social Studies era and, most recently, in the wars over the National History Standards, scholars intending to reform classroom instruction did not fully

consider the implications of working within the realm of civic education and prepare to justify their work to civic and political leaders. Finally, as cognitive researchers have been arguing for nearly 50 years, student thinking matters. It is not enough to focus on what students *should* know; it is also necessary to understand what they *do* know, and to consider their knowledge and understanding when designing instruction. By not considering current understandings, students may not be learning what is being taught.

In this post-9/11 era, we find ourselves in another period of crisis, focusing people's attention once again on civic education in the schools, and prompting the federal government to dedicate substantial funds to improving the education of America's future citizens. Yet, cognitive science now benefits from several decades of growth, so there exists a substantial body of research on thinking and learning to guide reform efforts and to encourage further research.   As policymakers and scholars attempt to reform civic education in the current era, they would be wise to consider the lessons learned over time.

The next chapter looks at some post-9/11 efforts to reform and improve civic education—specifically, at recent federal policies that emphasize professional development of teachers.   What are the assumptions underlying recent reform efforts? What role, if any, does cognitive research now play? Can lessons from the past provide any insight into the potential promise and pitfalls of current reform efforts? The next part of this dissertation aims to address these questions.

Chapter 3

Examining Three Federal Policies Intended to Improve Civic Education

As this dissertation has argued, the September 11 terrorist attacks

encouraged scholars, educators and policymakers throughout the United States

to initiate or strengthen efforts to improve school-based civic education. Most

reformers believe improving civic education requires increasing students' *content*

knowledge in history and civics, and they propose several reforms (i.e.,

increasing course requirements and implementing better state standards) to

achieve those ends. Among those proposed reforms is a call to provide more

and improved professional development for teachers of history and civics. Over

the last several years, it seems federal legislators have answered that call. They

have supported policies and provided nearly a billion dollars in funding for three

programs that provide professional development for history and civics teachers—

the Teaching American History Grant Program, the National Endowment for the

Humanities' (NEH) We the People initiative[11], and the Presidential Academies for

Teaching American History and Civics program.[12]

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[11] This is not to be confused with the federally funded instructional program, *We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution*. The funds for *The Citizen and the Constitution* program go to the Center for Civic Education, which administers the creation and dissemination of the curricular materials.

[12] This program began as the Presidential Academies for Teaching of American History and Civics. Later it became the Presidential Academies for Teachers of American History and Civics and was combined with the Congressional Academies for Students of American History and Civics under the title Academies for American History and Civics. Because the analysis in this chapter focuses on policymakers' assumptions about civic education, I will focus on the original initiative, the Presidential Academies for Teaching of American History and Civics.

Such bipartisan federal support and funding for teacher professional development seems like a victory for civic educators, particularly in light of the emphasis the *No Child Left Behind Act* placed on reading and math.[13] Beyond these attractive features, though, what assumptions about civic education underlie these federal initiatives? What do federal legislators believe will improve civic education? What effect are these initiatives likely to have on civic education in practice? What promise do they hold for improving teaching and learning?

This chapter takes up these questions. First, I highlight the goals, stipulations, and scope of each of the federal programs, revealing that each places a strong emphasis on improving history teaching and learning. Although improving historical content knowledge is one of the goals of many civic education reformers, the central role that history plays in all the federal programs nonetheless raises questions regarding federal legislators' beliefs about the proper education of citizens: Why do they emphasize historical content knowledge? How do they link historical content knowledge with civic education? What historical content do they believe the programs should focus on?

Therefore, the next section of this chapter uses congressional records and secondary sources to investigate how history came to play such a central role. I argue that federal legislators' concerns over Americans' "civic memory" led them to place what they often refer to as "traditional American history" content at the center of students' civic education. Though federal legislators' worries about citizens' civic memory can be traced back to the 1990s "history wars" discussed

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[13] For examples of the concern NCLB raised for civics educators, see
("Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools: Policies and Issues," 2004; Gardner, N. A., 2004)

in Chapter 2, the September 11 terrorist attacks galvanized support for programs that would ostensibly ensure people's civic memory by emphasizing what legislators deem the nation's significant events, people and institutions. Therefore, all three federal programs share as a central feature the teaching of American history—particularly, a celebratory, nation-building history—that federal legislators assume will help secure citizens' commitment to U.S. ideals and institutions.

However, I argue that federal legislators fail to make a convincing rationale for how the acquisition of historical content knowledge is going to contribute to improved citizenship. They imply that students will become more committed citizens by learning a celebratory, nation-building version of American history, yet they ignore research on thinking that provides insight into *how* students learn in the classroom. While federal legislators seem convinced that knowing historical "facts" will produce better citizens and secure the future of the republic, there is little evidence to support their contentions. I use recent research, as well as the lessons gleaned from past reform attempts discussed in Chapter 2, to argue that the failure of federal policies to reflect relevant research and lessons from the past may prevent them from effecting any significant change in teaching and learning.

Clearly, federal legislators are interested in improving civic education. Their recent legislation demonstrates that they are not only willing to give rhetorical support to programs that support it, but to provide financial support as well. Understanding the assumptions underlying the recent federal policies is

important for educators wishing to reform civic education—as discussed in Chapter 2, "New Social Studies" educators and scholars learned that it is unwise to ignore the politics of the era in which you are attempting to implement reforms. Federal legislators' beliefs about what will improve civic education determines the criteria for deciding which applicants to fund or not and, in turn, shapes the professional development curricula recipients design, propose and enact. It is important, therefore, to attend to questions about the potential of these programs to improve teaching and learning.

<div align="center">Federal Programs to Improve Civic Education</div>

What are the features of the federal programs intended to improve civic education through teacher professional development, and what kinds of professional development projects do they support? The Teaching American History grant program was the first of the federal initiatives. The program's primary mission is to improve instruction and raise student achievement by improving teachers' knowledge and understanding of and appreciation for "traditional American history" as "a separate school subject," meaning, as a subject taught apart from social studies (U.S. Department of Education, 2006b). The Teaching American History program awards grants to local educational agencies that partner with "entities that have extensive content expertise," including institutions of higher education, nonprofit history or humanities organizations, libraries, or museums (U.S. Department of Education, 2006b). Together, these institutions can receive funds to design, implement, and demonstrate effective, research-based professional development programs.

Between 2001 and 2008, the federal government provided 906 Teaching

American History grants, totaling $845,165,600, to partnering institutions (U.S.

Department of Education, 2006b).

The second of the federal programs, We the People, is administered by

NEH and aims to strengthen "the teaching, study, and understanding of

American history and culture" (National Endowment for the Humanities, 2005).

Although We the People supports projects outside of K-12 education, one of its

primary goals is to provide opportunities for K-12 teachers to "deepen their

knowledge of American history through summer seminars and institutes"

(National Endowment for the Humanities, 2005). Grants support professional

development projects that will reportedly extend and deepen teachers'

knowledge and understanding of the humanities, provide models of excellent

scholarship and teaching, and promote effective links between teaching and

researching in the humanities. Part of We the People, a specialized professional

development program called the Landmarks of American History program,

supports one-week residence-based workshops for K-12 educators that use

historic sites to address central themes and issues in American history,

government, literature, art history, and other related subjects in the humanities.

The NEH stipulates that institutions eligible to host professional development

seminars, institutes or workshops include community colleges, school systems,

universities, four-year colleges, learned societies, libraries or other repositories,

centers for advanced study, cultural organizations, or professional associations.

Interestingly, the program also stipulates that grants may *not* be used for projects that focus on cognitive psychology, pedagogical theory, or research on educational methods, tests, or measurements, thereby excluding any projects explicitly informed by research on how people learn or on effective teaching methods. Between 2003 and 2008 the We the People initiative supported 134 professional development projects for K-12 educators (National Endowment for the Humanities, 2005).[14]

The most recent of these three federal programs, the Presidential Academies for Teaching American History and Civics program, is the only one of the programs that explicitly extends beyond history education, supporting professional development for civics teachers as well as history teachers. It provides for the establishment of academies that hold workshops for "both veteran and new teachers of American history and civics to strengthen their knowledge and preparation for teaching these subjects" (U.S. Department of Education, 2006a). Institutions of higher education, museums, libraries, and other public and private agencies, organizations, and institutions are eligible to apply. The program funds academies holding the workshops over a five-year period. Between 2005 and 2008, over \$2,800,000[15] in funds supported two Presidential Academies providing workshops for a total of 160 teachers per year. Applicants need to demonstrate how their project covers "specific civics content"

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[14] The We the People website provided no information on how much money was granted to support the education projects that are part of the We the People initiative.
[15] The Department of Education website only provides information about the amount of money originally granted to run the Academies. The total appropriations for the Presidential Academies and Congressional Academies suggest that this amount may fall short of the total amount granted to the Presidential Academies after the first two years, but no specific information is given.

and, reminiscent of the Teaching American History program, "traditional

American history content." Specific civics content must include "the development

and function of local, State, and Federal governments and citizens'

responsibilities with respect to these institutions" (U.S. Department of Education,

2006a). "Traditional American history content" must include:

> (i) Significant issues, episodes, and turning points in the history of the
> United States.
> (ii) How the words and deeds of individuals have determined the course of
> the United States.
> (iii) How the principles of freedom and democracy articulated in the
> founding documents of the United States have shaped the Nation's
> struggles and achievements as well as its social, political, and legal
> institutions and relations. (U.S. Department of Education, 2006a)

As their descriptions reveal, all the recent federal programs support

teachers' professional development and emphasize American history content.

The Teaching American History program and Presidential Academies program

specify what they call "traditional American history" content. By its inclusion of

civics, only the Presidential Academies program mentions a school subject other

than history. How did history and historical content knowledge come to play such

a central role in the federal programs? According to these programs, what

historical content should students know? According to federal legislators, how will

historical content knowledge contribute to improved civic education? The next

section addresses these questions.

For "The Vitality of Our Civic Memory": The Emergence of Federal Programs to Improve Civic Education in the Schools

Federal legislators' interest in and commitment to history education is not

unprecedented. As discussed in Chapter 2, federal legislators first became

involved in issues concerning students' historical content knowledge with the so-called history wars of the 1990s. Federal legislators sided with critics of the original *National History Standards* like Lynne Cheney (1994) who opposed what she called the standards authors' "great hatred for traditional history" and their tendency to gloss over America's accomplishments. With a 99-1 "sense of the Senate" resolution, the Senate denied the *National History Standards* approval and certification. After the Council for Basic Education reviewed the standards and offered recommendations for revisions in 1996, there was a period of quiet in curricular matters relevant to civic education at the federal level. However, on February 16, 2000, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) released a study of history education that would once again stir federal legislators to action.

The Teaching American History Grant Program

The ACTA released the results of a survey that drew questions from a basic high school curriculum to assess the history knowledge of college seniors from the United States' top 55 liberal arts colleges and universities. The report revealed that graduates from top U.S. colleges were not required to take an American history course and that 81 percent of those seniors surveyed failed the exam (American Council of Trustees and Alumni, 2000). Criticizing the failure of institutions of higher education to require history courses for graduation, the ACTA lamented:

> Who are we? What is our past? Upon what principles was American democracy founded? And how can we sustain them? — These are the questions that have inspired, motivated, perplexed since the beginning. And they are questions which still elude our full understanding. Yet they

underscore a belief that a shared understanding, a shared knowledge, of the nation's past unifies a people and ensures a common civic identity…But the importance of a shared memory appears to have lost its foothold in American higher education. As we move forward into the 21st century, our future leaders are graduating with an alarming ignorance of their heritage — a kind of collective amnesia — and a profound historical illiteracy which bodes ill for the future of the republic. (p. 2)

The ACTA's assertion that "a shared knowledge of the nation's past unifies a people and ensures a common civic identity" apparently stirred federal legislators to action. Four months after the release of the report, Senator Slade Gorton (R-Washington), who had spearheaded the Senate's disapproval of the *National History Standards*, as well as Senator Joseph Lieberman (D-Connecticut) and Representatives Thomas Petri (R-Wisconsin) and George Miller (D-California), assembled with the ACTA and a number of distinguished historians, such as Gordon Wood, David McCullough, and Theodore Rabb. These policymakers and scholars met in anticipation of the introduction of a Congressional Concurrent Resolution regarding the "historical illiteracy" of America's future leaders and what seemed like the imminent loss of America's "civic memory" (Craig, 2000, December 21; *Loss of America's Civic Memory*, 2000).

On June 30, 2000, before a Senate appropriations hearing, Senator Lieberman introduced the resolution, arguing, "When we lose the memory of our past, when we lose our understanding of the remarkable individuals, events, and values that have shaped this Nation, we are losing much of what it means to be an American." And although the ACTA report on which they were basing their resolution referred to college and university students, Lieberman noted, "We also

cannot ignore the role of our public schools in contributing to this historical ignorance, so we must ask educators at all levels to redouble their efforts to bolster our children's knowledge of U.S. history and help us restore the vitality of our civic memory" (S6200-01).

As the resolution was introduced, Senator Robert Byrd (D-West Virginia), sitting at his desk on the Senate floor, handwrote an amendment to the appropriations bill at hand. The amendment would make $50,000,000 available to "enable the Secretary of Education to award grants to develop, implement and strengthen programs to teach American history (not social studies) as a separate subject within school curricula" (*Loss of America's Civic Memory*, 2000). Byrd's stipulation that money be awarded to programs aiming to teach American history *apart from social studies,* amidst discussions of Americans' loss of civic memory, is important to note. It indicates that he, like other history-centered advocates, assumed school social studies was failing to achieve its civic aims.   As they had in the 1990s history wars, the federal government endorsed this view, approving Byrd's amendment, which would become the Teaching American History Grant program, and appropriating $50,000,000 for its first year (Craig, 2000). In effect, the federal legislature gave history instruction primacy over social studies in the civic education of America's youth.

The *kind* of history Byrd and federal legislators supported became somewhat clearer in May 2001, when Senator Byrd pushed to reauthorize funding for his grant program, this time by amending it to the Bush administration's sweeping education bill, the Elementary and Secondary

Education Act (Craig, 2003, May 7). The amendment, titled "Grants for the Teaching of Traditional American History as a Separate Subject," stipulated again that programs supported by federal money teach history as a separate school subject, apart from social studies. However, this amendment went a step further, stipulating that it would support local educational agencies choosing "to carry out activities to promote the teaching of *traditional* American history" [emphasis added] (Byrd, 2001). In arguing for his amendment, Byrd stayed consistent with his original repudiation of social studies, referring to social studies as "an unfortunate trend of blending history with a variety of other subjects" (p. S4810). He then added, "[T]he history books provided to our young people, all too frequently, gloss over the finer points of America's past. My amendment provides incentives to help spur a return to the teaching of traditional American history" (p. S4810).

For Byrd, the teaching of traditional American history meant two things: First, it must be taught apart from social studies, the way that it was before social studies became the curricular home of history education in the early 20th century. Second, it would involve content that would emphasize America's triumphs to a greater extent than current textbooks supposedly did.[16] By dismissing social studies and advocating traditional history, Byrd's amendment not only placed history at the center of civic education, but specific history content—that which did more than "gloss over the finer points of America's past" in order to promote a

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[16] Despite Byrd's claim that the "history books" glossed over the nation's accomplishments, several scholars argue that school textbooks, which are often used as proxies for instruction in the classroom, still emphasize a celebratory, nation-building, assimilating history (Cornbleth, 2002).

love of country. Byrd (2001) argued, "Our failure to insist that the words and actions of our forefathers be handed down from generation to generation will ultimately mean a failure to perpetuate this wonderful, glorious experiment in representative democracy" (p. S4810). For Byrd, then, history was heritage, to be "handed down from generation to generation," ensuring the health and survival of American democracy.

The We the People Initiative

Before federal legislators could fully endorse or oppose Byrd's views of history education, a greater threat to America than the content of school history classes temporarily halted their discussions. On September 11, 2001, in the midst of discussions over the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of which Byrd's amendment was a part, terrorists attacked American soil, and with it, many felt, American ideals and institutions. As the country mourned its losses and tried to pick up the pieces, legislators pushed aside issues concerning education. Yet, sensibilities about the education of citizens would soon be racked again, and this time with the painful memory of September 11 in the foreground.

In May 2002, NAGB released the results of the U.S. History NAEP. The results were abysmal—only 12 percent of 12th graders scored at or above the proficient level. Fifty-seven percent of students scored below basic level, indicating not even a partial mastery of basic historical knowledge and skills (Lapp et al., 2002). Historian Diane Ravitch (2002) commented:

> [S]ince the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001…no one needs to be reminded about how important it is to learn history. We know now that our

ability to survive as a nation depends on our belief in our purposes as a nation, and this can only come from the knowledge about ourselves that the study of U.S. history provides.

The events of September 11 heightened other peoples' concerns about civic education as well. Six days after the first anniversary of 9/11, President Bush held a press conference to announce plans for a series of civic education initiatives. Central to these initiatives was a program called "We the People," which would be administered by the NEH. According to Bush, the purpose of the We the People program was to "encourage the teaching of American history and civic education," by, among other things, providing grants to "develop good curricula," and to "hold training seminars for schoolteachers and university faculty" (Office of the White House Press Secretary, 2002b). Later that day, speaking to teachers and administrators in a magnet school in Nashville, Tennessee, Bush characterized the We the People initiative as a patriotic endeavor, stating, "History is important for our children to understand, to give them a better sense of how to understand what we do and a sense of what it means to be an American; a sense of importance of serving something greater than yourself in life" (Office of the White House Press Secretary, 2002c).

Like federal legislators, President Bush saw history as having a civic purpose, or more specifically, a patriotic purpose. He introduced the initiative when the importance of patriotism was real—in the same month, in fact, that he was promoting his Homeland Security Bill and urging the United Nations and Congress to look seriously at the threat posed by Saddam Hussein in Iraq (Office of the White House Press Secretary, 2002a). In carrying out the initiative, the

NEH promoted the "the teaching, study, and understanding of American history and culture" as a patriotic, civic endeavor as well (National Endowment for the Humanities, 2005). The NEH mission statement, for example, reads:

> Today it is all the more urgent that we study American history and culture. Defending the ideas and ideals of America requires more than a strong national defense. Americans must know our nation's past so we can uphold its guiding principles and labor toward a free a just society. (National Endowment for the Humanities, 2005)

According to this statement, not only would American history improve America's civic memory, it would help ensure America's security by inspiring citizens to defend and uphold its democratic ideals. Once again, knowledge of American history—specifically, a celebratory, nation-building history—was the backbone of responsible citizenship.

In February 2003, the Bush administration's requested funds for fiscal year 2004 made the drive to ensure Americans know their nation's past all the more real. The administration added $25 million to NEH funding for the We the People initiative and requested double that amount for the Teaching American History program. These budget requests, in addition to others that would benefit the historical and archival community, amounted to record-level funding for history-related programs (Craig, 2003, February 4). In a time of war, Americans' knowledge of U.S. history—their civic memory—became that much more worthy of rhetorical *and* financial support.

The Presidential Academies for Teaching American History and Civics Program

Given the ideological and economic backing for history-related programs among federal officials, it was probably no surprise when Senator Lamar

Alexander (R-Tennessee) used his maiden Senate speech in March 2003, to introduce "The American History and Civics Education Act," which would establish summer academies for outstanding teachers and students of American history and civics (Craig, 2003, March 7). In introducing his legislation, Alexander (2003) acknowledged the broad basis and support for history and civics education in the country, including by the federal government, since 9/11. He then noted an apparent decline in American history and civics knowledge, arguing, "It is time we put the teaching of American history and civics back in its rightful place in our schools so our children can grow up learning what it means to be an American. Especially during such serious times when our values and ways of life are being attacked, we need to understand just what those values are" (p. S3038). Alexander joined his colleagues in painting American history education as a means of building patriotic sentiment in America's future citizens, and as a central subject in students' civic education.

Interestingly, though, Alexander included *civics* instruction in addition to history instruction in the bill he designed, and mentioned the poor NAEP civics scores, which had gone largely unnoticed by federal officials after their release (Alexander, 2003). Yet, civics did not become central. As evidenced by the hearings on the bill and the bill itself, history remained the school subject central to the civic education of students. Those who testified on behalf of the American History and Civics Education Act, for example, consistently placed history at the center of their discussion. Senator Patty Murray (D-Washington), who offered the first testimony on behalf of the bill, argued that one important aspect of

"citizenship education" is "teaching young people how our unique democracy was created" (*Putting History and Civics Back in the Classroom*, 2003). Historian David McCullough made archival historical research central to his discussion and spoke only of the importance of fostering a love of history. When asked how he would run the academies, for example, McCullough talked about getting teachers to take part in historical investigation to promote a love of history (*Putting History and Civics Back in the Classroom*, 2003). Senator Byrd also focused his testimony on the teaching of American history rather than civics content. Reminiscent of his speech on the Teaching Traditional American History Act, Byrd stated, "I believe in teaching history. Social studies are fine in their place, but I believe in history, teaching history and reading history" (*Putting History and Civics Back in the Classroom*, 2003). Bruce Cole, chairman of the NEH, focused on history as well, bemoaning "our American amnesia," or the "loss of memory and lack of understanding of our history" (*Putting History and Civics Back in the Classroom*, 2003). Over and over again, historical content knowledge was the center of civic education, deemed necessary to ensure the civic memory of the American people and maintain national security. And once again, the federal government endorsed this view of civic education by passing the Teaching American History and Civics Education Act, which would result in the Presidential Academies for American History and Civics, with overwhelming approval in December 2004 (Office of Senator Lamar Alexander, 2005). Following the passage of his bill, Alexander captured widespread sentiment accurately, commenting, "Here we are a nation at war. Our principles are being attacked,

and we're not teaching our children what those principles are" (Office of Senator Lamar Alexander, 2004).

To be sure, September 11 prompted widespread concern over civic education, which in turn, inspired people to work toward improvements in civic education. Those interested in improving civic education in the schools might be content to accept the federal government's willingness to provide funds to support civic education, especially considering the recent emphasis that *No Child Left Behind* placed on math and reading. However, it is important to carefully consider the potential outcomes of the recent federal programs, especially their potential to improve civic education.

<center>The Federal Policies' Promise for Reform</center>

As discussed in the preceding section of this chapter, federal legislators privilege celebratory, nation-building American history content knowledge, taught apart from social studies, in Americans' civic education. They often refer to such a version of American history as "traditional American history."

Their beliefs about what content students should be taught aside, policymakers agree with other civic education reformers that good teaching is the common denominator for effective instruction. Whereas people once believed that socioeconomic background was the most influential factor in students' success, studies now show that schools in general and teachers in particular make a noticeable contribution to what children learn (Bransford et al., 2005). *No Child Left Behind* reflects this new conventional wisdom, requiring that every classroom have a "highly qualified teacher" to help close the learning gaps that

currently exist between socioeconomic and racial groups (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). Therefore, the professional development of teachers is central to all three of the recent federal initiatives. Clearly, federal policymakers acknowledge that teachers *do* matter and wish to support their professional development to help them become better instructors. Because they acknowledge teachers' crucial role at the same time that they believe traditional American history education is central to civic education, federal legislators' remedy for improving civic education is emphasizing historical content knowledge in the professional development of teachers. They assume that such an emphasis will then result in the improvement of future citizens' crucial historical content knowledge, or what they call civic memory.

Legislators' emphasis on content knowledge for the federal grant programs is important—their beliefs about what will improve civic education determines the criteria for deciding which applicants to fund or not and, in turn, shapes the professional development curricula recipients design, propose and enact. Indeed, a 2005 analysis of teachers' work in the Teaching American History Grant programs showed they had " a firm grasp of historical facts" (Humphrey et al., 2005), which was most likely strongly emphasized in the professional development program. Clearly, legislators think that poor content knowledge—a loss of civic memory—is the root of the problem. Therefore, privileging historical content knowledge above all else seems to be the natural solution.

But will emphasizing historical content knowledge in teacher professional development programs improve civic education? Addressing that question requires addressing three related questions: First, given the important mediating role teachers play in the federal programs, what potential do the programs have to improve teacher instruction in the classroom? Second, what potential do the programs have for improving student learning? Finally, how does historical content knowledge translate into knowledge for civic purposes? To address these questions, I examine relevant research on teaching and learning, and scholarly arguments about the relationship between content knowledge and citizenship.

Research on Teaching

Research on highly effective, or "expert," teachers suggests that the professional development programs emphasizing content knowledge will do little to improve instruction. Such research argues that one characteristic of highly effective teachers is *deep* subject matter knowledge (Wineburg & Wilson, 2001). Deep subject matter knowledge constitutes more than knowing the "facts" of history, as federal legislators emphasized. Rather, effective teachers' subject matter knowledge consists of both substantive and syntactic structures of their discipline (Bruner, 1960; Shulman, 1986; Wineburg & Wilson, 2001). Advocating the Brunerian principles espoused by advocates of the New Social Studies in the post-War United States, these scholars argue that a teacher must be able to convey the substance, or organizing concepts and principles of the discipline, as well as the syntax, or ways for establishing legitimacy in their discipline. In

history education, this means not only knowing the "stuff" of history, or the key people and events, but also knowing the organizing structure, including concepts like accounts, significance, and historical empathy (Lee, P. J., 2005). For example, in their study of expert teachers, Wineburg and Wilson (2001) found that teachers *do* know countless bits of information, but that these facts are organized into broader conceptual frameworks, which give the facts meaning. To these teachers, therefore, history is not an endless parade of names and dates. Expert teachers also understand that history is a human construction and textbooks are only one of many accounts. This sort of subject matter knowledge is significant, for the teachers can then use their knowledge of the substantive and syntactic structures of history to teach their students and help them develop a deep understanding of history (e.g., Bain, 2000, 2005).

Research on effective teaching indicates that *pedagogical* content knowledge is also crucial (Bransford et al., 2005; Shulman, 1986). Pedagogical content knowledge is subject matter knowledge for purposes of teaching, which involves knowing both the deep structure of the discipline and knowing how to represent and formulate a subject that makes it comprehensible to others. Wineburg and Wilson (2001) found, for example, that expert history teachers use pedagogical content knowledge to attempt to build a bridge between their own understanding and the understanding of their students by turning to both the structure of their discipline and to the needs and abilities of their learners.

Developing and reflecting upon one's pedagogy, or the practice of teaching, plays a crucial part in pedagogical content knowledge. Some research

indicates that subject matter information alone is insufficient for the development of pedagogical content knowledge (McDiarmid, 1994; Wineburg & Wilson, 2001). For example, McDiarmid (1994) found that prospective teachers majoring in history and enrolled in a history methods course failed to see how the subject matter knowledge they acquired could be employed in the teaching of history. He concluded that prospective teachers need courses that provide the opportunity for them to think about the pedagogical implications of their history knowledge.

Despite this research on teaching, there is some indication that federal legislators are opposed to the idea of pedagogy as part of the professional development programs. For example, information to applicants of the We the People initiative explicitly states that programs based on "pedagogical theories" will not be considered for funding. Moreover, in his Senate testimony on the Teaching American History and Civics Act, NEH chairman Bruce Cole remarked, "Many education schools focus more on the theory and methods of teaching rather than on the key documents, events, and figures of our history." He asserted that emphasis should be placed on "teaching actual history as opposed to pedagogy." Throughout the hearing on the History and Civics Act, in fact, pedagogy was painted in a negative light (U.S. Congress, 2003). However, research maintains that effective teachers do, in fact, know something about pedagogy.

One might also look to the lessons learned from past reform efforts to address whether or not the federal programs will help teachers improve

instruction. As discussed in Chapter 2, New Social Studies reformers of the

1960s and 1970s learned that if initiatives do not ultimately change teachers'

behaviors in the classroom, then the reforms do not take hold. It is important,

therefore, to consider how teachers are processing the information provided by

professional development programs. They may be learning something new, but

that does not necessarily mean that they will translate the new information into

changed teaching behaviors. Being attentive to teachers' thinking means

viewing them as "active agents in the development of their own practice" and as

"decision-makers using their specialist knowledge to guide their actions in

particular situations" (Calderhead, 1987). Unfortunately, the federal programs'

emphasis on providing teachers with more content knowledge implies that merely

transmitting historical content to teachers will result in more effective teaching,

with little acknowledgement of how teachers may be using the information to

design instruction that will help their students learn. Ignoring such teacher

thinking could be detrimental to the intended effects of the federal programs.

Research on Learners' Thinking

Even if the professional development programs help teachers learn

content, will the emphasis on transmitting content help students learn? Again, it

is useful to look to the lessons learned by past civic education reformers—

specifically, the notion that student thinking matters.   Decades of cognitive

research argue that students are not just passive recipients of information. They

come into the classroom with preconceptions about how the world works, and if

their current conceptions are not engaged, they may fail to learn new information

or may revert to previous conceptions outside of the classroom. Such principles of learning do not ignore the importance of factual knowledge; they just suggest that facts and ideas must be organized in a conceptual framework that will facilitate retrieval and application (Bransford et al., 2000).

In history, for example, it may be naïve for reformers to believe that the historical content teachers present in class is the only version of history students use to construct their understanding of the nation's past and to identify significant people and events. Research reveals that students also rely on information gleaned from family stories, historical films, television fiction, museums, and earlier school experiences (Seixas, 1997), which may offer a different view of history than the "official narrative" promoted by federal legislators. As Cornbleth (2002) argues, the relationship of individual, history, and setting is a dynamic one that is neither mechanistic nor predetermining and, consequently, "it is wrong to assume that intended school messages are transmitted and received and interpreted as intended by their advocates" (p. 522). Instead, educators need to look at what students already know, including what they know about the United States and its history, in order to design effective instruction that takes into account existing concepts and theories.

To be sure, current research on student thinking in history argues that students hold not only narratives derived from the "official history" presented in schools, but also their own "vernacular histories" that they have constructed from information gathered from other sources and everyday observations (Barton & Levstik, 1997). Their "images of America" include not only ideas about

exceptionality, freedom and progress, but also pervasive inequity associated with race, gender, socioeconomic status or disability (Barton & Levstik, 1997; Cornbleth, 2002). Students' current ideas and theories about the nation's history will affect how they process any new information teachers present in the classroom. For people concerned with improving civic education, and especially for federal legislators who privilege celebratory, nation-building historical content in Americans' civic education, such information is critical. Students' existing ideas and theories help shape the outcomes of their civic education and, ultimately, their civic identity.

Unfortunately, the federal programs reflect no research on student or teacher thinking. They seem to assume that students, like teachers, are passive recipients of information. Indeed, the We the People program rejects projects that derive from "cognitive psychology." By ignoring such research, however, students may not learn what the federal programs intend them to learn. What is more, the federal programs miss an opportunity to help teachers use research on student thinking constructively, and to analyze and build upon the unique thinking of their own students, who come into the classroom with a diversity of knowledge and experience. Such inattention to student thinking may prevent the programs from improving student learning, even if they do succeed in improving teacher knowledge.

There are some signs that the federal programs may, in fact, be demonstrating symptoms of impending failure. For example, though the Teaching American History program may have helped improve teachers' factual

knowledge of history, teachers earned low scores in historical analysis and

interpretation skills (Humphrey et al., 2005), which are associated with deep

subject matter knowledge. Perhaps not surprising to some, then, only 29 percent

of participating teachers indicated that student performance improved a great

deal or substantially after taking part in the program (Humphrey et al., 2005). In

addition, after five years of federal programming focusing on historical content

knowledge, the results of the 2006 U.S. History NAEP showed only 13 percent of

12th graders scoring at or above the proficient level—just one percent

improvement over the 2001 results that helped spur the federal policies (Lee, J.

& Weiss, 2007).

The Relationship between Historical Content Knowledge and Citizenship

Even if there was research to support that increasing teachers' factual

knowledge would change teachers' instructional practices and increase students'

knowledge, another question remains: How does historical content knowledge

translate into knowledge for civic purposes? Certainly, federal legislators are not

alone in their assumption that historical content knowledge is linked to good

citizenship. Nor is the place of history in concerns about national cohesion and

patriotism unexpected. As historian Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. (1991) argues,

> The schools and colleges of the republic train the citizens of the
> future…What students are taught in schools affects the way they will
> thereafter see and treat other Americans, they way they will thereafter
> conceive the purposes of the republic. The debate about the curriculum is
> a debate about what it means to be an American. (p. 17)

As discussed in Chapter 2, people, in fact, have been arguing for a history-

centered approach to civic education for decades. Lowenthal (2000) has referred

to these movements to enhance national or group memory as "heritage crusades." He recognizes that even those who reject the conflation of "history" with memorization of "facts" embrace their obligation to "marry civic with pedagogic duties" (p. 68). In short, federal legislators' privileging of history in civic education is not unprecedented, unexpected, nor idiosyncratic.

Moreover, researchers and scholars agree that political knowledge, including knowledge of history, is necessary for an informed and enlightened citizenry, and there is ample research to suggest that education is the strongest, most consistent correlate for political knowledge (Niemi & Junn, 1998). Political scientists Niemi and Junn (1998) argue that, contrary to conventional wisdom, the school curriculum, including civics and history classes, enhances what and how much students know relevant to civic education.

However, there is little agreement over what factual knowledge is essential for citizenship. For example, Niemi and Junn (1998) argue there is "no 'canon' that defines what students should know" for effective citizenship. Lupia (2006) contends that being able to recall the facts included on surveys assessing knowledge deemed important by academics and politicians—not unlike those that fueled legislators' concerns over Americans' "civic memory"— does not necessarily correlate to the competence needed by American citizens. In addition, if effective citizenship means people should be engaged in politics and civic life, Nie and colleagues (Nie, Junn, & Stehlik-Barry, 1996) argue that, while education has positive effects on civic knowledge, it has little to no effect on civic engagement.

Regardless of debates in research and scholarship, federal policymakers seem confident that citizens should know facts about history and that this will ensure responsible citizenship and help secure the nation's future. In the legislative records and documents surrounding the recent federal programs, there is no mention of scholarship that addresses questions relating to those factors, nor are there testimonials offered by individuals who might provide a research-based perspective. In fact, the only evidence that is mentioned are the results of surveys, such as the ACTA report, and of national assessments, such as the NAEP scores in history, and civics and government. Yet, the implications of these surveys and assessments are highly controversial. Scholars suggest that national assessments, such as the NAEP tests, are poor measures of civic competency because they ask for isolated bits of information (Weiss, Lutkus, Grigg, & Niemi, 2001). Moreover, some scholars argue that, even if surveys and assessments do indicate a lack of historical knowledge among the general public, there is no reason to assume that America's civic memory or the nation's security are in danger. In a study of surveys conducted since the 1910s, for example, Paxton (2003) found that knowledge of history has been consistently low among the general public, even among the "greatest generation" of Americans who helped fight and win two world wars.

Whether federal policymakers are unaware of scholarship that might have implications for their recent initiatives or choose to ignore it for political leverage is difficult to say. Whatever the case, there is no sure indication that the recent federal programs will actually improve civic outcomes. Traditional American

history content may be important, but it is questionable whether it is sufficient to prepare students for the demands of citizenship. Even scholars who argue that civic knowledge is important for civic education argue that the content emphasized in schools is not enough. They contend that schools should give more attention to political conflict and controversy, which will better prepare students for civic and political participation (e.g., Niemi & Junn, 1998). Furthermore, the focus on acquisition of historical "facts," without attention to how historical knowledge can be used for civic purposes, confuses the easily visible trappings of civic education (i.e., test scores indicating knowledge of "facts") with harder to see core practices embedded in civic life. As Kuhn (2005) argues, education for citizenship depends not upon simple knowledge acquisition or the inculcation of values, but upon the "development of the cognitive capabilities that enable citizens to participate in the ongoing debate that democratic societies require" (p. 8). She writes, "To prepare our youth to engage in effective debate of the important issues that arise in their local and global communities is to prepare them to think well" (p. 12).

Indeed, paying attention to the thinking that underlies effective citizenship in a democracy may hold some promise for moving forward with efforts to improve civic education. As discussed in Chapter 1, attention to thinking has already had positive implications for teaching and learning in fields such as math, science, and history. And, as argued in Chapter 2, lessons from past reform efforts suggest that both student thinking and teacher thinking matter if reformers hope to improve teaching and learning. Fortunately, in the last several decades,

some research on children's political thinking has emerged that can begin to

inform reform efforts in civic education, providing insight into students'

understanding of fundamental democratic concepts and of their reasoning

processes. The next chapter presents a review of such research on learners'

thinking.

Chapter 4

Considering Students' Thinking for Civic Education: A Review of the Literature

As argued in Chapter 3, current policies aiming to improve civic education ignore cognitive research, especially research on students' thinking. One example of a body of cognitive research that could inform reform efforts consists of studies of students' understanding of democratic concepts and of their reasoning processes. Decades of cognitive research reveal that learners' current understandings play an important role in the learning process, an important finding for civic educators and policymakers.

This chapter provides a review of extant research on students' knowledge, conceptions and reasoning processes. It begins with a summary of findings about students' knowledge emerging from standardized tests upon which policymakers rely. The next section focuses on research of students' understanding of key democratic concepts such as government, democracy, citizenship, freedom and justice. Finally, this chapter reviews research on students' reasoning processes, including studies of how learners use knowledge and how they reason in the absence of knowledge.

What Do Assessments of Students' Knowledge Tell Us?

Many policymakers, including the federal policymakers discussed in Chapter 3, base their judgments of the current state of civic education on findings

from national assessments on students' knowledge of civics and government, and U.S. history. Most national assessments indicate that the majority of U.S. students have an insufficient knowledge in these subjects (Lee, J. & Weiss, 2007; Lutkus & Weiss, 2007). The most widely cited tests are the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The 2006 NAEP in civics and government evaluated students' understanding of the democratic institutions and ideas, while the 2006 NAEP in U.S. history evaluated students' understanding of the development of America's democratic institutions and ideals. The test assessed a nationally representative sample of more than 25,000 students at grades four, eight, and twelve (Lee, J. & Weiss, 2007; Lutkus & Weiss, 2007). The civics assessment results revealed that only 24 percent of fourth graders, 22 percent of eighth graders, and 27 percent of twelfth graders scored at or above the proficient level, which the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) that administers the test has determined demonstrates "competency" (Lutkus & Weiss, 2007). In history, the results were worse: Only 18 percent of fourth graders, 17 percent of eighth graders, and 13 percent of twelfth graders demonstrated competency.

Although people debate the value of such standardized tests (e.g., Weiss et al., 2001; Wineburg, 2004), the results nonetheless provide some insight into facts many students do and do not know. For example, in civics, the majority of fourth-grade students demonstrated an understanding of what government is and what it does, and could identify some things that government is not allowed to do. They also demonstrated some understanding of the foundations of the American

political system. In the context of their school and community, they understood rules and laws, rights and responsibilities, and ways to participate in governing. Most fourth graders could identify the current U.S. president; explain classroom rules; identify a reason for police; recognize that only citizens can vote in the U.S. and that the president is an elected official; identify an illegitimate use of power; recognize the importance of treaties between countries; identify a service that a local government provides; and explain an effective way to get a rule changed (Lutkus & Weiss, 2007).

In history, most fourth-grade students were able to identify and describe a few of the most familiar people, places, events, ideas, and documents in American history. They were able to explain reasons for celebrating most national holidays, had some familiarity with the geography of their own state and the U.S., and were able to express in writing a few ideas about a familiar theme in American history. They could perform tasks like identifying the suffragists, identifying a change for African Americans, and understanding symbolism of the Statue of Liberty (Lee, J. & Weiss, 2007). However, according to NAEP, such knowledge of civics and history content was considered only basic for the fourth grade, not competent.

According to NAEP, most fourth graders did not reach the proficient level that they determined demonstrates competence. They *could not* define the meaning of the term discrimination; identify the two main political parties; explain the importance of a rule or law; identify the legislative branch or the role of the Supreme Court; explain why sex discrimination is wrong; explain why it is

important to vote for a president or the importance of political responsibility; or evaluate how certain actions can affect the community (Lutkus & Weiss, 2007).

In history, they could not identify, describe, and comment on the significance of many historical people, places, ideas, events and documents. They did not recognize the role of invention and technological change in history, or recognize the ways in which geographic and environmental factors have influenced life and work. Most students also could not identify a reason for the American Revolution, identify the time frame of the Vietnam War, explain how inventions changed life in the U.S., describe the impact of a world event on the U.S., or explain the goals of the MLK march (Lee, J. & Weiss, 2007).

Among eighth-grade students, most students demonstrated some understanding of competing ideas about the purposes of government, and of the importance of a shared commitment to the core values of American democracy. They could describe advantages of limited government, define government, constitution, the rule of law and politics, and identify the fundamental principles of American democracy and the documents from which they originate. They recognized the components of the political process, and understood personal, political, and economic rights and responsibilities. Some of the specific tasks most eighth graders could perform were analyzing the purpose of government expressed in the Declaration of Independence, explaining how rules help people, identifying the term limit for president, determining an instance of abuse of power, and explaining that peaceful assembly is protected by the law (Lutkus & Weiss, 2007).

In history, most eighth-grade students could identify and place in context a range of historical people, places, events, ideas and documents; distinguish between primary and secondary sources; and explain the significance of some major historical events. They demonstrated a beginning understanding of the diversity of American people, the ways in which people from a wide variety of national and cultural heritages have become part of a single nation, and of the fundamental political ideas and institutions of American life and their historical origins. Most students were able to identify the impact of the cotton gin, evaluate the usefulness of historical sources, and explain why workers go on strike (Lee, J. & Weiss, 2007). Again, though, according to NAEP, such knowledge of civics and history constituted only a basic level for eighth grade.

NAEP did not see most eighth-grade students as proficient because they could not identify the branches of government; link religious freedom to the Bill of Rights; explain why jury duty is important; identify an example of checks and balances; identify the parliamentary structure of government; explain that people control their government; identify a characteristic of constitutional government; or explain how public protests can achieve political goals (Lutkus & Weiss, 2007).

In history, most eighth graders could not explain the significance of people, places, events, ideas and documents, or recognize the connection between people and events within historical contexts. They could not explain the opportunities, perspectives, and challenges associated with a diverse cultural population. Nor could they identify an important Great Society idea, explain the importance of the Connecticut Compromise, and explain how the Berlin Wall fall

affected foreign policy (Lutkus & Weiss, 2007).

In 12th grade, most students reached the basic level in civics and government, meaning they demonstrated an understanding of what is meant by civil society, constitutional government and politics, and the fundamental principles of American constitutional government and politics, including functions of political parties and other organizations. They knew that constitutional governments can take different forms and were familiar with international issues affecting the United States. They could understand both rights and responsibilities in a democratic society and they could recognize the value of political participation. Some specific tasks that most students in the 12th grade were able to perform were identifying a leadership position in Congress, identifying and explaining a constitutional principle, and identifying protection provided by the first amendment (Lutkus & Weiss, 2007).

However, most 12th-grade students did not reach the proficient level in civics. They could not identify the president's role in foreign policy, explain the president's responsibility to enforce the law, explain the parliamentary system, identify the outcome when state and national laws conflict, describe the meaning of federalism in the U.S., explain a benefit of federalism, and explain checks on the president's power (Lutkus & Weiss, 2007).

In history, most students did not reach even a basic level of understanding according to NAEP, let alone a proficient level. They could not identify the significance of many people, places, events, dates, ideas, and documents in U.S. history. They did not recognize the importance of unity and diversity in the social

and cultural history of the U.S., nor that history is subject to interpretation. They did not demonstrate an understanding of the role of evidence in making a historical argument, and they could not put particular people, places, events, ideas and documents in historical context. Specific tasks that most students in the 12th grade could not perform were identifying and explaining the historical context of supreme court decisions; identifying a role of third parties; identifying an immigration pattern and its causes; explaining post-WWII foreign policy; identifying segregation's impact on African Americans; identifying a consequence of an important religious movement; and explaining reasons for U.S. involvement in the Korean War (Lee, J. & Weiss, 2007).

Although standardized tests like the NAEP can provide information about what "facts" students do and do not know—or perhaps, more accurately, what facts they can recall in a test situation—they tell us little about students' existing understanding of ideas that are an integral part of democratic society. For example, although fourth-grade students could not define the term discrimination on the civics and government NAEP, it might be wrong to assume that they do not understand what it means to be treated differently or unfairly because of race, gender, socioeconomic status or age. That 12th-grade students could not explain checks on the president's power does not necessarily mean they believe the president does or should have unlimited power in the government. Furthermore, information about students' factual knowledge tells us little about how students use such knowledge to address civic and political issues. Fortunately, some research does exist that can provide insight into students' conceptions of

fundamental democratic concepts and of their reasoning processes. The following sections provide an overview of such research.

Research on Students' Understanding of Key Democratic Concepts

Most studies of students' thinking focus on their understanding of key concepts like government, democracy, citizenship, freedom and justice. Of those studies, the majority focus on students' understanding of government and the political system, including related concepts like political leaders, law, and political parties. Fewer studies focus on students' conceptions of democracy, citizenship, and "democratic values" such as freedom and justice, and even fewer address the relationship among such concepts. Though sparse, the studies provide important insight into children's understanding and growth of understanding of key concepts from kindergarten through high school.

Government, Law, and the Political System

Research reveals that young children, roughly between the ages five and nine, have superficial ideas about government and the political system. Some researchers conducting studies of young children in the United States found that they cannot define government or say anything about what government does (Brophy & Alleman, 2006; Moore, Lare, & Wagner, 1985), and that children personalize the idea of government into a single individual like the governor or some other political leader (Brophy & Alleman, 2006; Hess & Torney, 1967). Brophy and Alleman (2006) found that the majority of children aged five through eight emphasized two major ideas about government: government as a source of authority and power over people's actions, and government as a benevolent

resource that protects us, solves problems, and helps people in need.

Younger students also have very naïve understandings of political leaders, law and political parties. Although most know the president and even some other political leaders, they lack understanding of the president's roles and duties (Brophy & Alleman, 2006; Greenstein, 1969). Brophy and Alleman (2006) found young children's responses about the president's role and duties emphasized virtuous behavior and a belief that the president personally takes care of things like cleaning up the environment or stopping riots. Young children know much more about the president and other executives than legislators, believing that the president, governors and other such leaders make and proclaim laws (Brophy & Alleman, 2006; Greenstein, 1969; Hess & Torney, 1967; Moore et al., 1985). They define laws themselves as rules, which they conceive of as prohibitions, with little understanding of the importance of laws (Lutkus & Weiss, 2007; Moore et al., 1985). Young children appear unaware that laws establish rights and duties, how certain activities must be performed, and that laws are the means by which decisions of the government are communicated to subordinate organizations that implement them (Moore et al., 1985). They have a tendency to view both leaders and law as benevolent and trustworthy, so they have difficulty conceiving of pressure groups, parties, and conflict (Brophy & Alleman, 2006; Hess & Torney, 1967). In fact, most children do not know about the two major political parties, or can say little more about them than "They think differently" (Brophy & Alleman, 2006; Lutkus & Weiss, 2007; Moore et al., 1985). Together these studies suggest that young children in the U.S. have a naïve

understanding of government and the political system.

Studies conducted with students outside the United States corroborate such findings. For example, in a study of Australian children, Connell (1971) found that young children construct a single idea of a political role. They merge information about different figures into an idea about a political role, which involves telling people what to do and doing things like building roads and collecting garbage. This produces an overestimation of the power of political figures.   Berti and Benesso (1998) found that Italian children aged five through six reported knowing "nothing" about ideas related to government and the state like border, capital, and kingdom, and defined the others only through characteristic features (i.e., describing taxes as money). By age eight or nine, more students were familiar with border, capital, and kingdom, but at best could describe them only through characteristic features. In another study of Italian children aged eight and nine, Berti (1994) found that children did not appear to possess the concept of the state in that when asked to define it, most could not. When asked about the meaning of government and governing, most children associated the idea of governing with that of command and government with public functions like issuing laws and heading the army. When asked about law, most children defined law as rules that must be respected, more often emphasizing the repressive and coercive aspects of laws than positive aspects. And, in another study of children of the same age, Berti and Andrioli (2001), found that prior to instruction, children appeared to have very few conceptions of political offices, whether correct or incorrect, and their most frequent answer was

"I don't know."

Although there are fewer studies of students' conceptions of government and the political system in early adolescence, existing studies suggest that students have a more developed, albeit still naïve, conception of the political system and hierarchy. For example, in his study of Australian children, Connell (1971) found that around ten or eleven, children begin to develop a concept of a political hierarchy, even though they lack specific details. Similarly, Berti and Benesso (1998) found that the interview responses of 11- and 12-year-old Italian children reveal a step toward the political domain, in that they conceived of some sort of hierarchical government structure. Early adolescents also realize that there are political disagreements over courses of action, and sometimes even take sides. They are aware of political parties and from age 12 on there is an increased understanding of parties as representing the interests of different social groups, and as proposing different policies and views of society, or political ideologies (Connell, 1971; Greenstein, 1969).

According to data from large scale assessments, by age 14, most students in the United States have ideas not only about what government is and does (Lutkus & Weiss, 2007), but also about the government's economy-related responsibilities, including keeping prices under control, providing industries with the support they need to grow, guaranteeing a job for everyone who wants one, reducing differences in income and wealth among people, providing an adequate standard of living for the unemployed; and their society-related responsibilities, including being sure there are equal political opportunities for men and women,

providing free basic education for all, guaranteeing peace and order within the country, providing basic health care for everyone, providing an adequate standard of living for old people, controlling pollution of the environment, and promoting honesty and moral behavior among people in the country (Baldi, Perie, Skidmore, Greenberg, & Hahn, 2001).

However, Adelson and colleagues (1966) found that before the age of 15, adolescents continued to display personalistic tendencies, in that they failed to fully grasp the concepts of institutions like government, community and society but fell back on persons, and actions and persons. They did not usually appraise political events in light of their collective consequences, and they interpreted actions aimed to serve communal ends parochially, seeing them as serving only the needs of individuals. Moreover, younger adolescents spoke of law in concrete terms, describing specific acts of wickedness that laws were designed to curb and punish, and connected law exclusively to external conduct, rarely seeing the subtle, indirect influences of law on the spirit and motivation of the citizenry (Adelson et al., 1969).

Yet, according to Adelson and colleagues (1966), by age 15, adolescents acquire some fundamental concepts and abilities, rather than just information about political systems. These include the capacity to imagine institutions abstractly rather than in terms of specific, discrete activities; a positive view of law and government, which stresses the administrative aspect as opposed to the negative or coercive view; an appraisal of political events and laws in light of their consequences on the collectivity rather than on individuals; and a grasp of the

nature and needs of the community. Around 15, they begin to see a functional

view of the law, understanding that it can exist in an altered form in the future.

Even though the institution of law may be deemed sacred, individual laws invite

tempering and tampering for the greater good. They also mention the personal

confusion, instability, and dwindling moral sense that might accompany a state of

lawlessness (Adelson et al., 1969).

Democracy

Unfortunately, there are few studies that purposefully study young children's

conceptions of democracy, and there are no studies I am aware of that study

young U.S. children's conceptions of democracy. Berti (1994) provides one

exception to the overall dearth of research, reporting that Italian third graders,

when asked about democracy, either could not answer, or just gave evaluative

judgments about democracy. Helwig (1998) explicitly studied young Canadian

children's conceptions of democracy, asking Canadian students in first, third and

fifth grades to judge the fairness of examples of representative democracy, direct

democracy, democracy by strict consensus, and non-democratic systems such

as meritocracy and oligarchy. He found that all children favored democratic

systems, rejecting non-democratic alternatives using justifications that often

explicitly referred to specific democratic concepts like majority rule, voting,

political representation, and voice. Younger children were more likely to favor

representative democracy and consensus democracy, while older children were

more likely to favor direct democracy.

More extensive studies of adolescents' conceptions of democracy exist. In

the 1999 International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) study of civic education in 28 participating countries, including the United States, researchers designed questions to evaluate ninth graders' understanding of democracy. The majority of students identified the following attributes as somewhat good or very good for democracy: Everyone has the right to express their opinions freely; citizens have the right to elect political leaders freely; many different organizations are available for people who wish to belong to them; political parties have rules that support women to become political leaders; people peacefully protest against a law they believe to be unjust; and laws that women claim are unfair to them are changed. A majority of students also recognized that various types of negative influences are somewhat bad or very bad for democracy: Wealthy business people have more influence on government than others; one company owns all the newspapers; all the television stations present the same opinions about politics; political leaders in power give jobs in the government to members of their family; and courts and judges are influenced by politicians (Baldi et al., 2001).

Another IEA study looked at 17-year-olds' conceptions of democracy. The results showed that upper secondary students across countries recognized the importance of some of the basic attributes of democracy. For example, they believe that free elections and freedom of expression strengthen democracy, and that democracy is weakened when politicians influence courts and when wealthy people have undue influence on the government. Comparing the answers of older students with those of the younger, 14-year-old students from the first

phase, researchers observed that older students seemed to hold more differentiated views of democracy than did the younger students. Also, there was more agreement among older students that it is good for democracy when people demand their social and political rights (Amadeo et al., 2002).

Citizenship

There are almost no studies on young children's conceptions of citizenship. One questionable exception is the NAEP in civics and government, which reveals that most fourth graders understand ways to participate in their school and local communities.

For adolescents, the IEA studies again provide more extensive information. The study of 14-year-olds reveals that the majority of students surveyed reported that the following civic behaviors are somewhat important or very important for good citizenship: to vote in every election; to show respect for government leaders; to know about the country's history; to follow political issues in the newspaper, on the radio, or on television; and to engage in political discussion. Furthermore, a majority of students reported that participation in various social movement-related activities is somewhat important or very important for good citizenship: to participate in activities to help people in the community, to take part in activities promoting human rights, and to take part in activities to protect the environment (Baldi et al., 2001). In the study of upper secondary students, which did not include the United States, researchers reported that there was a high degree of consensus that three activities are important for good citizenship—obeying the law, voting, and following political issues (Amadeo et

al., 2002).

Freedom, Justice, Equality

A few studies focus on students', especially adolescents', conceptions of the key democratic ideas of freedom, justice and equality. The only studies I found focusing on young children's conceptions were with Canadian children. As for studies focusing on elementary students' conceptions, in a study of children's ideas about human rights, Ruck and colleagues (1998) found that the majority of Canadian eight-year-olds, when asked what a right is, answered, "I don't know." However, Helwig (1998) found that young Canadian children in first, third and fifth grades possess basic understandings of important concepts of civil liberties such as freedom of speech, and that they apply notions of "fairness" to the political sphere. The majority of children at all levels endorsed freedom of speech and extended it to other countries, recognizing that it is an important part of human activity that must be secured against intrusion by government. Interestingly, the findings also suggest children's understanding of these concepts increases with age, reflecting a greater ability to coordinate political concepts in situations in which they conflict with one another, such as when freedom is in tension with law. For example, younger children contradictorily maintained that freedom of speech was a right held independent of existing laws, but that unjust rules prohibiting freedom of speech must be followed. Older children tended to be more consistent in that they were more likely to judge violations of unjust rules prohibiting free speech as acceptable.

Helwig (1995) conducted a similar study of students' conceptions of

freedom with younger U.S. adolescents from seventh grade and older adolescents from eleventh grade. He found that the vast majority of subjects endorsed freedom of speech and religion in the United States and generalized these rights to other countries as well. Students justified freedom of religion with references to individual identity, autonomy, self-expression, and social functions such as the maintenance of group traditions deemed important. They saw freedom of speech as important because it assisted individuals in pursuing truth and knowledge, has social utility in contributing to the discovery of innovations facilitating social progress, and as a means by which moral and democratic principles are secured in political systems. Students of all ages judged hypothetical laws restricting these civil liberties as wrong. However, when asked to evaluate violations of a hypothetical law restricting each civil liberty, younger adolescents, like young children, were less likely to hold up freedom of speech and religion when in conflict with law than were older adolescents. In addition, seventh grade subjects were significantly less likely to affirm civil liberties when in conflict with equality than older subjects were. This suggests that equality of opportunity is an especially salient issue for younger adolescents, warranting governmental intrusion into both religious and public speech contexts in order to prevent discrimination or unfair treatment. Helwig also studied whether or not students would affirm freedom of speech and religion in cases where psychological and physical harm were imminent. Seventh graders were more likely to affirm freedom of religion in the psychological harm conflict than in the physical harm conflict, but were more likely to affirm freedom of religion in the

physical harm conflict than the equality conflict mentioned above. The physical harm conflict was the strongest conflict for the older age groups.

A study by Avery (1992) provides information about adolescents' conceptions of freedom in the context of a study of tolerance. She attempted to measure the political tolerance of 10th- and 11th-grade U.S. students, defining political tolerance as the willingness to extend human rights to one's least-liked sociopolitical group. After surveying the students to measure their tolerance, she conducted interviews with 22 of the least tolerant students according to the survey and 22 of the most tolerant. When asked if least-liked groups should be allowed to assemble and rally, 90 percent of tolerant students mentioned the Constitution, the right to assemble, or the right to freedom of speech. However, echoing the findings of Helwig, these older adolescents also qualified their support for the rally, mostly in regards to whether or not any violence occurred. Intolerant students mentioned violence as a reason for disavowing the rally as well, but they also mentioned concern about the impact of the rally on the community, and the potential influence of the group on others.

More studies are needed on students' understanding of key democratic concepts, and especially, on their understanding of the relationships among them. Currently, we know more about students' conceptions of government and the political system than we do about their conceptions of democracy, citizenship, and value concepts like freedom, justice and equality. Many studies are with children outside of the United States, and different national, educational and social contexts may influence the way children and adolescents view

democracy, citizenship and ideas like freedom and justice. Nonetheless, existing research suggests that young children and adolescents have developing, albeit superficial, understanding of key democratic concepts and even some of the tensions that can exist between them when applied to real-life situations.

Research on Students' Reasoning Processes

In addition to communicating what factual knowledge students possess, data from NAEP tests provide some insight into the general skills students have that might allow them to interpret and use information. For example, most fourth-grade students demonstrated that they could understand a simple population pie graph, and most eighth-grade students demonstrated that they could interpret a political cartoon. Most twelfth-grade students could identify the main idea in a historical document, describe the information in a graph of political attitudes, and interpret the message of a political cartoon. However, while knowing that students can interpret a political cartoon or read a graph is helpful, it does not tell us how they might *use* the information they glean from such sources to address civic and political issues.

Indeed, few studies focus on how students use information or factual knowledge to make sense of new information, reason through problems, and make decisions. One exception is a study by Mosborg (2002) in which she examined how high school students use historical knowledge to interpret current affairs in newspaper articles, arguing that using history in the course of similar daily activities is a prevalent form of engaging one's historical knowledge. The attention of students in Mosborg's study seemed to be guided not only by their

competing background narratives but also by a shared script for how to argue with others. In a search for data to support their views, they interpreted the facts of the same news story differently, foregrounding certain bits of information above others, and focusing on data to be used as warrant and illustration. In their everyday historical discourse, the goal of expressing an opinion rose to the top. The author argues her findings suggest "adolescents framed current affairs not only relative to prior convictions, but also relative to historical eras associated with popular themes, and tacit understanding of how to express opinions in the public sphere" (p. 350). She asserts that using history in the course of reading the news evokes background narratives that join past and present in evaluative judgments about historical change and continuity. Mosborg also argues that, rather than assimilating the news stories to their idea of the present, the adolescents assimilated the news stories to their idea of the *difference* between past and present. She further asserts that adolescents' use of history when reading the news is shaped by self-expression, a key ideal of American citizenship. The invitation to use history when reading the news became an occasion for such self-expression, and historical references were recruited as footnotes and illustrations in voicing a personal point of view.

While Mosborg's study focused on how students use historical knowledge to reason about current events, other studies look at students' reasoning processes more generally. For example, looking at reasoning processes across a range of ages, Adelson and O'Neil (1966) found significant differences in students' capacity to reason by the age of 15, at the same time they found a

significant shift in students' conceptions of community. When asked to solve

problems that involve a conflict between individual interests and the common

good, older students tended to be more responsive to communal needs, although

they did not choose the community willy-nilly.   As principles and ideals had

become more firmly established among older adolescents, there was an

impressive difference between the younger and older adolescents in the

orderliness and internal consistency of their political perspectives. When older

subjects were challenged, they refuted, debated and counterchallenged.

Younger students tended to be self-contradictory and their principles were

loosely held or easily abandoned. When challenged, however gently, younger

subjects had a tendency to reverse themselves even on issues they seem to feel

strongly about.

In regards to decision-making, Adelson and O'Neil (1966) also found that

older adolescents have the capacity to trace out the long-range implications of

various courses of action, and they can deduce specific choices from general

principles, usually ethico-political in nature. By age 15, principles and ideals have

become more firmly established so that students take into account not only the

personal and social consequences of political choices, but also the values like

liberty and justice that may be enhanced or endangered.

Other studies looking across a range of ages indicate that older

adolescents, around 18 years, also have a good understanding of compromise

and are better able to articulate another's point of view (Furnham, 1994).

However, considering others' points of view seems dependent upon the

information students have about other groups or people. For example, Avery (1992) showed that students who lack political information about their least "favorite" socio-political groups are more likely to be intolerant of the views and political voice of those within that socio-political group.

Studies reveal that information also plays an important role in reasoning toward a decision. According to Avery (1992), students who lack political information are less likely to engage in thoughtful, prolonged deliberation before reaching a conclusion. Similarly, Torney-Purta (1992) showed that novices who are insensitive to multiple consequences for political actions are less involved in the cognitive decision-making process.

Together, studies of students' reasoning processes suggest that, regardless of their existing knowledge, adolescents have the capacity—if not the inclination—to discuss or argue about civic and political issues. Mosborg (2002), for example, showed that students will use historical knowledge and knowledge of democratic values to deliver a persuasive argument, no matter how unsophisticated their guiding framework. Hahn's (1994) study of high school students engaging in controversial discussions reveals that, when students have a teacher supporting and mediating such discussion, they readily engage in classroom conversations about controversial issues.

<p style="text-align:center">Discussion</p>

The studies reviewed in this chapter offer important information about students' thinking that can and should guide reform efforts in civic education. For example, reformers who recommend that elementary school children should

learn about government and its function, including the making and purposes of law (e.g., Center for Civic Education, 1994), might benefit from knowing young children believe the president, governors and other such leaders make and proclaim law, and that they have little awareness or understanding of legislative bodies (Brophy & Alleman, 2006; Greenstein, 1969; Hess & Torney, 1967; Moore et al., 1985). Moreover, young children conceive of laws as prohibitions, with little understanding of the importance of laws in society (Lutkus & Weiss, 2007; Moore et al., 1985). Likewise, as policymakers implement increased requirements for community service and service-learning projects, they might benefit from knowing that before the age of 15, adolescents have an underdeveloped sense of community, tending to interpret actions aimed at serving communal ends parochially and seeing them as serving only the needs of individuals (Adelson & O'Neil, 1966). Unfortunately, though, current reform efforts in civic education, such as the federal programs discussed in Chapter 3, largely fail to take students' thinking into account.

However, despite the important research discussed in this chapter, research in civic education that might inform policy lags behind research in math, science and history education. The body of research on students' conceptions, theories, and reasoning processes is relatively small. We also need more studies that span a wide range of ages and that focus on more key democratic concepts and the relationships among them. Moreover, we need research that looks at students' thinking *in action*—their thought processes *while* they are solving problems and making decisions relevant to democratic citizenship.

Yet, we do not even have a clear picture of the kind of thinking we *want* students to engage in while solving problems and making decisions. Unlike in math, science and history, we currently lack a clear, research-based picture of the sophisticated thought processes embedded in civic education. We have yet to fully address questions such as: What are the cognitive components underlying the problem solving and decision-making necessary for responsible, competent democratic citizenship? What constitutes sophisticated civic thinking about public issues? What are differences between sophisticated and novice thought processes?

The next chapter presents an initial study that begins to address these questions by analyzing the thought processes embedded in products of thinking about problems inherent in democratic society—that is, in the work of influential political theorists. It also provides a framework for the subsequent research in this dissertation, which aims to further fill the gap in civic education research by looking at the thinking of both sophisticated and novice thinkers *in action*.

Chapter 5

Using Products of Democratic Thinking to Describe Democratic Thinking

We currently lack a body of research to provide a clear picture of the thought processes underlying competent, responsible democratic citizenship— what I refer to as democratic thinking.[17] What is democratic thinking? What are the cognitive components underlying the problem solving and decision-making necessary for democratic citizenship? What are differences between sophisticated and novice thought processes?

This chapter seeks to understand democratic thinking through analysis of its products. It presents an initial study aimed at describing the thinking "experts" do when engaged with political and civic issues in a democracy. Using a systematic analysis of the work of political theorists, I identify and describe four salient features of sophisticated democratic thinking, which I call (1) mental representations of conceptual tension, (2) formative thinking, (3) public reason, and (4) deliberative decision-making.

While other research provides insight into students' understanding of a few key democratic concepts and their reasoning processes, this analysis fills a gap in current research by providing an initial picture of *sophisticated* democratic thinking. Moreover, it offers insight into similarities and differences between

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[17] As mentioned in Chapter 1, other scholars (e.g., Csapo, 2001; Farrar, 1988) have used the term "democratic thinking" as well.

sophisticated democratic thinking and the thinking of learners discussed in

Chapter 4. The facets of thinking described in this chapter provide an initial

model of the thought processes underlying engagement with democratic issues

and institutions. This model frames the design and analysis for the subsequent

research in this dissertation, which further fills the research gap by looking at

novice and sophisticated thinking in action.

Methods

To study democratic thinking, it is first necessary to consider *where* one

could find such thinking. To what source could we turn to begin to picture a

model of such thinking? Historian and political theorist, Cynthia Farrar (1988),

offers a suggestion of where to look for democratic thinking by connecting

democratic thinking with political theorizing. She traces the origins of democratic

thinking to fifth-century Athens, where people first lived within and thought about

democracy as a political order. There, ordinary citizens, who had once only

known government by an authoritarian rule or aristocracy, were part of the

government themselves. Social order was no longer determined or kept by one

or by the few, but by the collective citizenry. Farrar (1988) writes:

> Democratic politics enabled all citizens, rich and poor, to express and
> pursue their own aims. Democratic politics also prompted citizens to
> construe their aims politically, and to reflect on their actions in terms of
> general, relatively abstract considerations. Political theory was a part of
> democratic politics, self-understanding was political. (p. 1)

To understand oneself politically was to know that one was part of a body of

citizens or a state. Therefore, people could not help but consider how their

actions would affect not only themselves but also others. Individuals were

expected to pursue their own interests, and that would somehow yield the collective good, creating a tension between individual interests and the common good that had not previously existed. Living in a democracy, according to Farrar (1988), meant asking, "How or in what sense does the polis express and secure the aims of each individual and the common good" (p. 10)? Reflection upon the relationship between individual interests and the common good meant thinking about democracy and the democratic process, and was a necessary part of "preserving order, unity and continuity, as well as autonomy and diversity, in the course of change" (p. 12). Farrar suggests that, with this thinking about democracy and the democratic process in order to reflect upon the relationship between individual interests and the common good, political theory was born.

To be sure, scholars of political theory dedicate their careers to thinking about democracy and the democratic process, including the meaning of citizenship in a society where individual interests and the common good are in tension with one another. The work of political theorists represents the product of sophisticated and prolonged thinking about such issues. Therefore, to begin to uncover aspects of democratic thinking, I analyzed the work of political theorists, hoping to identify patterns of thought embedded in their scholarship. In treating the texts as products of domain-specific thinking, I was able to surface features of that thinking to guide subsequent work.

I selected scholars and texts to study by first searching the *Worldwide Political Science Abstracts*, using "democratic thinking," "civic education," and "citizenship education" as keywords. My aim in doing this keyword search was to

locate literature on these topics to identify scholars most often cited within the work on democratic thinking, civic education, and/or citizenship education. I limited my study to texts related to the education of citizens in a democracy published after the release of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983. Because the presidential commission who produced the report linked academic excellence with the responsibilities and duties of citizenship, I took this as a point of demarcation for recent revival of civic education that extended beyond the current post-9/11 era (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Looking for literature published before 9/11 would significantly increase my corpus of data to analyze, while, at the same time, restricting it to the last 25 years would provide a limited data set to make analysis more feasible.

After looking for citation patterns, I compiled a list of authors that appeared frequently throughout the abstracts on civic education and democratic thinking and that were highly cited in political science abstracts as a whole. I verified the relative influence of the scholars by crosschecking their names in the *Social Science Index* and emerged with the following: Benjamin Barber, Eamon Callan, William Galston, Amy Gutmann, Will Kymlicka, Stephen Macedo, Norman Nie, Robert Putnam, John Rawls, Michael Sandel, Michael Walzer, and Iris Marion Young. I then chose one or two of each author's most influential books to use as the subject of investigation to uncover their democratic thinking.

To analyze the work of the political theorists, I used a modified grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I first chose relevant text by developing simple a priori codes based on the work of Beno Csapo. He (2001)

argued that democratic thinking is "how we form mental representations of our social environment," " build a knowledge base about social phenomena that we face in everyday life," "solve complex problems that involve social relationships," and "make decisions in social situations" (pp. 126-127). Therefore, I began with a coding scheme to identify text that seemed to represent mental representations, a knowledge base, problem solving, and decision-making. I then used constant comparative analysis to further identify and describe the salient aspects of their thinking. Two questions shaped my analysis of the authors:

> 1. How is this author thinking about democratic and social phenomena; solving complex problems that involve social relationships; and making decisions in social situations that have implications for democracy? In short, how is the author engaging in democratic thinking?
> 2. What are the salient characteristics of the components of their thought processes—such as forming mental representations or making decisions—that define their thinking about democracy?

Through constant comparative analysis of the relevant text that emerged from the first round of coding, I identified and determined four common, distinctive components of their thinking: (1) mental representations of core democratic concepts and conceptual tensions, (2) formative knowledge, (3) public reason, and (4) deliberative decision-making. I describe the characteristics and contours of each component below.

Findings

Representations of Key Concepts and Conceptual Tensions

The political theorists I analyzed appeared to offer complicated pictures of core democratic concepts, such as liberty, justice, equality, authority and the common good. Tensions are crucial to their understanding of such concepts—both tensions *within* each concept and *between* concepts. Indeed, the political theorists define these key concepts using the tensions and suggest that to understand the concepts we must consider the internal and relational tensions. To illustrate the tensions, the theorists use real-life cases or propose realistic but imaginary cases. In short, the scholars set key concepts connected to democracy into dynamic relationship with each other.

Political theorists' conceptions of key democratic ideas are complicated and nuanced; rarely do they discuss the concepts in simple, easily defined terms. For example, in his seminal work, *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls (1999) dedicates nearly 600 pages to the concept of justice, including not only its integral place within democracy, but also various and competing conceptions of justice. In working out his own theory of justice, Rawls discusses and rejects utilitarian notions of justice, which would provide the greatest good to the greatest number, arguing that this conception can lead to the tyranny of the majority. Instead, Rawls sees "justice as fairness," whereby, in a society assumed to consist of free and equal persons, social primary goods—liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the social bases of self-respect—are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of one or all of these goods is to the advantage of

everyone, including those least favored.

One way that political theorists articulate their conceptions of key democratic ideas is by setting them up in relationship to other possible conceptions of the same idea. For example, Galston (1991) uses "non-examples" of liberalism and the liberal state before defining these concepts and, thus, shows the contours of the concepts. The liberal state is not, Galston argues, "neutral," nor "a purposeless civil association," nor "an arena for the unfettered expression of 'difference'" (pp. 3-4). In elaborating and giving examples of these "non-characteristics," Galston is narrowing and clarifying the scope of his conception of the liberal state, differentiating his conceptions from those of others. Gutmann (1987) does something similar in *Democratic Education*, spelling out her conception of democracy, in part by explaining what democracy is not. She writes:

> [D]emocracy is not merely a political process—of rule by majorities (or pluralities)…[D]emocracy is a political ideal—of a society whose adult members are, and continue to be, equipped by their education and authorized by political structures to share in ruling. (p. xi)

By first articulating her conception of democracy in contrast to other possible conceptions, Gutmann is able to use it to frame her arguments for democratic education.

Giving examples and non-examples of key democratic concepts not only serves to delineate political theorists' own conceptions, but also shows an understanding that common conceptions of the same democratic idea can be in conflict with another. For example, several scholars challenge traditional conceptions of justice, illustrating that people can equally value a key democratic

ideal and possess an equally sophisticated understanding of that ideal, yet

people's conceptions of the ideal can be different enough to cause some degree

of conflict. Callan (2004), for instance, understands that traditional conceptions of

justice are plagued by unresolved issues, such as who is entitled to what in a just

society. In his work, therefore, he gives credence to the feminist ideal of caring,

because it adds another noteworthy dimension to debates over the concept of

justice in a democratic society. He writes:

> The voice of justice is the loudest and most insistent in the public morality
> of liberal democracies, and rights are what it talks about…[M]uch feminist
> scholarship in recent years has suggested that the voice of justice, with its
> often querulous demands about who is entitled to what, is at the very least
> not the only one that merits our attention. Many have advocated an 'ethic
> of care' as an alternative voice to justice…" (p. 70)

In doing so, Callan acknowledges that justice, while a key idea in a democracy, is

not an easily defined, agreed-upon concept.

Key democratic concepts are often difficult to define, resulting in different

conceptions, because they can be in conflict with other key democratic ideas. For

example, Kymlicka (1996) argues that traditional conceptions of justice are in

conflict with individual rights, another key democratic concept, when applied in

multicultural democratic societies. He argues that so-called universal human

rights that are meant to guarantee justice for the majority often sacrifice justice

for minorities. Therefore, working with his own conceptions of individual freedom

and social justice, Kymlicka contends that group-differentiated minority rights will

lead to fuller realization of justice in a multicultural society. He argues, "A

comprehensive theory of justice in a multicultural state will include both universal

rights, assigned to individuals regardless of group membership, and certain

group-differentiated rights or 'special status' for minority cultures" (p. 6). Barber

(1992) also complicates the idea of justice by discussing how it can be in conflict

with another key democratic idea, equality, when applied to public education. He

writes:

> [Advocates of democratic education] often seem anxious to jettison
> excellence (or just plain competence) in the name of educational equality
> as elitists are to jettison equality (or just plain fairness) in the name of
> educational excellence. (pp. 12-13)

He contends that schooling that is equitable should give everyone an equal

opportunity in society, which can mean that students' schooling itself is

sometimes unequal. He argues:

> Education need not begin with equally adept students, because education
> is itself the great equalizer. Equality is achieved not by handicapping the
> swiftest, but by assuring the less advantaged a comparable opportunity.
> 'Comparable' here does not mean identical. Math whizzes may get high
> school calculus, while the less mathematically inclined get special tutoring.
> (p. 13)

To better illustrate their understanding of democratic concepts and the

conceptual tensions, political theorists are able to give accounts of how the

conceptual tensions might be manifested in society. In some cases, these

accounts are hypothetical. For example, Rawls (1999) describes what he views

as reasonable conditions for civil disobedience and asserts that such conditions

must be present for civil disobedience to exist within the framework of justice that

he has already constructed. Civil disobedience is reasonable, for example, when

there is "a substantial and clear injustice," and preferably one that "obstruct[s] the

path to removing other injustices" (p. 372). He then lists hypothetical situations in

which such an injustice would exist *or* would not exist. In regards to the criterion

above, for example, he writes, "Unless tax laws…are clearly designed to attack or to abridge a basic equal liberty, they should not normally be protested by civil disobedience" (p. 372). Rawls gives such hypothetical situations throughout his discussion of civil disobedience, thus clarifying his own conception of justified civil disobedience.

Further, political theorists can imagine a society in which democratic concepts are carefully balanced and one in which imbalance poses a threat to the democratic order. Callan (2004) opens his book, *Creating Citizens*, with an invitation to "imagine an enviably wealthy and peaceful society that has descended, through a couple of generations, from the society to which you or I belong," (p.1), but then goes on to describe the lack of political participation, indifference, and intolerance that exists therein. Drawing upon the picture he has created for his audience, Callan concludes his thought experiment with the assertion, "The institutions of liberal democracy seem poised for collapse here because the shared public morality that once enlivened them has vanished" (pp. 1-2).

For all these political theorists, the mental representations of democratic concepts and the integral understanding of the conflicts within and between them are crucial. It seems as if their conceptions are incomplete without understanding the tensions within and at the boundaries of the concepts. The capacity to see and use these tensions and boundaries, are critical features in the work of these skilled political thinkers.

Formative Knowledge

Knowledge was also evident in the political theorists' scholarship. Political theorists use a rich knowledge base, replete with historical and contemporary examples, to formulate, explicate, and reassess critical democratic concepts and their various relationships. Their knowledge was not inert; the theorists did not simply demonstrate their knowledge of some event, case or idea. Rather they *used* the knowledge base to construct, support, articulate and elaborate the concepts, ideas and issues about which they wrote. I saw such knowledge in use as "formative," in that the knowledge helps formulate and shape the political ideas and issues. The key point is not that the theorists have extensive knowledge of historical examples and of lay and disciplinary theories, but rather that they *use* such knowledge to think about political issues. In particular, I found that theorists actively used specific knowledge of (1) the fundamental rights of citizens and the role of government in protecting those rights; (2) historical accounts; (3) contemporary issues; (4) democratic theories; and (3) diverse conceptions of the good life, which translate to competing individual interests.

Not surprisingly, knowledge of documents and of historical examples that explicate the fundamental rights of citizens, roles of government, and theories about the relationships among them resided at the heart of this knowledge base. Every one of the political theorists I read referenced documents such as the United States Constitution or the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights. In addition, they employed multiple historical or contemporary examples of government's role in protecting or violating human and citizens' rights. Used to

form complicated, tension-filled concepts, these documents and historical or contemporary cases helped ground abstractions and illuminate their nuances. For example, in *Democratic Education*, Gutmann (1987) first establishes the democratic, constitutional principles central to her overarching argument—that all citizens are entitled to an education that will prepare them for democratic citizenship. Then she uses the democratic principles to make an argument about the special case of governments distributing resources for the primary schooling of handicapped children. She argues that, although responsibility for primary schooling has been traditionally vested in state and local governments, the federal government should play an important financial role in protecting and educating handicapped children because it requires substantial financial support. Further, she uses her knowledge of the 1975 "Education for All Handicapped Children Act" (Public Law 94-142) and contemporary debates surrounding it to argue her case with specific, concrete examples. In making the case for federal funding of the education of handicapped children, Gutmann uses knowledge of democratic principles, traditional functioning of government, and federal legislation and its impact to flesh out her conception of democratic education and make an argument about how future government policies should address the democratic education of children with mental and physical handicaps.

Political theorists all use historical examples to reason through an argument. Referring to the use of historical knowledge in making an argument, Gutmann (1987) suggests that using historical knowledge helps us consider the "the practical implications of our normative standards" (p. 17, footnote)—our

normative standards being defined by key democratic concepts. To that end, political theorists use both examples *and* non-examples from history to make arguments about democratic ideas. Sandel's book, *Democracy's Discontent* (1998*)*, is full of historical events, court cases, and legislation, ranging from the Lincoln-Douglas debates to *Roe v. Wade*, all of which he uses to illustrate arguments about the evolution of ideas like justice and liberty in American society. For example, in arguing that it is only in recent decades that federal courts have rejected the notions of "speech-intrinsic injury" and "group-based harm" in freedom of speech cases, Sandel cites the 1942 case of *Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire,* in which the court acknowledged "fighting words" as injurious to individuals, and the 1952 "group libel" case of *Beauharnais v. Illinois*, in which the court declared that individuals should be treated as "situated selves" defined in part by the groups to which they belong.   Similarly, in presenting his argument for the possibility of egalitarianism, Walzer (1983) uses historical accounts to shed light on "what security and welfare, money, office, education, free time, political power, and so on, mean to us" (p. xvi). In discussing the idea of "meritocracy" in the attainment of public office, for instance, Walzer describes the thirteen-century long recruitment of officials into the Chinese government through an intricate system of examinations. He uses the story to illustrate a meritocratic system and the difficulties and imperfections inherent in it.

The theorists also draw heavily on the work of other political thinkers such as John Locke, Jean-Jaques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, and John Stuart Mill. Again, they use, not merely cite, other theorists and their ideas to reason about

issues and to demonstrate the opportunities and constraints in the thinking of others. In short, the theories are tools for thinking. For example, as Walzer (1983) attempts to describe the sphere within which money operates in society, he discusses the market, the distribution of money and commodities, in its "Lockeian form." He uses Locke's theories to explain "market morality" as a "celebration of the wanting, making, owning, and exchanging of commodities," which have flooded their boundaries in modern society, turning the market into "a kind of tyranny, distorting distributions in other spheres" (pp. 104-105).

Political theorists also take into account people's differing conceptions of "the good life" to argue that these ultimately affect their conceptions of justice, freedom, toleration, and so on. In trying to articulate and then use others' conceptions of the good life to reason about democracy, political theorists acquire and use substantial knowledge of others people's history, culture, and religion. Kymlicka (1996) uses rich examples of many minority groups' histories and cultures to develop and promote the idea of minority rights as supplementary to universal human rights. For example, Canadian history plays a prominent role in his book because of the "obvious" existence of national minorities in Canada and because "[m]any of the pivotal moment in Canadian history have centred on attempts to renegotiate the terms of federation between English, French and Aboriginals" (pp. 12-13). Kymlicka, therefore, draws upon Canadian history as an illustration of how a group's history shapes its relationship to the collective whole, as well as its motivations and aspirations.

Knowledge in the service of thinking and arguing defined each work I

analyzed. The thinking evident in these works revealed the importance of not simply knowing *about* legal, historical and cultural examples, but knowing when and how to use these to build and formulate understanding, and, as I'll argue below, reason toward a conclusion. Knowledge, then, is valuable chiefly in the ways thinkers use historical, legal, cultural and contemporary examples to reason about, formulate, criticize and modify important concepts that drive and enliven democratic society. In short, all the political theorists possessed and put into constant use a rich and relevant knowledge base, thereby demonstrating its value.

Public Reason

Formulating and articulating reasoned arguments *in* public, *with* the public, and *about* public issues—or public reason—is another defining characteristic of the scholarship I analyzed. The theorists argued for the importance of public reason in a democracy *and* demonstrated such reasoning. In using their formative knowledge base to explicate and develop democratic concepts and conceptual tensions, the political theorists created arguments in the presence of others—literally and figuratively—and by considering both competing conceptions of the good life and competing political points of view. Such reasoning entails (1) considering one's own *and* competing, yet reasonable, points of view, (2) finding common ground and/or reconciling differences, and (3) delivering a persuasive argument. What remains important throughout the process of public reason is the willingness to listen to the viewpoints of others, trying to understand those viewpoints, and taking them into consideration when

formulating and delivering an argument.

Many political theorists argued that public reason is necessary in a democracy. For example, Young (2000) positions public reason as an essential component of an *inclusive* democracy. Public reason, she argues, is a combination of reasonableness, or the willingness to listen to others, and publicity, or the interaction among participants who hold each other accountable. Gutmann (1987) discusses the importance of public reason for democracy in the domain of education, which regularly incites bitter debates over questions of morals. She argues that rather than try to come to agreement over a moral ideal, we should "try instead to find the fairest ways for reconciling our disagreements, and for enriching our collective life by democratically debating them." By engaging in such activities, she continues, "We may even find ourselves modifying our moral ideals of education in the process of participating in democratic debates and publicly reconciling our differences" (p. 12). Barber (1992) holds that developing the capacity for public reason "enables individuals to become citizens capable of discovering common ground and rendering sound political judgments" (p. 266). For Barber, "Reason *can* rule in a democratic society" and is a vehicle for establishing "an aristocracy of everyone."

Beyond arguing for the importance of public reason in a democracy, the theorists also employ such reasoning in their work. Obviously, since political theorists publish their ideas, they open their arguments and assertions up to scrutiny and debate by those with competing points of view. In some ways, their vocation itself is an example of public reason—to be sure, members of all

academic disciplines make their arguments a matter of public record.

Importantly, though, most of the theorists whose work I analyzed include the

arguments of other members of the public in the ways they formulate and deliver

their arguments. For example, Rawls, (1999) explicitly takes up the classical

utilitarian and intuitionist conceptions of justice. In doing so, he first tries to

present the best case for those ideas before pointing out differences between

those views and his idea of justice as fairness. His aim was "to work out a theory

of justice that is a viable alternative to these doctrines which have long

dominated our philosophical traditions" (p. 3). However, he tries to do so by

treating ideas fairly and then reasoning with opposing ideas to demonstrate what

he saw as limitations. He did not use opposing theories polemically, but rather

took them up to think carefully with, realizing that others could take, and have

taken, up the theories themselves. Walzer (1999), in turn, acknowledges the

contribution of Rawls's scholarship to political thinking, thanking Rawls for

shaping and even creating the possibility of his work, before taking up Rawls's

ideas to reason with and ultimately disagree with them. Such acknowledgement,

evident in one form or another across the political theorists' work, does more

than indicate the contribution of others' ideas, whether supportive or

contradictory, but also the "publicness" of their work.

In reasoning in public, the political theorists situate themselves among

opposing points of views and try to bridge the differences. Macedo (2000), for

example, argues that, when discussing the purposes of public schooling, people

create a dichotomy between the promotion of a common civic culture in schools

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and religious freedom. He denies this dichotomy and argues that there is, in fact, common ground and purposes between these two opposing points of view. Throughout his book, he attempts to give credence to both sides in the debate, arguing that "public morality can be justified in the face of religious and philosophic diversity" (p. 21).

Public reason—formulating and articulating a reasoned argument in public, with the public and about public issues—is an essential component of democratic theorists' thinking. It seems to be a central way by which political theorists attempt to "solve" pluralistic, democratic society's stickiest civic issues. Hence, they not only recommend public reason, but also employ it themselves, providing a model for the process. In doing so, theorists use their formative knowledge and their understanding of the conceptual tensions to consider competing points of view and situate themselves among these competing points of view to deliver a persuasive argument.

Deliberative Decision-Making

Being able to reason in public, with the public, and about public issues can play an important role in supporting another aspect of democratic thinking—deliberative decision-making. Making decisions that will affect one's own person and one's community, whether in the voting booth or in one's everyday interactions and actions, is an integral part of democratic citizenship. As Farrar (1988) suggests, citizens understanding that their actions can affect not only themselves but also others is a distinguishing characteristic of living in a democratic society. To be sure, when discussing desirable qualities of

democratic citizenship, political theorists recommend that citizens carefully consider issues before reaching a decision and, most importantly, that they weigh both individual interests and the common good. Such deliberative decision-making is important in both the public and private spheres. While recommending deliberative decision-making, the political theorists also make their own deliberative decision-making visible in their writing by explicating the issues and viewpoints they considered in their argument.

Political theorists grapple with problems in society, problems distinguished by the conceptual tensions and, especially, the underlying tension between individual interests and the common good. Before coming to a decision and making a recommendation about how to deal with these problems, they consider a number of factors, taking into account their formative knowledge and the variety of conceptual tensions. In both the public and private spheres, deliberative decision-making involves (1) examining an issue fairly and critically, resisting knee-jerk reactions driven by self interest; (2) considering possible alternatives and outcomes; (3) drawing upon key democratic concepts, such as justice or equality, and competing views of those concepts, (4) employing formative knowledge, and (5) considering the importance of both individual interests and the common good.

Gutmann (1987) calls for education that promotes deliberation within and between its citizens in order to come to make decisions compatible with democratic values. She writes, "Children will eventually need the capacity for rational deliberation to make hard choices in situations where habits and

authorities do not supply clear or consistent guidance" (p. 51). Gutmann writes

that before coming to a decision children will need to learn how to "consider the

relevant alternatives," partially enabling them to take part in resolving

disagreements between citizens over those controversial issues that require a

decision. Young (2000) stresses the importance of deliberative decision-making

as well, arguing that deliberation must occur in public and between citizens,

including all interested parties in the process of making decisions that will affect

their lives. In addition, she writes, "Participants arrive at a decision not by

determining what preferences have greatest numerical support, but by

determining which proposals the collective agrees are supported by the best

reasons" (p. 23). In this way, before making a decision, people consider the most

reasonable, best possible alternatives rather than those that are "most popular"

for whatever reason.

In their study of citizenship, Nie, Junn and Stehlik-Barry (1996) make

references to deliberative decision-making with respect to voting and its

importance to democracy. They argue that enlightened citizens often make the

decision to go to the polls not because they believe they will cast the deciding

ballot, but because they know that voting is important to a democracy and

maintains "a system of electoral accountability as one of the most important

checks against corruption and the abuse of power by political elites" (p. 28).

Further, the authors infer that enlightened citizens are informed about candidates

and issues, which allows them to "pursue and protect their interests" (p. 26) when

making a decision about how to vote. However, these enlightened citizens may

be voting only with their individual interests in mind, without appropriately weighing the common good as well. For this reason, Putnam (2001) recommends that citizens also build their "social capital" by becoming more involved in community organizations. In doing so, people will begin to form "connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (p. 19). In this way, the common good becomes a concern of those individuals who are involved. Putnam writes, "[S]ocial capital…can have the 'externalities' that affect the wider community, so that not all the costs and benefits of social connections accrue to the person making the contact." In short, Putnam writes, social capital is "simultaneously a 'private good' and a 'public good'" (p. 20).

The political theorists not only recommend deliberative decision-making but also represent and model deliberative decision-making through their writing. Their recommendations for public and political action demonstrate that they have weighed individual interests and the common good. Kymlicka (1996), for example, sees a problem with the rights of oppressed groups in current models of democracy and makes recommendations for what actions should be taken to include the interests of these typically oppressed minority groups. Similarly, Macedo (2000) sees a problem with widespread negative attitudes toward moral and religious diversity in our society and so makes recommendations for how we might bridge differences by accepting "mutually acceptable reasons" (p. x). In doing so, Macedo weighs individual interests and the common good, arguing that a shared public morality will benefit the greatest number of people. In addition,

he weighs possible alternatives, such as religious fundamentalism in the schools and "civic totalism" divorced from all religious values, both of which he argues present dangers.

Like public reason, political theorists both recommend and employ deliberative decision-making. And, as with all the other facets of democratic thinking, deliberative decision-making seems closely related to the other facets. Political theorists' mental representations and rich knowledge base allow them to better imagine the social consequences of political actions because they can see how particular issues relate to democratic concepts and they can draw upon their rich knowledge base to better imagine the likely consequences of political action. This, in turn, aids them in deliberation. Further, public reason can play an important role in supporting deliberative decision-making by helping people consider competing points of view and arguments about an issue. For political theorists, deliberation in the service of making decisions that will affect not only one's self but other members of the public is an important part of democratic citizenship.

Discussion

Analysis of these works surfaced common, critical features of the thinking political theorists represent in their work (see Table 5-1). While I discussed these features separately, they were clearly interconnected in the reasoning the scholars used in their publications. It was clear to me that mental representations of the conceptual tensions and knowledge *use* were crucial components in public reasoning and deliberative decision-making. The work also

Table 5-1

Initial Descriptions of Facets of Sophisticated Democratic Thinking

Facet of Sophisticated Thinking	Description
Representations of Key Concepts and Conceptual Tensions	• Complex, nuanced understanding of key democratic concepts, such as liberty, justice, equality, authority, and the common good. • Able to articulate what concept is and what it is not • Understand the tensions within and between concepts • Give hypothetical or real-life examples of how concepts and conceptual tensions are manifested in society to illustrate their understanding • Can imagine a society in which democratic concepts are carefully balanced and imbalance poses a threat to the democratic order.

Formative Knowledge (Knowledge in Use)	• Use a rich knowledge base, replete with historical and contemporary examples, to formulate, explicate, and reassess critical democratic concepts and their various relationships.
	• In making decisions and reasoning in public, actively use specific knowledge of
	  1. the fundamental rights of citizens and the role of government in protecting those rights;
	  2. theories behind the conceptual tensions;
	  3. various conceptions of the good life, which translate to competing individual interests;
	  4. historical accounts related to social/political issues; and
	  5. contemporary issues

Public Reason	• Formulate and articulate arguments in public, with the public, about public issues • Consider competing conceptions of the good life and competing political points of view • Attempt to find common ground and reconcile differences • Deliver a persuasive argument supported by extensive evidence

Facet of Sophisticated Thinking	Description
Deliberative Decision-Making	• Try to examine an issue fairly and critically, resisting knee-jerk reactions driven by self-interest; • Consider possible alternatives and outcomes of decisions • Draw upon key democratic concepts, (such as justice or equality), and competing views of those concepts; • Employ formative knowledge, and • Consider the importance of both individual interests and the common good when deliberating.

suggests there is an enduring tension between individual interests and the common good in thinking about public issues in a democracy (Farrar, 1988). This tension resides at the intersection of a government resting on the sovereignty of its citizens, where both citizens and the government must survive and flourish. The distinctive cognitive components emerging from this study of a sample of political theorists—representations of key concepts and conceptual tensions, formative knowledge, public reason and deliberative decision-making—reflect the means by which expert political theorists sort out these competing interests and solve problems inherent in democracy.

Moreover, looking back at the research reviewed in Chapter 4 suggests that the facets of democratic thinking described in this chapter also play a role in learners' thinking. For example, studies of students' ideas about fundamental democratic concepts such as government (e.g., Brophy & Alleman, 2006; Greenstein, 1969), democracy (e.g., Baldi et al., 2001; Berti, 1994), citizenship (e.g., Amadeo et al., 2002; Baldi et al., 2001), and freedom, justice and equality (e.g., Helwig, 1995, 1998) reveal that young children and adolescents have

developing, albeit superficial, understanding of key democratic concepts and even some of the tensions that can exist between them when applied to real-life situations. Indeed, as evidenced in studies described in Chapter 4, students as young as elementary school age seem to have the capacity for forming these concepts and for, eventually, recognizing the conflicts between them. It is not difficult to imagine that if students were supported in their thinking about the conceptual tensions, they would gain a more sophisticated understanding. Moreover, the conceptual tensions would help them to categorize and think about any new knowledge they acquire.

However, the research reviewed in Chapter 4 also indicates that adolescents lack the knowledge to help them form mental representations of key democratic concepts, let alone understand the crucial conceptual tensions. National assessments of students' knowledge of civics, government, and U.S. history indicate that the majority of U.S. students have an insufficient knowledge in these subjects (Lee, J. & Weiss, 2007; Lutkus & Weiss, 2007). Without a knowledge base, students might have trouble developing mental representations of conceptual tensions and reaching a more sophisticated level of democratic thinking. At the same time, without mental representations of the conceptual tensions, novices have nothing with which to frame or store new knowledge.

Yet, providing students with information to expand their knowledge base may not be enough. It was not just a knowledge base that was important in the thinking of political theorists, but their use of that knowledge for specific tasks. Unfortunately, with some exceptions (e.g., Mosborg, 2002), there are very few

studies that focus on how students use knowledge to make sense of new information, reason through problems, and make decisions. However, what little research does exist suggests that students *do* use their knowledge base, however scanty, in the service of tasks such as formulating arguments, just as the political theorists do. For example, Mosborg (2002) argues that students' existing knowledge helps them form a framework that becomes an "important orienting device" in public discourse. Still, if knowledge is scant, they may maintain only naïve conceptions—or worse, misconceptions—of key democratic concepts, and may be misguided in forming and arguing their personal point of view.

Indeed, for political theorists, reasoning in public, with the public, about public issues—or public reason—is highly dependent upon formative knowledge and mental representations of the conceptual tensions. Political theorists' fundamental, sophisticated understanding of the conflicts between individual interests and the common good, for example, enable them to engage in public reason by taking into account interests and conceptions beside their own. Research on students' thinking suggests that public reason is closely linked to mental representations of conceptual tensions and formative knowledge in students as well (e.g., Adelson & O'Neil, 1966). For example, Avery (1992) showed that students who lack political information about their least "favorite" socio-political groups are more likely to be intolerant of the views and political voice of those within that socio-political group. This suggests that without

knowledge of other viewpoints, one is less willing to tolerate other views, making public reason impossible.

With or without a knowledge base, though, current research on students indicates they are capable of and inclined toward public reason (e.g., Mosborg, 2002). For example, Hahn's (1994) study of high school students engaging in controversial discussions reveals that, when students have a teacher supporting and mediating such discussion, they readily engage in public reason. However, formative knowledge and mental representations of conceptual tensions seem to be a necessary precondition for *sophisticated* public reason. If students have a better understanding of those with whom they are expected to reason, and of key democratic concepts and conflict between them that can frame their reasoning, they might be more likely to both engage in public reason and use their knowledge and understanding of conceptual tensions to do so.

Like public reason, deliberative decision-making is also dependent upon conceptual tensions and formative knowledge in political theorists' thinking, and, again, research suggests that these components are closely linked in novices as well. As indicated before, students who lack political information about their least "favorite" socio-political groups are more likely to be intolerant of their political views and voice. According to Avery (1992), these same students who lack political information are also less likely to engage in thoughtful, prolonged deliberation before reaching a conclusion.

It seems, then, that just as all the facets of democratic thinking were essential for sophisticated thinkers, so too are they essential for novices (see

Table 5-2 for comparisons). No one component is sufficient—they all compose democratic thinking in an interconnected web that makes one incomplete without the other. Formative knowledge, for example, is indispensable, but if it is knowledge that is not aimed at forming concepts and building understanding of the relationship between them, and for reasoning and making decisions, it is meaningless for thinking in a democracy. Likewise, concepts are dependent upon knowledge and lack sophistication if they do not evolve with the introduction of new knowledge.

Table 5-2

Initial Comparisons between Sophisticated and Novice Democratic Thinking

Facet	Sophisticated Thinking	Novice Thinking
Representations of Key Concepts and Conceptual Tensions	• Complex, nuanced understanding of key democratic concepts, such as liberty, justice, equality, authority, and the common good • Able to articulate what concept is and what it is not • Understand the tensions within and between concepts • Give hypothetical or real-life examples of how concepts and conceptual tensions are manifested in society to illustrate their understanding • Can imagine a society in which democratic concepts are carefully balanced and imbalance poses a threat to the democratic order	• Superficial understanding of democratic concepts such as government, democracy, citizenship, community, freedom, justice, and equality • Developing understanding of conflicts between concepts, such as freedom and equality, when applied to real-life situations

Facet	Sophisticated Thinking	Novice Thinking
Formative Knowledge (Knowledge in Use)	• Use a rich knowledge base, replete with historical and contemporary examples, to formulate, explicate, and reassess critical democratic concepts and their various relationships • Actively use specific knowledge of 1. the fundamental rights of citizens and the role of government in protecting those rights; 2. theories behind the conceptual tensions; 3. various conceptions of the good life, which translate to competing individual interests; 4. historical accounts; and 5. contemporary issues	• Low levels of factual knowledge about history, civics and government • Use what knowledge they do have (i.e., history, core democratic values) to formulate arguments and express an opinion.
Public Reason	• Formulate and articulate arguments in public, with the public, about public issues • Consider competing conceptions of the good life and competing political points of view • Attempt to find common ground and reconcile differences • Deliver a persuasive argument supported by extensive evidence	• Engage in public reason with the encouragement and mediation of a teacher • Developing understanding of compromise and ability to take another's point of view • Less likely to be tolerant of groups about whom they have little knowledge • Voice a personal point of view using existing knowledge frameworks

Facet	Sophisticated Thinking	Novice Thinking
Deliberative Decision-Making	• Try to examine an issue fairly and critically, resisting knee-jerk reactions driven by self-interest; • Consider possible alternatives and outcomes of decisions • Draw upon key democratic concepts, (such as justice or equality), and competing views of those concepts; • Employ formative knowledge, and • Consider the importance of both individual interests and the common good when deliberating.	• Less likely to be tolerant of groups or engage in deliberation with groups about whom they have little knowledge. • Superficial understanding of democratic concepts and competing views of those concepts • Low levels of factual knowledge to draw upon • Developing understanding of needs of the community

Unfortunately, existing studies imply that many students need further development of the components that make up democratic thinking. By the time they are seniors in high school—and close to or at the age they may become fully participating members of a democracy—they have not developed sophisticated thinking about civic issues, which would allow them, for example, to weigh individual interests and the common good in solving problems and making decisions.

Conclusion

My repurposing of the work of political theorists provides some useful categories that begin to paint a clearer picture of sophisticated democratic thinking (see Table 5-1). Furthermore, they help provide insight into similarities and differences between novice and more sophisticated democratic thinking (see Table 5-2). However, looking at the written work of political theorists—work that may have taken them years to think through and complete—does not offer a

picture of sophisticated thinking *in action*. How do experienced democratic thinkers think as they encounter information about and reason through civic issues? What are the features of sophisticated thinking in action?

As for novices, identifying features of their thinking remains difficult because, as noted in Chapter 4, there is currently not enough research on student thinking. Moreover, any comparisons between sophisticated and novice thinking, such as those discussed in this chapter, must be made with disparate studies, with sophisticated and novices thinking around very different issues in very different contexts. How do learners think as they encounter information about and reason through civic issues? What are the features of novice thinking in action? How does novice thinking in action differ from sophisticated thinking in action?

The next phase of my research begins to answer these questions. It involves "think alouds" conducted with experienced and novice political thinkers around the same civic issue. It focuses on one feature of democratic thinking— formative knowledge, or how experts and novices actively use knowledge while grappling with a civic issue. I discuss the rationale for focusing on formative knowledge and describe the methods used in this study in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

Methods and Data

This chapter describes the study I designed and enacted to analyze and describe one aspect of democratic thinking, formative knowledge, in both sophisticated and novice democratic thinkers. The study seeks to address the following questions:

4. How are sophisticated and novice thinkers using knowledge?

    a. What kinds of knowledge are they using? Historical knowledge? Knowledge of current events? Knowledge from personal experience? Do they draw upon existing knowledge when grappling with a public or civic issue? Do they use new information they encounter? Do they seek to acquire knowledge they do not possess?

    b. What is the utility of the kinds of knowledge subjects are using? What are they doing with the knowledge?

5. Are there differences in how sophisticated and novice thinkers use knowledge? Similarities? What, if any, gaps exist between their thinking?

Why concentrate on formative knowledge? First, as I argued in Chapters 1 and 3, civic knowledge is central to many people's concerns over civic

education, and increasing student knowledge has often been the linchpin of reform efforts. While I do not disagree that knowledge is an important aspect of civic education, in my preliminary study of sophisticated thinking, I found it is knowledge *in use* that is important for democratic thinking. People actively use knowledge to form concepts, make decisions, and reason both in public and with the public. Therefore, focusing on formative knowledge in this empirical study offers the potential to support, extend, or contest my argument that the acquisition of content knowledge, for which standardized tests often serve as a proxy, is not enough.

Second, in my preliminary study of democratic thinking, I concluded that formative knowledge was foundational and related to all the other facets I identified. I found that the political theorists used a rich knowledge base, replete with historical and contemporary examples, to formulate, explicate, and reassess critical democratic concepts and their various relationships. In making decisions and reasoning in public, they actively used specific knowledge of the fundamental rights of citizens and the role of government in protecting those rights; theories underlying the conceptual tensions; various conceptions of the good life, which translate to competing individual interests; historical accounts related to social/political issues; and contemporary issues.

Based on my preliminary studies of political theorists' work and of research on student thinking, I hypothesized that sophisticated democratic thinkers possess a rich knowledge base, which they actively put to use in (1) explaining and/or fleshing out their conceptions of key ideas like justice, freedom

and equality and the conceptual tensions; (2) formulating and delivering an argument; and/or (3) making a decision. I hypothesized that novices do not as readily put knowledge to use for different purposes, partly because they do not have as much knowledge to use and partly because they are not practiced in using knowledge for specific purposes. In short, novices do not possess the habits of mind to use knowledge as proficiently as experts.

To test the hypothesis derived from my preliminary work, I used cognitive psychology's think aloud method, which asks subjects to verbalize their thoughts while solving a problem. The purpose of the think aloud is to understand the thinking process, rather than the product of that process. This method, if performed correctly, can provide data about sophisticated and less sophisticated thought processes (Kuusela & Paul, 2000; Newell & Simon, 1972; Wineburg, 1990). The following sections provide background information on the think aloud method, and describe the design of this study and methods for data analysis.

The Think Aloud Method

The think aloud method is one of the best methods available for understanding human thought processes. It has provided educational scholars in history and the social sciences with a useful method for determining how experts and students think, and the similarities and differences between expert and novice thought processes. For example, Wineburg (1990) used the think aloud method to study the cognitive processes of historians and students in examining historical sources. His study provided insight into the disciplinary heuristics employed by historians when reading historical evidence, and the differences

between historians' and students' reading of the evidence. Torney-Purta (1992) used think alouds with adolescents who not had the opportunity to practice problem-solving strategies of political experts, and government officials who were practiced in dealing with policy issues, to learn about differences in their understanding of political processes.

The think aloud method is derived from cognitive psychology's introspection model, which held that events in consciousness could be observed in the same manner as events in the natural world. However, it did not mature as a widely accepted research method until 1972 when Newell and Simon published their pioneering work, *Human Problem Solving.*[18] Newell and Simon (1972) viewed the human as a processor of information and set out to understand the complex processes involved in information processing—that is, how humans think. As opposed to treating subjects' internal thoughts as interpreted by the subject as data, as users of the introspection model did, Newell and Simon treated verbal reports of thinking as data, so that they were open to inspection and interpretation by anyone. Their work revealed that subjects verbalizing their thought processes could yield large amounts of data and, as a result, the think aloud method gained increasing acceptance (Someren, M. W. V. et al., 1994).

Despite the think aloud method's increasing popularity, some psychologists remained skeptical. In the most serious criticism of the use of verbal data, Nisbett and Wilson (1977) associated verbal data with introspection,

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[18] The original introspection model had severe methodological problems because psychologists were studying data that had already been subjectively interpreted and reported by the person whose thoughts were being studied. So flawed was this methodology that psychologists grew suspicious of any research method even resembling introspection, hence the rise of behaviorism in the 1930s (Someren, M. W. V., Barnard, Y. F., & Sandberg, J., 1994).

claiming that people did not have privileged access to their thought processes. They argued that subjects could not explain their thought processes because they could not always know what provided the stimulus for their thought processes. Because verbal reports provided a picture of thought processes that was incomplete at best and false at worst, Nisbett and Wilson held that only inaccurate conclusions could be drawn from analyzing the data.

However, the experiments that Nisbett and Wilson used as evidence for their argument asked subjects to retrieve information from long-term memory. Proponents of the use of verbal data, Ericcson and Simon (1993b), agreed that verbal reports retrieved in this way would be invalid. They held that the reports are only valid when they reflect the content of *short-term memory*. Therefore, only concurrent reports should be used to gather verbal data, rather than the retrospective reports that Nisbett and Wilson used (Wineburg, 1990). Furthermore, Ericsson and Simon emphasized that verbal reports should not involve subjects reporting *why* they were thinking but rather *what* they were thinking. Therefore, the question to ask of verbal reports was not whether or not the verbal report was valid but whether or not the researcher's execution of the think-aloud procedure was valid.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the use of verbal data became increasingly accepted and respected among researchers in psychology, education and cognitive science (Ericsson & Simon, 1993b; Someren, M. W. V. et al., 1994). In 1993, in a revised edition of their original book on verbal reports as data, Ericsson and Simon presented a review of over 30 studies to prove the

reliability of a well-executed think aloud procedure. They again emphasized the use of concurrent reports over, or at least in combination with, retrospective reports, and the importance of instructing participants to only verbalize their thoughts as they come into consciousness, rather than try to interpret or explain their thoughts.

After over 30 years of application and methodological research, the think aloud stands as a respected and widely used method for understanding human thought processes. Because this study aims for better understanding of the thinking relevant to civic education, the think aloud procedure is one of the most appropriate methods to arrive at that understanding. It provides insight into thinking that cannot be gleaned from looking at the finished products of such thinking, whether it is the published work of a political theorist or the term paper of a high school student. As Martin and Wineburg (2008) write:

> Think alouds give insight into the "intermediate processes of cognition"—the way stations that lead to discovery and the creation of warranted interpretation. It is during these stages, well before a conclusion has been reached, that we see thinking at its most raw—filled with hems and haws, false starts and switchbacks, wrong turns and self-corrections...Think alouds give us a glimpse of what expert cognition looks like before it is tidied up and presented for public view" (pp. 307-308).

<center>Design of the Study</center>

In designing the study, I needed to address several foundational issues: First, who would represent the sophisticated thinking relevant to civic education? Who would represent novices? And, finally, about *what* would the subjects think aloud? The sections below address these questions. In addition, I describe

some of the considerations in designing the think aloud protocol and the methods for data analysis.

Identification and Recruitment of Sophisticated Thinkers

This study is influenced by an expert-novice research tradition, and expert studies typically use those with high levels of domain-specific knowledge or discipline-specific heuristics—usually those who are academic scholars in the particular discipline under investigation (Wineburg, 1990). For example, studies of expertise in math focus on the thinking of mathematicians, studies of expertise in history focus on historians, and so on. In a similar vein, this study rests on the assumption that political scientists possess high levels of knowledge regarding civic and political issues. The American Political Science Association (APSA) (2007) defines political science as:

> The study of governments, public policies and political processes, systems, and political behavior. Political science subfields include political theory, political philosophy, political ideology, political economy, policy studies and analysis, comparative politics, international relations, and a host of related fields.

According to APSA, key issues in political science are immigration, political violence and terrorism, civil rights, and the environment—civic and political issues that all citizens face. Further, political science was the most represented discipline among participants on the steering committee, national advisory committee, national review committee, and national scholars review panel for the *National Standards for Civics and Government* (Center for Civic Education, 1994). While not the only people with "expertise" relative to civic and political issues, certainly political scientists do employ the type of thinking I seek to

describe.

Still, some people might argue that political scientists are not necessarily "good" or "model" citizens, and therefore, should not serve as models of sophisticated thinkers in relation to civic education. For example, Oliver and Shaver (1966) argued that the academic scholar as model of intelligent citizenry for civic education is inadequate because academic scholars are not necessarily engaged with immediate issues of society. So what defines the "model" citizen? As discussed in Chapter 1, scholars and educators writing about civic education refer to the aims of civic education as producing "competent" and "responsible" citizens, and those who explicitly define such citizens (i.e., Gibson & Levine, 2003; Lupia & McCubbins, 1998) make it possible to glean several key, measurable attributes of a competent, responsible citizen. Such citizens are:

5. *Informed and knowledgeable*, with a grasp and an appreciation of history and the fundamental processes of American democracy; and an understanding and awareness of public and community issues;

6. *Able to reason*, with the ability to obtain information, think critically, and enter into dialogue among others with different perspectives; and the ability to predict the consequences of their actions;

7. *Engaged in their communities,* through membership in or contributions to organizations working to address an array of cultural, social, political, and religious interests and beliefs;

8. *Politically active,* through participation in such activities as group problem solving, public speaking, petitioning and protesting, and voting.

One could certainly argue that political scientists do not necessarily possess all of these attributes, and therefore cannot be studied as models for civic education. Indeed, their Ph.D. training only guarantees that they will be informed and knowledgeable and able to reason, the first two of the attributes listed above. For example, the political theorists whose work I analyzed for my initial study discussed in Chapter 4 possessed the problem-solving and decision-making capital listed above (i.e., knowledge of history, democratic processes, and political and civic issues; skills in obtaining information, critical thinking, predicting outcomes).

However, political scientists do not necessarily *lack* all the other attributes either. For example, Young (2000) begins the introduction to *Inclusion and Democracy:*

> In January 1997 I stood on street corners in Pittsburgh soliciting signatures for a referendum petition. The temperature hovered around 15 degrees Fahrenheit in the sun. I persisted in this self-punishment because I knew that scores of other people were spread over the city also collecting signatures. The petition called for a question to be put on the May ballot asking voters to approve the creation of a Police Civilian Review Board. (p.1)

Young's actions demonstrate that political scientists may be quite engaged with the immediate issues facing society and, in addition to being informed and knowledgeable, sometimes participate in their communities and act politically to accomplish public purposes. In short, "engaged political scientists" certainly exist.

What distinguishes an engaged political scientist from other engaged and politically active citizens though, is their high level of domain-specific knowledge

and disciplinary heuristics related to the civic and political issues. Such knowledge and skills are exactly what studies in expertise have consistently used as a qualification for expertise (Wineburg, 1990).

Therefore, I recruited eight political scientists, who, by virtue of their Ph.D. training and professional work, are informed and knowledgeable about political and civic issues, and also possess the other attributes of a competent, responsible citizen (i.e., involved in their communities, act politically to accomplish public purposes). I looked at the profiles of political scientists at several Midwestern universities and recorded the names of those who appeared to have the attributes of "good citizenship" listed above. I randomly chose eight names from the pool of political scientists who fit my criteria and sent each an email (see Appendix A) requesting their participation. If I did not receive a response or a political scientist declined to participate, I randomly chose another political scientist's name from the pool of eligible participants until I reached the sample of eight.

In the end, I conducted think alouds with eight political scientists from five different Midwestern universities. At the think aloud session, I used survey questions to gather background information on the political scientists' education and scholarship, and to ascertain the participation characteristics discussed above (see Appendix B). Table 6-1 provides profiles for each of the political scientists who served as a subject in this study. Six of the political scientists concentrate on American government and politics, while two of them concentrate on comparative government and politics. Each reported being involved in two or

more community organizations or activities, and in four or more recent political
activities.

Table 6-1

Profiles of Participating Political Scientists

Political Scientist[19]	Ph.D. University	Research Areas	Community Membership/Activity	Recent Political Activity
David	University of Michigan-Ann Arbor	-American Government and Politics -Political Psychology -Public Opinion -Impact of pedagogy on students' civic competence	-Serves on Board of Directors for community religious organization -President-elect for community religious organization -Former president of university religious organization -Member of Board of Directors for university religious organization	-Voting -Attending a political rally -Contributing money for a political cause -Writing letter or email in support of political cause -Signing a petition -Speaking publicly about a political issue -Engaging in a public debate
Alex	University of Michigan-Ann Arbor	-American Government and Politics -Political Theory -Public Law -British Idealism -Educational Theory -Ancient Greek Political Thought	-Elementary School Volunteer -Membership in religious organization	-Voting -Volunteering for a campaign -Contributing money for a campaign -Contributing money for a political cause -Engaging in public debate

[19] All names are pseudonyms.

Political Scientist[19]	Ph.D. University	Research Areas	Community Membership/Activity	Recent Political Activity
Kate	University of Iowa	-American Government and Politics -Gender and Politics/Feminist Theory -Research methods and statistical analysis -Sociobiology and feminism	-Religious organization -N.A.A.C.P. -City planning commission -City historical architectural preservation commission -Various volunteer opportunities	-Voting -Attended a political rally -Volunteering for a campaign -Contributing money for a political cause -Writing a letter or email in support of political cause -Signing a petition -Speaking publicly -Political leadership role -Engaging in public debate
Rachel	University of Minnesota	-American Government and Politics -Gender and Politics/Feminist Theory -Methods -Political Psychology -Use of gender in political campaigns	• Sierra Club • Biking Club • Urban community organization	-Voting -Attended a political rally -Contributing money for a campaign -Contributing money for a political cause

Political Scientist[19]	Ph.D. University	Research Areas	Community Membership/Activity	Recent Political Activity
John	Wayne State University	-American Government and Politics -Political Theory -Public Policy and Administration -Political Theology -Religion and Politics -Catholic Social Teaching	-Religious organization -Center for community leadership	-Voting -Attended a political rally -Contributing money for a campaign -Contributing money for a political cause -Signing a petition -Protesting -Speaking publicly -Engaging in public debate -Writing magazine articles
Doris	University of Cincinnati	-American Government and Politics -Gender and Politics/Feminist Theory -Public opinion on foreign policy -Public opinion and terrorism -Gender gaps in public opinion and foreign policy	-Non-profit organization dedicated to the creation of parks and protection of land -Non-profit group organizing local music, art and heritage festival -Non-profit institute for life-long learning	-Voting -Contributing money for a campaign -Writing letter or email in support of political cause -Signing a petition -Speaking publicly

Political Scientist[19]	Ph.D. University	Research Areas	Community Membership/Activity	Recent Political Activity
Michael	New School for Social Research	-Comparative Government and Politics -Latin American Migration -Democratization and Militarism in Latin America -US-Latin American Relations	-Served on the board of service organization dedicated to meeting the needs of Spanish-speaking population -Faculty representative for multicultural needs committee -Former Peace Corps volunteer	-Voting -Writing letter in support of political cause -Petitioning -Signing a petition -Speaking publicly about a political issue -Political leadership role
Sharon	University of Florida	-Comparative Government and Politics -Gender and Politics/Feminist Theory -Political Theory -Race, Ethnicity and Politics -Urban Politics -Comparative Identity Politics -Migration -How groups construct belonging in an era of globalization	-Human rights organization -Conservation organization -Food cooperative	-Voting -Attended a political rally -Contributing money for a campaign -Contributing money for a political cause -Signing a petition

Identification and Recruitment of Novices

The novices in this study are eight high school students, four 10th graders and four 12th graders. Following the lead of other scholars who have used high school students as novices in their study (Lee, M., 2006; Torney-Purta,1992; Wineburg, 1990), I assumed that the students would be novices by virtue of the fact that they are unpracticed in solving problems relevant to civic education.

Because this study focuses on how novices use knowledge to reason through a problem, I wanted to eliminate potential confounding variables. One potential confounder was reading ability; if students were not at a competent reading level for their grade, it might confound with understanding of how students are using text-based information to reason through a problem (Lee, M., 2006). In addition, in designing and conducting think alouds it is important to keep disruptions to the thinking under investigation to a minimum (Someren, M. W. V. et al., 1994). If students had above-average difficulty comprehending what they were reading, that could interfere with the think aloud process.

Another potential confounder was their content knowledge base. I wanted the students to be working with a similar knowledge base. As I argued in Chapter 2, people trying to improve civic education often emphasize the importance of content knowledge, for which coursework and standardized test scores often serve as a proxy. Since I am arguing that such content knowledge is necessary but not sufficient, I wanted to study the thinking of students who were starting with what many would consider to be an adequate knowledge base. Moreover, other scholars have argued that an inadequate knowledge base can

affect reading comprehension and can significantly limit the corpus of data that is derived from a think aloud (Lee, M., 2006).

Therefore, I asked teachers to recommend students based on the following criteria: First, all students were at or above reading level as reported by their teachers. Second, all students had completed a civics or government course and had performed well, also as reported by their teachers. Third, all students had scored greater than 51% on pre-test items drawn from the NAEP examination in civics and government (see Appendix C), which all the teachers agreed to administer as a regular class practice assessment and then use the scores to recommend students. Fifty-one percent was the national average on the 2006 NAEP in civics and government (Lutkus & Weiss, 2007), and teachers reported that students they recommended received a score of 53 percent or above, giving participating students "above average" scores on the sampling of test questions.

I asked only those students who met the above criteria as reported by their teachers, and turned in required consent and assent forms (see Appendix A) to participate in the study. Four of the students were 10th graders, who had just completed the required civics course in the school. The four remaining students were 12th graders, who had completed the required civics course in 9th grade and were currently enrolled in an elective course on current events.

Using the criteria listed above does not assume that only "good readers" or those who score well on a test can think democratically. Nor does it assume homogeneity among the students; I realize there could be many subtle

differences in their reading abilities and content knowledge. However, for the purposes of this study, which aimed to begin to describe a range of democratic thinking from novice to sophisticated, I wanted to eliminate any potential confounders and to control for reading ability and knowledge base as much as possible. Future studies may investigate the thinking of novices of varying reading levels and knowledge bases. For now, however, I am describing the thinking of high school students of competent reading level who many would consider to have proficient content knowledge.

At the beginning of the think aloud session, students took a simple survey of background questions (see Appendix B) modeled after the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) Civic Education Study (Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001). Table 6-2 provides a profile of each participating student. The student group consisted of three boys and five girls, each participating in at least one school or community activity. The frequency with which students read or watched the news on their own varied from almost never to every day.

Table 6-2

Profiles of Participating High School Students

Student[20]	Grade/Age	Social Studies Classes Completed	Frequency of Reading/Watching the News	Participation
Alfred	10th/16 years old	-Civics -Economics -U.S. History	Every day	-Community volunteering
Jenny	10th/15 years old	-Civics -Economics -U.S. History	A few times per week	-Community volunteering -Charity work -Cultural organization based on ethnicity -Academic club -Religious organization
Deborah	10th/15 years old	-Civics -Economics -U.S. History	Every day	-Student council -Student exchange program -Human rights organization -Community volunteering -Charity work -Academic club -Art, music or drama organization -Sports team

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[20] All names are pseudonyms.

Student[20]	Grade/Age	Social Studies Classes Completed	Frequency of Reading/Watching the News	Participation
Karen	10th/15 years old	-Civics -Economics -U.S. History	A few times a week	-Young UN group -Community volunteering -Cultural association based on ethnicity -Academic club -Art, music or drama organization
Marianne	12th grade/ 17 years old	-Civics -U.S. History -Economics 1&2 -European History -Current Events	A few times per week	-Student council -Student exchange program -Community volunteering -Charity work -Girl Scouts -Academic club -Art, music or drama organization -Sports team -Religious organization

Student[20]	Grade/Age	Social Studies Classes Completed	Frequency of Reading/Watching the News	Participation
Tanya	12th grade/18 years old	-Civics -U.S. History -Current Events	A few times per week	-Youth organization affiliated with political party or union -School newspaper -Environmental organization -Student exchange program -Human rights organization -Community volunteering -Charity work -Cultural organization based on ethnicity -Art, music or drama organization -Sports team -Religious organization
Rafael	12th grade/17 years old	-Civics -Economics -U.S. History -Current Events	A few times per week	-Environmental organization -Community volunteering -Boy Scouts -Cultural organization based on ethnicity -Sports team
Joshua	12th grade/18 years old	-Civics -Economics -U.S. History	Almost never	-Student council -Community volunteering -Academic club -Sports team

The Issue and Documents

The political scientists and students participating in this study puzzled aloud about the issue of "bipartisanship." I purposely chose a topic that, although controversial, was unlikely to elicit the emotional response that topics like illegal immigration, abortion, and gun control could. My reasons for doing so were two-fold: First, this study qualifies as a study of cognition, and, as Howard Gardner (1985) points out, studies of cognitive science deliberatively de-emphasize factors like affect, which may be "important for cognitive functioning but whose inclusion at this point would unnecessarily complicate the cognitive science enterprise" (p. 6).

Second, the sensitivity of those issues might have presented another confounder: It would have required me to take a student's background into consideration to a greater degree (i.e, their immigration status, whether or not their parents were gun owners, etc.) and I did not feel that was necessary for the purposes of this study.

At the same time, I realize that a person's emotional connection to a topic may affect their ability to use knowledge to make a decision and reason through an issue. To be sure, there has recently been a resurgent interest among political scientists in how emotions interact with political thinking (e.g., Neuman, Marcus, Crigler, & MacKuen, 2007). And, certainly, educators who are interested in helping children and adolescents, who can be highly emotional beings, have a vested interest in the role emotions play in thinking. However, I determined that focusing on the thinking around a sensitive issue and the emotional responses

involved would be an interesting and quite different problem to consider for a later study.

Although the topic of bipartisanship may not be as controversial and emotion-laden as some other topics, it is ubiquitous. The upcoming 2008 elections made partisan differences and the potential for bipartisan compromise with a new administration issues that were ripe for discussion. Further, the issue of bipartisanship has the potential to elicit thinking about government and the political system, political parties, and the very idea of democracy itself, making it a topic with the potential to yield rich data.

I put together two sets of documents related to bipartisanship for the think aloud session. The first set consisted of eight documents that all subjects would read through in the same order. I refer to this set of documents as "common documents." Having all the subjects read through the same set of documents in the same order would aid in data segmentation and comparative analysis. The set consisted of four types of documents: background information, survey data, opinion pieces, and newspaper articles (see Appendix D). I wanted to include background information to help orient subjects to the issue. The survey data was intended to represent typical survey or statistical information provided in magazines, newspapers, or on television news programs. The opinion pieces represent the wide array of viewpoints on an issue that people are exposed to in the news or in everyday conversation. Finally, the newspaper articles are typical sources of information on an issue, and a source from which many people glean their knowledge of current controversial issues.

The first of the common documents stated the issue itself: Should politicians work toward a spirit of bipartisanship? Or are the partisan divisions between the Democratic and Republican parties actually a sign of a healthy democracy? Then came a "Summary of the Issue," which gave them further background information on the issue itself, including an explanation of why bipartisanship even qualifies as a controversial issue. The next document was a bar graph called "Top 10 Partisan Gaps over Political Priorities," which was created from a survey by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. This graph reported differences between the so-called priorities of Democrats and Republicans. The third document was a pie graph called "Preferred 2008 Presidential Candidates," also created from a survey by the Pew Research Center. It showed the percentage of respondents from a January 2007 poll who would vote for a liberal Democrat, a moderate Democrat, a conservative Republican, a moderate Republican, and those who were undecided.

The problem itself and the first three documents were borrowed from the *Facts on File Issues and Controversies* website ("Bipartisanship," February 22, 2008). On its website, writers describe the *Facts and File* database as

> [A]n award-winning publisher of print and online reference materials for the school and library market. We specialize in a number of key subject areas, such as history, science, literature, geography, health, and more. Our print titles are authoritative references geared toward the high school, academic, and public library markets. Our online databases are unique because they contain authoritative *Facts On File* reference content that is tailored to school curricula and designed for ease of use. *Facts On File* has more than 65 years of service to librarians backing our editorial content and decisions. ("About Us," 2008)

They describe the *Issues and Controversies* sub-database as follows:

Issues and Controversies helps researchers understand the crucial issues we face today, exploring more than 800 hot topics in business, politics, government, education, and popular culture. Updated weekly, with links to a 12-year back-file, Issues and Controversies offers in-depth articles made to inspire thought-provoking debates. This database is great for research papers and debate prep. ("About Issues and Controversies," 2008)

As the descriptions suggest, the *Issues and Controversies* database has a solid reputation and is available to a wide range of educators. In fact, I learned about the website upon the recommendation of a practicing civics and history teacher. Conveniently, it provided a wide array of "problems" that could be put to use in this study and would likely be put to use by at least some practicing teachers.

The next three documents were excerpts from viewpoint essays included in the Greenhaven Press *Opposing Viewpoints* series, which compiles essays on current social issues written by some of the United States' most well known columnists, scholars, and politicians. The first document, "America has Always had Divisive Politics," by William Schambra, the director of the Bradley Center for Philanthropy and Civic Renewal at the Hudson Institute, argues that divisiveness in American politics is no higher or more of a problem now than it has been in the past. The second viewpoint piece, "In Defense of Partisan Bickering," by American political journalist Michael Kinsley, argues that people in a democracy disagree, so partisanship is not going to go away. He also argues that ideology is a good thing, allowing voters to choose a candidate without really knowing all the specifics of their politics. The third and final viewpoint piece, "The Political Divide Makes Honest Policy Debate More Difficult," is by David Brooks, former editor and columnist for the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Weekly Standard*, and current op-ed columnist for the *New York Times*. Brooks argues that the political

divide is harmful to the United States because it causes people to have more loyalty to their political team than to the country and prevents people from honestly discussing solutions to problems.

The last two documents were newspaper articles that I found by searching the *Newsbank Access World News* database using the keywords "bipartisanship," "bipartisan," "partisanship," and "partisan." The first was a *Washington Post* article entitled "A Did-Something Congress," by David Broder. It reports on the bipartisan approval of the economic stimulus bill that was sent to the President in February 2008 and eventually approved, arguing that the act represented a "dramatic reversal of the gridlock that had characterized executive-congressional relations throughout 2007" and reflected "the recognition by both Republicans and Democrats of the public disenchantment with official Washington that has been one of the dominant themes of the 2008 presidential campaign." The second article was a *New York Times* piece by David M. Herszenhorn and Vikas Bajaj, called "A Bipartisan Bid On Mortgage Aid Is Gaining Speed." It reports in April of 2008 on the bipartisan move to work on a package of legislation to aid homeowners at risk of foreclosure, situating the legislators' actions as a move in "casting aside partisan differences." Both articles provided examples of bipartisan actions in Congress.

The second set of documents were arranged in folders titled, "background information," "historical documents," and "additional news articles" (see Appendix E). I told subjects that they could choose to look through these documents or not in order to further address the problem. I refer to them as "chosen documents."

My purpose for this portion of the think aloud was to see how participants would choose and then use chosen information to address the problem. The background information folder provided pieces that might give subjects grounding on the issue of bipartisanship, should they seek to fill in any gaps in their knowledge. It consisted of three pieces from the *Issues and Controversies on File* database: "The Evolution of Partisan Politics in the U.S.," providing an overview of the history of partisan politics in the country; "Policy Statements by the Democratic and Republican Parties," with excerpts from the parties' websites regarding their positions on issues like immigration and healthcare; and "Recent Key Events," providing a selected chronology of events since 1992 related to the issue of bipartisanship.

The "historical documents" folder held an excerpt from "The Federalist Number Ten," by James Madison, as well as an excerpt from "George Washington's Farewell Address." These excerpts from primary documents were intended to provide subjects with additional historical perspective on partisanship and bipartisanship by giving them access to the viewpoints of two of the nation's founding fathers. For my purposes, it could also provide insight into how subjects use historical documents in reasoning through a problem, especially as opposed to the textbook-like documents provided in the background information folder. The excerpt from the Federalist Paper warns of the danger of factions in government, characterizing them as having the potential to cause "instability, injustice, and confusion." The remainder of the excerpt, which was not provided to subjects, has Madison giving recommendations on how to cure factious

activities and discussing how it is impossible to cure the cause of faction, it being "sewn into the nature of man," but necessary to control its effects.   In his farewell address, Washington also argues that faction is part of man's nature and passions, but that the "mischiefs of the spirit of party" are in need of constant vigilance and restraint.

The third folder, "additional newspaper articles," could provide subjects with more information on current events related to the issue at hand. The first article, "Politicians Turn Steroid Hearing into Partisan Squabble," from the *New York Times*, covered the steroid hearing for baseball player Roger Clemens. I purposely chose an article covering a story that might be of more "popular interest," but that was, nonetheless, about an issue supposedly influenced by partisan bickering among legislators. The second article, "Election Shaping Agenda on Hill - Democrats Push Bills that Won't Pass to Outline Differences with Republicans," from the *Washington Times*, argued in March of 2008 that Democrats were purposely pushing legislation that would not meet the approval of President George W. Bush or other Republicans to highlight their differences with the opposing party in the presidential election year. It provided a contrast to the newspaper articles in the common document set because it focused on partisan differences, rather than providing an example of bipartisan-supported legislation.

I modified all expository text that was used in the think aloud, using the principles of voiced and considerate text as a guide (Beck, I., McKeown, Sinatra, & Loxterman, 1991; Beck, I., McKeown, & Worthy, 1995). I do not know the

degree to which I succeeded in making the expository texts more voiced or considerate as that would require a separate study focusing on changes in reading comprehension between the original text and the modified text. I only did what I could to increase the comprehensibility of the texts without adding another study. All newspaper articles, historical documents, viewpoint pieces, and survey data were kept in their original forms. These documents were representations of information or discourse people might typically encounter as citizens in public life, where they are not given the benefit of revised, more comprehensible data or rhetoric.

I also provided a dictionary for the novice think alouds. A pilot study helped me determine that a dictionary could help young readers pronounce and define unfamiliar words that might otherwise negatively affect reading comprehension. However, students were not required to use the dictionary.

The Think Aloud Environment

Each political scientist chose the setting for his or her think aloud session. Each student's teacher arranged a place to conduct the think aloud. The only requirement was that the location was a quiet place where we would most likely not be interrupted, and that there was a chair and table or desk for the subject to work, and a place for me to sit out of their field of vision. Literature on think alouds suggests that subjects often grow accustomed to the presence of the researcher and any recording devices after a short while, but it is important for the researcher to be as invisible as possible. Experts, in particular, can become very embarrassed when they do not know how to solve a problem or find it very

difficult, and may begin making socially motivated comments in an effort to explain their perceived failure (Ericsson & Simon, 1993a; Someren, M. W. v., Barnard, Y. F., & Sandberg, J. A. C., 1994). To minimize such interjections, I made every attempt to stay out of the subject's field of vision and only spoke when a prompt was absolutely necessary. However, I am fully aware that I could not completely control for socially motivated interjections from either political scientists or students.

I gave the subjects simple, straightforward instructions, making sure that the instructions explicitly told the subject not to explain or interpret their responses. However, I did not give specific directions about what information should be attended to, or what differences in performance could occur. The instructions were not very long so as not to confuse the subject about what they should be doing (Someren, M. W. v. et al., 1994). In accordance with the suggestions of Ericcson and Simon (1993a), I gave three practice problems to every subject, adding more if the subject had difficulty with the think-aloud procedure. Since thinking aloud is unnatural, previous studies also recommended and employed opportunities for subjects to practice, or "warm up" (e.g., Wineburg, 1990).

During the concurrent think-aloud procedure, I did as little to interfere as possible. Only when the subject stopped talking for a long period of time did I prompt him/her to continue and then it was simply by saying, "Keep talking." I avoided prompting the subject with anything like "Tell me what you are thinking,"

so it would not cause the subject to interpret that that they should provide some sort of an explanation of their thoughts.

The Think Aloud Procedure

The think aloud session consisted of five segments: a report of prior knowledge, a concurrent think aloud with the common documents, a retrospective think aloud with the common documents, a concurrent think aloud with the chosen documents, and a retrospective think aloud with the chosen documents (see Appendix F for the think aloud protocol).

In the first part, I simply asked subjects to tell me what they already knew about the issue of bipartisanship. I provided students with a simple dictionary definition of bipartisanship.

Next, I gave subjects the problem and the first of set of documents, which I refer to as the common documents. Both political scientists and students verbalized their thoughts while reading the documents on bipartisanship and addressing the problem: Should politicians work toward a spirit of bipartisanship? Or are the partisan divisions between the Democratic and Republican parties actually a sign of a healthy democracy?

Using a sheet that allowed me to read along with subjects while taking notes, I marked points in the text where subjects stopped reading, referred to another document, or referred back to the problem. These "moves" within the space of the document set first became apparent to me during the pilot studies, and I decided they should become a pre-determined focus of my observations. I also noted any other behaviors or comments that stood out to me.

In addition to the concurrent verbal report, I used retrospective reporting by asking subjects to go back and talk more about what they were thinking while reading through the common documents and addressing the problem. Such reporting can be useful in learning why subjects thought they were thinking something at a particular time, or to better understand parts of the concurrent report that seemed incomplete or odd (Ericcson and Simon, 1993).

In the third part of the think aloud session, I gave subjects the second set of documents, which I refer to as the chosen documents, and told them they could choose to look at documents in the set or not, and that they did not have to look at any of the documents if they did not want to look at them. They were instructed to think aloud throughout the process of choosing and reading the documents. I then asked them to go back and talk about what they were thinking again.

I concluded the think aloud by asking them if there was anything they thought was influencing their thinking. My reason for doing this was to get some idea of the subjects' awareness of their own ideology, or the degree to which they were aware that they were delivering socially motivated responses due to my presence.

<div align="center">Data Analysis</div>

For this study, I was concerned with how subjects thought about, described, and analyzed the issues related to bipartisanship, not with whether or not subjects arrived at a definite, confident conclusion. The study sought to

make visible their thinking when grappling with a complex social and political issue, and to understand their reasoning about the issue.

The protocol analysis for this project entailed transcribing, segmenting, and coding (Yang, 2003). After conducting and tape recording the think alouds, I transcribed the data, and then broke up the transcribed data by paragraphs in the text, using those as units of analysis for purposes of comparison.

Before coding, I highlighted relevant text in the transcripts—that is, text of what people were saying in response to the problem and readings, rather than text of reading verbatim (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). After coding was complete, I established inter-rater reliability with an experienced qualitative researcher. Initially, inter-rater reliability was 73 percent. However, we were able to resolve most disagreements through discussion, resulting in inter-rater reliability of 97 percent (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Common Documents

I analyzed the transcribed political scientist and student verbal reports from the common document think alouds first. Coding and analysis of these verbal reports took place in three rounds, each described below:

Round One: Types of Movements

During pilot studies, I observed that subjects were making three salient "moves" within the document space while engaging in the think aloud: referring to another document, referring to something in the same document they were reading, or referring back to the problem. I also realized that they were making moves in *time*—that is, they were referring to knowledge or experiences that

existed before their interaction with the documents. Therefore, this round of analysis addressed the following questions: What moves are subjects making? What are they making references to as they read? Are their thoughts moving to a different space in the document they are reading? To another document? Back to the problem as stated? Are their thoughts moving to a different place in time when they acquired knowledge or had a relevant experience? Or are subjects just reacting to what they read without necessarily "moving"? To answer these questions, I combined a modified grounded theory approach (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and content analysis (Neuendorf, 2002). I describe the major steps in this first round of analysis below.

Coding. The modified grounded theory approach was "modified" in that it employed a mixture of predetermined and grounded coding (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Based on my observations, I developed descriptive, pre-determined codes to note the kind of move subjects were making (Miles & Huberman, 1994). These were movements in space (referring to another document, something within the same document, or to the problem), movements in time (referring to knowledge or experience), or reactions to information in the document that did not necessarily involve movement in space or time.

In coding for the general moves subjects were making while thinking aloud with my predetermined codes, I simultaneously used a grounded approach, noticing patterns that emerged in the kinds of information or knowledge being used when subjects moved in time (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Miles &

Huberman, 1994). I noticed they referred to knowledge of published arguments, often scholarly, from books, articles, or other sources; knowledge of current events, including knowledge of the people, like senators or other political leaders; knowledge of the structure and function of government; knowledge of history; knowledge of a source they encountered in the reading; knowledge of economics; and knowledge of foreign politics. All of this knowledge could be characterized as knowledge of "facts"—of events that happened and people who were involved, of political structures and processes, and of others' philosophical, published arguments.

However, there were also passages that could not be characterized as textbook knowledge, referring to specific facts, but were ideas and generalizations that the subjects were bringing to bear on their arguments. I determined that subjects were not making moves to factual knowledge, but to previously formulated conceptions and theories. I, therefore, recoded my original knowledge codes as concept or theory codes, and then analyzed those passages, allowing deeper descriptive codes to emerge. I determined subjects were referring to conceptions of American Democracy, partisanship, bipartisanship, ideology, and political parties; and to theories about the nature and function of politics in the United States, about the nature and function of *electoral* politics, about what "good politics" or ideal politics looks like, about the beliefs, character or behavior of the American citizenry, and about the role of media in American society and politics. See Table 6-3 for codes, operational definitions, and examples.

Table 6-3

Common Documents Movement Codes

Code	Operational Definition	Example(s)
S-D	Subject's thoughts are moving in space to another document in the document set.	Rachel: Okay, let's see, so we've got a bunch of different documents here about um, about it, well I'm just flipping through and I'm looking at who wrote these articles and where they came from.
		Karen: So, and then back in this one, the graph that says that America would choose a moderate Democrat…
S-S	Subject's thoughts are moving in space to another part of the same document they are reading.	Michael: …who's doing this? *New York Times*, okay.
		David: I'm noticing this is from *Issues and Controversies on File*…
S-P	Subject's thoughts are moving back to the problem as originally stated.	David: I'm going back and just looking at the original question, if I could find it. Should politicians work toward a spirit of bipartisanship or are the partisan divisions actually a sign of a healthy democracy?
		Marianne: So back to the beginning, the issue, should politicians work toward the spirit of bipartisanship or are the partisanship, or are the partisan divisions between Democratic and Republican parties actually a sign of a healthy democracy?
T-E	Subject's thoughts are moving in time to a personal experience.	Doris: I'm remembering my parents, when I grew up and…what they had to say about Harry Truman was extremely awful.
		Rafael: …like in my neighborhood in the city because of a lot of houses are going into foreclosure…

Code	Operational Definition	Example(s)
T-K:SCH	Subject's thoughts are moving in time to knowledge of another person's (usually a scholar's) published argument and/or philosophy.	Alex: I think about Tocqueville and his argument that political participation actually moderates you, turns you around, gives you a set of civic virtues in the process and getting involved turns you away from your narrow, private world of friends and family to consider something broader like the public good, or at least your self-interest rightly understood as he says. Marianne: I think of a documentary I watched the other day about cults, talking about how when people claim one thing and it proves not to be true, instead of changing their belief to fit with reality, to fit what's really going on, they'll change their view of reality to fit with their beliefs.
T-K: CE	Subject's thoughts are moving in time to knowledge of current events, including the people involved.	Alex: …the Bush administration took a left turn after 9/11 and became born again, actually, had this, took on this ideological spreading democracy around the world when one had, would have thought they started not wanted to nation-build as they said in their original campaign. Alfred: I heard on the news that we're using inspectors to solve the gas problems.

Code	Operational Definition	Example(s)
T-K: G	Subject's thoughts are moving in time to knowledge of the structure and function of government in the United States.	David: Obviously the central tool to getting bipartisanship is the fact that you need 218 votes in the House and in most cases parties are going to have a very hard time getting there without reaching across the aisle. And certainly the Senate, which is going to be the central home for bipartisanship, the continued requirement of 60 votes requires working toward a spirit of bipartisanship. Marianne: Taxes are something that needs to be paid because the government needs money obviously.
T-K: H	Subjects' thoughts are moving in time to knowledge of history.	David: …as I look back to the 50s Republican party and the 50s Democratic party for that matter, it doesn't strike me in retrospect as a horrifically partisan time. Certainly I wouldn't put Eisenhower in as a remarkable partisan but, on the other hand, depends on how early in the 50s…I mean if it's '50 or '51 you're talking about Republicans up against Truman, the Do-Nothings 80th Congress, which was very partisan. But if you're talking about '53, '54, it's a less partisan period. Tanya: I think there have been a lot of corrupt things in American history that a lot of people don't talk about.
T-K: SO	Subject's thoughts are moving in time to knowledge of the document source.	Sharon: So this person is at the Hudson Institute, which I happen to know is more of a conservative place. Rachel: Some of these names I recognize, like David Brooks. I see him on the Jim Lehrer News Hour.

Code	Operational Definition	Example(s)
T-K: E	Subject's thoughts are moving in time to knowledge of economics.	John: You can't read this without understanding that the significant wealth that most people have is tied up in their property and in their homes and if you don't protect that then you're going to do damage to people's long term ability to actually take care of themselves in old age. Deborah: A little bit about refinancing, I thinking what they're trying to say is that if you refinance your home, trying to keep it, I think it has something to do with you need money, it's a short type of loan, but each time you refinance that's more you have to pay on the house.
T-K: FP	Subject's thoughts are moving in time to knowledge of foreign politics.	John: Peaceful transfers of power take place all the time in American politics in ways that would be unthinkable in a lot of nations that we're looking at, especially in the south and especially in what we would call the developing world. Marianne: I think about politics in different countries where some people have a lot more power than just the average voter or where the average citizen has no power at all.
T-C: AD	Subject is referring to a conception of American Democracy (i.e., what the idea of American Democracy is and is not, what is good or bad for American Democracy)	Alex: [The American Democratic System] is a very stable political system. And perhaps less ideological because it's a two party system that forces the compromise before the election. Tanya: America is supposed to be whole, but there's so much division and hate.

Code	Operational Definition	Example(s)
T-C: P	Subject is referring to a conception of partisanship (i.e., idea about what partisanship is and is not, or does or does not entail)	Doris: It's perfectly sound to have party identities…you can be partisan but not necessarily be polarizing or nasty. Tanya: I feel as though there will always be some type of line between people, people that agree and people that disagree.
T-C: BP	Subject is referring to a conception of bipartisanship (i.e. idea about what bipartisanship is and is not, or does or does not entail).	Rachel: I don't think working toward bipartisanship as an end in and of itself is really going to solve anything. I think bipartisanship will come naturally as lawmakers need to get something enacted. They will have to look to bipartisanship support, particularly in the climate that it is today. Rafael: I do think [bipartisanship] is realistic and it can change the way Republicans and Democrats feel about each other…
T-C: I	Subject is referring to a conception of ideology (i.e., idea about what ideology is and is not).	John: An ideology is a nice sort of snapshot to give us the idea of the direction people are going to move in… Alex: Good political decisions aren't driven by ideology, and to the extent that partisanship is ideological, I think that's probably what people imagine to be a problem, and they often mischaracterize [ideology] with partisanship.
T-C: PP	Subject is referring to a conception of political parties (i.e. idea about the views of the political parties, what they represent, and their relationship with each other).	Kate: I would have expected the Democrats to be more supportive of strengthening the military. Joshua: You have two different point of views from a Democrat and Republican, people side and the wealthier side of things.

Code	Operational Definition	Example(s)
T-T: P	Subject is referring to a theory about how politics works in the United States (i.e., general statements about how decisions are made and how political leaders operate).	Michael: Whether or not you get a policy isn't dependent upon just the tactics; there's all sorts of other variables at play: the rules of Congress at the time, what the issue is, structural conditions. There's all sorts of things that go into why we get the kind of legislation we get.

Alfred: To me [Republicans] don't look at the good part of what Democrats can do. It can also be vice versa between Democrats looking at Republicans. And to me Republicans and Democrats never talked that much through, they just argue about their opinions…That's why they have debates, I guess, to make the other person look bad, cause they want to be, I think they want to feel a level of power. |
| T-T: EP | Subject is referring to a theory about how electoral politics, as distinctive from politics that are not influenced by elections, works in the United States. | Alex: From a campaign strategy, [debating to score points for one's stand] is a much simpler way to talk to Americans and get votes.

John: If you were to really look at the way the [political] system works, there's a lot more agreement than there is disagreement. It's just that during elections from time to time some of these things tend to get heightened pretty dramatically. |

Code	Operational Definition	Example(s)
T-T: GP	Subject is referring to a theory about what "good politics" would look like (i.e., general statements about how political leaders and the political system should operate).	Kate: It would be fine for the Democrats to bring their ideology and their partisanship to the table and the Republicans to do exactly the same thing. If the Republicans want to solve everything with some kind of free-market solution, let them put the free-market solution on the table and discuss whether it's workable. Pay attention to the economist, pay attention to the House staff, not the committee staffs. Joshua: It's important that when you're going into a topic that you get, receive all different points of view. You can't be biased, not one thing. You have to receive all the information, all the surroundings, all the roadblocks, all the facts and arguments in order to make a healthy decision on it
T-T: AC	Subject is referring to a theory about the behavior, beliefs and/or character of the American citizenry.	Michael: There's a lot of cynicism out there, or a lot of discontent. Deborah: Americans, they like to know what's going on in their community, their economy, and the United States as a whole. I think that's very important to every American to know what's going on.
T-T: MR	Subject is referring to a theory about the role of the media in American society and politics.	Sharon: The point of leadership is to try to forge through [media backlash] and get beyond it and no just give into it and perpetuate it. Tanya: I think the media right now is just all about entertainment, trying to just get juicy stories, trying to make stuff more interesting, instead of really putting out the facts they need to put out.

Code	Operational Definition	Example(s)
R	Subject is reacting to the document in a way that doesn't necessarily involve a move in space or time.	Rachel: So what does this tell me? That there are a bunch of different issues where Republicans and Democrats disagree. Alfred: So he's saying that back in the day politics, he said politics, back then, from those political cartoons, said it was much better back then than now.

Quantitative Analysis. After coding all the transcripts using my pre-determined and grounded coding scheme, I quantified the data, counting and recording the different kinds of moves per session segment. Session segments consisted of the subjects' first introduction to the problem in written form, each separate document, and concluding statement, if any. I then statistically analyzed the data to compare the general behaviors of political scientists and students in terms of their types of moves throughout the common documents think aloud sessions. For all comparisons between groups, I conducted two-tailed, unpaired student's t-tests to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the means.

I first compared total moves between students and political scientists because I knew that there was a wide range in the time the think aloud sessions took and the length of the transcribed verbal reports. I tabulated the total number of moves for each subject and generated a box and whiskers plot showing maximum and minimum values and means for political scientists and students. This allowed me to see the range of movements within each group and to

compare means between the groups. To gather information about how different

groups might be behaving at different points—that is, during the different

segments—in the think aloud session, I tabulated the number of moves per

session segment for each subject. This allowed me to compare the average

number of moves by session segment between 10th- and 12th-grade students,

and between students and political scientists. I generated a bar graph showing

means plus standard errors.

Because of the wide range of total moves per session among subjects, I

also compared the relative frequency of moves by session segment. The relative

frequency graph, showing mean plus standard error, allowed me to compare

each subjects' average number of moves by session segment relative to their

total number of moves. I made comparisons between 10th- and 12th-grade

students, and between students and political scientists.

I also compared groups by the kinds of moves being made in the

sessions. I analyzed moves in space, moves in time, and reactions in the same

way I analyzed total moves. For each type of move, I generated box and

whiskers plots showing maximum and minimum values and means for total

moves per think aloud session, and bar graphs showing means and standard

errors for average number of moves by session segment and average relative

frequency of moves by session segment.

Next, I analyzed the particular types of moves in space and moves in time.

For these analyses, I only made comparisons by think aloud session, not by

session segment. No significant differences in average number of moves or

relative frequency of moves by session segment were found between students and political scientists, so I decided that looking at the session as a whole would be an adequate way to compare groups. For moves in space, I tabulated the total number of references to the problem, to another document, and to something in the same document. For moves in time, I tabulated the total number of references to personal experience, to knowledge, to conceptions, and to theories. I generated bar graphs showing means and standard errors that allowed comparisons between students and political scientists.

In addition, I tabulated references to specific types of knowledge, conceptions and theories. Again, I generated bar graphs showing means and standard errors.

Qualitative Analysis. I organized verbal data coded as a type of knowledge, conception or theory into the appropriate categories for qualitative case and cross-case analysis and comparison. I looked for internal consistency in the conceptions and theories of each individual, and for similarities and differences in the sophistication or accuracy of knowledge, conceptions, and theories between different students, different political scientists, and between students and political scientists.

Round Two: Utility of Movements

The first round of analysis established kinds of movements subjects were making while reading the common documents and addressing the problem on bipartisanship, including to the kinds of knowledge, conceptions, and theories to which subjects were referring. This round of data analysis was aimed at

determining the utility of the movements subjects were making. What purpose

did their movements serve in the reasoning process? How were they using their

knowledge, conceptions and theories? To answer those questions, I used a

grounded theory approach (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Strauss & Corbin,

1990) and content analysis (Neuendorf, 2002). I describe the major steps below.

Coding. For this round of analysis I used a grounded approach to coding

(Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994), asking myself as I read

back through relevant data: What is this person doing? I looked at the text-based

documents and the graphs separately, as the subjects were clearly doing

different kinds of things in "reading" these different sources of information.

For the text-based documents, more than 20 different codes emerged out

of my analysis, so I categorized those codes to help make further sense of what

subjects were doing. I classified one set of codes as "information-extraction

reading strategies." These were strategies subjects used to aid in their

understanding of the text and included summarizing, paraphrasing, backtracking

for clarification, and determining the author's purpose. I classified another set of

codes as "evaluative reading strategies," which subjects used in determining the

value or merit of a piece of information. These strategies consisted of sourcing,

contextualizing, questioning the author, and—what might be more appropriately

classified as a post-evaluative strategy—electing to disregard a piece of

information. Electing to disregard a piece of information hinged on information-

extraction reading strategies (i.e, a subject might determine that the main points

of the piece were already understood and so he or she need not read further),

but they were evaluative nonetheless.

I classified the third set of codes, the largest, as "reasoning strategies."

These included strategies for voicing an opinion, such as agreeing with the text,

providing a reason for agreement, disagreeing with the text, providing a reason

for disagreement, expressing a viewpoint (independent of what text was

asserting), and providing support for the viewpoint. They also included strategies

for illustrating or clarifying arguments or ideas, such as providing an example,

using information from the text as an example, comparing or contrasting an idea

to something, and stating the opposing viewpoint.

There were also three separate codes that I could not fit neatly into any of

the aforementioned categories: noting an extension in one's thinking, such as

commenting that they were "struck" by an idea, or had never realized or thought

about something before; noting a gap in knowledge; and simply commenting,

such as expressing recognition of someone or something or characterizing

something as interesting or not interesting. See Table 6-4 for codes, operational

definitions, and examples.

Table 6-4

Text-Based Common Documents Utility of Movement Codes

	Code	Operational Definition	Example
Information-Extraction Strategies	SUM	Subject is summarizing the text; stating the main point(s) of a paragraph or the entire piece.	*Marianne:* It's saying that decisions that people are going to have to make, we don't really look at those when we're voting for them. We just like kind of look at their stance on major political issues such as abortion, gun rights, education, taxes, that kind of thing.
	P	Subject is paraphrasing, or rewording a sentence or group of sentences to make sense of a statement.	*Karen:* If they work together they would represent the country in a better way.
	BT	Subject is backtracking, or rereading some of the text to assist in reading comprehension.	*Sharon:* Now wait a minute, I'm screwing this up, hold on. " Over the course of the last year the speaker and I didn't have a policy conversation…"
	AP	Subject is stating the author's purpose, or saying what the author is trying to do with the text.	*Michael*: Well, OK, so he criticizes Bush.
Evaluative Strategies	SO	Subject is sourcing the article, or considering the author/newspaper potential bias.	*David:* I'm noticing this is from *Issues and Controversies on File*, which I don't know what that source is but it sounds awfully like one of those digest things, *Facts on File*, that just kind of summarizes things.
	CTXT	Subject is contextualizing the article, or considering the social and political context of the time it was written.	*Doris:* Washington, of course, is leaving government, just as political parties are beginning to form.

Code	Operational Definition	Example
Q	Subject is questioning the author, especially why he/she made the choices he/she did.	*Kate:* Why does he call is a polarized America? America's not polarized, Congress is.
NR	Subject is making a decision not to read or skip a portion of text because they have deemed it unhelpful.	*Rachel*: I don't think I need a summary of the issue so I'm just going to put this aside for right now.
A	Subject is agreeing with a point in the reading, or indicating that a point in the reading affirms or supports their thinking.	*Rafael*: I do agree with William Schambra,…when he said that the American Democratic System was designed to deal with these inevitable decisions.
RA	Subject is providing a reason or support for their agreement.	*Rafael*: I do agree with William Schambra,…when he said that the American Democratic System was designed to deal with these inevitable decisions. As far as I'm concerned America has always been divided as a political party… and it probably always will be.
D	Subject is disagreeing with or expressing doubt about a point in the reading.	*Kate:* Immediate response is disagreeing with the critics of bipartisanship.
RD	Subject is providing a reason or support for their disagreement.	*Kate:* Immediate response is disagreeing with the critics of bipartisanship…Bipartisanship is the only way you can get out of a lot of problems, particularly when the Congress is so equally divided.

Reasoning Strategies

Code	Operational Definition	Example
VP	Subject is offering a viewpoint or opinion that is prompted by a topic from the reading but is not necessarily connected to an argument being made in the reading.	*John:* What we see recognized by this move on the part of both the president and members of Congress is more or less to self interest.
RVP	Subject is offering a reason or support for their viewpoint.	*John:* What we see recognized by this move on the part of both the president and members of Congress is more or less to self interest. I'm not convinced that they're thinking too much here about what's good for the country. Certainly the idea that we're going to have all this money pouring into the economy and that's going to fix al the fundamentally wrong things strikes me as a little bit silly.
OV	Subject is stating the other side of an argument.	*Alex:* The other side of the argument is that you cave into your principles.
EX	Subject is providing an example to support their reasoning.	*Marianne:* I think of a documentary I watched the other day about cults, talking about how when people claim one thing and it proves not to be true, instead of changing their beliefs to fit with reality, they'll change their views of reality to fit with their beliefs.
TEX	Subject is using the text as an example in their reasoning.	*Sharon*: Here's an example of how bipartisanship can happen…
C/C	Subject is comparing or contrasting an idea in the text to something to support their reasoning.	David: Right! That's the issue people have with ideology. It's E.J. Dionne's argument.

Code	Operational Definition	Example
EXT	Subject is noting an extension in thinking, or stating that an idea or argument in the reading is new to them and making them think about something in a new way.	*Sharon:* It's starting to make me feel a little bit more willing to hear the defense of partisanship when it's get presented in this kind of way.
G	Subject is noting a gap in their knowledge.	*Tanya*: I don't know any of these people.
COMM	Subject is simply making a comment that is not connected to their reasoning process.	*Doris:* That's very interesting—you never let them see you make a decision.

Five new codes emerged from analysis of the verbal data surrounding the bar graph and pie chart: identifying and "reading" salient features, determining what information the graph or chart is providing, questioning and determining methodology, contextualizing information and responses, and sourcing information. In addition, the six opinion codes from analysis of the text-based document responses emerged again: agreeing with the assertions of the information, providing a reason for agreement, disagreeing with the assertions of the information, providing a reason for disagreement, expressing a viewpoint, and providing support for the viewpoint. These codes could be categorized in the same way that the text-based document codes were: I saw noticing salient features and determining information given as information-extraction strategies; questioning methodology, contextualizing, and sourcing as evaluative strategies; and the remainder as reasoning strategies. See Table 6-5 for codes, operational definitions and examples.

Table 6-5

Graph/Chart Utility of Movement Codes

Code	Operational Definition	Example(s)
Information-Extraction Strategies		
SF	The subject is taking note of the salient features of the graph or chart. They are essentially (sometimes explicitly) asking themselves: What am I looking at? How is this organized? What is being shown? This is the most superficial of subjects' strategies.	*Karen:* Top Ten Partisan Gaps over Political Priorities. Improving educational system, 72. So Democrats are in blue and the Republicans are in orange.
DI	The subject is determining what information is being provided, or what assertions are being made with the data. They are asking themselves: What is this graph or chart telling me? What "argument" is the data making? This looks at the information in a slightly deeper way than noticing salient features.	*Jenny*: So it seems that more people would vote for a Democratic person than a Republican one.
Evaluative Strategies		
M	The subject is questioning and trying to determine the methodology behind the information. They are asking themselves: How was this information gathered? What was the sample? What questions were asked?	*John*: One of the things I'm curious about is the methodology.
CTXT	The subject is contextualizing the information. They are asking themselves: What was this data gathered? What was going on a the time? What might explain the responses?	*Michael*: That was in January 2007 and that was quite a while ago. I wonder how it would look today. I think these things are pretty volatile.

Code	Operational Definition	Example(s)
SO	The subject is sourcing the information. Who gathered and presented the information? Are they a reputable source?	*Alex*: Pew Research Center, they're reputable.
A	Subject is agreeing with the assertions of the information, or indicating that the assertions affirm or support their thinking.	*Kate:* That's about where it should be with splits in party.
RA	Subject is providing a reason or support for their agreement.	*David*: It confers what I would have suspected that a larger percentage of Republican voters would prefer a conservative to a moderate.
D	Subject is disagreeing with or expressing doubt about the assertions of the information.	*Doris*: These are oversimplified.
RD	Subject is providing a reason or support for their disagreement.	*Kate*: Just because somebody considers this a high priority doesn't necessarily mean that there are 30 percent gaps across the board on how to deal with it.
VP	Subject is offering a viewpoint or opinion prompted by the information in the graph or chart but that is not necessarily connected to an assertion being made by the information.	*Marianne*: I kind of do feel that we need to offer a better healthcare system to the everyday American.
RVP	Subject is offering a reason or support for their viewpoint.	*John*: I've probably voted for more Democrats than Republicans in my life…one of the things I look for are people whose views are ultimately consistent with my values.

Reasoning Strategies

Quantitative Analysis. After coding all the transcripts using my grounded coding scheme, I quantified and statistically analyzed the data. This data analysis allowed me to compare the degree to which students and political scientists used their movements in space and time for specific purposes. For all data sets, I conducted two-tailed, unpaired students' t-tests to see if there were statistically significant differences between means.

I tabulated data and generated bar graphs showing means and standard errors to compare the average number of times subjects used information-extraction reading strategies and used evaluative reading strategies while reading and thinking about the text-based documents throughout the common documents session.

I also tabulated data and generated three different bar graphs showing means and standard errors for the reasoning strategies. The first set of data and bar graph focused on the strategies that involved giving an opinion of some kind: agreeing with an argument in the text, giving a reason for agreement, disagreeing with an argument in the text, giving a reason for disagreement, giving a viewpoint about something (not in response argument in text), and giving a reason for viewpoint. The second set of data and bar graph focused on strategies for illustrating or clarifying a point: providing an example, using information from the text as an example, comparing or contrasting an idea to something, and stating the opposing viewpoint. The third data set and bar graph focused on the number of times subjects indicated gaps in knowledge or commented on an extension in their knowledge.

I also looked at the average number of times subjects offered an opinion by document. Comparing the average number of opinions by document showed if a particular document, or kind of document, prompted significantly more or less argumentation among political scientists or among students. I added the number of times each subject was agreeing, disagreeing, or offering a viewpoint for each document, tabulated the data, and generated a bar showing means and standard errors. In addition to performing two-tailed, unpaired student's t-tests to compare political scientists' and students' actions for each document, I performed one-way ANOVA tests with a Bonferroni post-tests to see if there were statistically significant differences among the political scientists and students.

Qualitative Analysis. To see how particular movements, especially kinds of knowledge were being put to use by the subjects, I used constant comparative analysis with verbal data for both political scientists and students, connecting the movement codes with the utility of movement codes. This analysis allowed me to draw conclusions about how subjects were using knowledge, concepts and theories, as well as using the text itself, to reason through the problem.

<p align="center">*Chosen Documents*</p>

For the chosen documents, I first tracked the order in which subjects chose documents to help them further address the problem. I coded and analyzed only the verbal data from the documents looked at by at least fifty percent of the subjects: "Washington's Farewell Address," "Federalist Number Ten," "The Evolution of Partisan Politics in the U.S.," and Recent Key Events.

Data Analysis Round One: Movement Codes

I used the pre-determined and grounded codes from the first round of analysis of the common documents to code the data from the chosen documents session. I then tabulated data and generated bar graphs showing mean and standard error for subjects' use of knowledge, concepts, and theories for each individual document. Then I combined data from all four documents and generated a bar graph showing means and standard errors for subjects' use of knowledge, concepts and theories across the most commonly chosen documents. I compared students' and political scientists use of knowledge, concepts and theories using two-tailed, unpaired students' t-tests.

Next, I organized verbal data coded as a type of knowledge, conception or theory into the appropriate categories for qualitative case and cross-case analysis and comparison. I looked for similarities and differences in the sophistication or accuracy of knowledge, conceptions and theories between different students, different political scientists, and between students and political scientists.

I used findings from analysis of the chosen documents to confirm, contest, or extend the findings from analysis of the common documents.

Data Analysis Round Two: Utility of Movement Codes

I coded and analyzed verbal data from the most commonly chosen documents from each group using my established utility of movement codes. Again, I tabulated data and generated bar graphs showing means and standard

errors to compare the average number of times subjects used information-extraction reading strategies and evaluative reading strategies for the historic documents and for the background information documents. For each type of document, I also generated a bar graph to compare subjects' use of specific types of evaluative reading strategies. In addition, I tabulated data and generated a bar graph for subjects' notation of gaps in knowledge or understanding and extensions in knowledge or understanding. I then combined data from the chosen documents with data from the common documents to compare students' and political scientists' use of information-extraction and evaluative strategies throughout the think aloud session. I conducted two-tailed, unpaired student's t-tests for all data sets, in order to determine if there were statistically significant differences between means.

I also tabulated data and generated bar graphs for the reasoning strategies subjects used while reading the historic documents and while reading the background information documents. I first focused analysis on the strategies that involved giving an opinion of some kind: agreeing with an argument in the text, giving a reason for agreement, disagreeing with an argument in the text, giving a reason for disagreement, giving a viewpoint about something (not in response argument in text), and giving a reason for viewpoint. I then focused analysis on strategies used to illustrate or clarify a point: providing an example, using information from the text as an example, comparing or contrasting an idea to something, and stating the opposing viewpoint. In addition, I tabulated data and generated graphs to compare subjects noting gaps or extensions in their

knowledge or understanding. I conducted two-tailed, unpaired student's t-tests for all data.

To see how subjects used particular movements, I again used constant comparative analysis with verbal data for both political scientists and students, connecting the movement codes with the utility of movement codes. I used findings from analysis of the data from the chosen documents portion of the think aloud session to confirm, extend or contest findings from the common documents portion.

The next two chapters present and discuss findings from the analyses described in this chapter.

Chapter 7

The Information, Knowledge, Concepts and Theories Students and Political
Scientists Used in Reasoning

What kinds of knowledge did the students and political scientists use while

they were reasoning about bipartisanship? Did they draw upon existing

knowledge? How often did they use the new information they were provided,

and in what ways? Did they seek to acquire new knowledge? This chapter takes

up these questions, aiming to understand what knowledge and information

subjects used to help them grapple with the issue of bipartisanship. It compares

the degree to which students and political scientists used the information and

arguments from the materials provided during the think aloud, as well as the

degree to which students and political scientists moved *beyond* the materials by

referring to existing knowledge, ideas, and experiences (Bruner & Anglin, 1973).

In addition, this chapter describes and compares the specific kinds of knowledge

(i.e., knowledge of history or current events), concepts (i.e., concepts of

American Democracy or political parties) and theories (i.e., theories about what

"good politics" looks like or about the role of the media in American society)

subjects referred to while reasoning.

I present findings in three sections. In each section, I first describe the

information, knowledge, ideas or experiences subjects used, and then discuss

similarities and differences between the students and political scientists. The first

section focuses on subjects' prior knowledge of the issue of bipartisanship. The next section addresses findings from the "common documents" portion of the think aloud—that is, the portion of the think aloud in which I provided all subjects with the same document set (see Appendix D) and asked them to address the issue while reading through it. The third section presents findings from the "chosen documents" portion of the think aloud. Here, I directed subjects to choose documents they wanted to read, in the order that they wanted to read them (see Appendix E). The chapter ends with a general summary and discussion of my findings and the questions that emerged from them.

Prior Knowledge of the Issue of Bipartisanship

Before thinking aloud, subjects shared what they knew about bipartisanship. I hypothesized that the political scientists would know significantly more about bipartisanship than high school students would, so I provided the high school students with a simple dictionary definition of bipartisanship.[21] Below, I describe and compare subjects' prior knowledge.

Findings

The Political Scientists' Prior Knowledge. Coming into the think aloud session, all the political scientists were familiar with the issue of bipartisanship (see Appendix G). When asked to share what they knew, the majority of political scientists provided detailed definitions of bipartisanship. David, for example, defined it as follows:

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[21] When asking students to tell me what they knew about the issue of bipartisanship, I added that bipartisanship "refers to a state of agreement or compromise between the two major U.S. political parties, Democrats and Republicans."

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It comes out of the notion of Republicans and Democrats being very heavily partisaned—that they're sticking together as parties and not perhaps searching for compromise in the middle and reaching across the aisle to work one side to another. So bipartisanship would typically be used to refer to working on legislation or working on policy ideas that are typically done by Democrats working with Republicans across the aisle.

In his definition, David conveyed an understanding of bipartisanship as compromise ("working on policy ideas across the aisle"), and even clarified bipartisanship further by differentiating it from partisanship, or being "partisaned" ("they're sticking together as parties and not…searching for compromise").

Some political scientists provided more nuanced definitions, describing how various people might view bipartisanship slightly differently. For example, Alex stated:

We have a two political party system and a bipartisan outcome is often defined as a combination between one party, say the Republican party, carrying a handful of Democrats with them as opposed to equal numbers of Republicans and Democrats. So, there's a bit of a controversy about how exactly to define bipartisanship—whether it's a handful of the other party endorsing some proposal or a genuine coming together of the two parties in equal numbers to support a particular proposal.

Both David and Alex not only provided detailed definitions of bipartisanship but also revealed their understanding that bipartisanship is not necessarily easy to define—David by referring to its "typical" use, and Alex by briefly explaining the "controversy" around defining bipartisanship. In doing so, they seemed to situate bipartisanship as an idea *at issue*, rather than just giving over the term's dictionary definition.

In fact, several political scientists explicitly situated bipartisanship as an issue, providing a definition *and* some information about its history, its current

status, or both. For example, Kate gave a detailed definition of bipartisanship, stating:

> Ordinarily you would think of [bipartisanship] as cooperation across party lines, cooperation of the president with the opposition party in Congress, trying to involve them in the decision making along with the president's own party, whether they were in the majority or not in the majority.

But she also provided some historical and contemporary context for bipartisanship, explaining how she thinks it has declined in recent years and why it might be at issue. She stated:

> Since the 1950's, but certainly since the late 60's, the Congress has become more polarized in terms of its relationship across party lines. The Republicans have gotten more conservative; the Democrats have gotten somewhat more homogeneously liberal. Both have lost their opposition wings and that has made it difficult to cooperate across party lines. The current state of campaigning in America makes it such that the party that's in opposition to the president has very little incentive to cooperate with the sitting president.

Doris did something similar, providing some historical and contemporary context for bipartisanship. She asserted:

> Most people would say that we have very little bipartisanship going on at all at the moment. They would say that we're very partisan and most things are divided by political party. Bipartisanship used to be quite common in this country, particularly in dealing with foreign policy. The belief was we should not be divided as a country when we face the outside enemy. But bipartisanship has not been very present in Washington for quite some time.

The High School Students' Prior Knowledge. In contrast to the political scientists' detailed, nuanced and contextualized understanding of bipartisanship, three high school students said they knew nothing about the issue of bipartisanship (see Appendix G). One 10th grader, Karen, and two 12th graders, Tanya and Rafael, said they did not know or were not sure about what

bipartisanship is, regardless of the fact that I provided them with a simple definition to help them talk about bipartisanship as an issue.

However, the remaining five high school participants seemed to piece together "educated guesses" about the issue of bipartisanship, using the definition of bipartisanship I gave them and/or what they already understood about political parties to formulate an answer. For example, in his effort to give some meaning to bipartisanship, 12th grader Joshua noticed the word "compromise" in the definition of bipartisanship I provided and explained what compromise looks like. He stated:

> When there's a compromise, I guess they're having a debate between two things and they're just like well, okay, this one agrees with what he's saying, we've got people over here agreeing with what they're saying. Okay, we should compromise and call it a day, instead of going on about the subject at hand.

Other students heard in the definition that bipartisanship involved the two major political parties and proceeded to say what they knew about their differences. Tenth grader Jenny, for example, stated:

> I know that Democrats and Republicans tend to have different beliefs on many things, like Republicans tend to lower taxes while Democrats tend to raise taxes for social issues. And on abortion and stuff the Republicans tend to have traditional values while Democrats feel like people should have their choice with abortion.

Although most of the students simply tried to give some meaning to the term bipartisanship, a couple of students combined the definition of bipartisanship with their knowledge of political parties to situate bipartisanship as an issue, as most of the political scientists did. For example, 10th grader Deborah said:

Democrats and Republicans, I do know that they have their differences. One is conservative and one is liberal. I think the problem between both of them is they don't know how to come to a general consensus on how to deal with certain political issues. I'm not really clear about bipartisanship but I do think that it has something to do with both of them working together to try to reach a common goal, but they are having a hard time trying to come up with a solution to whatever problem that they are trying to fix.

She knew that the Democratic and Republican parties had conservative and liberal views that made "consensus" (which she may have viewed as interchangeable with "compromise") on certain issues difficult.

Twelfth grader Marianne was deliberate in situating bipartisanship as an issue, characterizing it as a "conflict" from the outset. She stated:

Bipartisanship would probably be a conflict since the Democratic and Republican parties tend to have different views on many issues. So, [bipartisanship] is probably something that we need to have more of, more agreement between the two parties. And it might be difficult to come up with a way that they can always agree on things. I currently can't think of anything that they necessarily have a bipartisanship on.

Students' attempts to define bipartisanship suggest that, despite minimal knowledge of the term or definition of the term, they still could and did formulate ideas about bipartisanship based on their understanding of related concepts—specifically, compromise and political parties.

Discussion

The participating political scientists provided detailed definitions of bipartisanship, including what bipartisanship is and is not and how different people may view bipartisanship slightly differently. The political scientists also often described the historical and contemporary situations surrounding bipartisanship in order to characterize it as an *issue* rather than just a term.

On the other hand, several participating high school students said they knew nothing about bipartisanship. They had never heard the term bipartisanship and so shared nothing about what they might know about party differences and efforts at compromise. However, more than half the students revealed they did know something about compromise and/or about the Democratic and Republican parties, including differences or disagreement between the two parties. From that, they were able to piece together an answer about what they knew about the issue of bipartisanship using the definition I provided at the beginning of the think aloud session and/or what they already understood about political parties. Still, students' definitions were not as detailed or nuanced as political scientists', and they not include any historical context.

The differences between students' and political scientists' existing knowledge bases were not surprising. Findings from subjects' reports of prior knowledge confirmed my hypothesis that the political scientists would have a stronger knowledge base than high school students would. Existing studies on students' knowledge, which I discussed in Chapter 4, suggest that students have significantly less knowledge with which to form concepts, reason, and solve problems than more sophisticated thinkers.

However, it was interesting that students had enough familiarity with and ideas about related concepts—compromise and political parties—that they could make conjectures about bipartisanship. Far from being *tabula rasa*, these students came into the think alouds with enough of a relevant knowledge base that, when given a simple dictionary definition to provide some "clue" as to the

meaning of bipartisanship, they were able to provide sensible responses. If I had

not provided a dictionary definition for them, the five students who gave a

response about bipartisanship may have also answered with some version of "I

don't know," leading me to conclude that all the high school students knew

nothing. However, by providing them a simple hint, they revealed that, in fact,

they did possess some knowledge about bipartisanship, even if the term was not

a part of their vocabulary.

The next section describes the degree to which the political scientists and

high school students used the materials I provided in the common documents

portion of the think aloud sessions, and the degree to which they moved beyond

the materials provided to use their existing knowledge, conceptions and theories

while reasoning about the issue of bipartisanship.

How Did Subjects Use and Move beyond Provided Materials during Common Documents Portion?[22]

As subjects reasoned about the issue of bipartisanship with the eight

different documents provided in the common documents portion of the think

aloud, they made several different kinds of "moves." Sometimes, a subject used

information or arguments from the provided materials, referring to a different part

of the document they were reading, referring to something they had read in one

of the previous documents, or referring back to the problem. At other times,

subjects moved *beyond* the materials provided, referring to knowledge, ideas, or

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[22] For this and all subsequent presentations of findings, I have grouped 10th and 12th graders together, because, with the exception of the relative frequency of moves for the Brooks viewpoint piece, there were no significant differences in 10th and 12th graders' movements throughout the think aloud session.

experiences not provided in the document set (Bruner & Anglin, 1973).[23] The

following sections describe my findings from analysis of subjects' different kinds

of moves.

Findings

　　Subjects' Responsiveness to the Provided Documents. I looked at the

total number and relative frequency of moves during the common documents

portion of the think aloud session to get a general sense of subjects'

responsiveness to the provided documents: Were political scientists responding

to documents differently than students? Were some documents more stimulating

to political scientists than to students, and vice versa? Upon analyzing the data, I

found that, not surprisingly, some individuals made more moves than others did

simply because some individuals talked more than others did during the think

aloud sessions. On average, political scientists made more total moves during

the entire think aloud session than did high school students. Figure 7-1 shows

that the mean number of moves for political scientists is significantly higher (p-

value=.0388) than the mean number of moves for high school students.

Moreover, it shows the wide range of total moves within groups—the maximum

number of moves for political scientists was 207 while the minimum number of

moves was 44, and the maximum number of moves for students was 97, while

the minimum number of moves for students was 19.

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[23] As described in Chapter 6, subjects also simply reacted to the documents without necessarily moving within the document space or moving in "time" by referring to knowledge, conceptions and theories. Reactions were coded in the second rounds of analysis as reading or reasoning strategies and will be addressed in detail in Chapter 8.
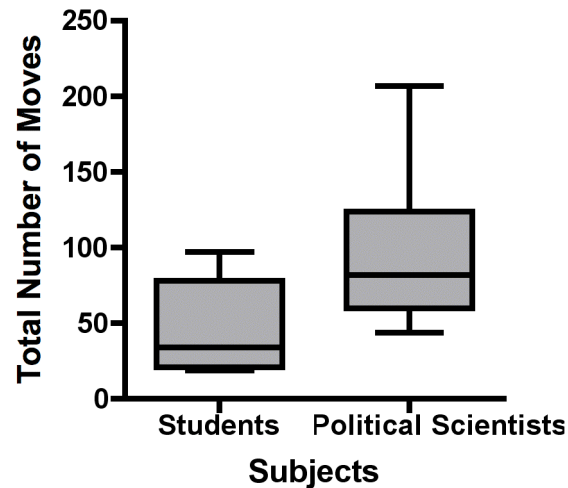
Figure 7-1. Comparing maximum and minimum values, upper and lower quartiles, and means for the total number of moves (i.e., referring to the documents on hand or moving beyond the documents on hand) subjects made during the common documents portion of the think aloud session

However, political scientists and students distributed their moves similarly throughout the think aloud session. In other words, even though political scientists made more moves throughout the entire think aloud session, they did not spend a significantly higher percentage of their moves on any one segment than did students. There were no significant differences (p-value>.05 for all session segments) in the average relative frequency of moves between political scientists and students when they first read about the issue, when they looked at the graph and chart, when they read the opinion pieces, or when they read the newspaper articles (see Figure 7-2). In short, all the pieces seemed to be relatively equally stimulating to students and political scientists. Furthermore, each session segment seemed to prompt a relatively similar amount of references to the materials provided, and references to knowledge, ideas and experiences beyond the materials provided. I found no significant differences (p-

value>.05) in the average relative frequency of the different types of moves subjects made for each session segment (data not shown).[24]
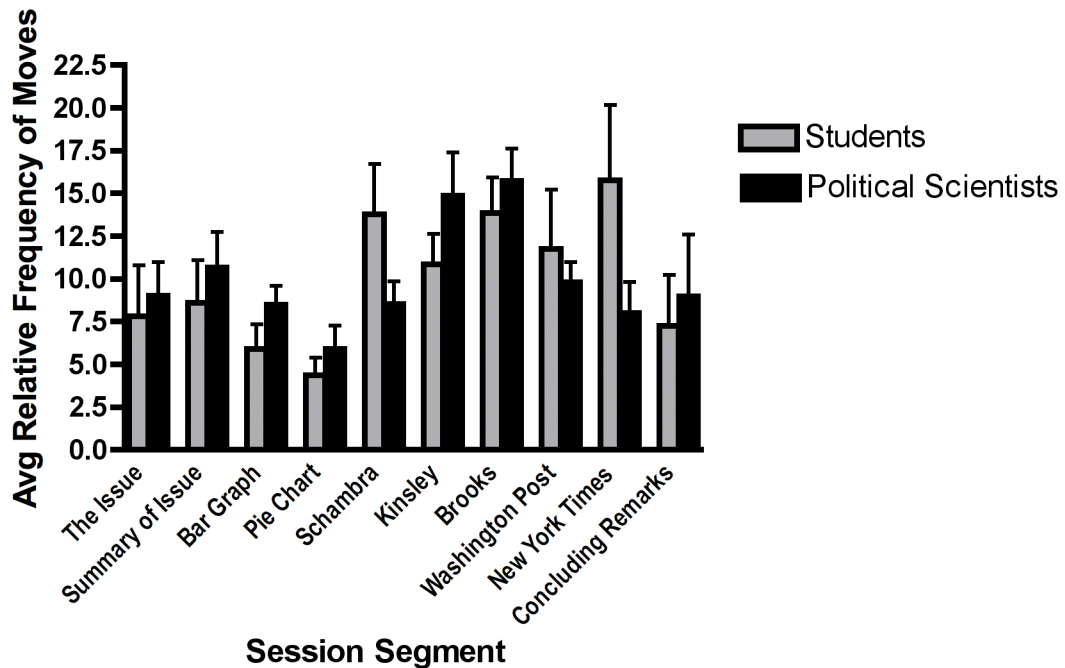
Figure 7-2. Average relative frequency of students' and political scientists' moves by session segment during the common documents portion of the think aloud session.

References to Another Document, Space in Current Document, or the Problem. Although I found similarities in subjects' general responsiveness to the provided materials, I was interested in looking at the specific types of moves within and beyond the documents. For example, in using information or arguments in the materials provided, subjects sometimes referred to something in a document they had already read. Other times, subjects referred back to the problem, which was written on the first document in the document set. Subjects

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[24] Novices did not make any moves in space for the Issue, the Summary of the Issue, the Bar Graph and the Pie Chart, so I could not perform t-tests.

also occasionally referred to another part of the document they were currently reading (see Chapter 6, Table 6-3 for examples).

Upon analyzing subjects' use of the documents on hand, I found no significant differences (p-value>.05) in the average number of times students and political scientists referred to another document and back to the problem (see Figure 7-3). This suggested that students and political scientists utilized or referenced information or arguments from other sources in the document set to a similar degree. Interestingly, contrary to my expectations, it also suggested that they used the problem as an orienting or focusing device to a similar degree.

However, not once did a student refer to a space in the same document, while, on average, political scientists did so at least a couple of times throughout the common documents portion of the session (see Figure 7-3). The majority of times political scientists made this move, they were referring to the document source. For example, at one point, Michael stopped reading the *New York Times* in mid-sentence to look back at the source, stating, "…who's doing this? *New York Times*, okay." This suggested that political scientists regularly sought out the document source, while students did not. In fact, some students did not even read the document source when it was embedded in the text. For example, when Karen began reading Document Six, she read, "'The Political Divide Makes Honest Policy Debate More Difficult,'" then skipped the author, David Brooks', name, the information about Brooks' background and affiliation, and began reading the argument, "The political divide is harmful to Americans because…"
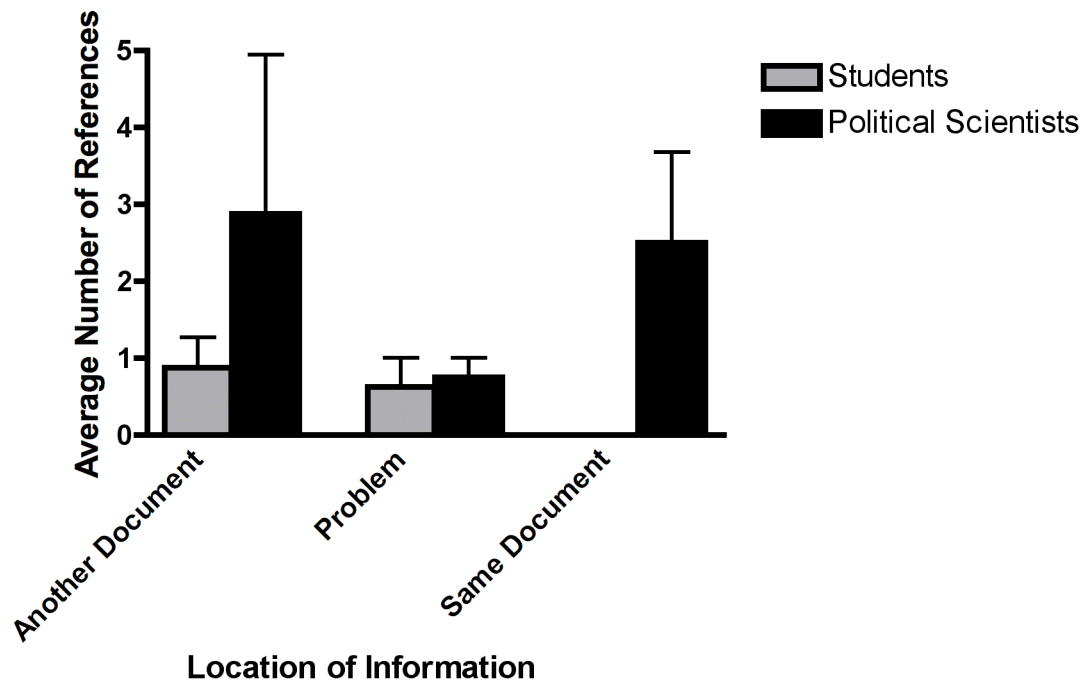
Figure 7-3. Average number of times during the common documents portion of the think aloud session that subjects made references to another document in the set, to the problem, and to another place in the same document.

References to Knowledge, Concepts, Theories, or Experiences. In addition to referencing the documents on hand, subjects moved beyond the documents provided to reference a piece of knowledge or an idea that they already possessed,[25] or to reference an experience they had already had. Sometimes, subjects referred to some knowledge they had about someone else's argument or philosophy—perhaps that of a published scholar, of a well-known philosopher, or of some other person who had documented and publicized their thinking in some way. In other instances, subjects referred to

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[25] I made no assumption about how far back in time subjects had acquired the information, knowledge, or idea. I may have been prior to the think aloud session, or it may be have been sometime earlier in the think aloud session.

knowledge of something they had experienced as a current event, including knowledge of familiar people somehow involved in current affairs. Subjects also referred to knowledge of a document's source, of the author or author's professional affiliation, and/or of the newspaper or book where the source was published. Finally, subjects sometimes referred to knowledge that might be gleaned from school textbooks—knowledge of historical people or events, knowledge of the structure and function of United States government, knowledge of economic terms or functioning, or knowledge of foreign political systems (see Chapter 6, Table 6-3 for examples).

Subjects also referred to conceptions or ideas they had about something discussed or alluded to in the readings. These references did not consist of simple textbook definitions, but of notions about what something was and was not, or of its relationship to other things or ideas. For example, as revealed by some of the responses to the prior knowledge question, subjects had ideas about political parties, bipartisanship and partisanship, and they drew upon these ideas as they were reasoning about the issue of bipartisanship. In addition to conceptions of political parties, bipartisanship, and partisanship, subjects also had ideas about American Democracy and ideology (see Chapter 6, Table 6-3 for examples).

Subjects had *theories* about how things operate in the world as well. Sometimes, they referred to existing theories about politics in the United States, or how decisions are made and how political leaders operate within the political system. Slightly different were subjects' theories about electoral politics, or how

politics and politicians operate during election season. Subjects also had theories about "good politics"—that is, theories about how decisions should be made or how political leaders should operate as opposed to the current state of affairs. Further, subjects had theories about the American citizenry—about their behavior, their beliefs, and their character (see Chapter 6, Table 6-3 for examples).

Finally, subjects drew upon their past experiences—classes they had taught or taken, interactions they had had with family, friends and acquaintances, and other miscellaneous experiences (see Chapter 6, Table 6-3 for examples).

Upon analyzing subjects' movements beyond the documents on hand during the common documents portion of the think aloud session, I found a significant difference (p-value=.0392) in the average number of times political scientists and students referenced existing knowledge (see Figure 7-4). In fact, political scientists referenced existing knowledge more than anything else when moving beyond the common documents provided.

On the other hand, both political scientists and students drew upon personal experiences to a similar degree while reasoning about the issue of bipartisanship, although they did so less than anything else (p-value>.05).

What was most interesting and unexpected, though, was that I found no significant differences (p-value>.05) in the average number of times political scientists and students referenced conceptions and theories while reasoning about the issue of bipartisanship (see Figure 7-4). Given political scientists' strong knowledge base, I expected that they would use existing conceptions and

theories to a significantly greater degree. These findings raised questions about the similarities and differences among the specific kinds of knowledge (i.e., knowledge of history or current events), concepts (i.e., concepts of American Democracy or political parties) and theories (i.e., theories about what "good politics" looks like or about the role of the media in American society) subjects were using.
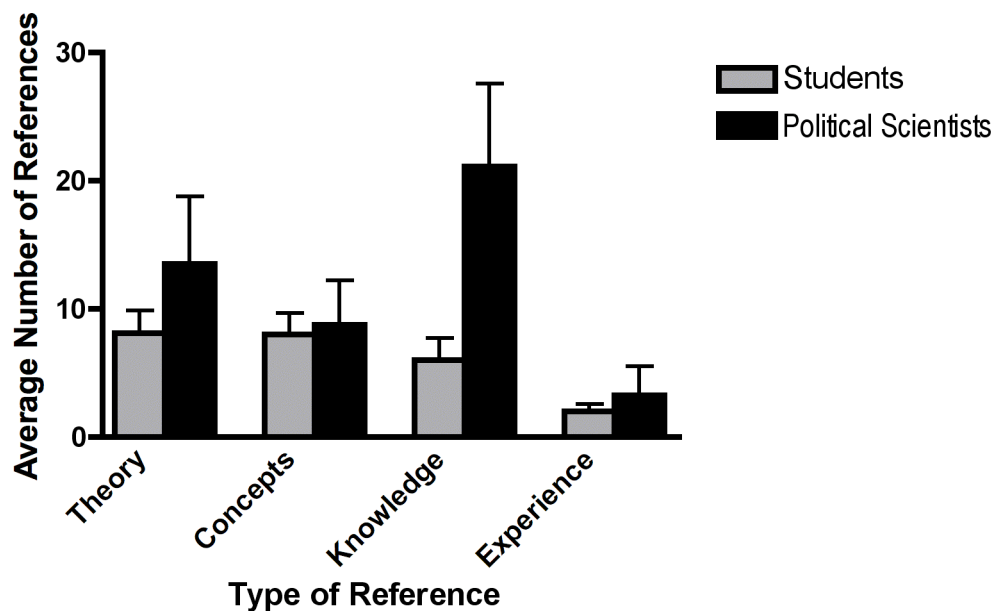
Figure 7-4. Average number of times students and political scientists referenced existing theories, conceptions, or knowledge, or personal experiences during the common documents portion of the think aloud session.

Specific Kinds of Knowledge. The average number of times political scientists referenced any specific kind of knowledge was consistently greater. There was not a single category of knowledge that students referenced more (see Figure 7-5). Furthermore, there was a significant difference (p-value=.0472)

in the average number of times political scientists and students drew upon knowledge of scholarship or published arguments. Political scientists regularly referred to the arguments of scholars like Alisdaire MacIntyre, Morris Fiorina, and E.J. Dionne, and to thinkers like Alexis de Tocqueville, John Stuart Mill and Aristotle. For example, while reading one of the viewpoint pieces, David thought of scholarly arguments with which he was familiar, stating, "I mean this sounds very much like Mo Fiorina's *Culture Wars* book. It sounds also very much like E.J. Dionne's *Why Americans Hate Politics*, that most people are in the middle and that the choices that they get are falsely polarized. Sort of the purple rather than red and blue argument that Fiorina makes." John recalled an Aristotelian theory while reading a viewpoint piece, stating, "…we talk about Aristotle, and we talk about the idea of the golden mean, which means doing what's appropriate to the situation, not simply splitting the difference." Novices referred only a couple of times to arguments they had seen presented in documentaries or other television programs. Marianne, for example, thought of a documentary she had recently watched. She recalled,

> I saw the movie *Expelled* the other day, the documentary by Ben Stein that talked about how several scientists automatically believe in evolution and then other people talked about how if we all just say, okay, well evolution is exactly how it happened and ignore any other sides of looking at how everything came to be, such as intelligent design, if we all just believe one thing then we'll never question what we're believing. So we might be believing the wrong thing altogether.

Although the differences were not significant, on average, I also found that political scientists used knowledge of history (p-value=.0922) and knowledge of foreign politics (p-value=.0853) more than students. Students rarely referenced

knowledge of either, while political scientists tended to do so at least a couple of times throughout the session. For example, while reading the Schambra piece, political scientist David engaged his knowledge of history, stating:

> As I look back to the 50s Republican Party and the 50s Democratic Party for that matter, it doesn't strike me in retrospect as a horrifically partisan time. Certainly I wouldn't put Eisenhower in as a remarkable partisan but, on the other hand, depends on how early in the 50s…I mean if it's '50 or '51 you're talking about Republicans up against Truman, the Do-Nothings 80th Congress, which was very partisan. But if you're talking about '53, '54, it's a less partisan period.

Political scientist John drew upon his knowledge of foreign politics while reading the Brooks viewpoint piece, stating, "Peaceful transfers of power take place all the time in American politics in ways that would be unthinkable in a lot of nations that we're looking at, especially in the south and especially in what we would call the developing world."

In addition, novices never referenced or used knowledge of the source of a document while reading (see Figure 7-5). Political scientists, on the other hand, regularly drew upon knowledge of the sources they encountered while reading through the documents. Political scientist Sharon, for example, expressed some familiarity with Schambra's political affiliation, stating, "So this person is at the Hudson Institute, which I happen to know is more of a conservative place." In addition, political scientist David revealed that he was quite familiar with the work of columnist David Broder, stating, "I really like and respect David Broder."

There was not a significant difference (p-value>.05) in the number of times students and political scientists referenced something they would have

experienced as a current event, but it is noteworthy that both groups referenced knowledge of current events more than any other kind of knowledge. Political scientist Alex recalled, for example:

> …The Bush administration took a left turn after 9/11 and became born again, actually, had this, took on this ideological spreading democracy around the world when one…would have thought they started not wanted to nation-build as they said in their original campaign.

High school student Deborah talked about her knowledge of homes going into foreclosure across the nation, stating, "…there are lots of foreclosed homes...I hear about that often and you hear it on the news that a lot of foreclosed houses, there are at least one on every block."
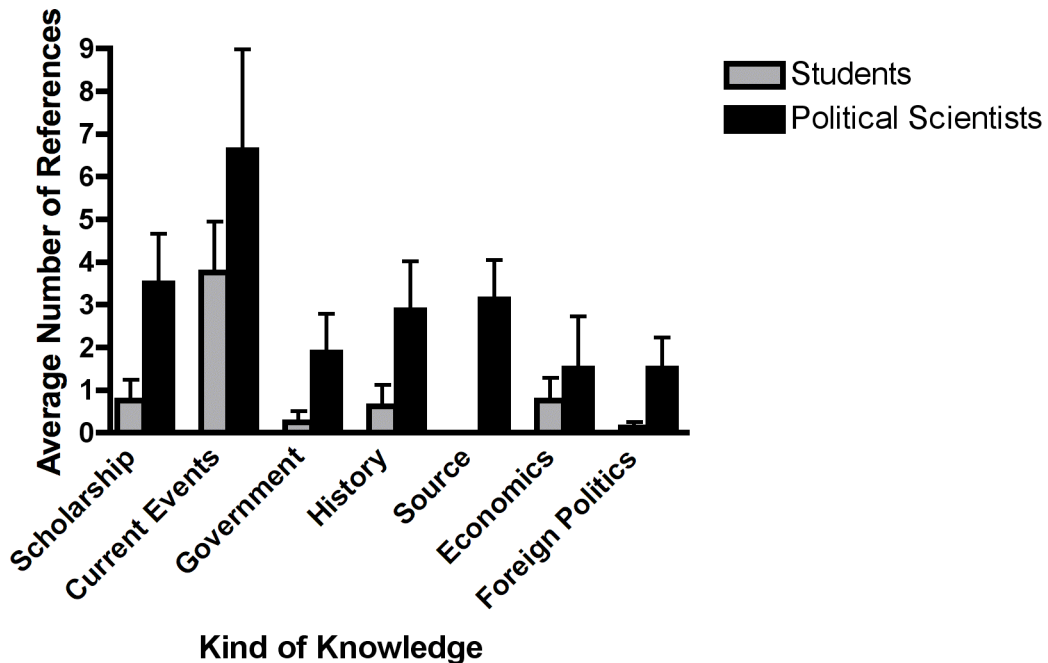
Figure 7-5. Average number of times students and political scientists referenced different kinds of knowledge during the common documents portion of the think aloud session.

Specific Concepts and Theories. Upon looking at subjects' use of specific concepts and theories while reasoning with the common documents, I found, surprisingly, that students referred to concepts of American Democracy, bipartisanship and political parties more than political scientists (see Figure 7-6). For example, Marianne engaged her conception of bipartisanship—that bipartisanship means working together and getting things accomplished, asserting, "Bipartisanship is important because we do need to work together in some ways. I think nothing will ever get done if we can't work together just a little bit." Tanya referred to her conception of the political parties, specifically, what the parties stand for, stating, "I feel like Democrats you hear more about improving jobs and healthcare, and Republicans I don't feel you hear that, that much, and a lot of the problems with America might be because of that."

Students' references to bipartisanship were particularly interesting, considering most of them knew little to nothing about bipartisanship at the beginning of the think aloud session. Given their references to political parties during the prior knowledge portion and during the common documents portion, it seems they knew enough about political parties and the definition of bipartisanship to formulate conceptions of bipartisanship.
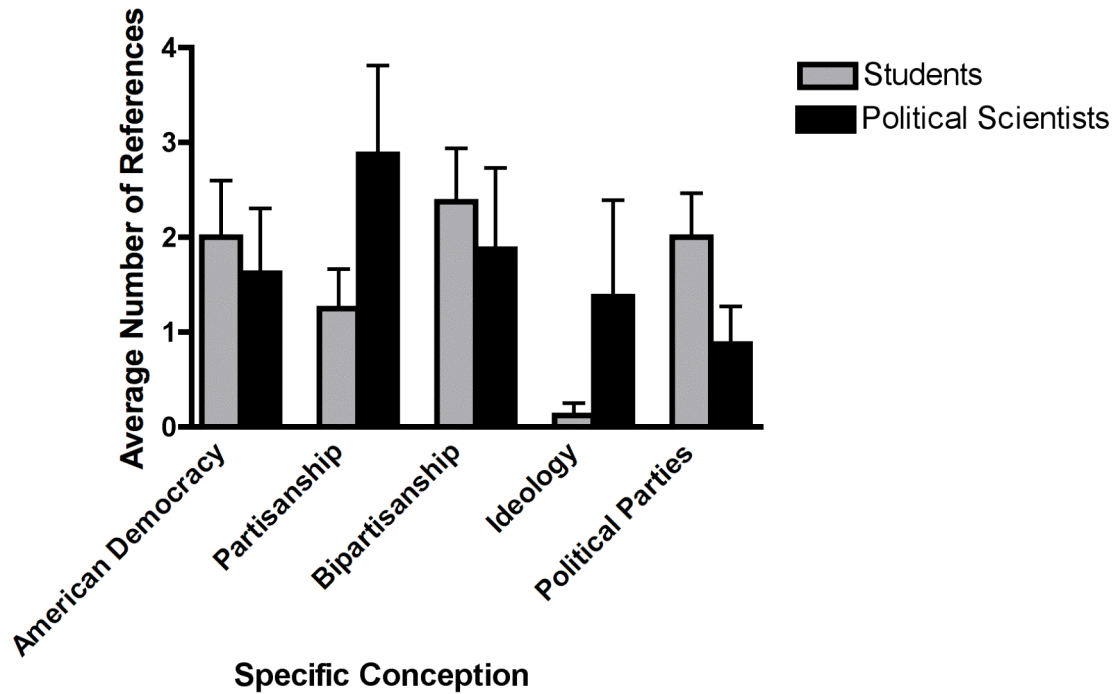
Figure 7-6. Average number of references to specific conceptions during the common documents portion of the think aloud session.

Students also used theories about the behavior, beliefs or character of the American citizenry more than political scientists did (see Figure 7-7). Joshua conveyed a theory that American citizens often do not know very much about the people they vote for, stating matter-of-factly, "Most people don't know who they're voting for." Karen theorized that American voters believe the president should consider both Democratic and Republican views in deciding on an issue. She asserted, "Voters would want the president to think of both Democratic and Republican ways of solving the issue, even if they tend to use one more than the other."
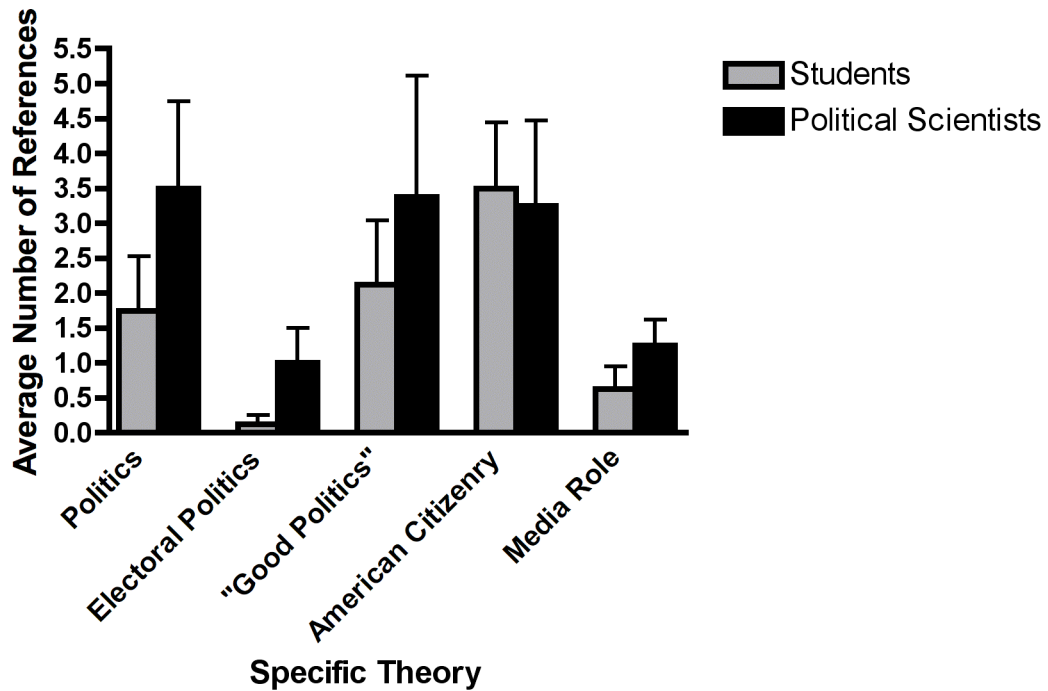
Figure 7-7. Average number of references to specific theories during the common documents portion of the think aloud session.

Regardless of who used what concepts or theories more, however, there were no significant differences (p-value>.05) when comparing the average number of times subjects referred to specific concepts (see Figure 7-6) and specific theories (see Figure 7-7). Students and political scientists used conceptions of American Democracy, partisanship, bipartisanship, ideology and political parties to a similar degree. Likewise, they engaged theories about politics, electoral politics, "good politics," the American citizenry, and the media's role in society to a similar degree.

Discussion

The behavior of the students and political scientists while reading the common documents were remarkably alike in some respects. Political scientists

did not have relatively more animated responses to any one document or type of document than did students, and they did not do more with a concluding response than students did. There was little difference in the number of times students and political scientists referenced other documents or the problem during their sessions, or in the number of times they reacted to something in the text, graph or chart. In short, members of both groups used the documents on hand to a similar degree, and that they used the problem to help focus their reasoning to a similar degree.

Students also drew upon existing conceptions and theories to reason with as often as political scientists did. In fact, students drew upon conceptions of American Democracy, bipartisanship, and political parties, and theories about the American citizenry slightly *more* than political scientists. Despite their lack of knowledge, it seems students were just as likely as political scientists to hold and use concepts (even newly formed concepts, as was the case with bipartisanship) and theories to help them reason about the issue.

However, there were important differences between the students and political scientists. First, students never referred to another place in the same document, while political scientists often did. When political scientists referred to another place in the same document, they were most often referring to the source of the document. This suggests that political scientists found it more important to note the source of the document at some point in their reading, while students consistently ignored the source. In fact, some students chose to forego reading the source, even when it was situated within the main body of text, such

as was the case with the viewpoint pieces and newspaper articles (see Appendix D). These findings support those of Wineburg (1990), who studied historians' and high school students' reading of historical text while reasoning about an historical problem. He found that historians, the models of sophisticated thinking in his study, also sourced documents regularly, while students did not. By not considering the document sources, students do not differentiate between authors or publication source, nor do they even begin to consider the political, social, or historical perspective from which information is presented.

Another important difference was that participating students, who would be considered relatively knowledgeable according to their performance on standardized test questions and the recommendations of teachers, drew upon different kinds of knowledge while reasoning through the issue significantly less than the political scientists did. These students, though perhaps more knowledgeable than their counterparts, still seemed to have such a weak knowledge base that they did not have adequate ammunition to draw upon while reasoning through the problem. Moreover, the 12th-grade students did not appear to have a stronger knowledge base than the 10th-grade students did, despite having taking an additional civics course focusing on current events. This confirms studies on students' knowledge, discussed in Chapter 4. Furthermore, the findings would mesh well with what critics of civic education often argue is currently wrong with civic education, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 3.

However, one might explain students' lack of knowledge use as a lack of *practice* in using knowledge for a particular purpose. The students may have

had stores of knowledge relevant to the issue they were thinking about, but they may not have been experienced enough in retrieving "factual" information to aid them in the reasoning process. Moreover, their knowledge may not have been organized in such a way as to aid in easy retrieval while reasoning. Expert studies find that experts' knowledge is much more than a list of disconnected facts about their disciplines. Their knowledge is connected and organized around important ideas of their discipline. It also includes information about conditions of applicability, which helps experts know when, why and how aspects of their vast repertoire of knowledge are relevant in any particular situation (Bransford et al., 2006). Such an organizational framework may have helped political scientists readily draw upon knowledge while reasoning about the issue of bipartisanship.

What was most surprising from this round of analysis was the similar degree with which students and political scientists referenced theories and conceptions throughout the think aloud session. With such a scanty prior knowledge base about the issue of bipartisanship, it seemed unlikely at the beginning that students would even have theories and conceptions to draw upon, particularly about bipartisanship and partisanship.   Yet, analysis of subjects' movements beyond the *chosen* documents confirmed that students and political scientists were using theories and concepts to an equal degree. The next section presents and discusses the findings from that portion of the think alouds.

How Did Subjects Use and Move beyond Provided Materials during Chosen Documents Portion?[26]

During the chosen documents portion of the think alouds, subjects were told that they could choose from a new document set in order to reason further about the issue. In addition to analyzing their document choices, I analyzed their verbalized thoughts while reading their chosen documents in the same way that I analyzed data from the common documents portion, looking for confirmation of or disagreement with earlier findings.

Findings

Document Choices. Interestingly, despite their different prior knowledge bases, students and political scientists made very similar choices when they were told they could choose which additional documents they wanted to read to help them further reason about the issue of bipartisanship. The majority of political scientists, five out of the eight, chose to look at historical documents first. Out of those five, four chose to look at both historical documents, while one chose to look only at the excerpt from "Washington's Farewell Address." Only one political scientist did not look at the historical documents at all.

Like the political scientists, the majority of students, five out of eight, chose to look at historical documents first. Out of those five, three chose to look at both, while two chose to look at Washington only. Two students chose not to look at historical documents at all.

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[26] For this and all subsequent presentations of findings, I have grouped 10th and 12th graders together, because, with the exception of the relative frequency of moves for the Brooks viewpoint piece, there were no significant differences in 10th and 12th graders' movements throughout the think aloud session.

All three of the remaining political scientists chose to look at background information first. Two out of those three chose to look at "The Evolution of Partisan Politics" first. Two also looked at all three documents in the folder, while one chose not to look at the "Policy Statements" piece. Only one political scientist chose not to look at background information at all.

The remaining three students also looked at background information first, beginning with the "Evolution of Partisan Politics" piece. Only two students chose not to look at background information at all.

No political scientists and students chose to look at news articles first. Four political scientists and five students chose not to look at news articles at all.

Overall, the majority of both political scientists and students chose to look at documents in the historic documents and background information folders. Most of both groups looked at "Washington's Farewell Address," "The Evolution of Partisan Politics in the U.S.," and "Recent Key Events." Fifty percent or more looked at "Federalist Number Ten" (see Appendix G for document choices). This suggests that both groups deemed historical documents and background important for reasoning through the issue.

In some cases, subjects explicitly stated what they intended to do by looking at the documents historic documents and background information. For high school students, such statements suggested that they sought to extend their knowledge, aware that they did not know a lot about the topic of bipartisanship. For example, Jenny stated, "I'm going to look at background information first because it makes sense to have a background before reading anything else."

Marianne explained, "I kind of think looking at this, this might—it's an excerpt from George Washington's Farewell Address—so maybe we could look at what went on way back when and kind of see how they felt about bipartisanship. That could kind of give me a little help on that."

For political scientists, though, statements about what they intended to do by looking at different documents suggested that they sought to support, or potentially contest, knowledge they already possessed. For example, speaking about the document, "The Evolution of Partisan Politics in the U.S.," John said, "So I would sort of say to myself, does this match up with my understanding of history?" About the historical documents, Alex said, "Let's see what kind of historic documents we have and supplement it with anything else. Oh, Federalist Number Ten--I know that one. Washington's Farewell Address—I haven't read that in a very long time." Therefore, although students and political scientists made similar document choices, they seemed to do so for different reasons—that is, with different uses for the information in mind.

References to Knowledge, Concepts, or Theories. Analysis of students' and political scientists' references to knowledge during the chosen documents portion of the think aloud session confirmed findings from the common documents portion. I found a significant difference (p-value=.0218) in the average number of times students and political scientists referenced knowledge, with political scientists referencing knowledge significantly more (see Figure 7-8).

Analysis of moves from this portion also confirmed other findings from the common documents portion: There were no significant differences (p-value>.05)

in the average number of times subjects referenced conceptions and theories (see Figure 7-8).
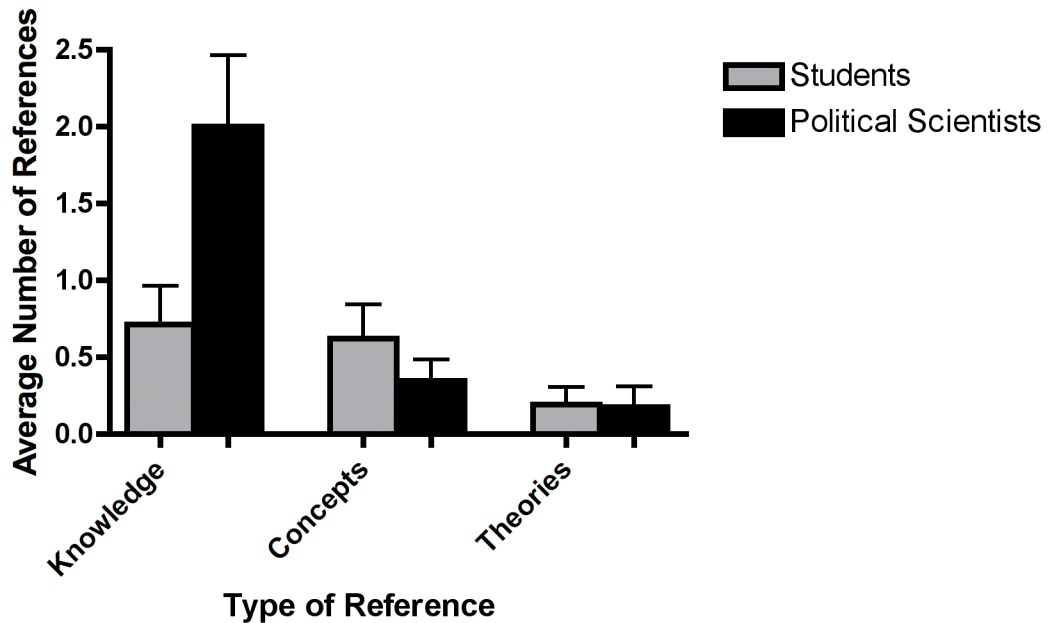
Figure 7-8. Average number of times students and political scientists referenced existing theories, conceptions, or knowledge during the chosen documents portion of the think aloud session.

Specific Kinds of Knowledge. Taking a closer look at the kinds of knowledge used, subjects used many of the same kinds of knowledge during the chosen documents portion of the think aloud as they had during the common documents portion—knowledge of scholarship, current events, history, and sources. With one notable exception, analysis of the different kinds of knowledge students and political scientists were using also confirmed findings from the common documents portion of the think aloud session. For example, there was no significant difference (p-value>.05) in the average number of times students and political scientists referenced knowledge of current events. Furthermore, as

they had during the common documents portion, students referenced knowledge of current events more than any other kind of knowledge. Students never referenced knowledge of scholarly arguments, whereas political scientists did. Moreover, political scientists used knowledge of history more than students did on average, although, statistically, there was no significant difference (see Figure 7-9).

Where findings from this portion *differed* from earlier findings was in regards to students' knowledge of document sources—I found no significant difference (p-value>.05) between students' and political scientists' knowledge of sources as they read their chosen documents (see Figure 7-9). However, it is important to note that each time a student referenced knowledge of a source it
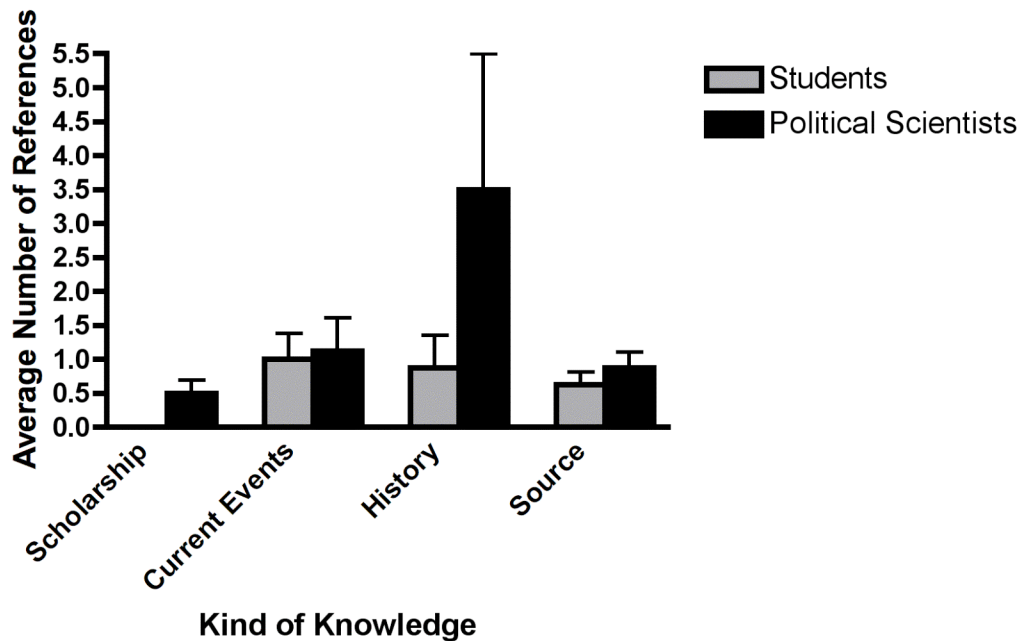
Figure 7-9. Average number of references students and political scientists made to different kinds of knowledge during the chosen documents portion of the think aloud session.

was while reading the excerpt from George Washington's Farewell Address. Not surprisingly, most students verbalized their knowledge that George Washington was the first president of the United States, and one student, Jenny, said she had read the Farewell Address in class.

Specific Conceptions and Theories. Subjects also used several of the same concepts and theories during the chosen documents portion of the think aloud that they had during the common documents portion. Specifically, they used concepts of bipartisanship and political parties, and theories about politics, electoral politics, and the American citizenry. There were no significant differences (p-value>.05) in the average number of times students and political scientists referenced conceptions of bipartisanship and political parties, nor in the average number of times they referenced theories about politics. Political scientists referenced theories about electoral politics, whereas students did not, but students referenced theories about the American citizenry, whereas political scientists did not. Overall, the number of times they referenced these theories was miniscule, but the findings still support findings from common documents portion, when political scientists referenced electoral politics more and students referenced the American citizenry more (see Figure 7-10).
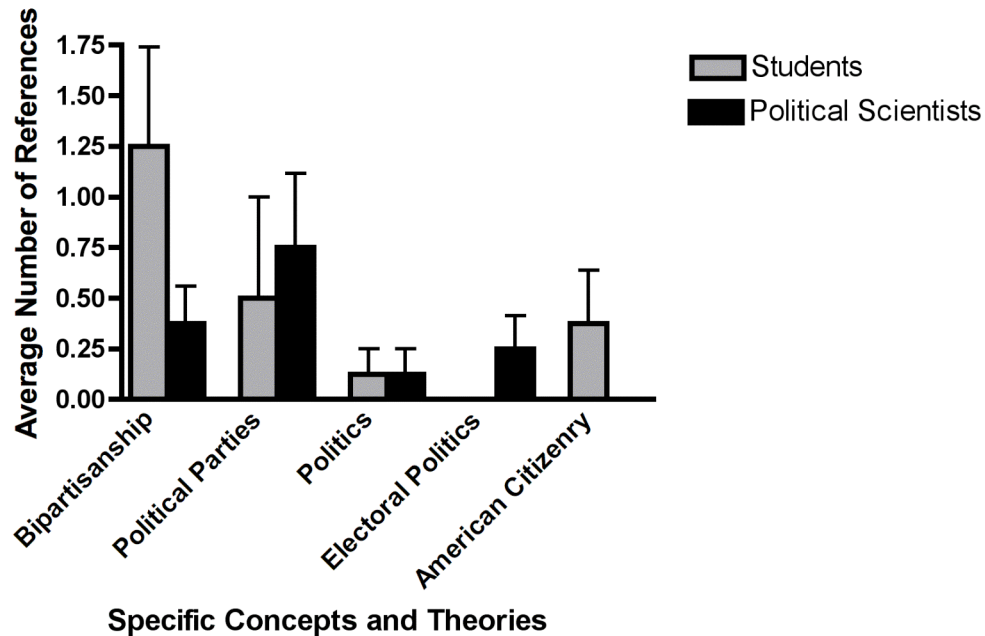
Figure 7-10. Average number of references students and political scientists made to specific concepts and theories during the chosen documents portion of the think aloud session.

Discussion

The majority of students and political scientists chose to look at historic documents and background information to help them further reason about the issue of bipartisanship, suggesting that the majority of people from both groups deemed such information important for helping them reason through the issue of bipartisanship. Based on their thoughts about why to look at one type of document over another, it seemed the students sought to extend their knowledge bases, while political scientists, who seemed more confident in their knowledge bases relevant to the topic, sought to support or perhaps even contest their thinking.

As was found in analysis of the common documents portion of the think alouds, the participating students, who would be considered relatively knowledgeable according to their performance on standardized test questions, referenced knowledge while reasoning through the issue significantly less than the political scientists did. Specifically, political scientists seemed to know more about scholarship, history and current events. However, during the chosen documents portion of the think aloud, students' knowledge of the sources was more on par with the political scientists' because they were familiar with George Washington, the source of one of the documents members of both groups deemed important to read.

Another finding that confirmed those from the common documents portion was that students referenced relevant concepts (i.e., bipartisanship and political parties) and theories (i.e., politics, electoral politics, and the American citizenry) to a similar degree.

Findings from both the common document and chosen document sessions of the think aloud sessions raise questions about the knowledge, conceptions and theories of the students and political scientists. Students may have used knowledge significantly less than political scientists, but how did the knowledge they used compare to that of the political scientists? Further, both students and political scientists possessed and used theories and concepts to a similar degree while reasoning through the common documents about the issue of bipartisanship. But what was the *substance* of the concepts and theories they were using? Were there similarities and differences in their ideas? To answer

these questions, the next section of this chapter discusses findings from qualitative analysis of subjects' responses during the common and chosen documents portions of the think aloud session.

A Closer Look at Subjects' Knowledge, Conceptions and Theories

Findings

Substance of Subjects' Knowledge. As already discussed, political scientists used knowledge significantly more than students did during the think alouds. However, there were not significant differences in uses of some specific kinds of knowledge, such as knowledge of current events, government, and history. Yet, students' and political scientists' knowledge of current events, government and history was not the same.

Both students and political scientists used knowledge of current events while reasoning about the issue of bipartisanship more than any other kind of knowledge. However, political scientists seemed to know more details about specific events and political figures than students did. For example, Alex could speak with some detail and authority about the policies of the Bush administration before and after 9/11 when he asserted:

> The Bush administration took a left turn after 9/11 and became born again, actually, had this, took on this ideological spreading democracy around the world when one… would have thought they [did] not want to nation-build as they said in their original campaign.

In addition, statements by political scientists, such as David's assertion, "Nobody would call [Harry Reid] a bipartisan person," revealed their familiarity with the names they came across in the newspaper articles, as well as their reputations or character.

On the other hand, students often expressed that they were unfamiliar with many of the Senators' and Representatives' names they came across in the newspaper articles, including the Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi. More often, they mentioned or expressed familiarity with "big" names like former President Bill Clinton, President George W. Bush, former presidential candidate Al Gore, and the presidential candidates at the time, John McCain, Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama.

Furthermore, their current events knowledge often consisted of simple statements about something they had "heard" on the news, related to the topics they came across while reading the newspaper articles.   Deborah said, "…there are lots of foreclosed homes...I hear about that often and you hear it on the news that a lot of foreclosed houses, there are at least one on every block." Alfred "heard on the news that we're using inspectors to solve the gas problems," and Marianne "heard recently that the air in Detroit is unsuitable to breathe."

Overall, it seemed political scientists knew about current events on a deeper level—that they followed news stories regularly, learning how they began and unfolded, and became familiar with the people involved. Students, however, seemed to hold isolated bits of information and were unfamiliar with many of the names of legislators who were not in the spotlight to the extent that presidents and presidential candidates were.

As for knowledge of government and history, political scientists' knowledge seemed more nuanced and detailed than students' did. Furthermore, the knowledge they used seemed more relevant to the issue at hand, whereas

students used knowledge that was only remotely connected. For example, political scientist David referenced very specific knowledge of the legislative structure when discussing bipartisanship:

> Obviously, the central tool to getting to bipartisanship is the fact that you need 218 votes in the House and in most cases, parties are going to have a very hard time getting there without reaching across the aisle. And certainly the Senate, which is going to be the central home for bipartisanship, the continued requirement of 60 votes requires working toward a spirit of bipartisanship.

David understood how many votes were needed in the House of Representatives and in the Senate for policies to move forward, and that the number of required votes necessitated "reaching across the aisle" to compromise with members of the opposing party. For him, bipartisanship was not just an ideal, but involved pragmatic considerations that his knowledge of the legislative process allowed him to realize.

Students never referred to knowledge of the legislative process when discussing bipartisanship. If anything, they merely expressed ideas about how bipartisanship might come about, such as when Joshua characterized the means of achieving bipartisanship as members of the two opposing parties giving "both of their opinions on there and put[ting] it with some facts or details, then com[ing] to a nice agreement."

For the most part, knowledge of government was absent from students' reasoning process. When a student did mention knowledge of government, it was sometimes only remotely tied to the issue. For example, Marianne stated, "Taxes are something that needs to be paid because the government needs

money obviously." Her statement was prompted by a reference to taxes in the text, but was not necessarily connected to the issue of bipartisanship.

It was a similar story with subjects' knowledge of history. Political scientists John referenced detailed knowledge of history, stating:

> The reality is the 1920s and 1930s in this country were probably some of the most fascinating times to be alive in terms of political ideas. You had people like Father Coughlin on the right, who had millions of listeners coming out of Michigan, who was preaching a sort of fascism that we would associate with Benito Mussolini. We certainly had supporters on the left of what was going on in the Soviet Union, certainly at least some Leninists and Trotskyites who were very, very excited about the possibility of a revolution taking place in this country. And then we had all kinds of people in the middle from Populists to Democrats and Republicans and Socialists like Eugene Debs…Its always funny to remember that Eugene Debs runs for president from a jail cell as a Socialist candidate in 1920 or so and gets a million votes.

John's reference to history came when he was reading the Schambra viewpoint piece, which argued that there has always been partisan bickering. Schambra's argument prompted John to engage his understanding of past political differences that arguably render today's political differences benign. He provides an historic example, complete with historic figures, illustrative political viewpoints, and relevant stories.

The same viewpoint piece prompted high school student Tanya to engage her knowledge of history, but the substance of her knowledge was starkly different from that of John's. In response to Schambra's argument that "The level of divisiveness and nastiness in American politics is no higher now than it has been throughout American history," Tanya asserted, "[T]here have been a lot of corrupt things in American history that a lot of people don't talk about." First, her response revealed that she associated divisiveness in American politics as

"corruption," and that she might misconstrue any stories about past political divisiveness as stories of corruption rather than stories of the political differences inherent in a democracy. Secondly, her knowledge of history was little more than a theory about historic narratives, which she believed often neglect a "true" picture of the past. The knowledge of history she used in the reasoning process lacked the specificity and illustrative function that John's did. In short, while John could provide a specific and relevant example, Tanya could not.

Substance of Subjects' Conceptions and Theories. Although students referenced knowledge significantly less than political scientists, they possessed and used concepts and theories to a similar degree as political scientists. For example, like political scientists, students characterized political parties as groups with different political views, and expressed their ideas about specific planks of the different parties while reasoning about the issue of bipartisanship. For example, political scientist Kate said, "I would have expected the Democrats to be more supportive of strengthening the military," while political scientist John commented, "If it read something like, we ought to rely on the market to improve the job situation, I think a lot more Republicans would think that was a good idea." In a similar vein, high school student Marianne said, "Republicans seem to be dealing with illegal immigration or want to deal with it more." High school student Tanya said, "I feel like Democrats you hear more about improving jobs and healthcare, and Republicans I don't feel you hear that much."

Both political scientists and students also similarly employed relevant theories, such as theories about what good politics would look like, the role of the

media in American society, and beliefs and/or behavior of the American citizenry. In some instances, political scientists' and students' theories were remarkably similar. For example, regarding the behavior of the American citizenry, political scientist John argued, "People tend to gravitate toward things that make them feel passionate," while high school student Jenny argued, "I think American citizens are interested in their government if they feel passionate about their beliefs." About the role of the media in American society, political scientist Alex argued, "[The press] is interested in selling newspapers and reporting the news, which is where things are broken and conflict and drama come in," as high school student Marianne argued, "[T]he media just does what's going to sell the most papers, what's going to get the highest ratings for the news stations."

Political scientists' and students conceptions were also sometimes quite similar. For example, members of both groups conceived bipartisanship as compromising so that legislators can get things accomplished. Political scientist Alex reported that he teaches his students, "Compromise in a legislature is a virtue not a vice." Rachel, another political scientist argued, "Every once in a while you need Republicans and Democrats on the same side to get everything accomplished." Similarly, Marianne argued, "[W]e do need to work together in some ways. I think nothing will ever get done if we can't work together just a little bit." Tanya said, "It's good to agree. It's good to stop arguing cause, I mean, we can't move on."

However, even where similarities existed between political scientists' and students' conceptions and theories, there were also important differences. For

example, though both groups saw bipartisanship as compromising to get things done, political scientists were also careful to further qualify their conceptions of bipartisanship. For example, Kate argued that bipartisanship did not necessarily preclude partisanship, stating, "You can have a spirit of bipartisanship while maintaining a very healthy partisan division." John asserted that bipartisanship "is only a valuable idea when it does valuable things." And Rachel felt that bipartisanship should not be an end goal, for "working toward bipartisanship as an end in and of itself" would not "really solve anything." Only once did a student, Marianne, seem to qualify her idea of bipartisanship, when she said, "I think [politicians] should [work toward bipartisanship] to some degree but I think that divisions are good in some ways."

The same was true with ideas about partisanship—while there were some similarities between students and political scientists, there were also important differences. Like political scientists, students possessed and used ideas about partisanship—that partisanship involves differences between political parties and is a natural part of American Democracy. Joshua, for example, stated, "You have two different points of view from a Democrat and Republican," and Tanya said, "I feel as though there always be some type of line between people, people that agree and people that disagree."

However, the idea that partisanship involves differences between the political parties was the extent of students' ideas, whereas political scientists' ideas about partisanship entailed more nuances. For example, Alex distinguished partisanship from ideology, stating, "Good political decisions aren't

driven by ideology, and to the extent that partisanship is ideological, I think that's probably what people imagine to be a problem, and they often mischaracterize [ideology] with partisanship." He went on, "[Partisanship and ideology] don't necessarily map onto one another and sometimes when you define partisanship you do so in terms of ideology." Doris distinguished partisanship from angriness and nastiness among politicians, arguing "I think they're confusing having a partisan position with having a hostile, angry approach to each other…It's perfectly sound to have party identities…you can be partisan but not necessarily be polarizing or nasty."

Both groups had individuals who argued that partisanship can be good for democracy, as well as individuals who argued that bipartisanship would be beneficial for democracy. However, it was more common for political scientists to argue that *both* could be signs of healthy American Democracy. For example, Alex argued, "Compromise in a legislature is a virtue not a vice…but the other side of the argument is that [compromise means] you cave into your principles, and then a fair amount of partisanship is healthy." Kate argued, "You can have a spirit of bipartisanship while maintaining a healthy partisan division with most of the Democrats sharing one position and most of the Republicans sharing another position." John stated:

> The idea that you've got two parties in tension with each other that are in theory at least trying to muster up the best possible arguments strikes me as a fundamentally sound sign of democracy. Now on the other hand…the idea that people could work across the aisle on important questions to try and accomplish [the common good] rather than just partisan ends is deeply appealing to me.

Students more often tended to think about partisanship and bipartisanship as good or bad for democracy in absolute, either/or terms. Karen, for example, stated, "The political divide is definitely harming America," while Alfred argued, "If they don't compromise, this country's going to fall apart." Only one student, Marianne, seemed comfortable with the idea that partisanship and bipartisanship could happily co-exist in American Democracy, as illustrated by her statement, "I think they should [work toward bipartisanship] to some degree but I think that divisions are good in some ways." The remainder of students felt the need to provide a definitive answer about partisanship versus bipartisanship—that one was good and was bad. In short, students had uncomplicated ideas about concepts like bipartisanship, partisanship, and American Democracy, which they used to reason about the issue of bipartisanship.

Students also had uncomplicated theories about how the political system operates and how it should operate. For example, in talking about how legislators make decisions, Alfred argued:

> [T]o me Republicans and Democrats never talk that much through, they just argue about their opinions…That's why they have debates, I guess, to make the other person look bad, cause they want to be, I think they want to fell a level of power.

For this student, legislators just debated for the sake of debating, or to assert their power and authority, and they "never" talked much through. Political scientists saw debate and decision-making among legislators much differently. Alex argued, "Though we should find practical ways to solve our problems, sometimes our problems are not easy to solve." John asserted:

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[O]n the big issues where we can get universal agreement or close to universal agreement we can move very, very swiftly…On the other things where it's very, very contentious, it only right that it moves very, very slowly. We're a country that believes that the laws are by and large best served by voluntary participation on behalf of the citizens and not coercion at the end of a gun barrel. This means you've got to get a lot of consent.

For these political scientists, legislators often had to deal with complex issues without easy solutions. Therefore, debate was a natural, regular, and necessary part of the political process.

When employing their theories of "good politics"—about what the political process and decision-making should look like—students also tended to express simplified ideas about how politics works, or could work. Rafael argued, "U.S. politicians should agree to some type of change between the parties…I think there should be more meetings with Democrats and Republicans." Alfred argued that legislators "should just talk to each other, see what's the pros and cons of every problem to deal with and then deal with the best ones first, the more important ones." Perhaps Karen best captured these views of how the decision-making process could work, when she stated, simply, "Bipartisanship should be achieved."

To be sure, political scientists also expressed theories about how legislators could "achieve" bipartisanship. However, they offered more complicated illustrations that took into account the contentiousness and complexity of some of the issues they were trying solve, and that reflected some level of comfort with the co-existence of bipartisanship and partisanship. For example, Kate argued:

If you have a spirit of bipartisanship, the first thing you have to do is agree on what the problem is…You work toward a spirit of respect, a spirit in which you can put the ideology aside long enough to define the problem. A spirit in which you can have a respectful conversation long enough to define what the problem is and get back to the healthy partisan division over what the solutions are…They need a healthy ideological argument on what the solutions are, and they should be able, with intelligent respect for each of those ideological positions and intelligent recognition that there is not just one ideology but multiple ideologies, they should be able to come to a solution that is at least partially acceptable to the other side, enough to get their votes.

Such a theory of "good politics" involved a clear idea of what politics should accomplish, and some notion of how disagreement over the definition of "problems" to be solved, the role of ideology, and the rules of Congress create complexity.

Discussion

Students not only used knowledge significantly less than political scientists, the knowledge they used was far less detailed than political scientists' was. This confirms findings from my analysis of political theorists work and from existing research on students, discussed in Chapters 4 and 5: Sophisticated thinkers use a rich knowledge base, including historical and contemporary examples, while reasoning. Novices, on the other hand, have low levels of factual knowledge about history and government. Yet, they still use what knowledge they do have while reasoning about issues. Unfortunately, the fact that students possess a relatively weak knowledge base may negatively affect their ability to use knowledge effectively while grappling with an issue relevant to democratic citizenship. The lack of detail in the knowledge they use does not

seem as effective in illustrating the points they are trying to make, or in making sense of the information they encounter.

Despite the differences in their knowledge bases, however, political scientists and students used many of the same concepts while reasoning about the issue of bipartisanship: ideas about bipartisanship and partisanship, American Democracy, and political parties. They also employed many of the same kinds of theories: about politics, about what good politics looks like, about the behavior and beliefs of the American citizenry and more. However, students' conceptions and theories seemed much less complicated than those of political scientists. Furthermore, students seemed less comfortable with gray areas related to their conceptions, such as the idea that both bipartisanship and partisanship could co-exist as healthy signs of democracy. These findings also support findings from analysis of political theorists' work and research on student thinking—sophisticated thinkers have a nuanced understanding of democratic concepts and their relationship with each other, while students have a superficial, albeit developing, understanding of such concepts.

General Discussion

Students and political scientists demonstrated many interesting and surprising similarities while reading through the documents and grappling with the problem. For example, given their different levels of experience dealing with civic and political issues and arguments, I expected that students might have much less to say than political scientists while reading certain documents, particularly the viewpoint pieces. However, this was not the case—relative to

how much they talked in total, the students' responses to all the documents were as animated as the political scientists' were. This struck me as an indication that educators could expect students to use different kinds of information in grappling with a political or civic issue, even if, at that point, I knew little about how well they were using it.

I also expected that the students would be less likely to stay focused on the problem, and they would be less likely to move back and forth between documents. Again, this was not the case. The students appeared as adept as the political scientists were at using the problem as a focusing or orienting device, and they moved back and forth between documents as much as the political scientists did. I also found that both the students and political scientists judged historic documents and background information as valuable sources of information, opting to use such information to help them address the problem when given the choice.

However, there were also important differences between the students and political scientists. The political scientists often referred to the document source, whereas students ignored it. In fact, even when the document source was embedded in the main body of text, students often skipped over it. This suggests that students did not deem the source of the information as important as political scientists did, supporting what other researchers have found about sourcing in expert-novice studies (e.g., Wineburg, 1990).

Political scientists also demonstrated a much stronger knowledge base than students did. They came into the think aloud session with a detailed,

nuanced, and contextualized understanding of the bipartisanship. Most students,

on the other hand, knew little about bipartisanship per se, though they did know

enough about the related concepts of compromise and political parties to

formulate some understanding of bipartisanship. In addition, while reasoning

about the issue of bipartisanship, political scientists referred to knowledge of

scholarship and sources significantly more than students, and their knowledge of

current events, government and history was noticeably more detailed and

specific than students' was. Together, these findings suggest that students lack

the strong knowledge base that could aid them in the reasoning process,

supporting findings from measurements of student knowledge discussed in

Chapter 4.

Happily, though, the students in this study seemed inclined to extend their

knowledge base to help them reason—several students indicated that they chose

to look at historic documents and background information in the chosen

documents session because they wanted to extend their knowledge base.

The fact that students were significantly less knowledgeable about

scholarship or document sources was no surprise—political scientists' vocation

prepares them to know and use the arguments of political thinkers like Alexis de

Tocqueville or John Stuart Mill, and their experience familiarizes them with

sources like the *New York Times* or author David Broder. It was also not

surprising that political scientists had more sophisticated and detailed knowledge

of current events, government and history. Again, it is their job to be

knowledgeable. Still, it is important to consider that the participating students

were all considered relatively knowledgeable according to standardized test scores and teacher recommendations, yet rarely drew upon knowledge, specific and detailed or not, as they reasoned about the issue of bipartisanship. This suggests that, even though they possessed knowledge, they were simply unpracticed in using their knowledge in the service of addressing a problem. Further, it suggests that they did not possess the organizational framework of the "experts" in this study that would allow them to easily retrieve relevant information (Bransford et al., 2006).

Yet, despite their apparent lack of organized and readily retrievable knowledge, the students *did* refer to and use relevant concepts and theories much the same as political scientists did. Members of both groups had pre-existing conceptions and theories about how the world works that influenced the way they looked at and reasoned with new information (Bransford et al., 2000). However, qualitative analysis revealed that students' conceptions and theories were less nuanced and complicated than political scientists.' Furthermore, with their more extensive knowledge, political scientists seemed to have an easier time imagining that competing ideas like bipartisanship and partisanship could co-exist as equally healthy signs of American Democracy. Again, these findings support my analysis of political theorists' work and extant research on student thinking, discussed in Chapter 4: Sophisticated thinkers have a complex, nuanced understanding of democratic concepts, including and understanding of the tensions between some concepts, while novice thinkers have only an emerging understanding of the concepts and their tensions.

Whatever their conceptions and theories, the fact that students possessed and used them to the same degree as political scientists revealed the central role they played in students' thinking, even when they have relatively little knowledge to draw upon. Unfortunately, students may harbor incomplete conceptions at best and misconceptions at worst. Without some sort of intervention that provides them with the appropriate knowledge and understanding, they might continue to use such conceptions to make sense of and filter information and arguments they encounter (Bransford et al., 2000).

But how exactly were students using their conceptions and theories? How were political scientists using their conceptions and theories? How were both groups using the knowledge they possessed? What were the purposes of their movements in the space of the document sets? What were the purposes of their reactions that did not involve moves in time or space? The next chapter addresses these questions, reporting and discussing the remainder of findings from this study, which focused on the "utility of movements" during the think alouds.

Chapter 8

How Students and Political Scientists Used Information, Knowledge, Concepts,
and Theories to Reason

As discussed in Chapter 7, both students and political scientists used

information from the provided documents, and knowledge, concepts and theories

beyond the provided documents, to reason about the issue of bipartisanship.

How did the students and political scientists use such information, knowledge

and ideas? And to what end? Were there differences between students and

political scientists? Similarities? This chapter addresses these questions,

describing the reading and reasoning strategies subjects used as they grappled

with the issue of bipartisanship, as well as the purposes of their strategies.

First, I describe the kinds of strategies subjects used throughout the think

aloud sessions. In the sections that follow, I first compare and discuss the

degree to which students and political scientists employed these strategies, and

then analyze the relationship between the strategies and the information,

knowledge, and ideas discussed in Chapter 7. The chapter concludes with a

general summary and discussion of findings.

Kinds of Strategies

While reading and reasoning with the text-based documents, subjects

used several different kinds of strategies. Sometimes, they summarized or stated

the main points of a paragraph or an entire piece. For example, high school

student Marianne summed up an argument in the Kinsley viewpoint piece, stating:

> It's saying that decisions that people are going to have to make, we don't really look at those when we're voting for them. We just like kind of look at their stance on major political issues such as abortion, gun rights, education, taxes, that kind of thing.

At other times, subjects paraphrased, or reworded a sentence or group of sentences to aid in understanding of arguments and assertions. High school student Karen took the sentence, "Supporters of bipartisanship say that a more bipartisan Congress would set U.S. politics on a more moderate course, which would accurately reflect the population as a whole," and reworded it as "If they work together they would represent the country in a better way."

In addition, subjects occasionally backtracked as they were reading, returning to an excerpt they had already read because either they did not understand it or they sensed that it was something important they should better understand. For example, after reading a sentence as written, political scientist Sharon must have felt that she did not fully process what she had read, so she said, "Now wait a minute, I'm screwing this up, hold on, " and reread the sentence: "Over the course of the last year the speaker and I didn't have a policy conversation…"

Finally, subjects sometimes stated the author's purpose, determining what the author was doing rather than what the author was saying. Political scientist Michael, for example, stopped as he was reading the Brooks viewpoint piece to make an assertion about what he thought the author was doing with a particular passage, stating, "Well, OK, so he criticizes Bush."

These strategies—summarizing, paraphrasing, backtracking, and determining the author's purpose—are similar to those that literacy researchers and educators (e.g., Beck, I. L. & McKeown, 2001; Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008) argue help readers in comprehending and making meaning of texts. They aid in comprehension and meaning-making because they help the reader to extract information from the texts. Therefore, I refer to these strategies as *information-extraction strategies*.

Other strategies subjects used were sourcing, contextualizing, questioning the choices or arguments of the author,[27] and electing to disregard a piece of text. When subjects sourced a text, they tried to identify the author and, if possible, determine the author's perspective or potential biases. Political scientist David tried to determine the reliability of the source for the "Summary of the Issue," stating, *"I'm noticing this is from Issues and Controversies on File,* which I don't know what that source is but it sounds awfully like one of those digest things, facts on file, that just kind of summarizes things."

Subjects also sometimes contextualized a text, considering when a document was written, and the social, political or historical circumstances surrounding it. Political scientist Doris commented on what was happening at the

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[27] This is not to be confused with the strategy "Questioning the Author," a comprehension strategy conceived of and studied by Beck and McKeown (2001), whereby readers ask questions like, "What is the author trying to say?" or "What does the author want us to know?" Beck and McKeown's Questioning the Author strategy is closer to the comprehension strategy participants in this study used when they tried to determine the author's purpose. This strategy, questioning the choices or arguments of the author, seemed closer to the strategies employed by the historians that Sam Wineburg (2001) studied. Wineburg argued the historians questioned "authoritative" textbook passages, looking for bias and deeming them untrustworthy when bias is detected.

time Washington wrote his farewell address, saying, "Washington, of course, is leaving government, just as political parties are beginning to form."

In addition, subjects sometimes questioned the choices the author was making, asking why he chose to include or exclude information or assertions. For example, political scientist Kate questioned why Brooks would use the term "polarized" to describe the United States, saying, "Why does he call it a polarized America? America's not polarized, Congress is."

Occasionally, subjects elected to not read a section of text or an entire document because the subject deemed it unhelpful. Political scientist Rachel chose to forego reading the "Summary of the Issue, stating, "I don't think I need a summary of the issue so I'm just going to put this aside for right now."

These strategies are similar to those other researchers and educators (e.g., Wineburg, 2001) have argued experienced or expert readers employ in order to evaluate the usefulness or merit of a text for their particular purposes. Therefore, I refer to these strategies as *evaluative strategies*.

Subjects employed information-extraction and evaluative strategies while "reading" the graphic data during the think aloud as well. To comprehend the information provided in the bar graph and pie chart, subjects employed two different strategies: noting the salient features of the graph or chart; and determining what information the graph or chart was providing, or what assertions were being made with the data. With the first strategy, subjects were essentially asking themselves: What am I looking at? How is this organized? What is being shown? For example, when first looking at the bar graph, high

school student Karen called out features that would help her make sense of the graph. She said, "Top Ten Partisan Gaps over Political Priorities…So Democrats are in blue and the Republicans are in orange." This was the most superficial of the strategies used.

To determine the information provided in the graph, subjects were essentially asking themselves: What is graph or chart telling me? What "argument" are the data making? For example, high school Jenny determined that the pie chart was telling her "that more people would vote for a Democratic person than a Republican one." This strategy helped subjects look at the information in a slightly deeper way than just noting the salient features.

The evaluative strategies for the graphic data included questioning the methodology, sourcing the information, and contextualizing the information. To determine and evaluate the methodology subjects seemed to ask themselves: How was this information gathered? What was the sample? What questions were asked? For example, political scientist John was very explicit in questioning the methodology, stating, "One of the things I'm curious about is the methodology."

When subjects sourced the graphic data, they tried to identify who gathered and presented the information and to determine if it was a recognizable, reputable source. For example, political scientist Alex found that the Pew Research Center conducted the survey represented in the bar graph and remarked, "Pew Research Center, they're reputable."

Subjects also sometimes contextualized the graphic data, considering when the data was gathered and what the social and political contexts were at the time data was gathered. Political scientist Michael was interested in when the survey on preferred political candidate was conducted, stating, "That was in January 2007 and that was quite a while ago. I wonder how it would look today. I think these things are pretty volatile."

In addition to using information-extraction and evaluative strategies, subjects also used what I will refer to collectively as *reasoning strategies* for the text-based documents and graphic data. Both students and political scientists entered into an argument of sorts as they began reading the documents and grappling with the issue of bipartisanship, expressing three different kinds of opinioned reactions to the information they encountered. First, they sometimes agreed with an argument or an assertion made in the document, or, in a similar vein, indicated that what they were reading affirmed something they already knew or understood to be true. For example, while reading the Schambra piece, high school student Rafael stated, "I do agree with William Schambra,…when he said that the American Democratic System was designed to deal with these inevitable decisions." Second, subjects disagreed or expressed doubt about an argument or assertion made in the document. When reading the first document in the document set, political scientist Kate said, "Immediate response is disagreeing with the critics of bipartisanship." Third, something in the text sometimes prompted the subject to offer his or her viewpoint. In these instances, subjects were not agreeing or disagreeing with an argument or assertion; they

were just compelled to give their opinion about something. While going through the issues represented on the bar graph, for example, high school student Marianne said, " I kind of do feel that we need to offer a better healthcare system to the everyday American."

Whether agreeing, disagreeing, or offering their viewpoint, subjects sometimes provided some sort of support or reason for their opinion. While looking at the pie chart on preferred candidates, for example, political scientist John talked about how he typically votes, and then offered a reason for his choices, stating, "One of the things I look for are people whose views are ultimately consistent with my values." However, sometimes subjects offered an opinion without giving a reason for why they agreed, disagreed, or felt a particular way about a topic.

There were also strategies subjects used to clarify or illustrate a point. They might support their reasoning by providing an example, using the text as an example of something, comparing or contrasting an idea in the text to something, or stating the other side of an argument. For example, high school student Marianne used a documentary as an example to explain why she agreed with Brooks' argument that voters "choose a political philosophy and then shape their views of reality to fit their politics." She stated:

> I think of a documentary I watched the other day about cults, talking about how when people claim one thing and it proves not to be true, instead of changing their beliefs to fit with reality, they'll change their views of reality to fit with their beliefs.

Political scientist Sharon used the bipartisan agreement described in one of the newspaper articles as "an example of how bipartisanship can happen." Political

scientist David compared an argument discussed in the Kinsley piece with a scholar's argument, stating, "Right! That's the issue people have with ideology. It's E.J. Dionne's argument." And political scientist Alex said he taught his students that compromise is a "virtue not a vice," then added, "The other side of the argument is that you cave into your principles."

The next sections present and discuss the results from analysis of subjects' use of the three kinds of strategies described above—what I call information-extraction strategies, evaluative strategies, and reasoning strategies.

Use of Information-Extraction and Evaluative Strategies

Findings

While reading the text-based documents throughout the think aloud session, students employed what I call information-extraction strategies more than political scientists did, but there was not a significant difference between the two groups (p-value>.05; see Figure 8-1). At the same time, however, there was a significant difference (p-value=.0298) in the number of times students and political scientists noted gaps in their knowledge or in their understanding of what they were reading throughout the think aloud session, with students doing so significantly more (see Figure 8-2). The majority of the times students noted a gap of some kind, it was to note a gap in their understanding of what they just read. This suggests that while students and political scientists tried to make sense of what they were reading to a similar degree throughout the think aloud session, students had some difficulty actually comprehending what they were
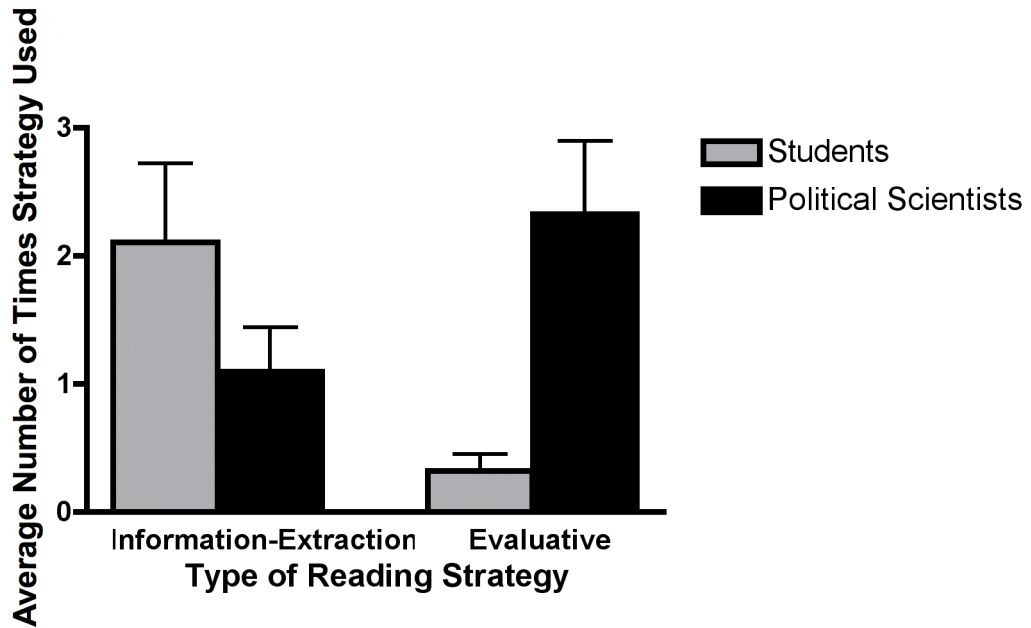
Figure 8-1. Average number of times students and political scientists employed information-extraction strategies and evaluative strategies while reading text-based documents during the think aloud session.
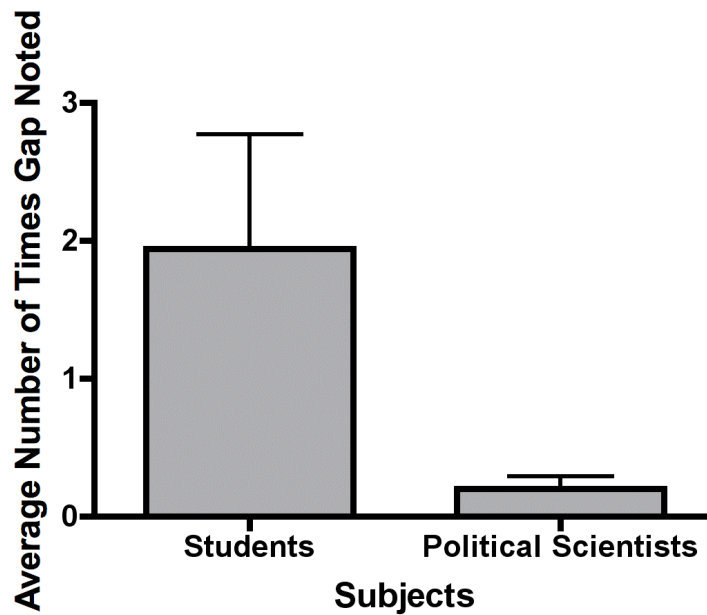
Figure 8-2. Average number of times students and political scientists noted a gap in their knowledge or comprehension while reading the text-based documents throughout the think aloud.

reading. This was particularly true of historic documents, where students most often noted gaps in their comprehension

Although use of information-extraction strategies while reading the text-based documents may have been similar between students and political scientists, I found a significant difference (p-value=.0019) in subjects' use of evaluative strategies, with political scientists employing the strategy significantly more on average than students (see Figure 8-1).   Political scientists were significantly more likely to source the documents they were reading (p-value=.0047) and to question the choices and assertions of the documents' authors (p-value=.0248). Furthermore, political scientists sometimes considered
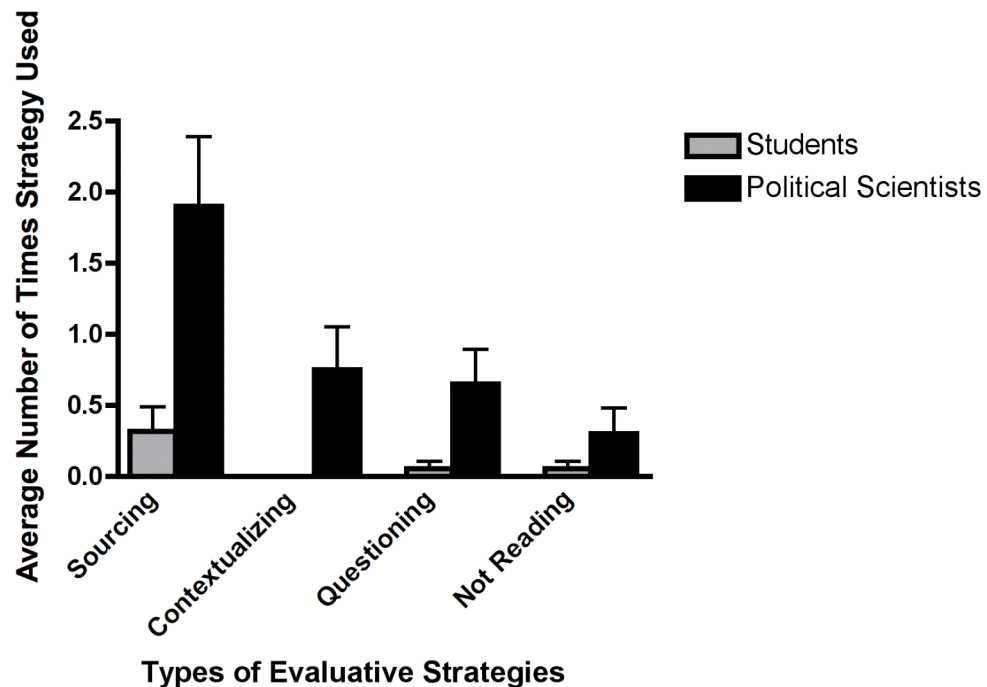
Figure 8-3. The average number of times students and political scientists employed specific types of evaluative reading strategies while reading text-based documents during the think aloud session.

the historic, political or social context in which a document was written, whereas students never did (see Figure 8-3). Members of both groups rarely chose to not read something, and there were no significant differences between them on this measure.

As with the text-based documents, students and political scientists used information-extraction strategies to a similar degree (p-value>.05) while "reading" the bar graph and pie chart from the common documents session. In fact, they used information-extraction strategies almost the same amount while working with the graphic data.
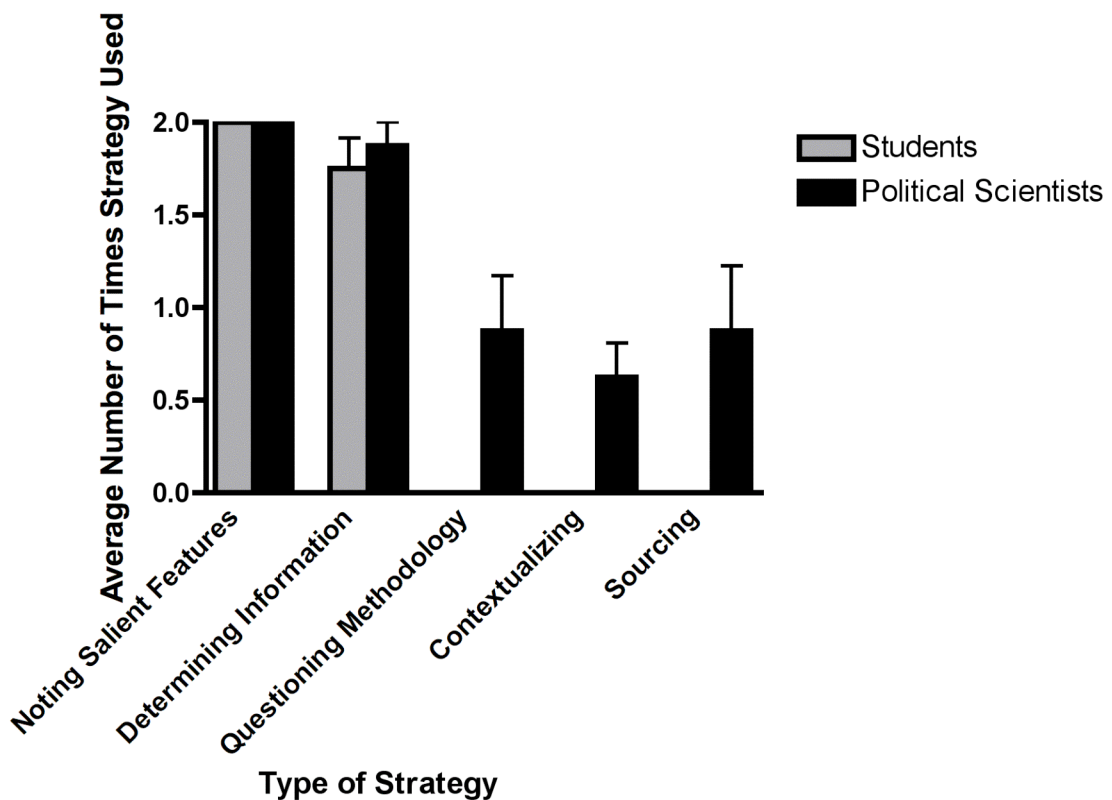
**Figure 8-4.** Average number of times students and political scientists used information-extraction and evaluative strategies with the bar graph and pie chart from the common documents session of the think alouds.

However, political scientists also used evaluative strategies while looking at the graph and chart, whereas students never once used an evaluative strategy with the graphic data (see Figure 8-4).

Discussion

While working with both the text-based documents and graphic data during the think aloud sessions, students and political scientists employed information-extraction strategies to aid in comprehension of the materials to a similar degree. For the text-based documents, these strategies including summarizing or paraphrasing, backtracking, and determining the author's purpose. For the graphic data, these strategies consisted of noticing salient features of the bar graph or pie chart to determine what exactly they were looking at, and determining what information the graph or chart was providing. The similarities in subjects' use of information-extraction strategies suggests that both students and political scientists were attempting to make sense of the information in the material before them in order to better use it to reason. To be sure, the students' teachers recommended students partially because they were at or above the recommended reading level for their grade, so it was no surprise that they employed some of the strategies used by practiced readers (Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008).

However, their similar use of information-extraction strategies does not suggest that students and political scientists comprehended the information equally. Students noted gaps in their understanding significantly more than political scientists did, suggesting that simply employing strategies to extract

information did not necessarily result in understanding. Students' scanty knowledge base may partially explain some of their difficulties with comprehension. Research on reading comprehension shows that a lack of knowledge impedes comprehension, and that a person's extent and depth of knowledge can influence the quality of their understanding (Beck, I. L., McKeown, & Gromoll, 1989).

While students and political scientists were similarly likely to employ strategies to extract information, political scientists were significantly more likely to employ evaluative strategies while looking at both text-based documents and graphic data. For the text-based documents, evaluative strategies included sourcing, contextualizing, questioning the choices of the author to include or leave out information or arguments, and electing to not read a piece of information because the subject deemed it untrustworthy or unhelpful. For the graphic data, evaluative strategies included questioning the methodology, sourcing, and contextualizing. Students' lower tendency to employ evaluative strategies suggested that they do not take an evaluative stance toward sources of information. They tended to take information at face value, rather than question who was providing the information, what might explain the information provided, and what information was excluded or underdeveloped.

Students' lack of an evaluative stance toward the information they encountered might also be explained by a weak knowledge base. As discussed in Chapter 7, students came in knowing very little to nothing about the issue of bipartisanship. Throughout the think aloud session, students drew upon

knowledge significantly less than political scientists, and when they did draw

upon knowledge, it lacked detail. Examining the relationship between knowledge

and the evaluative strategies through qualitative analysis provided insight into

students' and political scientists' use of knowledge to employ evaluative

strategies. The next section describes and discusses findings from this analysis.

The Relationship between Knowledge and Evaluative Strategies

Findings

Often, when political scientists employed an evaluative strategy, such as

sourcing or contextualizing, they used knowledge in doing so. For example,

when reading the Kinsley viewpoint piece, Alex read the author's name, and

remarked, "I know him." In the retrospective report, he said of the Kinsley piece:

> I guess I was struck by the source...that we were moving into more
> political territory here with Michael Kinsley, rather than with William
> Schambra. [T]hat struck me, I guess because I was looking at who it was
> and that this fellow [Schambra] was from the Bradley Center, which I didn't
> read out loud I guess. And I know Michael Kinsley from his other writings.

Rachel flipped through the common documents and said, "[S]ome of these

names that I recognize, like David Brooks. I see him on the Jim Lehrer

NewsHour." She then added, with a laugh, "So I don't know if that makes me

believe him or not." Sharon read that William Schambra was "at the Hudson

Institute," and added, "which I happen to know is a more conservative place, so I

have that in my mind even before I begin to read it." While looking at the graphic

data, Alex saw that that the data in the bar graph was gathered and presented by

the Pew Research Center and stated, matter-of-factly, "They're reputable."

Likewise, David read Pew Research Center and associated them with "a reliable, solid methodology."

Students, however, rarely sourced, and often, they did not even read the source. By not reading the source, they sometimes missed information that could have given them some idea of the author's perspective. The beginning of the Kinsley piece, for example, described Kinsley as a "liberal pundit." Even when students did read the source, though, they rarely indicated that they had knowledge of the source. For example, Tanya, who regularly read the source when it was embedded in the text, always followed with some variation of "I never heard of him." More often, students said nothing after reading the source.

The only time knowledge and sourcing were linked in the transcripts of students was while reading the "Excerpt from George Washington's Farewell Address." Deborah, for example, began reading the excerpt, stating, "George Washington, so you know, he was the first president, of course." Alfred noted that he chose to read the Washington piece over the "Excerpt from the Federalist Number Ten" because, "To me George Washington is more important than the Federalist, since he started the, was our nation's first president."

The link between knowledge and sourcing suggests that a knowledge base aided subjects in taking an evaluative stance toward the documents. The fact that political scientists' knowledge base was stronger would then naturally lead them to source more often than students. However, political scientists also sourced when they had little or no knowledge of a source. For example, Sharon indicated that she was wholly or partly unfamiliar with several of the sources, but

she still tried to gather some idea of what perspective the source was coming from by looking at was provided her in the documents. Of Michael Kinsley, she read, "…who's a commentator and also described as a liberal pundit." She then added, "So this is interesting if this person is also defending partisanship but from a different political perspective." Consistently, when political scientists were not certain about the source, they tried to take what little knowledge they had and piece together some notion of the author's perspective or bias. For example, Michael read that William Schambra is the Director of the Bradley Center for Philanthropy and Civic Renewal at the Hudson Institute and said, "…which I think is a conservative think tank."   David read the name David Brooks and commented, "David Brooks is the *Times* columnist? I don't read the *Times*. He worked for the *Wall Street Journal*. I believe Brooks is sort of the token conservative on the Old Gray Lady."

It seems then, it was not the political scientists' knowledge that caused them to source; they sourced regardless of knowledge, to see if they could determine the reliability of the source. Most students, on the other hand, were clearly *not* in the habit of sourcing information, which was indicated by their failure to even read most of the sources, or to read them but then say nothing in response.

For political scientists, knowledge, either of history or of something they would have experienced as a current event, was also often linked to contextualizing. For example, Doris used her knowledge of history to consider the context of "Washington's Farewell Address," noting:

Washington of course is leaving government, just as the political parties are beginning to form and certainly had nothing like we have today. And you wonder if what he wrote was tinged by the issue of the time, including the developing hatred between Adams and Jefferson who surely would be his successors. I mean I think the Congress at the time was, and the administration, filled with people who'd been working for freedom for 20 years together and they were beginning to see some really evil things. I mean, after all, remember the duel with Aaron Burr, to see some real hatred evolving but I'm not sure if Washington's comments would be the same in light of the party system that developed later. But I don't know.

Kate used her historical knowledge to contextualize the "Excerpt from Federalist Number Ten," stating:

I mean everything Federalist is set up to work against the coalitions that would later evolve into political parties. It's just so clear that the entire Constitution can be seen to be set up to afford partisanship. I mean their assumption was that everybody who's going to be there was going to be above partisanship and act only in the interest of the nation, but there was no defined interest of the nation and there was no incentive to behave that way rather than behave in terms of self interest. So, you know, bless Madison. And that just has to be read in light of "why parties?"

Political scientists also used their knowledge of current events to contextualize the information they encountered. For example, looking at the pie graph, David commented, "This is January of '07. I'm trying to think what was particularly salient then. It was right after Bush got his clock cleaned in the midterm elections so, it certainly was part of a down cycle for him." Kate did something similar with the pie chart, stating, "Well, we're a year out from the primaries and starting two years from the election." Both used their knowledge of current events to try to make meaning out of the information they encountered.

Students, on the other hand, never contextualized, which might suggest they lacked the knowledge of history and current events to do so. Again, however, political scientists also contextualized even when it did not involve

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knowledge of history or current events. Michael, for example, simply noticed that the survey data for the pie chart was from 2007, over a year before he was looking at it, and said, "2007, that was quite a while ago so I wonder what it would look like today." Kate dated the *New York Times* article, saying, "And that was when, in April? April. And I don't know what has happened to that bill since then."

Political scientists' questioning of the authors' choices and assertions was also often linked to knowledge. For example, Doris took issue with information the author excluded from "The Evolution of Partisan Politics in the U.S.," saying, "Are we going to argue? Aren't we going to mention the fact that the Democrats in the South oppressed, put the blacks back under oppression and passed all the segregation laws and kept them out of politics? Not going to mention that." In this case, Doris's knowledge of history seemed to lead her to question the author's choice to leave some information out of the expository text.

However, Michael—not necessarily prompted by knowledge of anything except that Barack Obama was a presidential candidate (which was stated in the text)—questioned the author of the "Summary of the Issue" for including a quote by Obama. Michael said, "It's not clear to me why they're quoting [Obama]. Am I supposed to, because he says that, then that gives, lends authority to the argument? Or are they just trying to give an example of it?" Again, it seemed that questioning the choices or assertions of the author was a strategy political scientists employed, even in the absence of prior knowledge.

Discussion

Sourcing, contextualizing, and questioning the author's choices and assertions were closely linked to knowledge for political scientists. Political scientists often used their knowledge of sources to source the text-based documents and graphic data they encountered, and used their knowledge of history and current events to contextualize them. Political scientists also used knowledge of history and current events when questioning the choices or assertions of the authors. Students on the other hand, who, as discussed in Chapter 7, used significantly less knowledge of sources and less knowledge of history and current events throughout the think aloud, rarely sourced, contextualized, or questioned the author. The link between knowledge and evaluative strategies suggests that political scientists' knowledge base aided them in taking an evaluative stance toward the documents, and perhaps, students just lacked the knowledge base to source, contextualize, and question to the degree that political scientists did.

However, political scientists also sourced when they had no or little knowledge of a source, and they contextualized and questioned even when they were not using knowledge of history or current events. Undeniably, their knowledge base *was* a crucial part of applying their evaluative strategies. However, it was not necessarily their factual knowledge that led them to source, contextualize and question; they made such moves even in the absence of relevant information or factual knowledge. This suggests that political scientists

possessed the habits of mind to take an evaluative stance toward the information they encountered regardless of the knowledge they possessed.

Political scientists' tendencies to source, contextualize, and question the authors' choices and assertions regardless of their knowledge may be characteristic of what some researchers (e.g., Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008) refer to as "disciplinary literacy"—advanced, domain-specific literacy skills and norms that enable disciplinary experts to deal with subject matter in a specialized and sophisticated way. The fact that students did not display what I call evaluative reading strategies supports research arguing that, irrespective of their toolbox of more generalizable comprehension strategies, students are rarely taught more advanced, domain-specific, less generalizable reading strategies (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008), such as those that might help them make meaning of political information.

<div align="center">Use of Reasoning Strategies</div>

As previously stated, subjects also used *reasoning strategies* to make an argument and provide support for their argument during the think aloud session. These strategies included opinioned responses like agreeing or disagreeing with arguments or assertions in the documents, or simply sharing a viewpoint about a topic mentioned in the text; providing support or reasons for one's opinion; and clarifying or illustrating a point by using the text as an example, comparing or contrasting, or stating the opposing viewpoint. The following sections focus on use of these reasoning strategies with text-based documents and with graphic data.

Findings

Use of Reasoning Strategies with Text-Based Documents. Students and political scientists were opinioned to a similar degree while reading the text-based documents in the common documents portion of the think aloud. Looking at the average number of times students and political scientists offered an opinion by document, there were no significant differences (p-value>.05 for all text-based documents) between students and political scientists, nor among students and among political scientists (see Figure 8-5).
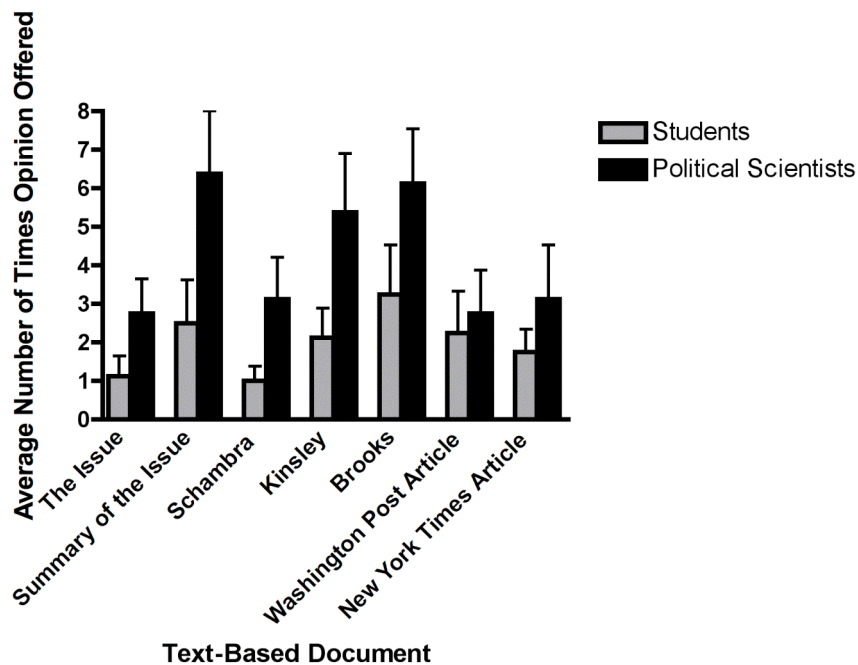
Figure 8-5. Average number of times students and political scientists offered an opinion for each text-based document in the common documents portion of the think aloud.

Looking at the type of opinion they offered, however, provided revealing similarities and differences between students and political scientists. Students and political scientists were similarly likely (p-value>.05) to agree with an

argument or assertion from the text. Likewise, students were similarly likely (p-value>.05) to feel compelled to offer a viewpoint about some particular topic while reading the text-based documents (see Figure 8-6).
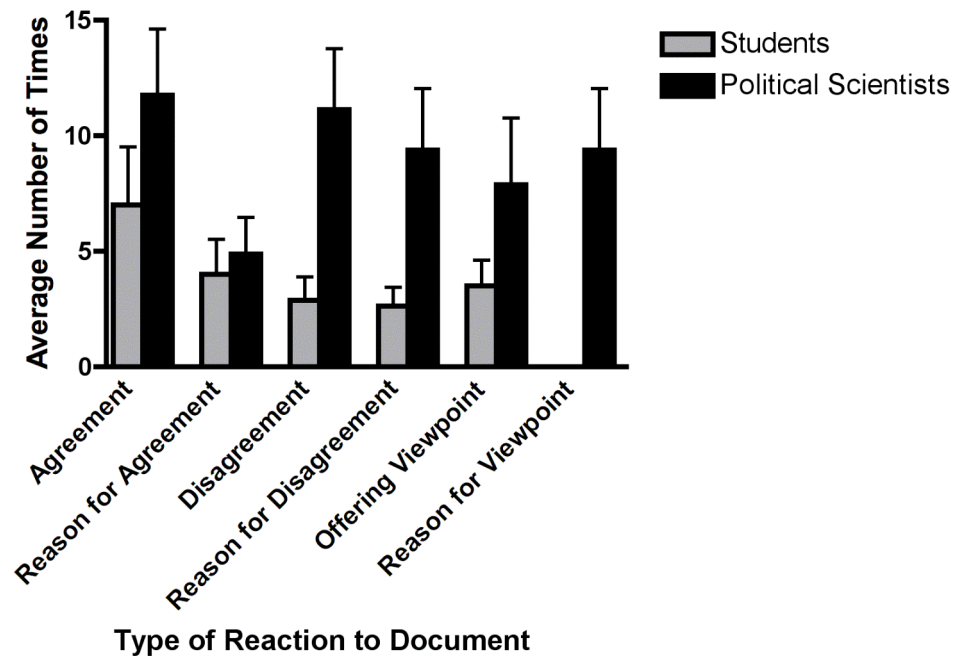
Figure 8-6. Average number of times students and political scientists had a particular kind of opinioned reaction to the text-based documents in the common documents portion of the think aloud.

However, there was a significant difference (p-value=.0111) in the average number of times students and political scientists disagreed or doubted something in the reading, with political scientists disagreeing significantly more (see Figure 8-6). These findings suggest that, just as the students did not take an evaluative stance toward the information they encountered, they also did not take a skeptical stance toward the information in the documents.

Findings from analysis of the chosen documents confirmed most of the findings from analysis of the common documents. While students agreed with

arguments or assertions in the text, and offered a viewpoint about some topic to a similar degree as political scientists, they never disagreed with what they were reading in their chosen documents (see Figure 8-7). Political scientists, on the other hand, disagreed or expressed doubt regardless of whether they were looking at background information or a historic document.

When analyzing the degree to which subjects provided viewpoints and reasons for their viewpoint, I found mixed results. During the common documents session, I found that while students were as likely to offer a viewpoint as political scientists, they never provided a reason for their viewpoint (see Figure 8-6). However, they did provide reasons for their viewpoints during the chosen documents session (see Figure 8-7).
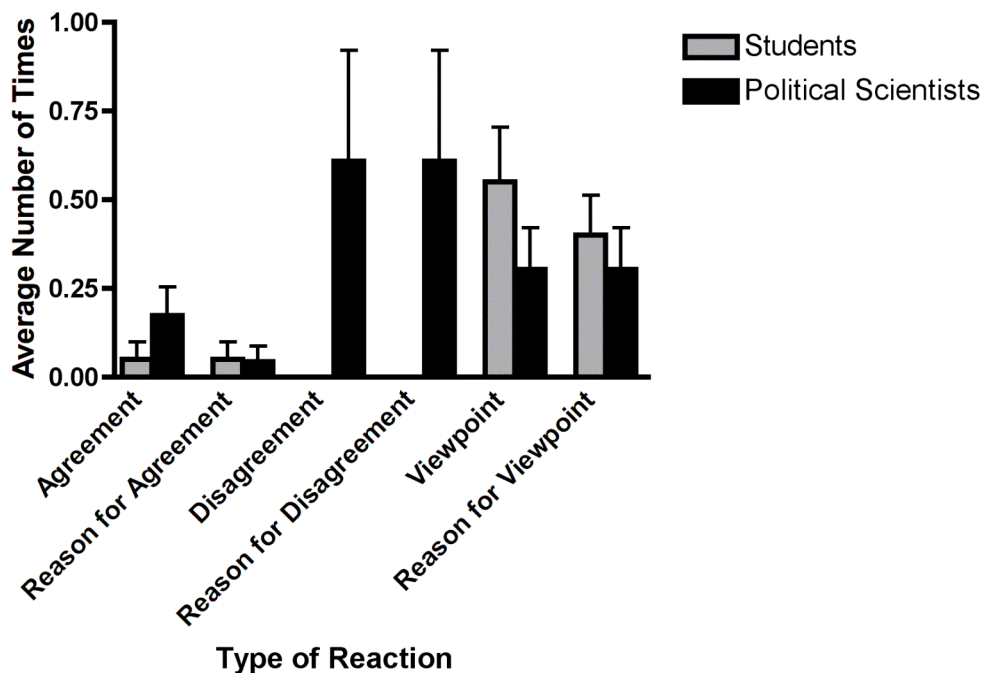
Figure 8-7. Average number of times students and political scientists had a particular kind of opinioned reaction to the text-based documents during the chosen documents portion of the think aloud.

There were also somewhat mixed findings from analyzing the average

number of times students and political scientists used different kinds of strategies

to clarify or illustrate a point they were making. During the common documents

session, political scientists used a full range of strategies—providing examples,

using the text as an example, comparing or contrasting, and stating the opposing

viewpoint—more than students did. Moreover, political scientists were

significantly more likely (p-value=.0335) to use the text from the documents as

an example to clarify or illustrate a point (data not shown). However, during the

chosen documents session, students used the text as an example more often

than political scientists did (data not shown). For whatever reason, political

scientists used the text as an example significantly more (.0007) during the

common documents session than they did during the chosen documents session

(data not shown). Therefore, when combining the data from both portions of the

think alouds, political scientists used the strategies for clarification or illustration

more, but there were no significant differences (p-value>.05) between groups

(see Figure 8-8).
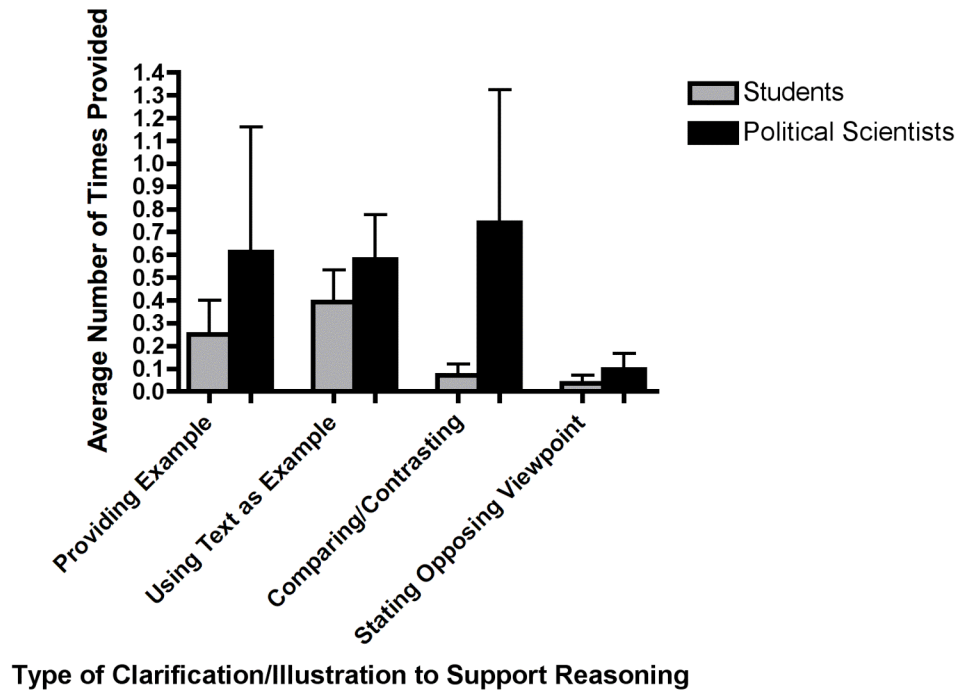
Figure 8-8. Average number of times students and political scientists provided some type of clarification or illustration to support reasoning during the think aloud.

Use of Reasoning Strategies with Graphic Data. Upon analyzing subjects' use of reasoning strategies with the graphic data, I found that students expressed the same kinds of opinioned reactions to the graphic data as they did to the text-based documents: agreement, reason for agreement, disagreement, reason for disagreement, viewpoint, and reason for viewpoint. Findings from analysis of the graphic data confirmed findings from analysis of the text-based documents. While there were no significant differences (p-value>.05) in the average number of times students and political scientists agreed with an argument or assertion in the text or expressed a viewpoint about a topic they encountered in the text, not once did students disagree with an argument or assertion being made with the graphic data (see Figure 8-9).
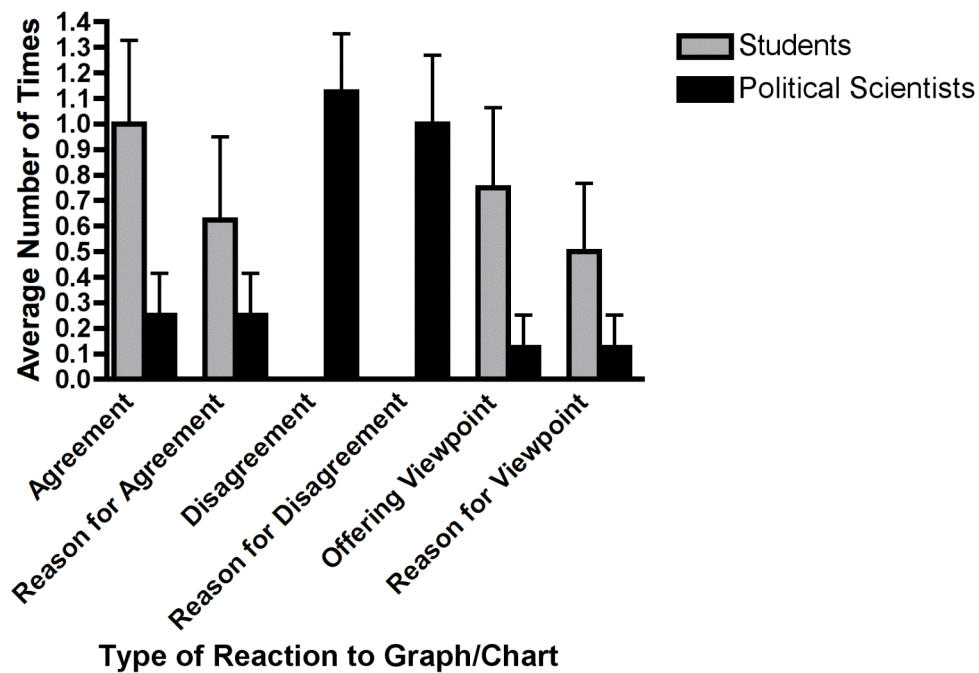
Figure 8-9. Average number of times students and political scientists had some kind of opinioned reaction to the graphic data during the common documents portion of the think aloud.

Discussion

Students and political scientists were similarly opinioned as they reasoned about the issue of bipartisanship during the think aloud. Members of both groups similarly agreed with arguments and assertions in the documents and offered viewpoints about topics they encountered while working with the documents. In addition, both students and political scientists provided some clarification or support for the points they were making. In short, when asked to reason about a controversial issue, it seems subjects from both groups were poised to offer their viewpoints.

These findings, along with the findings discussed in Chapter 7 that students and political scientists displayed some very similar behaviors while

reasoning (i.e., referring to information in other documents, referring back to the problem, referring to existing conceptions and theories), suggest that the subjects seemed to share a kind of "script" while reasoning about bipartisanship (Stigler & Hiebert, 1998).   In other words, regardless of years of training or richness of knowledge, the students and political scientists implicitly knew that while reasoning about a controversial issue they should regularly offer opinions *and* use any information available to support their reasoning. To be sure, Mosborg (2002) also found that adolescents reasoning through daily newspaper articles seemed to have what she called a "shared script" for how to argue with others.

However, though students were similarly likely to agree and offer viewpoints, they were significantly less likely to *disagree* with arguments and assertions presented in the documents. In fact, while looking at the graphic data in the common documents portion, and reading the background information and historic documents in the chosen documents portion, students never once disagreed with the arguments or assertions they encountered. These findings suggest that, just as students were unlikely to take an evaluative stance toward the information they encountered, they were unlikely to take a skeptical stance toward the information they encountered as well.

Students' weak knowledge bases might explain their lower tendency to disagree with argument and assertions in the text. The fact that political scientists had more ammunition with which to disagree with an argument or assertion may have made them more inclined to do so. Students, on the other

hand, might have assumed that the texts were authoritative sources of information—information with which they were unfamiliar. Consider, for example, the fact that students *never* disagreed with arguments and assertions about background information and historic documents that they chose to read. As discussed in Chapter 6, several students mentioned that they chose to look at background information and historic documents because they wanted to extend their knowledge, whereas political scientists wanted to support the knowledge they already had. In short, students declared there were gaps in their knowledge, which they sought to fill by reading their chosen documents. Therefore, students may have begun reading with the idea that their chosen documents were authoritative sources of information. This may have made them even less inclined to disagree with assertions or arguments they encountered. Political scientists, on the other hand, seemed to view the sources as only a few accounts among many possible accounts, and therefore, were inclined to take issue with some of the assertions. Other research also argues that disciplinary experts are more likely to question sources they encounter, whereas students tend to see sources of information as authoritative (e.g., Bain, 2006; Wineburg, 2001). Further, as Bain (2006) argued in his study of students' use of historical text, a knowledge differential is what makes it very difficult for students to take on the substantive and critical eye of experts.

Political scientists' disciplinary understanding might also explain why they were significantly more likely to disagree with arguments and assertions in the text. They may be more accustomed to the notion that ideas, no matter how

evidence-based or authoritatively presented, are not immune from contestation or revision. Such understanding might incline political scientists to enter into any reasoning process involving various assertions and arguments with some skepticism. They may see "facts" as one interpretation among several possible interpretations or as nested within a political, social and historical context that serves to determine and shape them. In short, political scientists' approach to information may have epistemological underpinnings that lead them to take a skeptical stance.

In any case, analysis of subjects' use of reasoning strategies raised questions about the relationship between knowledge, concepts and theories, and subjects' opinioned reactions to the documents. Findings from qualitative analysis, described below, provide further insight into the similarities and differences between the students and political scientists from this study.

The Relationship between Knowledge, Conceptions and Theories, and Reasoning Strategies

As discussed in Chapter 7, students and political scientists drew upon conceptions and theories to a similarly degree while reasoning about the issue of bipartisanship. Qualitative analysis revealed that both students and political scientists most often used their conceptions and theories to agree with an argument or assertion in the documents, disagree or express doubt about an argument or assertion in the documents, or express a viewpoint about a topic they encountered while working with the documents. For example, political scientist Rachel conceived of partisanship as a natural and enduring part of American Democracy that emerged out of a first-past-the-post political system,

and that leads members of opposing political parties to push each other to make

better policies. She used her ideas about partisanship and American Democracy,

and politics in the United States to express her viewpoint about the positive role

partisanship could play in American Democracy and politics, arguing:

> I don't want to take a firm, kind of normative stance on [partisanship], that it's a sign of a healthy democracy. I want to say that it's just...the way our democracy is set up. It makes the two-party system a natural necessity. I mean when you have a first-past-the-post system, you're going to end up with two parties and that's what we have. So it just sort of is what it is...it's not really going to change. We're not going to have three parties, for instance, and we're not going to have one united Democratic and Republican Party I mean there are always going to be differences in American politics. So I think it's just sort of the fact of the matter that we're going to have these differences and that, even further, that they will push each other to make better policies.

Political scientist John held a theory of good politics that involved trying to

achieve the common good. For him that was what should drive political decision-

making, and it might sometimes lead to partisan difference. He used his

conceptions of partisanship and bipartisanship, and his theory of what good

politics looks like, to agree with people who argue that bipartisanship is

meaningless, stating:

> That I agree with for the most part. What folks ought to be looking for is the common good. What they ought to be trying to do is establish what that good is and how to realize it in ways that are consistent with sound moral principles and principles of justice, which sometimes means being very, very partisan.

Similarly, high school student Deborah used her theory about the beliefs

or desires of the American citizenry to agree that people would like to see

politicians change the way they do business in Washington. She asserted,

"Americans, they like to know what's going on in their...community, their

economy, and the United States as a whole, and I think that that's very important, you know, to every American, to know what's going on." High school student Tanya used her theory about the media's role in society to agree that the press is only interested in taking politicians down. She stated, "I think that the media right now is just all about entertainment, trying to just get juicy stories, trying to make stuff more interesting, instead of really putting out facts that need to be put out."

To help them clarify, illustrate, or flesh out their conceptions, which were such important parts of their reasoning process, students and political scientists sometimes used the text as examples of concepts. For example, while reading about bipartisan compromise over the economic stimulus bill in the article, "A Did-Something Congress," political scientist Sharon stopped to apply what she was reading to her conception of bipartisanship, which she had argued was good for democracy throughout the think aloud. She said, "I'm finishing that paragraph thinking, yeah, okay, good, here's an example of how bipartisanship can happen and can work." While reading about the so-called Era of Good Feeling in the "Evolution of Partisans Politics in the U.S.", high school student Karen interpreted the period as a positive example of bipartisanship. She, who had also been arguing that bipartisanship was good for democracy, stated, "I think that says bipartisanship is good and it should be like before and there shouldn't be that much conflict between the two parties because then there would just be too many issues in Congress." These subjects used the information they encountered as an example of a concept—a concept which could then be applied while reasoning and expressing an opinion about the issue.

Though students and political scientists similarly used their conceptions and theories to express an opinion, there were also important differences in their opinioned responses. Political scientists, who referenced knowledge significantly more than students throughout the think aloud sessions, were also more likely to reference knowledge as they were agreeing, disagreeing, and expressing a viewpoint. Doris, for example, used her knowledge of history to take issue with the account of Lincoln's position on slavery in "The Evolution of Partisan Politics" piece. She argued, "It wasn't for emancipation at the early beginning. It was not his major issue." Kate also used historical knowledge to disagree with an assertion in the same piece, when it discussed causes of the Democratic Party in the 1960s. She argued "Gay rights and feminism didn't really exist as political issues until after the 60s so that's oversimplification."

It was also quite typical for political scientists to combine a reference to knowledge with a reference to their conceptions and theories while expressing an opinion, usually in order to clarify their conceptions. For example, John used knowledge of history and foreign politics, along with his conception of American Democracy to agree that American Democracy is a stable political system. He argued:

> The reality is we have not had a civil war since the Civil War and once in a while it gets a bit rancorous but by and large we're not shooting each other in the streets. That's a sign of a pretty healthy political order, especially if you look around the world. Peaceful transfers of power take place all the time in American politics in ways that would be unthinkable in a lot of nations that we're looking at, especially in the south and especially in what we would call the developing world.

In essence, John was using his knowledge of history and foreign politics to clarify his conception of American Democracy as a stable political system. He then used his knowledge and ideas to agree that American Democracy is designed to deal with political divisions and historically has done so quite well.

Political scientist Alex used his knowledge of scholarship by Alasdair MacIntyre and Michael Oakeshott along with his conception of ideology—that ideology is a distillation of the way you go about making decisions—to disagree with Kinsley about the role ideology should play in politics. He argued:

> This reminds me of Alasdair MacIntyre and his argument about how we think about moral questions when politics is a form of a moral question. Are we seeking this sort of cloak of ideological, inflexible, permanent, true, unchanging principles to guide our decisions? That's not the way to think about it. It reminds me of Michael Oakeshott too, actually, and his argument of rationalism. And I just think that's the wrong way to think about it as well. We shouldn't be guided by ideology. Ideology is a distillation of the actual way you go about making decisions and it's an abridgement not a guide. It comes afterwords.

As John used knowledge to clarify his conception of American Democracy, Alex used knowledge of scholarship to clarify his conception of ideology and its relationship to political decision-making.

Political scientists also referenced knowledge to clarify or illustrate reasons for agreement or disagreement by providing an example, comparing or contrasting. For example, David compared an argument in the Kinsley article to scholarly arguments as he agreed with an argument presented in the text, stating:

> Right! That's the issue people have with ideology. It's an E.J. Dionne issue. That people are fixed in their ideology and when presented with new information, such as Dionne's example, with the issue of welfare, people don't take on new information. It's sort of that Bayesian argument

that if nature disagrees with a theory you've got to give nature a little bit of consideration.

Whereas political scientists regularly used knowledge in giving their opinioned reactions to the documents, students rarely referenced knowledge. When they did, it often lacked detail, as discussed in Chapter 6. Rafael, for example, used some knowledge about the history of political parties to agree with Schambra that there have always been political divisions, stating, "As far as I'm concerned, American has always been divided as a political party." Alfred used some knowledge of the separation of powers—"that's why people don't have too much power throughout the branches"—to support his contention that political differences could be dangerous because people might want to "force other people's opinions [to be] like their own."

Discussion

Concepts and theories were important aspects of the reasoning process for both students and political scientists. They regularly employed them in their opinioned responses, and sometimes used information from the text to flesh out their conceptions for the purposes of reasoning. For political scientists, though, knowledge also played an important role in their opinioned responses to arguments and assertions in the text. They regularly drew upon knowledge as they reasoned, sometimes to clarify the concepts or theories they also used to reason. These findings support my earlier findings from analysis of political theorists' work and extant research on student thinking, discussed in Chapter 4—sophisticated thinkers use their knowledge bases to explicate and use democratic concepts.

Students, on the other hand, rarely used knowledge in their opinioned responses, but relied, instead, upon concepts and theories. Moreover, students often expressed their conceptions and theories without the accompaniment of any specific, clarifying knowledge. Again, this supports findings from analysis of extant research on students' thinking discussed in Chapter 4, that a weak knowledge base may negatively affect students' conceptions, leaving them with a more superficial understanding of democratic concepts than sophisticated thinkers have.

General Discussion

For both text-based documents and graphic data, subjects employed three different types of strategies: information-extraction strategies, evaluative strategies, and reasoning strategies. *Information-extraction strategies* were strategies subjects used to makes sense of the information they encountered. For the text-based documents, these strategies included summarizing, paraphrasing, backtracking, and determining the author's purpose. For the graphic data, they included noting the salient features and determining what information was being provided. *Evaluative strategies* were strategies subjects used to determine the merit or worth of the information they encountered. For the text-based documents, they were sourcing, contextualizing, questioning the author, and choosing to not read. For the graphic data, they were questioning the methodology, sourcing, and contextualizing. The *reasoning strategies* were strategies subjects used to make an argument and provide support for their argument. They included opinioned responses like agreement or disagreement

with arguments or assertions in the documents, or simply sharing a viewpoint about a topic mentioned in the text. Reasoning strategies also included strategies to provide support or reasons for one's opinion. In addition, they included strategies aimed at clarifying or illustrating a point, such as using the text as an example, comparing or contrasting, and stating the opposing viewpoint.

As they reasoned about the issue of bipartisanship, using the common and chosen documents provided them, both students and political scientists regularly employed strategies to extract information from the documents. However, student and political scientists did not comprehend the information equally. Students noted gaps in their understanding significantly more than political scientists did.   In short, similarly employing information-extraction strategies to aid in comprehension did not result in similar comprehension. Research argues that a lack of background knowledge impedes comprehension, and that a person's extent and depth of knowledge can influence the quality of their understanding (Beck, I. L. et al., 1989). Therefore, students' scanty knowledge bases, which I discussed in detail in Chapter 7, may partially explain their difficulties with comprehension.[28]

While students and political scientists were similarly likely to employ information-extraction strategies, political scientists were significantly more likely to employ evaluative strategies while looking at both text-based documents and

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[28] The comprehensibility and coherence of the texts may also explain students' difficulties, as research also shows those factors to affect reading comprehension (Beck, I. L. et al., 1989). As explained in Chapter 5, I tried to make the readings more comprehensible but I do not know if I succeeded.

graphic data. In fact, students did not use evaluative strategies at all when they worked with the graphic data. Students' low tendency to take an evaluative stance toward the documents may also relate to their weak knowledge bases. When political scientists employed evaluative strategies, they often used their knowledge of the sources of the documents to source information, and their knowledge of history and current events to contextualize information or to question the choices or assertions of the authors. Undoubtedly, the political scientists' knowledge base aided them in taking an evaluative stance toward the documents.

However, political scientists also sourced when they had little to no knowledge of a source, and they contextualized and questioned the authors' assertions and choices even when they were not using knowledge of history or current events. In other words, it was not their factual knowledge that led them to source, contextualize, and question; they made moves to source, contextualize, and question regardless of factual knowledge. This suggests that these political scientists possessed the habits of mind to take an evaluative stance toward the information they encountered regardless of the knowledge they possessed. While the students may have understandably lacked the knowledge that the political scientists did, they also simply lacked the habits of mind to evaluate the information they encountered and determine its merit or worth for their reasoning process. These differences may indicate that the political scientists used advanced literacy strategies that students lacked. To be sure, Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) argue that adolescents rarely benefit from instruction in literacy

strategies that can help them deal with domain-specific information, such as political information, in a specialized, sophisticated manner.

As they reasoned about the issue of bipartisanship, though, students and political scientists were similarly opinioned. Upon being asked to reason about a controversial issue, it seems, subjects from both groups were poised to offer their viewpoints. This finding supports Mosborg's (2002) argument that students have a shared script for expressing their viewpoints—that self-expression is a key ideal of American citizenship that they demonstrate when dealing with public issues. To be sure, students and political scientists similarly agreed with arguments and assertions in the documents and similarly offered viewpoints about topics they encountered while working with the documents.

However, students were significantly less likely to *disagree* with arguments and assertions presented in the documents. In fact, while looking at the graphic data in the common documents portion, and reading the background information and historic documents in the chosen documents portion, students never once disagreed with the arguments or assertions they encountered. These findings suggest that, just as students were unlikely to take an evaluative stance toward the information they encountered, they were unlikely to take a skeptical stance toward the information they encountered as well. They tended to take the assertions and arguments in the documents at face value, particularly when they viewed the documents as sources of information to expand their knowledge, as was the case with the background information and historic documents. This may be because, as other research has suggested (e.g., Bain, 2006), students saw

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these texts as authoritative and, therefore, would not think to question or doubt them. Moreover, the students might lack the disciplined understanding that political scientists have that even information presented authoritatively or as "fact" is still subject to scrutiny and revision.

Students' lack of a skeptical stance toward the information provided may also relate to their knowledge bases. While students regularly employed concepts and theories while reasoning through and providing opinioned responses about the issue of bipartisanship, they rarely used knowledge. When they did, their knowledge lacked detail, as explained in Chapter 7. For political scientists, on the other hand, knowledge played an important role in their opinioned responses to arguments and assertions in the text. They regularly drew upon knowledge as they reasoned, sometimes to clarify the concepts or theories they were also using to reason. Students, therefore, may have been less inclined to take a skeptical stance toward the information they encountered because they lacked the ammunition to do so. Because they had a sparse knowledge base compared to the political scientists, they may have simply used the text as information to expand their knowledge base, and to affirm their existing understandings and opinions. For example, students sometimes used the text to clarify or expand their conceptions of partisanship and bipartisanship. If they understood bipartisanship to be healthy for democracy, and partisanship to be bad, any argument or assertion in the text supporting that conception could be used as affirmation. Unfortunately, as discussed in Chapter 4 and in other cognitive research literature (e.g., Bransford et al., 2000), students sometimes

have incomplete conceptions or misconceptions. Unless there is something or someone to mediate their use of new information they encounter, their conceptions may remain incomplete or incorrect.

The next chapter synthesizes and discusses these and all other findings from this dissertation. In addition, it discusses implications of this research for reform of classroom instruction, teacher education, policy, and research.

Chapter 9

Discussion and Implications

Since the fledgling days of U.S. public education, people have considered

schools "pillars of the republic," charging them to prepare America's future

citizens for their roles in democratic society at large (Kaestle, 1983). Throughout

American history, threats from outside forces, either real or perceived, have

underscored this historic civic mission and prompted scholars, educators,

policymakers, and other citizens to turn their attention toward school-based civic

education. For example, the Soviet launch of *Sputnik* in 1957 spurred federal

legislators to give an unprecedented amount of funding to scholars and

educators to help improve education, including civic education, in the schools.

Similarly, in 1983, amidst fears that the U.S. was losing its lead among the

world's industrial nations, the Department of Education's report on the failings of

U.S. education, *A Nation at Risk,* led to the development of national standards in

all core academic subjects, including history and civics—the two subject areas

believed to be the core of education for citizenship.

Public and federal reaction to the September 11 terrorist attacks proved

no different. The attacks posed a serious threat to American security, ideals and

institutions, serving as another stark reminder of the U.S. schools' historic civic

mission. In response, scholars, educators and policymakers initiated or

strengthened efforts to improve school-based civic education. Since 9/11, most scholars and policymakers seeking civic education reform have focused on enhancing students' civic knowledge and engagement by increasing their exposure to history and civics content (e.g., Albert Shanker Institute, 2003; U.S. Congress, 2003), increasing accountability measures (Gibson & Levine, 2003; Lopez & Kirby, 2007), implementing better state standards (e.g., Gagnon, 2003; Soule & McConnell, 2006), improving teacher education and professional development (e.g., Gibson & Levine, 2003; Office of the White House Press Secretary, 2002b), and instituting more service-learning opportunities and requirements (e.g., Gibson & Levine, 2003; Kirby et al., 2006). Federal legislators, for example, have initiated and funded three programs aiming to improve professional development for teachers of history and civics—the Teaching American History Grant Program, the National Endowment for the Humanities' (NEH) We the People initiative, and the Presidential Academies for Teaching American History and Civics program.

Although the reasons for wanting to strengthen civic education may not change much from one generation to another, the body of knowledge we can draw upon to inform our reform efforts does. Over the same 50 years that Americans witnessed and responded to *Sputnik*, *A Nation at Risk* and 9/11, the field of cognitive science and its influence on education have grown considerably, providing a body of research on the nature of thinking that has already begun to positively inform math, science and history education. However, civic education

policy has not drawn upon such research, essentially doing in 2008 what we did in 1958.

This dissertation has argued that new scholarship, particularly research on how people think, has the potential to positively inform civic education. This work has also *added* to our understanding of how people think, demonstrating how sophisticated and novice thinkers reason while grappling with a civic and political issue. It has shown that students are not *tabula rasa*--they have existing concepts and theories that they use to reason, even though these concepts and theories are sometimes underdeveloped and uninformed by relevant knowledge. Yet, this dissertation has also demonstrated that knowledge, while important, is insufficient for civic education. Sophisticated thinkers have knowledge, but, more importantly, they *use* knowledge to construct, support, articulate and elaborate concepts, ideas and issues, and to challenge others' assertions and arguments. Together, my findings reveal that, in efforts to improve civic education, we should pay attention to the thinking necessary for competent, responsible citizenship in a democracy—what I call democratic thinking.

In an initial study of democratic thinking, I analyzed the work of political theorists and found four salient features of their thinking—key democratic concepts and conceptual tensions, formative knowledge, public reason, and deliberative decision-making. Together, these facets provide a much needed picture of the sophisticated thinking underlying competent, responsible citizenship in a democracy. The other research detailed in this dissertation clarified this picture even further, focusing on one feature of democratic

thinking—formative knowledge, or knowledge in use. I analyzed eight political

scientists' and eight high school students' thought processes as they grappled

with the issue of bipartisanship in United States politics, addressing the

questions: How are sophisticated and novice thinkers using knowledge? What

kinds of knowledge are they using? What is the utility of the kinds of knowledge

subjects are using? Are there differences in how sophisticated and novice

thinkers use knowledge? Similarities? What, if any, gaps exist between their

thinking? Below, I summarize my major findings from this study.

Major Findings

Social Scripts for Reasoning about Civic and Political Issues

Other researchers have suggested that there are cultural "scripts" that

people use to guide their expectations and actions (Stigler & Hiebert, 1998),

including while using knowledge and information to express a viewpoint

(Mosborg, 2002). The similarities in thought processes between the students

and political scientists who participated in this study suggested that subjects

shared a kind of "script," or protocol, for reasoning about a controversial issue

(Mosborg, 2002; Stigler & Hiebert, 1998). During the think alouds, subjects were

not directed to do anything other than read through the documents and use them

to help them reason about the issue of bipartisanship. Yet, while reading the

eight provided documents, students and political scientists displayed many

unexpected similarities in their reasoning processes.

First, students and political scientists reacted to what they were reading

with about the same frequency. Often, they reacted by expressing their

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viewpoints, demonstrating a commonly held understanding that democratic self-expression is an important value to exercise while dealing with public issues (Mosborg, 2002).

There were also similarities in how students and political scientists used the provided documents. They used the problem I gave them as an orienting or focusing device to a similar degree during the reasoning process, suggesting that they both realized the importance of remaining focused on the issue at hand. While reading a document to address the problem, they also both referred back to information from other documents, conveying a shared sense that it is important to use available information to support reasoning. When given an opportunity to choose information to help them reason, members of both groups opted to use historic documents and background information to help them further address the problem, signifying similarities in their judgment of valuable sources.

The most unexpected finding to emerge was that students referred to and used relevant concepts and theories in the reasoning process much the same as political scientists did. Members of both groups had existing conceptions and theories about how the world works that they employed when expressing their opinions and that influenced the way they looked at and reasoned with new information (Bransford et al., 2000).

This last finding was not only the most unexpected similarity I found between students and political scientists, it is arguably the most important for educators and policymakers interested in improving civic education. The next section explains why.

The Important Role of Conceptions and Theories in People's Thought Processes

One central finding from research on how people learn is that people are not *tabula rasa*; they have existing ideas and theories about how the world works that influence how they interpret and use new information they encounter (Bransford et al., 2000). The present study supports and applies this finding to the political and social world. Both the participating students and political scientists regularly referred to and used relevant conceptions and theories throughout their think aloud sessions. From the outset, political scientists revealed they had existing ideas about bipartisanship, while students revealed they had existing ideas about compromise and political parties that they could use to formulate ideas about bipartisanship. While reading through the documents and in forming a response to the issue, students and political scientists alike used their conceptions of partisanship, bipartisanship, American Democracy and political parties; and theories about politics, "good politics," the American citizenry, and the role of the media in society.

However, there were important differences in students' and political scientists' conceptions and theories. Political scientists used more nuanced and complicated concepts and theories than students did. Their ideas were often accompanied by knowledge of government, history and current events, which they used to help clarify their ideas. Furthermore, political scientists seemed to have an easier time imagining that competing ideas like bipartisanship and partisanship could co-exist as equally healthy signs of American Democracy.

These findings support those from my preliminary study of political theorists' work and extant research on student thinking: The political theorists' conceptions of democratic ideas were also complicated and nuanced; rarely did they discuss the concepts in simple, easily defined terms. Often they explained their conceptions by saying what they are and are not, and were aware of people's various ideas about the concepts. Moreover, they demonstrated understanding that concepts can be in tension with one another, and they were comfortable working within that tension. Students, on the other hand, tend to have a superficial understanding of democratic concepts, and only a developing understanding of the tensions between concepts.

Even though the conceptions and theories of the students from my empirical study were less sophisticated than those of the political scientists, the fact that students used them in a similar way is important. Concepts and theories played a central role in students' thinking, even in the absence of knowledge. In addition, their existing conceptions and theories seemed to influence how students viewed new information. For example, if they understood bipartisanship to be healthy for democracy and partisanship to be bad, then they saw any argument or assertion in the text supporting that perception as affirmation.

These findings underscore the importance of investigating and engaging students' initial understandings in instruction. If educators do not consider such initial understandings, learners may fail to grasp new concepts and information. Further, without intervention, learners may continue to harbor incomplete or incorrect ideas (Bransford et al., 2000).

Sophisticated Thinkers' Use of Advanced "Civic Literacy" Strategies in Reading Political Information

The high school students who participated in this study were recommended by their teachers as "good readers," so it was not too surprising that they used information-extraction strategies to about the same degree as the participating political scientists, even if there were comprehension differences between students and political scientists. Both students and political scientists regularly employed information-extraction strategies to aid in their understanding of the text-based documents, including summarizing, paraphrasing, backtracking and determining the author's purpose. For graphic data, information-extraction strategies included noticing salient features and determining the information provided by the graph or chart. The similar degree with which subjects used these strategies suggests that both attempted to make sense of the new information they encountered in order to use the information in the reasoning process.

These findings also suggest that basic literacy skills play a key role in using political information to reason about civic and political issues. Of course, not all political information is text-based or graphic, and so it is possible to access political information without needing to use the comprehension strategies utilized by subjects in this study. However, a good deal of political information *is* text-based and graphic, and a lack of ability to understand the arguments and assertions being made in it essentially denies a group of citizens access to information they might use in problem solving and decision-making processes.

However, the political scientists employed more than just basic information-extraction strategies. They employed what I refer to as *evaluative strategies* significantly more than students did while reading the documents. For the text-based documents, evaluative strategies included sourcing, contextualizing, questioning the author's assertions and choices, and deciding to not read text; for the graphic data, evaluative strategies included sourcing, contextualizing, and questioning methodology. Political scientists used these evaluative strategies with or without accompanying knowledge, suggesting that they possessed the habits of mind to employ these evaluative strategies regardless of their knowledge of the source, or of historical or current context. The students, on the other hand, rarely employed evaluative strategies while reading the text-based documents, and never employed them while working with the graphic data. While the students may have understandably lacked the knowledge that the political scientists did, they also lacked the habits of mind to evaluate the information they encountered and determine its merit or worth for their reasoning process.

Other research argues that experts in specific domains like math, science and history possess advanced literacy skills that allow them to deal with specialized information in a sophisticated manner (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). The evaluative strategies that the political scientists regularly employed in this study may be indicative of "civic literacy" strategies, or advanced literacy strategies sophisticated democratic thinkers use to make meaning of political information. Unfortunately, adolescents rarely benefit from instruction in literacy

strategies that can help them deal with domain-specific information in a specialized, sophisticated manner (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008), possibly explaining why students seldom employed the evaluative strategies while working with the political information provided them.

Taking a Skeptical Stance toward Political Information

Just as students were significantly less likely to take an evaluative stance toward the information they encountered during the think aloud, they were significantly less likely to take a skeptical stance as well. Students rarely disagreed with or expressed doubts about arguments and assertions presented in the documents. In fact, while looking at the graphic data, and while reading background information and historic documents, students never once disagreed with the arguments or assertions they encountered. Instead, they tended to take the assertions and arguments in the documents at face value, particularly when they viewed the documents as authoritative sources of information to expand their knowledge, as was the case with the background information and historic documents.

Political scientists' disciplinary understanding might explain why they were significantly more likely to disagree with or express doubt about the arguments and assertions in the text. They may be more accustomed to the notion that ideas, no matter how evidence-based or authoritatively presented, are not immune from contestation or revision. Such understanding might incline political scientists to enter into any reasoning process involving various assertions and arguments with some skepticism. They may see information presented as "facts"

as one interpretation among several possible interpretations or as nested within a political, social and historical context that serves to determine and shape them. In short, political scientists' approach to information may have epistemological underpinnings that lead them to take a skeptical stance.

Other researchers argue that, indeed, disciplinary experts are more likely to question sources they encounter, whereas students tend to see sources of information as authoritative (Bain, 2006; Wineburg, 2001). In his study of students' use of historical text, for example, Bain (2006) explained that students' difficulty in taking on the substantive and critical eye of experts may be explained by a knowledge differential. To be sure, as I discuss in the next section, I found a knowledge differential played a key role in differences between the students' and political scientists' reasoning processes.

The Importance of "Usable Knowledge" in Democratic Thinking

In my preliminary study of democratic thinking, I found that political theorists used knowledge of citizenship rights and responsibilities, political theory, various conceptions of the good life, historical accounts, and contemporary issues to construct, support, articulate and elaborate the concepts, ideas and issues about which they wrote. I saw such knowledge in use as "formative," in that the knowledge helped formulate and shape the political ideas and issues. The key point was not that the theorists have extensive knowledge, but rather that they *use* such knowledge to think about political issues.

The political scientists also possessed a strong knowledge base that they used to think about the issue of bipartisanship. Their detailed knowledge of

government, history, current events, scholarly arguments, and sources played a key role in all the factors that differentiated them from students. For example, although both students and political scientists regularly used concepts and theories while reasoning, the political scientists used knowledge to clarify their conceptions and theories, whereas students relied upon their conceptions and theories without the accompaniment of any specific, clarifying knowledge. In addition, when political scientists employed evaluative strategies, which students rarely employed, they often used their knowledge of the sources of the documents to source information, and their knowledge of history and current events to contextualize information or to question the choices or assertions of the authors. Furthermore, political scientists regularly drew upon knowledge in their opinioned responses to the text, whereas students rarely did. Political scientists' knowledge might have given them the confidence to disagree with arguments and assertions in the text significantly more than students did.

Based on findings from analyses of sophisticated thought processes, use of a strong knowledge base is a crucial part of reasoning through democratic issues in an "expert" manner. Unfortunately, national assessments on students' knowledge of civics and government, as well as U.S. history, indicate that the majority of U.S. students have low levels of content knowledge in these subjects (Lee, J. & Weiss, 2007; Lutkus & Weiss, 2007) Indeed, the high school students from my study of sophisticated and novice thought processes in action, who would be considered "above average" based on their scores from a sampling of standardized test questions and the recommendations of their teachers, seemed

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to possess only scanty knowledge of scholarship, document sources, government, history, and current events. However, the students still possessed knowledge that was useful in helping them reason. For example, even though students seemed to have little knowledge of the term bipartisanship per se, they had enough knowledge of the idea of compromise and political parties to draw conclusions about what bipartisanship must be. Further, regardless of their scanty knowledge bases, students used what knowledge they did have to give opinioned responses to the information they encountered. They also sought to extend their knowledge by referring to background information and historical documents that they assumed would help them learn more and reason through the issue.

Although it is probably safe to assume that the students were less knowledgeable than the political scientists, they still may have had stores of relevant knowledge they could have used to reason. Cognitive research argues that experts' knowledge is much more than a list of disconnected facts about their disciplines. Their knowledge is connected and organized around important ideas of their disciplines and it includes information about conditions of applicability of key concepts and procedures. The latter information helps experts know when, why and how aspects of their vast repertoire of knowledge and skills are relevant in any particular situation (Bransford et al., 2006; Hirsch, 1987). Therefore, the students participating in this study may have simply lacked the organizational framework to aid in retrieval of their factual knowledge. Their lack of knowledge use may have had more to do with how their knowledge was

organized and how practiced they were in using their knowledge than with the amount of knowledge they possessed. In any case, like sophisticated thinkers, the novice student thinkers did attempt to use relevant knowledge while reasoning through the issue, and demonstrated awareness that an extended knowledge base might help them further reason.

The major findings from this study have implications for instruction, teacher education, policy, and research. Before describing those implications, though, it is important to attend to the limitations of this research.

<div align="center">Limitations of Research</div>

Defining Sophisticated Thinkers

As discussed in Chapter 6, the "engaged political scientists" in this study possessed what many people believe to be attributes of competent, responsible citizenship. They were informed and knowledgeable, able to reason, engaged in their communities, and politically active. Therefore, I determined they would be good models to serve in a study of sophisticated thought processes. However, engaged political scientists are by no means the only models of sophisticated democratic thinkers. One could make a case for why community leaders, political leaders, political activists, or others might also serve as models of sophisticated democratic thinkers. Future studies examining the thought processes of such people could positively contribute to a more broad-based model of sophisticated democratic thinking.

Limitations of the Methodology

In designing the think aloud study for this dissertation, I tried to keep my interjections to a minimum in order to allow the subject to become more comfortable with my presence and avoid socially motivated responses. However, I was, in fact, in the room with the subjects and they were aware that I would be analyzing their verbal responses. Therefore, I assume that the verbal data is not completely void of socially motivated responses. In fact, two of the political scientists mentioned that they were nervous because they thought I might have expectations about how much they would know.

In retrospect, there are some things I would have done differently in carrying out the think alouds. First, I would have asked all subjects more prior knowledge questions. I would have further probed them on their understanding of bipartisanship, refusing to accept anything as unequivocal or understood (Shemilt, 1987). For the retrospective reports, I would have allowed myself to ask specific follow-up questions, rather than only prompt subjects to tell me what they remember they were thinking. In looking back at the retrospective reports, some subjects seemed to misunderstand the request, so I would have provided more guidance and asked for more clarification.

The Breadth of Political Information

I provided subjects with only a small sampling of the political information, arguments, or assertions they might encounter. I did not include television, radio, the Internet or any other number of resources. Future studies exploring how people use such resources could make a positive contribution to our

understanding of how people use and reason with various kinds of political information.

The Breadth of Political Issues

Not only is there a vast amount of political information that people might encounter, there is a vast number of political issues about which citizens may be asked to reason. The findings discussed above emerged as students and political scientists grappled with the issue of bipartisanship, but it is possible that different findings would have emerged were subjects asked to reason about a different issue. Future studies should ask subjects to deal with other issues, including those that might elicit more of an emotional response than bipartisanship did (i.e., immigration, gun control, etc.).

The Role of Affect

As discussed in Chapter 6, I chose to focus only on cognition and purposely ignore other influences in the reasoning process, including the role of emotions. However, in recent years, researchers have become increasingly interested in the interplay between emotions and thinking in the reasoning process and largely agree that there *is* an "affect effect" (Neuman et al., 2007). By choosing to ignore affect, this study therefore misses an important influence on democratic thinking. However, that does not diminish the central role that the cognitive components described in this dissertation play in democratic thinking, nor does it diminish the role that education can play in fostering those cognitive components.

Implications

Implications for Classroom Instruction in Civic Education Courses

The research in this dissertation reveals that usable content knowledge plays an important role in reasoning about civic and political issues, suggesting that helping students acquire content knowledge should be a central goal of civic education. In this age of accountability, teachers hardly need reminding that students' acquisition of content knowledge should be a goal of instruction. Indeed, looming standardized tests that administrators and policymakers will use to judge teachers' and schools' performance probably place the acquisition of content knowledge top among teachers' instructional priorities. Moreover, many professional development programs, such as those funded by the federal government, emphasize the acquisition of content knowledge in civic education.

However, while not denying that a strong knowledge base is important, my research also suggests that content knowledge alone is insufficient for instruction in civic education. Feeding students information and encouraging them to memorize terms and facts that may appear on a quiz or test[29] will do little to prepare them for democratic citizenship. Rather, it is essential that students know how to *use* content knowledge for solving problems and making decisions in a democracy.

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[29] Using survey data from the 2006 civics NAEP, Lopez and Kirby (2007) report that such practices are prevalent in social studies classrooms. In 2006, 76 percent of eighth-graders and 71 percent of twelfth-graders reported having to memorize materials they have read. Far fewer reported taking part in activities in which they might apply their knowledge like debates or panel discussions (37 percent/57 percent), role-playing, mock trials or dramas (f30 percent/34 percent), or writing a letter to give an opinion or help solve a community problem (18 percent/ 25 percent).

Therefore, without abandoning the goal of helping students acquire content knowledge, teachers should provide instruction that will assist students in using their knowledge and the information they encounter for civic purposes. First, teachers should help students understand how "facts"—those that might appear on a test or quiz—relate to key democratic concepts and theories. Key concepts may be "value concepts" such as justice, equality, and freedom, as discussed in Chapter 4, or they may be related to ideas students might regularly encounter in the political realm, such as bipartisanship, partisanship, political parties, and electoral politics. Helping students organize their knowledge around such key ideas may aid them in retrieving relevant knowledge (i.e., of scholarly arguments, history, current events, etc.) that can serve as clarifying examples or analogies in the reasoning process.

To help students develop *sophisticated* understanding of such organizing concepts, teachers should help them see that people have competing ideas about concepts like justice and freedom, and that such concepts can often be in tension with one another. This sophisticated understanding will help students understand, for example, why people can equally value the idea of freedom, but that their different conceptions of freedom may translate to very different realities, or that laws intended to ensure the common good sometimes seem to come at the expense of individual rights, and vice versa. History and current events are rife with such manifestations of conceptual tensions and teachers may readily incorporate them into classroom instruction.

While incorporating instructional strategies to help student develop more sophisticated conceptions and theories, though, it is important for teachers to realize that students will likely come into the classroom with preexisting ideas, and they may fluently draw upon existing conceptions and theories when reasoning about democratic issues. Therefore, it is important to carefully analyze what those existing conceptions and theories are. In this study, for example, students used ideas about American democracy and political parties, and theories about politics and the American citizenry to the same degree that the political scientists did, but their ideas and theories were not as informed and detailed as they could be. To help their students learn, teachers should be aware of the substance of the existing conceptions and theories with which students will enter their classrooms. Students' ideas about how the world works may be incomplete at best and wrong at worst. Unfortunately, their existing conceptions and theories, even misguided ones, will influence the way students interpret and use new information they encounter. To help students flesh out their ideas, correct misconceptions, and extend their knowledge, teachers should find ways to probe their students' current understandings and then design their instruction accordingly.

Teachers should also give students plenty of opportunities to use their knowledge, conceptions and theories to express their viewpoints about political and civic issues, but with plenty of guidance in helping them do so effectively. It is useful for teachers to know that students may come into their classrooms already inclined to express their viewpoints, as findings from this research

suggest that students possess cultural "scripts" that stress the importance of expressing viewpoints about civic and political issues, and the importance of using available information in doing so. However, it is important that teachers help students understand how to do those things in a more sophisticated manner. It is one thing to encourage students to express their opinions, but another to enable them to deliver evidentiary arguments that support their viewpoints *and* take others' viewpoints into account. Furthermore, it is one thing to ask students to use available information to support an opinion or to help them make a decision about a public issue, but another to show them how to take an evaluative and skeptical stance toward the political information they encounter in newspapers, on television, or on the Internet. This research suggests that students should receive instruction in using advanced civic literacy strategies such as sourcing, contextualizing, and questioning the assertions and choices of the author of text-based political information, and sourcing, contextualizing, and questioning the methodology of graphic data. They should learn that political information, no matter how "factual" it may seem, or how authoritatively the source presents it, should be open to scrutiny and contestation. They should then be able to use relevant and reliable information to reason in public, with the public, about public issues, beginning within the comfort of their own classrooms where they and fellow classmates may openly express their viewpoints and competing ideas. Students should also be able to use relevant information to tackle problems that require decisions by considering alternatives and imagining possible outcomes of those alternatives. Moreover, in all problem-solving and

decision-making situations, students should be encouraged to consider not only their own individual interests, but also the good of their communities. Acquiring such habits of mind will help students to become sophisticated democratic thinkers, and, hopefully, will aid them in solving the problems and making the decisions that democratic citizenship requires.

Implications for Teacher Education and Professional Development

A central goal of teacher education is helping prospective and practicing teachers develop or strengthen their pedagogical content knowledge, or knowledge of content for the purposes of teaching. Studies on novice and more sophisticated thought processes can be useful tools in helping teacher educators foster pedagogical content knowledge in teachers by providing (1) a picture of sophisticated, domain-specific thinking, including how experts approach and solve problems, organize facts into meaningful and powerful ideas, and use analogies, illustrations and explanations to convey arguments and assertions; and (2) the insight into students' conceptions, preconceptions and reasoning processes that is necessary for developmentally responsive teaching (Grossman & Schoenfeld, 2005; Horowitz et al., 2005; Shulman, 1986). However, "expert-novice studies" are useful only insofar as teachers know how to interpret them and apply them in their classrooms. It is to that end that teacher educators play a crucial role in helping to improve civic education.

The findings from this dissertation can serve as a tool for teacher educators who aim to help develop prospective and practicing teachers' pedagogical content knowledge—especially those who are teaching people to be

the social studies educators who many consider primarily responsible for civic education. It provides teachers with a clearer picture of the essential facets of sophisticated democratic thinking, and details of how experienced sophisticated thinkers approach and use information for civic and political purposes. Furthermore, this dissertation provides a useful overview of existing research on students' thinking, and insight into how high school students might approach and use information while solving a problem relevant to democratic citizenship. Teacher educators can refer to this research in helping prospective and practicing teachers (1) identify worthwhile goals for instruction, (2) design assessments in order to better understand their own students' thinking and progressions in their thinking, and (3) implement instructional strategies to help bring students to more sophisticated levels of understanding and performance (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998).

At the same time, though, teacher educators should be aware that simply providing prospective and practicing teachers with such research is probably not enough to change teaching practice. Teachers need sustained guidance in using such research and envisioning how it can be used to inform practice. As discussed in Chapter 2, New Social Studies reformers learned that, because teachers were not aware of the underpinnings of the research guiding their programs and could not see examples of the research being used in instruction, they did not actually change their teaching practices in the classroom. Teacher educators should be aware of that, take the teachers' current understandings of

civic education and effective teaching practice into account, and then design their teacher education and professional development courses accordingly.

Implications for Policy

The experiences of past reformers should remind us that it is crucial to consider and be prepared for the political implications of the reforms you are introducing, and to be ready and able to communicate with policymakers. After all, if we believe that teachers' and students' thinking matters in the implementation of successful reforms, it would be misguided to assume that policymakers' thinking does not. Federal policymakers have already revealed that they think it is important to improve teaching and learning in civic education through the professional development of history and civics teachers, and that they think the acquisition of historical content knowledge should play a central role in the proper education of citizens. Since they consider content knowledge so central to civic education, federal legislators naturally turn to large-scale objective assessments that measure students' content knowledge when evaluating the state of civic education in U.S. schools.

In many ways, this study supports what federal legislators claim is important for civic education. The participating political scientists often drew upon detailed knowledge of history to help them reason about the issue of bipartisanship, and most chose to look at historic documents when given the option. In serving as models for sophisticated democratic thinking, the political scientists thereby demonstrated the importance of historical content knowledge for civic purposes.

However, this study reveals that, while policymakers need not abandon their privileging of historical content knowledge, they should support professional development programs that do more than transmit content knowledge. To improve teaching and learning in civic education, professional development programs should also help teachers use cognitive research to better understand how they might help their students *use* their content knowledge to reason effectively. Moreover, professional development programs should encourage teachers to uncover their students' existing conceptions and theories, and then think about how to improve students' understanding and how to correct misconceptions. In addition, professional development programs should help teachers instruct their students on how to view available information that might eventually contribute to their content knowledge bases. Fortunately, strategies like sourcing, contextualizing, and questioning the author's choices and assertions are just as valuable for working with historic documents and information (Bain, 2000; Wineburg, 2001), as they are for working with political information.

The use of research, such as the studies in this dissertation, in the professional development of teachers does not require abandoning the importance of content knowledge, whether historical or otherwise; it only helps teachers see how content knowledge can and does become a part of the problem-solving and decision-making processes required for citizenship.

The importance of being able to *use* knowledge for civic purposes also suggests that our judgments of a successful program of school-based civic

education should not rely only on standardized assessments that measure students' ability to provide correct answers to multiple-choice questions. Therefore, policymakers might consider calling for and supporting changes in how we measure students' preparedness for democratic citizenship. This research suggests that, in addition to measuring students' content knowledge, assessments should reflect students' abilities to draw upon relevant knowledge and ideas in delivering evidentiary, persuasive arguments, and to consider possible alternatives and outcomes when making a decision about a public policy issue. Further, assessments should reveal how students evaluate and weigh different information they encounter as they solve a problem or make a decision.

Of course, assessments providing evidence of students' reasoning and decision-making processes would probably require extended response questions and more sophisticated scoring processes than what is currently necessary with objective standardized assessments. Such assessments would undoubtedly be more difficult—and expensive—to design, administer and score than current standardized models. However, if current standardized assessments tell us little about students' preparedness for civic education, they may be much more "expensive" than people realize. Therefore, it may be worthwhile to consider alternative assessments that more accurately measure students' readiness for the responsibilities of citizenship, and that will provide educators with more useful information about what they should be emphasizing in classroom instruction.

Implications for Research

Although this dissertation represents an initial step toward clarifying the thought processes relevant to civic education, more research is needed. For one, our understanding of sophisticated democratic thinking could be much more robust. This study focused on how novice and more sophisticated thinkers used knowledge to grapple with the issue of bipartisanship, but future studies can focus on the other components identified in this study—key concepts and conceptual tensions, public reason and deliberative decision-making. Future studies can also ask subjects to deal with other issues, including those that elicit more of an emotional response. In addition, they could again use political scientists as models of sophisticated democratic thinking, but they might also consider other possible models, such as community leaders or political activists. We could also benefit from studies of democratic thinking in social settings, where subjects are asked to reason and deliberate in the presence of others who may scrutinize, question, and challenge their assertions and arguments.

Moreover, future studies could look at novice thinking across a greater age range. We need additional studies focusing on high school students, but we also need studies of elementary and middle school students. As a whole, current research barely scratches the surface of students' conceptual understanding. As discussed in Chapter 4, we have some understanding of students' understanding of government and citizenship, and of value concepts like freedom and justice, but we could have a much better understanding. We also need a better understanding of how students view the relationship between concepts, including

tensions between concepts like freedom and justice, which this dissertation argues is an integral part of democratic thinking.

In addition to more research on democratic thinking, we need more research on classroom interventions informed by research on sophisticated and novice democratic thinking. Although cognitive research on how people learn provides a compelling case for the value of using expert-novice studies in designing instruction, being able to show the actual *effects* of instruction informed by such research will speak volumes to educators and policymakers who may remain skeptical. For example, Berti's (1994) studies on children's conceptions of the state, discussed in Chapter 4, go far in proving the importance of considering children's conceptual understanding for instruction, but her and Andriolo's (2001) studies showing how students learned when provided instruction *informed* by such research go much further. Future studies might include designing instructional units informed by research on democratic thinking, and assessing the degree to which it improves student learning.

If teachers are going to use such research to inform their teaching, we also need a better understanding of how teachers think about and use studies such as this one. It is not enough to simply conduct and disseminate research, expecting that teachers will use it to alter their teaching practices—especially if there is no hard evidence that it will actually improve student learning. Future research should focus on how teachers think, and if and how they use available cognitive studies to inform practice. It should also analyze professional

development programs, both existing and newly designed, to discover the methods that produce desired changes in teaching and learning.

Finally, future research might analyze prospective and practicing teachers' democratic thinking to better understand where teachers fall within the range from novice to sophisticated democratic thinking. Such research could provide further insight into the kind of education teachers need to help their students achieve more sophisticated levels of understanding and performance.

Conclusion

Civic education is an area ripe for research and instructional improvements.   A better understanding of how people think about issues relevant to democratic citizenship is not only important for history, civics and other social studies educators, it is important for all educators who believe that schools need to prepare students to become competent, responsible citizens when they finally walk out the schoolhouse doors.

Although this dissertation provides an initial model of democratic thinking to inform civic education, there is much important work to be done. We need to conduct more research that provides a clearer picture of novice and sophisticated democratic thinking, design instruction that takes such thinking into account, and assess the effectiveness of such instruction in improving student learning for both the short- and long-term. Furthermore, we need to find ways to help teachers successfully use such research to inform and change their teaching practices, so that it actually contributes to positive reforms. Finally, we must imagine better ways to communicate with policymakers who support and

fund reform initiatives like professional development programs. Unless

policymakers are convinced that research can help produce improvements in

student achievement, they will continue to reject such research in favor of their

own assumptions about what works.

Democracy requires responsible, competent citizens—citizens who are

informed and knowledgeable, able to reason effectively, engaged in their

communities, and politically active. Schools are uniquely positioned to help

cultivate the cognitive components that will help people solve the problems and

make the decisions necessary for such democratic citizenship. However, we

cannot cultivate those cognitive components unless we have a clear picture of

what they are. This dissertation provides an initial model of democratic thinking

to help educators imagine how their students currently think *and* how they might

enable them to think. With such a picture of novice and sophisticated democratic

thinking, the important work of designing instruction to bring students to more

sophisticated levels of understanding and performance can proceed. The future

of our republic demands such work, and our students deserve it.

Appendices

Appendix A

Recruitment Materials

Dear Professor _____,

My name is Tammy Shreiner and I am a doctoral student in Educational Studies at the University of Michigan. I am contacting you to request your participation in a dissertation research study called "Expert-Novice Democratic Thinking." Further information about the study is below.

I am investigating how people use information/knowledge to reason about political issues. I aim to describe how "experts" and "novices" actively use knowledge and information to grapple with a political or civic issue, and to describe any differences between experts and novices. A description of expert and novice thinking processes can help educators design instruction and cognitive tools to bridge any differences in thinking that exist. Expert-novice studies have already proven useful for math, science, and history educators, but we are lacking a research-based picture of how people think in civic education.

To understand how people use knowledge, I plan on conducting "think alouds," in which I ask subjects to verbalize their thoughts while reasoning through a problem. To help them reason through the problem, subjects will be given a series of documents, including background information, statistics, news articles and opinion pieces. After allowing subjects time to address the problem, I will also ask them a few questions about what they were thinking as they addressed the problem.

I have chosen political scientists to serve as the experts in my study. Specifically, I am interested in working with Ph.D. political scientists who are at least moderately politically and civically engaged. You were randomly chosen from a group of political scientists whose profiles meet my criteria. Your participation would be a great help in moving this study forward.

If you choose to participate, we can communicate via email or telephone to arrange a date and time. The entire think aloud and interview process should take approximately 2-3 hours. I will travel to your area to conduct the research at a location you feel is most convenient. You will receive a $25 bookstore gift certificate for your time. Your identity will be kept entirely confidential.

I greatly appreciate any consideration you give to my request. I am happy to talk with you further should you have any questions. My email is tlknowlt@umich.edu and my phone number is 734-717-4999.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tamara Shreiner
Doctoral Candidate
University of Michigan

Adult Informed Consent

Dear Sir or Madame,

My name is Tamara Shreiner and I am a Ph.D. student in Educational Studies at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.   To complete my dissertation, I will be conducting a research study called "Expert-Novice Democratic Thinking." The purpose of this letter is to describe the study and request your participation.

Description of Research This research is attempting to describe people's thought processes as they solve problems and make decisions regarding civic and political issues in the United States. Specifically, I am interested in how people use knowledge (i.e., knowledge from personal experience, historical knowledge, knowledge of current events, knowledge of statistics, etc.) to reason through civic and political issues.

Participant Involvement If you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete a brief survey to gather background information. You will then be asked to participate in a research procedure called a "think-aloud," which asks you to verbalize your thoughts as you solve a problem. First, I will ask you to practice thinking aloud by solving a few simple math problems. Once you feel comfortable with the think aloud process, I will give you a problem related to a current public issue to solve and a number of documents related to the issue. The documents will consist of historical background information, newspaper articles, opinion pieces, tables and graphs, etc. You will be asked to address the problem while reading through the documents. I will only intervene to remind you to keep thinking aloud, should you become silent for more than a few seconds. When you are finished, I will conduct an interview asking you to try to remember and describe what you were thinking.

Audio Recording This study requires that I audio record the think aloud session. These recordings will be transcribed and analyzed for my dissertation. I will keep the recording and transcription in my files, which will be secured in a locked office.

Place and Length of Involvement The study will take place at a location you feel is most convenient. I anticipate that the study will take approximately 2-3 hours from start to finish.

Payment Out of gratitude for your time, I will give you a $25 gift certificate to a local bookstore.

Potential Risks and Benefits You will be addressing a civic and political issue, most of which are controversial. You may, therefore, feel uncomfortable talking about the issue. However, at no point, will I question or challenge your feelings or opinions. I am interested in how you think, not what you think. You may also feel uncomfortable if you do not know as much about the topic as you think you should. Because you will be provided information related to the topic, you may gain new knowledge as a result of the study. It is not expected that your knowledge on the topic is exhaustive.

Confidentiality You will not be identified in any reports on this study. Data will be recorded and transcribed, and kept in a securely locked office. All data will be destroyed

upon completion of all analysis and writing projects associated with this study. Records will be kept confidential to the extent provided by federal, state, and local law. However, the Institutional Review Board or university and government officials responsible for monitoring this study may inspect these records.

Voluntary Nature of Participation Participation in this project is voluntary. Even after you sign the informed consent document, you may decide to leave the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you may otherwise be entitled.

Contact Information If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact Tamara Shreiner at tlknowlt@umich.edu, or 734-565-8514. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Robert Bain at bbain@umich.edu. Should you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the Institutional Review Board, 540 E. Liberty Street, Suite 202, Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2210, (734) 936-0933, email: irbhsbs@umich.edu.

Sincerely,

Tamara Shreiner
Doctoral Candidate
The University of Michigan

Consent
I have read the information given above. I understand that all participants will be audio recorded. Tamara Shreiner has offered to answer any questions I may have concerning the study. I hereby consent to participate in the study.

ADULT SUBJECT OF RESEARCH

_____

Printed Name   Consenting signature

DATE: _____

Parent Informed Consent

Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Tamara Shreiner and I am a Ph.D. student in Educational Studies at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.   To complete my dissertation, I will be conducting a research study called "Expert-Novice Democratic Thinking." Your child's teacher recommended him/her as a potential participant for my study. The purpose of this letter is to describe the study and request permission for your child's participation.

Description of Research This research is attempting to describe people's thought processes as they solve problems and make decisions regarding civic and political issues in the United States. Specifically, I am interested in how people use knowledge (i.e., knowledge from personal experience, historical knowledge, knowledge of current events, knowledge of statistics, etc.) to reason through civic and political issues.

Participant Involvement If your child participates, he/she will be asked to complete a brief survey to gather background information. He/she will then be asked to participate in a research procedure called a "think-aloud," which asks subjects to verbalize their thoughts while solving a problem. First, I will ask the student to practice thinking aloud by solving a few simple math problems. Once he/she feels comfortable with the think aloud process, I will give him/her a problem related to a current public issue to solve and a number of documents related to the issue. The documents will consist of historical background information, newspaper articles, opinion pieces, tables and graphs, etc. The student will be asked to address the problem while reading through the documents. I will only intervene to remind him/her to keep thinking aloud, should he\she become silent for more than a few seconds. When he/she is finished, I will conduct an interview asking him/her to try to remember and describe what he/she was thinking.

Audio Recording This study requires that I audio record the think aloud session. These recordings will be transcribed and analyzed for my dissertation. I will keep the recording and transcription in my files, which will be secured in a locked office.

Place and Length of Involvement This study will take place in the student's school, in a location deemed appropriate by his/her teacher. I anticipate that the study will take approximately 2 hours from start to finish.

Payment Out of gratitude for the time your child will spend helping me with my research, I will give him/her a $25 gift certificate to a local bookstore.

Potential Risks and Benefits The student will be addressing a civic and political issue, most of which are controversial. The student may, therefore, feel uncomfortable talking about the issue. However, at no point, will I question or challenge his/her feelings or opinions. I am interested in how students think, not what they think. Because the student will be provided information related to the topic, he/she may gain new knowledge as a result of the study.

Confidentiality Participants will not be identified in any reports on this study. Data will be recorded and transcribed, and kept in a securely locked office. All data will be destroyed upon completion of all analysis and writing projects associated with this study. Records will be kept confidential to the extent provided by federal, state, and local law. However, the Institutional Review Board or university and government officials responsible for monitoring this study may inspect these records.

Voluntary Nature of Participation Participation in this project is voluntary. Your child may decide to leave the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which he/she may otherwise be entitled.

Contact Information If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact Tamara Shreiner at tlknowlt@umich.edu, or 734-565-8514. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Robert Bain at bbain@umich.edu. Should you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the Institutional Review Board, 540 E. Liberty Street, Suite 202, Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2210, (734) 936-0933, email: irbhsbs@umich.edu.

Sincerely,

Tamara Shreiner
Doctoral Candidate
The University of Michigan

Consent
I have read the information given above. I understand that all participants will be audio recorded. Tamara Shreiner has offered to answer any questions I may have concerning the study. I hereby give permission for my child, _____to participate in this study.

_____
Printed Name   Consenting signature

Relationship to Subject: _____

DATE: _____

<p style="text-align: center;">Student Assent</p>

Dear Student,

My name is Tamara Shreiner and I am a Ph.D. student in Educational Studies at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.   To complete my dissertation, I will be conducting a research study called "Expert-Novice Democratic Thinking." Your teacher has recommended you as a potential participant in my study. The purpose of this letter is to describe the study and request your participation.

Description of Research This research is attempting to describe people's thought processes as they solve problems and make decisions regarding civic and political issues in the United States. Specifically, I am interested in how people use knowledge (i.e., knowledge from personal experience, historical knowledge, knowledge of current events, knowledge of statistics, etc.) to reason through civic and political issues.

Participant Involvement If you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete a brief survey to gather background information. You will then be asked to participate in a research procedure called a "think-aloud," which asks you to verbalize your thoughts as you solve a problem. First, I will ask you to practice thinking aloud by solving a few simple math problems. Once you feel comfortable with the think aloud process, I will give you a problem related to a current public issue to solve and a number of documents related to the issue. The documents will consist of historical background information, newspaper articles, opinion pieces, tables and graphs, etc. You will be asked to address the problem while reading through the documents. I will only intervene to remind you to keep thinking aloud, should you become silent for more than a few seconds. When you are finished, I will conduct an interview asking you to try to remember and describe what you were thinking.

Audio Recording This study requires that I audio record the think aloud session. These recordings will be transcribed and analyzed for my dissertation. I will keep the recording and transcription in my files, which will be secured in a locked office.

Place and Length of Involvement This study will take place in your school, at a location deemed appropriate by your teacher. I anticipate that the study will take approximately 2 hours from start to finish.

Payment Out of gratitude for the time you will spend helping me with my research, I will give you a $25 gift certificate to a local bookstore.

Potential Risks and Benefits You will be addressing a civic and political issue, most of which are controversial. You may, therefore, feel uncomfortable talking about the issues. However, at no point, will I question or challenge your feelings or opinions. I am interested in how you think, not what you think. Because you will be provided with information related to the topic, you may gain new knowledge as a result of the study.

Confidentiality You will not be identified in any reports on this study. Data will be recorded and transcribed, and kept in a securely locked office. All data will be destroyed upon completion of all analysis and writing projects associated with this study. Records will be kept confidential to the extent provided by federal, state, and local law. However, the Institutional Review Board or university and government officials responsible for monitoring this study may inspect these records.

Voluntary Nature of Participation Participation in this project is voluntary. Even after you sign the student assent document, you may decide to leave the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you may otherwise be entitled. Even if your parent/guardian has signed the parental consent form, you may choose not to participate.

Contact Information If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact Tamara Shreiner at. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Robert Bain, at bbain@umich.edu. Should you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the Institutional Review Board, 540 E. Liberty Street, Suite 202, Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2210, (734) 936-0933, email: irbhsbs@umich.edu.

Sincerely,

Tamara Shreiner
Doctoral Candidate
The University of Michigan

Assent
I have read the information given above. I understand that all participants will be audio recorded. Tamara Shreiner has offered to answer any questions I may have concerning the study. I hereby agree to participate in the study.

SUBJECT OF RESEARCH

_____ _____
Printed Name   Assenting signature

DATE: _____

Appendix B

Surveys

Political Scientist Survey Questions

1. **Please list your degrees and where you received them**

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. **Research Area (Circle all that apply)**

American Government and Politics   Political Economy

Comparative Government and Politics   Political Psychology

Gender and Politics/Feminist Theory   Political Theory

Methods   Public Law

Formal Modeling   Public Policy and Administration

Organizational Theory   Race, Ethnicity, and Politics

Peace Research   Urban Politics

Political Development   World Politics/International Relations

Other_____

3. Please briefly describe your research

_____

_____

_____

4. To what community organizations working to address cultural, social, political, and/or religious interests and beliefs do you belong?

    _____

    _____

    _____

    Estimate how many hour/week you spend participating_____

5. Recent (last 5 years) Political Activity to Accomplish Public Purposes (Circle all that apply)

    Voting

    Attended a political rally

    Volunteering for a campaign

    Contributing money for a campaign

    Contributing money for a political cause

    Writing letter or email in support of political cause

    Petitioning

    Signing a petition

    Protesting

    Speaking publicly

    Political Leadership Role

    Engaging in Public Debate

    Other_____

Student Survey Questions

1. What is your date of birth? (Month/Day/Year) _____

2. What grade are you in? _____

3. What social studies courses have you completed in high school?

_____

4. What social studies course(s) are you currently taking?

_____

5. What is your sex? Male_____   Female_____

6. Which best describes your race/ethnicity?

   a. American Indian/Alaska Native _____

   b. Asian/Pacific Islander_____

   c. Black, not of Hispanic origin_____

   d. Hispanic_____

   e. Multi-racial_____

   f. White_____

   g. Other_____Please specify_____

7. Were you born in the United States? Yes_____   No_____

8. If no, what is your country of origin?_____

   How old were you when you came to the United States? _____

9. Do you get a daily newspaper at home? Yes_____ No_____

10. How often do you read the news or watch the news?

    a. Every day_____

    b. A few times a week_____

    c. Once a week_____

    d. A few times a month_____

    e. Once a month _____

f. Almost never _____

g. Never_____

11. About how many books are there in your home? Do not count newspapers, magazines or books for school

    a. None_____

    b. 1 – 10_____

    c. 11 – 50_____

    d. 51 – 100_____

    e. 101 – 200_____

    f. More than 200_____

12. Check off any of the following organizations you've participated in:

    a. A student council/student government_____

    b. A youth organization affiliated with a political party or union_____

    c. A group which prepares a school newspaper_____

    d. An environmental organization_____

    e. A student exchange program_____

    f. A human rights organization_____

    g. A group conducting voluntary activities to help the community_____

    h. A charity collecting money for a social cause_____

    i. Boy or Girl Scouts _____

    j. A cultural association or organization based on ethnicity_____

    k. An academic club _____

    l. An art, music or drama organization _____

    m. A sports organization or team_____

    n. An organization sponsored by a religious group_____

13. Think about all the organizations listed above. How often do you attend meetings or activities for any or all of these organizations?

    a. Almost every day (4 or more days a week) _____

    b. Several days (1 to 3 days a week) _____

    c. A few times each month _____

    d. Never or almost never_____

Appendix C

Selected NAEP Civics and Government Questions

Directions: For each of the following questions, choose the best answer and write the corresponding letter on the blank line next to each question.

_____ **1.** **Federalism: A way of organizing a nation so that two or more levels of government have authority over the same land and people.**

What 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.

_____ **2.** **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.
E) The public holds a referendum to decide which law should be enforced.

_____ **3.** **In the area of United States foreign policy, Congress shares power with the**

A) President
B) Supreme Court
C) state governments
D) United Nations

Questions 4 and 5 refer to the newspaper article below.

MICHIGAN WELFARE PLAN DRAWS UNLIKELY SUPPORT

    Michigan governor John Engler is pursuing changes in welfare policy that are pleasing the Clinton administration more than his Republican allies on Capitol Hill.

    The Democrats' unlikely and somewhat unwilling hero announced an ambitious pilot project . . . that seeks to cut welfare costs by providing generous social services so that poor people can go to work. Democrats call his plan enlightened. Republicans have been caught off guard.

    Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Democrat of New York, . . . praised Mr. Engler for breaking with congressional Republicans by using child care and transportation subsidies and fashioning a more active role for social workers in an effort to turn welfare recipients into workers.

—The New York Times, January 22, 1996

_____ **4.** **In what way does the article show one of the strengths of federalism?**

A) People will receive the same level of income support no matter where they live.
B) States may serve as sites for experimentation with new public policies.
C) The national government can force other states to follow Governor Engler's lead.
D) The federal government may prevent Michigan from treating its citizens unfairly.

_____ **5.** **Many congressional Republicans might object to Engler's plan because it**

A) involves increased government spending for transportation and child care
B) is not aimed at getting people off welfare and back to work
C) does not extend the social safety net far enough
D) places the state government in competition with private companies for employees

Americans volunteer to work with a wide variety of nongovernmental organizations. Volunteers provide social services, work to clean the environment, and help to educate the young. But while many people view volunteerism as a "good" thing, they do not understand just how important volunteers are to the health of American democracy. Volunteerism both makes people better citizens, and helps restrain the growth of government in a way that protects the freedom of all.

_____ **6. What is one example of the type of volunteer work referred to in the statement above?**

A) The Environmental Protection Agency cleans up toxic waste dumps.
B) A public school sponsor after-school programs for children whose parents work.
C) A youth group holds a food drive to help poor people.
D) Soldiers are sent to help put out forest fires threatening homes.

According to the European theory, men are divided into classes—some to toil and earn, others to seize and enjoy. According to the Massachusetts theory, all are to have an equal chance for earning. Vast and overshadowing private fortunes are among the greatest dangers to which the happiness of the people in a republic can be subjected.

The main idea set forth in the creeds of some political reformers, or revolutionizers, is, that some people are poor because others are rich. This idea supposes a fixed amount of property in the community, which, by fraud or force, or arbitrary law, is unequally divided among men. But education creates or develops new treasures, treasures not before possessed or dreamed of by anyone.

_____ **7. Mann suggests that universal public education can prevent the**

A) accumulation of private wealth
B) formation of a rigid and permanent class system
C) need for public charity
D) formation of stable republican government

8. **What is one important way in which central political principles of the United States government have had a major effect on United States foreign policy?**

A) The United States has usually supported movements in foreign countries to give all citizens basic economic rights.
B) The United States has played a leading role in the international environmental movement.
C) The United States has supported the growth of Western-style democracy in countries that were once communist dictatorships.
D) The United States has consistently encouraged its allies to develop federal systems of government.

Questions 9 and 10 are based on the quotation below.

> We have a constitutional system that so fragments and divides power that it's impossible to give this country effective, long-run leadership . . . . The system has led to an inability to plan and get on top of problems ahead of time. Even at best, this country has always been twenty to sixty years behind other industrial democracies in dealing with tough problems.
>
> —James MacGregor Burns, 1988

9. **Parliamentary systems might not show the same fragmentation that Burns finds in the American system because in parliamentary systems because**

A) more real power is given to local governments
B) power is not divided among three branches of government
C) governments do not try to play an active role in the economy
D) political parties do not differ over important issues

10. **Which aspect of United States government might Burns cite to support his argument?**

A) The use of the electoral college in presidential elections
B) The President's power as commander in chief
C) The division of policy-making power among national, state, and local governments
D) The role of political parties in congressional decision making

On May 17, 1954, in *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, the Supreme Court ruled that laws mandating racially segregated public school systems were unconstitutional. The Supreme Court later argued that federal courts should take steps to bring about the integration of segregated school systems "with all deliberate speed."

In 1957, Governor Orval Faubus of Arkansas called on the National Guard to turn away nine African American students as they attempted to enter Central High School in Little Rock. President Eisenhower, who did not support the *Brown* decision, called out federal troops to protect the rights of the African American students to attend the school.

_____ **11. President Eisenhower sent out federal troops because he**

  A) had a long career in the military
  B) believed that the governor needed his assistance
  C) was required by the Constitution to enforce the rule of law
  D) wanted to show that the federal government would protect the rights of protesters

_____ **12. The events described in the passage suggest that early attempts at school integration**

  A) led to a power struggle between state governments and the federal government
  B) were opposed by many in the South but were widely popular in other parts of the country
  C) proceeded without incident after the Little Rock standoff
  D) were supported by elected officials but opposed by the courts

Question 13 refers to the quotes below.

> "We need an intensified voter registration drive, a determined effort to integrate the public schools, lunch counters, public parks, theaters, etc."
> — Martin Luther King, Jr., 1961
>
> "These legislative and judicial victories did very little to improve the lot of millions of Negroes in the teeming ghettos of the North.... The issues which we confront are the hard core economic issues."
> — Martin Luther King, Jr., 1966

13. In what fundamental way do the two quotes above show different understandings of the rights of citizens?

A) In the first quote, rights are assumed to belong to individuals; in the second quote, rights are assigned to groups.

B) The first quote focuses on political and legal rights; the second quote focuses on economic rights and opportunities.

C) The first quote focuses on the rights of people in rural areas; the second quote focuses on the rights of people in cities.

D) The first quote defines rights as belonging to all humans; the second quote defines rights as belonging only to citizens.

Question 14 is about the graph below.

POLITICAL PARTY IDENTIFICATION, 1940-1994

Source: The Gallup Organization

■ Democrat   ▤ Republican   ☐ Independent
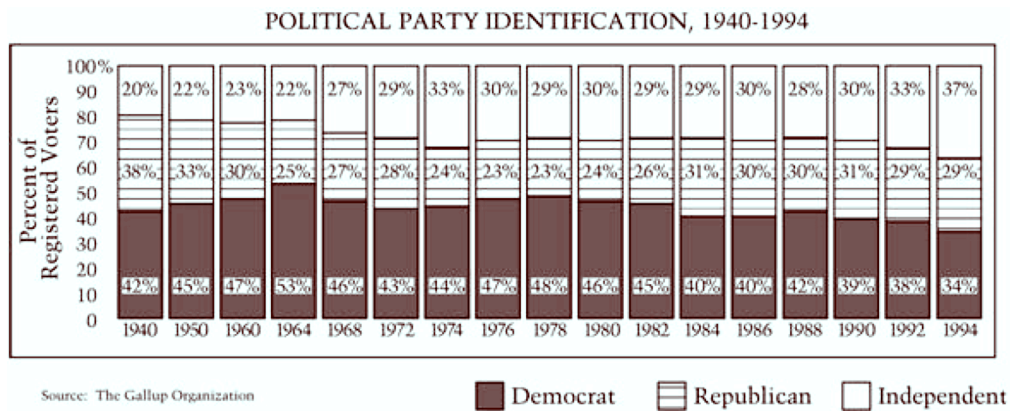
_____14. **In which year did the two main political parties attract the largest total percentage of all adult Americans?**

A) 1940
B) 1950
C) 1982
D) 1992

Question 15 is about the following political cartoon.

_____**15. What is the main message of the cartoon above?**

    A) Even though members of Congress say that they are for protecting the environment, they tend to drive big, gas-guzzling cars.

    B) Well-funded special interest groups have privileged access to Congress.

    C) Labor and business agree on which policies Congress should follow.

    D) People with money play no role in the political process.

Appendix D

Common Document Set

The Issue

The issue: Should politicians work toward a spirit of bipartisanship? Or are the partisan divisions between the Democratic and Republican parties actually a sign of a healthy democracy?

* Supporters of bipartisanship say: Partisan rancor has worsened in recent years, all but crippling Congress. For the good of the U.S., politicians must begin cooperating and compromising with members of the opposing political party. Most Americans say they hold moderate political views and deserve to be represented by politicians who do not consistently take a hard-line, partisan stance on major issues.

* Critics of bipartisanship say: It is silly and naive to think that bipartisan compromise will magically cure the problems that ail the U.S. Political change is most often brought about by politicians who remain firm and uncompromising in their beliefs. Partisanship is a natural, healthy and productive element of U.S. democracy.

Excerpt from "Bipartisanship." (2008, February 22). Issues & Controversies On File. Retrieved February 27, 2008, from Issues & Controversies

Document #1
Summary of the Issue

Most people agree that the U.S. government is sharply divided along party lines. Republicans and Democrats often disagree on how to resolve pressing issues facing the U.S. today. Such issues include taxes, terrorism, immigration, abortion, and global warming.

Democrats and Republicans have always had a tense relationship. But some political observers say the relationship has worsened in recent years, especially since the early 1990s. Democratic presidential hopeful Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) has said, "[O]ur leaders in Washington seem incapable of working together in a practical, common-sense way. Politics has become so bitter and partisan...that we can't tackle the big problems that demand solutions."

Indeed, many commentators criticize the "partisan" nature of U.S. politics. (The word partisan refers to faithful adherence to one particular philosophy, group or cause.) They argue that politicians should adopt a more bipartisan approach, compromising and working together to accomplish worthwhile goals. Supporters of bipartisanship say that a more bipartisan Congress would set U.S. politics on a more moderate course, which would accurately reflect the population as a whole. They argue that most Americans are tired of partisanship, which makes them feel disconnected from politics. Supporters contend that a more moderate, bipartisan political climate would lead citizens to be more interested in American government.

Meanwhile, critics argue that bipartisanship is not a realistic goal. They think that "bipartisanship" is only a political buzzword. Bipartisanship *sounds* good because it implies cooperation and positive feelings, but it is really meaningless. Opponents of bipartisanship argue that bipartisanship results in watered-down legislation that does not really accomplish anything. They assert that change usually happens when a party stands up for what it believes, without compromising those beliefs.

Adapted from "Bipartisanship." (2008, February 22). Issues & Controversies On File.
Retrieved February 27, 2008, from Issues & Controversies

Document #2

Top 10 Partisan Gaps over Political Priorities

Priorities

Priority	Democrats	Republicans
Improving educational system	72%	54%
Securing Medicare	66%	47%
Dealing with illegal immigration	43%	64%
Strengthening the military	37%	62%
Protecting the environment	67%	39%
Dealing with problems of poor	62%	34%
Reducing health care costs	81%	53%
Improving job situation	76%	43%
Dealing with global warming	47%	12%
Providing insurance to uninsured	65%	27%

% of Respondents Who Consider Each a "Top Priority"

☐ Democrats   ☐ Republicans

Resolving the problems surrounding unemployment, health care, the environment, education and poverty is more important to Democrats than to Republicans, according to a January 2008 survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, a nonpartisan think tank. Meanwhile, Republicans are more likely than Democrats to say that dealing with illegal immigration and strengthening the U.S. military are high priorities. Such differences illustrate the partisan gap between the two major political parties, observers say.

Source: Pew Research Center for the People and the Press

Graph from "Bipartisanship." (2008, February 22). Issues & Controversies On File. Retrieved February 27, 2008, from Issues & Controversies.

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Document #3

Preferred 2008 Presidential Candidates

Whom would you most like to vote for in the 2008 presidential election?

A moderate Democrat — 32%

A liberal Democrat — 17%

Other/depends/don't know — 20%

A conservative Republican — 15%

A moderate Republican — 16%

Nearly half of those surveyed in a January 2007 poll conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press said they would prefer to vote for a moderate candidate in the 2008 presidential election. Supporters of bipartisanship have long argued that most Americans favor politicians with moderate views. However, both the Democratic and Republican parties have become more partisan in recent years, supporters say, leaving little room for the sort of bipartisan politics that Americans say they prefer.

Source: Pew Research Center for the People and the Press

Graph from "Bipartisanship." (2008, February 22). Issues & Controversies On File. Retrieved February 27, 2008, from Issues & Controversies.

Document #4
America Has Always Had Divisive Politics
by William Schambra

William Schambra is the director of the Bradley Center for Philanthropy and Civic Renewal at the Hudson Institute.

The level of divisiveness and nastiness in American politics is no higher now than it has been throughout American history, and it is no more of a problem now than it was in the past. The American democratic system was designed to deal with these inevitable divisions among voters, and historically it has done so quite well. American citizens should remember this and resist political reforms that would supposedly cut down on divisiveness by letting scholars and other elites, rather than average voters, control policy discussions.

"Let's step on them!" exhorts the early 1950s Republican election poster hanging in my basement. It features the party's pachyderm with his foot planted squarely on two squirming figures, one a mustachioed Stalin look-alike labeled "Communism," the other a spectacled, briefcase-toting bureaucrat labeled "New Dealism" [Democratic president Franklin Delano Roosevelt's political philosophy].

Whenever I hear the complaint that today's politics has reached unprecedented levels of nastiness, I recall that poster from what was supposed to be a "golden age" of politics, brimming with civil discourse, bipartisanship, and national unity. In fact, politics for our parents' "greatest generation" was just as boisterous, nasty, and over the top as it is today—indeed, as it always has been, for Americans.

Excerpt from Schambra, W. (2006). America Has Always Had Divisive Politics. In J. Bauder (Ed.), Is the Political Divide Harming America? *Detroit: Greenhaven Press.*

Document #5
In Defense of Partisan Bickering
by Michael Kinsley

Michael Kinsley is an American political journalist, commentator television host and liberal pundit.

This postpartisan era everybody wants is not going to happen, and the great longing for it is childish. What Americans say they want--or even what they think they want--needs to be taken with a grain of salt. Their objection, very often, is less to politics than to arithmetic. Do they want our health-care system fixed? Yes. Do they want Social Security and Medicare on a more solid footing? Absolutely. Will they pay for these things? Not a chance. There are no pragmatic, nonideological solutions to the big question of what the government should do and what it shouldn't. You can have your government programs and pay for them, like a good liberal, or you can have your tax cuts and forgo the programs, like a good conservative. Asking for both is the opposite of pragmatic.

Another name for the much derided "politics as usual" is democracy. Things get disagreeable because people disagree. Ideology is a good thing, not a bad one— and partisanship is at its worst when it is not about ideology. That's when it descends into trivia and slime. Ideology doesn't have to mean mindless intransigence or a refusal to accommodate new evidence or changing circumstances. It is just a framework of basic principles. A framework is more than just a list: all the pieces should fit together.
A politician ought to have an ideology. For that matter, so should a voter. Although ideology is sometimes dismissed as a substitute for thinking, it more likely is evidence that you've thought things through…

Many or most of the decisions that an elected official must make on your behalf aren't even known when you must decide whether to vote for him or her. An ideology functions like a pledge or a promise, and it allows you, the voter, to judge the politicians seeking your vote in two different ways: their politics and their character. Do you share his or her political principles? And does he or she stick to them as new issues arise? Without some kind of ideology, the politician is asking voters to buy a pig in a poke.

Excerpt from Kinsley, M. (2007). In Defense of Partisan Bickering. (Notebook) (Viewpoint essay). Time, 169(6), 41.

Document #6
The Political Divide Makes Honest Policy Debate More Difficult
David Brooks

David Brooks was an editor and columnist for the Wall Street Journal and the Weekly Standard and has been an op-ed columnist for the New York Times since 2003. He is the author of several books, including Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There and On Paradise Drive: How We Live Now (And Always Have) in the Future Tense.

The political divide is harmful to America because intense partisanship causes people to have more loyalty to their political "team" than to the country, or even to the truth. In this atmosphere, debate becomes more of a contest to score points for one's team than about honestly discussing solutions to problems. This partisan attitude even extends to voters' views of reality: rather than using facts and logic to choose a political philosophy, voters choose a political philosophy and then shape their views of reality to fit their politics. Middle ground for consensus exists on many social and political issues, but it is difficult to see because of this extreme partisanship.

A running argument I have been having with members of the [George W.] Bush administration is revelatory of how they think about discourse and democracy. The first column I wrote for The New York Times ... began something like this: "People in the Bush administration will never admit a mistake, but they do change the way they effect policy." I got a call the next day from a friend in the administration to talk about why they never admit a mistake. He described a comment, made experimentally, admitting a mistake. He and many in the administration had taken a trip to Baghdad [Iraq] shortly after the ground war ended [in 2003]. When they came back, [Deputy Secretary of Defense] Paul Wolfowitz said publicly, "We made five mistakes so far in this war," and listed them. The headlines the next day were, "Wolfowitz: We Were Stupid" and other negative sound bites.

My friend's point was that Washington D.C. is a not a town in which you can have a give-and-take conversation on issues. The town is so polarized that admitting a mistake gives your opponents a chance to leap on you and then spend the next two weeks talking about your admitted mistake. He said, "We [in the Bush administration] have found ourselves surrounded by Democrats who, when we bring them into the White House, go out on the White House lawn and trash it. The press is only interested in taking us down—not only because they may ideologically differ, but because it is their job to take down administrations." His argument was that, in this polarized age, any administration has to have a communications strategy. And the communications strategy that [the Bush] administration came up with was based on the idea that you never make concessions. You may have journalists and public intellectuals who want to know how you are making decisions, who want to see you weigh the pros and cons,

who want to engage in an argument with you, but you strategically choose never to take part in that argument. You never let them see you make a decision. You never publicly deliberate because the system is so broken, with such strong backlash, that you cannot afford to reveal such information.

Excerpt from David Brooks, "A Polarized America," Hedgehog Review, volume 6, issue 3, Fall 2004. Based on the transcript of the Labrosse-Levinson Lecture given by Brooks at the University of Virginia, October 20, 2004.

Document #7
A Did-Something Congress
The Washington Post **(DC) - February 14, 2008**
David S. Broder

The voters' message is getting through, not only in settling the fights for the Republican and Democratic nominations but in changing the mind-set of Washington.

The clearest evidence of the change is what happened last week on the economic stimulus bill. A week ahead of their self-imposed deadline, the House and Senate, by overwhelming votes, sent to President Bush almost exactly the kind of relief measure he had sought for the staggering economy.

It was a dramatic reversal of the gridlock that had characterized executive-congressional relations throughout 2007, and it reflects the recognition by both Republicans and Democrats of the public disenchantment with official Washington that has been one of the dominant themes of the 2008 presidential campaign.

As one example of the turnabout that has taken place, consider the comments of House Minority Leader John Boehner just before the 380 to 34 vote to approve Senate amendments and send the bill to the president.

"Over the course of the last year," the Ohio Republican said, "the speaker [Nancy Pelosi] and I didn't have a policy conversation. I can tell you that we have had about 25 over the last several weeks. And for the health of our institution, I think it is good to come together and find common ground where we can. And I am glad that we were able to find common ground on this economic growth package, and I am hopeful that we will continue to try to find places where we can work together to solve problems that the American people expect us to solve…."

…Sen. Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, the No. 3 man in the Republican leadership, said, "There is one message we hear consistently from the people we represent in this country. It is: They would like for us to change the way we do business in Washington, D.C.

"They would like for us to come and focus our attention on big problems that affect everyday Americans -- whether it is helping each American have health-care insurance, whether it is keeping our jobs from going overseas, whether it is the $3 price of gasoline—and work together in a principled way to solve it.

"They do not mind our having big debates on big issues, about big principles such as liberty versus security or terrorism. What they do not like is the 'playpen' politics, when we bring out the charts and hire the campaign strategists and degenerate into what ought to be in a kindergarten or in a political campaign."

Alexander had it exactly right. And so did Rep. Barney Frank, the Massachusetts Democrat who helped frame the housing part of the stimulus package. He noted that because of the short-term urgency of the recession threat, "we are able to come together in a bipartisan way."

"And," he said, " partisanship is, I believe, a much unfairly maligned concept. Partisanship is essential to a healthy democracy. There has never been a self-governing polity in the history of the world, I believe, of any size where political parties did not emerge, because large numbers of people trying to govern themselves need an organizing principle other than the authority of the leadership."

Alexander and Frank are two of a growing number of Washington partisans who recognize and seize the opportunities for agreement and action. That augurs well, not just for the rest of this year but for the new administration and Congress that will arrive in
2009.

David, S. B. (2008). A Did-Something Congress. Washington Post, The *(DC), p. A25.*

Document #8
A Bipartisan Bid On Mortgage Aid Is Gaining Speed
The New York Times (NY) - April 2, 2008
David M. Herszenhorn and Vikas Bajaj

Casting aside partisan differences, Senate Democratic and Republican leaders said on Tuesday that they would work urgently on a package of legislation to help millions of homeowners at risk of foreclosure, with the hope of bringing a bill to the floor as early as Wednesday afternoon.

The new pledge of cooperation was the latest sign of fast-growing consensus among Congress, the Bush administration and financial regulators that broader government action was needed to prevent a torrent of new foreclosures and further collapse of the housing and residential mortgage markets.

And it reflected the mounting pressure on Congressional Republicans and the White House to extend a helping hand to average Americans after the Federal Reserve's intervention in the near collapse and proposed sale of Bear Stearns, the New York investment bank, to JPMorgan Chase.

As lawmakers worked Tuesday to refine details of the package, the new spirit of collaboration raised hopes of swift action on broader measures that some Democrats say could potentially help as many as 1.5 million homeowners by refinancing riskier adjustable-rate mortgages into traditional 30-year loans.

At a minimum, the bipartisan package was expected to include up to $200 million to expand counseling programs for homeowners at risk of foreclosure, $10 billion in tax-exempt bonds for local housing authorities to refinance subprime loans, $4 billion in grants for local governments to buy foreclosed properties and a $15,000 tax credit for purchasers of foreclosed homes or newly built homes that have been sitting vacant…

Senate Democrats and Republicans announced their plans at a joint news conference, an exercise so rare, given the partisan acrimony that has dominated Capitol Hill in recent months, that the majority leader, Senator Harry Reid of Nevada, felt compelled to offer a disclaimer: "This is not April Fool's," he said. "This is serious business."

"We know that the smoke out there is a housing crisis, the fire is the economy," Mr. Reid said. "This is a crisis that we have. The only way it's going to be solved is working together…"

The rare joint news conference followed a procedural vote in which the Senate agreed, 94 to 1, to open formal debate on a Democratic package of housing legislation, including the expansion of mortgage counseling and the bankruptcy change.

Republicans had blocked the measure in late February. Since then, the financial markets have experienced additional turmoil, including the near collapse of Bear Stearns and intervention by the Federal Reserve.

That prompted a barrage of criticism from Democrats, who accused the Bush administration and Republicans of rushing to help Wall Street while ignoring Main Street. And lawmakers then went home for a two-week recess where many said they had gotten an earful from constituents on the housing problems as well as rising gasoline prices.

And by the time they returned to Washington on Monday, it was clear that senators in both parties felt enormous pressure to make progress on a housing bill…

After weeks of often heated talk, including warnings from some Republicans that they did not want to commit taxpayer funds to what could be nothing more than a bailout for greedy lenders and irresponsible homeowners, there has been a more reasoned discussion in recent days about taking prudent steps to protect the wider economy.

Herszenhorn, D. M., & Bajaj, V. (2008). A Bipartisan Bid On Mortgage Aid Is Gaining Speed. New York Times, The *(NY), p. 1.*

Appendix E

Chosen Document Set

The Evolution of Partisan Politics in the U.S.

Historians say partisanship has always existed in the United States. Indeed, the original framers of the Constitution opposed the idea of political parties, fearing excessive partisanship could cripple the young democracy. They spoke often about the dangers of ideologically monolithic "factions" dominating the federal government. James Madison famously decried political factions in his essay "Federalist No. 10," and George Washington addressed the dangers of party politics in his 1796 Farewell Address.

Despite such warnings, political parties quickly formed in the U.S. John Adams, Washington's successor as president, was elected as a member of the Federalist Party. The Federalists favored a strong central government and advocated building an alliance with Great Britain. Their main opponents, the Democratic-Republican Party—led by Adams's vice president, Thomas Jefferson—supported states' rights and promoted an alliance with France.

Despite Adams's triumph in the election of 1796, Democratic-Republicans dominated U.S. politics throughout the first two decades of the 19th century. Beginning with Jefferson in 1800, Democratic-Republicans won seven consecutive presidential elections. Indeed, the Federalist Party dissolved by the mid-1810s, ushering in a single-party era largely devoid of partisan politics. In 1817, Boston journalist Benjamin Russell declared that the U.S. was experiencing an "Era of Good Feeling."

That era would prove to be exceedingly brief, however. The Democratic-Republican Party began to fracture during the run-up to the election of 1824. One faction, led by John Quincy Adams and Henry Clay, wanted the federal government to spend more money on infrastructure and industry. That was an idea that the other contingent, led by Andrew Jackson, firmly opposed. After Adams won the closely contested 1824 election, Jackson left the Democratic-Republicans to form a new party: the Democratic Party.

Running as a Democrat, Jackson handily defeated Adams in the 1828 election. Democrats won six of the eight presidential elections held between 1828 and 1856; the short-lived Whig party won the other two.

Meanwhile, the Republican Party did not emerge until the late 1850s, a time when slavery was quickly becoming the most contentious issue in American life. Abraham Lincoln led the Republicans. He argued that slavery was "a moral, a social and a political wrong" and should not be allowed to spread. The Democratic Party, meanwhile, was divided on the issue: Northern Democrats opposed the spread of slavery, while southern Democrats maintained that local, state and territorial governments should decide the legality of slavery. That disagreement--combined with numerous other factors, including Lincoln's victory in the presidential election of 1860—eventually led Southern states to secede from the U.S., leading to the Civil War (1861-65).

Although not strictly a partisan affair, the Civil War affected the evolution of partisan politics in the U.S. Specifically, the war helped to establish the Republican and Democratic parties as the two chief American political entities. It also cemented their rivalry; in the years following the North's triumph in the war, members of both parties said voting for the other party was like political treason. Additionally, the two parties differed on policy issues, with Republicans favoring a strong federal government and Democrats advocating states' rights. Nevertheless, an uneasy calm settled across the U.S. in the decades following the Civil War.

Partisanship was a significant factor during the next pivotal era in U.S. history, beginning with the stock market crash of 1929 and the subsequent global economic depression. In the 1930s, President Franklin D. Roosevelt (D, 1933-45), along with a heavily Democratic Congress, ushered in a slate of reforms designed to rescue the U.S. economy. Those reforms—collectively referred to as the New Deal—involved expanding the federal government's authority over economic matters to unprecedented levels.

Congressional Republicans campaigned against the New Deal, even likening it to socialism. However, the reforms proved to be extremely popular among ordinary Americans. Based on the lingering effects of the New Deal's popularity, historians say, Democrats went on to hold a majority in both houses of Congress for the next four decades.

Roosevelt's historic three-term-plus presidency was not always characterized by such partisan bitterness, however. In 1941, Japanese forces attacked a U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, in Hawaii, killing nearly 2,400 Americans. Following that attack, Democrats and Republicans in Congress united to declare war on Japan, thus pulling the U.S. into World War II (1939-45).

The bipartisanship did not end there, scholars say. According to Charles Kupchan, a professor of international affairs at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., and Peter Trubowitz, an associate professor of government at the University of Texas at Austin, Roosevelt's emphasis on bipartisanship during

World War II helped to launch a new era of political cooperation in foreign policy that would last for decades. That spirit of cooperation helped U.S. politicians design a coherent approach to the challenges of the Cold War—a rivalry between the U.S. and Soviet Union that lasted nearly half a century—without suffering many significant partisan clashes, Kupchan and Trubowitz write.

However, observers say bipartisanship was the exception, not the rule, in 20th-century U.S. politics. The turbulent 1960s, marked by events such as the civil rights movement and growing U.S. military involvement in the Vietnam War (1959-75), demonstrated the differences between conservatism and liberalism, the two dominant political ideologies. Conservatives started gravitating toward the Republican Party, which emphasized small government and low taxes. Liberals flocked to the Democratic Party, which advocated well-funded federal social programs and championed other so-called progressive causes, such as gay rights and feminism.

Consequently, the political parties experienced a geographical realignment during the 1960s. The southern U.S., which had long voted Democratic, switched its allegiance to the Republicans. Northeastern and West Coast states shifted from Republican to Democratic. That political division exists to this day, observers note. However, some politicians have managed to overcome that polarization. President Ronald Reagan (R, 1981-89) attracted the support of millions of mostly white, working-class Democrats from Northern states. Those "Reagan Democrats" contributed significantly to Reagan's landslide victories in the 1980 and 1984 elections.

From "The Evolution of Bipartisan Politics in the U.S." (2008, February 22). Issues & Controversies On File. Retrieved February 27, 2008, from Issues & Controversies

Policy Statements by the Democratic and Republican Parties

Following are excerpts from the Web sites of the Democratic National Committee (www.democrats.org) and the Republican National Committee (www.gop.com), outlining each party's stance on certain critical issues facing the U.S.:

ON ENERGY
Democrats: "We will create a cleaner, greener and stronger America by reducing our dependence on foreign oil, eliminating billions in subsidies for oil and gas companies and use the savings to provide consumer relief and develop energy alternatives, and investing in energy independent technology."

Republicans: "As the global economy becomes more competitive, America must find new alternatives to oil, pursue promising new technologies, and find better ways to generate more electricity." The RNC's Web site specifically promotes the increased use of nuclear power, natural gas, clean coal technology and renewable energy sources such as wind power.

ON HEALTH CARE
Democrats: "In the wealthiest, most powerful nation on earth, no one should have to choose between taking their child to a doctor and paying the rent. Democrats are committed to making sure every single American has access to affordable, effective health care coverage."

Republicans: The Republicans' health-care plan "will make private health insurance more affordable and increase the number of Americans with health insurance. The plan will also help our nation move away from reliance on government-run health care and toward a system in which Americans have better access to basic, affordable private insurance, and increased ownership of their medical decisions."

ON THE ECONOMY
Democrats: "The Democratic Party supports fair trade agreements that raise standards for all workers here and abroad, while making American businesses more competitive, and we don't believe in tax giveaways that reward companies for moving American jobs overseas."

Republicans: The RNC's Web site says that Republicans stand for "restraining spending by the federal government" as well as promoting "economic growth" by making tax cuts passed by President Bush (R) permanent.

ON HOMELAND SECURITY
Democrats: "Democrats have a plan that is comprehensive--from repairing our military, to winning the war on terror, to protecting our homeland security, to ensuring success in Iraq and freeing America of its dependence on foreign oil-- and it will finally prepare America for the security needs of the 21st century."

Republicans: The Republicans say they are "committed to keeping the nation strong and secure through strengthening our military, deploying a missile defense system, strengthening the NATO alliance and supporting military families and veterans."

ON IMMIGRATION
Democrats: "Democrats are fighting for laws that will: secure our borders, protect all U.S. workers and their wages and prevent exploitation of immigrant workers, reunite families, [and] allow immigrants who pay taxes and don't have trouble with the law a path to earn the opportunities and responsibilities of U.S. citizenship."

Republicans: The official Republican party platform, published in 2004, states that the party supports open borders, stating that "America is a stronger and better nation because of the hard work and entrepreneurial spirit of immigrants." However, most Republicans reject the idea of granting legal amnesty to the estimated 12 million undocumented workers currently living in the U.S., a plan the Democrats support.

"Policy Statements by Democratic and Republican Parties." (2008, February 22). Issues & Controversies On File. Retrieved February 27, 2008, from Issues & Controversies

Recent Key Events

1992

Gov. Bill Clinton (D, Ark.) defeats President George H. W. Bush (R, 1989-93) in the November presidential election. Clinton becomes one of the most polarizing presidents ever, inspiring fierce loyalty from most Democrats and vitriol from most Republicans.

1994

Republicans dominate the midterm elections, gaining control of both the House and the Senate for the first time in more than 40 years. The so-called Republican Revolution is led by Rep. Newt Gingrich (R, Ga.), who is elevated to Speaker of the House shortly thereafter. Some historians say that the 1994 midterm elections launched a new era of extreme partisanship in Washington, D.C.

2001

Terrorist attacks against the U.S. on Sept. 11 briefly usher in a mood of bipartisan cooperation in Congress. In the days following the attacks, President Bush (R) asks for, and receives, congressional approval to launch a military operation in Afghanistan, the country suspected of harboring the terrorists who attacked the U.S. In October, a now controversial antiterrorism bill called the USA PATRIOT Act is passed by Congress with overwhelming bipartisan support.

2002

A proposed military operation in Iraq receives broad bipartisan approval in both the House and Senate in October. The following March, a U.S.-led coalition launches Operation Iraqi Freedom.

2006

A group of former Democratic and Republican campaign advisers form Unity08, an organization dedicated to getting a bipartisan ticket on the presidential ballot in 2008. Unity08 representatives argue that partisan politics is ruining the U.S., and that politicians must make a concerted effort to "reach across the aisle" and cooperate with members of the other party if they want to accomplish anything. The organization folds in early 2008, however, due to minimal public interest.

2008

Sens. Barack Obama (D, Ill.) and John McCain (R, Ariz.)--both of whom are running for president in 2008--are often cited by political commentators as "postpartisan" candidates with the potential to bridge the ideological gap between Republicans and Democrats.

"Recent Key Events in the History of Bipartisanship." (2008, February 22). Issues & Controversies On File. Retrieved February 27, 2008, from Issues & Controversies

Excerpt from The Federalist No. 10
The Union as a Safeguard Against Domestic Faction and Insurrection
From the New York Packet. Friday, November 23, 1787.
James Madison

AMONG the numerous advantages promised by a well constructed Union, none deserves to be more accurately developed than its tendency to break and control the violence of faction. The friend of popular governments never finds himself so much alarmed for their character and fate, as when he contemplates their propensity to this dangerous vice. He will not fail, therefore, to set a due value on any plan which, without violating the principles to which he is attached, provides a proper cure for it. The instability, injustice, and confusion introduced into the public councils, have, in truth, been the mortal diseases under which popular governments have everywhere perished; as they continue to be the favorite and fruitful topics from which the adversaries to liberty derive their most specious declamations. The valuable improvements made by the American constitutions on the popular models, both ancient and modern, cannot certainly be too much admired; but it would be an unwarrantable partiality, to contend that they have as effectually obviated the danger on this side, as was wished and expected. Complaints are everywhere heard from our most considerate and virtuous citizens, equally the friends of public and private faith, and of public and personal liberty, that our governments are too unstable,that the public good is disregarded in the conflicts of rival parties, and that measures are too often decided, not according to the rules of justice and the rights of the minor party, but by the superior force of an interested and overbearing majority. However anxiously we may wish that these complaints had no foundation, the evidence, of known facts will not permit us to deny that they are in some degree true. It will be found, indeed, on a candid review of our situation, that some of the distresses under which we labor have been erroneously charged on the operation of our governments; but it will be found, at the same time, that other causes will not alone account for many of our heaviest misfortunes; and, particularly, for that prevailing and increasing distrust of public engagements, and alarm for private rights, which are echoed from one end of the continent to the other. These must be chiefly, if not wholly, effects of the unsteadiness and injustice with which a factious spirit has tainted our public administrations.

Excerpt from George Washington's Farewell Address, 1796

I have already intimated to you the danger of parties in the State, with particular reference to the founding of them on geographical discriminations. Let me now take a more comprehensive view, and warn you in the most solemn manner against the baneful effects of the spirit of party generally.

This spirit, unfortunately, is inseparable from our nature, having its root in the strongest passions of the human mind. It exists under different shapes in all governments, more or less stifled, controlled, or repressed; but, in those of the popular form, it is seen in its greatest rankness, and is truly their worst enemy.

The alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge, natural to party dissension, which in different ages and countries has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, is itself a frightful despotism. But this leads at length to a more formal and permanent despotism. The disorders and miseries which result gradually incline the minds of men to seek security and repose in the absolute power of an individual; and sooner or later the chief of some prevailing faction, more able or more fortunate than his competitors, turns this disposition to the purposes of his own elevation, on the ruins of public liberty.

Without looking forward to an extremity of this kind (which nevertheless ought not to be entirely out of sight), the common and continual mischiefs of the spirit of party are sufficient to make it the interest and duty of a wise people to discourage and restrain it.

It serves always to distract the public councils and enfeeble the public administration. It agitates the community with ill-founded jealousies and false alarms, kindles the animosity of one part against another, foments occasionally riot and insurrection. It opens the door to foreign influence and corruption, which finds a facilitated access to the government itself through the channels of party passions. Thus the policy and the will of one country are subjected to the policy and will of another.

There is an opinion that parties in free countries are useful checks upon the administration of the government and serve to keep alive the spirit of liberty. This within certain limits is probably true; and in governments of a monarchical cast, patriotism may look with indulgence, if not with favor, upon the spirit of party. But in those of the popular character, in governments purely elective, it is a spirit not to be encouraged.

From their natural tendency, it is certain there will always be enough of that spirit for every salutary purpose. And there being constant danger of excess, the effort ought to be by force of public opinion, to mitigate and assuage it. A fire not to be quenched, it demands a uniform vigilance to prevent its bursting into a flame, lest, instead of warming, it should consume.

Politicians turn steroid hearing into a partisan squabble
The New York Times-February 14, 2008
H. Araton

It was difficult to decide which of the camps had the greater divide here Wednesday, Roger Clemens's and Brian McNamee's, or the Democrats and Republicans trying to get at the truth that either Clemens or McNamee wasn't telling.

Democrats on the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform generally went after Clemens. Republicans tended to stalk McNamee. Then they denied that partisanship had ruled the day, even as Henry A. Waxman, the committee chairman, and Tom Davis, the ranking Republican, held a joint news conference and sounded as if they had attended different hearings in Room 2154 of the Rayburn Building.

"I thought Mr. McNamee was very credible," Waxman of California said.

"McNamee's obviously not the most reliable witness," Davis of Virginia said…

… Clemens, defiant when allowed to ramble, flummoxed and evasive when committee members pushed back, played every emotional card he could. Above all, he cast himself as the great American success story and patriot, who proudly wore the uniform of Team U.S.A. in the World Baseball Classic, who dutifully spoke to the troops in Qatar, Kuwait and Afghanistan, who did everything but liberate Kabul from the Taliban.

But who, in the final apolitical analysis, didn't have anything resembling a convincing argument for why anyone should believe that McNamee had invented a great fiction about Clemens after telling the truth about Chuck Knoblauch, Pettitte and, yes, himself.

Hours into the hearing came a memorable sound bite, from Elijah E. Cummings, Democrat of Maryland, who said he had determined Pettitte to be the absentee voice that tipped the scale in favor of McNamee, and in effect made Clemens the person most risking a potential perjury charge.

"It's hard to believe you, sir," Cummings said. "I hate to say that. You're one of my heroes, but it's hard to believe you."

In effect, Clemens's argument came down to McNamee being a troubled man out to destroy him. But when the tape of their telephone conversation recorded by Clemens was played weeks ago, didn't McNamee sound more distraught over having to give Clemens up?

Why, almost all of the committee Republicans asked, should the word of a drug dealer, as McNamee was characterized in one exchange with Christopher Shays of Connecticut, stand up against the pitcher considered the best of his generation and perhaps ever?

…Dan Burton, Republican of Indiana, tried to portray McNamee as incapable of telling the truth because he had admittedly lied for years about his involvement with performance-enhancing drugs. Lost, apparently, on Burton was McNamee's stated and obvious purpose for lying, to protect Clemens, until he was trapped into the truth by the Mitchell investigation.

Was a hearing on baseball and steroids that turned into "Hannity & Colmes" a reflection of a culture that is depressingly polarized? A better question for voters to answer in November, but where the case of Clemens versus McNamee goes from here -- to the court of public opinion or on to the Department of Justice -- may depend on which party has control of this committee or even the White House next year.

Araton, H. (2008). Politicians turn steroid hearing into a partisan squabble.(Sports Desk)(SPORTS OF THE TIMES). *The New York Times, 157*(54220), D1(L).

Election shaping agenda on Hill - Democrats push bills that won't pass to outline differences with Republicans.
The Washington Times (DC) - March 30, 2008
Sean Lengell

Democrats, eager to trump President Bush's bully pulpit on Republican causes, are using their position as the majority party in Congress to push an agenda they hope will propel them to victory in November's elections.

Much of their platform is unpassable or faces presidential vetoes that likely won't be overridden, including measures to end the Iraq war, limit the Bush administration's surveillance authority and roll back nearly $18 billion in oil-company tax breaks to pay for renewable-energy incentives and energy-conservation rewards.

But even in defeat, Democratic leaders are confident that by highlighting their differences with Republicans, they can show the electorate what Washington could accomplish if Democrats controlled the White House and held larger majorities in the House and Senate.

"The public expects Congress to work together and the president to sign legislation into law," said Nadeam Elshami, spokesman for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, California Democrat.

"However, if there are clear differences between Democrats and Republicans .. then [Democrats] will move forward, because it's important for the American people to know that this is what we stand for," he said

Congressional Democrats have accused Republicans and the Bush administration of playing partisan games by stubbornly obstructing the legislative progress.

Of Mr. Bush's nine vetoes during his presidency, eight have come at the expense of Democratic-crafted bills since the party took control of Congress in January 2008. Only one Bush veto - a bill authorizing $23 billion in new water projects - was successfully overridden by Congress, last November.

"Just because there's a veto threat doesn't mean we're not going to move ahead on those [measures] - we will," Mr. Elshami said.

Democrats have complained that congressional Republicans repeatedly have killed Democratic measures by using parliamentary procedures, such as motions to recommit in the House and filibusters in the Senate.

But Republicans say they're only trying to improve legislation that Democrats have developed without their input.

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"We're using the very limited tools available to the minority," said Michael Steel, a spokesman for House Minority Leader John A. Boehner, Ohio Republican.

"On a score of other issues, [Democrats] have chosen a go-it-alone, my way or the highway model that guarantees that bills often will not pass the Senate, and for certain will not be signed into law."

Democrats have little alternative than to push ahead with measures they know have little hope of becoming law because the party doesn't hold a "veto-proof" two-thirds majority in both houses of Congress, said Tom Mann, a congressional expert with the Brookings Institution, a liberal Washington think tank.

"Unlike [presidents] Reagan and Clinton, Bush is not interested in doing business with the other party unless they simply accept his agenda," Mr. Mann said.

"As a consequence, much of what they will do [this year] will be geared to the fall campaign," he said…

Sean Lengell. (2008). Election shaping agenda on Hill - Democrats push bills that won't pass to outline differences with Republicans. Washington Times, The (DC), p. A01.

Appendix F

Think Aloud Protocol

Practice Think Aloud Protocol

In this experiment I am interested in what you say to yourself as you perform a task I give to you. In order to do this I will ask you to THINK ALOUD as you work on the problem given. What I mean by think aloud is that I want you to tell me EVERYTHING you are thinking from the time you first see the question until you give an answer. I would like you to talk aloud CONSTANTLY from the time I present each problem until you have given your final answer to the question. I don't want you to try to plan out what you say or try to explain to me what you are saying. Just act as if you are alone in the room speaking to yourself. It is most important that you keep talking. If you are silent for any long period of time I will ask you to talk. Do you understand what I want you do?

Good, now we will begin with some practice problems. First I want you to multiply these two numbers in your head and tell me what you are thinking as you get an answer.

"What is the result of multiplying 24 x 36."

Good, now I want to see how much you can remember about what you were thinking from the time you read the question until you gave the answer. I am interested in what you can actually remember rather than what you think you

must have thought. If possible I would like you to tell about your memories in the sequence in which they occurred while working on the question. Please tell me if you are uncertain about any of your memories. I don't want you to work on solving the problem again, just report all you can remember thinking about when answering the question. Now tell me what you remember.

Good, now I am going to give you another practice problem. Again, I would like you to multiply these two numbers in your head and tell me what you are thinking as you get an answer. (OR Repeat the full directions above if necessary.)

What is the result of multiplying 15 x 12?

Good, now tell me what you remember you were thinking as you solved the problem. (OR Repeat the full directions above if necessary.)

I will now give you one final practice problem. Please THINK ALOUD constantly as you are solving the problem.

What is result of multiplying 52 x 25?

Good, now tell me what you remember you were thinking as your solved the problem.

Think Aloud Protocol

In a few minutes I am going to give you a series of documents related to the issue of bipartisanship, which refers to a state of agreement or compromise between the two major U.S. political parties, Democrats and Republicans. But first I would like to tell me what you know about the issue of bipartisanship in the United States.

Collect prior knowledge data.

Thank you. I am now going to ask you to think aloud about a problem related to bipartisanship. I will provide you with a variety of information related to the issue. Your task is to address the problem aloud as you read aloud through the documents. You may use any existing background knowledge you have, as well as the information in the documents. You are welcome to look back at documents at any time. Do you have any questions about the process?

I am now going to give you the problem and the series of documents. The problem is this: Should politicians work toward a spirit of bipartisanship? Or are the partisan divisions between the Democratic and Republican parties actually a sign of a healthy democracy?

Collect concurrent verbal data.

Thank you. Now I am going to ask you to recall what you were thinking as you read the documents. You are welcome to go back through the documents to jog your memory. Remember, I am interested in what you can actually remember rather than what you think you must have thought. If possible I would like you to tell about your memories in the sequence in which they occurred while working on the question. Please tell me if you are uncertain about any of your memories. I don't want you to work on solving the problem again, just report all you can remember thinking about when answering the question.

Can you go back and describe your thinking as you were reading the document?

Collect retrospective verbal data.

I am now going to provide you with some additional documents that might help you further address the problem. The documents are divided up into folders titled background information, historical documents, and additional news articles. I would like you to use these resources in the same way that you used the previous resources. But this time you can choose what you would like to look at to help you address the problem. You can choose not to look at any additional information. Do you have any questions about this portion?

Collect concurrent verbal data.

Thank you. Now I'd like to you to tell me again about what you were thinking from the time I gave you the folders, as you made your choices and read through the documents, in order if possible. Can you tell me about the choices you made and what you were thinking as you read through the documents?

Collect retrospective verbal data.

One last question—was there anything you believe was influencing your thinking as you read through and thought about the documents?

Appendix G

Prior Knowledge and Document Choices

Political Scientists' Prior Knowledge of the Issue of Bipartisanship

Political Scientist	Prior Knowledge
David	It comes out of the notion of republicans and democrats being very heavily partisaned—that they're sticking together as parties and not perhaps searching for compromise in the middle and reaching across the aisle to work one side to another. So bipartisanship would typically be used to refer to working on legislation or working on policy ideas that are typically done by democrats working with republicans across the aisle.
Alex	We have two political party system and a bipartisan outcome is often defined as a combination between one party, say the Republican party, carrying a handful of democrats with them as opposed to equal numbers of Republicans and Democrats. So, there's a bit of a controversy about how exactly to define bipartisanship—whether it's a handful of the other party endorsing some proposal or a genuine coming together of the two parties in equal numbers to support a particular proposal.
Kate	Bipartisanship in the United States has been declining in recent years. Ordinarily you would think of it as cooperation across party lines, cooperation of the president with the opposition party in Congress, trying to involve them in the decision making along with the president's own party, whether they were in the majority or not in the majority. Since the 1950's, but certainly since the late 60's, the Congress has become more polarized in terms of its relationship across party lines. The Republicans have gotten more conservative; the Democrats have gotten somewhat more homogeneously liberal. Both have lost their opposition wings and that has made it difficult to cooperate across party lines. The current state of campaigning in America makes it such that the party that's in opposition to the president has very little incentive to cooperate with the sitting president.
Rachel	There are two different parties and sometimes they fight.

Political Scientist	Prior Knowledge
John	People talk about working across the aisle and trying to form good relationships with members of the other party but at the end of the day bipartisanship doesn't really seem to be much of a priority for most of the people that I can think of in Congress except for a few, and they usually get vilified for it.
Doris	Most people would say that we have very little bipartisanship going on at all at the moment. They would say that we're very partisan and most things are divided by political party. Bipartisanship used to be quite common in this country, particularly in dealing with foreign policy. The belief was we should not be divided as a country when we face the outside enemy. But bipartisanship has not been very present in Washington for quite some time.
Michael	Bipartisanship is a condition and it's also an ideal for some. As a condition it's a time when people from different parties work together. In the U.S. context it's always the democrats and the republicans, or at least it has been since Jackson. And so they'll work together and get something done together. As an ideal it's a notion that that is the best way to enact policy. One of the best ways to work is to agree to compromise and to try to build consensus across the aisles.
Sharon	Because we have a two-party system we have, in some ways, a system that is less messy than multi-party systems. But its ability to function depends a lot on people from the different parties working together on issues and trying to find common ground. And in recent years, actually recent decades, there has been very limited bipartisanship in the U.S. Congress, although there are some notable examples of people that have worked hard in that respect to form alliances with somebody in another party.

Students' Prior Knowledge of the Issue of Bipartisanship

Students	Prior Knowledge
Alfred	What I know is that there is some disagreement between Republicans and Democrats. Democrats have their own ideas, like my mom really doesn't—well, some people she agrees with in the Democratic party and some people she doesn't agree with in Republican. And basically she's Independent, like I am. So, whoever comes out on top, as say the President, will be like the best choice in the American people's eyes.
Jenny	I know that Democrats and Republicans tend to have different beliefs on many things, like Republicans tend to lower taxes while Democrats tend to raise taxes for social issues. And on abortion and stuff the Republicans tend to have traditional values while Democrats feel like people should have their choice with abortion.

Students	Prior Knowledge
Deborah	Democrats and Republicans, I do know that they have their differences. One is conservative and one is liberal. I think the problem between both of them is they don't know how to come to a general consensus on how to deal with certain political issues. I'm not really clear about bipartisanship but I do think that it has something to do with both of them working together to try to reach a common goal, but they are having a hard time trying to come up with a solution to whatever problem that they are trying to fix.
Karen	I don't know anything. Never heard the term before.
Marianne	Bipartisanship would probably be a conflict since the Democratic and Republican parties tend to have different views on many issues. So, [bipartisanship] is probably something that we need to have more of, more agreement between the two parties. And it might be difficult to come up with a way that they can always agree on things. I currently can't think of anything that they necessarily have a bipartisanship on.
Tanya	Nothing
Rafael	I don't think I've heard the term, but I know what Democrats and Republicans are.
Joshua	When there's a compromise, I guess they're having a debate between two things and they're just like well, okay. This one agrees with what he's saying, we've got people over here agreeing with what they're saying. Okay, we should compromise and call it a day, instead of going on about the subject at hand.

Document Choices

Name	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
David	Federalist #10	Farewell Address	Steroid Hearing				
Alex	Farewell Address	Policy Statements					
Kate	Federalist #10	Farewell Address	Partisan Politics	Recent Events	Policy Statements	Steroid Hearing	Election Shaping Agenda
Rachel	Partisan Politics	Recent Events	Policy Statements	Federalist #10	Farewell Address		
John	Partisan Politics	Recent Events	Policy Statements				
Doris	Federalist #10	Farewell Address	Partisan Politics	Recent Events	Policy Statements	Steroid Hearing	Election Shaping Agenda

Name	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
Michael	Recent Events	Partisan Politics	Farewell Address	Steroid Hearing	Election Shaping Agenda		
Sharon	Federalist #10	Farewell Address	Recent Events	Policy Statements			
Alfred	Farewell Address						
Jenny	Partisan Politics	Policy Statements	Recent Events	Federalist #10	Election Shaping Agenda	Steroid Hearing	
Deborah	Farewell Address	Policy Statements	Recent Events	Election Shaping Agenda	Steroid Hearing		
Karen	Partisan Politics	Recent Events					
Marianne	Federalist #10	Farewell Address	Partisan Politics	Recent Events			
Tanya	Federalist #10	Farewell Address					
Rafael	Partisan Politics	Recent Events					
Joshua	Federalist #10	Farewell Address	Partisan Politics	Recent Events	Steroid Hearing	Election Shaping Agenda	

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