EXPLORING OVERLAP BETWEEN MICHIGAN LAWMAKERS AND SOCIAL STUDIES POLICY ENACTORS IN THE CONTEXT OF PUBLIC ACT 4136

By

Andrew Scott Miness

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ABSTRACT

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In a qualitative case study of Michigan Public Act 4136 – which mandates that high school students in Michigan must complete a one-semester civics course aligned with the the US Citizenship Exam in order to receive a diploma – I sought to determine to what extent lawmakers, social studies teachers and administrators, and resources related to the policy reveal shared or disparate positions in their orientations towards citizenship education. Through interviews with members of Michigan's state legislature, social studies classroom teachers, and educational leaders at the local and state levels, I positioned how these individuals tended to view social studies education in the context of high stakes exams, mandates, and a polarized political climate. Additionally, I examined related newspaper coverage to analyze how the mainstream press structured social studies knowledge and encouraged particular conceptions of citizenship.

The findings revealed that lawmaker and educator participants believed in the importance of civics education, especially given the partisan, highly polarized nature of today's society. In fact, lawmaker and educator participants seemed to agree about the importance of the content knowledge associated with the US Citizenship Exam, yet expressed levels of disagreement related to the competing political and educational aims of legislation mandating its instruction. More specifically, while educators expressed different levels of comfort with powerfully integrating civics learning opportunities amidst the polarized political climate, they all talked about wanting their students to question and develop reasons for their thinking. Some lawmaker

participants espoused similar beliefs about social studies teaching and learning related to critical thinking and student engagement. One lawmaker participant, who sponsored 4136, came at social studies education more from a rote delivery of information perspective, and argued for the need to learn certain content knowledge.

Investigating the shared and disparate views of citizenship that existed among these domains could contribute to better coordinating social studies education policy and practice, especially as close to 20 other states implement similar legislation as Michigan's Public Act 4136. By identifying patterns among lawmakers and social studies policy enactors' representations of social studies education, policy could be strengthened by making it more flexible and responsive to these potentially diverse perspectives and contexts. Most importantly, my research could restructure some of the debate about what it means to prepare students for their civic lives by empowering more active, non-traditional interpretations of citizenship.

“In this great future, you can’t forget the past.”
To my wife, Katie, thank you for making it all possible.

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INTRODUCTION

The notion that a civics crisis exists in the United States often stems from complaints about K-12 students' performance on standardized tests primarily dealing with content about government structures and processes (Dillon, 2011). Meanwhile, evidence also suggests that civics engagement is vibrant among youth populations as apparent interest in national and international issues has been increasing over time (Childers, 2012), and youth are nearly twice as likely as adults to utilize social media for civic and political engagement (Kahne, Hodgin, & Eidman-Aadahl, 2016). Perhaps the best explanation for these two scenarios, both the perceived civics crisis and civics resurgence, is explained by the lack of consensus in society on what democratic education entails. Two key actors in the process of democratic education include lawmakers, those with authority to enact policy, and social studies educators, those classroom and curricular leaders with authority to implement policy. Understanding more about how lawmakers and social studies educators conceive of civics education might reveal points of alignment and disunion in their beliefs. This knowledge ultimately might assist in better coordinating social studies education policy and practice, preparing emerging teachers to carry out mandated responsibilities, and orchestrating policy that best represents the interests of all people.

The case of Public Act 4136, which mandates that high school students in Michigan enroll in a civics course aligned with the US Naturalization Test to graduate, magnifies the importance of investigating the alignment between lawmakers and social studies policy enactors. Lawmakers, identified in this study as members of the Michigan House of Representatives or Senate, have been elected to govern on behalf of particular constituencies for particular reasons. In turn, understanding more about how these elected officials conceive of social studies

education offers greater context beyond their vote for or against Public Act 4136, and speaks to how they set the stage for such a vision by pursuing larger policy objectives. While citizens elect their lawmakers, House and Senate members retain autonomy over how to govern and advance public policy. Similarly, aspiring teachers represent a training instrument of the state (Raskin, 1972), yet they make sense of policies and implement them as best as they see fit (Weatherly & Lipsky, 1977). These descriptions reveal that the lawmaker and are inherently linked (by policy and official curriculum) and potentially disconnected (by their interpretive realities). Exploring lawmakers and social studies educators' ideologies in this study offers a way to better understand how individuals at distinct stages of the policy process conceptualize the purpose of social studies education and visualize the teaching and learning that should be taking place in high school US history and civics classes.

Goal misalignment between essential educational actors should be expected in a democracy because schools, as public institutions, exist as an expression of values (Gutman, 2007). Civics education in a democracy also evolves with time, such that events and innovations (technical and ideas) change how individuals think of what it means to be a citizen in that society (Parker, 1996). Social studies education policy thus involves the continual process of lawmakers seeking to make particular knowledge official, or at least the structures more aligned to a favorable condition or outcome (Apple, 2014). In the case of Public Act 4136, Michigan lawmakers influenced current high school teachers by mandating that civics curriculum and end of course assessment be aligned with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services' Naturalization Test. Uncertainty over the impact of Public Act 4136 on teachers' beliefs about instructional practice, and how it syncs with their views on meaningful, active teaching and learning elevate the importance of my research.

Some individuals might conceive of citizenship education in more rote terms, namely as teaching facts or concepts related to social studies subareas in which all knowledge can be remembered (Grant, 2003). Meanwhile, others might view citizenship education as embedded in a thinking curriculum (Parker, 1996) fostering what Kohlberg (1976/1996) called, "analytic understanding, value principles, and motivation" to engage actively in civic and political matters" (p. 211). In the first interpretation of citizenship above, individuals seem to believe more in teaching about citizenship; whereas the second reveals teaching for citizenship (Dewey, 1916). These distinct conceptions of knowledge reveal how some people view knowledge as delivered by teachers and received by students, while others view knowledge as co-constructed by students and teachers more equally and reciprocally. These beliefs about knowledge, as internalized by lawmakers and educators alike, have significant implications on the resulting civic habits and orientations of future citizens.

High stakes exams in social studies tend to lead teachers to prioritize content knowledge over engaging pedagogy (Au, 2007). The narrowing of curriculum around tested materials restricts access to particular funds of knowledge (Grant, 2006b). Most often, this narrowing elevates the dominant narrative behind secondary social studies, one that is entrenched in white, middle to upper class perspectives and notions of American exceptionalism (Yosso, 2002; Zimmerman, 2002). This most likely arises out of pressures created by the high stakes testing context, and teachers in general feeling a need to ensure coverage of official material (Segall, 2006; Smith, 2006). However coverage of required content occurs to the detriment of active, integrative instruction. In fact, the values-based component in many social studies classrooms tends to rely on the mandated assessment to leverage learning (Au, 2007). Knowing material for

the test thus seems to supersede authentic, engaging teaching and learning in which individuals co-construct knowledge together through their lived experiences.

In attempting to advance our understanding of the intersection of social studies policy and practice, this study seeks to address the following research question: To what extent do educators and lawmakers express coordination and disunion in their beliefs about civics education in the context of Public Act 4136? Through a qualitative case study of Michigan Public Act 4136, this study utilizes interviews with members from the House and Senate, as well as social studies policymakers at the classroom, district, and state levels, exploring their beliefs on teaching and learning, powerful social studies, critical literacy, and student engagement (Agarwal-Rangnath, Dover, & Henning, 2016; Au, 2007; Dewey, 1916; Grant 2003; NCSS, 2016). Additionally, a document collection of press coverage related to the passage of 4136 serves to contextualize how cultural dynamics at a macro-level influence educational norms and structures in their orientation towards social studies education. Through these analyses, this study addresses three specific research questions:

By laying out the actual configuration of ideologies espoused by central social studies actors within one state, this study contributes to enhanced knowledge that could assist in producing more coordinated policy between policymakers responsible for developing and implementing civics-based education. Achieving tighter alignment does not imply a singular civics goal exists, but rather that the space exists for citizens to pursue diverse goals simultaneously because we all interpret what is appropriate differently. Conceptually, this research captures how influential policymakers (i.e. legislators) and policy enactors (teachers and curricular leaders) make sense of civics within the context of both a K-12 school system and larger society. Mapping out these viewpoints and ideologies of influential social studies actors

clearly indicates points of union and cleavage that have hindered social studies reforms historically. More understanding of these dynamics in an era of escalating culture wars fought over what it means to be an American helps define the tools of citizenship most appropriate in our evolving society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Schools, in addition to family and peers, represent one of the most powerful socializing forces in young people's lives. Meanwhile, influential educational theorists like Raskin (1972), Apple and Weis (1983), and Giroux (2005) posited that schools do not exist as learning based institutions, but as staging grounds for culture wars fought over different values-based beliefs. In the case of social studies education, values differences tend to manifest in debates over what content should be included formally in the curriculum and how students should be engaged in this process as learners (Evans, 2004). Key actors in the ongoing social studies debate include lawmakers, those with authority to formalize policy, and social studies educators, those instructional and curricular leaders with authority to implement policy. Understanding more about how policymakers at various levels of social studies education make sense of civics education might reveal points of agreement and disunion in their beliefs. This knowledge might assist in better coordinating social studies education policy and practice, preparing emerging teachers to carry out mandated responsibilities, and orchestrating policy that best represents the interests of all people.

Social studies research tends to report that individual teachers possess a range of views on powerful teaching and learning (Agarwal-Rangnath et al., 2016; Grant, 2003; Grant, 2006a). Some individuals have conceived of civics education in more traditional and rote terms, namely as teaching facts or concepts related to social studies subareas in which all knowledge can be remembered (Grant, 2003). Meanwhile, others have framed civics education as embedded in a thinking curriculum aimed at engaging students in active and meaningful ways to groom them for future civic and political participation (Kohlberg, 1976/1996; Parker, 1996). In the first

interpretation of citizenship above, individuals seem to believe more in teaching about citizenship; whereas the second reveals teaching for citizenship (Dewey, 1916). These distinct conceptions reveal how the role of knowledge depends upon the dominant social paradigm and norms informing individuals' worldviews. My research sought to better understand how these underlying belief systems about social studies knowledge and engagement, as expressed by lawmakers and educators alike in interview sessions, filtered and framed their thinking on civics education policy and practice.

Conceptual Framework

Public Act 4136 (2016) legitimized the alignment of Michigan's high school civics curriculum with the Naturalization Test normally administered by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The further entry of lawmakers into social studies curriculum calls attention to the importance of understanding the perspectives of the range of policymakers with authority over civics education. I sought to understand how legislators in Michigan's House of Representatives and Senate, high school social studies teachers from various settings, a curriculum specialist working for the state department of education, and a principal leading a culturally diverse school in an urban setting, conceived of powerful civics education. Investigating diverse social studies policymakers' beliefs and mapping out points of agreement and cleavage in their thinking led me to rely heavily upon sensemaking theory. Since predicated on individuals interpreting policy messages through their existing worldviews (Coburn, 2001), sensemaking theory accounted for the way each individual noticed, modified, integrated, and bypassed messages related to civics education in the context of Public Act 4136.

Policy studies traditionally adopted sensemaking principles in order to hone in on individual interpretations that influence behaviors in the context of some external messaging.

Weatherley and Lipsky (1977) assessed the implementation of a new special education process introduced in Massachusetts that specified what needed to be done by teachers and staff, but provided no guidance on how to implement. Weatherley and Lipsky (1977) developed the concept of the street level bureaucrat in response to the distinct patterns of behavior and thinking they witnessed among educators negotiating the policy. Weatherley and Lipsky (1977) detailed how teachers and special education specialists possessed different views on enacting the new policy, like with regards to mainstreaming children as a result of their professional status and experience. Street-level bureaucrats thus had discretion over the implementation of a mandate or regulation placed on them in terms of processing the message and accommodating as they deemed appropriate (Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977). Pressures emerged as a result of the philosophical differences between street-level bureaucrats, as status differences intensified the individual coping habits employed by the teachers (Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977). Weatherley and Lipsky's (1977) research identified two enduring lessons: firstly, that policy did not manifest until actualized in practice, and secondly, the more policy tries to control the less it does. These enduring ideas informed my research design, evident in accounting for the full range of social studies policymakers functioning at positions from the statehouse to schoolhouse.

Lawmakers and educators seem bound by policy, yet also disconnected because of their distinct interpretive realities. Exploring social studies policymakers' ideologies in my research offered a way to better understand how individuals at various stages of the policy process conceptualize the purpose of social studies education and visualize the teaching and learning that should be taking place in high school civics courses. Despite the best intention of policy, implementation determines the outcome of what the policy actually looks like in practice (McLaughlin, 1987). So in the context of Weatherley and Lipsky (1977), the new state special

education law sought to adjust behaviors and the norms around working conditions, yet individuals made sense of the policy through their existing worldviews. This resulted in teachers negotiating what to do on an individual basis and developing their own routines in response to the policy's messages. Cohen and Ball (1990) also concluded, based on their work with elementary teachers implementing a math reform in California, that working from the classroom outward with regards to policy studies afforded insight into what the policy looks like in practice. Cohen and Ball (1990) found that teachers made sense of California's math reform through their "established practice" (p. 238). My research integrated teachers and other social studies policymakers functioning outside of the classroom to determine how they filtered policy through what Cohen and Ball termed "established practice," in order to find commonalities and differences among and between actors.

Earlier sensemaking studies tend to overlook how individuals interpreted policy with others, and were influenced by the social, professional, and organizational contexts in which individuals exist (Coburn, 2001; Coburn, 2005). Coburn (2001) examined elementary teachers in California as they made sense of a new program aimed at improving reading instruction. These teachers displayed consistent patterns of interaction in that they tended to seek out those with similar worldviews and practices to engage in deep exchanges (Coburn, 2001). Meanwhile, in instances when teachers were required to work with randomly assigned colleagues, Coburn (2001) noted the nature of those planned conversations to be surface-level and less personal when compared to informal discussions that teachers engaged in at the school. Shared traits like experience and belief systems united likeminded teachers in Coburn's (2001), yet Coburn (2005) later studied the impact of school leadership on fostering condition for learning in response to policy messages. In her work with two principals in California as they led their schools through

new reading initiatives, Coburn (2005) concluded that principals, like teachers, were sensemakers who drew upon their own notions of what they thought the policy entailed. When in agreement with the policy, principals tended to prioritize activities that developed their staff's capacity and exposure to the new program (Coburn, 2005). Coburn (2005) also found that in instances when the principals disagreed with the policy's prescription, they simply did not prioritize training to support teachers in that specific role. Teacher sensemaking does not occur in isolation, as patterns of interaction with other actors, conditions for learning in the school, and a range of local norms that shape responses and priorities contribute to individuals' interpretation of policy (Coburn, 2005). By interviewing lawmakers as well as classroom teachers and a principal in my research, I tried to account for diverse perspectives on social studies teaching and learning that contribute to policy formation and implementation.

Offering support and pressuring conformity to new norms emerged as potential tools that could deepen connections to policy language and more tightly couple the formation and implementation stages (McLaughlin, 1987). Even if support and pressure applied though, different street-level bureaucrats possess different worldviews and lived experiences resulting in different definitions of the same words. Hill (2001) explored the disconnect that arose between math teachers and math curriculum writers in their conceptualization of terms like explore, construct, understand, discrete math, and algebra in the context of new math standards issued. The two communities at the core of these math standards did not possess the same working knowledge of the reform's prescribed language, and this weakened the messaging from the policy formation to implementation stages (Hill, 2001). Wilson (1990) identified four constraints that influenced math teacher's ability to enact math reform in a California elementary school, and they offered a framework to think about policy more generally. Firstly, Wilson (1990)

argued that the pressures of testing, time, and community interfered with teachers implementing reform as policy language stated. Secondly, policymakers possessed competing conceptions of learning and teaching that created a goal misalignment between actors (Wilson, 1990). Thirdly, teachers varied in their existing pedagogical content knowledge, suggesting that teachers needed support to both learn about the new methods and to think beyond their notions of teaching and learning (Wilson, 1990). Fourthly, competing calls for reform spread teachers thin as they respond to multiple changes simultaneously (Wilson, 1990). These challenges that Wilson (1990) noticed in the policy implementation process were predicated on a clash of values between street-level bureaucrats, and I anticipated similar tensions might be developing between social studies policymakers with diverse interests in the context of Public Act 4136.

Goal misalignment between essential educational actors should be expected in a democracy because schools, as public institutions, exist as an expression of values (Gutman, 2007). Civics education in a democracy also evolves with time, such that events and innovations (technical and ideas) change how individuals think of what it means to be a citizen in that society (Parker, 1996). Social studies education policy thus involves the continual process of lawmakers seeking to make particular knowledge official, or at least the structures more aligned to a favorable condition or outcome (Apple, 2014). In the case of Public Act 4136, Michigan lawmakers influenced current high school teachers by mandating that civics curriculum and end of course assessment be aligned with USCIS' Naturalization Test. Mandates, as framed by Schneider and Ingram (1990), represented policy tools based in authority. Authority tools, unlike inducements, capacity-building measures, and systems-changing approaches, expected individuals to comply with rules simply on basis of their existence (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987; Schneider & Ingram, 1990). While inducements like monetary incentive bring about particular

outcomes through a reward structure (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987), mandates assume compliance by street-level bureaucrats occurs in response to policy messages, and educational policy and practice research suggests the process is not so linear (Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977; Wilson, 1990). Capacity-building measures though reflected investments in human resources in order to develop particular dispositions, knowledge, or skills (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987). Systems-changing approaches meanwhile entailed shifting authority or power because of an underlying belief that the status quo was not capable of producing desired outcomes. In turn, Schneider and Ingram (1990) and McDonnell and Elmore (1987) contributed to my conceptual framework by laying out the behavioral characteristics embedded in the range of policy tools available to state legislators, and the potential implications of mandates on implementation process and street-level bureaucrats.

Uncertainty over the impact of Public Act 4136 on teachers' beliefs about instructional practice, and how it syncs with their views on meaningful, active teaching and learning elevate the importance of my research. Gladwell (2005) explored how individuals made split-second decisions in a variety of settings in his book *Blink*, and contextualized how this psychological perspective on decision-making is useful when applied to the case of Public Act 4136, primarily because teachers and educators possessed autonomy over how they processed and made sense of mandates. Gladwell (2005) identified thin-slicing, the process of unconsciously scanning a situation for particular cues, as integral in understanding decision-making. In terms social studies street-level bureaucrats, thin-slicing applied most to the cultural, racial, and language ideologies that they possessed, and how these influenced their reaction to policies, curriculum, and their students. . In this regard, understanding the psyche of teachers and curricular leaders seemed to offer a window into how they expect to make certain learning and ways of thinking available to

students (Borko & Putnam, 1996). Teachers' ideologies seemed to play the central role in the structuring of students' experiences because they filter instructional decisions through their beliefs on schooling, content knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge (Borko & Putnam, 1996; Shaver, Davis, & Helburn, 1980). For example, in talking about what it means to be a citizen in the US, a student might make a derogatory remark about a group of people, and depending on the teacher's response (as moderated by their beliefs and experiences), other students might interpret the remark as acceptable or not. In turn, the role of the teacher in explicitly communicating the values of the classroom community, and how these apply beyond the school, need not occur in a scripted lesson. As such, understanding social studies street-level bureaucrats' existing and developing frames of references in response to the US Naturalization Test, mandates, and matters of powerful civics education, illustrated how they potentially could make certain knowledge available to students or not based on their own interpretive reality (Borko & Putnam, 1996).

By organizing the literature review around the role of citizenship education within a democratic society, I wanted to map out how civics issues influence the sensemaking of key social studies policymakers. This entailed contextualizing how curriculum, high stakes exams, patriotism, and other contemporary issues tended to influence the sensemaking norms around social studies education.

Citizenship Education in a Democratic Society

Sustaining democracy, John Dewey claimed, required more than being born into a democratic society because democratic values had to be renewed continually and not simply received (Dewey, 1916). Democratic education thus entailed preparing students for lives as citizens in political and social communities, such that they developed as reflective, inquisitive

problem solvers capable of making informed decisions to improve the world around them as they deemed fit (Dewey, 1916; Parker, 1996). While some educators conceived of citizenship education in more rote terms, namely as teaching facts or concepts or a particular content knowledge base (Grant, 2003), others tended to view citizenship education as embedded in a thinking curriculum (Parker, 1996) fostering what Kohlberg (1976/1996) described as "analytic understanding, value principles, and motivation" (p. 211) to engage actively in civic and political matters. In turn, merely covering material in social studies classes failed to develop civic dispositions, knowledge, and skills as powerfully as prioritizing higher order thinking tasks with students (Engle, 1960/1996). Furthermore, cultivating democratically deliberative skills involved much more than delivery of particular habits, because as Whitson and Stanley (1996) remarked, critical deliberation "can be formed only on the basis of values chosen by the mind in opposition to the established order" (p. 331). This condition illustrated that knowledge in a democracy had to be questioned and reconstructed by individuals so that it is verifiable to their lived experiences (Griffin, 1942/1996). Otherwise, democracies risked devolving into authoritarian states whereby teaching citizenship entailed assigning values and beliefs (Griffin, 1942/1996).

Positioning citizenship education.

I identified citizenship education as housed within social studies education because it manifested in US history, civics and government, and world history courses most formally (Grant, 2010; Grant & Horn, 2006; Levinson, 2012; Niemi & Junn, 1998). To some degree, all education acted as citizenship education in that each decision, from the wording of a curricular resource to the teacher's facial expression, contributed to the knowledge being constructed by students (Niemi & Junn, 1998). In my research, I selected social studies education as the primary site of citizenship education as a means of exploring the alignment between lawmakers, high

school teachers, a curriculum specialist, and a principal. I peppered the semi-structured interview with references to civics, citizenship, and social studies education, and cared more about the descriptions offered as insight into thinking on teaching and learning.

The absence of a formal canon for civics knowledge though (Niemi & Junn, 1998), as well as the paucity of authentic controversial issue engagement in schools (Apple, 1990; Zimmerman & Robertson, 2017), historically hindered the impact of schooling on students' civic growth, especially critical consciousness exposure and growth (Giroux, 2005). Social studies education, as revealed in official curriculum documents, tended to prioritize facts at the expense of big idea understandings (Grant & Gradwell, 2009) and a narrow canon in high school civics and US history courses in place of authentic multicultural perspectives (Niemi & Junn, 1998). These conditions indicated that powerful, critical social studies seemed to exist as the exception and not the rule. Thus, exploring the shared and disparate views of citizenship expressed by social studies policymakers – from legislators to teachers to school and state leaders – aimed to lay out the worldviews of major actors at formation and implementation stages. Integrating lawmakers in my research acknowledged that policy language matters in framing what is to be done; yet policy analysis required consideration for street-level bureaucrats to actually understand how policy is transferred into practice.

Sensemaking and citizenship education.

At its core, the United States' education system is a cultural expression of a dynamic and evolving understanding of what it means to be an American (Labaree, 2010). Labaree (1997) identifies three central aims advanced through the American schooling system that both reinforce and contradict one another. These three educational aims – democratic equality, social efficiency, and social mobility – illustrate the political competition over the meaning of

schooling and the ultimate ends that education serves (Labaree, 1997). While democratic equality emerged as the primary goal of the common school movement organized by the Whigs (Labaree 1997, 2010), this civic orientation of schooling has existed more rhetorically than in practice of late. Even Labaree (1997) remarked that, "what schools identify and reward as good citizenship in their students today is often just organizationally acceptable conduct – behaving in accordance with school rules rather than showing a predisposition toward civic virtue" (p. 67). As enrollment soared at the end of the nineteenth century, schools shifted their aim towards social efficiency models so that they could both better manage the increasing student populations, as well as justify their public value in economic terms (Labaree, 1997). This political recognition that education existed in service to the private sector began to fundamentally alter the notion that education was an exclusively public good preparing individuals for future political and civic roles (Labaree, 1997). This movement towards a market paradigm became entrenched throughout the twentieth century as beliefs about education as a private good for personal consumption characterized by the pursuit of social mobility proliferated (Labaree, 1997). This view of education embodied in a politics of individual opportunity, seemed to grow out of the belief that education represented an investment in human capital. These three educational aims that Labaree (1997) laid out – democratic equality, social efficiency, social mobility – emerged in discussions with social studies policymakers as they made sense of the purposes of civics education.

As communities changed throughout time, ambiguity over what it meant to be a "competent, responsible, well-educated citizen" also evolved and usually led to conflict (Newmann, Bertocci, Landsness, 1977/1996, p. 223). This conflict did not reflect weak citizenship, but rather represented opportunities to extend democratic values by confronting our

conceptual differences deliberately and analytically. Civics education did not remain static as a knowledge domain; instead, as the overall cultural and political circumstances changed, so too did the norms of what citizens were expected to know and do (Gagnon, 1989/1996).

In their seminal piece exploring what good citizenship is, and what it looks like, Westheimer and Kahne (2004) explored what kinds of citizens we need to sustain a democratic society by analyzing three civic profiles. Their research suggested that social studies norms encouraged personally responsible citizenship, and that it most often manifested in the curriculum being structured towards patriotism and obedience (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Westheimer and Kahne (2004) characterized personally responsible citizens by their law-abiding nature and tendency to view voting and volunteerism as civic hallmarks (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Personally responsible citizens were not likely to activate their critical consciousness, and thus were likely to accept the status quo. On the opposite end of the spectrum, Westheimer and Kahne (2004) identified justice-oriented citizens as the most critical and contextually aware of the three distinct civics profiles. In developing as justice-oriented citizens, students assumed various historical and contemporary standpoints to understand the complexity of issues and multiple perspectives. This training then often led to some type of action on behalf of individuals or a particular cause, thus setting the stage for a life of activism on civic and political causes. In between personally responsible and justice-oriented citizens, Westheimer & Kahne (2004) framed participatory citizens as those who were knowledgeable about institutions and processes, actively engaged in civic and political life, and who did not necessarily believe in transformational systemic change. While some educators tended to link participatory and justice-oriented terms in practice, Westheimer and Kahne (2004) emphasized the critical distinction between these orientations. Specifically, Westheimer and Kahne (2004) explored two civics

programs both designed to support civic and democratic development with 12th grade students. Westheimer and Kahne utilized a mixed-methods study to assess a participatory-based program serving 61 non-AP Government students, and a justice-oriented program serving 23 low-achieving students. These two programs were part of a larger ten-site study directed by Westheimer and Kahne (2004) over two years. The Madison program aimed at participatory citizenship to develop active citizens, while the Bayside program was directed at justice-oriented citizenship to foster community activists. This difference in purpose of the programs came to light during the interviews and surveys administered by Westheimer and Kahne (2004). Madison participants reflected more on technical elements of engaging with community issues, while Bayside participants remarked more on structural causes of conditions in the community. This distinction in the level of critique of the system offered by participants helps explain how the types of citizens offered by Westheimer and Kahne (2004) align with diverse democratic educational goals in prioritizing particular habits and perspectives.

Kahne and Westheimer (2003) found that in many cases, the presence of critical thinking and decision making in the curriculum, normally thought to be trademarks of critical instruction, were not appropriately broached by teachers and thus fell short of their civic expectations. Teachers tended to avoid what they perceived as political or controversial and maintained a supposed neutral position in classrooms, leading to a superficial coverage of content lacking active, challenging, meaningful engagement of students (Kahne & Westheimer, 2003). In some cases, Kahne and Westheimer (2003) detected a trend of schools adopting character education programs in which they instructed students on traits like responsibility, individualism, and common good. These types of programs seemed to result in the opposite of John Dewey's (1916) direction about civics education in that taught more about citizenship than for it. Kahne and

Westheimer (2003) caution that, "emphasizing loyalty, patriotism, or obedience can lead to antidemocratic forms of civic education if it constrains the kind of critical reflection, dialogue, and action that are essential in a democratic society" (p. 36).

Sensemaking and powerful social studies.

This study assumed that powerful social studies education entailed engaging students as critical learners such that they develop capacity to carefully analyze social inequalities, motivation to produce social change, and engagement in political or civic causes (Giroux, 2005). Furthermore, powerful social studies involved engaging students with meaningful issues in active, challenging, and integrative ways in order to deepen their understanding of particular knowledge in ways that are personally significant and enduring (NCSS, 2016). Additionally, social studies education envisioned powerfully made its values-based components explicit in order to avoid indoctrination at the expense of critical consciousness development (Giroux, 2005; NCSS, 2016). Developing students' critical consciousness, defined by Apple (2014) as "understanding the sets of historically contingent circumstances and contradictory power relationships that create the conditions in which we live" (p. 5), represented an essential component to powerful interpretations of citizenship education policy and practice. Without critical consciousness, the risk of conflating indoctrination and education increases, because the former entails normalization and the latter involves liberation through critical reflection (Gutmann, 1987).

The National Council for Social Studies (2016) developed a model to frame powerful social studies as composed of traits that promote authentic, transformational teaching and learning. The model identified five traits – meaningful, active, challenging, integrative, and

values-based – that captured the mechanisms by which social studies teaching and learning became more enduring. This study operationalized the five powerful traits as follows:

- Meaningful: Degree to which social studies is framed as personally relevant and of interest to students
- Active: Degree to which social studies fosters a thinking curriculum aimed at critical consciousness development
- Challenging: Degree to which social studies offers opportunities for rigorous engagement
- Integrative: Degree to which social studies offers opportunities to make connections to other coursework
- Values-Based: Degree to which social studies makes its positionality and purposes explicit

This model lays out some of the variables at play in generating conditions optimal for transformational teaching and learning, yet the NCSS' framework has limitations and tends to overlook the multicultural components of powerful instruction (Ladson-Billings, 2003). Ladson-Billings (2003) noted the importance of instruction that resonated with the cultural and personal identities of students by utilizing these identities in positive, growth-oriented ways. For example, Ladson-Billings (2003) described a situation involving a teacher framing a unit around heroes and sheroes in order to expand students' conceptions of what impactful individuals could look like, and how this connected students more personally to the experience. In turn, I want to analyze how understandings of powerful social studies instruction balance cultural relevancy (Ladson-Billings, 2003) and the five factors identified by the NCSS (2016), and how shared the views of educators and lawmakers appeared related to these concepts.

Role of curriculum.

Flinders, Noddings, and Thornton (1986) framed curriculum as a multidimensional concept that functioned on explicit, implicit, and null levels . Explicit curriculum included the formal and announced program of study, and was most evident in state approved materials. The implicit curriculum entailed the underlying values and expectations structuring the schooling experience (Flinders, Noddings, & Thornton, 1986). For example, the achievement ideology, or the belief that academic performance was indicative of work ethic and education, permitted overlooking structural and contextual factors that also contribute to performance (Apple, 1990). In turn, the explicit and implicit curricula work in tandem to deliver a normative message, one that was skewed towards white, middle-to-upper class values (Yosso, 2002). The null curriculum, that which was not taught, thus serves an important role in understanding how the canon of social studies excluded certain individuals, groups, events, and concepts from even being made available to students (Flinders, Noddings, & Thornton, 1986). Extending this, Au (2012) identified curriculum as "the tool that structures the accessibility of knowledge in environmental form, where framing and classification, respectively, communicate the accessibility and structure of knowledge embedded in the environment" (p. 44). The definition of curriculum that Au (2012) crafted highlighted why I am focusing on the particular domains that I am – state legislators, in-service teachers, curricular leaders at state level, and the US Naturalization Test. In terms of Public Act 4136, it was significant to explore how the privileging of the US Naturalization test as an exit exam restricted, expanded, or informed conceptions of citizenship accessible to social studies policymakers.

Conceptualizing curriculum in expansive terms, beyond resources like textbooks and course handouts, better reflected the full range in which material is presented (Yosso, 2002).

Digging deeper, curriculum entailed deconstructing normative discussions around issues of politics, race, nationalism, and immigration at the societal level to best gauge how these influence classroom variables like teachers' preexisting mindset and the overall classroom climate (Yosso, 2002). For example, the day after Donald Trump's presidential election victory, students at a middle school in Royal Oak, Michigan chanted, "build the wall," in support of the President-elects signature campaign phrase (Stafford & Higgins, 2016). In this instance, Trump's earlier rhetoric as a candidate seemed to empower students to employ an exclusionary slogan at the expense of some of their classmates. Critically assessing curriculum offered potential to confront racial and ethnic discrimination in terms of the knowledge included and excluded from formal structures, as well as the processes and discourses that reinforced the curriculum and advantaged particular students at the expense of others.

Controversial issues.

Gutmann (2007) criticized democratic education in K-12 schools for not facilitating deliberative democratic skills and habits, or one's capacity to be open-minded and to listen to another's perspective on an issue. This approach, Gutmann (2007) asserted, required development of a "politics of reason and persuasion rather than a politics of manipulation and coercion" (p. 354). The lack of emphasis on negotiating differences with others and resolving conflict communicatively though entrenches emerging citizens in more narrow and passive conceptions of democracy. For example, the tendency of schools and teachers to avoid controversial topics seemed to reproduce the qualities of the larger political culture in students, characterized generally by intolerance and a lack of open-mindedness (Gutmann, 2007).

Although many social studies teachers avoided delving into controversial subjects because of fear of parent or community backlash, powerful instruction often resulted from

engaging political issues thought to be off limits (Journell & Castro, 2011). In their study of a high school civics class in leading up to the 2008 presidential election, Journell and Castro (2011) analyzed a teacher, Mr. Harrison, who practiced a funds of knowledge approach with his students. Mr. Harrison recognized that the majority of his students were Latinx, and he decided to structure classroom activities around issues of immigration and politics (Journell & Castro, 2011). In addition to observing class multiple times per week for three months, Journell and Castro (2011) conducted individual interviews with Mr. Harrison and six students, and collected survey data from the 25 students in the class. Multiple data points revealed that Mr. Harrison did not shy away from conflict when confronting particular language in the textbook or lived realities in a class conversation. While Mr. Harrison's instruction relied on handouts and a traditional teacher-centered approach, students reported developing an appreciation for politics, and this potentially could relate to his willingness to engage with matters relevant to their lives.

Teachers tended to cite the risk associated with teaching potentially controversial issues, as well as lack of appropriate training, as the main reasons for excluding such contested conflict from the classroom (Zimmerman & Robertson, 2017). After all, the weak examples of civility that emerge from our national political culture demonstrate that skills of deliberation are often not apparent (Zimmerman & Robertson, 2017) when in fact, the democratic virtue of deliberation served as a crucial point of reference. Deliberation, as Gutmann (1987) described, "is not a single skill or virtue. It calls upon skills of literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking, as well as contextual knowledge, understanding and appreciation of other people's perspectives" (p. xiii). Predisposing youth to critical, deliberative strategies might foster different political norms than consciously reproducing ways of thinking and behaving that Gutmann and Thompson (2004) argue "treat people as objects of legislation, as passive subjects to be ruled, rather than as

citizens who take part in governance" (p. 58). In the case of Public Act 4136, the promotion of one test around which to craft curriculum and assessments potentially lacked concern for street-level bureaucrats as policymakers who determine how to process and enact prescribed actions.

Patriotism and nationalism.

In making sense of social studies education, individuals sometimes remarked on its similarity to patriotism, and in doing so, called attention to the potentially distorted goals of citizenship education (Sapon-Shevin, 2004). Civics entails developing an understanding of the laws, government institutions, and systemic structures such that one can act with a critically informed viewpoint as a member of a particular community (Sapon-Shevin, 2004). Patriotism though, is defined through national identity, and often framed as a matter of superior identity to others (Sapon-Shevin, 2004). This study recognized the complex nature of patriotism in that individuals identify with it in diverse ways. The meaning individuals make about patriotism entailed ideas about land, people, culture, leaders, policies, governmental structures, and core democratic values (Jensen, 2006). Kissling (2016) identified two types of patriotism connected to civics education that evolved from earlier citizenship models (Westheimer, 2006). The first, authoritarian patriotism, derived from a firm belief in the importance of American exceptionalism, and these roots tend towards elevating particular historical knowledge to construct a national identity (Kissling, 2016). Authoritarian patriotism manifested in schools and classrooms after the September 11 attacks in 2001, most evident in punishment for teachers encouraging discussion and participating in anti-war activities (Westheimer, 2006). The other form Kissling (2016) described, democratic patriotism, evolved from allegiance to a certain set of principles and values. In both interpretations, Kissling (2016) situated patriotism as a complex, dynamic concept informed by individuals' lived experiences and local norms.

Policy and practice.

In his meta-analysis of 49 qualitative studies related to social studies teaching and learning, Au (2007) reported that teachers tend to revert to particular strategies when faced with high stakes conditions that sacrificed their attention to social justice orientations. While some teachers presented integrated knowledge to students that emphasized big ideas and understanding, most teachers contracted the curriculum around the content demanded, and then employed teacher-centered practice (i.e. lecture, worksheets, outlines) as opposed to student-centered learning activities (i.e. inquiry projects, role play and simulation experiences) (Au, 2007). This finding revealed how testing mandates have the potential to direct the content and pedagogical habits of teachers, and called importance to investigating how teachers process and respond to Public Act 4136.

In response to Virginia's Standards of Learning (SOL) in the late 1990s, Smith (2006) investigated how five teachers think about and respond to mandated social studies curriculum aligned with high stakes tests. Relying on interviews and observations coordinated over the course of one year, Smith (2006) found that pedagogical knowledge and underlying beliefs about how social studies should be taught revealed little change in response to the. However, the way in which the focal teachers anchored their instructional decisions varied. For example, some teachers relied on transmission models of instruction in which they seemed to deliver historical facts to students (Smith, 2006). One teacher though used the test and textbook to facilitate critical literacy with his students. By encouraging students to analyze the official curriculum for what was missing, this particular teacher used the high stakes climate to contest and critique the dominant notion of heritage pushed by the assessment (Smith, 2006). The majority of teachers studied remarked that while they wanted to infuse alternative texts, they felt compelled to stick to

covering the content from the SOL because they did not know what material would actually be covered on the high stakes exam. So while lawmakers in this instance provided space in theory for teachers to interpret the content individually, they structured the exam in such a way to make teachers more dependent on the official curriculum.

Similarly, Segall (2006) found that among five high school social studies teachers in Michigan, mandated exams tended to influence their content usage but not necessarily their pedagogical approach. Segall (2006) conducted extended interviews between two to three hours with each teacher regarding what the Michigan Evaluation Assessment Program (MEAP) required of them. Four of the five teachers possessed at least five years of experience, and they consistently remarked on the misalignment between the MEAP and the state's social studies standards (Segall, 2006). Nonetheless, Segall (2006) concluded that regardless of the impact of the standardized test, it altered the context in which teaching and learning occurred, and influenced the way in which teachers viewed themselves as autonomous professionals.

Building on how mandated assessments impact what is perceived as important to teach, Salinas (2006) examined facets of teachers knowledge demanded, neglected, and ignored in a study of the high stakes social studies climate in Texas. Salinas (2006) seemed to corroborate earlier findings reported about the impact of required exams on content knowledge prioritization over engaging pedagogy (Segall, 2006; Smith, 2006). Salinas (2006) interviewed 11 teachers sampled from five predominantly Latinx South Texas and Rio Grande Valley high schools about their thinking on curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and staff development. Salinas (2006) also collected state, district, and teacher created documents supporting high stakes testing to triangulate the loosely structured interviews. Analysis revealed that teachers became more closely acquainted with the standards as a result of the testing pressure, regardless of years of

experience (Salinas, 2006). And while the teachers implemented benchmark exams to gauge student achievement before the high stakes exam, only one fifth of teachers acted upon the results to tailor more personalized instruction based on their students' needs (Salinas, 2006). Borrowing from Salinas' (2006) sensemaking framework that prioritized the importance of positioning teachers' beliefs, and her methodological approach of interviews triangulated with document collection, my study sought to pinpoint how social studies teachers and social studies policy enactors think about mandates in an overall high stakes climate.

In a study examining two veteran social studies teachers in New York, Grant (2003) matched the focal teachers on school characteristics and training background. Through extended interviews, observations, and document analysis, Grant (2003) determined that the two teachers differed in pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), stemming from distinct views on the nature of meaningful, active, challenging social studies instruction. One classroom reflected patterns of lecture with class tests modeled after state assessments. This teacher also tended towards instruction as delivery of facts, and framed learning through rigid activities like outlining and worksheet completion (Grant, 2003). Grant's (2003) other focal teacher tended towards engaging students by making learning personal to them, and not relying heavily on the high stakes exam. By not leveraging the exam to facilitate student engagement, this particular teacher seemed to be able to engage students in critically analyzing historical narratives and perspectives authentically. This teacher also provided low stakes opportunities for students to build comfort with the state testing style and sample items (Grant, 2003), and would do so during short warm-ups or exit activities. Utilizing the mandated assessment to implement quick formative assessments empowered this teacher to still concentrate on big ideas of social studies and not merely test preparation.

RESEARCH METHODS

In this study, I sought to address the following research question: To what extent do educators and lawmakers express coordination and disunion in their beliefs about civics education in the context of Public Act 4136? This study used interviews with state legislators, high school social studies teachers, and curricular leaders in Michigan to explore how aligned these key educational policy actors were in their orientations towards civics education. I interviewed four state legislators, identified as current members of Michigan's House of Representatives or Senate. One of these representatives also made their lawyer and legislative aide available to me, so I interviewed them to broaden the scope of policy actors included in this study. I interviewed four high school social studies teachers, two of whom taught in the same school that served a racially homogenous population in a rural district, while the other two taught in more culturally diverse and urban settings. Of the two curricular leaders, one served as a social studies consultant at a state educational agency, while the other served as the principal at a culturally diverse high school (at which one of the teacher participants worked).

By identifying the starting point of policy as the formation phase, Hill and Hupe (2009) provide rationale for studying legislators in that they formally introduce policy. Thus as decision makers in the policy process, House and Senate members mandated that high school civics curriculum and assessments in Michigan be based on content from the US Naturalization Test. So I spoke with members of Michigan's House of Representatives and Senate to understand their interpretations of Public Act 4136 and their subsequent votes for or against the civics bill. Then, I focused on the set of policy implementation actors who would be responsible for making sense of Public Act 4136 and converting it into practice. Integrating teachers and curricular leaders respects the significance of street-level bureaucrats in being the individuals who actually create

policy in practice. Ultimately, in designing this study, I wanted to better understand the dynamism of the relationship between social studies education policy and practice. Thornton (2004) framed the role of teachers as that of gatekeepers in that they structure curriculum and make particular knowledge accessible through activities. The notion of gatekeeper applied largely to my study in that in addition to teachers, others served this role of empowering particular knowledge and educational approaches. For this reason, my research extended this gatekeeping role to state legislators, curriculum specialists, and administrators – individuals with authority over the conditions in which teachers operate.

Building on this sociocultural view of policy, in which it is realized in practice, I designed my research as a qualitative comparative case study of Public Act 4136. Bartlett and Vavrus (2017) described how comparative case study design permits the contextualization of a phenomenon across locations, at varying scales, and over time. Horizontal comparisons can be made across locations involving a range of actors, and this lends itself to understanding legislators, teachers, and curricular leaders in the context of Public Act 4136. Vertical comparisons can also be made at varying scales, and specifically afford understanding the national and cultural forces contributing to Public Act 4136. Transversal comparisons, made over time, added rich details about the policy trajectory related to civics education before and after the passage of the civics mandate. These design features elevated the comparative case study above interpretivist case studies in which the impact of power dynamics and social structures tended to be overlooked, and variance-oriented case studies that prioritized correlations and experimental research norms (Bartlett and Vavrus, 2017). As a process-oriented approach, the comparative case study helps describe the interpretations and actions of diverse actors at policy formation and implementation stages, yet it does not make causal claims (Bartlett and Vavrus, 2017).

Significance of Case Study

In addition to Michigan, over 15 other states have implemented some type of civics initiative based upon the US Citizenship Test since 2015 (Phillips, 2017). In that time, the issue itself has been considered in over 40 state legislatures, with Arizona becoming the first state to implement a high stakes assessment based on the US Citizenship Test (Craig, 2018). In fact, Arizona has begun assessment of students, and many districts have reported students successfully meeting the new requirement, while some have described challenges with the high stakes format (Quiroz, 2017). Next, knowing more information about the impact of the exam on curricular decisions would be useful in making assessments about the policy's influence, and whether to expand these types of policies or look for alternative solutions. In most states, like Michigan, while the original bills called for using the US Citizenship Test as a graduation requirement, the negotiated bill softened that high stakes status and seemed to garner more political support as a result (Phillips. 2017). Even in states that preserved the high stakes component, some educators and lawmakers worry that the lack of rigor associated with the US Citizenship Test risks diminishing educational opportunities for students. Others believe that the elevation of civics education, regardless of the specific testing requirement, represents the critical development for enhancing social studies' status amongst other core subjects. The distinct contexts in which these interpretations have emerged and the varied responses to legislation similar to Michigan's Public Act 4136, suggest that thoughtful investigation of a relevant case could assist in understanding how these types of policies impact teaching and learning in practice. Also, seeing how Public Act 4136 has been filtered through individuals' existing belief systems could reveal challenges to implementation or areas of agreement among participants that might enhance similar work in other states.

Interestingly, since there has been a national campaign by the Civics Education Initiative and Joe Foss Institute to align state assessments with the US Citizenship Test, the policy formation stages in individual states closely resemble one another (Phillips, 2017). This means that education committees heard testimonies from similar witnesses and organizations, and that policy started with particular language that often changed significantly over time through conferencing and compromise. In most instances, the legislation to emerge enjoyed bipartisan political support from lawmakers, yet educators remained uncertain of the impact of such policies on transforming civics teaching and learning. Again, these shared conditions will make investigating particular cases more compelling because of the urgency to measure how these policies look in implementation, and whether they help solve problems associated with youth civics crisis and empowerment gap (Levinson, 2012). Lawmakers played on the reported limited civics knowledge of high school students, as captured by NAEP and popular surveys, as the primary reason to align curriculum explicitly with the US Citizenship Test.

Participants

Study participants included legislators from Michigan's Congress who played key roles in the passage (or opposition) of Public Act 4136 and with a variety of social studies educators and curricular leaders dealing with its implementation. I utilized my positionality as a social studies educator, researcher, student, and citizen to gain access and build a sense of comfort with participants. I emailed legislators and openly informed them about my passion for social studies education, the nature of my studies and research at Michigan State University, and the importance of engaging with them in a short meeting related to civics education. I sent similar emails to teacher and curricular leader participants. My dissertation chairperson helped me recruit teacher participants and one of the curricular leaders through her network of contacts by

forging relationships with them, and this was instrumental in bringing together the street-level bureaucrats critical to this policy study. Since I conducted interviews during three data collection waves, I included Table 1 to display when these occurred and what the focus was of each. Table 1 lists the participants by pseudonym in chronological order and specifies their policymaking position.

Table 1. Overview of the 11 interviews

Participant	Policymaking position	Interview date	Interview focus
Rep. Craig	Lawmaker	February 2016	Status of HB4136
Rep. Rumson	Lawmaker	April 2016	Status of HB4136
Mr. Poole	Educator	September 2016	Impact of HB4136
Mr. Leake	Educator	September 2016	Impact of HB4136
Mr. Garrett	Educator	December 2017	Impact of PA4136
Mr. Moore	Educator	December 2017	Impact of PA4136
Mr. Smith	Lawmaker	December 2017	Impact of PA4136
Sen. Whitford	Lawmaker	January 2018	Impact of PA4136
Rep. Coleman	Lawmaker	January 2018	Impact of PA4136
Mr. Ellington	Educator	January 2018	Impact of PA4136
Mr. Hill	Educator	January 2018	Impact of PA4136

Data Collection

Interviews.

In my estimation, interviews represent an appropriate and powerful method in this study because of their usefulness in discovering how participants see the world in the context of civics education (McCracken, 1988). I formulated my structured questionnaire to serve as a guide during interview sessions, yet I peppered participants with follow-up questions that emerged from their responses. This strategy ensured that I asked participants the same host of questions and allowed space to be flexible based on what they shared with me. For example, when interviewing Mr. Smith, the legislative aide to Mr. Coleman, we discussed more details related to policy procedures and protocols because those were points consistently referenced by the

participant. Similarly, when speaking with teachers, my ten years of teaching experience manifested in that I felt more suited to ask specific follow-up items about instruction. I notified participants that interviews were structured for 30 to 45 minutes. My interviews with the four teachers ranged in length from 60 to 80 minutes; partially due to school interruptions, but mostly due to participants graciously engaging me in deep conversations about their experiences and views on social studies policy and practice.

Interviews were conducted in three stages, which contributed to the potential of transversal comparisons within context of this research design. The first round of interviews were conducted in the winter of 2016 after 4136 had been introduced as a bill in the House and sent to education committee. I was working on my practicum at the time, and so those first two interviews with Ms. Craig and Mr. Rumson greatly informed my dissertation direction, specifically decisions about which actors to engage next and how to enhance the questionnaire. I conducted the second round of interviews later that fall in September of 2016 with Mr. Leake, the principal, and Mr. Poole, a social studies teacher, at a culturally diverse high school outside of a major city in Michigan, as 4136 was being debated in Congress. I then conducted the third round of interviews in December of 2017 and January of 2018 with remaining participants. By this point, Public Act 4136 had become official law, and so interviews with Mr. Garrett, Mr. Moore, Mr. Ellington, and Mr. Hill helped me understand range of educators' perspectives. I also wanted to seek out at least one opponent to 4136, so interviewing Mr. Coleman offered that opportunity. And as an active member of some of the state's civics education organizations, including Mr. Whitford ensured rich perspectives from the lawmaking community would be accounted for. At each round, participants were assured of their confidentiality, and were asked to authorize use of an audio recorder for later transcription purposes.

I interviewed two members from Michigan's House of Representatives regarding House Bill 4136. I interviewed the chairperson of the Education committee to get a better feel for both outlook on the bill and anticipated timing of the lawmaking process moving forward. I also interviewed the lead sponsor of the bill at this point to understand his motivations for bringing this legislation to the floor at this point in time. These interviews were structured using a scripted protocol, and follow-up questions were asked to clarify remarks and extend relevant talking points. I included the interview protocol in Appendix A that I used in these first two discussions with lawmakers. This early data helped capture the attitudes of lawmakers intimately involved with 4136 in its infancy and helped contextualize why HB4136 had remained in committee for a few months with no formal action occurring. After reemerging from committee in May of 2016 and gaining support in the House by summer, the bill passed by a margin of 82-27. HB4136 then traveled to the Senate for approval. At this point, I spoke with a teacher and principal at a culturally diverse high school in a major urban center in Michigan to gauge their feelings about impending civics legislation. I included the interview protocol in Appendix B that I used in these discussions with these two individuals.

In December of 2017, I interviewed a high school social studies teacher about his interpretation of 4136 and social studies education more generally. I also interviewed a curriculum specialist employed by a state agency since he served as a critical liaison, in theory, between legislators crafting policy and teachers implementing it. He directed me to some materials that he used in making sense of 4136, and I integrated this document into the document analysis portion of the study. In January of 2018, I interviewed a state senator who voted in favor of 4136, and also served in key civics education roles in the state, thus making him an intriguing viewpoint to integrate. I also interviewed a representative who voted against 4136, and as a

minority voice in response to the civics policy, I felt including this individual strengthened the study considerably. While this representative refused to be audio recorded because it was an election year, he permitted me to take notes during our conversation and was agreeable and forthcoming with regards to my line of questioning. I also reached out to the other two lawmakers who voted against 4136, but I was unable to coordinate a meeting with them. I conducted my last two interviews with two social studies teachers who worked at the same school in mid-Michigan. I included the interview protocol in Appendix C that I used in interviews conducted in December of 2017 and January of 2018.

The final interview protocol, included in Appendix C and used with final seven participants, was redesigned based upon practicum research and dissertation proposal feedback. Compared to earlier questionnaires I used, this protocol was established to promote comparison across individuals. In turn, this enabled me to concentrate on horizontal comparisons (Barrett and Vavrus, 2017) between lawmakers, teachers, and curricular leaders. I studied conceptions of engaged, powerful social studies with all participants, primarily to understand the shared and disparate views among the variety of policymakers targeted in the study. By integrating policymakers from various stages of the process, my research sought to find links among the way actors spoke about elements of civics education, including powerful social studies, beliefs on teaching and learning, student engagement, critical literacy, and key citizenship-related concepts like immigration and patriotism (Agarwal-Rangnath et al., 2016; Au, 2007; Dewey, 1916; Grant 2003; NCSS, 2016).

I took a couple precautions to protect participants' identity and the security of their interview responses. I established numeric codes to use in place of participants' names, and I saved the audio files using these numeric codes to protect participants' confidentiality. I created

a password-protected document detailing the synced numeric codes and participants' names for safe recordkeeping. I also have signed consent forms stored in a locked file cabinet in my home office.

Document analysis.

In addition to interviews, I collected documents related to Public Act 4136, primarily sourced through *The Detroit Free Press* and *Michigan Newsroom Radio*. These archived newspaper records related to passage of 4136 and detailed how mainstream media sources in Michigan framed, categorized, and structured stories related to US Naturalization Test and citizenship education. *The Detroit Free* Press, as the largest daily newspaper in Michigan, and *Michigan Newsroom Radio*, as a public radio network aimed at news and policy issues, emerged as reliable media organizations that covered 4136 in some capacity. In all, I included 5 news articles pertaining to Public Act 4136 in document analysis. These articles contributed to a more macro-level view on how 4136 has been perceived by various policy actors and citizens, and these documents thus served to strengthen the vertical comparisons (Barrett and Vavrus, 2017) across local and state levels of discourse. Ultimately these documents enriched details about the policy context in which individual actors like legislators, teachers, and curricular leaders function. I used additional articles sourced from *Michigan Newsroom Radio* and *The Detroit Free Press* for non-coding purposes, as they offered context on citizenship education more broadly, but were not pertinent enough to integrate into formal data analysis.

Data Analysis

I began analysis by using individual interview transcripts that removed participants' names and identifying information to keep them as blind as possible and to limit bias in coding. I used HyperResearch, a qualitative software program, to deductively code transcripts. These

codes derived from three strands of research – powerful social studies, purposes of education, and sensemaking literature – which collectively contributed to the conceptual framework and literature review. I adopted the five powerful social studies traits articulated by NCSS (2016) as codes because they provided a common framework for organizing individuals' comments about teaching and learning. As a premier professional organization, I respected NCSS' determination that transformative social studies education could be captured by whether it was active, challenging, integrative, meaningful, and values-based. I also included three codes that arose from Labaree's (1997; 2010) work on the goals of education. Labaree (1997) laid out that goal misalignment transpired in education over time because of the conflict of three primary aims – democratic equality, social efficiency, and social mobility. My study examined interview transcripts and documents to determine how these three distinct goals manifested in the framing of civics education by individual actors. If citizenship was framed in terms of preparing for jobs and the 21st Century economy, then my coding protocol would interpret that as potential evidence of social efficiency or mobility. This example demonstrates the practical nature of using these three codes to discern how diverse actors seem to talk about social studies education.

I also tapped into rich sensemaking literature to identify policy and practice patterns. The dominant narrative of street-level bureaucrats (Weatherley and Lipsky, 1977) making sense of policy through their established practice (Cohen and Ball, 1990), as moderated by their interactions with colleagues (Coburn, 2001) and school leadership (Coburn, 2005), provided the backbone for study design. These researchers captured how I view policy – as something being created, not something simply produced on demand. And in that implementation process, Wilson (1990) identified four constraints that influenced math teacher's ability to enact reform in a California elementary school, and these endured such that they apply to policymaking presently.

I adopted the big ideas to arise from Wilson's (1990) framework and included the full codebook in Table 2.

Table 2. Overview of codebook

Code	Code Type	Origin, if applicable
Purposes of Education – Democratic Equality	descriptive	Labaree (1997)
Purposes of Education – Social Efficiency	descriptive	Labaree (1997)
Purposes of Education – Social Mobility	descriptive	Labaree (1997)
Powerful Social Studies – Active	descriptive	NCSS (2016)
Powerful Social Studies – Challenging	descriptive	NCSS (2016)
Powerful Social Studies – Integrative	descriptive	NCSS (2016)
Powerful Social Studies – Meaningful	descriptive	NCSS (2016)
Powerful Social Studies – Values-based	descriptive	NCSS (2016)
Sensemaking – Pressures of testing, time, community	descriptive	Wilson (1990)
Sensemaking – Policymakers competing conceptions of teaching and learning	descriptive	Wilson (1990)
Sensemaking – Teachers PCK	descriptive	Wilson (1990)
Sensemaking – Competing calls for reform	descriptive	Wilson (1990)
Big issues in Civics Education	emergent	
Participant Background	emergent	
Powerful Social Studies Teaching and Learning – What does it look like	emergent	
Engaging Social Studies Education – What does it look like	emergent	
Factors Influencing Engagement in Social Studies	emergent	

By adopting the enduring themes from the various models discussed above, I produced a codebook with 12 descriptive codes that I used to analyze the interview and document sources. As I began analyzing the data, I found that these codes did not seem to adequately capture the themes, and so I developed some a priori codes. Specifically, the powerful social studies codes that I imposed from the start, totaling five of the 12 original descriptive codes, did not structure the data usefully. I found that I was parsing way too finely between participant comments in how they conceived of powerful social studies, and this limited how the data communicated with itself across interviews. In turn, I decided to organize these responses by a more general coding scheme entitled, "Powerful social studies – What does it look like." By employing this more holistic approach to coding I was able to capture more participant comments related to teaching and learning, and from that, themes emerged that enabled me to appropriately categorize the data. As a result, I was not tied down to the five traits of powerful social studies (NCSS, 2016), and was instead able to expand the scope naturally to related issues of student engagement, instructional pressures, and current demands. I added two emergent codes specifically dealing with student engagement – what it looked like and factors influencing – because these let me keep track of the individual interpretations that participants made. I also added an emergent code that captured participants' background related to civics education, as this contextualized the existing worldview and experiences that they made sense of the world through. My fifth and final emergent code – big issues in civics education – enabled me to analyze how participants viewed the big, pressing issues currently at the core of civics and social studies education. In the end, I had a total of 17 codes.

I utilized a conceptually clustered matrix approach (Miles & Huberman, 1994) in which I listed each code across the title row. Then, I organized the column by source, such that each

participant (N=11) and newspaper item (N=5) was listed vertically. Within each cell, relevant individualized responses from each participant or document source were included. This organization strategy permitted close examination of similarities and differences within and between groups. The matrix strengthened my ability to detect patterns across selected codes according to participants expressed views on social studies education.

Conclusion

This qualitative case study of Public Act 4136 captures beliefs about civics education and powerful social studies teaching and learning among policymakers in Michigan in order to configure the thinking of lawmakers and educators. Through interviews with eleven participants and a document analysis of two mainstream Michigan-based publications, I explore how individuals made sense of citizenship education at three points over a two-year period. I am most interested in conceptions of powerful teaching and learning and student engagement because these responses most likely inform one's approach to education more broadly.

FINDINGS

Throughout my conversations with state lawmakers, high school teachers, and curricular leaders in Michigan, I sought to understand how policy actors at the formation and implementation stages expressed coordination and disunion in their beliefs related to civics education. By exploring participants' conceptions of powerful social studies teaching and learning, student engagement, and citizenship education issues, I noticed responses consistently supporting active civics training as fundamental to our society across the eleven interviews. While educator and lawmaker participants were mostly in agreement, topics like mandates and teaching to a required test spurred a range of emotions and opinions. Even in areas of strong agreement among participants, points of nuance emerged that signaled how one's personal or professional experiences permitted critical insight in particular ways. Instead of presenting these personal narratives upfront, I weave these stories throughout this chapter to contextualize particular responses and add a deeper sense of meaning to the specific accounts integrated.

I anchored this chapter in the following research question: To what extent do educators and lawmakers express coordination and disunion in their beliefs about civics education in the context of Public Act 4136? As I designed this study, I identified the participants as representing two groups – lawmaker participants and educator participants. Educator participants, composed of teachers and curricular leaders, understandably spoke more descriptively of their educational training and particular experiences related to teaching and learning because of their positionality. So while this did minimize some of the rich examples that lawmaker participants pulled from by comparison, it by no means precluded lawmakers from expressing complex representations of civics teaching and learning, student engagement, and other pressing citizenship education issues. Participants conveyed varying understandings of the full complexity of actualizing

powerful social studies teaching and learning and engaging students. In terms of educator participants, this understanding became evident in comments they made that revealed knowledge they developed through practice, which resulted in them generating more flexible schemas and gaining exposure to a variety of cases. Some lawmaker participants expressed similar advanced understanding of educational issues, while a couple other lawmakers tended to oversimplify powerful instruction and student engagement, manifesting in comments that seemed to come from a more rigid, singular, and at times deficit-oriented approach to teaching and learning.

House Bill 4136 Becomes Law

As described earlier in the Methods chapter, collecting data at three points enabled me to examine Public Act 4136 from various perspectives over time. These distinct data points allowed me to assess the context surrounding the passage of 4136, and how these early conditions signaled particular challenges to implementation. Specifically, the fact that Public Act 4136 mandated certain content be aligned with official social studies curriculum, without additional funds or professional development, contributed to competing political and educational tensions that emerged during interviews with participants.

In the spring of 2016 I interviewed two lawmaker participants, the education chairperson and lead sponsor of the original House Bill 4136, to better understand the status of the potential law. These interviews, coupled with analysis of press coverage of 4136, helped contextualize how the bill emerged and why it remained in committee for over one year. I also interviewed two educators in the summer of 2016, while 4136 was still being debated on in Michigan's Congress. I interviewed two educator participants who worked at the same culturally diverse, high achieving high school in greater Detroit to understand how a teacher and principal interpreted the bills' potential impact on teaching and learning. In all, these interviews afforded insight into the

understandings of participants related to Public Act 4136 in its infancy, and they allowed for me to capture the reaction to 4136 as it was in the process of becoming law. In turn, this section purposefully sets the stage for tensions and issues that reemerge later in the chapter.

During my interview with the key sponsor of House Bill 4136 in April of 2016, the bill had been referred to the education committee for over 14 months, and a tension immediately began to appear amongst stakeholders based on Mr. Rumson's responses. In responding to a question about the lead-up to House Bill 4136 and the subsequent congressional process, Mr. Rumson remarked on the legal basis for the proposed law as well as the public need for citizens to demonstrate the same civic understanding as naturalized citizens. He stated:

> Now what are the teachers afraid of, I don't know. They're supposed to teach these core values. I didn't make 451 of 1976 that says you must successfully complete one semester of a civics course. What does successfully complete mean? Does it mean I have to have a pulse and show up everyday? Does it mean I have to keep my eyes open during class? Does it actually say the words and require to proficiently show the very nature of the course, no it doesn't. If these are the basic principles we use for an immigrant to become an American citizen, then why can't we have those same students achieve those minimum requirements? Now they can take it online if they can't afford a computer. They can take it in their school where they're supposed to have computers. They can take it written. They can send the scores by an email to their counselor, so that counselor can put it in their file. They all get student numbers when they go into school, I tell you it is the most easiest most direct most forthright most honest bill that should go out of this House, and through the Senate, and on the Governor's desk, why not when we can.

By first identifying teachers as a barrier to this bill, Mr. Rumson potentially foreshadowed concerns expressed by educator and lawmaker participants about their view of 4136 as a mandate. Then, Mr. Rumson recognized 451, which established the civics requirements that have governed high school students in Michigan ever since. By questioning what it meant to successfully complete civics, and by doing so in a derisive manner by framing successful completion as having a pulse or eyes open, Mr. Rumson expressed hostility towards the teaching force and his perception of seemingly unacceptable educational norms. He framed the new requirement as a minimal action in enhancing the knowledge base of citizens through a flexible test administration that could be taken anywhere. For these reasons, Mr. Rumson concluded that 4136 should be a simple bill to pass into law. Again, Mr. Rumson situated his response in a way that did not seem accommodating to educators and their practice, and this represented a potential area for conflict with other participants' views.

At several points, Mr. Rumson deflected the notion that he was requiring anything personally, referring back to the original Michigan revised school code Act 451: "The law currently in Michigan says that we have to take civics, it's mandated. I didn't do it. It's from 1976, it makes good sense that we do something and do something now, because America is failing." The 1976 law Mr. Rumson cited again offered no explicit direction on how to evaluate successful completion of a civics course, and he leveraged this uncertainty to elevate House Bill 4136's relevancy amidst what he saw as a youth civics narrative of crisis. Specifically, Mr. Rumson framed the demand for 4136 as evident in the weak knowledge of students. He seemed to be reading off of prepared remarks, and he delivered an impassioned plea about the dire situation surrounding high school civics:

> The purpose of why the bill was written, was because we have 76%, if not more, from a study I've seen, cannot even answer these basic questions. The study came from civics education initiative and they say that the national assessment and test results in 2014, a representation of about 29,000 8th graders across the country in public and private schools, 18% scored above proficient in US history, 18%. 27 scored at or above proficiency in geography. 23% scored at or above proficiency in civics. 77% were not proficient, it's a joke. Unfortunately, there has been no significant improvement over these test scores over each of these categories the last four years. When you have people, 85% could not define the rule of law, 75% didn't know function of judicial branch, 71% were unable to identify Constitution as supreme law of the land, 63% could not name one, not one, of their US senators. 62% did not know the speaker of the US House of Representative. 62% could not identify governor of their state. 57% could not define an amendment. 44% of those with a high school education couldn't even pass the exam. Tell me America is not crumbling.

This passage, delivered by Mr. Rumson in a fiery and dramatic tone, sounded like a persuasive pitch to constituents about the need for a civics education requirement and how it would solve the problem of students not knowing foundational content related to government and the Constitution. Mr. Rumson did not mention the standards to which Michigan teachers are already teaching, and if these demonstrate any alignment with the material covered on the US Citizenship Test. It seemed possible that 4136 had distinct political and educational impacts, and that perhaps Mr. Rumson focused on the former. Ultimately, Mr. Rumson seemed determined to use his authority to push legislation through to advance a political cause.

Additionally, Mr. Rumson added a cultural component to 4136 explicitly when he detailed that:

> There should be a basic understanding and appreciation for civics, Michigan civics specifically, and why should the threshold be higher for immigrants than one who is naturally born in this country. Again, there should be no higher threshold for anyone else, it should be the same for everyone. We're Americans. We're born here, we've been given a gift. We should know the basic foundation of the government that provides the very freedoms we enjoy.

By framing the threshold of knowledge created by 4136 as akin to the threshold of knowledge demonstrated by naturalized citizens, Mr. Rumson justified that Americans should prioritize this knowledge to fully engage with the government and freedoms of the nation. He also sounded almost derogatory in claiming that if individuals not born in the US could demonstrate acceptable mastery on this exam, then the task should be easy for native-born citizens. Mr. Rumson reiterated this social Darwinist view by stating, "This is a great country; it is a darned shame that we have citizens born here who know less than some naturalized citizens." Again, Mr. Rumson's comments revealed a tension between educational policymakers that would continue to reemerge. For example, the chairperson of Michigan's House Education Committee, Ms. Craig, described why she saw House Bill 4136 as jammed in committee:

> There probably are the votes to move it, but I am kind of holding it because it seems like another mandate. In and of itself, it is an important issue, but collectively with other mandates on what to teach, teaching becomes more about compliance. This appears to me to be a fluffy bill.

Specifically, Chairwoman Craig described holding the bill in committee because it represented another mandate. And she drew attention to the implications of such legislation on teaching and learning in making it more about compliance than powerful education. In turn, Chairwoman Craig's labeling of bill as "fluffy" reflected her skepticism about the purpose of the bill – almost implying that political and not educational considerations were paramount – and foreshadowed similar criticisms directly from educators.

By December of 2016, after 22 months since being first introduced, both chambers of Michigan's legislature agreed on the language in HB4136, with final votes in the Senate of 36-1 and 105-2 in the House. Then, Governor Snyder signed the bill into law on December 31, 2016. So what had started as a bill requiring high school students to pass the US Citizenship Test to graduate evolved into a law that sought to align Michigan's future civics curriculum and assessments with material covered in the US Citizenship Test. Along the way, the bill gained momentum and bi-partisan support. Interestingly, the strong political support garnered from the passage of Public Act 4136 did not necessarily translate into the implementation phase. In many cases, educators claimed that they had already integrated the content from the US Citizenship Test into their instruction, and that while important, Public Act 4136 did not significantly alter norms of teaching and learning.

Current State of Civics and Social Studies Education

A common theme across interviews dealt with the significance of civics education nowadays given highly partisan and polarized political climate. Educator and lawmaker participants expressed similar support for civics education, and social studies education more broadly, as providing training and experiences critical to a student's schooling and growth. Mr. Moore, currently a social studies consultant to a state agency and former teacher with over 40

years of experience, claimed, “The whole purpose of social studies is to create citizenship and citizen participation. To get the kids involved in citizen participation, involved in their community, make sure that they do vote.” This view oriented how civics and social studies were consistently intertwined in my study. I became less concerned with distinguishing between the two, and more interested in how participants envisioned transformative social studies or civics teaching and learning. For example, Mr. Garrett, a teacher from a predominantly African-American school in a major urban center remarked:

> To me citizenship education becomes vital in high school years. They’re four years away from being in the real world. When they leave my class and graduate and are out there in college or a career, I need them to be able to vote, to know how to be able to research a topic, have some of those skills, those citizenship skills. How to read and search and build that understanding, build that knowledge. Citizenship is a broad term, and it covers your morality as citizen to how you engage in not just society, in societal norms, and understanding norms. It’s more than civics and government, which is important. It entails world history, US history, other courses. It’s like trying to solve a rubrics cube, how many different things you have going on.

In this passage, Mr. Garrett captured two important themes related to understanding powerful social studies education. First, high school students are on the cusp of entering college or the workforce, and thus the demand to equip them with relevant skills and knowledge peaks because of this urgency. Second, Mr. Garrett articulated how “citizenship is a broad term” and how it entails understanding many moving parts, like civics and government, other social studies topics, and also how to navigate ethical decisions as they pop up. These comments specifically begin to

paint a picture of civics education as an endeavor more complex than acquiring knowledge through memorizing facts or dates.

Mr. Hill, a high school civics teacher with 11 years of experience, stated, "Well, if there's ever been a time for real social studies and civics education, it is now." Mr. Hill's framing of the importance of "real social studies and civics education" nowadays built on Mr. Garrett's belief about the urgency of preparing students for the real world beyond K-12 contexts, and also spoke to a recurring theme regarding the rejuvenated need for enlightened instruction today. Mr. Whitford, who also serves as a board member on the Michigan Center for Civics Education, believed that the present context was ripe for engaging students in meaningful, challenging social studies. Mr. Whitford, in talking about the big issues in social studies education, said:

> I would think and I would hope that at the very least, some of the very national conversations and some of the attention to big political stories could be both challenging as well as engaging. So there's that question of may we live in interesting times; for participation and democracy I think these are certainly interesting times.

Mr. Whitford's assertion about these being interesting times, and that triggering both opportunities and challenges to engaged, democratic learning, embodied the views of other educator and lawmaker participants. In fact, worried by the current political climate, Mr. Moore even cautioned that, "I don't remember our country being as fragmented or split as it is right now. And personally it is a concern. I've never seen the divisiveness between Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives." He remarked that he has witnessed this divisiveness seep into the social studies standards' updating process in Michigan, as that renewal nears its fourth year without consensus. While Mr. Moore lauded how the standards writing fostered civil interactions amongst individuals with different viewpoints, he also lamented the inability to

generate the changes in a more appropriate timeframe. In turn, the politics of the standards process seemed to outweigh the educational value of the updated standards themselves, much in the same way as the political nature of 4136 influenced its passage potentially more than its educational impact.

Mr. Ellington, a 19-year veteran social studies teacher who works at the same school as Mr. Hill, extended Mr. Moore's commentary by remarking on how the current political climate has made truth more partisan in the classroom. Mr. Ellington said:

> To be honest, right now more than ever with the breakdown in believing that truth is a metric to be used, that science is not understood to be a cornerstone of learning, I think that's an issue that not just social studies but especially social studies is really having to deal with in a way that was kind of just taken for granted. That we expect that logic and reason and truth were the goals of academics, were the goals of history.

Mr. Ellington seemed troubled by how traditional, academic practices and routines have been called into question by the spike in the use of terms like "fake news" to discredit opposing opinions. This rising tension that Mr. Ellington and Mr. Moore identified did not escape Mr. Hill and Mr. Garrett, both high school teachers who expressed some consternation about teaching in the Age of Trump yet seemed less burdened by the conditions. For example, Mr. Hill wondered how education might change and offered some perspective on how he deals with the larger political turmoil as a civics teacher:

> I taught most of my career under the Obama administration and I was comfortable with that, and I had schemas created that aligned with that. And when Trump became President, I was concerned what that would do to my civic education. I don't think it's changed a lot. It's so therapeutic to be the teacher and speak from the political science

> perspective that's so different than a pundit perspective. For me personally, it's so healthy, it's so healthy to be able to express Trump the presidency through a very scientific perspective. I do have my own personal opinions but it's more important to me to give the chance to play around with yours. And I like to think I take that very seriously. And when I'm practicing as a teacher, I'm not that personal person I might be at home. So I'd like to think not a lot has changed.

Mr. Hill described how in spite of his personal tendencies and predisposed beliefs, his practice and students demand a more professional and academic approach to political material, especially that which riles up personal emotions and could be considered controversial, in order to serve its educational purpose. Similarly, Mr. Garrett recalled:

> I think last year was a blessing with the election year being presidential was huge. Being able to take a step back from the process. Kids were upset about it, some were like, F Trump. And I was like ok, well let's develop some evidence for this. It's about having reasons and evidence. Huge teachable moment with the 2016 election. Those are types of things as a social studies teacher that are important to be informed about so we can grab onto those and bring into the classroom.

In this instance, Mr. Garrett responded to his students' positions and the political environment by attempting to convert their negative feelings about the election into meaningful learning opportunities based on developing arguments and supplying evidence. Mr. Garrett and Mr. Hill, based on their descriptions, turned into the current state of affairs in the US in order to challenge students in meaningful and active ways. Their decisions to utilize potentially controversial issues in their instruction captured how teachers can transform their classrooms to make learning more

personal and significant by taking risks and resisting pressures to conform to less powerful instructional methods.

Engaging controversy in the classroom.

The grammar of schools and current conditions facilitate certain norms and expectations around teaching and learning, and Mr. Hill described how these potentially compromised the type of transformative social studies that he envisioned as necessary for student growth:

> I see social studies as truly as a field that needs to transcend schools. Sometimes I think it is unfortunate that it is packaged into a school day because there is a great threat that students will treat this class as just another class. And the activities and assignments and my energy is just work and obstacles that need to be dealt with. And maybe every teacher can say that about their field, kind of hope they do, but I think I can testify to it, I could stand up to prosecution against that. It is certainly a need in our society, a critical need.

Mr. Hill worried that students would approach his class with the mindset that they employ potentially in others, and that this would diminish the deep connections that students would make with the learning process. Mr. Ellington, Mr. Hill's colleague and mentor, remarked separately about this issue of school culture as well:

> In terms of the instructional methods of the four other teachers a kid has during the day does dictate the environment that my room has. Because if I stray dramatically from what four other teachers are doing, there's student resistance to that. So any instruction, whether civics instruction or math instruction, if you are an outlier that creates different tensions.

Mr. Hill even described how there had been times when he changed his approach to coincide more with what students are accustomed to, but he said, "I feel horrible when I do that, busy

work or whatever you call that. I never approach a class wanting to do that." Mr. Hill seemed to be referring to the negotiation of schooling here, whereby some teachers will sacrifice the rigor of their teaching and learning requirements in order to avoid student resistance and push-back. Mr. Hill went on to say:

> A good teacher puts themselves in uncomfortable positions all the time where there's liability. For example, to fail a student, you can't whimsically fail a student. It's malpractice if you're not documenting and preparing to defend yourself against prosecution. If somebody says why did you do this, I want to be able to defend that and provide evidence. I think a good teacher goes up on that red line and makes their life a little uncomfortable. The easiest thing you can do in this place is give everyone an A. Whether you teach or not, you give everybody an A, no complaints. It is very tempting in today's atmosphere to make everyone happy. I hedge it with staying up on my state law. Because if we're talking about growing people, we're talking about making them uncomfortable, exercising, getting them to persevere out of that, and that's controversial in of itself, it's confrontational.

Mr. Hill acknowledged that the easier path for teachers is to avoid confrontation by distributing high grades and ensuring there are no complaints. However, as Mr. Hill articulated from his perspective, powerful teaching demands that individuals place themselves in challenging circumstances or risk not impacting student growth as prominently.

Related to Mr. Hill's claims about powerful teaching stepping right up to what's uncomfortable, Mr. Ellington in particular grappled with how his instruction had been impacted over the last decade by heightened partisanship:

> I would say in the past decade far more of a kind of hanging on to the tiger by the tail to make sure you're protected or not taking unnecessary risks in doing your job as a teacher. When truth has become partisan, that becomes a frustration as a teacher because I'm not sure I can say this because this will be perceived as an assault on a certain philosophy or certain political party, but it's true. And then you're, or I'm at least, weighing some of these decisions and be conscious of them. What goes home to mom and dad, what's going to get popped back to the principal, or will potentially cause a visit or email to me.

The "hanging on to the tiger by the tail" implied that as the teacher, Mr. Ellington found himself in a dangerous situation because of the difficult task of bringing a diverse group of students into academic discussions of political nature and not knowing if such an act would come back and bite you. For example, Mr. Ellington wondered about a recent lesson and whether there would be pushback:

> We just talked about LBJ's Great Society initiatives, and currently in 2018 there's a lot of talk about if this alleviated poverty, and if you use the official government measure which hasn't changed since the late 1960s, then no. But if you use any measure that academics and policy wonks actually suggest is a better measure of poverty, it worked. So I put that on a slide, and a graphic that showed the two lines, but in my head I'm wondering if I'm going to get hit by that. And maybe I'm more paranoid than I need to be.

While Mr. Ellington recognized he might be more paranoid than need be, he also brought up a compelling example of a purposeful academic task that could potentially be challenged on the grounds that it was too partisan. Mr. Ellington provided another example of a learning

experience that he used to rely on, but questioned its usage in such a polarized political environment:

> Often when we talk about women's lib movement, and this is one that makes me nervous now, but I'll push buttons very hard and be very arrogant about women aren't equal, and present that point repeatedly and back it up with statistics, and that will often get a rise out of some female students who have been taught about being equal with the boys, and that's often a good way to get some good interaction and discussion. Now when I do that I'm worried I could be recorded or taken out of context. Do they understand that this is a strategy to provoke discussion?

Mr. Ellington's use of a simulation to stir debate in this example further demonstrated some of the challenging decisions that he had been forced to ponder as he worked to engage his students. To some degree, Mr. Ellington's response also displayed a sensitivity to the changing social landscape, as women's activism in the Age of Trump and the #MeToo movement have altered our norms around gender related issues. The worry that Mr. Ellington cited also emerged in several of his responses about teaching nowadays. He later added about teaching controversial topics:

> And so talking about some of this, like gay rights in high school, makes me nervous. Talk about the second amendment, holy crap. We could get into hot water just by having appropriate educational discussions about it. I don't have a lot of confidence that I will be protected by my building or central office, so I tend to play it more carefully. Which I don't think is necessarily good instruction but I want to get paid and don't want to get fired. We very rarely are given any direction, but the vibe is you don't upset parents. Lots of decisions made in the building and at the district level are made in terms of how they

> will have to interact with parents, and not sound instructional decisions. If mom and dad are upset with something done in class, I'm getting a visit regardless of the merit of the instruction.

This response, paired with Mr. Ellington's earlier statements, revealed the pressures that he encountered in even thinking about broaching topics like gay rights or gun control in schools. The result, as Mr. Ellington indicated, did not favor powerful instruction, but rather education that risked becoming too deferential to parents and not upsetting the status quo.

Despite wanting to facilitate discussion-based instruction that tackled pressing issues, Mr. Ellington felt hindered by what he observed as partisanship making certain topics off limits. Mr. Moore, a veteran educator, broke down the process of teaching in a politicized environment:

> It can be intimidating because if you have a strong political element that wants to influence your classroom. If I had a student who disagreed with me, I'd tell them go home and tell your parents because if you disagree with me they can tell you 100 reasons why I'm wrong, and then we can speak about it, and I'd be happy to speak with them too. So instead of saying things that were controversial and hoping it didn't get home, I wanted it to get home. Of course that was later in my career, and I don't know if I would have had the confidence as a young teacher to do that.

While offering an example of how he had pushed against political elements in his classroom, Mr. Moore recognized that such an approach evolved over the course of his career, and thus expecting young teachers or teachers dependent on their maintaining their jobs to make such a decision. This represents an important consideration moving forwards, in that exploring strategies to support teachers taking risks and engaging controversial issues could spawn new norms that better prepare students for democratic life.

Powerful Social Studies Teaching and Learning

Educator and lawmaker participants expressed agreement about the importance of engaging students in powerful civics education and social studies training because of their capacity to foster future citizenship and active habits of mind. While some participants described current challenges of mandates and schooling norms in hindering transformative social studies teaching and learning, educators and lawmakers described the agency of teachers to make learning meaningful and values-based for students.

Mr. Rumson, a key advocate of Public Act 4136, in expressing support for civics education, passionately exclaimed:

> If you have a government of the people and for the people, the people should absolutely know what the government is about. If you really care about this country, please give individuals a deep-rooted understanding of how this government was formed, why the Constitution is so important, and where they need to take this country. I would like those individuals to have an educated understanding of why this country was built the way it was.

Mr. Rumson framed the importance of civics education as fulfilling a basic democratic demand, citing a civics crisis and the need for a traditional, transactional view of knowledge in which students receive information. Meanwhile Mr. Garrett, an educator participant, also framed the importance of civics education as meeting democratic demands today, but from a more empowering perspective. In reference to his practice and larger political culture, Mr. Garrett stated:

> Especially with what's going on in the NFL and NBA right now, wanting to teach about what is a civic responsibility. Am I teaching blind patriotism, or awareness, to be able to

> analyze what's really going on in the country? Especially because my classes are 99% African American. I can't necessarily stand up here and teach patriotism, because from their perspective they've seen things not go the way they would like.

Similar to Mr. Rumson, Mr. Garrett seemed to understand that engaging students with civics was significant to their growth as citizens, evident in his wanting to make learning responsive to what's going on and students' lives. Yet Mr. Garrett was not as singularly concerned as Mr. Rumson expressed with "giving individuals a deep-rooted understanding of how this government was formed, why the Constitution is so important, and where they need to take this country," as he understood that such an approach might not be compatible with the experiences that some of his students have had.

Ignoring the student-related cues could have severely hindered Mr. Garrett's likelihood of establishing buy-in in that class, and thus would have limited his ability to construct powerful learning experiences. According to Mr. Coleman, a two-term elected state lawmaker and practicing medical doctor of over 35 years, powerful social studies "depends upon interests of kids themselves. Keeping them socially active, understanding things that are important to them. I imagine it will vary." In this particular response, Mr. Coleman reflected a more flexible and nuanced understanding of powerful social studies. Among other lawmaker participants, Mr. Whitford and Ms. Craig also articulated the benefits of constructing active, values-based learning experiences meaningful to students. Mr. Whitford believed that powerful social studies:

> Can be experiential, and I think that's an important part of it. So you can see projects, mock participatory opportunities, but I certainly see engagement in students imagination and something that drives them to, again it almost gets into this philosophical piece where maybe a light comes on, where they understand ok not only is this is as academic

> subject, but it is something that applies to me and I can have some type of ownership over it. And when that comes into the academic arena, I think that that's really powerful. Think about all the different projects, or learning, that students can be involved in, and often you have to do something to graduate, and you may not take ownership and see it as important and may just do it to do it. And that's some of the less important less impactful learning. It's really when you take the ownership and have opportunities then to dive deeper, to really kind of learn, not just what's going to allow you to do well on a test or pass an assessment but really understand your role and how to participate. So the educating and learning that opens eyes and drives passion is really important really drives learning and passion is really important.

This inspired view of powerful social studies education shared by Mr. Whitford nailed how projects and interactive activities are solid ingredients to facilitating impactful learning, but how they tend to fail unless accompanied by instruction that challenges students by opening their eyes and passions to a world they might not had known existed otherwise.

Cultivating student investment in learning stood out as a consistent response across educator and lawmaker participants' comments. For teacher participants especially, they remarked on their immediate attempts to hook students into their classes. Mr. Garrett described his process of trying to generate student investment by framing his classes around human interactions:

> I try to have students leave that first week feeling it's more than studying what happened, it's more than vocab terms and identification. I like to root a lot of what I teach into interactions, and the idea of power, and how it's a human construct. I reference that

> throughout. I'll ask them why does this matter. These kids will sniff out bs 100 miles away. As long as I'm genuine, intentional, I'll get buy-in.

Mr. Garrett's approach to building student investment entailed asking students critical questions about why things happened and encouraging their analysis of systemic issues dealing with more abstract concepts like power. This progressive approach to fostering powerful social studies learning enabled Mr. Garrett to invite his students into meaningful discussions that were deliberately designed to get them practicing critical habits of mind.

Both Mr. Ellington and Mr. Hill, like Mr. Garrett, discussed how powerful social studies was contingent upon quickly establishing positive classroom norms. To achieve this, Mr. Ellington characterized powerful social studies as being "age-appropriate, time-appropriate, rooted in democratic and freedom traditions and application and thought." Mr. Hill added that powerful social studies teaching and learning:

> Is the opposite of oppressive education. It's the opposite of you shouldn't leave, a reasonable student who comes to class to learn, shouldn't leave class worse, they should leave better. If you come with an open mind, you shouldn't leave worse off. So I think with that powerful education, people are questioning, the kind of questions I can't answer. And hopefully I'm good enough to say that's a great freaking question man, I don't know the man answer to that. Sometimes I write them down, I got three today. Sometimes I tell them you look it up, you look it up and I'm busy. Questioning. Exercising what they learn. Practicing. How knowledge is acquired – take an idea, think about it, act on it, know that thing.

This vignette seemed to capture how powerful social studies did not exist as a prepackaged product, but only became powerful when activated in a reciprocal manner by teacher and

students. In Mr. Hill's example, he set the stage for learning by creating a culture where questioning became the norm, and he attempted to empower students to want to thrive in such an environment by praising them, following up with their questions, and encouraging their independence.

Student engagement.

A main element of powerful social studies entailed participants responding to questions about what student engagement looks like and the variables that influence student engagement. Interestingly, educator and lawmaker participants did not seem to subscribe to rigid rules about what student engagement looked like in practice, as they captured how contingent it is upon individual and contextual factors. Both Mr. Hill and Mr. Garrett tended to measure student engagement based on observations they made while students worked. For example, Mr. Hill believed that when students were engaged, they were "talking, hustling less, using their phones appropriately, not rushing, thinking." Mr. Garrett said:

> Honestly I listen. Usually I can hear, I listen to conversations, and a lot of times listen if they're focused on what we're doing. Like if I hear students say, what, and it's because of something they just figured out or read. I used to think oh this class is asking a lot of questions, and that is a sign, and now I listen for what type of questions. Like this class is asking the same question repeatedly, or asking about directions. So things like that. But I always get the, when I find students saying, but what about this, and they're making this connection, that's cool. Even if for some of the questions, even if they are more basic. , some students are trying to engage their own essential understanding. If I get a lot of people shouting out answers, that's a sign of engagement.

Unpacking Mr. Garrett's comments, similarities emerged with Mr. Hill. Both identified talking and thinking as primary signs of students engaging in social studies coursework, and also the implicit responsiveness of both to their students. For example, Mr. Garrett seemed to rely on calibrating the chatter that he hears while students are working on activities to determine if students are on task. Also, Mr. Garrett evaluated students' questions, and looked for critical, relevant questions, but also more basic questions if that aligned with where a student was in their development. Underscoring Mr. Hill and Mr. Garrett's remarks were relational components, and I felt Mr. Moore called attention to the importance of this interactional component. He said:

> I'm old school but I have trouble with online education not for what it is but for what it isn't. We could do this interview over the phone, but body language and eye contact and follow up are so, and that to me that interaction and watching students as they're interacting to see how students engaged and who isn't. And to make that personal connection with kids is very important.

Interestingly, Mr. Moore drew a contrast to online education in describing what engaging social studies looks like, because to him, the virtual component restricted one's more complete ability to interact with others in-person.

Participants were also candid in identifying factors that they believed to contribute to student engagement. From the onset, Mr. Hill acknowledged that there were "limitations to what we can do in the classroom." Mr. Coleman offered a holistic view of potential contributing factors, remarking:

> There are pressures like a lack of family support and pressure from youngsters their own age that complicate engaging students. Kids with issue of food security or housing

security have a different outlook than those who don't have those worries. Considering Maslow's hierarchy of needs, meeting basic needs is essential first.

By accounting for peer pressure, as well as family related issues like food and housing security, Mr. Coleman accounted for some of the environmental factors in which students operate. Interestingly, and appropriately given his medical background and practice, Mr. Coleman talked about meeting the basic needs of individuals such that they have the capacity to be able to engage. He added, "Again, I'm not a teacher, but it seems kids who were happier, security, someone caring for them, loving them. When mom's gone and there's no dad, it's very hard." Mr. Coleman deferred to teachers again when I asked about what student engagement looked like. He said, "It's tough for teachers, you're going to have to ask them." Mr. Coleman seemed like he did not want to speak out of turn, and since he lacked teaching experience, he did not want to impose unnecessary burdens on trained professionals. This was reflected in his objection to Public Act 4136 because it was a mandate. Educator participants also addressed these home factors in their discussion of factors related to engagement, but more from an academic standpoint than as an understanding of students' needs as Mr. Coleman suggested. For example, Mr. Hill remarked that based on performance in school, he could tell "what kind of conversations go on at home and have a pretty good sense of who converses about this stuff at home and who doesn't."

Educator participants also identified other contributing factors that impact student engagement involving student characteristics and school culture. Three of four teacher participants spoke about the time of day and age level of the students. Specifically, they believed upperclassmen to be more capable of engaging actively. For example, Mr. Ellington said, "Older students are more willing to engage in that kind of higher order thinking discussion."

Interestingly, a couple teacher participants talked about students not being as informed as they needed to be in order to engage in powerful learning. Mr. Garrett attributed this to "most students not having the means to be informed, or the desire to be informed on a topic." All four teacher participants remarked on student interest in a topic. Mr. Hill even talked about "what they had for lunch, what they did during lunch" as impacting student engagement, as well as issues out of teachers' control like class size and educational norms to which students were accustomed. He described what he saw as primary challenges to student engagement:

> Certainly number of kids in a room. More kids more shadows, less accountability. And I got to also say, what were your previous learning experiences? What class did you just come from? What expectations did that teacher have of you? How did you work in that class? Was the emphasis on doing, was the emphasis on thinking? To me that's a huge barrier too. Maybe I'm wrong, but I find that there's a learning curve when I ask students to be able to think about information. And I try to work them in novel ways. Like cross training, that's how we get strong when we confuse our muscles, I want to confuse their brains, I don't want them to do the same things they've always done and are used to. That's a huge roadblock, because like anybody, they want to be in their comfort zone, and I have to be really conscious of the attitudes as they come up. There can be a toxicity if a few students start to think that it's unfair. And it's not unfair because it's unfair because it's different, and that's what makes it slightly more difficult.

Mr. Hill seemed eager to engage controversial issues with his students because he wanted to make kids uncomfortable in order to help them grow. In such moments, Mr. Hill aimed to structure learning such that students were actively involved and challenged by the tasks. Nonetheless, he recognized that his unique approach might rub some students the wrong way,

especially since instructional norms tend more towards educational negotiation between students and teachers in which individuals maximize their comfort.

Pressures Impacting Powerful Social Studies Teaching and Learning

Pressures of testing, time, and community have been demonstrated to impact the manner in which an educational policy is implemented (Wilson, 1990). In this case, educator and lawmaker participants seemed to be operating from different frames of reference in terms of how they filtered these pressures. Even in instances when lawmaker participants empathized with the professional plight of teachers in questioning the educational value of mandates, lawmakers had to balance the political implications of not supporting them. So even though most educators expressed that they already integrated the required content from Public Act 4136 into their teaching, they still did not agree with this law that explicitly made the linkage between official curriculum and the US Citizenship Test.

Educator and lawmaker participants expressed opposition to mandates because of their tendency to undermine teachers as professionals and impose additional requirements on an already burdened workforce. Four out of five lawmaker participants expressed opposition to mandates, at least in theory, as individual state congressional voting records might indicate otherwise. Five out of six educator participants disapproved of mandates, yet compliance with them still became a central area of discussion for most educators. When I asked participants about their view on mandates and high stakes assessments specifically, I did so after I had introduced the context of Public Act 4136, so at points I refer to mandates more generally and at other times more directly to this piece of legislation.

There seemed to be near universal opposition to mandates among participants. Mr. Smith, Mr. Coleman's legislative aide and attorney, contextualized Mr. Coleman's vote against Public Act 4136 as directly related to it being another requirement placed on teachers. Mr. Smith said:

> It was an unfunded mandate on the districts. Mr. Coleman does not like mandates and that has motivated many of his votes. He also shared with me that he felt that the administration and teachers are professionals. School professionals should be allowed to teach the issues included in the citizenship test in their regular curriculum in his opinion.

Mr. Smith raised two key issues: one being that mandates, especially unfunded ones, burdened districts, and two, school professionals deserved curricular autonomy from legislative reach. Mr. Hill, who didn't see himself as a teacher who "played by a traditional script" and believed "some of these cats need to be told what to do," firmly believed that "legislation is not education."

Mr. Rumson, an outlier in terms of being the only participant who spoke in favor of mandates, saw them as a means of ensuring educational fairness and accountability. In our conversation while 4136 was still in committee, Mr. Rumson told me:

> If a teacher tells me they're not teaching to a test, they're not telling the truth. You have to teach to the test for the student to perform and see if the performance was evaluated in a way that you gave fairness in an education setting.

This belief in the centrality of teaching to the test seemed greatly influenced by Mr. Rumson's own personal journey as a student and professional:

> I'm a learned man coming to Lansing. I have two degrees, a masters degree in business and a law degree. I'm certified to practice real estate. I'm also licensed in insurance and

> securities. I took tests for a long time, the only way they knew that I knew what I needed was through tests.

Mr. Rumson seemed to conceive of learning as validated through testing based on his experiences in higher education and professional certification, and so understandably, this outlook appeared to influence his impassioned support for 4136. In arguing why 4136 should pass, Mr. Rumson stated:

> We as students learn from teaching to the test, I'll say it again. In America, we take the ACT or the SAT to get into a college. They evaluate and value that score to allow me entrance. If I want to become a lawyer I take the bar exam, to see if I understand the law. In dental school, I take one. Doctors. Accountants. I take a securities exam if I want to sell securities. I take an insurance exam if I want to sell insurance. Real estate if I sell property, real estate. If I want to enjoy the benefits of being an American, I do nothing, except have a pulse. Wrong! We should be indicating that these are basic principles you must know and should know. So when you're in a voting booth, you understand why you're voting. Why you are going to the polls to vote, and what that vote means, and why you want to have the protections and benefits of being an American.

Again, Mr. Rumson justified teaching to the test as logical since we as a society, through professional organizations and testing companies, have a history of administering exams that serve to assess how much individuals know about particular areas of study.

Other participants raised concerns about the implications of mandates on teaching and learning, namely the push to teach to the test. Recognizing this phenomenon, Mr. Coleman articulated:

> I don't find testing frequently productive. We're testing them to death, that's a big source of my personal frustration. And they change every couple years. We should have professionals involved and let professionals do what they want, they typically get it taught. There is a time loss from academic studies, a financial cost, and we rarely test high achieving schools at K-12 levels.

This concern showed awareness to the implementation pressures faced by educators.

Even in instances when mandates had an impact, educator participants conveyed how it was more about being compliant. Mr. Ellington, in describing his experiences working almost two decades in a decentralized school district, said:

> And I would say that attitude of independence from each other, from state mandates, from county mandates, is still pervasive, that there is often appearances of being followed but there is not a whole-hearted effort to adopt new approaches or thoroughly examine what's going on.

So even when followed, these participants expressed how mandates have little impact on their instructional decisions.

Other participants expressed potential strengths of Public Act 4136 outside of the benefits of teaching to a test. Mr. Whitford argued that the emergence of civics education more popularly as a result of this law could be an asset to powerful social studied instruction. Mr. Whitford claimed about 4136:

> For this one, I think it did make that connection that maybe lots of people don't always think about. If you think about new citizens, citizens that have been naturalized, citizens that would take this citizenship test if you will, it's interesting hear to some of the stories that come out of that in terms of doing some studying, doing some preparation. But lots

> of times you will hear new citizens really have a high value for participating, voting, and engaging in politics. Certainly not all the time, across the board, but certainly that's something that is on people's minds as they go through that process. So to make that linkage does add value.

Perhaps developing civic dispositions, habits, and knowledge does require a way to reset people's expectations. Mr. Whitford offered how citizens might start to appreciate engaging in political life as a result of renewed attention to civics education, and specifically the experiences of students in participating in powerful learning opportunities. And Mr. Garrett, from an educator's perspective, added that at least "this immigration test would be a little more valid, especially since information on it is more readily available." Despite access to testing materials, Mr. Garrett wound up bringing up his lingering worries, "I'd be afraid of teachers teaching to that test. A lot of times it becomes hey look how well I did on this test, as opposed to how well students actually learn." For educators, these types of worries seemed to outweigh all else.

One big objection of educator participants to Public Act 4136 stemmed from the fact that the legislature seemed to be working without consultation of those who would implement the policy, namely teachers and curricular leaders. Mr. Moore wondered, "Why wouldn't they consult the people that know the most about it?" Mr. Ellington added, "It didn't go through, it's my understanding, any state social studies organizations. This was politicians saying do this. It was so clearly a partisan hack job. Score points, get in the media, and not actually improve instruction or accountability." In discussing the impact of 4136 on teaching and learning, Mr. Hill said:

> The idea is odd to me in only one respect. It is odd to feel that, often as a teacher to feel like anyone is managing me. Now in the abstract of abstract, should a student be able to

> pass the naturalization test – if I teach even ok, and a student is reasonably active, they'll have no problem meeting the sixty percent threshold on any of the 100 questions. There are some unreasonable questions in the bank of US Naturalization questions, but you can pick ten easily that aren't unreasonable at all. It's incredibly low expectations, and we suffer from that big time. It's clear to me that you're not thinking about children and civics, you're thinking about going to the next farmer's market and telling people this idea that they'll understand. There's, most of the questions on the Naturalization exam, that between are covered in US history and civics courses students are taking.

This passage demonstrated that in theory, Mr. Hill had limited qualms with meeting the demands of a citizenship test mandate, in that preparing students for citizenship is important and the assessment was not challenging if students were relatively active in class. But, Mr. Hill captured how the imposition of a low required standard actually reduced the incentive to introduce more powerful, engaging instruction because of minimal expectations. Several teachers remarked on the likelihood of teachers at large relying on the test as a checklist and further undermining active civics learning that could be taking place. Furthermore, Mr. Hill's comments about the political nature of the civics directive satisfying simple communication of a message to voters while overlooking actual educational concerns embodied this similar educator sentiment expressed by Mr. Moore and Mr. Ellington.

Opposition to 4136 specifically dealt with the fact that Michigan's Grade Level Content Expectations already covered the majority of the material that the US Citizenship Test entailed. This tension, several educator and lawmaker participants acknowledged, weakened the need for a mandate. In fact, Mr. Moore described his immediate response to learning about 4136:

> I took the 100 questions, and I did my excel sheet. Of the 100 questions, we had content that directly addressed 79 of the 100 questions. It's already there. What the hell are they thinking down there? Why wouldn't you look at the standards? And ok, there are 21 that aren't covered, like who's your president, who's your governor, who's your representative, and we can't put those in the standards because they change and they're different depending on where you live. And something like what's the capital of the United States, I mean we don't need a standard for that. That's the most basic level.

Mr. Moore went on, though, to explain that he was not opposed to the law, and noted, "If it gives social studies more recognition and more resources or professional development, then okay."

In addition to mandates that created testing and curricular pressures identified by educator and lawmaker participants, pressures of time and community also generated other considerations that educator participants brought up. Perhaps this was a prime example of an area in which educators demonstrated their expertise and knowledge developed through practice. The six educator participants totaled 107 years of educational experience; ranging from 45 years for Mr. Moore, 19 for Mr. Ellington, 16 for Dave, 12 for Mr. Leake, 11 for Mr. Hill, to four for Mr. Garrett. In comparison, the five lawmaker participants totaled 25 years of legislative experience; 14 years for Mr. Whitford, six for Ms. Craig, two years apiece for Representatives Mr. Coleman and Mr. Rumson, and one year for legislative aide Mr. Smith. The experiential differential represented an important variable to contextualize the fact that the educator participants spoke as professionals who had been accumulating experiences at the street-level, versus lawmaker participants who seemed to exist more on the periphery of the classroom's teaching and learning conditions. Whilst this did not preclude lawmaker participants from appreciating and valuing the work of educators as professionals in this day and age, as

demonstrated throughout, it did result in this portion of the findings emerging almost exclusively from educator responses. Three distinct pressures, the time to teach, structure of school, and engagement of controversial issues, presented challenges to educators in actualizing powerful instruction. The consistent emergence of these themes across educator participants, and relative absence from lawmaker participants' remarks, highlighted these domains as areas of ideological disunion between the two participant groups I studied.

In terms of the time to teach, Mr. Garrett discussed how significantly snow days and assemblies cut into the 180 teaching days, resulting in difficult decisions about what to prioritize in class. Mr. Garrett described the challenge in deciding how to determine how to maximize limited time with students:

> It's a lot of decisions about trimming down assignments. Every year I've had to make some difficult cuts to get deeper into what I teach. Am I supposed to teach as much historical content as possible, or as many historical skills, social studies skills as possible. I come from the school of thought that skills are the most important part. I want them to be able to read, to analyze, to critique, and be able to analyze graphs, create graphs, go through those skills. At that point they can piece together the history. I want to address those skills. And leave with that strong enough sense of content knowledge.

Mr. Garrett's elevation of developing students' skills over content knowledge was a decision that he made in the best interests of students due to limited time. Mr. Garrett went on to say:

> Teaching a government class is important. Personally, I'd want government and economics to be a full year. Scrambling to get everything, and there's so much more that could have been done. I had to, barely got to talk about stocks and some macroeconomics, but at the end, made the decision to do personal finance. Personal

> finance is really important to these kids. Personally, I'd like to see both of those courses be a full year. If we're going to build informed citizens, it's a time thing. Not enough time to do everything.

Mr. Garrett's assertion about course length was brought up by two other teachers, and again, demonstrated how their positionality afforded insight into what's going on at the street-level. As Mr. Hill said in a related point, "We're in the trenches, we see the eyeballs." Collectively, these comments displayed that while educators and lawmakers both possessed authority over social studies education policy, being a professional educator facilitated more opportunities to advance understanding of knowledge in use.

Conclusion

Introduced in February of 2015, House Bill 4136 spent over one year in committee before gaining widespread bipartisan support in both Michigan's House and Senate. After being signed into law in December of 2016, Public Act 4136's impact remains unclear. This study examined the sensemaking of educator and lawmaker participants bound by their service to secondary social studies education. The varied positionality of participants contributed to unique perspectives that sometimes conflicted but more often than not overlapped. I examined issues of civics education, powerful social studies teaching and learning, and student engagement among policymakers. The data suggested that educator and lawmaker participants demonstrated a range of opinions when it came to mandates and what powerful social studies looked like, perhaps informed by educators more advanced experiences with teaching and learning.

DISCUSSION

Collectively, the findings from this study reveal how the competing political and educational aims of policy naturally pit legislators and educators against one another because of the power play to define, in this case, what social studies education looks like. One critical finding illuminated the way in which policymakers conceived of state legislation, primarily mandates, as impacting norms pertaining to curriculum, instruction, and the educational environment. These views seemed to largely emerge from individuals' theories of change and how they envisioned the process of education manifesting. Naturally, most educators spoke about the failure of mandates to impact powerful teaching and learning, as did some lawmakers. In most cases, educators claimed that mandates wound up requiring the teaching of content that already was being taught, and in turn, a low baseline seemed to be set for the profession. This finding coincided with Segall's (2006) determination that regardless of the impact, high stakes exams altered the norms in which teaching and learning occurred. Specifically, Segall (2006) found that mandated exams influenced content covered but not necessarily instruction. Similarly, most educators I spoke with expressed this sentiment, yet also suggested that they felt compelled to find ways to facilitate transformational learning experiences for their students. This called for making civics education indispensable to students by turning into issues like the clash between Colin Kaepernick and the National Football League, as well as current political developments during the Trump presidency, in order to co-construct with students classrooms based on solving real-world problems. This theory of change adopted by educators doubted the effectiveness of state mandates to impact education critically, unless such edicts were accompanied by additional funds or support.

Educators spoke unanimously about the importance of students knowing the material that mandates seek to require. However, educators doubted whether legislation, in of itself, had the power to impact teaching and learning conditions beyond setting a checklist for teachers to use. Similarly, Smith (2006) noted that in response to a high stakes social studies test in Virginia, most teachers she studied wanted to employ transformational instructional strategies but succumbed to content delivery to ensure test preparation. Interestingly, with respect to 4136, the actual law seemed to be communicated poorly to the actual teaching force. Few participants knew of the law because of any school or district initiative in response to 4136's passage, as individuals learned about it by watching the news and following stories on Twitter.

And so aside from additional funding, professional development, and public attention, educators seemed to doubt the impact of legislative acts on the classroom, especially absent of any consistent lines of communication between them.

Some lawmakers, however, identified legislative action as the appropriate response to a perceived youth civics crisis, in that in their estimation, a mandate to teach certain content would transfer to students learning the necessary, important material. Embedded in this view is a belief that teachers are incapable of making the decision about what is important to teach, and that simply by providing a curricular script, all teachers can elevate their students' performance related to civics. This theory of change seemed to coincide with traditional notions of social studies teaching and learning as delivery of facts and tasks aimed at memorization (Grant, 2003). The sponsor of the bill, however, refused to even acknowledge 4136 as a mandate, and repeatedly cited that no real additional requirements were being placed on teachers. He went on to express emphatically that if teachers were already presenting this material covered on the US Citizenship Test, then they should not object to accountability measures ensuring this was the

case. It seemed that this lawmaker, and the narrative constructed here, both condemned teachers for not doing their jobs effectively, and then utilized the teachers to institute new curricular guidelines without additional professional development or incentives. This conjured up Cohen and Ball's (1990) take on policy and practice, in that teachers filtered mandates through their established practice, and so legislating what happened during implementation tended to set individuals up to fall short of established expectations.

This gap between educators and some lawmakers was reminiscent of Hill's (2001) findings in which math teachers and curriculum writers expressed disconnect in their conceptions of abstract terms. In that case, the discrepancy in thinking existed between educators responsible for implementation of the math curriculum and manifested in their limited understanding of shared professional language (Hill, 2001). By expanding the scope to include actors at formation and implementation stages, I examined individuals who naturally operated in different spheres and thus came at social studies education in disparate ways. For example, the main concern of educators and some lawmakers, of teaching to a test, also embodied a primary selling point expressed by a lawmaker. By beginning to better understand the configuration of beliefs within the secondary social studies arena, I sought to account for how these distinct meanings that emerged impacted the policymaking process. I was most interested by how, despite being jammed up in committee and hearing from several lawmakers about the dangers of mandates, 4136 still became official law. While concessions were made along the way to scrap the testing component, the law does stipulate that future curriculum and assessments be aligned with the US Citizenship Test. The near unanimous bipartisan support for 4136's ultimate passage in Michigan's Senate and House of Representatives spoke to the prevalence of its political significance. However its educational significance has remained uncertain. That withstanding,

Public Act 4136 seemed to represent a first step, in that it would influence the development of educational and professional norms to follow.

One proven strategy to prepare for future civic life in a polarized democratic society entails turning into controversial issues through active, challenging, meaningful discussion-based instruction (Hess, 2009). It seems though that a policy like 4136 runs the risk of fostering norms in which teachers avoid hot-button issues and focus on content delivery. Especially nowadays given the partisan political climate, special attention should be devoted to how teachers structure learning to develop democratic habits. In the case of Mr. Ellington, he acknowledged that he prefers to employ safe instructional decisions – meaning less controversy as to reduce the likelihood of backlash. Meanwhile, Mr. Hill discussed his desire to make students uncomfortable by pushing them beyond what they're used to. These two teachers, Mr. Hill and Mr. Ellington, represent some possible responses of educators under similar pressures. It is interesting to consider how the norms might direct teachers to be more like Mr. Ellington than Mr. Hill. Crocco, Halvorsen, Jacobsen, and Segall (2018) explore how civic discourse, because of political polarization and difficulty in modeling effective democratic habits, has been disregarded in many classrooms. In the case of 4136, teachers could potentially meet the mandate's expectations by constructing low-level learning opportunities targeted at test preparation and knowledge delivery instead of as a springboard into deep, sustained learning.

Limitations

Despite the many valuable insights that this study offers, there are some limitations to the research design that warrant consideration. First, I deliberately focused on policymakers because I was interested in learning about how these various actors with power over social studies education conceived of the thing over which they possessed authority. As such, I isolated

educators and lawmakers to best understand their individual frames of reference and how these contributed to the visions of social studies made possible to them. This strategy inherently overlooks actual instruction within the classroom, and thus potentially minimizes two important components. First, the notion of teaching and learning that educators expressed during interviews may look different in practice. And second, students did not participate in my data collection, so their voice has not been explicitly accounted for.

In exploring the first limitation, I thought about how a couple educators described responding to where their students were, and that that meant leveraging meaningful issues going on right now to engage students to push them to question conditions. Past sensemaking literature found that in some cases, individual reports on one's instruction did not align with observational data collected by researchers (Cohen, 1990). Cohen (1990) detailed the case of Mrs. Oublier, who in response to California's shift to a more conceptual math framework, believed that she had altered her practice to achieve the new vision of teaching and learning. Cohen (1990) concluded though that Mrs. Oublier made sense of the new curriculum through her traditional instructional approach, and this buffered against significant changes occurring. Even in the case of Carol Turner, a skilled math teacher during California's math reform, Ball (1990) described how she both reflected and deflected elements of the new policy. The lesson learned from Mrs. Oublier and Carol Turner involve accounting for such gaps in the way one sees their practice and the way it is experienced by others. Therefore, while discounted from my research strategically, I think it would be an asset to integrate students and observations as triangulating data points to better account for teachers' actual instruction.

Lastly, one other future consideration entails the process of collecting data at different times, and wanting to define the tools clearly beforehand. While this study was exploratory, in

the future I would ensure that I streamlined my protocols to ensure the easy communication amongst and across data sources. For example, I ran into challenges in terms of changing my questionnaire at each iteration of my research (i.e. practicum, dissertation). While multiple iterations were beneficial in affording several data points and each wave of research contributed to my overall understanding of Public Act 4136, the lack of consistent, matched interview items minimized my ability to compare and contrast some of the data across time.

Areas for Future Research

As I expressed earlier in relation to Hill's (2001) analysis of math educators and curriculum specialists, further examination of the range of social studies education policymakers represents fertile ground for future research. Informed by personal and professional experiences that supported civics education, lawmaker and educator participants conveyed diverse perspectives on what powerful citizenship learning opportunities entailed and were up against. Penetrating these communities of policymakers might provide more nuanced insights into their views on social studies related issues, as well as offer opportunities to strengthen the bonds between educators and lawmakers. Research that can communicate to the varied stakeholders ultimately could assist in getting them more on the same page. As Hill (2001) and Wilson (1990) revealed, pressures of community can serve as a barrier to actualizing what a policy could be. In turn, developing research that deliberately joins the social studies policy network could serve to minimize some of the gap between actors at the formation and implementation phases.

One area critical to tap into seems to be ongoing relationships that already exist between policymakers to build upon shared history. As Mr. Moore, the curriculum specialist for the state agency noted, the protracted nature of the new social studies standards adoption, while challenging and political, represented a chance for individuals who cared about powerful

teaching and learning to sit down together. And ultimately, they learned from one another and compromised over particular content to include in the new state social studies standards. Perhaps situating a future research study in the standards adoption or renewal process could provide a natural setting in which to engage stakeholders with varied interests in social studies education. Additionally, joint-style committees also emerge in the social studies related to specific issues like genocide and human rights. Harvesting these types of government-sponsored ongoing meetings could offer consistent data points to gauge how individual community members are making sense of social studies education. Since social studies, as Gagnon (1989/1996) described, is always changing in response to the climate of the times, a longitudinal style design could be an effective tool to understand the degree to which belief systems are durable. Understanding the persistence of particular core values amongst policymakers could highlight unseen areas of union or cleavage.

Another potential research consideration involves exploring how classroom, school, and district variables impact the likelihood of teachers engaging controversial issues in their instruction. As Zimmerman and Robertson (2017) asserted, desiring the inclusion of hot-button issues is too basic, as such an approach must be accompanied by a deliberate strategy to support teachers' professional autonomy and understanding of legal rights such that they will tend not to avoid controversial matters with their students. After all, the benefits of fostering truly democratic education has been shown, as Gutmann (1987) detailed, to develop critical skills, dispositions, and knowledge suitable for transfer to practical real-world living as a citizen. In the classroom, democratic education most formally emerges in social studies, though schools inculcate students in particular norms by promoting high stakes assessments and teacher-centric instructional strategies (Apple, 1990). Despite these structural conditions that contribute towards

instruction that tends to be non-democratic – as characterized by lack of inclusion of controversial issues, discussion, and student-centered learning – we also know how transformational teaching and learning can be when individuals take risks and abandon traditional scripts. Hess (2009) expertly captured how skilled teachers she observed seemed to both teach for and with discussion. Such teachers thus designed situations for students to practice civility, respectfulness, and building an argument, while also ensuring that effective discussion was being modeled in-person and throughout the curriculum (Hess, 2009).

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to better understand the orientations of a specific group of social studies policymakers as they made sense of civics education in the context of Public Act 4136. Answering these research questions potentially could strengthen democratic education by laying out the actual configuration of ideologies espoused by central social studies actors and structures within one state. Working towards tighter alignment would not imply a singular civics goal existed, but rather mapping out the viewpoints and ideologies of legislators and street-level bureaucrats could indicate points of union and cleavage that might have hindered social studies reforms in the past. In turn, this enhanced knowledge could assist in producing more coordination between key policy actors responsible for developing and implementing civics initiatives. More understanding of these dynamics in an era of escalating culture wars fought over what it means to be an American could help define the tools of citizenship most appropriate in our evolving society.

This study offered the opportunity to better understand how key social studies stakeholders align with Michigan legislators. Pressures to teach to standardized tests and required curriculum tended to create norms that restrict how citizenship education is actualized

in the classroom (Grant, 2006a; Agarwal-Rangnath et al., 2016). In turn, social studies oriented street-level bureaucrats might reveal that their perceptions of powerful social studies look very different from those of lawmakers. Additionally, the within group differences contingent upon one's lived experiences and belief systems could offer meaningful insight into how these moments tend to shape one's predilection for a particular type of social studies education. Exploring this potential interpretive gap over citizenship education could assist lawmakers in crafting policy more responsive to future generations of teachers.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Scripted Interview Protocol for First Wave of Lawmaker Interviews

- House Bill 4136 (2015): introduced February 2015, referred to Committee; significance (political, educational)
    - Does anything stick out about that bill?
    - Could you describe the lead up to HB 4136?
    - What was the response like to HB4136?
    - What have you learned in speaking with stakeholders about the citizenship test requirement?
    - Did there seem to be particular voices active in HB4136, or particular interests in competition over the citizenship test requirement?
- Brings up larger issue of citizenship, and education's role in developing this capacity
    - What do you think the connection is between education and citizenship?
    - How can social studies education strengthen commitment to citizenship?
    - How would you describe current efforts at developing students as citizens?
    - Is there a particular type of citizenship we are training students for?
    - What are the qualities of this type of desired citizen?
    - How does/can social studies policy serve these particular ends?
- Reflecting on your experiences in the House
    - How much talk exists about social studies education among state leaders/representatives/policymakers?
    - What topics/issues seem to traditionally drive social studies policy discussions and action?
    - When these issues come up, whom do you normally speak with?
- Opportunities for enhanced local and state control (in defining standards)
    - At the federal level, the Every Student Succeeds Act, provides opportunities for competitive grants to enhance high quality social studies instruction.
        - Does this align with potential plans in Michigan to strengthen social studies teaching and learning?

Appendix B: Scripted Interview Protocol for Second Wave of Interviews

- Teaching & Learning
    - When you think of powerful social studies teaching and learning, what do you envision?
        - What has informed your perspective?
        - What experiences influenced these beliefs?
    - I want you to visualize that you are leading a US History and Geography class. The semester is just beginning. How do you think you would you describe to your future students what social studies education is?
- Student Engagement
    - I want you to imagine more details about this US History and Geography course that you could be teaching, specifically what does it mean for students to be engaged?
    - What factors might contribute to students' engagement in social studies classes?
    - How might you support their engagement in social studies?
- Preparation for Teaching
    - When you think of being in charge in your classroom, what do you feel prepared to do?
        - What has contributed to this belief?
    - When you think of being in charge in your classroom, what do you feel least prepared to do?
        - What has contributed to this belief?
- Case of Public Act 4136
    - So there's a new social studies graduation requirement in Michigan, have you heard of it?
    - Public Act 4136 mandates that high school students enroll in and successfully pass a semester long civics course. The content of the test derives from the US Naturalization test, which has normally been used for purposes related to citizenship and immigration.
        - What do you think about this?
        - How do you think this might influence social studies teaching and learning in Michigan's high schools?
        - What are the implications of high stakes contexts like this on social studies teaching and learning?

Appendix C: Scripted Interview Protocol for Third Wave of Interviews

- Please describe your background (as it pertains to civics education). What experiences have shaped the way you approach civics education and social studies education?
- What do you identify as the big issues related to social studies education currently?
- What do you identify as the big issues related to citizenship education currently?
- When you think of powerful social studies teaching and learning, what do you envision?
    - What has informed your perspective?
    - What experiences influenced these beliefs?
- What does it mean for students to be engaged in social studies?
    - What factors might contribute to students' engagement in social studies classes?
    - How might you support their engagement in social studies?
- Public Act 4136: How do you think this might influence social studies teaching and learning in Michigan's high schools?
    - What are the implications of high stakes contexts like this on social studies teaching and learning?
    - Does this mandate seem to align with your view?
- What is your view on how social studies education should prepare students for citizenship?

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