PRESENTING A THEORETICAL MODEL

OF FOUR CONCEPTIONS OF CIVIC EDUCATION

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Abstract

This conceptual study will question the ways different epistemological conceptions of citizenship and education influence the characteristics of civic education. While offering a new theoretical framework, the different undercurrent conceptions that lay at the base of the civic education process shall be brought forth. With the use of the method of ideal types, four utopian conceptions of civic education will be presented: *Liberal Civic Education*; *Diversity Civic Education*; *Critical Civic Education* and *Republican Civic Education*. After describing these conceptions and the theoretical field on which they stand, the potential applications of these conceptions in the classrooms and in research will be discussed.

Introduction

The last decade of the 20th century and the beginning years of the third millennium have shown a rise of the ongoing discourse regarding the meaning of the term 'citizenship'. The challenge of the fundamental position of the nation-state has turned this debate to a vital one. The collapse of the former USSR, the further establishment of the European Union, and the declaration of war on terror organizations, as opposed to sovereign states have all contributed to this ongoing debate. In respect to this reality, the question of how to educate the young citizens of the state emerges. Although the question of what kind of citizen is promoted in this educational process is as old as the term citizen itself, it is still cardinal specifically in the context of education for citizenship in a democratic state.

When engaging in the field of civic education one may be overwhelmed by the abundance of topics and issues that this field encompasses (Levstik & Tyson, 2008). Numerous studies have attempted to bring some clarity to this convoluted field, based both on its theoretical aspects (Parker, 2008) and on the evaluation of empirical case studies (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). The purpose of this conceptual study is to advance the discourse even further, by offering a new theoretical framework that concentrates on the different undercurrent conceptions that lay at the base of the civic education process. With the use of the methods of ideal types, four utopian conceptions of civic education will be brought forth, demonstrating the plurality of this field. After describing these conceptions and the theoretical field on which they are based, the potential applications of these conceptions in the classrooms and in research will be presented.

In general, civic education may be seen as an answer to the question of how to educate the young citizens of the state. This question mainly examines what types of citizens the state wants to cultivate, and how to implement that concept within an educational framework (Parker, 2008). National and cross-national studies have concentrated mainly on the tasks of stimulating civic engagement amongst the youth by the means of instilling democratic knowledge, values and beliefs (Hahn & Alviar-Martin, 2008; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Nevertheless, although all agree about the importance of this topic, in fact this field encompasses various ideological conceptions regarding citizenship in the democratic state, conceptions that produce significantly differing educational plans.

This state of affairs may be seen as what John Dewey (1927) described as "the great bad," referring to "the mixing of things which need to be kept distinct" (p. 83). In the contemporary discourse regarding civic education this "great bad" occurs when different fundamental conceptions of citizenship are translated into educational practices that are

incompatible with one another at best and contradictory at worst. Based on the notion of instructional program coherence (Newmann, Smith, Allensworth, & Bryk, 2001), which stresses the importance of holding a solid and coherent educational plan, not holding a coherent conception of citizenship while engaging in the civic education process may be a true quandary.

In an attempt to bring clarity to this field, this conceptual study will question the way different epistemological conceptions of citizenship and education influence the characteristics of civic education. Its main question may be framed as what different conceptions of citizenship and civic education influence the contemporary discourse of this field? In order to answer this question, a new typology of the term civic education will be presented, encompassing four conceptions: *Liberal Civic Education*; *Diversity Civic Education*; *Critical Civic Education* and *Republican Civic Education*.

The Methodology of Ideal Types

The purpose of this study is to present an overview of the different conceptions of civic education based on the ongoing discourse of the field. The main goal may be seen as an attempt to bring much needed clarity to this field, through the use of a theoretical framework that will be composed of different conceptions of the term civic education. For this purpose the traditional social science method of ideal types has been adopted.

The term ideal type has been brought forth by the founder of the field of social sciences, the German sociologist Max Weber (1949). Weber's main assumption was that researchers' knowledge is constantly influenced by the particular point of view from which she/he evaluates reality. Weber challenged the notion that a researcher can bring forth the "facts themselves" without being influenced by his own personal characteristics, and related to this notion as naïve

(p. 82). He explains that the researcher's personal beliefs and the values she/he adopts influence what is seen as valuable, important and significant regarding the phenomenon being evaluated. Weber explains that any attempt to analyze a social reality without relating to the researchers on personal beliefs "is absolutely meaningless" (p. 82).

This inherent personal bias led Weber (1949) to set the question what is significant about theories and theoretical conceptualization in the field of social sciences. As an answer to this question he offers the use of "ideal types" which are defined by him as "a mental construct for the scrutiny and systematic characterization of individual concrete patterns which are significant in their uniqueness" (p. 100). In other words, Weber proposes the use of a utopian display of a phenomenon that has been created by what he refers to as an "analytical accentuation of certain elements of reality" (p. 90).

According to Weber (1949), the use of ideal types shifts the concentration of the research from the phenomenon itself, to the evaluation of the relationship between the phenomenon and the ideal type to which it relates. Thus, the use of ideal types should not be seen as a method of describing reality, but rather as analytical tool utilized in order to enable the researcher to form a hypothesis regarding reality. Weber stresses the understanding that these ideal types are generic concepts rather than a reflection of reality.

In order to compose an ideal type, Weber (1949) explains that an individual phenomenon should be evaluated from numerous points of view. In this manner, a synthesis of the different components of this phenomenon is created, thus forming a "unified analytical construct" (*Gedankenbild*) (p. 90). Weber clarifies that with this use of numerous points of view, the final ideal type is in fact a utopian portrayal of the phenomenon that "cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality" (p. 90).

Regarding the use of ideal types while conducting research in the field of education, Brian Holmes (1981) recommends the use of ideal types in order to understand the normative statements regarding education that people "debate, accept or reject" (p. 112). In this manner ideal types may be used as a means of obtaining a better understanding of the proposed norms underlying contemporary debates in the field of education. Holmes explains that ideal types provide "conceptual clarity and simplicity" (p. 113) of a complex reality. This insight relates to Weber's main point, seeing ideal types as a way of understanding the manifestation of ideas, rather than attempting to portray reality itself.

On the practical level, Holmes (1981) explains the process of composing ideal types when dealing with educational issues. He stresses the importance of relating to educational, political, religious and economic factors that are debated in society. He elaborates on three fields that must be included when producing an ideal type: (1) the nature of man (2) the nature of society and (3) the nature of knowledge. He explains that each one of these fields must be confronted from the educational point of view. For example, the nature of man may relate to questions regarding equality and the tracking system, dividing students based on their personality. The nature of society may deal with questions regarding what types of schools exist in a given society and what different opportunities exist for the children in that society. Questions regarding curriculum, pedagogy and methods of assessment are all driven from the basic conceptions of the nature of knowledge.

Hayhoe (2007) adds to these three fields an additional avenue in the form of the normative values that each ideal type contains. Hayhoe presents a critical point of view at scholars such as Holmes, due to the neutral-scientific manner in which they display the concept of ideal types. She claims that in fact, each ideal type holds a value based normative assumption

that must not be overlooked. Therefore she calls to use ideal types not just as a "scientific" analytical tool, but rather as a means of promoting normative values to be implemented in the future.

Banks (1998) is a prominent scholar that put this method of ideal types to use, specifically in the field of multicultural education. He explains that because these ideal types approximate rather than represent an exact reality, they should be utilized in order to facilitate descriptions, comparisons, and hypothesis testing. He further explains that in this manner a complex reality may be better described and understood (Banks, 1993). He stresses the point that in reality these types are not mutually exclusive but rather interrelated and overlapping. Therefore, he explains, in some cases in order to describe reality the use of several ideal types is needed.

The field of civic education has been researched with the use of the method of ideal types in at least two previous examples. These two studies share the same flaw of the inductive method, relying on a given reality in order to compose different ideal types. As will be explained, this method in fact contradicts Weber's initial intentions regarding the use of ideal types.

Sears and Hughs (1996) researched the existing conceptions of civic education in Canada, utilizing the method of ideal types in a social studies research. The framework for these ideal types was the political conceptions of the term citizenship. In order to compose the different ideal types that represented these different conceptions, they evaluated numerous official documents regarding civic education from throughout the country, representing all of Canada's provinces. Based on the evaluation of these documents, the researchers derived the existing conceptions of civic education and presented them as ideal types. These types include:

(1) a state based conception, which concentrates on issues of national importance, such as the state's institutions and its common values and norms; (2) a liberal conception, which emphasizes the personal skills such as the ability to scrutinize public issues and the articulation of personal value positions; (3) the cosmopolitan conception that stresses the need to understand world issues such as the topic of environmental responsibility; and (4) a social justice conception that is centered on the issues of equality, oppression and discrimination.

In the same manner, Westheimer and Kahne (2004) surveyed the different undercurrent beliefs of good citizenship in educational programs aimed at promoting democracy in the USA. In their research, they pinpointed three concepts of good citizenship that may be seen as the base for the ideal types of civic education: (1) the personal responsibility conception, which sees its goal as developing each citizen's own individualistic character; (2) the participation conception that promotes citizenship that is of an active leadership role; and (3) the justice driven conception that calls for citizens to assess critically the structures of injustice in society.

In these two cases the researchers implemented the idea of composing ideal types based on specific points of view, while questioning the different educational aspects of each type. Nevertheless, the main flaw of these two studies is the lack of a strong theoretical ground on which the ideal types presented are based. Ideal types that represent the specific reality of the cases studied by the researches alone may be seen as less satisfactory. When creating ideal types the researcher should aspire to correlate the types with the theoretical-philosophical debate, which will enable a future evaluation of multiple case studies. In other words, it may be claimed that ideal types that were derived from the inductive methodology leave place to question the process of generalization that is based on these cases alone. In fact, this methodology contradicts Weber's original suggestion to compose ideal types that are based on numerous case studies in

order to create a true ideal representation of the phenomenon. It may be claimed that this utopian representation can never be reached due to the problem of the researcher's personal bias mentioned above. Nevertheless, this does not dismiss the researcher's responsibility to aspire to reach the most utopian representation based on the theoretical aspect of the field of study.

The choice of Sears and Hughes and of Westheimer and Kahne to base their ideal types on the inductive methodology resulted in a creation of types that were created based on a reality at a given place and time. In other words, these ideal types represent the specific reality of the cases studied by the researcher, be it the official documents in Canada or the educational programs in the USA.

In sum, the main justification of utilizing a deductive method of ideal types is the fact stated above that the field of civic education suffers from an "embarrassment of riches" that includes numerous scholarly writings. This reality makes it difficult for one to emerge into this important field. Furthermore, this abundance makes it difficult to grasp the different undercurrent civic aspects that are manifested into the different writings. With the use of this method of ideal types the main philosophical foundations that are present in the current discourse will be brought forth.

The Theoretical Field

In order to compose these following conceptions of civic education, numerous assumptions, insights and thoughts have been derived from both the field of education and the field of political science. Therefore, these conceptions may be perceived as ideal types, offering an attempt to lay out a typology regarding the educational process of civic education. A general theoretical framework will be presented in order to express the place of these conceptions in the larger

educational context. Afterwards, a detailed description of the conceptions will be brought forth, followed by a constructed comparison between them.

The four offered conceptions of civic education are rooted in the notion that education may be seen as an aspiration to influence the ways in which the individual behaves in society (J. Dewey, 1906 / 1990). In addition, these conceptions are based on the widespread agreement that civic education is in fact composed of three main factors: (1) knowledge; (2) attitudes; and (3) skills (CIRCLE, 2003; Parker, 2008) (see figure 1).

Figure 1 – The Educational Process

The Transmission on of Knowledge
+
The Instilling of Values
↓
The Development of Behavior
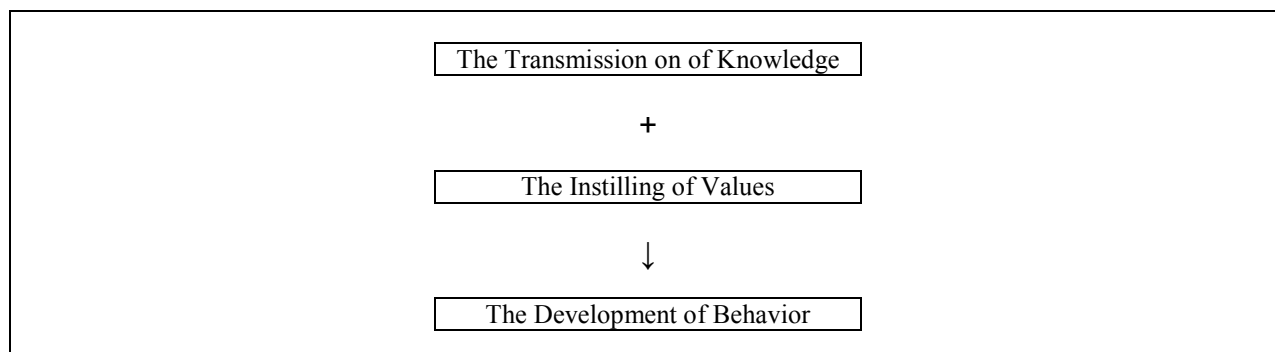
The concentration on the subject of civic education will bring forth the ongoing debate regarding the normative expected behavior of the citizen in the state. It is assumed that this behavior is an outcome of both the knowledge that has been transmitted and the values that have been instilled. These three components of the educational process – political knowledge, normative values and expected behaviors – will stand at the base of the following theoretical matrix from which the four conceptions of civic education will be drawn.

The four suggested conceptions may be set on a theoretical field between the interactions of two axes: 1) political knowledge and 2) normative values. As stated, this is based on the

assumption that the civic educational process is mainly composed of the transmission on of knowledge and the instilling of values that together promote an expected civic behavior.

The vertical axis (y) of political knowledge relates to what has been phrased as "civic literacy" (Milner, 2002) meaning the process in which specific knowledge is transmitted to the student. Political knowledge may be comprised of facts about the state, facts about the country's citizens and its political institutions. The main purpose of this notion is to create a common base of knowledge to be shared by members of society. This knowledge is seen as essential in order to take part in the in the social sphere and participate in political processes that takes place in the state (Lam, 2000). It is important to point out that whereas this notion may be interpreted as indoctrination, the main concern is with passing on information regarding everyday life in society rather than a grand ideology. As Milner (2002) explains, this notion of civic education emphasizes "…the knowledge and ability of citizens to make sense of their political world" (p. 1).

A good example of this notion is the demand that students know meanings of several terms which are seen as cardinal to the social sphere. Bernard Crick (2000) offers a list of terms seen by him as the keystones of life in the British public sphere, including the terms: "Power, Force, Authority, Order, Law, Justice, Representation, Pressure, Natural Rights, Individuality, Freedom and Welfare" (p. 95). It is interesting to point out at this notion does not include value based assumptions but rather sees the role of civic education as setting the base in order to enable students to choose and develop their own personal decisions (Milner, 2002).[1] In this manner, Crick does not reference the ongoing debate regarding the term "welfare" but rather sees it as a

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[1] Of course this statement itself may be seen as based on a specific value setting. It is important to remember that this description is part of the larger theoretical model.

fragment of knowledge that should be taught rather than a term that is connected to specific values.

The continuum of this vertical axis of political knowledge is based on the dichotomy between two types of knowledge regarding life in society – procedural knowledge and substantive knowledge (Bell & Staeheli, 2001; Gutmann & Thompson, 2004). The procedural far end represents knowledge regarding the institutions, rules, and practices of governance, such as the understanding of the voting system or the methods with which minority voices are represented in government (Dahl, 1998; Schumpeter, 1947). The other end represents knowledge regarding what is seen as the substantive fundamental principles on which the state exist, such as the social-economic structure of society or information regarding the cultural foundations of the state (Marshal, 1950; Tamir, 1993).

The horizontal axis (x) of the theoretical field is that of normative values. This notion is based on the assumption that for the sake of the existence of society citizens must possess certain values, aptitudes and dispositions. For example, White (1996) explains that in order for a democratic society to exist, its members must hold a democratic nature, therefore she stresses the need for instilling the basic universal values that are perceived as essential to the existence of this democratic society. In the same manner, Avnon (2005) argues that the values that should stand at the center of this educational process are those values that express the complexity of the encounters between the different individuals in the social framework such as equality, freedom and justice.

Michael Bottery (2000) explains that such values may relate to four different surroundings: (1) values that relate to the self; (2) values that relate to the encounter with the others; (3) values that relate to society as a whole; and (4) values that relate to the environment.

He continues to explain that in order to instill these values one must examine the different levels in which they exist, such as asking what are the dominant values in society, what are the values that guide the school system, and what values are present in lessons taught across the curriculum?

The continuum of this horizontal axis of normative values is based on the dichotomy between two valued based perceptions of society – an individualistic perception and a communal one (Habermas, 1994). On the individualistic side of this debate one may find the liberal point of view that emphasizes the place of the individual in the social setting and promotes values such as productiveness or critical thinking (Rawls, 1971). The communal end represents the republican point of view which stresses the communal meanings of citizenship in society and the affiliation of the individual to a larger social group such as a community or the state. Thus, values such as tolerance to different cultures or national solidarity will be endorsed (Sandel, 1984).

The interaction between these two axes creates the theoretical plane on which the four conceptions of civic education emerge. It is suggested that these conceptions are determined by the combination of what type of knowledge and which perception of values are emphasized in the educational process, influencing the civic behavioral outcome (see figure 2).

The choice of knowledge and values place the expected civic behavior at a point on the theoretical matrix. For example, if the desired civic behavior is of a liberal character the knowledge that will be passed on will include the procedural ways in which the individual can act in the social sphere and in the same manner, the values to be instilled will stress the importance of the acts of the individual. On the other hand, if the desired outcome is of a republican nature, the knowledge to be passed on will reference content regarding the

philosophical foundations of the larger national entity and communal values such as solidarity will be stressed.

Figure 2: Four Conceptions of Civic Education on Two Axes
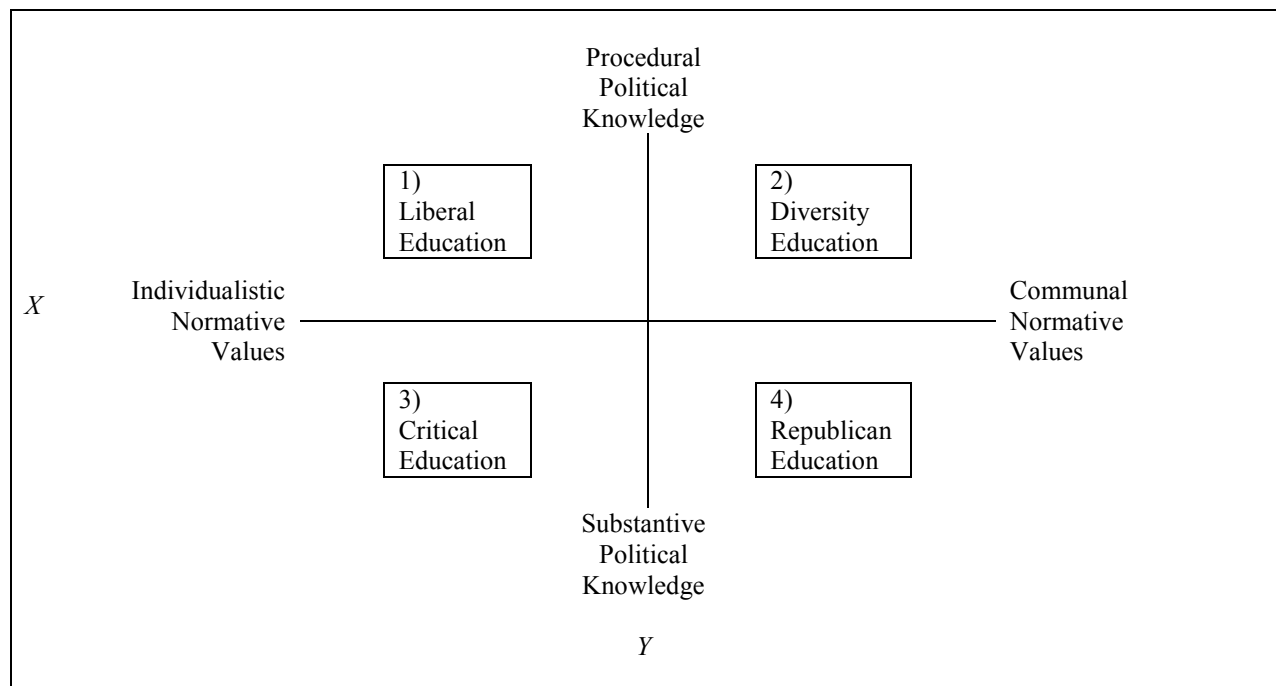
Four Conceptions of Civic Education

The four conceptions of civic education that emerge from this theoretical field may be seen as an ideal type due to the fact that *de facto* not one of them exists is its full form in reality. This model, therefore, may be seen as an analytical heuristic device in order to assist teachers, practitioners, scholars and researchers in understanding the complex process of civic education. To follow is a detailed illustration of each one of these conceptions and the main critiques that are made against them. First a description of each conception's main educational goal will be stated.

1. Liberal Civic Education – the student will develop the individualistic skills needed in order to take part in the political process

2. Diversity Civic Education – the student will understand the ways in which the different social groups that compose society may receive recognition and take part in the national field

3. Critical Civic Education – the student will develop individual analytical skills needed in order to better understand the unjust reality of society

4. Republican Civic Education – the student will posses a feeling of belonging and solidarity to the national entity

Liberal Civic Education - The assumption of this conception of civic education is that society is composed of individuals, and thus civic education should cultivate the role that the individual takes in the public sphere (Nie, Junn, & Stehlik-Barry, 1996). In order to develop this role, supporters of this concept ask two main questions: (1) does the individual hold the required knowledge regarding her/his function in society and (2) is the individual competent to act in this public sphere. It is important to point out that based on this concept's assumption the individual is seen as an autonomies being, aimed at achieving her/his own personal goals. Therefore, the ability of the individual to be active in the public sphere is seen as essential in order to reach these personal goals.

In this sense, this conception of civic education emphasizes the required intellectual and practical tools necessary for life in a democratic state, and thus, the concentration is put forward on procedural knowledge and individualistic values such as personal behavior, independence and responsibility. Such behaviors may include acquaintance with the different opportunities for political involvement such as voting, connecting to representatives and understanding the main issues being debated. As stated, all these factors are aimed at enhancing the individual's personal situation.

Two aspects of this conception of civic education are mainly criticized. First, some scholars argue that the emphasis on procedural knowledge alone is not satisfactory in the complex reality of the 21ˢᵗ century. For example, Barber (2004) stresses the importance of cultivating active participatory citizens that hold various civic responsibilities that are rooted in a strong value basis that acknowledges this need to be active citizens. Therefore, he will claim that the teaching of the procedural aspect of citizenship alone is simply not satisfactory. In addition, scholars such as Kymlicka and Norman (1994) argue that any debate regarding citizenship must relate to the social and cultural plurality of citizenship that characterizes our times. The emphasis on the procedural aspect of citizenship fails to relate to this plurality and thus makes *Liberal Civic Education* irrelevant.

Diversity Civic Education - The main assumption that stands at the base of this conception of civic education is the salience of the social constructs on the citizen's life. Therefore, the main goal may be seen as the need to raise awareness regarding the social reality and in particular to the oppression of different social groups by the stronger forces of society (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007).

This conception of civic education will concentrate on the ability of the individual to evaluate the social framework in which the individual exist. In this manner this conception is different than *Liberal Civic Education* due to the shift of the emphasis from the factor of individual human agency to the scrutiny of the social surroundings. The purpose of this shift is to reevaluate the ability of different social groups to overcome different circumstances, and to supply a greater understanding of the social forces that are put to work in order to maintain the given reality. Thus, the emphasis in the classroom is on the development of a thoughtful, active, and effective citizenry that relates to this social reality (Marri, 2005), which therefore too may be seen mainly as procedural knowledge as well.

The main critique regarding this conception of civic education is the risk that the students will give priority to their group identity and not to the larger national one. In cases when the social group and the larger national entity share common values this situation is bearable and appropriate. However, this situation may become problematic when the group's ideology contradicts the ideology of the state, what may lead to a true conflict, mainly regarding questions of sovereignty and the legitimacy of the decision making procedures in the state (Schlesinger, 1992; Tamir, 2006). Okin (1998) presents one example of such a situation in which liberal democratic states enable the ongoing oppression of women due to the tolerance toward cultural groups that oppress women's rights as part of their culture. An additional example is the religious ultra orthodox communities in Israel that do not accept the basic foundations of this democratic state and thus do not educate toward any aspect of democratic citizenship whatsoever (Tamir, 2006).

Critical Civic Education - This conception of civic education is rooted in the assumption that the world may be portrayed as a battle ground between social forces, where the dominant hegemonic

powers work in both exposed and hidden ways in order to oppress the weaker players. Thus, the supporters of this point of view critique the idea of generalization and objective knowledge, and call to emphasize the historical and social context of knowledge and of social issues (Kincheloe, 2007), which thus may be seen as substantive knowledge.

The role of education is seen as a means of promoting social justice and democracy by empowering the students and cultivating their intellect. For example, based on this conception the standard curriculum is seen as a part of the power structure, and thus must be constantly scrutinized. Whereas the conception of *Diversity Civic Education* emphasized the awareness to the communal forces that compose society, this approach stresses the importance of developing personal individualistic skills, such as critical thinking, in order to better understand and react to the unjust reality of society (Apple, 1993).

One critique of this conception of civic education is that its utopian aspiration to reform society is simply unpractical. A good example is Ellsworth (1994) description of her ongoing frustration while attempting to implement this conception in her teacher preperation course. She explains that the teacher's and student's abilities to relate to this critical aspect are limited. Thus, she drew the conclusion that the critical aspect is in fact an artificial cover that, at the end of the day, reinforces the authoritarian nature of student/teacher relationship. In addition, scholars such as Ravitch (1988), who stress the importance of teaching the common values to be shared by all, may see the emphasis on the individual as a negative force that will potentially lead to the fragmentation of society.

Republican Civic Education - At the basis of this conception of civic education stands the fundamental question why are individuals willing to give up some elements of their personal freedom as part of their life in a larger community? An answer to this question is presented by

Taylor (1996) who explains that the feeling of belonging to a larger social entity is a natural human will. Rousseau's (1762 / 1947) suggested term "the general will," also relates to this question, explaining the natural perception of goods shared by all human beings who live in a society. Thus, through the general will, it is possible to create a feeling of genuine belonging and unconditional devotion of the individual to the larger social entity.

This conception of civic education will emphasize the ways in which to arouse feelings of membership and affiliation to the larger community, thus relating to the substantive elements of society (Ravitch, 1988). In addition, this conception will stress the commitment of each individual to societies' shared goals (Ben Porath, 2007).

Critics of this conception of civic education are wary of the emphasis on the larger national entity, an emphasis that may lead to the oppression of the individual and of certain social groups (Kahne & Middaugh, 2006). In addition, critics call attention to the fact that in many cases the affiliation to a larger social group is fulfilled in the realm of the family, work and religion and therefore there is no need for promoting the feeling of belonging to the larger national entity (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994). Another aspect of critique is those who claim that the true need of the educational system is to promote a global affiliation to be shared by all humanity rather than a national one (Nussbaum, 2002).

So far, the four conceptions of civic education have been presented. We can further understand these four conceptions by comparing each one's undercurrent assumptions (see appendix 1). For instance, the assumptions of both *Liberal Civic Education* and *Diversity Civic Education* relate to political knowledge as the main means in which to take part in the public sphere. On the other hand, *Critical Civic Education* and *Republican Civic Education* define knowledge as the understanding of the deeper principles that are set at the base of society and of

the state. Regarding the social attitudes being instilled, both *Liberal Civic Education* and *Critical Civic Education* see society as a mere gathering of individuals. On the other hand, *Diversity Civic Education* and *Republican Civic Education* see man as a social creature that can fulfill her/himself only when taking part of a larger social entity, and thus society is defined based on the *a priori* connections between the individuals that compose it, either at the community or the state levels.

In addition, the role of education and the specific goals of civic education are seen by the different conceptions in a diverse manner as well. *Liberal Civic Education* and *Diversity Civic Education* put emphasis on the process of the **transmission** of knowledge as opposed to *Critical Civic Education* and *Republican Civic Education* that emphasize the **instilling** of values and principles. Whereas it is enough in the framework of *Liberal Civic Education* and *Critical Civic Education* to **develop** individual skills, *Diversity Civic Education* and *Republican Civic Education* strive to **promote** a feeling of possession. The distinct differences between the verbs "transmit," "instill," "develop," and "promote" contributes to our understanding of the complexity of this topic.

From Theory to Practice: Utilizing the Four Conceptions of Civic Education

Weber (1949) explains that with the ideal type in hand the next step of research is the comparison of the actual phenomenon to this ideal. This comparison may generate insights regarding the manner in which the phenomenon in fact approximates or rather exceeds the utopian ideal. With this analytical tool, a researcher may better understand the social circumstances of reality at a given place and time. Furthermore, numerous case studies may be compared, thus revealing long term processes as well. In addition, Weber suggests composing

numerous ideal types regarding a wider question, thus supplying the platform of an evaluation of the relationship between these different ideal types, creating an even deeper understanding of a complex reality.

In this manner, the four conceptions of civic education are significant as an analytical tool in the sense that they may be utilized in order to conduct meaningful research. One may utilize these four conceptions in order to gain a better understanding of the characteristics of civic education at a given place and time. This comparison to the four conceptions may reveal that one conception is emphasized more than the others, thus determining the character of civic education at that given case. On the other hand, based on the notion of instructional program coherence (Newmann, et al., 2001) that stresses the importance of holding a solid and coherent educational plan, one may find that different components of several conceptions exist parallel to one another, a reality that may outcome in a mutual contradiction. For example, a hybrid of both the *Liberal Civic Education* and the *Republican Civic Education* conceptions may result in students and teachers who do not understand what actual civic behavior is expected from them.

In addition, these conceptions may be utilized in historical studies in order to understand the development of civic education at a given setting throughout the years. One may find for example that the character of civic education shifted and thus, the historical roots of the subject are no longer of use to the contemporary reality. A comparison between different national and cross-national settings may be carried out as well. In this manner the influence of different factors may be evaluated. For example, an international study may reveal to the understanding of what cultural aspects lead to the adoption of one conception of civic education over the other.

In order to further demonstrate the significance of this theoretical model, several existing empirical studies will be evaluated based on the four conceptions of civic education. Parker

(2002) explains that democracy is a social construct that must be fostered and therefore asks how the educational institutions can promote it. He offers several answers to this question, representing in fact different the conceptions of civic education. He reports on the importance of engaging students in active deliberation in the classrooms in order to develop their personal skills. This represents the conception of *Liberal Civic Education* because of the strong emphasis on the individualistic skills. Subsequently, Parker stresses the need to create interactions between the students and social forces external to the class room in order to develop their feeling of affiliation to a larger social entity. This is an example of the *Diversity Civic Education* conception due to the emphasis on the communal feeling it promotes.

In the same manner, Hess' (2009) studies regarding the implementation of discussions of controversial issues in the classrooms reveal several of the conceptions of civic education. Hess explains that students rarely participate in classroom discussion despite the fact that discussion is seen as a fundamental aspect of democracy. Thus she asks how students could be educated to effectively participate in such discussions. She offers the use of controversial public issues as the main tool in order to develop the students' discussion skills as one of the main aspects of democratic citizenship. In addition she stresses the need to develop the students' critical thinking skills as part of their democratic education. This may be seen as a combination between the *Liberal Civic Education* and the *Critical Civic Education* conceptions, due to the emphasis on developing both personal skills as well critical thinking.

The *Republican Civic Education* conception is apparent in Kahne and Middaugh's (2006) study of students' opinions regarding patriotism and democracy. Based on their findings they claim that schools should promote a democratic version of patriotism that encompasses the common acceptance of the democratic ideals while enabling a free and ongoing discussion

regarding the citizen's opinions about public issues. In this manner the affiliation of the students to a larger national entity is emphasized.

Conclusion

In sum, a true discrepancy exists between the abundance of writings regarding the field of civic education and the actual implementation of such plans in the classrooms and beyond. One explanation to this phenomenon may be the fundamental fact that the engagement in the field of civic education encompasses issues of critical inquiry regarding the country's characteristics and policies, issues that many teachers prefer to disregard (Westheimer, 2004).

In addition, although one may claim that this abundance of topics may be seen in a positive light, this reality may lead to a situation in which the teachers are overwhelmed by the multitude of choices, leaving them with no option rather than not to relate to any civic aspect of this topic. As the Hebrew Talmudic idiom "If you have seized a lot, you have not seized", in this situation the teachers and students are in fact supplied with more items than they can actually grasp, which leads them to abandon any civic aspect what-so-ever.

Therefore, the purpose of this conceptual study was to bring some clarity to this convoluted field, in order to place the grounds for future research. I am hopeful that the use of ideal types, and the construction of these four conceptions of civic education, will enhance the educational process of the world's future generation of democratic citizens.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1: Conceptions of Civic Education – A Comparison

	Liberal Civic Education	Diversity Civic Education	Critical Civic Education	Republican Civic Education
Nature of Man	Individual	Affiliated to a social group	Individual that is juxtaposed to other individuals and groups	Affiliated to the nation/state
Nature of Society	A gathering of individuals	A gathering of social groups	A reality in which power structures maintain oppression	The nation as a whole that is worth more than the sum of its parts
Perception of Knowledge	Emphasizes knowledge that is aimed at helping the individual act in the public sphere	Emphasizes knowledge that is aimed at helping the social groups act in the public sphere	A tool in the hands of the oppressors that can be utilized in order to question reality	Emphasizes knowledge regarding the larger social entity
Perception of Values	Emphasizes the individualistic values	Emphasizes values which connect the individual to the social group	Can be manipulated in order to maintain social reality	Emphasizes values which connect the individual to the larger social entity
Role of Education	Develop individual skills	Develop skills in order to enhance the reality of the social group and its place in society	Develop critical abilities	Promote a feeling of belonging to the larger social entity
Behavioral Goals of Civic Education	The student will develop the skills essential for acting as a participating citizen	The student will understand the ways in which the different social groups that compose society may receive recognition and take part in national field	The student will develop individual analytical skills needed in order to better understand the unjust reality of society	The student should possess an authentic feeling of belonging to the state