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2. FROM INFORMED SOCIAL REFLECTION TO CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

How to Interpret What Youth Say and Do

INTRODUCTION

Don't ever say integration, we like to call it desegregation—it sounds so much more palatable, somehow. (Mother of a Southern Freedom Rider, 1962)

PART 1: SAYING WHAT ONE MEANS

This admonition was recorded by British born journalist Jessica Mitford, writing in the early 1960s as she set out to "record impressions of the contemporary white (American) South" (2010, p. 77). In this encounter, we may observe the undercurrent of unease embedded in this mother's support for her "Southern belle" (2010, p. 69) daughter's participation in the Civil Rights Movement. Yet consider the possibility that her apparently uncomfortable remarks may reflect her efforts to bridge the cultural milieu that she has always known with the new one her daughter is hurrying to meet—it is impossible to know if the friction in her comments is evidence of a real objection, or merely the awareness that she herself will accept change, regardless of how unprepared she feels. This tension is the recognition that civic life is not comprised only of action, but also of the meaning we give to our involvement, and our tools of understanding come both from within (personal experiences and temperament) and without (culture and contextual norms).

Although the most powerful actors in civic life are adults (i.e. voting, leading community organizations), turning our attention to the civic development of young people—as in the case of the Southern belle Freedom Rider—can help us understand how best to protect and support our society's future civic outlook (Beck & Jennings, 1982). While these outcomes certainly suggest that supporting the youth civic motive is beneficial for future society, how do youth perceive their civic roles and responsibility?

For young people, school is a primary locus of political socialization where students learn how to become citizens who will be aware of their interests, and have the skills and knowledge to advocate for these in the public arena against competing perspectives (McIntosh & Youniss, 2010). School is a "mini polity", a public space

in which young people learn about how and practice the skills required to live in a democratic society (Flanagan, 2004; Flanagan, Stoppa, Syvertsen, & Stout, 2010). Yet in the process of political socialization, the student is not a passive recipient from the school; adolescents are active agents in this process (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977). Though most often spurred to civic action through personal motivations, young people respond to the feedback and information from their peers and the community, modifying their participation as necessary. Although we have an established understanding of young people's civic attitudes and behaviors (Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001; Torney-Purta, Amadeo, & Andolina, 2010) we know less about how they process their cultural and social contexts into civic beliefs and actions (Youniss et al., 2002). Through examining students' perceptions of their schools as civic communities and of certain events that occur fairly regularly in schools as civic "flashpoints", we may derive insights on how schools might develop more successful civic engagement interventions. In this paper, we will explore the methods one can use to arrive at these insights.

To Broaden a Narrow View of Civic Outcomes

The concept of youth civic engagement contains the eventual goal of understanding the foundations of adult civic development. Accordingly, the predominant traditional approach of the "old" civics (Farr, 2004) to youth civic engagement emphasizes the observation of a range of easily quantifiable behaviors—extracurricular activities (Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1997), community service (Hart, Donnelly, Youniss, & Atkins, 2007; McFarland & Thomas, 2006), political socialization activities (Andolina, Jenkins, Zukin, & Keeter, 2003; Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002)— that will lead to measurable adult participation. Within the context of Western (in this discussion, specifically American) democracy, the triumph of adult civic engagement is framed as *action* over *apathy* (Haste, 2004; Snell, 2010; Youniss, McLellan, Su, & Yates, 1999; Youniss et al., 2002). However, this dichotomy is misleading because the conceptualization of citizenship that is culturally promoted has dimensions beyond behavioral outcomes, and both action and apathy can easily be misconstrued if we do not acknowledge that they contain inherent meaning.

While dividing outcomes across a conceptual dimension that moves from apathy to action is rhetorically (and politically) attractive, the desired end goal is not strictly an increase in *any* kind of civic participation. Under these very broad behavioral terms, the incensed individuals who organized sit-ins and confrontational protests in support of the Civil Rights Movement are morally indistinguishable from the hostile mob that angrily greeted Elizabeth Eckford on her first day at Little Rock Central High School in 1957. (Consider for a moment the differences in meaning invested in terms such as "sit-ins" and "mobs" that would be difficult to quantify on a strictly behavioral level. Under traditional approaches to measuring civic participation as taking action, no differences between the two groups' civic goals would be accounted for.)

The goals of contemporary "new" civic education (The Spencer Foundation, 2010), in fact, recognize the fostering of civic dispositions, such as the tolerance for difference, the protection of all citizens' rights, and a sense of duty to the community (Lenore Annenberg Institute for Civics of the Annenberg Public Policy Center, 2011) as the necessary complement to developing more quantifiable competencies such as a content knowledge of the government's roles and functioning, critical thinking skills, and direct public service experience (United States Department of Education, 2012). It has been noted recently that a narrow focus on traditional metrics of civic engagement (such as voting or organizational membership) is insufficient for recognizing the role of civic dispositions in citizens' participation (Carretero, Haste, & Bermudez, 2016; Haste & Bermudez, 2017). Indeed, we must always seek to understand how individuals make sense of what actions are expected of—and excluded from—them.

The Limits of the Old Cognitivism and the Old Civics

Understanding how youth interpret the civic choices available to them requires an approach that incorporates how they think. Yet the "old cognitivism" approaches that focus on attitudes are certainly inadequate, and often inappropriate for this task (Harré & Stearns, 1995). This "elderly" cognitivist emphasis on attitudes and values assumes that each of us carries a constellation of ideas, or a schema, that is (unconsciously) accessed when we present an opinion (Harré & Gillett, 1994). Yet we have no way of knowing if such an inner mental structure really exists because it is a conceptual, rather than a performative, entity (Billig, 2001, 2009). Moreover, if such mental processes existed and were actually beyond our consciousness, we would be unable to think because we would have no way to access them (Billig, 2001).

In civics research, the old cognitivist approach to participation also has behaviorist features in its concern with identifying the mental inputs (such as attitudes and values) that lead to predicted actions (Diemer & Li, 2011; Youniss et al., 2002). This strategy, which is largely survey-driven, assumes that a statistically significant number of participants share the same reasons for choosing to act because they were subject to the same cognitive structures. But such a narrow framing ignores the role of context, culture, and agency (Bandura, 2002; Shweder, 1999; Shweder & Sullivan, 1993). The goal of the (relatively) newer cognitivism is to reframe the "understanding of human behavior as involving interpretation, intention, and empathy rather than prediction or control" (Harré & Gillett, 1994, p. 21), and this is achieved through the use of discursive strategies.

Moving beyond Old Cognitivism: A Leap to Discourse

The "new cognitivism" (Harré & Stearns, 1995, p. 2),[1] then, is the rejection of understanding the mind via these hypothesized invisible secret processes. Our thinking is not the result of inputs being mediated through a "black box" that returns outputs (p. 15), but is in fact visible to us because it occurs through the sign system of

language (Harré & Gillett, 1994). In contrast to an attitudinal approach, this strategy aims to understand how our vital cognitive skills are deployed and refined as they are revealed through our discursive production (Harré & Stearns, 1995). We think using language, and we are able to reveal our thinking to others because language is a shared system with agreed-upon meanings and norms of usage (Wittgenstein, 2009). Language is not the evidence of a cognitive phenomenon, but the phenomenon itself: "Language is the vehicle of thought" (Wittgenstein, 2009, #329).

In that sense, discourse represents language used to accomplish a purpose (Edwards, 1997)—such as blaming, justifying, praising—and discursive psychology aims to examine how this occurs in discussion, communication, conversation, debate, etc. (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Although the target of discourse analysis can comprise a range of language artifacts including these above listed forms of talk (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975), text or written products (Halliday, 1978), the methods of data collection and analysis in the context of traditional civics research on youth, can generally rely on the discourse of students' written accounts to get a clearer picture of an individual's motivation for civic involvement—or control—expressed as a "will to power" (Ophir, 1991, p. 7).

That said, let us now return to the issue of attitudes ascertained through discursive methods: If we do not actually draw upon a static schema of related ideas about a particular construct, how does discursive psychology explain the deployment of opinions? Opinions under the lens of discursive analysis, are not a neutral statement declaring one's inner state, *but rather are expressed relative to another position* (Potter & Wetherell, 1987); the nature of such statements is to respond to a position put forth by someone else in a conversation (Billig, 2001). This ability to identify how individuals actually construct, justify and reject various perspectives permits an understanding of the cultural norms and communication strategies of different peer groups (Kitzinger, 2005; Liamputtong, 2011) is one reason why focus group analyses have gained prominence in social science research in the last thirty years (Krueger & Casey, 2015). But, even in the case of a the often relied upon questionnaire method—the key tool used in the traditional approach to studying attitudes—the measure can be construed as a dialogue between researcher and participant because the participant is responding to statements provided by the researcher (Billig, 2009), and the attitudes expressed in that context may never be presented again in that linguistic form (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). We express opinions because we express agreement or disagreement with another's statement, and as a result, they are best thought of as dynamic in nature rather than solidified constructs.

Towards Civic Engagement: The Road to and from Discourse[2]

Addressing the question of how youth interpret and understand their possibilities of civic engagement and participation, the discursive strategy is appropriate for three reasons: it recognizes that discourse about civic engagement is constitutive of thought about it; it structures understanding using participants' terms and theories;

and it treats civic engagement as a concrete rather than abstract construct through rooting it in participants' contexts.

If civic participation is so strongly discourse-driven, examining how young people construct their involvement discursively may contribute to our understanding of its quality and effectiveness. As philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin noted, "An independent, responsible, and active discourse is *the* fundamental indication of an ethical, legal, and political human being" (1981). Although Bakhtin constructs participation in public life as maturity, the demarcation occurs through effortful engagement, not as another inevitable stage of civic development. We learn to think through discussion, so adolescents' discourse about civic involvement allows us to observe their moral perspective (Bakhtin, 1981).

This approach is important not only for understanding the range of orientations one may take to civic participation, but also those that relate to choosing not to participate (O'Toole, Lister, Marsh, Jones, & McDonagh, 2003; Selman & Feigenberg, 2010). This emic strategy reflects an awareness that on the apathy and action axis, one's place on the continuum may be a matter of interpretation rather than objectively assessed motivation. For instance, civic engagement can encompass a range of behaviors that do not include political participation (Ekman & Amna, 2012; Flanagan & Gallay, 1995; Haste & Hogan, 2006), such as staying informed on current events, and choosing not to participate through traditional political avenues may reflect feelings of dictionary defined disenfranchisement but not disengagement (O'Toole, Marsh, & Jones, 2003). Through observing participants' discourses about involvement (or non-involvement) on a topic usually heavily laden with civic significance (such as social exclusion), we seek to understand not why participants themselves may have made a particular choice, but to identify how the discourses used draw upon culturally or contextually acceptable norms and rationales for such choices (Haste & Bermudez, 2017).

Discourse, as observed through students' explanations or justifications of their mode of participation, provides an entry point into individual experience, especially with the awareness that different types of participation facilitate a diverse range of interpretations. In other words, if voting is the topic of analysis, we should perhaps not fixate on voter turnout as our primary outcome, but on how constructions of voting may contribute to the circulation of discourses that make it more or less appropriate. Examining individuals' discourses about topics considered as civic participation necessarily implies a contextual or cultural grounding due to the social nature of both the phenomenon and the dialogic nature of discourse. The context of civic involvement is especially integral to discursive analysis because participation occurs in clearly defined situations, such as volunteering for a cause one cares about—one is unlikely to describe oneself as a volunteer in general terms.

One "developmentally appropriate" site of civic involvement with regard to a discursive analysis is the American public high school. High schools may be interpreted as "*mini polities*" (Flanagan et al., 2010, p. 312) where young people receive an apprenticeship in being a member of a democratic society through the

rituals of self-expression, considering others' perspectives, and learning to build consensus, or simply as an experience of adhering to a particular society's rules and fulfilling its expectations (Higgins-D'alessandro & Sadh, 1997). Schools are described as the "guardians of democracy" (p. 6) for their crucial role in preparing students for future democratic participation through the promotion of civic disposition, community responsibility, meaningful engagement, and political action (Lenore Annenberg Institute for Civics of the Annenberg Public Policy Center, 2011).

The discourse of the school itself, as observed through its policies and structure, also enters into the role of context in young people's construction of civic participation. Students at a school with an authoritarian climate, expressed through invasive policies such as locker checks and metal detectors, would likely use discourses distinct from those of students at a more supportive or open climate, such as one that allowed students to participate in the collective establishment of school rules (Diaz Granados & Selman, 2014). While students may benefit from schools that provide opportunities to exercise democratic participation skills before adulthood (Kohlberg, 1970), the safety and discipline-minded atmosphere of most high schools still tend to position young people as passive objects to be dominated until they may magically transform into productive contributors to society (Foucault, 1980). Such traditional school structures will afford only the most tenacious of youth to engage in a participatory democratic discourse.

PART 2: THE MEASUREMENT AND MEANING OF INFORMED SOCIAL REFLECTION AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Using Hypothetical Dilemmas: A History Lesson on the Evolution of Interest in Form and Function

To observe the discourses that students use to talk about civic involvement in their schools, we might ask them to describe their relevant contact with this theme through filling out surveys about their frequency and preference for participating in or to share their reactions about their involvement in certain activities that we attribute to the civic agency end of the apathy/agency continuum. These students, however, would be limited to their personal experiences (Walker, de Vries, & Trevethan, 1987), and the range of discourses observed might be narrower than those that students drew upon to discuss civic involvement as a broader concept beyond their direct encounters with it. For instance, students may produce insightful arguments about school uniforms as infringing on student expression despite never having been subjected to this policy, but their arguments might nevertheless reveal students' beliefs about the meaning of community norms developed from their immediate context. Using hypothetical scenarios is one way to allow for a standardization of stimulus across students, permitting for comparisons across individuals and settings, as long as we keep in mind that their purpose is not to predict what students do.

That is, although hypothetical scenarios have on occasion been used in research to speculate about actual behavior (Cauffman & Steinberg, 2000; Trevethan & Walker, 1989), for our purpose, they are better suited as stimuli used to elicit discourses in response to a contextually situated issue or topic of civic involvement. (Abstracted from context, they become thought experiments). The purpose is not to determine whether participants' discourses reflect their actual behavior or reflect the "'true' conditions" (p. 1136), but rather to determine what the discourses deployed accomplish, that is, say about the implicit and variegated rules of the culture, and how they function in the participation of youth in society, in this case schools as mini-societies (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000). Even consistency of reflective expressions across multiple accounts is not evidence of a discourse's validity, but only that a set of individuals within the culture may be using it to achieve the same ends (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

Of course, hypothetical scenarios are a well-established approach to investigating moral reasoning both in philosophy (Appiah, 2008; Thomson, 1985) and psychology (Glannon, 2011; Greene & Haidt, 2002; Greene, Sommerville, Nystrom, Darley, & Cohen, 2001; Kohlberg, 1970). Using the metaphors of old and new cognitivism, we would have to say they can be found half way between "old cognitivism" and "new language based discourse" (Kohlberg, 1973; Schultz & Selman, 1998; Selman, 1980), including reasoning about political issues (Oser, 2009; Torney-Purta, 1991, 1992), all commonly descended from Kohlberg's Moral Judgment Interview (MJI) (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987). In the now classic "Heinz Dilemma" (Kohlberg, 1973), a man (Heinz) grapples with decision of whether to seek a cure his wife's illness by stealing a greatly overpriced drug from the druggist who discovered it, or to watch her die. Either way, whether Heinz chooses to steal the drug or not, the participant is posed the question "Should the husband have done that? Why?" The reasoning justifying the suggested course of action, not the action itself, is the focus of the mid-cognitivist evaluation. For instance, two people could endorse Heinz stealing the drug, but one might emphasize caring ("because he loves her, and shouldn't just sit back and watch her die") while the other might focus on obligation ("because he would feel a natural responsibility to care or provide for his wife"). The goal of the dilemma analysis in the middle cognitive revolution is to examine the expanding capacity for cognitive complexity of individuals (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977), and to see if this complexity may be observed within individuals (aggregated or not) beyond the specific content of one's response.

If we were to use the Kohlbergian stages of moral reasoning as distinct discourses and bypass the burdensome weight of ontogenetic "stages," what accountability is a participant subject to in using a "law and order" discourse instead of a "social norms" discourse? Hypothetical scenarios may have been designed with cognitive revisionists' cognitive intentions, a focus on the form (stage or level) of an individual's moral reasoning more so than the choice itself, but the structure of their data is, ironically, easily applicable to discursive analysis, be it the response itself, or the argumentation that can proceed in a debate about how Heinz should

proceed. In treating cognitive categories (such as the stages of moral reasoning, for example) as discursive performances (Edwards, 1997), we do not demand or impose an underlying mental structure, but instead focus on the individual's use of these discourses by accepting them as performance using language, rather than denying that they emerge through language.[3]

Should vs. would. The initial prompt following the presentation of the hypothetical dilemma in Kohlberg's MJI (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987) often is "should": "Should the husband have done that?" (Rest, 1973). The implication of the "should" is also that Heinz is not really Heinz but a stand-in for the universal actor, i.e. anyone in Heinz' position (Power, Higgins, & Kohlberg, 1989), and the decision is being made under *ceteris paribus* conditions. This abstraction may be suitable for reasoning about hypothetical trolley cars coming down a track about to kill five people or one, take your choice (Thomson, 1985), but far too broad for examining the relationship to and reasoning about one's civic life and times which exist in the real world and cannot be plausibly disentangled from culture, history, and personal experience. Should Heinz steal the drug? Should Malcom X steal the drug? Should Hillary Clinton steal the drug? Should Heinz's daughter steal the drug? What is each likely to do?

In either of these two popular cases, this approach, though appropriate for philosophical or formal purposes, lacks the urgency found in personally meaningful moral dilemmas (Greene et al., 2001; Straughan, 1985). This is particularly relevant in discourse analysis because the context in which a discourse is used has an effect on its function and the speaker's accountability—different contexts pose different norms both in how something is said, as well as what might be said (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Harré & Gillett, 1994). Using "should" may elicit constructions of the scenario that reflect prevailing cultural ideals about civic involvement, whereas "would" may be more useful in drawing out constructions of responsibility reflecting more local concerns about involvement, such as concerns about personal safety, fair treatment by law enforcement, or the legal system, etc.

Task type. The scoring of responses to hypothetical moral dilemmas has posed a long-standing problem to the empirical field in balancing the richness of responses with objectivity in scoring and the values that accrue from large-scale assessment. In the case of discourse analysis, open-ended responses are required in order to observe the production of discourses. In order to make it possible to include more participants as a means of gaining greater insight into the parameters of an emergent discourse, an additional layer of organization is required. It is quite risky to make big yet often reductive claims about what the essential discourses are that may exist in a culture on the basis of one or even 100 responses. Restricting a representative sample of participants to specific choices in their response to the hypothetical dilemma but requesting a written explanation of their selection is a compromise that allows for the collection of texts that will provide a robust set of individual accounts while maintaining some limits on the possibilities of responses. One drawback of this approach is that the participant is required to explain her choice in the context of the *other available choices* (which may result in slightly different discourses that might

be constructed based on an unrestricted individual understanding the key issue or concern (Billig, 2001, 2009). Since all responses are subject to the same limitations, however, the discourses that are observed will be comparable within the sample, and will be understood as constructions of civic involvement only in the context of the hypothetical dilemma, rather than as equivalent to the discourses that might be produced with regard to the full range of individual experiences.

Informed Social Reflection: Bridging Content and Discourse

A focus on discourse (whether the text is written or spoken) as a means of understanding youth civic expressions/opinions about participation does not, however, remove the need to understand the content and quality of youth responses. Discourse, after all, is produced in response to something our attention has been called to. It would be foolhardy to restrict our study to how individuals think about participation without also noting what their participation does or does not entail. The informed social reflection (Selman & Kwok, 2010) and informed social engagement (Barr, Selman, Diazgranados, & Kwok, 2014) frameworks (see Figures 1 & 2) we now describe provide the opportunity to account for both the content and quality of students' responses to addressing civic concerns. We may conceptualize informed social engagement as the skills youth will bring to bear upon civic issues, and informed social reflection as what youth believe these civic issues are.
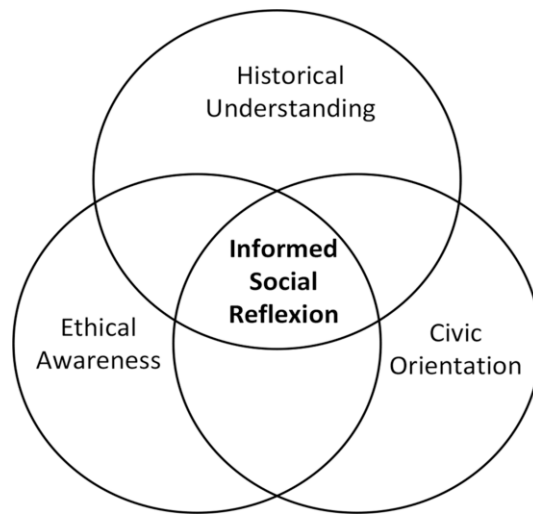

Figure 1. Informed social reflection

Informed social reflection (Figure 1), as defined (really designated, rather than defined in the usual sense of the term) by Selman and Kwok (2010), comprises three overlapping content domains about which one may navigate with greater

awareness if one is better informed: civic orientation, ethical awareness, and historical understanding. Developing one's awareness of these three components of individual and shared experience supports the capacity to become aware of the crucial relationship between social choices, including their inherent risks and rewards, and their justifications (Kwok & Selman, 2013). Here, the term "civic orientation" refers to the conceptualization of one's responsibility and role as a member of a community; the term "ethical awareness" encompasses the moral guidelines and understanding of fairness and care that we use to navigate individual and group social relationships; and "historical understanding" refers to assets within individual and shared experience—such as perspectives and memory—that provide scripts for navigating interpersonal situations (see Bellino & Selman, 2011, for an example where historical considerations are foregrounded). Each of these overlapping components allows one to access slightly different background knowledge, strategies, and personal experiences, and individuals may favor drawing upon different ones based upon the specific situation, personal background, or cultural context. Being able to draw upon all three increases the likelihood of more successful understanding of social relationships and social situations (Selman & Kwok, 2010).

Quantum Leap to Discourse: Informed Social Engagement

Informed social engagement (Figure 2), on the other hand, refers to specific competencies individuals internalize that we believe support the development of young people into constructive citizens in a democratic society (Barr & Selman, 2014). These competencies were identified over a long-term research program in collaboration with history education non-profit Facing History and Ourselves, a group whose mission is to promote social justice through understanding the roots of intolerance and injustice throughout history (Strom, 1980; Barr & Facing History and Ourselves, 2010; Barr, Boulay, Selman, McCormick, Lowenstein, Gamse, Fine, & Leonard, 2015). By gaining insight into young people's interpretations of historical events (Bellino & Selman, 2011), conflict resolution strategies in context (Feigenberg, Steel King, Barr, & Selman, 2008; Schultz, Barr, & Selman, 2001; Selman & Feigenberg, 2010), and navigating difficult interpersonal dynamics at school (Diazgranados & Selman, 2014; Kwok, 2014), this research collaboration has contributed to the understanding of the skills necessary to support adolescents' understanding of intergroup tolerance and relationships. Recent research suggests that this "new" model is statistically robust even across international contexts: The informed social engagement framework, for instance has been found useful in understanding Latin American students' views on the legality of expected civic participation (García-Cabrero, Pérez-Martinez, Sandoval-Hernández, Caso-Niebla, & Díaz-López, 2016) as captured by the 2009 International Civic and Citizenship Education Study.
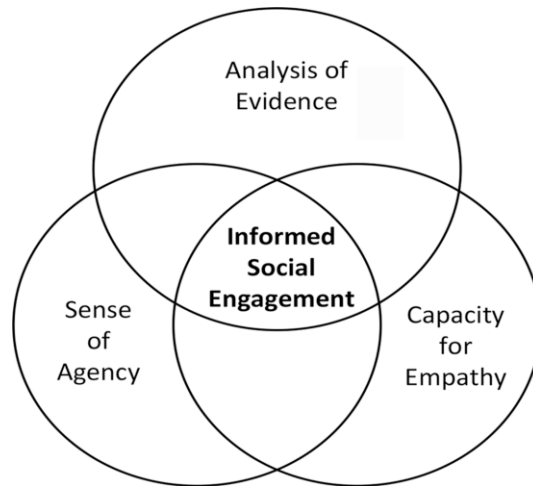
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Figure 2. Informed social engagement

Although the content domains of informed social reflection can be acted upon through the skillful expression of the competencies described by informed social engagement, they are certainly not limited to them. The "analysis of evidence" in Figure 2 is primarily a "cognitive" skill, referring to how youth comprehend, critique, discuss, and synthesize multiple sources of data including contradictory information. This competency gives students a complex understanding of contextual reality, whether contemporary or historical, and affects the degree to which they make informed decisions when addressing social issues. The "capacity for empathy" refers to ways and degrees to which youth feel motivated to consider and protect the well-being of actors—known and unknown, similar or dissimilar in identity and values—representing different positions in a given situation or conflict (Selman & Barr, 2009). Their capacity for empathy affects the scope of their universe of moral responsibility, or the people whose welfare they are willing to protect when considering social problems. "Capacity" is inadequate, however, to capture the emotional dimension of this competency—the focus is less on an individuals' *potential* to empathize than their actual feelings towards others, whether in the moment or over time. If capacity is involved at all, it is how capable are students becoming aware of why they feel or do not feel empathy towards others.

Finally, the "sense of agency" is primarily characterized in this conceptual framework as a "disposition" toward action. It is "informed" to the extent that it refers to ways in which students understand the range of opportunities for their involvement in relation to social and civic matters, the potential to effect change, and the quality of different strategies they imagine using to most adequately

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address a given social problem. Students' actual—even if limited to the moment—disposition toward taking action affect both the quantity and quality of their civic participation.

Two Steps to Form One Leap

Therefore, in order to effectively use hypothetical scenarios (coming up shortly, our school based situations) in an investigation of youth civic participation, we need to take an intermediate step–rather than one big leap from student responses to a hypothetical to the identification of the cultural discourses the responses suggest are available to them in their own "lifespace" (Habermas, 1984, 1987). We must first move to a thematic analysis of the content of their responses before jumping to a discursive analysis of how individuals make culturally based civic meaning of the content of their responses.
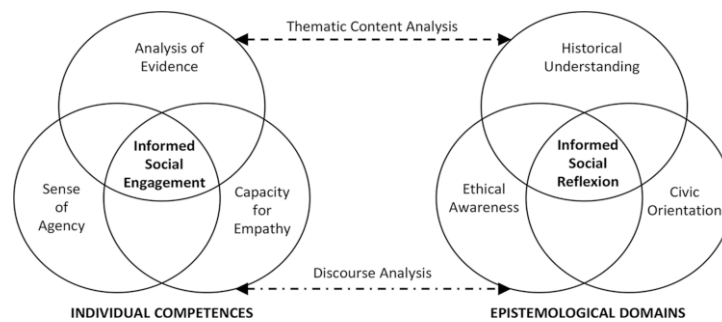

Figure 3. Informed social engagement and informed social reflection linked by thematic analysis and discourse analysis

Figure 3 needs some exegesis. First, our use of "informed" necessarily implies eventually developing a scale to indicate "how *well* informed?" The thematic analysis, necessary for the analysis of informed social reflection, may be regarded as a means of drawing individuals' map of their culture and concerns (Miller & Crabtree, 1992 [cited in Boyatzis, 1998]). Through prompting students to respond to a hypothetical scenario (rather than a series of attitudinal statements), thematic analyses can use both etic and emic codes to identify these student perspective clusters.[4] Second, unlike discourse analysis, this cognitively-driven non-discursive investigation is focused on the content of students' responses rather than an analysis of what students are trying to accomplish rhetorically within their responses (Selman & Xu, 2016).

The discourse analysis of responses, as portrayed in Figure 3, aims to describe how students' responses define (and eventually enact) the boundaries and expectations of their roles and responsibilities in the school civic sphere in the context of the

possible choices available to them. In other words, how do students construct the expectations and restrictions on the choice to intervene in a conflict? We may contrast the thematic and discourse analysis as the difference between what students say about their choice and how they justify it; not just reason (cognize) about it, but use their own language as "performative acts" (Austin, 1962, p. 7).

Third, the significance of the Venn diagrams is to remind us that all social situations and all social discourse about social situations have moral, civic, and historical factors in play. What matters here is how much of each epistemological domain, and hence each competency calls a discourse topic into play (Once again, please refer to our coda).

PART 3: MEASURING MEANING: THE CHOICES
IN CONTEXT MEASURE (CCM)

For all the reasons and rationales, we have presented in support of using discourse to understand civic participation and engagement, we turn our attention now to how it looks in practice: How do we measure meaning? The Choices-in-Context Measure (CCM) was designed to assess students' socio-moral reasoning through hypothetical dilemmas about cases of racial exclusion and social injustice (Selman, Barr, Feigenberg, & Facing History and Ourselves, 2007). Initially, these hypothetical scenarios were derived from the actual experiences reported by middle and high school students, thus making them more relatable and more representative of the reasoning that students might make in their actual lives (Feigenberg et al., 2008). The scenarios were intended to represent different situations that emphasized (in the sense that they foregrounded) ethical social relations (teasing, bullying, harassment, ostracism), orientations toward civic issues and initiatives (mandatory school uniforms, racist graffiti on the walls) and perspectival understanding (understanding the socio-historical basis for the actions of agents living in unfamiliar religions and customs as they were experienced in school).

Consider, as examples of the method we used, the following two scenarios. The first illustrates an incident of discriminatory teasing:

> A student sees a group of his friends teasing a boy whose family recently arrived in the U.S. from another country. They are making fun of the way he speaks and telling him he should move back to his own country. The student who sees this wonders what to do. He decides not to say anything. Instead, he walks away from the group.

Which one of these three actions would you be most likely to take?

a. Tell a teacher what was going on. *[Indirect Upstand]*
b. Just stay out of it. *[Bystand]*
c. Tell the students to stop making fun of the new boy. *[Direct Upstand]*

Please explain why:

_____

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The second scenario asks students to think about the appearance of an ethnic slur at school:

> Some students have written racist slurs on one of the walls of the auditorium. The principal responds by banning the use of the auditorium for after-school activities.

Which one of these three actions would you be most likely to take?

a. Organize a meeting to discuss racism in the school. *[Direct Upstand]*
b. Offer to clean up the graffiti. *[Indirect Upstand]*
c. Let the principal deal with it. *[Bystand]*

Please explain why:

_____

_____

As seen above, students are offered three multiple-choice responses representing possible actions ("Which one of these three choices would you be most likely to take?"). Each of these represents one of three types of (etic, or theoretically assumed) civic strategies: Direct Upstand (address incident directly, such as telling perpetrator to stop), Indirect Upstand (address incident indirectly, such as by consoling victim after the incident), or Bystand (remaining uninvolved) (Feigenberg et al., 2008). (In the actual measure given to students, the identifying civic-strategy labels were not included with dilemmas.) These action categories represent what the individual believes to be the range of possibilities that includes the most and least preferable strategies.

Accompanying the multiple-choice selection is the opportunity for a brief written response where participants provide an explanation of their choice ("Please explain why."). Both thematic and discursive dimensions can be drawn based upon these written explanations of students' multiple choice responses to the hypothetical situation. The multiple-choice option yields a particular civic strategy, while the written response allows for a consideration of the cultural and political angles relevant to students' experience of their schools as early civic contexts.

Take, for example, two students who have both selected option A ("Organize a meeting to discuss racism in the school") for the second scenario describing the discovery of racist graffiti written on school property. If they both have chosen to Direct Upstand, does it necessarily follow that their reasons for this choice are the same? Consider their responses:

> Talking to students about racism can help understand the different races there are and how it affects everyone.

If the person sees how his actions affect his classmates and friends, then they hopefully realize what they did was dumb.

Although both respondents have selected the response corresponding to the same civic strategy (Direct Upstand), each respondent reveals divergent cultural or political concerns in their rationale for selecting this choice. The first response frames the incident as a community issue. Although one person may have committed the act, its occurrence may point to a larger misunderstanding or tolerance of such behavior or opinions, and as such, it is valuable to have this forum for building understanding and empathy. The second response, however, locates the key issue within the perpetrator, not in the community. However, the meeting is intended to be corrective through building empathy within the perpetrator for those who were affected—the implication being that the perpetrator was more foolish (our interpretation of the word, "dumb) than intentionally malicious. Both students chose to Direct Upstand, but each describes the solution as taking effect through different channels.

In terms of informed social engagement (Figures 2 and 3), student generated responses to these questions could be assessed via thematic analysis for the expression of *agency* (or lack thereof). Agency should not be assumed strictly on the basis of the etic civic strategies that are the theoretical foundation for each response. One student might suggest to tell the teacher in the bullying scenario (Indirect Upstand) because to her, this is the most effective option ("A teacher would make sure this stops"), while another who decides to confront the aggressors (Direct Upstand) might suggest this because he believes that nothing else that can be done ("They're going to beat us all up anyway and always win").

Responses might be evaluated for analysis of *evidence* by examining what kinds of reasoning a student provides based upon personal experiences or information contained within the scenario and available responses. Students might mention having tried one of the responses in the past ("Standing up usually works because it will make them respect you"), specific school rules (actual rules of imagined rules for this school), or cultural norms at the school ("We like to talk things out here").

Using written responses is particularly important for examining students' capacity for *empathy* as a full range of possible emotional responses would be difficult to capture in multiple choice option. As with the evaluation of students' sense of agency, empathy should not be assumed present or absent within any particular choice response. Students might empathically suggest *not* intervening because it could be in conflict with the victim's desires ("I don't want to embarrass him because he can handle it but I might talk to him later privately").

Following the thematic analysis, informed social reflection explores the discursive aspect of these responses (Figures 1 and 3). The purpose of this discussion is not to examine the full range of discourses that might be produced (it is arguable that there are as many discourses as there are individuals), but instead to propose the method as a valid approach in advancing and deepening our understanding of youth civic thought and participation. Discourses that emphasize the relationship between the

individual and the institution or power differentials, to name just two, are those from the civic domain. Student responses that draw upon concerns about fairness, justice, and the effect of one's responses on others (known and unknown) are those that derive from the ethical domain. Finally, discourses that refer to knowledge of "just how things are", past experiences, or cultural norms are those within the historical or contextual domain.

Collectively, these competencies drawn from informed social engagement reflect essential skills and dispositions that youth must develop, while the epistemological content domains of informed social reflection describe the range of social issues available for their engagement. Taken together, a consideration of these two different areas of youth civic life—skills in addressing a problem and what youth think the problem is—allow for an integrated picture of the quality of youth civic engagement and participation.

Going Forward: Is Everything Civic?

Past research using this hybrid hypothetical scenario approach suggests that an emphasis on civic participation may function better not with a focus on specific actions that are objectively favored or discouraged, but rather with an exploration of the different ways an individual may describe his relationship to society (or just other people) (Kwok, 2014). Students who do not want to intervene in a situation for fear of escalating it have something to teach those who wish to intervene in order to punish another. More broadly, to be informed is learning to have something to say before learning to exercise one's right to say it.

The disconnection between any "objective" meaning assumed to be understood in the civic strategies by all students is also reflected in the discourses identified within each civic strategy. As in the case of the Direct Upstanders who are eager to use force, or the Bystanders who are concerned about their peers' safety, the discourses that were identified by Kwok (2014) using this method, echoed these themes: directing others towards certain kinds of action (Direct Upstand), seeking a balance between different perspectives (Indirect Upstand), and justifying un-involvement (Bystand). Most surprising of these were the findings for Indirect Upstand: Although the conceptual name of the strategy implies a form of diluted action, the cluster discourses that emerged accompanying it were classified as "coordinating discourses", referring to respondents' goal of integrating various perspectives and taking action accordingly.

The goal of discourse-driven civic research is not to approach civic education as prosocial education: Throughout history, efforts to secure greater rights for others in society have required apparently antisocial behaviors such as being arrested or accused of disagreeableness (at best). In this frame, the more unilateral tone of the Direct Upstand discourse is logical: If you want to personally intervene, regardless of motive, you may need to shed your inhibitions or anxieties about others' opinions. Yet our motives should always remain at the forefront of these decisions.

If it appears that we are arguing for a consideration of all social action and reasoning as civic, we are. The "new" approach to civic research must necessarily disentangle notions of civic participation from the prosocial or as tethered to specific norms, and instead be overlaid upon the expanding social universe of concern for those beyond our immediate circle, for those whom we may not yet have known to include in our purview of action. For this reason, perhaps civic education intended to foster greater participation and engagement might do better to emphasize not the outcomes that we envision, but the motivations we experience right now[5] and whether they contribute or detract from our ability to live in a (social) world that we enjoy. This is not about making decisions that will boost our likability, although they may have that result, but rather directing our attention to act more consciously through the world we would like to live in, and whether there is room for others there too.

> Coda: a brief diversion in the service of definition
> Have you heard the news, everyone's talking
> Life is good 'cause everything's awesome
> Lost my job, it's a new opportunity
> More free time for my awesome community
> […]
>
> Everything is better when we stick together
> Side by side
> You and I gonna win forever
> Let's party forever
> We're the same
> I'm like you
> You're like me
> We're all working in harmony
>
> Everything is awesome
> Everything is cool when you're part of a team
> Everything is awesome when we're living our dream
> (Patterson, Bartholomew, Harriton, & the Lonely Island, 2014)

In *The Lego Movie,* released in 2014, the villainous Lord Business wishes to freeze the Lego brick universe into eternal perfection using the Kragle (which is to say, superglue). In Lord Business' world, culture has become homogenized and controlled (Rosenberg, 2014) to the point where there is only one hit song, the ominously cheerful "Everything is Awesome" aimed at convincing the Lego citizens that their world should remain unchanged and undisturbed by acts of creativity (Brown, 2014).

To our cause, "Everything is Awesome" is a paean to apathy on the apathy-agency highway. In that sense, it is a dangerous message for the action-oriented-but-uninformed eight-year-old, and a painful message for those who find themselves well informed but unable to act, like the slacker clerks in the cult movie, *Clerks.* In other

words, if everything is awesome, then nothing is awesome—awesome exists only in the context of its absence. The same conundrum is infused into the very meaning, or definition, if you prefer, of the term "new civic." When the new cognitive meets the new (and broadly expanded) civic, there runs the risk that as far as discourse analysis goes, "Everything is civic." We believe that our conceptual framework allows us to exit this quandary: We grant that in discourse analysis, it is the case that there is at least a little bit of civic in all social discourse, but what really matters is how much civic, and perhaps even more importantly, what is the quality of the framing of civic discourse, how well-informed is the civic engagement being expressed, performed, claimed, positioned? This is a good enough definition of terms for us to rest our case—until we revisit it, inevitably.

NOTES

[1] Decades later, "New" is still an appropriate term, perhaps because the "old" cognitivism persists.
[2] Please see the coda to this paper for an important detour.
[3] For another important diversion from the Kantian-Kohlbergian main line, see new measurement work conceptualized and validated by Diazgranados, Selman, and Dionne (2015). Here the focus is on using school-based "flash-point" scenarios or dilemmas as a vehicle to capture the "acts of social perspective taking," as they are "performed" by the participant in the hypothetical task of giving "civic advice". The analytic approach is more closely akin in nature to "speech acts" analysis (Austin, 1962) than to attempts to ferret out participants' cognitive competence, even though the structure of the responses are the same. Paradoxically, because the measure is designed to be used for purpose of program evaluation (such as interventions designed to promote youth civic improvement), the analysis (coding) focuses only on the various types of social perspective taking acts used by participants, *excluding* themes that emerge and discourses that are used. (To be described in more detail, of course, at another time.)
[4] Etic codes refer to existing theoretical ideas, and emic codes refer to how ideas are actually emergent in student responses (i.e., developmentally and contextually appropriate forms of these ideas).
[5] See also the chapters within the volume edited by Heinrichs, Oser & Lovat (2012), in the *Handbook of Moral Motivation*.

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