Crowdsourcing Civics Instruction to Improve Student Civic Knowledge, Skills, and Citizen Engagement

Charles T. E. Jones
Lynn University

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By:

Charles T. E. Jones

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Abstract

Secondary students' lack of civic knowledge, skills, and engagement is well documented in the literature. States continue to address the issue through an increase in mandated civics requirements, but a striking improvement has not been confirmed. Improving civics instructional delivery through crowdsourcing holds promise in addressing deficits in students' acquisition of civic knowledge, skills, and engagement. Crowdsourcing is the act of using the internet to obtain information and input from multiple parties on specific topics and to find solutions to problems. The purpose of this study was to determine if crowdsourcing may be an effective instructional tool that civics teachers could use in their classrooms to close the civics achievement gap. The following research questions guided this study: What are civics teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of crowdsourcing as an instructional tool in high school civics courses, and how can crowdsourcing be implemented into high school civics curriculum? A case study design was determined to be the appropriate methodology to use to answer the research questions. A survey instrument with both Likert Scale and open-ended questions was administered to civics teachers in seven urban school districts in Florida. Results from the data analysis indicate that crowdsourcing can be an effective instructional tool for teaching civics. However, survey bias inhibited the study's ability to determine what other examples of crowdsourcing can be implemented in the civics classroom.

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Dedication

For Spencer. Our nation will depend on you and your generation's wise decisions to see it

through another 250 years. Be sure that these decisions are selfless and always made from a

foundation built upon liberty.

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Chapter I

Overview of Study

Introduction

If learning civics is as American as apple pie, why is it that younger generations are less engaged than previous generations (Kenna & Hensley, 2019)? When students graduate from high school, it is assumed they have the knowledge and life skills necessary to join the workforce, attend an institution of higher learning, or both. It is also assumed that students possess adequate civic knowledge and skills to become engaged citizens. Yet, many students appear to have a civics knowledge deficit and are less inclined to be future citizen-participants after they leave high school (Malin, Han, & Liauw, 2017). Unsurprisingly, a survey undertaken by the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania found that only 39% of those surveyed could name the three branches of the U.S. government (Annenberg Public Policy Center, September 12, 2019).

General knowledge of how national, state, and local levels of government are designed and how they operate should be understood by all citizens. An interest in improving one's local environment should be a cornerstone of a citizen's involvement in society, and citizens should be able to address societal challenges through a focus of systemic change. Students are groomed to be good citizens from an early age as most civics-related curriculum in the elementary grades focus on personally responsible citizenship. In later schooling, the secondary curriculum focuses on being a participatory citizen (Lin, 2015). There is nothing wrong with teaching both young and adolescent students to be responsible, participatory citizens. However, secondary civics courses

should also emphasize teaching citizenship skills that allow students to think critically to be better equipped to solve real-world challenges. In any case, the type of citizen modern schooling produces should be engaged in their community, participate in the political process, and make strides to facilitate changes in unhealthy institutions (Dewey, 2016). To this end, Westheimer and Kahne (2004) created a typology that lists three types of citizens that are most recognizable: 1) Personally responsible citizen; 2) Participatory citizen; 3) Social justice-oriented citizen. Personally responsible citizens might participate in a neighborhood trash clean-up. The participatory citizen might be involved in some sort of political advocacy which advances policies that adhere to their belief system. And a social justice-oriented citizen would actively pursue the causes of inequalities in society and how to fix them. Each type of citizen is engaged; however, ideally, schooling should produce students who have some of each type of citizen within themselves.

Statement of the Problem

Citizen engagement in the United States has steadily declined since the 1970s (Kenna & Hensley, 2019). This challenge has continued unabated as high school students generally do not possess the citizenship knowledge and skills necessary to become engaged citizens after graduation (Kenna & Hensley, 2019; Lutkus & Weiss, 2007; National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). Civics assessments taken by sampled 12th graders for the National Center for Education Statistics' *Nation's Report Card* in 2006 and 2010 show a decline in overall scores in civics knowledge between the two measurements. More specifically, the later report shows students who scored above or proficient in civics knowledge declined from 27% to 24% of assessed students. Further

disconcerting is that only 64% of students assessed are at or above a basic level of civics

knowledge, a percentage that has remained nearly static since 1998 (National Center for

Education Statistics, 2011). These statistics are similar to earlier data which shows a

continued decline in citizenship skills (Lutkus & Weiss, 2007). The 12th-grade civics

assessment was last administered in 2010.

The problem is exacerbated by the continued devaluation of social studies

education in school districts nationwide (Heafner & Fitchett, 2010, 2012; Heafner,

Fitchett, & Lambert, 2014). This decrease parallels a strong surge in mathematics and

English Language Arts (ELA) instructional time. Unfortunately, the byproduct of these

occurrences is partially responsible for a decline in students' civics knowledge and skills

(Heafner & Fitchett, 2010, 2012). The authors mentioned above have written extensively

on this matter. They attribute the continued decrease in social studies knowledge to the

persistent requirement of high-stakes testing of math and ELA on state and national

levels.

Students' citizenship skills deficit is not isolated to specific regions of the United

States or to particular demographics. However, districts with large minority groups

correlate with reduced civics instruction in their schools (Chan, Ou, & Reynolds, 2014).

In Gallup's (2018) annual survey of 1,892 K-12 public school superintendents, a

nationally representative sample, 75% of respondents believe that increasing students'

civic preparedness has become challenging. A solution to this challenge which has

gained more traction recently is to require high school students to take a state-required

civics exam (Iasevoli, June 8, 2018). Seventeen states currently require exams, though

students are not required to pass them, while eight states require passing scores to graduate from high school (Jacobson, September 18, 2017).

A further concern for lack of civic engagement may also be tied to the ubiquitous traditional civics curriculum in U.S. classrooms (Galston, 2004; Journell, 2010, 2015). Most curricula and instructional techniques still mostly center on conventional views of learning about the structure and operations of our national government. Such has been the case for decades (Campbell, Levinson, & Hess, 2012).

Kahne, Hodgin, & Eidman-Aadahi (2016) note that the ever-burgeoning use of technology to engage students in civics education should continue to be applied to the classroom setting to increase student engagement in civics curriculum. Indeed, data collected from Lecompte et al. (2011) and Bowyer & Kahne (2020) show that students who are given the opportunity to learn civics through digital tools to gain a stronger grasp of civic knowledge are more likely to be engaged in offline participatory politics.

Solution Strategy: Crowdsourcing

Crowdsourcing is "the practice of obtaining information input into a task…by enlisting the assistance of a number of people---"a crowd" typically online via the internet" (Saunderson, 2017). It can also be considered a digital learning tool that allows an online community of members to generate solutions to common problems (Estellés-Arolas & González-Ladrón-de-Guevara, 2012). Though the term is not used often by most, the process of crowdsourcing is more evident than one might notice. For example, Wikipedia is arguably one of the most frequented crowdsourced websites on the internet. Independent persons worldwide can author and submit entries on any topic on the website or any new topic they wish to create.

Every day, people with Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram accounts may solicit answers to questions to help guide their decision-making (Kenna & Hensley, 2019). Municipal and state governments also use crowdsourcing to solicit input from constituents on various tax-funded projects or services (Wadeker et al., 2020).

The private sector has also used crowdsourcing to its benefit for several years (Afuah & Tucci, 2012). For example, a customer who leaves online feedback for a good or service is crowdsourcing (Acar, 2018). Corporations look to their consumers to help drive product development, and crowdsourcing allows corporations to accomplish this more easily (Acar, 2018). Crowdsourcing in both public and private milieus, requires citizen participation, one of the primary skill areas that our students lack as they leave K-12 schooling (Malin, Han, & Liauw, 2017; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

Education has only recently begun to harness the opportunity to engage students in crowdsourcing for civic participation (Schrier, 2018). Crowdsourcing seen in a classroom is most similar to peer groups of students who engage in political discussions on a message board in a virtual forum such as Google Classroom or Twitter (Kenna & Hensley, 2019). However, crowdsourcing can also involve students from different schools, even in other states, who interact on a topic-specific website, such as the case with Civic Action Project (Doggett, Huss, & Smith, 2018).

Because crowdsourcing may improve the quality of civics learning, acquisition of citizenship skills and an increase in citizen engagement, it is an instructional option that needs to be further explored and expanded upon for the K-12 classroom (Interactive Learning Environments, 2018). There are examples of crowdsourcing lessons in other subject areas (Berson & Berson, 2019; Hills, 2015). However, the literature is still mostly

bereft of research on crowdsourcing as an instructional method to increase student civic engagement (Kenna & Hensley, 2019). This researcher plans to add to the existing base of literature that addresses how crowdsourcing can be used as an educational tool.

Purpose of the Study

In response to the problem that secondary students lack civic knowledge and interest in civic engagement, the purpose of this study is to determine how crowdsourcing can be further utilized to teach civics curriculum to create meaningful learning, which may positively impact the citizenship knowledge, skills, and citizen engagement deficits.

Research Questions

RQ1 - What are civics teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of crowdsourcing as an instructional tool in high school civics courses?

RQ2 - How can crowdsourcing be implemented into high school civics curriculum?

Rationale

A country's citizens should have a basic civics skillset to utilize so they can effectively navigate through civic life (Kahne, Hodgin, & Eidman-Aadahl, 2016). Some civic areas that citizens encounter in their lifetime include voting, navigating the judicial system, and understanding social security and other payroll taxes. These are areas in which citizens in the United States should have some basic knowledge. But, as Westheimer and Kahne (2015) point out, citizens not satisfied with how the government or societal institutions operate should also have the interest and wisdom to address injustices.

The researcher has been a U.S. Government teacher at the secondary level for three years. During this time, he has observed that most students who matriculate through

high school do not typically possess solid citizenship knowledge or skills, even though these skills are taught beginning at the elementary level. The existing literature base confirms the problem is not isolated, but salient across many regions and demographics in the U.S. (Heafner & Fitchett, 2005; Lin, 2015; NAES, 2011). Students' lack of general knowledge of political and governmental processes and specific citizenship skills can be further simplified. According to the NAES (2011, p.39), there exists major reductions in the study of several governmental structures, including legislative, executive, and judicial, with a particularly significant drop in the percentage of students that study the Constitution. Though the NAES compares data taken from 2006 and 2010 surveys for their Nation's Report Card, the downward trend in the percentage of high school students at or above civics proficiency levels seems not to have abated, and at best, has remained stagnant (NCES, 2011). Similar observations could be made of the data collected from the NCES's National Civics Assessment for 8th-grade students (NCES, 2019). The scoring difference between the 2014 and 2018 assessments shows that the "proficiency percentile" did not increase and also remained static, with an average score of 153 points out of 300 (NCES, 2019). As Heafner (2020, p.251) points out with dramatic emphasis, "social studies has flatlined and needs life-support." Clearly, civics and government courses seem to have flatlined too.

At the fundamental core of every U.S. citizen, there should be an understanding of the importance of the country's rich history, for better or for worse, a desire to improve their communities, and the knowledge to do so. It is vitally essential for citizens of any country to be actively involved in their political and social systems and local communities. Without involvement, society would not be able to function effectively.

The literature confirms that students continue to be underprepared for civic life after high school (Malin, Han, & Liauw, 2017; Schrier, 2018), which may create grave consequences for future generations of citizens. Because the civics curriculum taught in secondary school is usually the last opportunity students will encounter before entering higher education and the real world, educational leaders within school districts must determine the best methods for imparting citizenship skills on our students and building better-engaged citizens.

Significance of Study

This study is designed to make a direct and immediate impact on civics curriculum and the way social studies educators teach civics. It is hoped that if teachers embrace crowdsourcing as a digital teaching tool for civics, students will become more interested in the subject and become better-engaged citizens. To this end, the researcher believes that presenting crowdsourcing as a digital tool for effective civics instruction will give educator-participants a more robust understanding of what it means to "crowdsource" civics learning. Data collected from the study will inform the researcher and fill the gap in the literature that addresses effective types of crowdsourcing lessons for civics and what the lesson's specific components should include.

Definitions of Terms

Engaged citizen - a person of a nation-state who participates in political and social activities that improve the greater society they live in. (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006; Campbell, Levinson, & Hess, 2012).

Digital Tools - tools that can be considered any online curriculum, software, or website students use to learn civics material.

Crowdsourcing - a type of digital tool that allows members of an online community to solve common problems and to learn from one another.

Civics/U.S. Government/American Government - any high school level content, curriculum, or course that addresses how the U.S., state, and local governments operate. It also refers to the study of how citizens engage in political and social processes which may affect society at large. These terms may be used interchangeably in this study.

Citizen Engagement/*Civic Engagement*/*Civic Participation*/*Participatory Politics* - refers to those who engage in political processes. These terms may be used interchangeably in this study.

Citizenship Skills/Civic Knowledge - a baseline of knowledge and skills which equip one to understand and engage primary governmental institutions and their respective processes.

Delimitations

The Delimitations of this study include:

    a) Limited to one demonstration of crowdsourcing as a teaching and learning tool.

    b) No participants from rural school districts will be surveyed

    c) Localized to the state of Florida, therefore not necessarily generalizable to all states.

    d) Study will not be undertaken in a classroom setting with students and teachers

    e) Participants must currently be teaching or have taught civics at some point in their careers.

Limitations

The Limitations of this study include:

a) Participants may not provide accurate opinions for various reasons, such as a rushed survey or quick, truncated answers to open-ended questions.

b) Participant bias is always a possibility. For example, surveyed participants may have prior knowledge of crowdsourcing and may not care for it as a learning tool.

c) The researcher is currently a high school civics teacher; therefore, possible researcher bias exists concerning the interpretation of data.

d) Participants do not fully complete the survey.

e) Survey fatigue/indifference may occur, which can result in incomplete surveys or unreliable data.

Theoretical Framework

It is the hope of all educators that students will be interested in the subject matter they learn. However, this is not always the case. Therefore, it is imperative curriculum developers, teachers, and educational institutions continue to improve K-12 educational content and instruction for students. Students interested in subject content are more likely to acquire knowledge and obtain higher academic achievement (Shiefele, 1991).

The assimilation theory put forth by Ausubel (1963) suggests that the best way to teach students is first to determine a students' baseline of existing knowledge on a subject. After this is completed, the student learns the subject matter, and new knowledge construction occurs. Ausubel believed this was how meaningful learning occurred as opposed to rote learning.

Joseph D. Novak (1993) incorporated Ausubel's theory that meaningful learning is fundamental to cognitive development and new knowledge construction. Therefore, to use Novak's (1993) and Ausubel's (1963) view of meaningful learning as a baseline from which to discuss the improvement of students' civic knowledge and engagement, it is logical to assert that when civics learning is meaningful to students, they may construct new civic knowledge and gain citizenship skills that better prepare them to become engaged citizens. Crowdsourcing as a digital tool offers students opportunities for more meaningful civics learning.

Summary

Modern schooling should help produce politically knowledgeable citizens, participate in the political process, and make strides to facilitate changes in unhealthy institutions (Dewey, 1916, Westheimer & Kahne, 2016). However, the truth is students who graduate high school are limited in their knowledge of our political institutions and processes (Malin, Han, & Liauw, 2017; Schrier, 2018), and they tend to possess a citizenship skills deficit which engenders less engaged citizens (Kenna & Hensley, 2019).

Crowdsourcing is a digital tool that private and public entities sometimes use to solve problems by gaining input from users outside their organizations (Saunderson, 2017). Social studies educators have also used crowdsourcing as a digital teaching tool (Kenna & Hensley, 2019). However, there exists a gap in the education literature that suggests crowdsourcing as a teaching option for civics instruction should be further reviewed. This study aims to attempt to fill this gap through the analysis of a crowdsourcing presentation that can be used for professional development for civics

teachers. Of central importance is determining how crowdsourcing can be an effective

tool for civics educators and its required components.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Introduction

The literature provides the foundation for this study. Four key areas of existing research will be addressed that shed additional light on the background of the problem and uses of crowdsourcing. First, the review will consider the challenges facing civics education in the U.S. Second, and to establish a general understanding of citizenship education, citizenship theory will be discussed. Third, action civics, a type of civics instruction that has been shown to have demonstrable effects on student engagement in civics, will be considered. Lastly, the review will explain what crowdsourcing is, how it is currently used in private and public arenas, and how it can be used as a specific digital tool for teaching and learning.

Challenges of Civics Education

Like any subject, civics courses must follow standards set forth by their respective state. It is universal now that all states have educational standards in civics that must be followed and student benchmarks that must be met. The research indicates that students are graduating high school at a record high of 85% (National Center on Education Statistics, 2020). Therefore, it is plausible to assume that graduated students have all the required skills to succeed after high school, including citizenship skills. However, as mentioned in the previous chapter, contradictory evidence found in the literature indicates many challenges in citizenship education, including low civics assessment scores (Heafner & Fitchett, 2005; Lin, 2015; NCES, 2010).

Citizenship education cannot be taught in a bubble and should not be a "one-size-fits-all" subject. Urban areas differ from rural locales in demographic make-up (Waterson & Moffa, 2016). Each demographic has its lens through which they derive the meaning of what it means to be an actively engaged citizen (Waterson & Moffa, 2016). It seems fair to posit that a nation's people, though not all alike, are all citizens who should learn how to be actively engaged in society. Furthermore, not all demographics are offered the same exposure to civic engagement activities (Chan, Ou, & Reynolds, 2014). Citizenship curriculum and student involvement need to be malleable and subject to alterations to appeal to diverse communities. (Waterson & Moffa, 2016). The price of not adjusting civics instruction and activities based on demographics can have detrimental effects on society, including increased incarceration rates and other adverse outcomes (Chan, Ou, & Reynolds, 2014).

White and Mistry (2016) studied the degree of belief in civic duty of 359 elementary students and their parents. The researchers determined that a strong correlation exists between the civic involvement of parents and the extent to which these occurrences impact the same beliefs and awareness in their children. The authors base their analysis on Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (1998) theoretical bio-ecological model, which infers that "human development occurs within various systems or environmental contexts" (p.45). Of particular interest in their findings is the idea of social trust. Higher levels of trust in others translated into increased levels of community responsibility and civic values (p.56). Additionally, their data support the contention that parents' civic engagement can at times be directly linked to the beliefs and civic participation of their

children. Breaking patterns of generational succession that increases the likelihood of inadequate citizenship skills is vital.

One of the most prevalent challenges to civics education found in the literature is the continued marginalization of social studies (Au, 2007; Fitchett, Heafner, & Lambert, 2014; Hutton & Hembacher, 2017; Journell, 2015; McGuire, Stevahn, & Bronsther, 2019; Neel & Palmeri, 2017; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Reasons for the marginalization are mainly due to high-stakes testing requirements in math and ELA (Fitchett, Heafner, & Lambert, 2014; Journell, 2015). For example, many districts require elementary teachers to use the majority of their classroom instructional time for these subjects to better prepare students for required standardized tests. Unfortunately, because of this, social studies instructional time is reduced to a nearly non-existent subject.

Heafner and Fitchett (2012) have extensively researched the devaluation of social studies for more than a decade. The authors' analysis enhances previous research on the reduction in classroom instructional time devoted to social studies teaching. Their research design analyzed national data provided by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) for 1993-2008. Of particular focus is the instructional time given to ELA and mathematics versus social studies. Further analysis included the effect of the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) on instructional times. Findings show that high-stakes testing and the NCLB had a marked impact on the time allotted to teaching social studies (Heafner and Fitchett, 2012).

Pre-service teaching is also affected by the reduction in social studies instructional time. Heather (2017) investigated the self-efficacy of a sample of pre-service teachers (PST) after completing practicums during a course for their education degrees. Of focus was the minimal amount of time spent teaching social studies in their respective classroom, which directly affected PST's observance of professional teachers in social studies instruction. The authors point to Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and state legislation that creates ELA and math standards continue to reduce social studies instructional time.

The study of civics typically begins at an early age (McGuire, Stevahn, and Bronsther, 2019), yet a lack of engagement by students after high school is still prevalent (White and Mistry, 2016). A strong need exists for democratic decision-making to be encouraged in the lower grades, but this can be difficult to undertake when many schools require a social-emotional curriculum which further reduces social studies instructional time (McGuire, Stevahn, and Bronsther, 2019). As a solution, teachers often have to be creative and use social-emotional instructional time to teach citizenship skills (McGuire, Stevahn, & Bronsther, 2019). Democratic decision-making requires students to be curious, to investigate, and to generate solutions to civic problems. An inquiry-based disciplinary practice used deliberately in classrooms correlates to increased student civic engagement (Hutton & Hembacher, 2017; Neel & Palmeri, 2017). Journell, Beeson, and Ayers (2015) take the concept of deeper thinking, inquiry-based learning for better democratic decision-making a step further. Their case study of a high school classroom teacher's method requiring students to use "sophisticated political thinking and deliberation" to acquire civics knowledge led to student gains in this area. The results

further showed that participants who experienced this medium obtained a firm grasp on

political realities instead of being a passive vessel absorbing information (Journell,

Beeson, & Ayers, 2015).

Another challenge for citizenship education is the lack of engagement of students

as active participants in society. There is a de-emphasis of political participation in

adolescent education, which is marginalized in favor of teaching the importance of

community involvement (Exposito, 2014). Young persons' political voices should be

acknowledged and listened to equally with adults' voices. One way to reach those voices

is to get students more engaged in the political process. However, in current curricula,

we continue to see this lack of citizenship. Citizen engagement later in life is vitally

important to a healthy democracy. As adolescents move into adulthood, they are less

inclined to participate in civic matters (Malin, Han, & Liauw, 2017). To counter this

phenomenon, quality citizenship education must begin early in one's schooling,

particularly in regions with low-SES demographics (Ho, 2014). At-risk youth in urban

areas are less likely to be exposed to civic engagement activities during adolescent

schooling, directly correlates to the increased likelihood of future incarceration and other

adverse outcomes (Chan, Ou, & Reynolds, 2014).

Citizenship Theory

Ideas about what constitutes good citizenship and how schools should prepare

students to become engaged citizens arguably began in the United States with Thomas

Jefferson. He believed that public schools were essential to a civil and democratic

society. He authored a bill in the Continental Congress that created universal public

schools in the U.S. (1778). Later, in the 19th century, Horace Mann, as Secretary of the

of Education in Massachusetts, noted in his report to the state's board that Massachusetts' educational systems should not be divorced from teaching democratic values and patriotic goals (1844).

The modern push for injecting democratic principles, or what one might term citizenship education, began with the social philosopher John Dewey. He posited that one of the primary goals of education is for students to become engaged citizens (1916). To Dewey, learning to be an involved citizen was not to be taught in isolation. On the contrary, Dewey asserts that they are learning to be an engaged democratic citizen in everything a student does. His educational philosophy is arguably the first solid theoretical suggestion on how schooling creates democratic citizens.

Currently, several citizenship theories resemble the original ideals and positions that early educational theorists suggested be a part of the education of students' experience in democratic citizenship (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006; Banks, 2017; Crowley& Swann, 2018: 2004; Knight & Watson, 2014; Malin, Han, & Liauw, 2017; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). These modern theories tend to intersect at the same point where types of citizenship are then labeled. For example, Crowley and Swan (2018) contend that "the goal of economics education within the U.S context is to promote economic literacy in the service of citizenship" and that types of civic behaviors are looked upon as outcomes. Unfortunately, Crowley & Swan (2018) also note that citizenship education is generally not encompassed in the teaching of economics. They conclude that co-joining economics and civic duty is inherent in the economics curriculum and that educators should delineate this theme when teaching economics.

Citizenship theory can also be used to address continued societal stratification. In contrast, low SES and immigrant students tend to have less access to or do not identify with the way citizenship education is typically taught. This may be because many U.S. citizens view progress through a lens of sameness and meritocracy (McNamee & Miller, 2004). Unfortunately, this view may have negative consequences for students as they climb the ladder of education toward high school graduation. Ho (2014) studied how students are tracked in both the United States and Singapore and how this affects the accumulated citizenship skills of students. In both countries, minority students and others from low SES were more likely to receive a watered-down civics curriculum. Ho's findings also show that teaching citizenship skills through a meritocracy lens does not necessarily translate into adequate citizenship knowledge for immigrant populations.

Classrooms are an ideal place to teach citizenship to immigrants and minority groups. However, this particular subject matter is diminishing in current schooling (Banks, 2017). A part of this challenge is the need for immigrant populations, and those born in the U.S. from immigrant families, to procure a sense of nation-state citizenship (Ho, 2014). However, at the same time, the undertaking should not marginalize the cultural experiences and practices of the immigrant individuals nor deny them their natural rights as this leads to failed citizenship.

The idea of "belonging" as a construct of what it means to be a citizen is important for minority students to become engaged citizens. For example, African-Americans (AA) typically feel less like U.S. citizens (Vickery, 2017). It is vital to frame learning in a manner inclusive of all demographic groups so that exclusionary experiences are reduced. One way to do this is to recognize that minority groups may

view their sense of belonging differently than whites. Participatory, communal citizenship for AAs comes from the use of AA's culture and community to make sense of their worlds (Knight & Watson, 2014). And Latinos and AAs are most likely to represent an expressive form of civic engagement. (Malin, Han, & Liauw, 2017). Using this as a background should inform the civics curriculum that they all cannot be pre-packaged and delivered universally, particularly regarding minority demographics.

Rural demographics may also have different notions than urban demographics of what it means to be a citizen. The curriculum in rural communities should focus on

"(a) civic republican notions of citizenship likely dominate rural communities, but liberal citizenship discourses may offer meaningful pathways for a proactive democratic life; (b) rural individualism must be assessed for its strengths and weaknesses; (c) economic hardships can lead to political distrust, but can also become fuel for citizen empowerment; (d) rural social norms can jeopardize educational goals, so they must be acknowledged," (Waterson & Moffa, p. 213, 2016).
This citizenship framework is based upon Abowitz & Harnish's *Multiple Discourses on Citizenship* (2006).

The Democratic Citizenship Framework proposes three citizen archetypes: the personally responsible, the participatory, and the justice-oriented citizen (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). The authors spent two years studying ten different educational programs to teach citizenship to students, focusing on data found in two primary curriculums, one being in a more conservative, white suburban community school, the other in a more ethnically diverse urban school. Mixed methods were used to analyze data from interviews, observations, and surveys that rendered three main conceptions of citizenship:

personally responsible, participatory, and justice-oriented. The latter two conceptions are

at the center of the results, as the authors determine the former as more of character

conception than citizenship conception. The results show participatory, and justice-

oriented citizen types both have their merits but are also not inclusive of all the skills and

understandings that students receive from each program. In other words, a little from

both programs are what is needed for a solid civics curriculum.

Action Civics

The National Action Civics Collaborative (2010) defines action civics as "an

engaged citizenry capable of effective participation in the political process, in their

communities, and the larger society." Action civics can take many forms, such as

engaging community leaders in candid discussions, visiting places of civic interest such

as a city hall, or online political engagement. It may also entail students who choose a

civic topic that they're passionate about and then determine an evidence-based solution

and implementation to the problem. However, implementing action civics instruction can

be a challenge for civics classrooms (Levinson, 2014). Having enough instructional time

is one factor. With so much material to cover typically in one semester, high school

civics teachers are already pressed for time to have students achieve a solid foundation of

U.S., state, and local governments and how they operate. Therefore, adding inquiry-

based projects requiring significant research and analysis adds to an already busy

schedule.   Levinson (2014) suggests that there are several other challenging factors.

Teachers require administrational support because action civics requires proper training

in curriculum and methods. There is also the need for supplemental school funds to pay

for field trips and various site visits to create more meaningful experiences. However, it

is possible to implement action civics in classrooms, which does not strain administrations, teachers, and students. One solution to address these challenges is to offer an alternative program that allows students to participate in action civics outside of the classroom setting.

iEngage Summer Civics Institute was created to better immerse themselves in civic issues outside of school using action civics. Though short in its duration, the five-day summer institute enables students to understand better what it means to be an engaged citizen (Blevins et al., 2018). The camp has had much success since its launch in 2013. Post-test outcomes from a study that sought to gauge attendees' understanding of advocacy and ability to identify root causes of civic issues were positive, with 87% of participants having a solid understanding of being an advocate and 87% able to understand and identify root causes of civic challenges. A further longitudinal study of iEngage by Lecompte et al. (2019) also showed an overall increase in students' civic competence.

Another alternative to time-consuming action civic projects in the classroom may be found in using a single-destination website for both curriculum and instruction. Available to teachers would be a truncated action-civics curriculum needed for lessons. Students would each have their web page with all necessary assignments and tools already embedded to develop action civics projects. Using a "one-stop-shop" for all instruction and learning would benefit both teachers and students and would most likely not impact instructional time spent on other civic topics.

Crowdsourcing to solve civic challenges is another method that can be considered action research. It appears to offer ample opportunity for students to harness their passions for change in political and social issues.

Crowdsourcing as Civic Participation

A simplified definition of crowdsourcing is "the practice of obtaining information input into a task...by enlisting the assistance of a number of people---"a crowd" typically online via the internet" (Saunderson, 2017). A more detailed definition by Estellés-Arolas & González-Ladrón-de-Guevara (pp. 9-10, 2012) concludes that

"Crowdsourcing is a type of participative online activity in which an individual, an institution, a non-profit organization, or company proposes to a group of individuals of varying knowledge, heterogeneity, and number, via a flexible open call, the voluntary undertaking of a task. The undertaking of the task, of varying complexity and modularity, and in which the crowd should participate bringing their work, money, knowledge, and experience, always entails mutual benefit. The user will receive the satisfaction of a given type of need, be it economic, social recognition, self-esteem, or the development of individual skills. At the same time, the crowdsourcer will obtain and utilize to their advantage that what the user has brought to the venture, whose form will depend on the type of activity undertaken".

The term *crowdsourcing* appeared for the first time in the English lexicon in June 2006 when the author, Jeff Howe, wrote a story for Wired magazine on communicative input from a population of strangers on technological issues requested by an organization.

Various tech areas were covered, such as a photo-sharing website that provided photos for a health exhibition on global pandemics, a video-sharing website harnessed by VH1 to show funny home videos, and a major pharmaceutical corporation's enlistment of scientists in the general public to help develop potential drugs for market.

Since 2006, crowdsourcing has evolved to the extent that even civic bodies such as city councils seek design input from constituents on how to effectively utilize funds to pay for various public-use projects (Sturgis, March 13, 2015). And, it is not just smaller municipalities that use crowdsourcing. The federal government's Office of Science and Technology Policy "directed all federal agencies to adopt citizen science and crowdsourcing that contributes directly to a goal or need that is relevant to the agencies' missions" (Liu, p.659, 2017), and the Federal Transit Administration's applied crowdsourced data to inform bus stop design at the local level (Brabham, Sanchez, Bartholomew, 2009).

Private entities also use crowdsourcing to garner explanations to specific matters from the general public. Researchers Handler and Ferrer-Conill (2016) analyzed a crowdsourcing initiative created by the British newspaper, *The Guardian*, which encouraged readers to investigate several hundred thousand documents gained from the U.K. government that purported misuse of funds by Members of Parliament (MPs). Readers were able to access over 100,000 documents through the use of an open-access platform on their website. The results showed that crowdsourcing was effectively engaged participants, as evidenced by thousands of posts by the paper's readers that led to the exposure of extensive mishandling of funds by MPs (Handler & Ferrer-Conill, 2016).

Finally, community-based organizations have also successfully used crowdsourcing to improve their communities, such as in Jackson, Mississippi, where the organization and website, www.*ctizenville.org*, creates live venue events which crowdsource and crowdfund the presenters' projects on a wide array of topics such as art, the environment, and education.

Stepanek (March 16, 2010) summarized several non-profit crowdsourcing initiatives on the internet which, ten years later, are still in existence: *Project Noah*, a citizen science platform used to identify local wildlife; *GreenMap.org*, a crowdsourced website where users upload sustainable ecological maps used to create stronger local communities and raise awareness of local cultural sites; *Invisible People*, a website where users can upload video-stories of homeless persons to help raise awareness for this demographic that rarely receives attention.

Education has only recently begun to harness the opportunity to engage students in crowdsourcing for civic participation (Schrier, 2018). One reason for this delay is that a teacher must have ample training and experience in using technology integration in crowdsourcing in the classroom, and many educators lack these skills (Hills, 2015). Crowdsourcing is a viable method to further engage secondary school students in social studies (Berson & Berson, 2019). Crowdsourcing is a social studies classroom that seems most similar to peer groups of students who engage in political discussions on a message board in a virtual forum such as Google Classroom or Twitter (Kenna & Hensley, 2019). However, crowdsourcing can also involve students from schools located in different states interacting with one another on a topic-specific website like the Civic Action Project (Doggett, Huss, & Smith, 2018). Sixteen years after the

term "crowdsourcing" was coined, businesses, organizations, governments at the local, state, and federal levels continue to harness crowdsourcing from citizens as a viable means to determine a proper course of action in solving a problem. It is clear crowdsourcing is a successful model to increase citizen participation in non-school environments. Crowdsourcing lessons or products with a curriculum that encourages students to exploit their passions for civic issues is an area within the research that still contains gaps.

Summary

The literature that addresses the problem that a lack of citizenship skills and civic engagement exists in younger persons is extensive. Several researchers have written extensively on this topic (Heafner & Fitchett, 2005; Lin, 2015; Westheimer & Kahne, 2015) alongside data showing a stagnant decline in civic knowledge and engagement (NAES, 2010; 2018). Citizenship theory research offers several frameworks to choose as lenses to study civic participation (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006; Banks, 2017; Crowley& Swann, 2018: 2004; Knight & Watson, 2014; Liauw, 2017; Malin, Han, & Vickery, 2017). Westheimer & Kahne's Democratic Citizenship Framework (2004) simplifies the types of citizens common in society into three archetypes types: the personally responsible, the participatory, and the justice-oriented citizen.

Action civics is a type of civics instruction that has demonstrable effects on student engagement in civics learning (Blevins, Lecompte, & Bauml, 2018). It encourages students to become more deeply involved in civics study through self-empowerment, creating motivation to effect change (Blevins et al., 2018). The use of crowdsourcing for educational instruction may also be considered a form of action civics.

Crowdsourcing is a digital version of social involvement by crowds of people in an online environment who join together to solve a problem or address a topic. The literature provides research on the use of crowdsourcing in public (Liu, 2017) and private spheres (Acar, 2018), as well as in education (Berson & Berson, 2019; Okada, Connolly, & Scott, 2012). However, there exists a gap in crowdsourcing as an instructional method to increase student civic knowledge and participation (Kenna & Hensley, 2019).

Chapter III

Methodology

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine how crowdsourcing can be utilized to teach civics curriculum to create meaningful learning, which may positively impact civic knowledge, skills, and citizen engagement deficits in students.

The researcher modeled how crowdsourcing could be used for instructional purposes in a high school civics classroom using a pre-recorded video. The actual act of crowdsourcing encourages group participation to address a topic using digital tools. Therefore, the demonstration contained detailed information and instruction on how crowdsourcing lessons apply technology to promote group participation in a civics classroom.

Philosophical Perspective

The researcher has been a U.S. Government teacher at the secondary level for three years. During this time, he has observed that most students who matriculate through high school do not typically possess solid citizenship knowledge or skills, even though these skills are taught beginning at the elementary level. The existing literature base confirms the problem is not isolated but salient across many regions and demographics in the U.S. (Lin, 2015; NAES, 2010). The researcher believes that the current education system of the United States produces students who are not typically interested in civics as a general rule. Indeed, some students may have strong political beliefs, and some who even act on those beliefs. But high school students are largely absent from civic life after graduation and much less engaged as they advance in age (Malin, Han, & Liauw, 2017).

Citizens of a country must be engaged in civics processes so that government institutions continue to function correctly. Should a country fail in this endeavor, then the suspected outcome could be more than bleak. Thomas Jefferson stated that when citizens fear the government, there is tyranny. But, when the government fears its citizens, there is liberty. This study's researcher advocates for civics instruction that encourages students to think freely and to become more involved in civics processes so that this country will continue to flourish.

Proposed Research Design

This study's design is based on *action research*, a specific type of research and analysis of educational topics or problems that may arise from experiences in a classroom setting (Stringer, 2008). Action research allows investigators to use the insight gained through the study of a problem to directly impact classroom teaching and learning (Stringer, 2008). Key to this design is the data analysis to determine actions or solutions that may be implemented in the classroom later.

Action research allows for various study methodologies, including those which are qualitative in nature. The researcher believes the educational topic to be addressed here should be considered similar to a *case study*, based on Creswell and Poth's (2018) definition:

> A qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material and documents, and reports), and reports a case description and case themes (pp. 96 – 97).

This study used qualitative methods; however, it diverged to a degree from Creswell and Poth's definition in that it analyzed one moment in time using one source of information or data (survey instrument).

This study employed quantitative questions on the survey to be administered. According to Leedy and Ormond (2016), "Many research problems have both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. To fully address them, the researcher used both quantitative and qualitative techniques" (p.311).

This study's methodology was an analysis of data from an online survey given to civics teachers in seven urban school districts in Florida after they watched a video-recorded presentation of how crowdsourcing can be used for civics instructional delivery. The problem addressed in the investigation is students' lack of civics knowledge, skills, and civic participation after high school.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the study:

RQ1 - What are civics teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of crowdsourcing as an Instructional tool in high school civics courses?

RQ2 - How can crowdsourcing be implemented into high school civics curriculum?

Demonstration

A civics presentation was created that focuses on crowdsourcing as a digital tool in a civics classroom. The length of the researcher's demonstration was approximately six minutes in length. The participants who completed the survey received a recorded version of the demonstration to view and use to answer the several survey questions. The

particular length of time for the demonstration was picked to inhibit survey fatigue so that the data collected would be more reliable.

Participants

Participants in this study were social studies teachers who received the survey used in the study's data analysis. This sample group consisted of teachers who had taught high school Civics, American Government, or U.S. Government courses at some point in their teaching careers. The representative sample was taken from seven urban school districts in Florida, which the researcher believed would provide a diverse demographic. After the researcher successfully received a digital list of social studies teachers' email addresses using a listserv information request sent to the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE), the prospective participants were contacted via email with the attached video lesson and survey. The researcher expected to receive several hundred email addresses from the FLDOE. It was hoped that at least fifty participants contacted would complete and successfully return a valid survey to the researcher.

Instrumentation

A survey questionnaire was the instrument used for the study's data collection. It was distributed to teacher-participants who had taught civics at some point in their teaching careers. The questionnaire was created using Google Forms and was emailed to participants as a secured link.

The survey contained quantitative and qualitative questions that addressed the participants' reactions and opinions on the crowdsourcing lesson, demonstrated their perceptions of crowdsourcing as an effective instructional tool, and their

recommendations on other ways to incorporate crowdsourcing in the civics classroom.

Sample questions and statements included:

1) Crowdsourcing and the lesson's expectations were clearly understood by you?

2) This video showed me effective strategies for teaching civics.

3) Do you believe that crowdsourcing is or can be an effective way to teach civics? Why or why not?

Data Collection

Qualitative and quantitative data were obtained through the use of a survey. It was necessary to determine types of responses to survey questions using a Likert Scale, a quantitative method of data collection and analysis.   However, not all survey questions were quantifiable. Qualitative questions were also used in the survey, which provided subjective data that needed to be analyzed. Because it is an accurate method for categorizing and coding qualitative data, Yin's (2016) model of qualitative data analysis was employed. For the qualitative portion of the analysis, the researcher coded the data to determine common themes.

The study's quantitative survey questions were measures of central tendency (mean, mode, median, range, standard deviation) using a five-point Likert scale. The researcher employed SPSS software to assist in the analysis. The software is a standard tool used by educational researchers and has been found to be effective in calculating and organizing statistical data (Leedy & Ormond, 2016). The study's quantitative and qualitative data gleaned from the survey centers on the participants' experience with crowdsourcing before and after the participants viewed the demonstration video.

Delimitations

The Delimitations of this study included:

    a) Limited to one demonstration of crowdsourcing as a teaching and learning tool.

    b) No participants from rural school districts will be surveyed

    c) Localized to the state of Florida, therefore not necessarily generalizable to all

states.

    d) Study not undertaken in a classroom setting with students and teachers

    e) Participants must currently be teaching or have taught civics at some point in their

careers.

Limitations

The Limitations of this study included:

    f)   Participants may not provide accurate opinions for various reasons, such as a

        rushed survey or quick, truncated answers to open-ended questions.

    g)   Participant bias is always a possibility. For example, surveyed participants may

        have prior knowledge of crowdsourcing and may not care for it as a learning tool.

    h)   The researcher is currently a high school civics teacher; therefore, possible

        researcher bias exists concerning the interpretation of data.

    i)   Participants do not fully complete the survey.

    j)   Survey fatigue/indifference may occur, which can result in incomplete surveys or

        unreliable data.

Ethical Considerations

       It was required that all participants in this study were provided with and must

have agreed to an informed consent decree. Hence, there was no ambiguity concerning

the expectations of both the researcher and participants and affirmation that participants' identities would remain anonymous. Risks posed to participants were minimal such as possible frustration with the survey instrument; however, participants could choose to exit the survey at any time they wished. All data received was confidential and is stored on a secure, password-protected computer hard drive, as well as on offsite-cloud storage for three years, at which time the data will be destroyed. Risks notwithstanding, it was hoped that the participants felt encouraged by the study's purpose and crowdsourcing solution. Their experience with the study benefits or informs their instruction in the future.

The researcher is currently a high school civics instructor, which gives the study a certain degree of immediate reliability. However, with any academic research endeavor, there is always the possibility of researcher bias. It was a concern of the researcher, and steps were taken to remain partial when creating the crowdsourcing demonstration and interpreting the survey data.

Summary

This investigation of crowdsourcing civics instruction was an action research design that used a case study methodology. The investigation's purpose was to gain further insight into the efficacy of crowdsourcing as a digital tool for civics learning and to other examples that could be implemented in a civics classroom. The researcher created and demonstrated two mini-lessons using crowdsourcing that were video recorded. A survey questionnaire was administered to prospective teacher-participants from seven urban school districts in Florida to gain the data necessary to answer the study's research questions. The participants viewed the demonstration video, then took

the subsequent survey. Based on the collected data, it was hoped that further clarity on

the effectiveness of crowdsourcing as a digital tool for civics instruction to increase

student civic knowledge, skills, and engagement would be gained.

Chapter IV

Results

Introduction

The purpose of this case study was to determine if crowdsourcing is an effective digital instructional tool for the civics classroom and how crowdsourcing can be integrated into high school civics curriculum to create meaningful learning opportunities. A survey questionnaire containing quantitative and qualitative questions was employed to collect the requisite data from high school civics teachers. The quantitative data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics and coding to find themes in the qualitative portion of the analysis. Later, these two sets of data were triangulated to identify consistencies and inconsistencies between the quantitative and the qualitative areas of data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). The study's research questions were:

RQ1 - What are civics teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of crowdsourcing as an instructional tool in high school civics courses?

RQ2 - How can crowdsourcing be implemented into high school civics curriculum?

The researcher contacted the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) via email with a listserv request to obtain social studies teachers' email addresses in public high schools in seven urban counties. The total number of email addresses obtained was 2,317. On three separate occasions, June 3 & 4, June 11, and June 17, 2021, the researcher contacted the 2,317 prospective participants through an email containing an introductory letter describing the study and a secured link to the survey instrument. A total of thirty-four (n = 34) surveys were attempted. Of these, twenty-four surveys (n = 24) were mostly completed, while only fifteen questionnaires (n = 15) were fully

completed. Because inferential statistics were not employed, the twenty-four mostly complete surveys were used for the study's data analysis.

At first glance, this small percentage of completed surveys appears to be a sizable limitation to the study's data analysis compared to the total number of prospective participants contacted. However, delimitations in the study's data collection requirements and circumstances strongly impacted the survey response rate. One is the requirement that those who participated had taught high school civics at some point in their careers or were currently teaching the course. Of the 2,317 social studies teachers contacted, it was impossible to determine how many met this criterion. According to Florida State University's website, which contains the Florida Sunshine State Standards for public schools, nine social studies courses are listed for high school students (Cpalms, 2021). This does not include elective social studies courses that individual high schools may offer, such as Holocaust Studies, Psychology, Sociology, or African-American Studies. It would be folly to speculate on the number of social studies instructors who currently teach or have taught civics in the seven urban schools districts sampled. Still, it is reasonable to suppose that only a fraction of the 2,317 teachers solicited were currently teaching or had taught high school civics at some point in their careers. To summarize this delimitation, the expectation of a low response rate because of the purposefully targeted teacher demographic was anticipated.

A second delimitation that strongly influenced the survey completion rate was the timing of the emailed survey, which occurred at the end of the 2020-2021 school year for four of the districts contacted. For example, Duval County's last day for teachers was June 4. Broward and Miami-Dade counties was June 10, and Palm Beach County's was

June 21. The school year had already ended for the remaining districts sampled, those of

Hillsborough, Orange, and Pinellas counties, by June 3 & 4, the dates that the first

attempt was made to contact prospective participants. This challenge was a further

delimitation which the researcher anticipated before collecting the data.

Results

Quantitative Questions

The data analysis employed descriptive statistics with measures of central

tendency to illustrate findings from twelve quantitative questions on the completed

surveys. The first question in the survey was informed consent.

Question 2: **Are you currently a high school Civics (U.S.**

Government/American Government) teacher?

The figure below represents a total of 34 responses, 70.6% (n = 24) of which were high

school civics teachers and 29.4% (n = 10) were not.

Figure 1. **Are you currently a high school Civics (American Government/U.S. Government) teacher?**
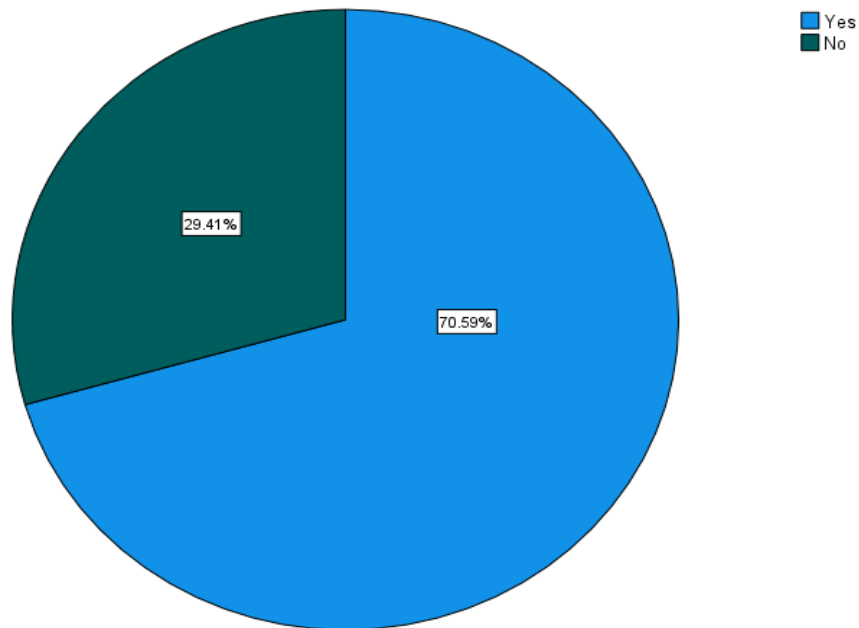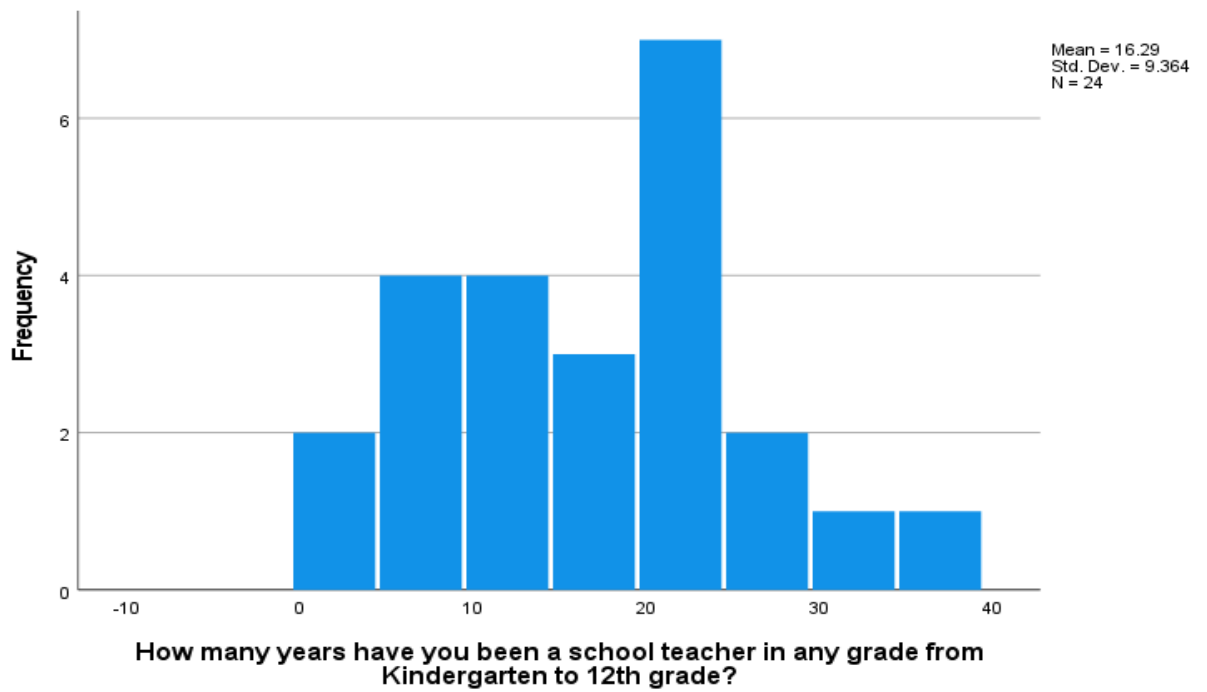
Question 3: How many years have you been a school teacher in any grade from kindergarten to 12th grade?

Participants reported having 2 to 36 years of teaching experience in any grade from kindergarten to 12th grade, with the mean being 16.3 years.

Figure 2.

Mean = 16.29
Std. Dev. = 9.364
N = 24

How many years have you been a school teacher in any grade from Kindergarten to 12th grade?

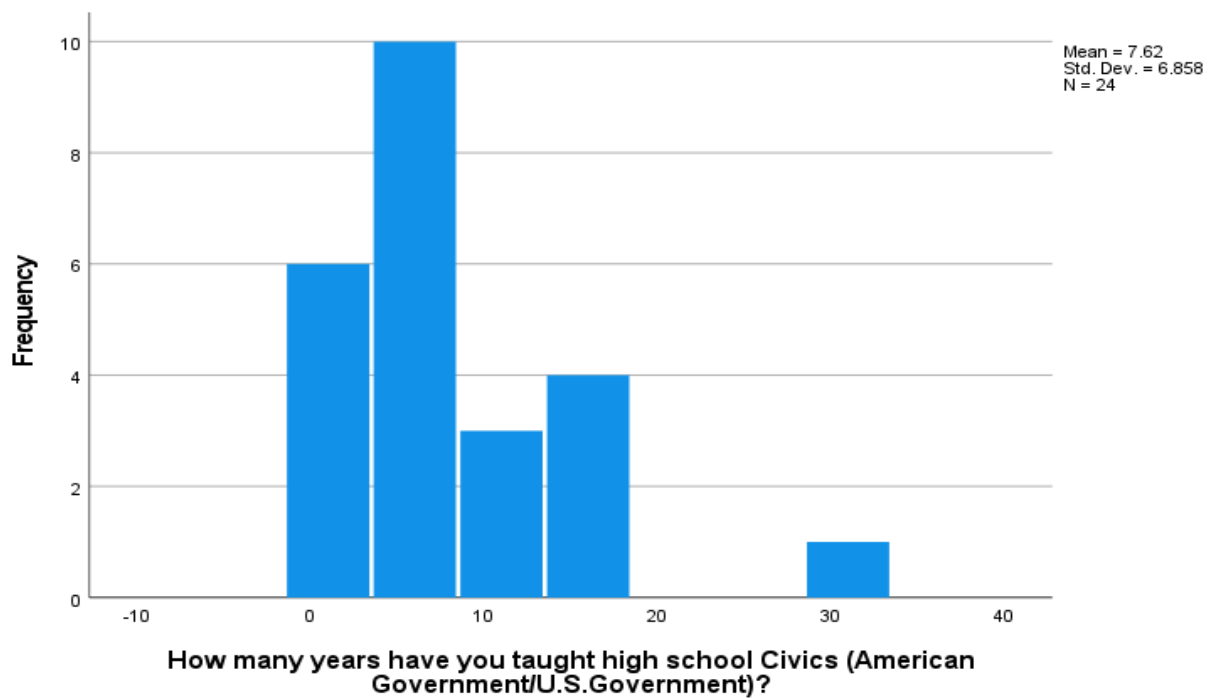**Question 4:** **How many years have you taught high school civics (American government/U.S. government)? This includes present and past experience teaching the subject.**

Participants reported between 1 to 30 years of high school civics teaching experience with a mean of 7.6 years.

Figure 3.

Mean = 7.62
Std. Dev. = 6.858
N = 24

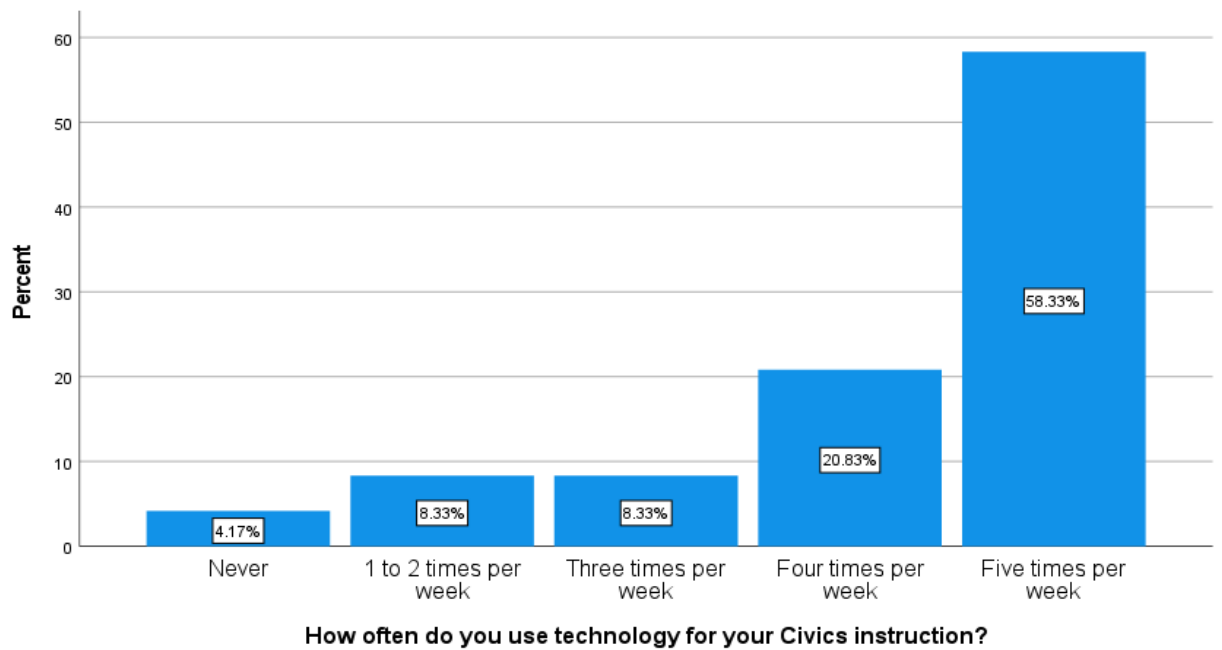**Question 5: How often do you use technology for your civics instruction?**

The largest proportion of respondents, 58.3% (n = 14), use technology five times per week. 20.8% (n = 5) use technology four times per week, 8.3% (n = 2) each use it three times per week, two use it two times per week, 8.3% (n = 2), and 4.2% (n= 1) said they never use technology in their civics instruction.
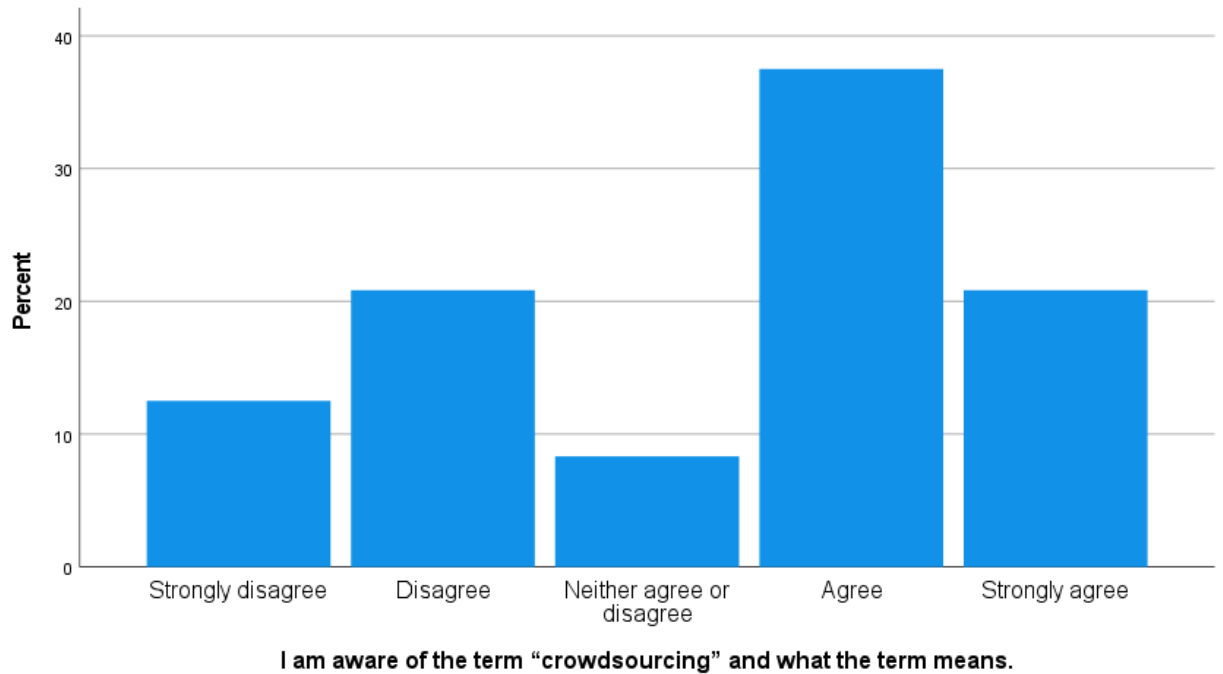
Figure 4.

Question 6: I am aware of the term "crowdsourcing" and what the term means.

A little more than half of the respondents, 58.3% (n = 14), were aware of the meaning of crowdsourcing while 33.3% (n = 8) were not, and 8.3% (n = 2) were unsure.

Figure 5.

I am aware of the term "crowdsourcing" and what the term means.

Question 7: High school students are deficient in civic knowledge and skills needed to be engaged citizens.

The majority of participants, 91.7% (n = 22) believed that high school students are deficient while 4.2% (n = 1) did not, and 4.2% (n = 1) was unsure.

Figure 6.

High school students are deficient in civic knowledge and skills needed to be engaged citizens.
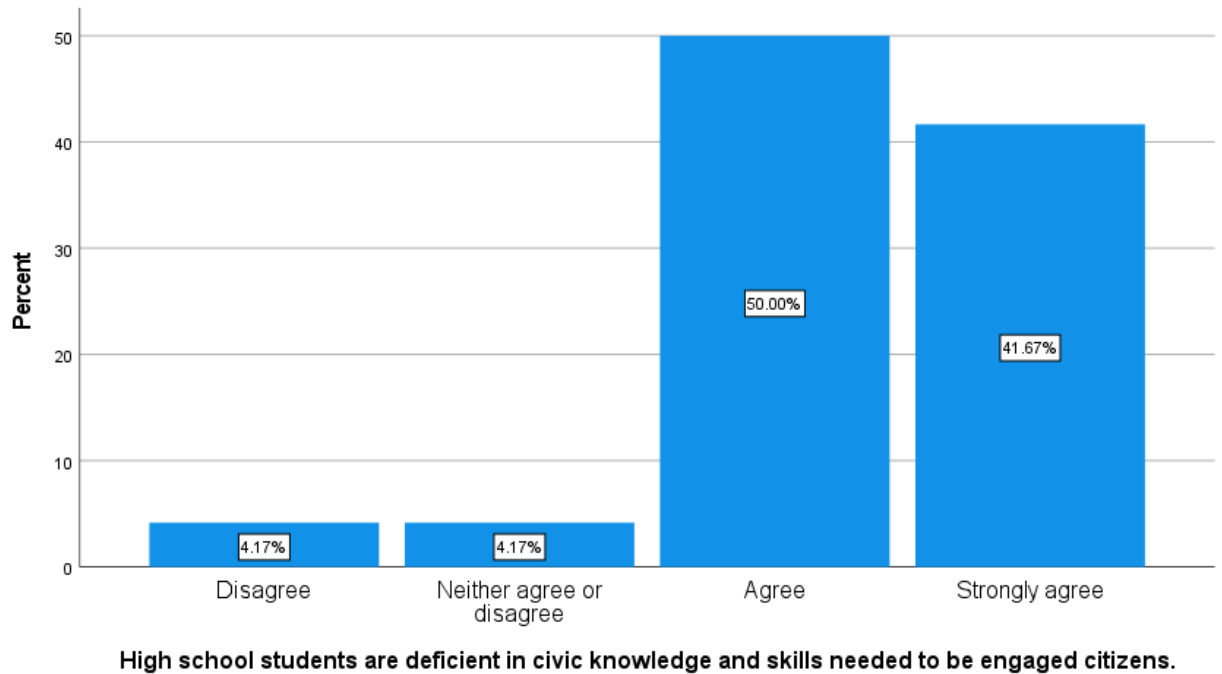
Question 8: A definition of *crowdsourcing* was clearly defined.

After viewing the video demonstration, 91.7% (n = 22) of those sampled confirmed that the definition of crowdsourcing was clearly defined while 4.2% (n = 1) did not, and 4.2% (n = 1) was unsure.

Figure 7.

A definition of crowdsourcing was clearly defined.

Question 9: The demonstration video clearly showed (2) examples of

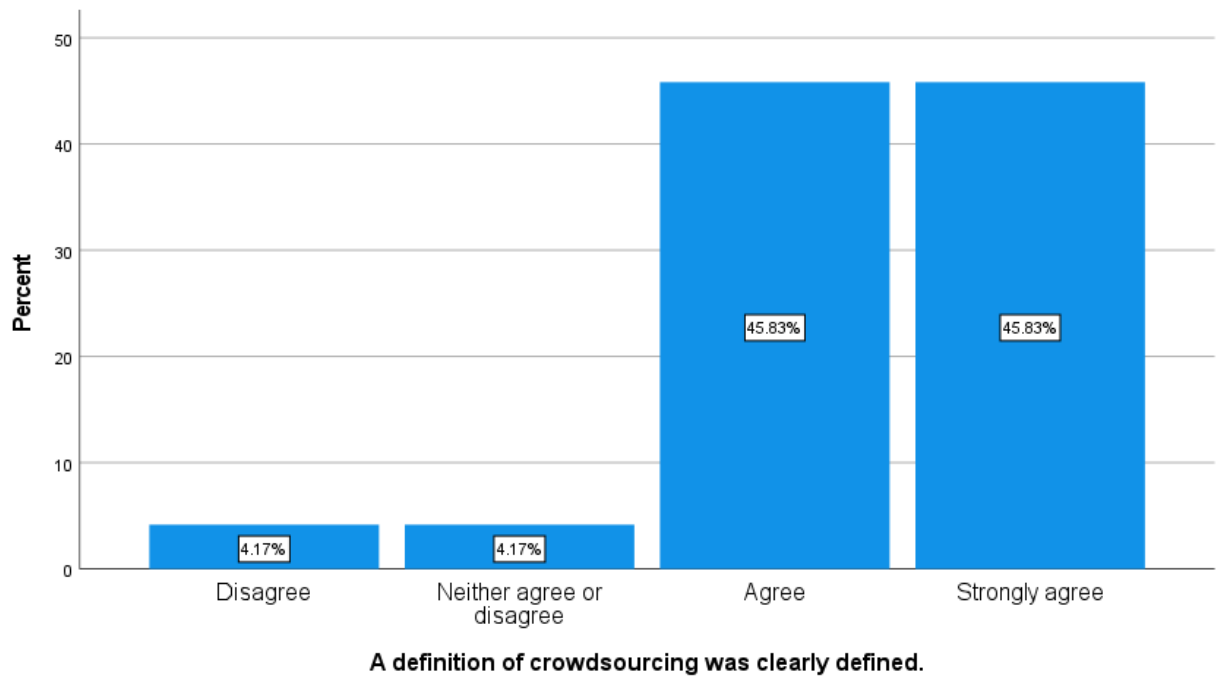*crowdsourcing* **and how they may be implemented in the classroom as instructional**

tools.

A total of 87.5% (n = 21) thought the demonstration video clearly showed two examples

of crowdsourcing and how they may be implemented in the classroom as instructional

tools. However, 8.3% (n = 2) disagreed and 4.2% (n = 1) remained neutral.

Figure 8.

The demonstration video clearly showed (2) examples of crowdsourcing and how they they may be implemented in the classroom as instructional tools.
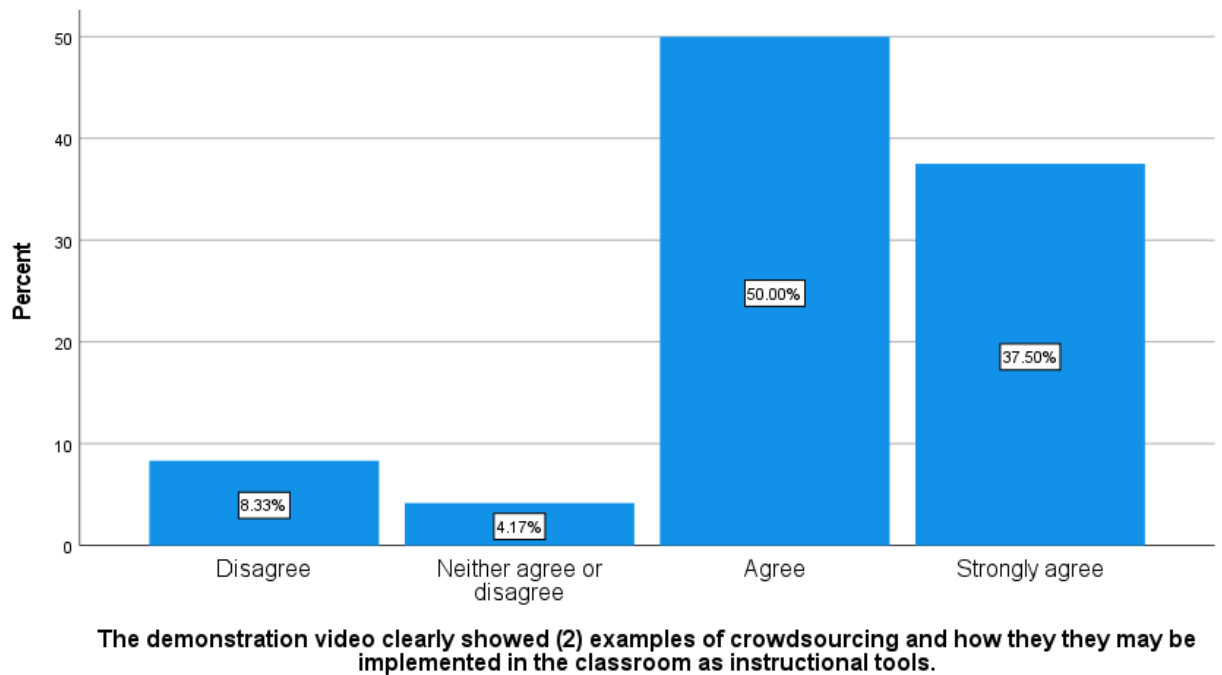
Question 10: The video addresses some of my concerns with how civics is taught.

Two-thirds of teachers surveyed, 66.7% (n = 16) agreed, 16.7% (n = 4) disagreed, and 16.7 (n = 4) neither agreed nor disagreed.

Figure 9.

The video addresses some of my instructional concerns with how civics is taught.
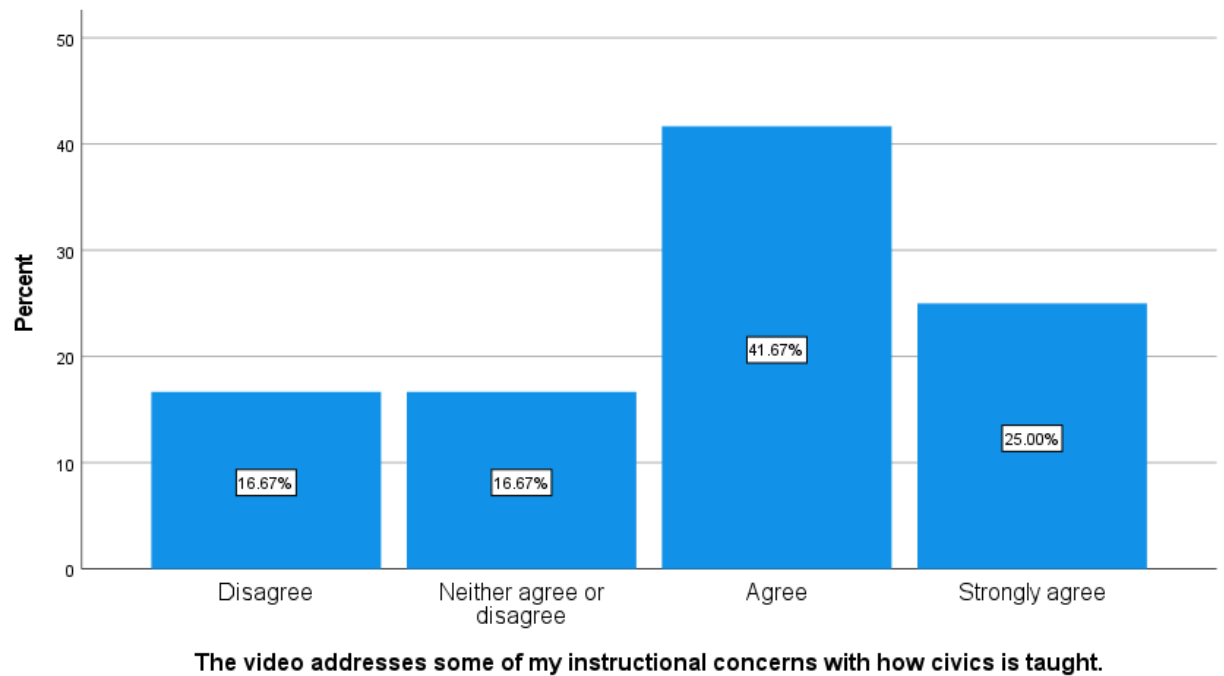
Question 11: The video will help civics teachers to improve their instruction.

The majority of respondents, 75% (n = 18), believed it would, 8.3% (n = 2) thought it

would not, and 16.7% (n = 4) were neutral.

Figure 10.
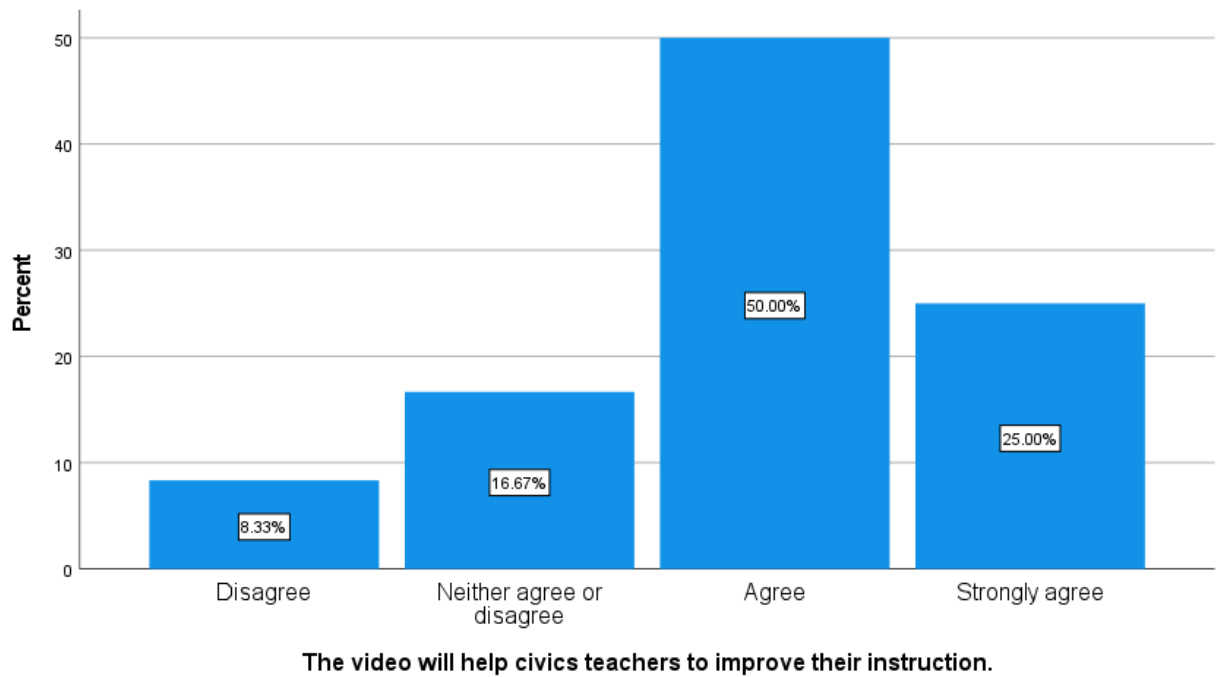
The video will help civics teachers to improve their instruction.

Question 12: This video showed me an effective strategy for teaching civics.

70.8% (n = 17) agreed, 4.2% (n = 1) disagreed, and 25% (n = 6) neither agreed nor

disagreed.

Figure 11.

This video showed me an effective strategy for teaching civics.
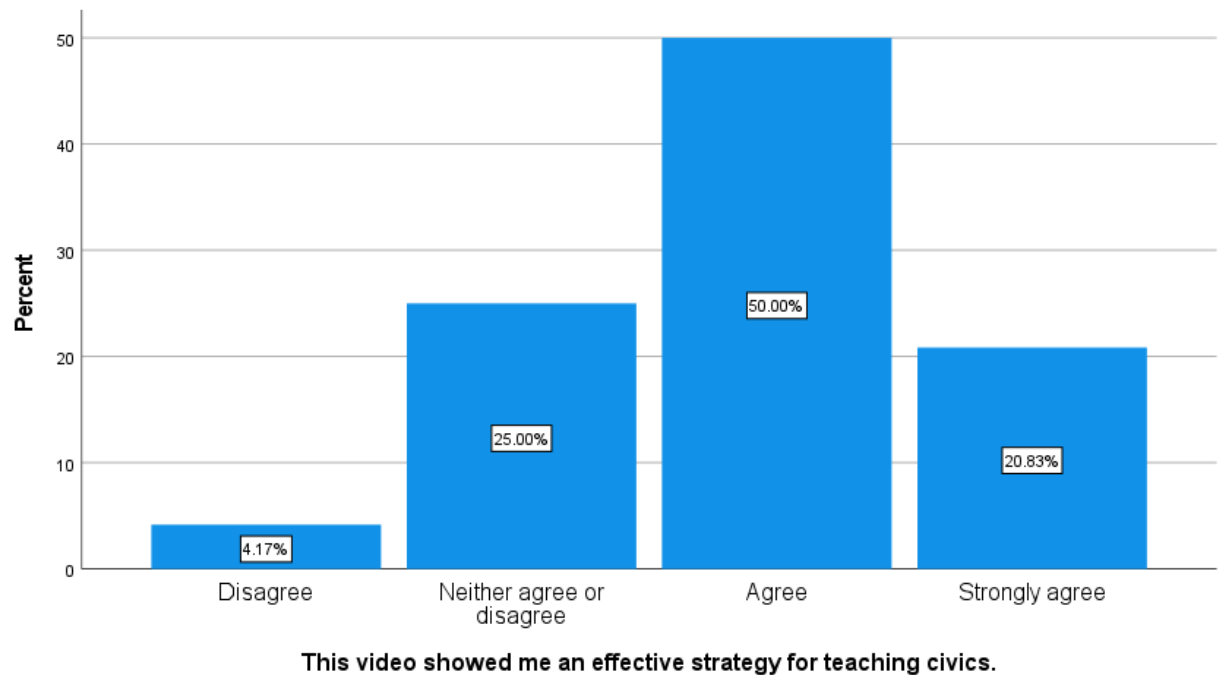
Question 13: My idea of effective instructional tools for teaching civics has changed after viewing this demonstration on Crowdsourcing.

After viewing the crowdsourcing demonstration video, 45.8% (n = 11) agreed that their idea of effective instructional tools for teaching civics had changed after the crowdsourcing demonstration while 12.5% (n = 3) disagreed and 41.7% (n = 10) remained neutral.

Figure 12.

My idea of effective instructional tools for teaching civics has changed after viewing this demonstration on Crowdsourcing.
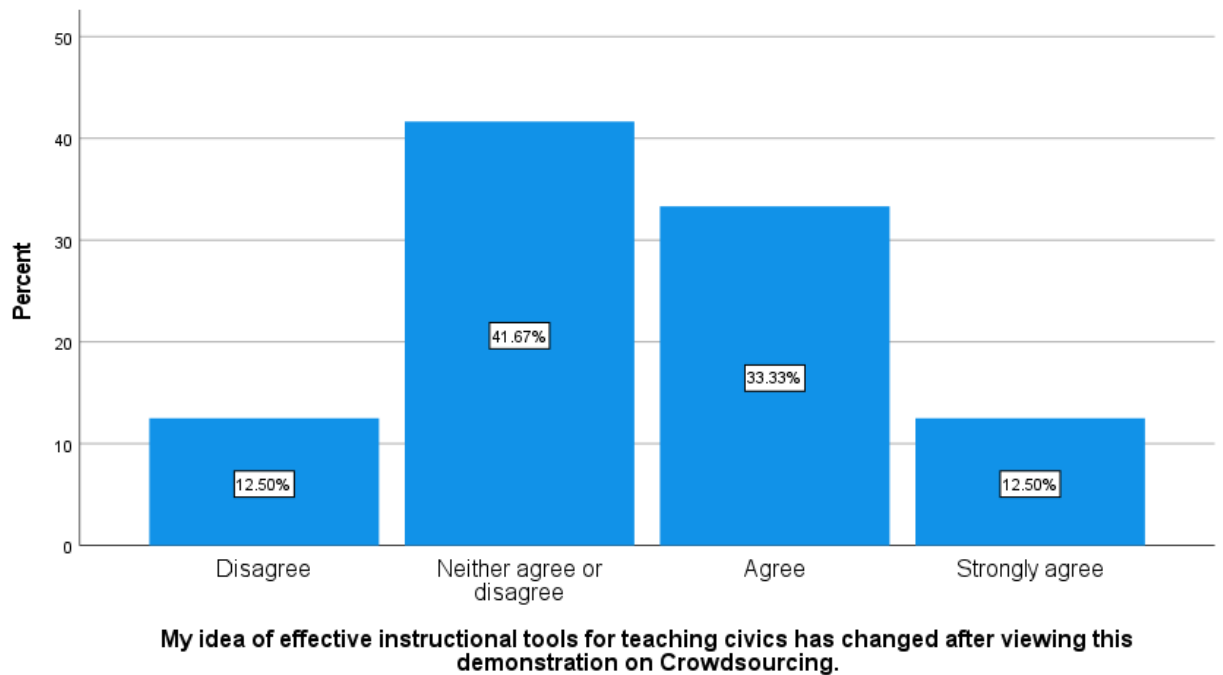
Qualitative Questions

Question 14. After viewing the video, do you believe that crowdsourcing is or can be an effective tool to teach high school civics (American Government or U.S. Government) courses? Why or why not?

Two (n = 2) respondents did not answer the question. One (n = 1) respondent believed crowdsourcing was not an effective teaching tool, two (n = 2) others were unsure, and one (n = 1) was neutral, stating that "I do not think it shows any better or worse than what/how teaching is presently." Two (n = 2) teachers, one who self-identified as an AP teacher, believed it was "...better to stick to the College Board provided learning tasks," while the other suggested this type of instructional tool would be most appropriate for AP and AICE level courses. The remaining written responses (n = 16) all confirmed that crowdsourcing was or could be an effective instructional tool

Table 1. Thematic Codes Question 14

Codes	Theme
- Being politically & socially aware - Promotes diversity, inclusivity, and cultural responsiveness - The students are contributing to a project that is Greater than themselves	Social & Civic Awareness
- Encourages positive interaction among students - Enhance instruction with student engagement, interaction - It is a more interactive way of working with primary sources. - Using different forms of disseminating material is always helpful	Interaction/Engagement

Table 2. Question 14 Sample Responses

Yes	Could Be
Yes, it can help students get involved and see the importance of being politically and socially aware	Crowdsourcing could be an effective tool to teach high school civics. The second example would be much more beneficial, as an example of citizen engagement. The students are contributing to a project that is greater than these, even; even greater than their high school/local community.
Yes, crowdsourcing encourages positive interaction among students as it promotes diversity, inclusivity, and cultural responsiveness as our classrooms reflect a truly democratic society.	Could be. I'll have to explore it some more on my own. The video made clear what the student would do in the two crowdsourcing activities but fell short in describing to what ends those activities might be put.
Yes. It will enhance instruction with student engagement, interaction, and feedback activities.	
Yes, using different forms of disseminating material is always helpful	
Yes, because it is a more interactive way of working with primary sources.	
Yes, [but] it always depends on the students	
Yes, [it is a] hands-on explanation	

Question 15. After viewing the demonstration video, do you have any suggestions or ideas on how crowdsourcing can be further implemented in high school civics classes?

This question yielded five (n = 4) somewhat substantive responses out of the twenty-four (n = 24) surveys submitted. Eight (n = 9) responded with either "no" or "none" while one (n = 1) participant answered, "see answer above." Ten (n = 10) participants did not answer the question. Due to the limited number of responses to this question, thematic ss

Table 3. Question 15 Sample Response

Crowdsourcing is a nontraditional way to experience being a part of a community. We ask students to participate in community service but often dismiss how students can do this through civic engagement. Students should understand how community service and civic engagement are oftentimes linked and continue these practices into adulthood as part of citizenship.
I typically offer extra credit to students who take civic action about their concern(s), write a letter to a policymaker or a letter to the editor, or attend a school board meeting or a town hall meeting, or take part in any kind of interest group activity.
Students have an entirely different experience with community than most of their teachers.
No, the demonstration was effective and resourceful enough.
Show an actual lesson with students and how they do it in class.

Discussion

This study aimed to purposefully sample social studies teachers who had taught civics at some point in their careers to gain the most reliable data possible. Twenty-four participants surveyed were currently civics (American Government/U.S. Government) teachers or had taught civics previously. Of those sampled, the average years of teaching experience were 16.29, and the average length that participants had taught high school civics was 7.62 years. If longevity is taken into consideration, the general experience level and specific time teaching civics may increase the reliability of the collected data.

Twenty-two of the twenty-four participants (91.6%) believed that high school students are deficient in civic knowledge, skills, and citizen engagement, supporting the same theme found in the literature. Just over 79% of those sampled (n = 19) use technology in their classrooms four to five times per week. A little more than half of the respondents, 58.3% (n = 14), reported that they were familiar with the term crowdsourcing and what it means, while 38.3% (n = 8) were not.

The majority of respondents, 91.7% (n = 22), believe that the demonstration video clearly defined crowdsourcing, and 87.5% (n = 21) agreed that the video provided two specific examples of crowdsourcing activities that can be used in a civics classroom. Seventy-eight percent (n = 17) decided that crowdsourcing is an effective digital tool for civics instruction, while 75% (n = 18) believed the demonstration video could help civics teachers to improve their instruction. Strangely, only 45.8% (n = 11) of respondents agreed that their view of what constitutes effective instructional tools had changed after viewing the demonstration video. Perhaps this is because the degree of participants' familiarity with technology as the means of instructional delivery was already high.

Triangulation

The majority of respondents (79%) use technology in their classrooms at least four times per week, indicating that most teacher participants should have a solid grasp of technology integration in the classrooms. A slight majority (58.3%) of participants were aware of what crowdsourcing is and what the term means; however, nearly half of the respondents (41.6%) either didn't know what crowdsourcing was or was unsure. This inconsistency is more beneficial to the data analysis by decreasing possible participant bias.

Part of the study's aim was to determine if civics teachers believe that crowdsourcing can be an effective instructional tool for the classroom. The majority of Likert scale responses indicate that crowdsourcing is an effective tool for civics instruction: 75% of respondents confirm teachers will improve their instruction and 70.8% confirm that crowdsourcing is an effective strategy for teaching civics. Lastly, 66.7% of participants believe that some of their concerns on how civics is taught were addressed after watching the crowdsourcing video demonstration. These three affirmations indicate that the participants believe crowdsourcing can be an effective tool for civics instruction.

The researcher determined that part of the qualitative data collected was too limited and inconclusive to answer RQ-2. However, the participants indicated in their responses to Likert scale Question #9 that the demonstration video clearly showed crowdsourcing lessons and how they may be implemented in a civics classroom. Data collected from the other open-ended question was sufficient to code and determine

themes that allowed the researcher to further triangulate with the responses to Likert scale questions.

The majority of those who answered open-ended Question #14 (58.3%) believe crowdsourcing is an effective instructional tool for teaching high school civics; only one negative response to this question was recorded. This is consistent with the Likert scale responses that suggest civics teachers should use crowdsourcing as a digital instructional tool.

The theme *interaction/engagement* was determined from codes noted in Question #14. Data gleaned from Likert Question #10 indicates that the crowdsourcing video demonstration addressed some of the participants' concerns with how civics is taught. The researcher suggests that a lack of student engagement and interaction during classroom lessons can concern teachers.

Question #7 asked the participants if they believed current high school students are deficient in civics knowledge and skills needed to be engaged citizens. Overwhelmingly, 91.7% agreed that this is the case. The participants were concerned about students' deficiencies in these areas. This converges and is consistent with the *social/civic awareness* theme in answers to open-ended Question #14. The two themes of *interaction/engagement* and *social/civic awareness* form a large part of the epicenter of the problem that this investigation attempts to address.

Summary

The delimitations of the study influenced the number of responses submitted. The researcher contacted public school social studies teachers in seven urban school districts in Florida. This investigation was purposeful in sampling only high school civics

teachers. However, it did not have the means to determine precisely how many of those contacted met this criterion. Because of this limitation, the response rate was relatively low. Additionally, the researcher attempted to contact prospective participants at the end of the school year for four of the sampled school districts, while three districts contacted had already completed the school year.

The total number of social studies teachers contacted numbered 2,317. Of these, thirty-four began the survey questionnaire but did not finish. Twenty-four questionnaires submitted were mostly complete, while only fifteen were fully completed. Because inferential statistics were not employed, the twenty-four mostly complete surveys were used for the study's data analysis.

The survey instrument contained Likert scale questions and open-ended questions, which yielded similar data when triangulated. The majority of participants agreed that high school students lack civics knowledge, skills, and citizen engagement. The majority also agreed that crowdsourcing is an effective digital instructional tool teachers should use in high school civics classrooms. These findings also parallel the two themes noted through coding the qualitative data: interaction/engagement and social & civic awareness.

Chapter V

Conclusions

Introduction

Research supports the contention that high school students continue to be minimally engaged citizens and are deficient in civic knowledge and skills (Kenna & Hensley, 2019; National Center for Education Statistics, 2011; Lutkus & Weiss, 2007). The literature suggests that crowdsourcing may be an effective digital tool for social studies instruction (Berson & Berson, 2019; Kenna & Hensley, 2019). However, an analysis of crowdsourcing's efficacy for instructional delivery of civics is not found in the literature. The purpose of this study was to address this gap.

It was anticipated that a portion of those sampled would not be familiar with crowdsourcing and how it can be used in a civics classroom. The investigator created a short demonstration video that defined crowdsourcing and showed two examples of how crowdsourcing could be implemented in civics lessons to address the likely unfamiliarity. Participants in this study viewed the video then answered ten survey questions concerning the video's clarity of what crowdsourcing is and also what their perceptions were of the effectiveness of crowdsourcing as a digital instructional tool.

Conclusions

The following research questions guided this study:

Research Question 1: What is civics teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of crowdsourcing as an instructional tool in high school civics courses

Research Question 2: How can crowdsourcing be implemented into high school civics curriculum?

The study successfully answered RQ-1. The data collected from the survey instrument indicates that civics teachers overwhelmingly believe that high school students are deficient in civics knowledge, skills, and civic engagement. Teachers sampled also indicated that crowdsourcing can be an effective instructional tool for teaching civics and that civics teachers should utilize crowdsourcing as a digital instructional tool.

The two themes gleaned from the study's qualitative data were student *interaction/engagement* and generating *social & civic awareness* in students. The analysis of Likert scale data and themes determined from qualitative data collected in this study support similar analyses and themes found in the existing literature. A lack of engagement in civics as well as deficiencies in civic knowledge and skills in high school students exists (NCES, 2019; Kenna & Hensley, 2019), and crowdsourcing can be utilized by educators to increase student engagement in the curriculum (Berson & Berson, 2019; Hills, 2015);

This study was not able to effectively answer the second research question. The researcher demonstrated two examples of crowdsourcing that could be used in a high school civics classroom. These examples were considered acceptable by the participants based on their responses to survey questions. Unfortunately, there was not enough qualitative data collected to indicate in what other ways crowdsourcing could be implemented in the civics classroom. Interestingly, because the survey participants did not make suggestions for further examples of crowdsourcing, it is reasonable to conclude that either they did not wish to give examples or did not know of any existing models. The latter assertion suggests that high school civics teachers are not familiar with harnessing crowdsourcing in their classrooms.

Limitations

Sampling bias exists in this study because of the low survey response rate {20% is suggested per 1,500 participants contacted}, and that several participants did not fully complete the survey (Leedy & Ormond, 2016). A total of thirty-four (n = 34) surveys were attempted. Of these, twenty-four surveys (n = 24) were mostly completed, while only fifteen questionnaires (n = 15) were fully completed. Furthermore, the delimitation that only those teachers who were currently teaching civics or had taught civics previously could respond to the survey very likely impacted the response rate, which contributed to survey bias. However, this investigation did not have the necessary means to accurately determine how many prospective participants met these criteria. Though the researcher attempted to be purposive by sampling only civics instructional experience, this requirement most likely strongly inhibited the response rate.

A second limitation concerns the time frame in which the data was collected. The dates used by the researcher to solicit prospective participants occurred during the last few weeks of the school calendar year for four of the school districts sampled, while three of the school districts had completed their school year before the date of first contact by the researcher. This also very likely impacted the response rate.

This investigation was intentionally non-experimental in its design with the researcher's intent to discover what high school civics teachers thought about crowdsourcing for civics instruction and gain civics teachers' ideas for further implementation of crowdsourcing as a digital instructional tool.

This study was geographically localized. The goal was to sample seven urban school districts in Florida, therefore excluding rural districts. This limiting factor reduces the generalizability to rural schools and other school districts across the United States.

The crowdsourcing examples demonstrated on video by the researcher were not in a student-filled classroom. Therefore, it was impossible to observe various dynamics that could be noted, such as the teaching and learning process.

The researcher did not include teacher demographics such as gender, race, or ethnicity so that the data collected would be more generalizable.

Recommendations

This investigation was conducted in urban school districts in the state of Florida. Additional studies may wish to conduct investigations using a similar survey instrument in other urban areas around the country to see if the results are similar. The researcher believes the survey instrument used in this study's data analysis is valid. It could be used again in a future study with only minor changes needed to increase the reliability and generalizability of this study's conclusions. To do this, though, the researcher recommends that any future investigation should gain access to prospective participants in a manner that appears to be less of a solicitation and more of a targeted inquiry with relevant institutional approval. This would more than likely provide a much higher response rate and inhibit survey bias.

Though a survey yields informative data, it can also be limited as it focuses on one specific place in time. Future studies should attempt to determine the efficacy of crowdsourcing on student achievement in civics, perhaps using an experimental design methodology. Ideally, the experiment should be based on a schedule of crowdsourcing

lessons taught over a specific period with pre-and post-assessments for students sampled. This would greatly benefit the sparse literature on crowdsourcing in civics education and improve the generalizability of the results and conclusions found in this investigation.

Only a few examples of how crowdsourcing can be implemented in social studies classrooms are found in the literature (Berson & Berson, 2018; Kenn & Hensley, 2019). Because this investigation could not determine other effective examples of crowdsourcing, which was the researcher's intent, additional studies may want to use focus groups with high school civics teachers who have consistently implemented crowdsourcing lessons to determine which activities are effective for civics instruction. If future investigations partnered with a national association of social studies teachers and scholars, researchers would be able to sample a large population of urban and rural civics teachers from several states to more easily identify other effective crowdsourcing activities.

Continuing professional development for certified teachers is required in most states for licensure renewal. In Florida, 120 hours must be obtained every five years to keep one's professional license valid. Future research should also focus on creating professional development courses that provide teachers with instruction on implementing crowdsourcing activities in a civics classroom.

Alongside professional development, an open-sourced website containing a repository of crowdsourcing lessons that could be downloaded for free would assist civics teachers in greatly expanding opportunities for using crowdsourcing in their curriculum. Also, existing websites that currently offer crowdsourcing activities for students, such as

at the Library of Congress, could be investigated to determine if their activities effectively increase student achievement in civics.

Implications for Practice

It is of particular importance that high school students become better knowledgeable, skilled, and engaged in civics to improve their local communities and states, and the nation. Teachers who have previously taught high school civics most likely have experienced times in their classrooms that seemed devoid of student interest in classroom lessons. Therefore, it is paramount that civics teachers have an extensive repertoire of intriguing, creative, and provocative lessons to inhibit student apathy for the subject. The researcher believes it is the most suitable time to consider instructional alternatives for teaching civics. The state of our union and adolescents' increasing disinterest in civic processes suggests that educators need to be more creative than ever before in designing and delivering civics content that will get the learner more engaged both in and out of the classroom. The results of this investigation suggest crowdsourcing is a digital instructional tool whose application has not been thoroughly studied in a civics classroom setting. Yet, it appears to hold considerable promise for creating more meaningful learning for students.

Summary

Crowdsourcing as a digital instructional tool for delivering high school civics instruction has not been strongly investigated in the literature (Kenna & Hensley, 2019). Existing studies have offered suggestions on how to implement crowdsourcing activities in social studies classrooms (Berson & Berson, 2019). Still, there is a gap in the literature that addresses crowdsourcing's use to teach high school civics. This study's purpose was

to fill this gap. The researcher surveyed high school civics teachers to determine if crowdsourcing can be an effective instructional tool for civics and gain teachers' suggestions on how to further implement crowdsourcing for civics instruction.

The data collected by the researcher indicates that crowdsourcing can be an effective means for the instructional delivery of high school civics. However, because of delimitations that created a low survey response rate, the researcher could not more solidly support this position.

Future research should use an experimental design methodology to determine crowdsourcing's efficacy in the civics classroom.   Focus groups conducted with high school civics teachers may also yield reliable data that could be harnessed to create more meaningful learning opportunities for civics students and continue to close the civic knowledge, skills, and engagement gap. Seeking study participants through respected social studies organizations would likely provide an investigation with a substantial sample of teachers who have taught high school civics.

There is usually a good potential for any type of digital instruction in the classroom to be effective. Based on the researcher's own experience teaching civics, high school students are generally tech-savvy, and they respond well to classroom lessons that use a digital means of instruction. The digital instructional tool of crowdsourcing can be an effective tool to teach civics. It is also an ideal means by which learners can interact with primary sources, a vital experience necessary for all social studies students.

The current state of political awkwardness in the U.S. and a lack of a strong disposition by the body politic towards a more congenial and constructive political and social climate creates an ideal opportunity for civics teachers to address this challenge in

their classrooms. Using effective methods of instruction such as crowdsourcing can impact our high school learners so that when they enter the civic world, they are prepared to effect positive change that may benefit all citizens of this great nation.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Email & Procedures

Hello,

I am a high school U.S. Government teacher and doctoral candidate at Lynn University in Boca Raton, Florida. I am conducting a research study on the use of crowdsourcing as a digital instructional tool to create meaningful learning for students enrolled in high school Civics (U.S. Government/American Government) courses. The goal of this research project is to effectively impact the civics knowledge and citizen engagement deficit common in students after they graduate from high school. To participate in the study, you must currently be or have been at any time in your teaching career a high school civics (U.S. Government/American Government) teacher. Your participation in this research project includes watching a 6-minute video demonstration on how *crowdsourcing* can be applied in a civics classroom and then completing a 15-question survey. Your email address/identity remains anonymous to the survey. The total time required should be approximately 15 minutes. If you wish to proceed with the survey, please click on the web link found below my signature, which will take you to the Google Forms survey and video, then follow the directions provided on the survey form.

Thank you very much in advance for your participation.

Charles Jones

Appendix B: Informed Consent Document

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research is to investigate how crowdsourcing can be used as a digital tool for teaching civics courses. Crowdsourcing is "the practice of obtaining information input into a task...by enlisting the assistance of a number of people---"a crowd" typically online via the internet" (Saunderson, 2017). Your participation in this study will assist in learning more about how crowdsourcing civics lessons may create more meaningful civics learning for students. This is a research project being conducted by Charles Jones, a high school civics teacher and doctoral candidate in the Ross College of Education at Lynn University.

Disclaimer: If you have never taught **high school** civics (U.S. government/American government), please exit the survey now.

SPECIFIC PROCEDURES

You will be asked to complete a 15-question survey and to watch a 6-minute recorded video of the researcher demonstrating crowdsourcing as a digital instructional tool.

DURATION OF PARTICIPATION AND COMPENSATION

The total duration of your participation should be approximately 15-minutes. There will be no compensation for participation.

RISKS

This online survey is strictly voluntary, and no penalty will be imposed for non-participation. There are minimal risks in participating in the survey. However, if you feel uncomfortable or anxious at any time, you may press the "X" button in the upper right-hand corner of the survey and exit out of the survey.

BENEFITS

There are no benefits to answering the survey questions. However, by participating in this study, you may gain additional learning and instructional ideas for your own civics or American Government course. Whether you have or have not ever used crowdsourcing as a digital tool to teach civics, our opinions will have a direct impact on this important topic.

CONFIDENTIALITY

This survey is strictly anonymous, and there is no identifying information. No IP addresses will be kept or known to the researchers. Your answers to questions will be stored for two years on a password-protected computer and, after that, they will be deleted. This project's research records may be reviewed by the departments at Lynn University responsible for regulatory and research oversight.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions about the research project, you may contact

Charles Jones (email: xxxxxxx@email.lynn.edu). For any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may call Dr. Jennifer Lesh, Chair of the Lynn University Institutional Review Board for Protection of Human Subjects, at (561)237-7082 or email at xxxxx@lynn.edu

DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT
I have had an opportunity to read the consent form and understand the parameters of the study in which I am about to participate. I have had an opportunity to ask questions about the research project, and my questions have been answered. I am prepared to participate in the research study described above. By clicking "O, K," I am consenting to participate in the study. Should you wish not to participate, please click the button below titled "I Do Not Wish to Participate" or click the "X" at the top of your web browser to immediately exit the survey.

◼ Ok   ◼ I Do Not Wish To Participate

Appendix C: Survey

1. *Documentation of Informed Consent*
Disclaimer: If you have **NEVER** taught **high school** Civics (American Government/U.S. Government,) please exit the survey now by clicking the "X" at the top of your web browser to exit the survey.

I have had an opportunity to read the consent form and understand the parameters of the study in which I am about to participate. I have had an opportunity to ask questions about the research project and my questions have been answered. I am prepared to participate in the research study described above. By clicking "OK" I am consenting to participate in the study. Should you wish not to participate, please click the button below titled "I Do Not Wish to Participate" or click the "X" at the top of your web browser to immediately exit the survey.

■ OK ■ I Do Not Wish To Participate

2. Are you currently a **high school** Civics (U.S. Government/American Government) teacher?

3. How many total years have you been a school teacher in any grade from kindergarten to 12th grade?

4. How many years have you taught high school Civics (American Government/U.S. Government)? This includes present and past experience teaching the subject.

5. How often do you use technology for your Civics instruction?

1 – Never   2 – One or two times per week   3 – Three times per week   4 – Four times per week   5 – Five times per week

6. I am aware of the term "crowdsourcing" and what the term means

1 – Strongly Disagree 2 – Disagree 3 – Neither Agree nor Disagree 4 – Agree 5 – Strongly Agree

7. High school students are deficient in civic knowledge and skills needed to be engaged citizens.

1 – Strongly Disagree 2 – Disagree 3 – Neither Agree nor Disagree 4 – Agree 5 –

Strongly Agree

You will now watch a video recording of the researcher demonstrating how crowdsourcing can be used as a digital instructional tool or method for teaching Civics. Please watch the demonstration closely so that you may effectively answer the following questions upon the completion of the video.

8. A definition of *crowdsourcing* was clearly defined.

1 – Strongly Disagree 2 – Disagree 3 – Neither Agree nor Disagree 4 – Agree 5 –

Strongly Agree

9. The demonstration video clearly showed (2) examples of *crowdsourcing* and how they may be implemented in the classroom as instructional tools.

1 – Strongly Disagree 2 – Disagree 3 – Neither Agree nor Disagree 4 – Agree 5 –

Strongly Agree

10. The video addresses some of my concerns with how civics is taught.

1 – Strongly Disagree 2 – Disagree 3 – Neither Agree nor Disagree 4 – Agree 5 –

Strongly Agree

11. The video will help civics teachers to improve their instruction.

1 – Strongly Disagree 2 – Disagree 3 – Neither Agree nor Disagree 4 – Agree 5 –

Strongly Agree

12. This video showed me an effective strategy for teaching civics.

1 – Strongly Disagree 2 – Disagree 3 – Neither Agree nor Disagree 4 – Agree 5 – Strongly Agree

13. My idea of effective instructional tools for teaching civics has changed after viewing this demonstration on Crowdsourcing.

1 – Strongly Disagree 2 – Disagree 3 – Neither Agree nor Disagree 4 – Agree 5 – Strongly Agree

14. After viewing the demonstration video, do you believe that crowdsourcing is or can be an effective tool to teach high school Civics (U.S. Government/American Government) courses? Why or why not?

15. After viewing the demonstration video, do you have any suggestions or ideas on how crowdsourcing can be further implemented in high school civics classes?

Appendix D: Listserv Request Email to Florida Board of Education

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a social studies teacher in South Florida, and I am currently conducting research for my graduate studies at Lynn University. I have attached a data request for your office to review. Please feel free to contact me with any questions. I can be reached at xxxxxxx@email.lynn.edu or on my cell phone at (xxx)xxx-xxxx. Thank you for your assistance. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

Charles Jones