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**IS AUTHENTIC ENOUGH? AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT AND CIVIC
ENGAGEMENT**

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Abstract

This qualitative teacher action research study examined the observed and reported experiences of both students and teacher on civic engagement when authentic instruction was implemented within a 12th grade college preparatory American Government and Economics class in a large urban high school in eastern Pennsylvania.

Methods of gathering data included surveys, participant observations, informal interviews, student work, and detailed field notes. Methods of analysis included reflective memos, coding of observational logs and student work, and construction of theme statements. The participants engaged in various authentic assessments, including simulations, opportunities for debate and discussion, and research of and writing about belief structures relevant to individuals. The study suggests that the use of authentic assessments allows students to become more motivated to develop civic self-identity and become civically engaged. Civically engaged students demonstrate key content knowledge, discuss their knowledge with others both in and out of class, debate civilly, employ critical thinking, and understand complex issues from multiple perspectives. Developing civic engagement also poses numerous challenges to the classroom teacher.

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Researcher Stance

Very few things in life are as enjoyable to me as the sound of the ocean waves, the smell of salt water, and the feeling of sand on my feet. The beach has always had a deep, practically cathartic, hold on me. I was in the latter stages of my fourth and final, consecutive summer working in Ocean City, Maryland on the morning of September 11, 2001. I had slept late knowing that I did not have to work that morning. My most pressing concern was that I had to move quickly in order to get to my haircut appointment on time. As I dressed to the news of the terrorist attacks on the radio, I knew that the world had irrevocably changed. I also knew that the context for my purpose as an aspiring teacher had been altered and that at some point, possibly during a job interview, I would have a chance to explain my passion for teaching.

I had recently applied to go back to college to earn my post-baccalaureate certification in social studies grades 7-12. I was attempting to join the teaching profession four years after I had earned my bachelor's degree in History. I have always loved the social sciences and knew that I would work in a career that engaged that passion. When I decided to become a teacher I did so with the thought that I could change society, but in light of the terrible events of 9/11, my thinking changed, and I knew that the need for passionate teachers dedicated to open democratic principles and civic engagement was going to be greater than ever. Passion alone simply wouldn't be enough. While I recognize that many, if not most teachers will attest to some form of this kind of idealism, I truly believed

that I could make it happen. I did not know at the time that my motivations and beliefs were rooted in social reconstruction, but, in retrospect, reconstructing society had been a goal even in my formative years as a teacher. To accomplish that task, I knew that I wanted my students to be able to deal with the difficult challenges of our time and evaluate the role they could play in shaping our society and our democracy. Further, I immediately knew that the new challenge posed by terrorism was going to be both generational as well as reflective upon our current balance of freedom and order.

My personal challenge was to be unlike most of the challenges faced by the social studies teachers from whom I had learned as a student. I knew that the clear disconnect I felt between what went on in the classroom and the passion I had outside of it needed to be identified and bridged. My experience as a student had been rooted in direct instruction with little or no room for evaluation, discussion, participation, and reflecting on challenging real-world issues. It was recall level stuff to say the least, and while such trivia may make excellent jeopardy contestants, it develops less critically involved citizens. I knew that if I had tuned out my educational experience as a secondary school student, then those with much less enthusiasm would likely not entertain the idea that social studies and by extension society could be different. I felt concerned that what I had experienced in school was indeed the norm. If that was the case, then I would need to teach differently.

The path toward implementing my societal reconstruction was not without its bumps. In fact, during my second job interview, one of the first questions I was asked is why social studies is important. I must have grinned from ear to ear. How do you tell a handful of administrators that your goal is to change the world? How do you explain to them that being an alumnus of their institution is not simply about wearing the school colors, but rather a summation of the influence the school's knowledge and values have imparted without sounding condescending or too philosophical? I took a shot at the best explanation I could muster, trying to avoid those pitfalls. I explained that the lens through which I perceive the world was rooted in this question, which had become of paramount importance to me from the moment I realized what had happened in New York, Washington D. C, and Pennsylvania on that fateful day. I also admonished the testing requirements of No Child Left Behind and launched into my recitation of how the social sciences provide the context to life's challenges, beliefs, and actions. I couldn't help but note that no math equation could deduce why 19 men would commit suicide by flying planes into various US landmarks, bringing about a global conflict that challenged societies' international and domestic policies, religious interpretations and beliefs, the efficacy of economic systems, and the necessity of international organizations. I avowed that I would make it my mission to develop critical citizens who took their job as a democratic participant seriously and not as simply a slogan or empty promise meant to fill a district action plan on character development lessons. I told them that I would teach in a

manner that would engage students in dialogue and action that befitted the wonderful responsibility of a citizen living in a democratic society. One principal told me that my answer demonstrated “erudition.” My answer provoked looks of learned nervousness, and I didn’t get the job. Maybe it was my personal insult on tests measuring simple literacy and numeracy. Maybe there were more qualified candidates. I don’t know and never will. Eventually, though, I did earn a classroom of my own, and since that moment, I have made it my personal mission to alter the way the social studies, and in particular American Government and Economics are taught. My goal is to measure my success by how likely my students are to engage in the challenges of our time through knowledgeable discussion, critical reflection, and participatory democracy. I must help develop the too often hidden citizen that lies dormant inside too many of our public school students. Anything less than that would be a failure of scale, similar to simple alumni color schemes.

After my initial interview experience one would think that developing a research question would be a simple enough activity. Considering that as a teacher, much of my job is to ask questions, I should have developed this question with less trepidation. Questioning is a simple enough task; after all, I do it a hundred times or more every day. Yet, as I have progressed through Moravian’s Master of Education program, the “question” has loomed ominously in my head as a harbinger of actualizing my purpose for teaching. Improving society, answering fundamental questions, and learning to learn are my core beliefs as a

teacher. My question had to effectively deal with each of those beliefs, while maintaining a focus on increasing civic engagement. I tossed around a preliminary research question that attempted to tie formative assessment to political efficacy, but I simply could not make the question answerable or trustworthy. I had to rethink my beliefs. Upon reflection, the answer was as clear as any that I had ever come up with. I needed to find out whether any or all of the authentic assessment devices that I currently used in my classroom had any impact on my students' civic engagement. It was obvious. After six years of teaching I needed to research the spirit of the question posed to me in my failed interview: why is social studies important?

Literature Review

Introduction

Aristotle once said, “If liberty and equality, as is thought by some, are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be best attained when all persons alike share in government to the utmost.” When Aristotle spoke these words ancient Athens did not have a democracy in the form that we would imagine today. It was a discriminatory system that excluded “Athenian women, slaves, children, and metics” (Tozer S. E., Senese, G., & Violas, P. C., p. 13, 2009) from participating in the political and civic life of Athenian Greeks. While these words were spoken approximately 2,300 years ago, their wisdom and societal analysis are cogent today. They call into question the collective purpose and ideals of democracy, while alluding to the challenge of realizing them.

Challenges

After 2,300 years how have democracies attempted to attain this Aristotelian democratic ideal? One approach is through compulsory public education and schooling (Kahne & Sporte 2008; Meir, 2003). Dewey (1938) would add the argument that the purpose of education on its own, is not to serve a future end, but rather a present one (p. 49). He further argues that it is only through experience and its full realization that anyone can have long-run fulfillment (p. 49). Tozer (2009) suggests that “teachers typically accept the notion that a major goal of teaching is to prepare citizens for life in a democratic society, and most teachers believe that their teaching contributes to achieving this

goal” (p. 5). If this statement is true, are our students civically engaged enough to live a life of rich civic participation? Damon (2006) suggests that if one were to ask students what they thought democracy might mean, three common responses emerge. Students might say that democracy is where everyone is equal in outcome, where everyone has an equal say, and that people may do whatever they want as long as others are not hurt (p. 7). Damon anguishes over the obvious fact that each of these possible student answers is not only incorrect but also suggests a gross misunderstanding of the purpose of democracy and its ideals.

Damon’s normative argument might be easily dismissed if it weren’t for the vast amount of empirical data sustaining his concerns. The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) conducted the largest international civic education study to date (Torney-Purta and Barber, 2004). The survey sampled 90,000 14-year old students in 28 democratic countries. Torney-Purta and Barber (2004) analyzed the IEA Civic Education Study for the strengths and weaknesses in US students’ knowledge and skills and found that American students’ understanding of the role citizens play in a democracy, the role of periodic elections, the function of political parties, and what political rights citizens’ maintain was below the international average (p. 4). While not every measure in the IEA study was negative for American students, the US performance on content and conceptual items was similar to Hungary and the Russian Federation, both of which were newly formed democratic nations at the time the survey was administered (p. 4).

The lack of students' basic civic knowledge is alarming; and the statistics on participation and voting are equally poor. In terms of youth participation, Lehmann and Torney-Purta (2001) citing the IEA study note, "four out of five students do not intend to participate in conventional political activities" (p. 1). In his essay "Bowling Alone," Putnam (1995), states that from the 1960's to the 1990's voter turnout weakened by nearly a quarter (p. 67). Kirby and Kawashima-Ginsberg (2009) demonstrated, though, that subsequent voter turnout of American youth ages 18-29, rose to 51.5% of the possible age-group electorate in 2008, or the third highest percentage it has been since 1972 (p.1). Voting is the quintessential process through which people in democratic societies demonstrate their voice.

Education, both formal and informal, is widely seen as one of the strongest predictors of future civic engagement (Davila & Mora; 2007, Torney-Purta & Barber, 2004). Torney-Purta and Barber (2004) cite IEA data indicating that students who come from households that have "literacy or educational resources as well as an expectation of college attendance have voting expectations of 56.9% while those students without either characteristic have voting expectations of only 18.7%." (2004). Research compiled by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement [CIRCLE] (2008) based on Federal Election Commission data found that "although 57% of U.S. citizens between the ages of 18 and 29 have never attended college, 70% of the young voters had gone to college, meaning that college educated youth were

much more likely to vote” (p. 2). Therein lies the problem. Increased income is a likely result of college education and the lack thereof has the potential to create a stratified democracy where only those who can afford college are civically engaged. This is no trivial issue. The lack of civic engagement often means a lack of external efficacy or a belief that government is not responsive to the needs and demands of its people (Kahne and Westheimer, p. 292, 2006). The end result is the perpetuation of a representative government that doesn’t necessarily work for the interests of all people. Bartels (2005) found that “the views of constituents in the bottom third of the income distribution received no weight at all in the voting decisions of their senators” (p. 5). Not only are our most uneducated citizens poorly prepared to compete with their more educated counterparts for jobs and income, but they are also are poorly positioned to alter the course of legislation that might make their low-income status non-generational.

What can be done? This question is particularly poignant today. The United States faces multiple challenges at home and abroad. Our citizens make decisions ranging from saving the environment to waging war. These are complex issues that require a citizenry that is capable and willing to partake in the process of solving our democracy’s greatest challenges. Inherent in facing the consequences of a complex world, are the specific cognitive, affective, and skill requirements needed to be able to respond effectively. Do today’s students have what it takes to fulfill the democratic mission that Aristotle articulated two

thousand years ago? Are our schools teaching our students the knowledge and skills they need to function in this world?

To answer these difficult questions we must educate in a manner that allows all students access to the benefits of our democracy, such as participation, educational attainment, and larger incomes. This will require schools to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem. For example schools continue to perpetuate societal stratification by structuring classes through perceived ability grouping. Oakes (2005), writing about students placed in lower tracks, found that these students had narrowed “expectations for achievement, access to subject matter and critical learning opportunities, instructional strategies, and resources” (p. 225). Further, Junn (2006) argues that schools can play two negative roles. The sorting function whereby degrees or other scarce titles are awarded in a hierarchical fashion and through the meritocracy essential to legitimize the differences in outcome in a system that is founded on equality. She argues that this meritocracy maintains the positions of power among those that have it (p. 36). Haberman (1991) in “The Pedagogy of Poverty versus Good Teaching” argues for a change in the approach to teaching today’s students. He advocates for a challenging curriculum, which places high expectations for student learning at its core. Haberman (1991) clearly articulates what he believes is the risk of inaction by arguing that “graduates who lack basic skills but are partially informed, unable to think, and incapable of making moral choices are downright dangerous” (p. 294). While he doesn’t specify whom these uninformed students may endanger, it

is reasonable to infer that democratic society itself is at risk. Kahne and Middaugh (2008) conducted three studies to analyze the equity of classroom based civic learning opportunities of over 2,800 total students. Their results further contextualize the problem articulated by Junn (2006), Oakes (2005), and Haberman (1991). In each study there was one universal finding: students who come from the most privileged backgrounds receive the most classroom based civic learning opportunities (Kahne & Middaugh, p. 5). Additionally they state, “Schools, rather than helping to equalize the capacity and commitments needed for democratic participation, appear to be exacerbating this inequality by providing more preparation for those who are already likely to attain a disproportionate amount of civic and political voice” (p 18). This does not need to be the case. Schools may offer all students equal opportunities to participate in classroom based civic learning opportunities.

Conceptions of Citizens: Whom do We Want?

Stating that schools want their students to be good citizens is not a revolutionary or argumentative concept, nor is the desire for schools to play a better role in the development of more civically engaged students. However, defining the types of actions a good citizen partakes in at the behest of the school in order to demonstrate his or her civic engagement is tougher and more debatable. The effort to engender civic engagement in students forces researchers to establish paradigms for conceptualizing how the actions of students fit a civic goal and whether civic engagement has occurred. This occurs at a time when

Putnam (1995) has argued that the nation's citizens have disengaged from traditional forms of democratic involvement such as voting, parent-teacher associations, labor unions, fraternal groups, and other associational groups (p. 69). This loss of traditional civic engagement practices represents a loss of social capital and thereby becomes a threat to democracy (p. 72).

Contrary to Putnam's thesis, is Dalton's (2006) conception of civic engagement as a reformulation of citizenship to encompass non-traditional forms of participation. He argues that citizen participation is moving from civic duty, a theory encompassing Putnam's, to engaged citizenship (p. 3). Dalton cites the results of the Citizenship, Involvement and Democracy Survey noting that engaged citizens depart from the traditional forms of civic engagement and partake in such activities as referendums, direct action on social issues, alignment with interest groups, and volunteering (p. 10). While these scholars agree on the importance of civic engagement, they differ on the context and social norms that modern society needs. Consequently, neither of these theories suggests how schools and teachers can act in a systemic way to help students develop civic engagement.

The implications for education are important to consider. If schools are motivated to help produce and maintain democratic society through the development of civically engaged students, then the actions that best represent societal goals are of the utmost importance to parents, teachers, and school districts. But, what kind of citizens do schools hope to develop? This discussion

is contentiously debated in academic and public circles (Dalton, 2006; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004; Kirlin & Kirlin, 2002; Putnam, 1995; Wang & Jackson, 2005). Counter to Junn's negative description of schools' potential stratifying effects, Gimpel and Lay (2006) argue that in light of students' poor socializing influences, schools might be "the only places where good citizenship can be modeled" (p. 10).

Working within this context, Westheimer and Kahne (2004) studied ten civic education programs from across the country as part of the Surdna Foundation's Democratic Values initiative (p. 7). In their paper titled "What Kind of Citizen? The Politics of Educating for Democracy," they describe three different dimensions of citizenship as personally responsible, participatory, and justice oriented (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 3). The authors' views of citizenship describe each of the categories as a distinct set of theoretical and curricular goals going beyond constructions such as traditional and non-traditional. In other words, while not being mutually exclusive, they are different enough to have unique goals and assumptions at the root of their existence (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

According to Westheimer and Kahne's citizenship structure, the personally responsible citizen is someone who acts responsibly in his or her community through actions such as picking up litter, giving blood and obeying laws. Consequently, the appropriate curriculum attempts to build character, honesty, self-discipline, and hard work (2004, p. 3). The authors did not study

this approach, as it did not apply to any of the ten schools participating in their study. And while they recognized the value of each of the personally responsible goals, they felt that this conception of citizenship was devoid of the critical elements of democratic life, particularly the lack of collective action, the influences of social movements, and government's policies to effect change (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004, p. 6). They further contend that even though the goals are all reasonable, they do not necessarily contribute to democratic society, arguing that dictatorships would love to have citizens who felt duty bound to be responsible.

The second type of citizen is the participatory citizen. These are citizens who actively participate in the civic affairs of their communities by engaging in collective, community based efforts designed for community understandings, trust and collective commitments (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 6). The last type of citizen studied by Westheimer and Kahne is the justice-oriented citizen (2004). This type of citizen would study the "interplay of social, economic, and political forces...*in order to* [emphasis added] address social issues and injustices... and effect systemic change" (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 4). It is important to note the key differences between the two constructions. The participatory citizen is motivated to be involved in his or her community and collectively deal with the effects of communal problems. The justice-oriented citizen is motivated to address the causes of the communal issue.

After developing a framework for analyzing citizens, the authors contrasted two of the participating high schools' programs attempt to develop civic commitments and understandings in their 12th grade students. While each exemplified similar aims, they were very different in their approach and goals. The first program, called Madison County Youth in Public Service, was located in a suburban/rural east coast community outside of a small city that aimed to develop students who were critical participatory citizens (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). The program took place over two years and focused on two 12th grade American Government classes each year of the study (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). The program developed a service-learning curriculum by working in small groups on public service projects in their county's administrative offices (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 9). The results were positive. The program had success in developing civic participation skills, both internal and external efficacy, leadership skills, practical knowledge about the role of government in local issues, a sense of personal responsibility, and social capital in community affairs (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 11).

The Second program, Bayside Students for Justice, was a course designed for 12th grade low-achieving students in a large west coast high school. This program's goal was to create community activists. The study took place over two years but because there were important changes from the first year to the second, the authors only wrote about the first year. The program's curricular depth sought to investigate and address "structural issues of inequity and injustices and bring

about social change” (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 14). The program had success in developing the students’ capacities for and commitments to civic participation, specifically civic skills and knowledge, leadership efficacy, social capital, and personal responsibility to others (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 18).

The results of Westheimer and Kahne’s (2004) study affirm that it is not enough to simply educate students and hope that citizenship, let alone participatory or justice-oriented citizenship will develop. The two programs the authors focused on in this study succeeded in achieving the goals that the programs set out to accomplish. Madison County was able to develop participatory citizens, and Bayside was able to shape justice-oriented citizens. Each took very different paths in terms of pedagogy and curricular aims. The authors argue that it is critical to think about the specific values, both political and ideological, that are to be developed (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). It is essential that teachers and curriculum developers are cognizant of the specific outcomes they wish to embrace and then design programs to affect those values. Further, they contend that all three types of citizens possess traits that are desirable, but only two, the participatory and justice-oriented, embrace democratic ideals of education and societal civic engagement (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 21).

Kirlin and Kirlin (2002) advance Westheimer and Kahne’s (2004) view of the need to develop citizens who are participatory and justice-oriented by noting that the events of September 11, 2001 have spurred a societal response that may not advance civic engagement. They argue that in the wake of 9/11, individuals,

non-profit organizations, businesses, and even the federal government have acted in ways that support individual actions, but do not correlate with increased civic engagement. Essentially, the authors argue that the response has been to support the personally responsible typology of Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) citizen framework. Kirlin and Kirlin (2002) argue that civic engagement derives from the motivation to get involved, the ability to use skills to advance a civic goal, and the ability to forge network connections that enable society to act collectively. (Kirlin & Kirlin, 2002, p. 80). These three factors can lead to increases in civic engagement and the development of collective judgment (Kirlin & Kirlin, p. 84). The researchers state that policy makers and educators need to think deeply about developing programs and curricula that advance students' motivation and skills, while advancing their network connections in order to truly advance democratic aims (Kirlin & Kirlin, p. 84).

Critical Starting Points

The literature on civic engagement suggests a few broad approaches to mitigate the knowledge, participation, and structural inequalities that exist and a number of methods for improving the civic participation of our youth, including specific strategies that have demonstrated a positive relationship for building civic engagement. The Carnegie Foundation brought together some of the foremost researchers, professionals, and practitioners to synthesize the current thinking on civic education and make recommendations for future implementation. The resulting report, titled the "Civic Mission of Schools" (Gibson & Levine, 2003),

found six promising approaches to civic education. Of the six approaches, five are explicitly tied to classroom practice. They are: continuing instruction in social studies that goes beyond the memorization in rote facts, the inclusion of current event discussions particularly ones that are relevant to the students in the classroom, linking community service with curricular aims that additionally promote reflection and choice, offering extracurricular opportunities that are not related to athletics, and simulations that replicate the democratic process (p. 6). Collectively, these practices fall under the categorization of authentic assessment, and this is a great place to start.

Authentic Assessment

Authentic assessment is a compound term that must be broken down to its constituent parts to be useful for teachers. Assessment, as defined by Popham (2007), is a “formal attempt to determine students’ status with respect to an educational variable of interest” (p. 6). Popham (2007) argues that the definition considers three areas to formally, or specifically and intentionally, determine. They are the students’ knowledge, skills, and attitudes about something educationally important enough to measure (Popham, 2007, p. 6-7).

While Popham articulates a workable definition of assessment, it is only half of the equation. The authentic piece of the definition is much harder to define and more contentiously debated. Gulikers, Bastiaens, and Kirschner (2004), argue that many researchers differ on their viewpoints of authenticity (p. 69). They cite various researchers and the definitions that each provides concerning the

differences in definition, performance task, fidelity, realistic value of task and context, the relative nature of authentic work, and the application of knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Gulikers et al., p. 69). At its most simplistic, authentic assessment, according to Wiggins (1990) is “when we directly examine student performance on worthy intellectual tasks” (p. 1). He further reasons that these types of assessments “mirror the priorities and challenges found in the best instructional activities” (p. 1).

To flesh out the definition it is critical to begin to determine what Wiggins’ (1990) deems are “worthy intellectual tasks” (p. 1). Darling-Hammond, Ancess, and Falk (1995), add that authentic tasks ask students to do what professionals do in out of school settings (p. 2). Herman, Aschbacher and Winters (1992) state that alternative or authentic assessments “ask students to perform, create, produce, or do something that taps higher-level thinking and problem solving skills, representing meaningful instructional activities while invoking real-world applications” (p. 5). Arter and Stiggins (1992) note three strengths of authentic assessments, particularly the use of knowledge to solve problems, demonstrating evidence of valued behaviors, and the creation of products that possess certain [*target*] [emphasis mine] attributes (p. 2). Archbald and Newmann (1988) set the defining, three-pronged framework for authentic assessment. They theorize that the assessed task must have “disciplined inquiry, integration of knowledge, and value beyond evaluation” (Archbald & Newmann, 1998, p. 2). This structure was further developed by Newmann, Marks, and Gamoron (1995) who believe that in

order for something to be considered authentic is must have “construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry, and have a value beyond school” (p. 4).

Rule (2006), the editor of the *Journal of Authentic Learning*, completed a qualitative analysis of 45 journal articles that were submitted by her colleagues as examples of authentic learning in their content areas (p. 2). The result of her study argues that authentically assessed activities have four characteristics. They “involve real-world tasks that mimic the work of professionals, include open-ended inquiry, thinking skills and metacognition, engage students in discourse and learning, and empower students through choice to direct their own learning” (Rule, 2006, p.2).

Gulikers, et al., (2004) state their particular view of authentic assessment as “an assessment requiring students to demonstrate the same competencies, or combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes, that they need to apply in the criterion situation in professional life.” (p. 69). They go one step further than Rule (2006) arguing for a five-dimensional approach focusing on task, physical context, social context, assessment result or form, and criteria and standards (Gulikers, et al., 2004, p. 71-75).

What is the Value of Authentic Assessments?

Why should teachers use authentic assessments? Researchers and theorists have a multitude of reasons. Darling-Hammond, Ancess, and Falk (1995) argue that authentic assessments allow students to engage in “complex and challenging tasks” that would allow them to integrate, synthesize, evaluate, and

create their own knowledge (p. 3). They further argue that authentic assessments allow teachers to work collaboratively as a staff and district to formatively shape what and how students learn, as well as communicate that progress to parents and community members (p. 3). Wiggins (1990) negatively contrasts traditional assessments with authentic assessments arguing that they are simple stand-in assessments that purely track performance (p. 1). Consequently, he argues that test validity should be partially measured by the assessment's capacity to replicate real-world challenges of ability (Wiggins, 1990, p. 1). Arter and Stiggins (1992) agree, positing that authentic assessments are a more thorough examination of student achievement. Moon, Brighton, Callahan, and Robinson (2005) assert that authentic assessments "require scoring that focuses on the essence of the task and not what is easiest to score," implying that traditional tests are a matter of convenience (p. 120). Darling-Hammond (2006) more vigorously supports their claim by arguing that when states stopped using authentic assessments as one of their measures of learning it was a "perverse consequence" of NCLB (p. 655). She maintains that NCLB and the US Department of Education have discouraged the use of authentic assessments because they do not easily support states' ability to rank students and schools, and because they are not simply evaluated by computerized scoring (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

Darling-Hammond and Pecheone (2009) state that most of the highest performing countries use performance assessments in elementary and middle school with a combination of open-ended measures of performance at the high

school level. To what end do these high performing nations use authentic assessments? Darling-Hammond and Pecheone summarize the benefits as increasing instruction in higher order thinking skills, a fuller indicator of what students know and can do, a better communicative device for interested adults, higher student engagement, more teacher investment, and support for standards-based instruction. Newmann, Marks, and Gamoran (1995) studied 130 classrooms in 23 restructuring schools and found that students' academic performance in math and social studies improved across all grade levels (p. 28). They also found that regardless of race or gender, an average student, as determined by scoring at the mean on NAEP achievement tests, would increase his or her achievement from the 30th percentile to the 60th percentile as a condition of receiving low versus high authentic pedagogy (Newmann et al., 1995, p. 23). Additionally, Moon, et al., (2005) found that consistent information about students' learning could be developed through authentic assessments. Although Arter and Stiggins' (1992) claim that "traditional tests...will never again be regarded as sufficient as a means of profiling student achievement" (p. 4) their proclamation may be a bit exaggerated considering the federal government's creation of a high stakes testing environment, but their point is well taken. Schools need to focus on authentic assessment as the way to engage students in rigorous and relevant tasks.

What Authentic Assessments and Civic Education Have in Common

Civic engagement is much like authentic assessment in terms of its lack of

definitional authority. Walker's definition of civic engagement (as cited by Prentice, 2007) is simply "political involvement" (p. 136). Swaner (2007) states that civic engagement involves the development of capacities for participation and social responsibility that would allow access to community membership (p. 19). Jacoby (2004) concurs, but expands the definition articulating specific actions taken by individuals. She states "civic engagement is a heightened sense of responsibility to one's communities that includes a wide range of activities, including developing civic sensitivity, participation in building civil society, and benefiting the common good" (Jacoby, 2004, p. 10). Many scholars do not define the term; rather they simply give examples of civically engaged activities. For these scholars, the concept is that if a person participates in said activities, then he or she is civically engaged. Kirilin and Kirilin (2002) state that civic engagement is a set of behaviors marked by people attempting to convince others to dedicate a personal commitment and resources to a community issue (p. 80). Jacoby (2004) once again provides more precise behaviors of civic engagement. She asserts that individuals are "empowered as agents of social change" (Jacoby, 2004, p. 10) by a lifelong learning process to become self informed on social issues, actively participate in community life, actively lead social organizations, uphold social justice, develop empathy, and become a reflective citizen. While these definitions vary, they have some common threads, particularly personal, social, and communal participation and responsibility.

A Framework for Best Practices

Once again the “Civic Mission of Schools” report is instructive at the outset of any discussion of which best practices will lead to increased civic engagement (Gibson & Levine, 2003). The report takes two expansive approaches to this issue: a classroom and a cultural or environmental approach. The classroom approach found that all of the most effective methods of teaching civic education have educator-influenced characteristics that intentionally focus on students’ civic behavior such as voting. These methods are especially critical for populations that have typically been poorly engaged, have teachers who advocate for explicit participation in politics or civic minded groups without supporting any specific groups, and have teachers who pursue real-life learning strategies that actively engage students in discussions and activities, while demonstrating the real-world importance of the founding ideals and principles articulated in the founding documents of the United States (Gibson & Levine, 2003, p. 21).

Comber (2005) found that civic education supported increased cognitive, communication, discussion, and news-monitoring skills (p. 1-4). Gimpel and Lay (2006) state that schools can support the least engaged groups through instruction that focuses on the “the role of conflict and disagreement in American political institutions while showing that disagreements are soluble and manageable” (p. 13). Kahne and Westheimer (2003) agree with the report, but add depth to the framework by advocating for an explicit examination of controversial issues

through a call to action and solution. They further argue that students need positive explicit experiences in civic participation (Kahne and Westheimer).

The cultural or environmental approach stated in the “Civic Mission of Schools’ report found that the most effective programs have school cultures and environments that promote civic engagement by all students, have transparent school governance, collaborate with the community to offer civic learning chances, provide collaborative professional development for teachers, and infuse a civic mission in all curricula and extra-curricular activities (Gibson & Levine, 2003, p. 21). Davila (2007) supports this approach and found that civic engagement might be a precursor for increased educational attainment (p. 1). Zaff, Malanchuk, Michelsen, and Eccles (2003), who conducted a longitudinal study of 1,000 youths residing in a Maryland suburb from 7th grade until three years after high school, concur with both the Civic Mission report and Davila. (Zaff et al., p. 1). They focused on the programs that advanced positive civic engagement through contexts that allowed students to surround themselves, particularly their social interactions, with the environment, and civic values. The researchers found that previous civic participation predicts future civic participation and that the social context of students’ lives influenced their civic engagement, especially when positive parental or peer models demonstrated civic participation and matching cultural values (Zaff et al.).

Contrasting Davila (2007), the researchers Gimpel and Lay (2006) argue that formal education may not be the sole motivator for civic engagement, but do

concede that it is important to students' civic socialization in terms of providing good models (p. 11). To mitigate the lack of positive role models to learn from, Kahne and Westheimer (2003) studied ten programs that developed communities of support that "focus on advancing democratic citizenship and achieving specific social goals... while [emphasis added] emphasizing exposure to compelling role models to help students develop a vision for a life filled with civic commitments" (p. 63). Their study concluded that programs that helped teach democracy could develop students' civic commitments, capacities, and connections.

Authentic Assessment to Civic Engagement

The Civic Mission of Schools report (Gibson & Levine, 2003) identified five encouraging classroom level approaches that teachers can use in order to develop civic engagement in their students. What are the various approaches' connection to authentic assessment and civic engagement? It is at this point that authentic assessment and civic engagement merge. The following approaches to teaching for civic engagement adhere to the various definitions and frameworks of authentic assessment. Each of these approaches plays a critical role in fostering a classroom and school atmosphere that supports civic engagement. There are two important characteristics of these approaches. First, they realistically mirror and assess the complex cognitive, affective, and skill challenges that citizens face in the real world (Archbald & Newmann 1988; Arter & Stiggins 1992; Gulikers et al., 2004; Herman et al., 1992; Newmann et al., 1995; Rule 2006; Wiggins, 1990) thereby making them authentic. Darling-

Hammond, Rustique-Forrester, and Pecheone (2005) argue that “using a variety of measures to organize and assess student learning — including measures that represent real-life tasks rather than only multiple-choice and short-answer items — provides a broader, more complete, and more accurate understanding of what students know” (p. 5).

Second, the approaches demonstrate the active elements of citizenship and civic engagement thereby making them authentic democratic models (Dalton, 2006; Kahne & Westheimer, 2004; Kirlin & Kirlin, 2002; Putnam, 1995; Wang & Jackson, 2005). Kahne and Sporte (2008) found that classroom civic learning opportunities could offset negative models of civic engagement. The core concept stated here is that citizens, by any definition or framework, must have a grasp of the knowledge needed to be involved in civic society. Additionally, they must participate in some manner in their communities, they must have the skill sets needed to access knowledge or advocate for himself or herself, and finally, they must have affective skills such as tolerance and respect. To develop these skills, participatory models of civic education are essential in schools.

Individual Approaches as Best Practices

Discussion and Current Events.

Kahne and Middaugh (2008) support these six approaches, but add that classrooms must have an open climate for discussion and interaction with civic role models (p. 10). Syvertsen, Flanagan, and Stout (2007) surveyed 1,670 students ages 14-19 from 80 social studies classes in the United States in an

attempt to provide additional support for the Civic Mission's recommended approaches (p. 3). The researchers analyzed civic skills, engagement, and awareness of civic issues and concepts. They found that discussion of political beliefs, opinions, and behaviors with other people promoted civic skills such as active listening. And this listening to diverse viewpoints brought about gains in conversing about political issues and current events with other people in their lives (Syvertsen et al., p. 9.). However, they found that students were less confident in their ability to influence others about their opinions as well as interpret political information. The authors note that as the data dealt with pre and post surveys, many students may have overstated their understanding in the pre-learning survey compared to the post-survey after learning occurred (Syvertsen et al., p. 8). In terms of civic engagement Syvertsen et al. found that teachers who provided concrete actions that students could take in order to participate in politics in ways other than voting resulted in positive gains in students' self-reported political efficacy (p. 13). Finally, the authors found that discussion was the most common way for students to demonstrate positive gains in civic concepts and issues. They particularly noted that discussion improved civic knowledge, while discussion of international issues brought positive gains in students engaging in thinking about their economic futures, and that controversial issues solidified interest and motivation to engage in civic thinking and actions (Syvertsen et al., p. 16). This concept is supported by Freire's (1971) theory that the "teacher is no longer merely the one who teaches, but one who is himself

taught in dialogue with the student, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow” (p. 67). Freire is essentially outlining the fundamental precepts of democracy and its need to be rooted in communal skills and discussion.

Community Service and Non-Sport Extracurricular Activities.

While discussion as a strategy is an important way to engender civic engagement through communal analysis, community service and non-sport extracurricular activities have also demonstrated gains in civic engagement through community participation and social networking (Davila & Mora 2007; Kahne & Sporte 2008; Prentice 2007; Swaner 2007; Yates & Youniss 1997). Yates and Youniss reported on a 10-plus year longitudinal study on community service and found that students who volunteered made a connection between “reflecting on the broader meaning of a service experience in relation to one’s own life and willingness to participate in service in the future” (p. 6). They also found a significant relationship between extracurricular service as a student and belonging to an organization as an adult. Additionally, the social networks are valued for the introduction to civic skills (Yates & Youniss). Kahne and Sporte (2008) found that service learning opportunities had the second highest effect size in promoting future civic commitments in their study spanning 4,057 students in 52 Chicago high schools. Prentice (2007) further supports the benefits of community service, stating that service learning by community college students may have a positive effect on civic engagement as long as it is defined more

broadly. Davila and Mora (2007) using data from the 1988-2000 National Education Longitudinal Study found that high school students who participated in class-mandated community service that was linked to curricular goals demonstrated “significantly greater scholastic development by three to five percentage points” (p. 11). Further, the authors report that community service increased the odds of graduating from college by “14 percentage points” (Davila & Mora, 2007, p. 15). They also report that being involved in student government increased the scholastic performance of high school students by at least two percentage points (Davila & Mora, 2007). Community service non-sport extracurricular activities have been demonstrated to improve civic engagement, commitments to civic participation, and educational attainment.

Simulations and Democratically Modeled Strategies.

When classroom activities are directly tied to civic and political issues and ways to act, there is a strong correlation between the activity and improved civic engagement (Haberman, 1991; Kahne & Sporte, 2008; Lehmann & Torney-Purta, 2001; Stroupe & Sabato, 2004). Kahne and Sporte (2008) added simulations into the overall classroom civic learning opportunities, which previously included discussion, current events, and hearing from civic role models, and found that the effect size was .41 or larger than any other factor in their study of 52 Chicago high schools. Stroupe and Sabato (2004) studied the National Youth Leadership Initiative program, which focuses on developing experiential lessons and materials for teachers and students ranging from elementary to high school. Each

of the elements in their study was either a simulation or a strategy that modeled democratic functions (Stroupe & Sabato, 2004). The study specifically analyzed mock elections, an E-Congress online simulation, an interactive campaign simulation, and a direct link to students' elected representatives. The authors found that students who participated in these lessons scored higher on a range of civic engagement characteristics including political efficacy, knowledge, and commitments to future participation (Stroupe & Sabato). Lopez and Kirby (2004) report that based on the 2006 NAEP Civics Assessment, approximately one-third of eighth and twelfth graders reported that they had participated in role-playing, mock trials, or dramas in their classrooms (p. 4). This promising figure suggests that teachers have an underutilized strategy that may develop more civically engaged students.

Summary

Democratic society rests on the participation and engagement of its citizens. It relies on citizens' use of knowledge, social networks, and social and participatory skills in order to bring the benefits of democracy to the most people. Yet alarming trends have been noted by social scientists often citing a decline in the core practices that keep our democracy working (Davila, 2007; Dalton, 2006; Kahne & Westheimer, 2003; Putnam, 1995) and core constituencies that are often excluded from the process (Junn, 2006; Oakes, 2005). Young people, often of high school age, participate the least of any voting age demographic. The issue at hand is not simply theoretical; rather it is practical. What can schools do to

increase the civic engagement in the population that participates the least? They can start by reformulating how they perceive the day-to-day occurrence of teaching and learning. Schools should provide authentic instruction in all classrooms that follows, at a minimum, the three-pronged framework created by Archbald and Newmann (1988) and further articulated by Newmann, Marks, and Gamoran (1995). Concurrently they should embrace the six promising approaches cited in the “Civic Mission of Schools” report (Gibson and Levine, 2003) and supported by years worth of empirical and qualitative data starting with teaching civics and American government to all students. The research is clear. Schools that teach authentically and for explicit civic education purposes, develop students that benefit and perpetuate the greatest benefits that democracy has to offer. Specifically schools can increase the likelihood that their students develop the participatory and justice seeking orientation of citizenship advocated by Westheimer and Kahne, (2004) enjoy greater academic performance including college graduation, earn larger incomes, have greater voice in political matters, and continue the reinforcing nature of generational democracy.

Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

The driving conceptual force behind the research design and methodology of my study is a deeply rooted belief that school plays an integral part shaping students' civic engagement. Dewey believed that school's primary purpose was their ability to foster democratic structures that would serve as a proving ground and laboratory for democratic growth. He argues "since democratic society repudiates the principle of external authority, it must find a substitute in voluntary disposition and interest; these can be created only by education (Dewey, 2007, 68). Schools can act as civic transition models for students as they matriculate through the system and into the adult world where civic engagement and opportunity are the building blocks of democratic society. More specifically, my study centered on authentic classroom practices that allowed the students an opportunity practice the activities that adult citizens are frequently engaged in doing. In other words, the students would be involved in authentic behaviors to substitute for a lack of real life experiences. The students, for example, would partake in discussion of current events and issues, work with diverse groups, use role-play or simulations of various civic activities, and research information to defend or refute a point. My belief is that if I was able to provide a classroom instruction based platform of civic intellectual discovery, I thought that the students' would feel more confident to become civically engaged. In this manner

I was attempting to design a classroom-based study that was authentic to actual civic activities.

Setting

The setting of the study was a large urban high school in eastern Pennsylvania. The school currently enrolls about 2,900 students and has a diverse population. The school's demographic breakdown is 55% White, 33% Hispanic, 9% Black, 2% Asian, and less than 1% Native American. The school is slightly above the Pennsylvania average with 28% of its students eligible for free and reduced lunch as well as its per student expenditures topping out at \$12,751. The district graduates 95% of its students, which is slightly below the state average of 97%. Of the students who graduate from this particular high school, about 47% go on to 4-year colleges, 37% to 2-year colleges, 2% go to technical school, 3% join the armed forces, while 4% seek employment status. This school and district offer a vocational technical program that is available to all students in grades 9-12, as well as a variety of academic, athletic, and club activities. While the district has been able to meet annual yearly progress as determined by Pennsylvania System of School Assessment tests (PSSA), this particular high school is still on Corrective Action II for the fourth consecutive year.

My study focused on 11 students in my 12th grade American Government and Economics class. Nine of the eleven study participants were female, including one who was eligible for free or reduced lunch. One of the male participants was identified as IEP-Gifted and none had 504 plans. Two of the students, one male

and one female, were born outside of the US. Ten of the twelve students are Caucasian, one is African American, and one is Brazilian American.

Data Collection

Surveys and Interviews

I administered two Internet based surveys using the subscription-based website, Quia, during the course of the semester. One of the ways that I intended to examine the anticipated change in student thinking was in the attitudes and dispositions of the students based on their responses to survey questions.

MacLean and Mohr (1999) argue that surveys give the researcher a “broad base for understanding you students’ ideas in regard to your research question, a profile out of which a more specific study may take shape” (p. 41). I

administered the first survey on the third day of the school year and the second survey after the class had changed from government to economics. The surveys included a number of different types of questions, ranging from binary answer questions such as agree/disagree, to open-ended questions. Each type of question allowed me to gain some insight into their thinking. By designing many open-ended questions, I allowed the students to share their voice, instead of choosing from a slate of choices. I followed Hendricks’ (2009) advice in using attitudinal scales in my survey design, as well as online technology to administer them, but disagreed with the author’s argument that all questions of the survey needed to relate directly to primary and secondary research questions (p. 104). While all of the questions that I asked the students in my study related to American

government or economics and at a minimum worked as discussion starters, in itself a democratic endeavor, there were a few that did not have a laser-like focus on my research question.

The survey initially provided a contextual basis for the course as well as a starting point for my interviews. After completing the surveys I followed up with the students on points that I felt needed further explanation. As I was researching a change in attitude and behavior as a determinant of their civic engagement, it was imperative for me to understand the gradual contextual shifts in their thinking and its possible relation to their civic actions. I used “semi-structured interviews as a good way to make sure that questions important to [my study] are answered, while providing participants with an opportunity to add other useful information” (Hendricks, 2009, p. 99).

Student Work

Over the course of the semester, I gathered multiple pieces of student work to help me understand the changes taking place in their thinking. My intention was to use student work as an internal reflective process for the students, similar to a journal response, and as another measure of their change over time. Hendricks (2009) argues that student-generated artifacts are both a formative and summative opportunity for the teacher researcher to analyze, plan, and evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention. The questions that I was most interested in were ones that allowed me “the opportunity to look within and across these documents to analyze them in new and different ways” (Dana & Yendol-Silva,

2003, p. 72). I gathered data from class work, homework, open-ended answers on tests and quizzes, and reflections on simulations.

Participant Observations and Reflective Memos

In a class where I was constantly asking the students to analyze and evaluate controversial issues and scenarios and work with various groups in order to come up with a solution or negotiate a response, it was critical that I observe the interactions of the students. Hendricks states that observational data “are the most important source of information in an action research study” (2009, p. 90). I observed my students as a participant in two particular ways. As the teacher I often asked questions that were provocative and required some level of analysis and opinion. When students in my study answered these questions, I noted their responses in a notebook that I always carried with me. The second type of observation was done as I walked around the room as the students participated in the various activities I designed. This gave me some insight into the language and context of their problem solving, leadership, negotiation, and conflict resolution. Much like the questioning observations, I noted their responses in my notebook, being careful to separate my personal feelings from what I had observed by using brackets (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003).

At the end of the day I reflected on the observations, using a double entry style notebook to record my interpretations or continued thoughts about what I had observed. The next step was for me to write reflective memos based upon what I had observed. MacLean and Mohr state, “observations are not complete,

without reflection” (1999, p. 28). Reflecting on my observations and interpretations, I was able to reconsider how to plan and implement changes in lesson design to deal with the current trajectory of their civic engagement. From my continued reflection I discovered more detailed questions that would be asked as either brief interview questions or just focus points of further observations.

Trustworthiness Statement

According to Hendricks, (2009) practitioner action research is an individualized study to “investigate and improve their practices” (p. 3). I set out to understand how I might be a better teacher by understanding and interpreting the setting in one classroom. Therefore, my study is not generalizable, rather it is a study of how I interpreted the results of my intervention with the students participants. Yet, it is critical that the interpretations that I have made are trustworthy. To meet this standard, I have tried extremely hard to meet criteria that would allow me to be viewed as a trusted, ethical, valid, and fair researcher.

Ethical Guidelines

Even though I wanted to learn about my practice, I had to be responsive to the needs of my students. This meant that although I had a designed a research study with a particular goal in mind, I did not allow my singular purpose to trump any of the needs that existed or emerged in my students.

I submitted and received written approval to conduct my study from Moravian College’s Human Subjects Internal Review Board (HSIRB). As suggested by Hendricks (2009) as well as MacLean and Mohr (1999) I obtained

written permission to conduct my study from my building principal, student participants, and their parents or guardians through an informed consent letter. The letter explained to all signatories the purpose, scope, and duration of the study. It also promised the confidentiality of every student through the use of pseudonyms, as well as ensuring each participant that their participation was voluntary, that it would not reflect in their grades whether they were participants or not, that they could withdraw as participants at any point, and that I would destroy all of the collected data upon completion of the study. I followed all of the obligations that I set out in my informed consent letter.

Validity

While being an ethical teacher action researcher is important, it is not the only consideration of trustworthiness. Being a credible and valid researcher entails triangulating your data through a “process in which multiple forms of data are collected and analyzed” (Hendricks, 2009, p. 80). I created data collection and analysis plans that allowed me to study the data through multiple perspectives thus increasing validity. As Hendricks (2009) suggests, I triangulated my data through the use of observational data, student artifacts, and inquiry data such as interviews and surveys.

I engaged in persistent and prolonged observations to understand how the participants were affected by the intervention and included thick description to note the setting, participants, research methods, and intervention (Hendricks, 2009). I recorded these observations in a field log and then personally reflected

upon the data to make connections and ask questions that might be answered with further observation or other data sources. Additionally, I wrote reflective memos that facilitated my understanding of the setting of my study and the progress of the participants while being open to negative case studies. I also studied student artifacts such as homework, classwork, essays, and group project materials to check and verify what I had been observing and noting was being backed up. I also surveyed the participants and interviewed them to understand the context of what I had either observed or read through their work. Finally, I utilized peer debriefing in order to gain an outside perspective from someone who was not invested in my study (Hendricks, 2009). By speaking with peers, I was able to explain my interpretations of the data and garner different points of view. Multiple perspectives allowed me to consider other possible interpretations and directions for emerging explanations.

Researcher Bias

It is critical to be upfront about the biases that I held prior to conducting the study. The foremost bias that I brought to the study was the belief that democracy can only be maintained if we have participatory citizens that act in civically engaged ways. Knowledge that I had learned such as voter participation had influenced my negative view of citizen engagement. This bias prompted me to think deeply about how to ensure that my students would want to be participatory citizens. I believed that if I could influence students to become more engaged they might become greater shareholders of our democratic future.

Furthermore, five years of teaching experience had predisposed me to believe that authentic assessment was crucial to maintaining classroom engagement and ownership. I believed that if I wanted students to civically engage then I needed to provide them with experiences that would prepare them for future democratic opportunities. While I had never studied authentic assessment and civic engagement systematically, each year I anecdotally reflected upon what I thought had worked the year before. I believed through this reflection that authentic assessment was the way to go. Finally, I believed that all students were capable of being civically engaged. Considering what I knew about democratic participation already, I was predisposed to believe that many of my students lacked the participatory models to become civically engaged citizens. I wanted to change that paradigm. To mitigate these biases I reflected on the questions that I asked, the path that class discussions took, and the types of assignments that I gave. I reflected on my struggle to not judge the students' developing sense of civic engagement and often confided my interpretations with peers in order to gain a sense of perspective that was outside of the study. This helped me move past my biases and interpret the data in a manner that increased validity.

This Year's Story

The First Day: Am I Running for Office?

Each year I set out with no less of a goal than to help ensure the future of democracy in America. One might question whether this is too ambitious an undertaking. Quite frankly, I have questioned this goal regularly myself. Yet each time the thought passes through my mind, it is quickly discarded as the reality of the first day of school approaches. As I prepare both mentally and physically for the challenges that a new school year brings, I am always drawn to the fact that a classroom full of twelfth grade students will look upon me with expectant but experienced eyes, and wonder what I bring to the table. This question requires an honest response. Nothing less than the truth will suffice. They have been students longer than I have been a teacher, and dishonesty would be sniffed out in a matter of minutes. So I lay my goal out there for their full scrutiny. This year, like each year before, I told them, "Together we will begin to perpetuate democracy." I let the students know that we would, whether they realized it or not, ensure that democracy would be influenced by young adults who have been equipped to civically engage in the challenges of our time. This year, also like each year before, they looked back at me with cynical eyes, perhaps even feigned amusement.

I realized that something more powerful was needed. Drawing on the limited command that I have for heightened rhetoric, I used words that were meant to empower them, explaining that this class would give them the

confidence to analyze and discuss matters of government, politics, and economics with more experienced adults. I appealed to their personal development and explained that this would be a course centered on their interests. I explained that they would be able to see the world in which they live, but have often ignored, as a place that not only invites their participation, but also requires it. Finally, I challenged them to engage in creating a class that would civically respond to Benjamin Franklin's description of our democracy as a "Republic, if you can keep it."

I was speaking from the foundation of my beliefs. This admission, while idealistic, is the authentic me. What I would require out of them would be to develop the authentic citizen that lurks inside of each of them. I would challenge them to "keep it" indeed. But this isn't all I had to request. To explain my dedication to both improve my teaching, and, in turn, improve democratic society through civically engaged students, I ask the class if they would want to be involved as research participants for my study on how authentic assessment might build civic engagement. I thought, "Who will volunteer?" and "Have I connected enough on the first day of school to motivate some student participation?" Like a candidate running for office, I knew I'd find out when the results came in.

It was then that I realized my introduction had all the hallmarks of a campaign speech. I had given a statement of beliefs and asked for a reciprocating action. I wondered if the parallel fit. More importantly, I wondered if I would be elected? My early, unscientific indications were positive. As I looked out across

the room, I saw the faces of students who would eventually participate in my study and noted what they seemed to be conveying. Annie, Marcy, Lisa, Dana, and Joyce seemed to be saying that I'd earned their vote. Tim and Cali looked undecided, while Chris seemed unconvinced and likely to vote a different way.

Implications for the Future: Baseline Data

As I was studying the effects of authentic assessment on civic engagement, it was critical that I explore some essential concepts related to their current belief structure. Civic engagement is essentially a course of action or a philosophy of action that a person partakes in that is rooted in his or her personal conception of the duties and responsibilities of a citizen. This is a feeling that is developed over time and is the product of a variety of lifelong influences. School and, by extension, my class was one of those influences. The obvious challenge for me was to manage the narrow timeframe of the study and yet be able to qualitatively measure the influence of the intervention. Essentially, civic engagement is a lifelong activity, and since I would have the students for only one semester or four and a half months, I would need to place them in a variety of scenarios and situations to increase the frequency of civically engaging activities.

After introducing the course and my seemingly pie in the sky goal, I presented various PowerPoint slides that were designed to have the students reflect on their current or long-held beliefs about democracy and then reflect on images and questions that I projected and respond to discussion-based questions. The following slides elicited the most important insight into their belief systems.

The slides in figures 1 and 2 were designed to question the historical and social circumstances of the founding of our nation and its relationship to today's world. I asked the students if they believed the men who are painted are still relevant today. Lisa, a bright eyed, and critical student argued that they were as relevant today as they had ever been, while Chris stated that they didn't mean anything today. Prior to showing the images on the next slide (figure 3) I asked the students if they thought that torture was a reasonable method to extract information or to question a suspected criminal or terrorist. I found that nine out of eleven study participants stated that torture was wrong in all cases, and the ideals and principles of our nation's founding still matter in a world of terrorism and the internet. This was, I had to admit, pleasantly surprising. I had thought that a greater proportion of the students would articulate a position that was antithetical to democratic ideals, yet they did not.

I then projected the third slide, (figure 3) attempting to bring the previous two slides together by juxtaposing the image of Khalid Sheik Mohammed, the alleged mastermind of the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, with the federal courthouse in Manhattan, New York where Mohammed might be tried, with the image of the Constitution of the United States with a crosshair centered on it. I explained the background of each of the images and then asked the two questions indicated on the PowerPoint slide. Joyce responded, "I think that government will have to be the ones to deal with terrorists, but it's our job to let them know if they have stepped on our rights." Tim, Tammy, and Dana nodded

their heads in approval. I was surprised by Joyce's degree of nuance and faith in the power of civic engagement. Maybe there wasn't going to be a need for low-level interventions like authentic assessments in order to stimulate an increased level of civic engagement. Could I be so lucky?

How do these guys still matter ...



Figure 1 Founding Fathers

... In this world?



Figure 2 Twin Towers Attacked

What is the govt's role in maintaining rights and responsibilities?



- How do we deal with modern challenges, such as terrorism?
- How do we maintain our freedoms and values, while protecting our citizens?

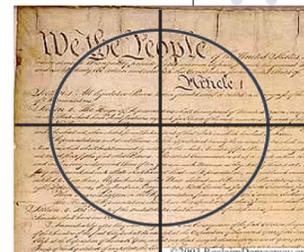


Figure 3 Juxtaposed Challenges

On the third day of class I placed the students in groups and had them read a fictitious case study about a newly independent nation. Their task was to develop a system of governance that would lead their nation to prosperity. Each group was responsible for generating a type of government, economic system, voting rights, as well as foreign and domestic priorities. These data would help me observe and evaluate two fundamental civic skills, namely cooperation and discussion, and also give me a chance to be a participant observer, interacting with the students and helping them to analyze the more complex decisions that they were to consider.

“How is your plan going?”

“Good,” replied Annie, “We have decided on an enlightened dictatorship, kind of like the one in ancient Rome.”

I commented, “You know ancient Rome was only enlightened in the sense that a privileged minority was able to participate. Consider that it became a powerful empire that enslaved thousands of people.”

“Well we’ll be different,” she replied.

“How so? I mean, how will your authoritarian policies help the newly independent people?” I wondered aloud.

“Well, I’m not sure, but it would be easier.”

The interesting thing about this conversation was not that it was unique, but rather that it was the norm. What I had hoped to learn through this activity and what I actually learned were two different things. Annie was not taking the easy way out; she was engaged in thoughtful discussion with her peers and that was the best that they could come up with. In fact, all groups including research study participants, decided on a government type that would be authoritarian at least in the short-term and potentially longer. I realized that their principles might be situational and not bounded as they had demonstrated in the PowerPoint discussion. Maybe some introductory steps were needed.

Voting and the First Survey

On the third and fourth days of class, two developments made me rethink my earlier hope that the students were civically advanced. One of the basic components of my classroom environment is giving the students some basic

democratic responsibilities, generally centered on choice. This means that we vote on issues that concern the class such as future plans, issues, and even lesson ideas. It is important that I engage this activity early. Like all building teachers, I am required to go over the basic classroom rules and expectations. I perform my due diligence in this regard, but include a place for the students to create a rule. I realize that it isn't much, just a single rule, but I hope that it will have at least some effect on how my students perceive our class as well as lead to future decisions.

I began, "Part of my job this year is to assist you in a transition towards democratic behavior. You are, at this moment, a fledgling democracy, one that is coming to terms with its newfound power and responsibility, and in order to facilitate growth we have to start with some basic decision making."

Quickly a hand shot up. It was Chris, the student who stated the day before that the founders meant "nothing" in today's world. I was interested to see where this was going. He asked, "Can the rule be anything that we want?"

"No, it can't." I replied. "As you are a fledgling democracy, and I am a weakening, but enlightened dictator, you have to follow the parameters I set. First, your rule must be a rule that I can grant. I have children to feed at home and this is a tough economy, so I have to keep my job, thus all rules must fit within the confines of existing district and school rules. Second, you get one rule, not two. That means when you vote, which will be on a paper slip with your written selection, all of your words matter. You may not use the following words as they

imply a second rule: *and*, *or*, or *in addition*, and you must have minimal usage of *all* or *every*. As I said earlier, I am a dictator, and if the voting rules are not followed, I will disenfranchise you.”

“If our rule has to fit school rules, what fun will that be?” asked Tim.

“Maybe an example would help. In the past when other classes have been offered this opportunity, they have voted for no homework over the weekend, or no tests on Mondays.”

As class came to a close I asked if there were any questions concerning the type of rule they could create. I explained that the voting would be the first activity in our next class.

The next day began with a vote on their proposed rule. I handed out small, blank slips of paper and asked the students to write down their rule. After collecting the votes, I asked for a student to play the role of election monitor. I explained that I did not intend on lying to them, but without verification and engagement, they could not be certain that I would be as honest as they would hope. I realized that I was an extension of both the real and our created government. One by one, I unfolded the votes, read them aloud, and wrote their suggestions on the board. As I tallied them, the students realized the outcome. They have voted to have no homework over the weekend. The vote total was overwhelming, 16 votes for no homework over the weekend, 3 votes for no tests on Mondays, and 6 votes for open note quizzes every other quiz. I asked the class if they spoke with each other over the past night and day prior to our vote. Four

students respond that they had collaborated. This led me to my first concern, stemming from two questions. First, how engaged were they? And second, how much influence did I have? While I recognized that my class did not occupy the most urgent place in their lives, I was worried by what I perceived as the apparent lack of collaboration and, by extension, willingness to think for themselves considering that their fallback choices were the two rules that I had suggested. Would they collaborate well as the semester progresses? Did they possess the skills necessary to do so effectively? What did this mean for their ability to civically engage with each other? Additionally, as they chose one of the two examples that I had given from years past, what did that imply? Knowing that my intentions were without regard to any particular outcome, what would happen when much more organized, concerted efforts would be made to influence their views with regard to a specific outcome?

Will They Participate?

I knew that my decision to ask for student participation in my teacher action research study on day one was fraught with potential problems. At the heart of my nervousness was the possibility of rejection-- not the kind that is decided based on the number of students willing to participate but rather the type of rejection that would question my existential reason for teaching. As the students found their desks and were seated, I asked them to pass their study consent forms forward. Out of 25 total students in my 2nd block class, eleven were willing to

participate. While it was not as many participants as I had hoped for, I was excited to finally know whom I would be studying throughout the semester ahead.

To end the first week of baseline data collection, I gave the students the first of two surveys (see Appendix E) that they would complete in the course. The goal of the survey was to learn about students' basic beliefs concerning government and their role as participants in civic society. The survey asked knowledge-based, attitudinal, and free response questions. The first question on the survey was a free response question in which I asked the students to identify the number one problem facing the country that they would like to see addressed. The most frequent responses dealt with healthcare, ending the war in Iraq, eliminating poverty, and improving the economy. When I read their responses I was excited to see that they had identified problems that have proven, for the most part, to be generational problems. Additionally, I was thrilled to read that the problems they identified required an engaged populace that would need to be dedicated to reconstructing how society addresses these issues in order to solve them. The second free response question, figure 4, asked what they could specifically do to make a meaningful difference in their community. I have collated their responses using Wordle, an online program that takes prose and illustrates it using the size of the illustrated word as a frequency count. Eight of eleven participants believed that volunteering was the best way to solve their community's problems.

important, and consequently only six believed that the government addresses the needs of young people Figure 7.

| Which of the following political parties do you think that you will/do belong to? | | | |
|---|---|-----------------------|---------|
| | | Number of Respondents | Percent |
| Republican |  | 2 | 15.38% |
| Democrat |  | 5 | 38.46% |
| Independent |  | 1 | 7.69% |
| Libertarian |  | 1 | 7.69% |
| Constitution | | 0 | 0.00% |
| Green |  | 1 | 7.69% |
| I don't even know what any party really stands for |  | 3 | 23.08% |

Figure 5 Survey question

| How important is voting to you personally? | | | |
|--|---|-----------------------|---------|
| | | Number of Respondents | Percent |
| extremely important |  | 4 | 36.36% |
| very important |  | 2 | 18.18% |
| somewhat important |  | 4 | 36.36% |
| a little important |  | 1 | 9.09% |
| not important at all | | 0 | 0.00% |

Figure 6 Survey question

| Question 7 (Yes-no) | | | |
|---|---|-----------------------|---------|
| 13 of 13 respondents answered this question. | | | |
| Does the government attempt to address the needs of young adults (17-25)? | | | |
| | | Number of Respondents | Percent |
| Yes |  | 6 | 46.15% |
| No |  | 7 | 53.85% |
| Total | | 13 | 100.00% |

[top](#)

Figure 7 Survey Question

Additionally, nine students believe that they were at least average citizens, while all eleven stated that staying informed was a critical component of citizenship. The students seemed to know what they thought good citizens were, yet these results were contrasted by the fact that five of the participants believed that expressing concern for the rights and welfare of others, and demonstrating tolerance was not important. Lastly, the students reported on activities that empowered them to participate and influence the government. For reporting purposes, I created table 1 to reflect the participants' answers to this question, and numbers reported are for the choice that was most empowering. As this was a ranking question, no two responses could have been ranked as the most empowering.

Table 1. Student Survey #1 Question13

| Instructional Activity | Student Response N = 11 |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Simulations/role play | 1 |
| Current Events-reading and discussing | 2 |
| Debating Issues | 2 |
| Posting Responses on Nicenet | 2 |
| Class Discussion of Issues Affecting the US | 4 |

At this point I did not know what to make of their overall civic engagement. When I reviewed the results of the survey, I was surprised to find that no students ranked discussion highest. Of all of the activities, discussion is

the most readily available tool at citizens' disposal, and I would argue that it is the essential building block of democratic action. Yet at the start of my study, my participants did not view discussion as highly as net postings, simulation/role-play, or debate. These data were further supported by the second to last question, which asked if it was important for the student to express concern for the rights and welfare of others and to demonstrate tolerance and respect for opposing viewpoints. Consistent with their earlier rankings, question 14 illustrates that only 25% strongly agreed while over 41% were opposed to the concept of having concern for and having tolerance and respect for opposing viewpoints.

The first week of class ended, and I felt fairly concerned. My students largely did not yet see the value of personal and group discussion as a means to influence others, evidenced little respect for those who disagreed with their own viewpoints, and were somewhat disconnected from the problems they perceived and the means by which to address them. I actually had the thought that I was in over my head. That being said, I knew there was a lot of room for growth. Hopefully, it would be just a matter of time and some well-placed authentic assessments.

Philosophers as Anchors?

I needed a way to understand the students' thinking and at the same time engage them in activities that authentically reflected the critical characteristics of civic engagement. Re-examining the data that I gathered during the first week, I realized that in order to understand how students viewed the world and their place

in it, I needed a simple framework that both the students and I could discuss with common understanding. What we needed was an anchor. Beginning on Monday morning of the second week of the study, I began class by asking “Is mankind good or bad?” Additionally, I asked students not to respond immediately, but to consider the question for thirty seconds and then write a written response and to place a check mark on a continuum like the one that I was drawing on the Smartboard. I used the time while they were thinking to draw and label the continuum *Mankind* and then write *people are good* on the left end and *people are bad* at the right end. I needed to explain how the students would use the continuum to illustrate their views. Before I had a chance to speak, many hands shot up.

Dana: What do you mean good or bad? Do you mean all of the time? Do you mean all of the people?

Mr. Quartuch: What I mean is, do you, based on your beliefs and life experiences, believe that people are innately good or bad? Maybe one way to look at this is to imagine how people would behave if no one were watching or if they knew they wouldn't ever be caught. Would people be good or would they be bad under those circumstances?

Dana: O.K. I think I understand.

Chris: Mr. Q., I don't like the simple either or part of the question. I can't answer this because people are both of those things.

Mr. Q: I understand your concern, but that is the beauty of using a continuum. If you would place your mark on either end, that would mean that 100% of the people were either good or bad. If you don't think like that you can place a mark closer to the middle, which would indicate that people were both good and bad.

At this point many of the students' hands went down, but their writing and erasing increased dramatically. As the students thought about their responses, I studied their body language and listened to the comments floating around the room. As I watched them, I also wondered... *Will I be able to keep my beliefs a mystery from the students? I'm shocked by the number of students who seem to be changing their responses based on whether they could or would get caught. What does that say about their ability or willingness to carry out democratic compromises when they don't trust their neighbors?*

When the pencils and pens have come to a stop, I ask again, "So, what do you think? Is mankind good or bad?" More than half of the students raise their hands. I'm excited by the level of participation and eager to hear what they have

to say. As I call on them, I direct the students to go up to the Smartboard and place a checkmark on continuum based on how they think.

Joyce: I think humans are born indifferent. Humans are influenced by their surrounding and how they were brought up. They could go either way. *Places a checkmark just slightly right of center.*

Jackie: I think that all of the laws that we have make people act out.

Mr. Q: How so?

Jackie: I mean if there were fewer laws people wouldn't be motivated to break them as much. Take drugs and drinking for example. Many kids do these things just because they are bad things to do and they will think that they are cool. But I'm also not sure, maybe more people would do stuff if there wasn't anyone watching them. *Places a checkmark just right of center.*

Mr. Q: Sandy, what do you think?

Sandy: I think there are more bad than good. People lie and do bad things now and we've got tons of laws. *Places a checkmark further right than both Joyce and Jackie.*

Chris: I'd like to think that people are all good, but I think that if a person dropped some money and no one saw if someone

Once we had finished discussing, I divided the class into thirds and asked students to read brief overviews of the life and philosophies of Thomas Hobbes, Jean-Jacque Rousseau, and John Locke. Each student had to summarize his or her assigned philosopher's beliefs, paying particular attention to what that philosopher thought of mankind, as well as how each viewed the purpose of government. When the students were finished, they discussed their findings with their respective groups. During the ensuing discussion about the different philosophical viewpoints and their relationship to our earlier discussion of mankind, the students were able to come to explain why the social contract exists, but from different philosophical perspectives. I briefly polled each participant about which philosopher's worldview they supported. I then compared them to my notes from the previous week's simulation on the fictional nation of Freedonia and identified two particularly interesting results of the comparison. The first was that all of the students either favored Hobbes or Locke. Second, all of the students who favored a Hobbesian worldview, where mankind lived a life seeking protection with likeminded others from the violent and selfish urges of their society, also had wanted a Romanesque style enlightened dictator the week before. I was able to contrast this with the fact that all of the students who identified with Locke's worldview, where mankind lived a happy existence distinguished by reason and tolerance, were also proponents of a democratic government in the simulation.

The anchor had found a mooring. I began to feel that I had uncovered a key lens through which the students viewed the world. The trick was going to be to see if the students would come to the same or similar insight, and then act upon it in a way that would foster continued civic engagement. At this point they could identify themselves as either a supporter of Hobbes or Locke and have the beginning stages of a theoretical defense of their beliefs. While students possessed only an initial understanding of the philosophical basis of the social contract, I hoped that this new learning would facilitate future understanding and action.

Quiz One

The first traditional assessment gave me an opportunity to see how the students would make the connections between the philosophical underpinnings of American Government and actions that they might be willing to take as individuals. The participants responded to the following prompt. “If democracy insists that individuals rights are at the heart of ensuring democracy, what are you, as an individual, willing to do in order to ensure that it continues to work serving the rights of all citizens? Or do you think that you are obligated to do anything?” I created a pastiche to compare the differences in student responses, with the most efficacious answers at the top and the least at the bottom. Overall, the responses were positive. The students seemed to be making basic connections between idealistic goals and realistic implementation. While many of the responses that I placed near the top of the pastiche spoke of obligatory involvement, their proposed actions belied blind obligation and crossed over into active

participation. By intellectually crossing that barrier between obligation and implementation, students demonstrated civic efficacy. Even the answers that were less efficacious to me still advanced a connection between individual freedoms and societal gains. My students were not anarchists by any stretch, but I hoped that participants that I placed at the bottom of the pastiche would eventually responds with greater awareness of the efficacy, legitimacy, or correctness of any law.

The students' response to the short answer question was a preview of what was to come in our discussion of the Declaration of Independence. Only one student in the class, a study participant with the pseudonym Joyce, had actually read the document prior to twelfth grade. The other study participants stated that they were aware of the document and what its overarching purpose was. Joyce was the only student in the class to have been in AP US History the year before, making me wonder whether non-AP tracked students had prior exposure to document analysis, or whether they had been given summative information by the teacher. I assigned the Declaration of Independence as a reading for homework along with a graphic organizer to facilitate their analysis. The next day the students participated in a pair-share analysis based on their homework responses. I asked the pairs to come to a consensus of the most important pieces of the Declaration. The participants as a whole argued that the basic human rights articulated in the document were the most important. Tim, whose response was indicative of the larger class' viewpoint, stated that without the defense of

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>“I THINK I AM OBLIGATED TO GET INVOLVED AND DO SOMETHING ABOUT ENSURING DEMOCRACY’S INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS ARE AT THE HEART. WE NEED TO WATCH TV OR FIND SOME WAY IN GETTING INFORMATION AND GET INFORMATION ON HOW THE GOVERNMENT AND U.S IS DOING TO ENSURE WE DON’T LOSE OUR RIGHTS.”</p> | Most engaged |
| <p><i>“As an individual I am willing to give up some of rights in order to gain freedom and also be protected. ...[you must] use your rights to help you and your community, such as protesting something you strongly believe in and getting your voice heard.”</i></p> |  |
| <p><i>“If I didn't like the way things were in my city I think I would stand up and tell the democracy what needed to be changed and hoped I could make a difference for others lives.”</i></p> | |
| <p>“One must be willing to educate oneself through schooling, teaching one's children about his/her rights, and paying attention to what the government is doing. I am obligated to do all of these things so I can be sure that the government does not overstep its boundaries.”</p> | |
| <p>“I, as an individual, need to obey rules and fight for what I believe in with nonviolent acts.”</p> | |
| <p>“As an individual I'm willing to give up certain rights for the betterment of the whole. I feel obligated, even though I may not like it, to follow everything the government puts into action.”</p> | |
| <p>“I must follow the basic laws and be an active participant in society. I need to do the right things, so I can be a role model towards others.”</p> | |
| <p>“I think that we should have to participate in government so that we keep the democracy strong.”</p> | |
| <p><i>“I do not believe that you are obligated because we have the freedom with our government. I do however believe you should do it because it is the right thing to do.”[emphasis mine]</i></p> | |
| <p>“I'm willing to stand up for my rights when needed. <i>I don't really feel obligated to do anything,</i> [emphasis mine] other than follow the law, because to have rights I feel that we have to follow the law.”</p> | |
| <p>“So in a way, if we as people want to live successfully, it's almost as if we're <i>expected</i> [emphasis mine] to perform acts, of our own, such as volunteering, being part of the community in which you live in, follow the national news, keep in touch with what the government has to say to the people, be aware of what the nation has to offer and what it can take away.”</p> | Least engaged |

Figure 9 Declarations

unalienable rights, “none of the rest matters. I mean if we can’t do what we want without violating another person’s rights, then what do we have?” I was pleased to see their ability to forge a consensus, but when I asked about the more radical implications of the document, fissures began to form.

Mr. Q: Let me see by a show of hands if you think that illegal immigrants have the same unalienable rights as you do.

Two of the ten present participants raise their hands in support of the statement.

Mr. Q: Now, how many believe that people should be able to marry anyone that they want, regardless of gender?

All of the participants raise their hands in support of this question.

Mr. Q: Does anyone see a conflict between these two examples?

Tim: I don’t. Illegal immigrants have no legal status here in the US. They are not citizens, so they don’t get the same rights as everyone.

Lisa: I agree with Tim. I mean if they are here illegally then they have no rights.

Joyce: I see a problem. I don’t think government should be telling people what they can and cannot do whether it is working or marrying. Besides the whole “life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness” thing doesn’t say only if you are American.

Chris: I see a problem, too. I mean I’m not a citizen here, but I deserve to have basic human rights.

Mr. Q: Well, how about this? The Declaration states that if the government violates your unalienable rights, the population has the duty at the very minimum to protest, and at the most, to dissolve the government. Do you agree?

Joyce: I agree because otherwise we wouldn't have a democracy.

Marcy: I do too. If my rights were violated I would feel like the government had sold me out.

Annie: It depends. If women's rights were taken away then I think it would be fine.

Mr. Q: Well what would you do? How many of you would protest?

Eight out of the ten student participants who were present raised their hands.

Mr. Q: Do you think that it could be reasonable for states like Alaska or Hawaii, considering how they became US states, *(I explained how their statehoods originated)* to dissolve their bond with the US and act as independent nations if they chose to?

As I observe the students wrestling with this question I began thinking: *The students looked confused. Can they really imagine a world where the United States was less united than it had been? Can they imagine that the US could be viewed as less than ideal? I can also see that they need some processing time.*

The students respond to the question, but this time only 4 of the participants raised their hands. I can observe from their body language that they do not feel

very comfortable with this idea, even if they could philosophically support it. I asked the students to respond to this brief discussion through one of our online classrooms, Nicenet, using the “conferencing” feature, which allowed each of the students to see everyone else’s response as they posted their own. This also allowed them the processing time needed to come to a more nuanced position than just discussing. As they fervently typed their responses, the only audible sound was that of fingers on keyboards. The students had been authentically engaged in civic discourse.

As I checked their responses, I was struck by both the maturity of some viewpoints, as well as the relative simplicity of others. I’ve paired the participants’ responses in a two columned chart in figure 10.

While I was not advocating for a breakup of the United States, I wanted to see how far the students were willing to push the logic and ideals of the Declaration. For the most part, the students were unable to imagine a world that did not include the US as it is currently configured. But more importantly, only two of the students, Joyce and Annie, were able to connect the ideals of the Declaration to the given scenario. At this point in the semester, most of the students were unable to confront their own contemporary bias in order to adhere to a broad logical argument. They struggled to connect the articulated individual struggles or injustices in 1776 with an attempt to reach a modern audience. As the students could understand how “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” applied

to them and more broadly to their fellow Americans, they struggled with the notion of applying an American document to non-Americans.

| <i>Yes, the Declaration could be used to justify Alaska and/or Hawaii becoming independent.</i> | <i>No, the Declaration should not be used to justify Alaska and/or Hawaii becoming independent.</i> |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Yes, some states might not want to be involved with the U.S because of all the war involved. If Alaska or Hawaii didn't want to be attacked they could break away from the U.S to stop involvement in US wars. ▪ If they felt they had the 4 qualities to suffice as their own state, and if they felt that they would be better off without the U.S. then yes. ▪ I think it would reasonable for any state especially Hawaii and Alaska to break away from the US. Why? I believe that if they don't like how they are being governed then they should be able to break away and form a better government for themselves and the rest of their people. ▪ I would be in favor of the state leaving if their Constitutional rights were being violated and no one was speaking up for them. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No, it would not be reasonable ... You pay taxes to the US and have been for many years so to break away would be difficult. ▪ If we were an utterly failing country and not taking ANY of our issues into hand, then perhaps they'd find it easier to secede. But we're not, we're not horrible, so they shouldn't. ▪ I don't think it would be reasonable for any states especially those states to break away. We gained those territories and other states wanted to join us, ... so hopefully they would be willing to talk to US before running away. ▪ I don't feel it would be reasonable for a state to break away from the US, ... the state would not be able to survive as a separate nation because their government is so used to being guided. ▪ First off they did not want to be part of the United States they would have fought and apparently they did not because they want to be part of the country. ▪ No, because I feel that could cause revolutions with other states. And all the states get their voice heard, so if the government is treating all the states "equally", any state shouldn't really secede, because that could cause problems to the government and other states. |

Figure 10 Declaration Comparisons

From this, I gained two particular new insights. The first was that if I was to help my students become civically engaged through authentic assessments, I must recognize the relative limitations of fictitious scenarios. Without feeling as though the Hawaii and Alaska secession scenario was true to life, the students dismissed it out of hand. Hence, I realized that I would need to become more prepared for the intellectual and emotional ups and downs of seventeen and eighteen year old senior high school students. While I found myself wishing here that they had a stronger framework for analyzing democratic processes and issues, I would not be studying how to increase civic engagement if they already possessed this framework.

The Second Simulation

As our study of American Government grew beyond the founding documents, we confronted the way that the US Constitution divides power between a federal government and the state governments. I asked the students if they could define *federal government*. Chris jokingly responded that he sees the word Federal on his money but didn't know anything else about it. As A British citizen living in the United States, Chris is a mix of two similar cultures, but very different political systems. To explore the division of power in more detail, I placed the students into local, state, and federal groups and told them that they would be the leaders confronted with developing an emergency preparedness response to a hurricane. I had them create a list of things that they felt they would be able to do prior to a hurricane making landfall. I then had them watch the first

few minutes of a documentary titled *When the Levees Break*, describing the physical impact of Hurricane Katrina on the city of New Orleans and the state of Louisiana. Once the students had seen the actual destruction and flooding, they had to develop a during and after emergency plan, which included a reevaluation of their initial emergency preparedness plan.

The students took to their task with newfound confidence. Armed with a list of governmental agencies and a brief description of their responsibilities, the students started working. I observed the students delegating responsibilities and taking on leadership roles within the subgroups. Tammy, Sandy, and Annie were assigned to the “state” level group. Immediately, Tammy and Annie delegated and subdivided the larger group into two smaller units with each working on the “during” and “after” stages of the emergency plan. It was amazing to see them take leadership roles and move their groups forward. Similarly, Jackie, Cali, and Dana set about leading their respective “local” level groups, while Joyce and Lisa led the “federal” representatives on the assigned tasks. Unfortunately, Chris and Tim did not seem as engaged as the other participants. They were in less focused groups that struggled to stay on task. Yet, this was the first time that I had seen real leadership from so many of the participants. As I walked around the room I overheard Tammy organizing the prioritized list of emergency measures, while Joyce was trying to handle the burden of managing the “federal” group. This group was inundated by the vast amount of resources that the federal government

could bring to bear, yet Joyce and Lisa managed successfully to keep the group on task.

Overall, the level of their engagement as well as the product that they turned out impressed me. In post simulation class discussions the participants made greater connections to various types of federalism and solid inroads on their beliefs about their views on the proper scope and purpose of government. Most importantly they stated that their expectations of government(s) were often too high, considering the degree to which resources needed to be allocated prior to disasters. This led them to state, not too strongly, that citizens need to bear two responsibilities: sacrificing short-term gains for long-term protections, and greater degree of vigilance of their legislators' responsibilities. Joyce, a burgeoning Libertarian, declared that while she was predisposed to want little government involvement, she didn't see how individuals could manage natural disasters in the short-run. She made the connection between her belief system and the real-life challenges that societies face in the wake of disasters. Now I felt as though we were getting somewhere! Additionally, Annie connected the challenges of having an appropriate level of interaction between the Federal and state governments. Tim and Sandy, on the other hand, struggled to make the connection between states' rights and federal responsibilities. Tim asked, "Why can't the President just send the military in to maintain order?"

Sandy indicted the federal government by asking, “Why would the President let the levees be built if they weren’t strong enough to hold back a powerful hurricane?”

Both Tim and Sandy’s questions demonstrated an interest in the content, but a lack of accurate application. When I asked who would be willing to give up tax dollars in order to try to prevent excessive damage caused by natural disasters, all of the participants raised their hands. Tammy even added, “You pay each month for insurance and this is kind of like that.” Yet, in light of the challenges posed by the simulation, all of the participants had begun to make important connections that they had largely failed to make in earlier activities. I was beginning to see some progress concerning their analysis of governmental actions and personal engagement.

What am I?

High school is a challenge for all students in some way or another. Many students find the depth of content challenging, while others find the personal maturation process difficult, while all students are developing a sense of who they are and what they believe. Historically, my students have come to class with very little understanding of political parties, and most identify with the party their parents belong to. This year was no different. Three of the eleven participants stated in the baseline survey that they had no idea what the parties stood for. Even the state of Pennsylvania, in its Civics and Government standards for 12th grade has only one standard that directly addresses political parties. Standard

“5.3.12.D: Evaluate the roles of political parties, interest groups, and mass media in politics and public policy” does not begin to consider any aspect of individual beliefs, how to develop them, how to analyze or evaluate issues as they concern a framework or philosophy of thinking, or whether they are valuable in a democratic society. If the state were an honest broker of educational content, the standard would insist that personal political development was taught throughout the state. In order to facilitate another of Pennsylvania’s standard areas on rights and responsibilities of citizenship, students must be able to evaluate political leadership as well as what makes competent and responsible citizens. Yet there is no specific mention of whether learning about the beliefs of political parties has a role. It is as if the students would be able to do what the state wants without the knowledge to make an informed decision. This is counter to competent and responsible citizenship, and it discourages civic engagement. It was clear that my students needed to delve into their personal beliefs and see if they found themselves to be part of a larger whole. If we are to expect civic engagement, they could not simply be passengers along for the ride; rather they had to be the drivers who understood the full range of paths to their respective destinations. For the next week and a half, my students launched into a unit on political parties and voting behavior that was rooted in individual research and self-discovery. I assigned an organizer who would help the students manage the results of their research and ideological surveys that I had them complete. I designed the organizer to help the students realize the trends that they might be seeing in their

research. One of my main goals was to be as impartial a facilitator as was possible. While I chose the surveys that the students would take, I felt that there was a wide-enough range of options to allow for individual discovery. The students had to predict the political party they might belong to, as well as which two issues they believed were the most important to them personally. The students then took the surveys and researched independently what five political parties believed about the issues that they felt most passionately about. On the third day of this exploration, I had the students participate in an activity that would help them take stands on various issues in a non-confrontational manner, yet allow them to hear multiple perspectives on the issues being discussed. When the students were standing in the center of the room, I read a statement or scenario that required the students either to agree or disagree. I then directed the students to move to one of two corners of the room, representing agreement or disagreement. Once the students had moved to the corner that best represented their own viewpoint, I called on students from each side to state why they felt that they were right. If the students were unsure of how to interpret the scenario or statement, they stayed in the middle until they received an adequate enough explanation to make a choice. I also asked the students not participating in the movement to categorize the agree or disagree corners as either liberal or conservative as well as to keep track of how they would have moved had they been actively moving at that time. The students moved from center to corner time and time again. It took about three statements for a familiar pattern to occur. The

students were beginning to understand that they often didn't move as individuals, but rather as groups, because their beliefs were similar to those who were as liberal or conservative as they were. They also began noting whose beliefs indicated that they were similarly liberal or conservative. It was the first time that I had seen the proverbial light bulb turn on. As students began moving and defending their positions with greater comfort and enthusiasm, I began to read less clear-cut statements. After I read the statement, "Law abiding citizens should not have a limit on the number of guns they own," Tim, a self-predicted Democrat, seemed torn. He began moving from the center to the left corner, which represented the disagree/liberal perspective, but paused and said, "I mean, are we talking about handguns, machine guns, or hunting rifles? I don't know how to move if I don't have more information." I asked the one student from each of corners who had already committed to explain how he had interpreted the statement.

Annie, a self-identified Republican, said, "I was interpreting this to mean any gun. The 2nd amendment didn't state how many guns we could have. Besides, the people that are causing all of the problems aren't buying them legally."

Tammy, a self-identified Democrat, responded, "I thought it meant any kind of gun except one used for hunting. Why would someone need a machine gun, let alone three? I mean there's a reason why there are so many murders in the

US.” As Tim heard the explanations he moved toward the disagree/liberal corner, but did not commit to being completely within the liberal group.

Confusion Leading to Understanding

As the activity progressed it was clear to me that the participants were beginning to find their intellectual footing. As they were able to take a position and defend it without resorting to arguments or bullying, I felt that we were gaining some ground on becoming a better more informed citizen. It was time to introduce more difficult scenarios that would expand their political ideology. Up until this point we had only focused on two typologies, liberal and conservative, although students had also done research on the Libertarian and Green parties. Yet, the scenarios and statements that I had read were fairly simple to identify based on the big versus small government argument, which represented the liberal versus conservative arguments respectively. To end the activity I delivered the following two statements: “Government should not interfere with a woman’s right to choose whether to have an abortion or not, and pornography should not be protected by the 1st amendment.” The students, especially Annie, my most conservative student, and Lisa my most liberal student, looked confused as they found themselves trying to place themselves in the appropriate corner. I asked them what troubles they were having. Both Annie and Lisa responded in a way that demonstrated that they were analyzing the issues in greater depth than they had previously. They knew how they wanted to respond to the statements, but they stated concern about what their response would indicate about their

philosophy. Lisa asked, “I know that I don’t want government to make decisions for women, and while I’m not saying that I support pornography, I think that it should be legal. But that means that I want government to do less, and that is confusing considering what we had said about big versus small government.” Annie gave a similar response, providing a perfect opportunity to allow the class that was not moving from corner to corner a chance to respond to their dilemma by categorizing the agree or disagree statements. But these students couldn’t understand it either. It was perfect. I had hoped that the students would grow together, and they had. I had hoped that they would analyze, discuss, and evaluate issues and their response to them, and they had. Now they needed new depth of knowledge, and it needed to tie into their belief system. I stopped the activity and had them take their last survey, titled *Idealog*, the creation of Janda et al., which expands the single typology, big versus small government, into a two dimensional framework that analyzes four philosophical perspectives including liberal, conservative, libertarian, and communitarian. As the students were taking the survey I was able to circle the room and discuss the problems of the big versus small perspective. As I spoke with Chris, he stated that he “just didn’t understand how he could be both liberal on some issues and conservative on others.” I replied that while his discomfort was shared among the students in the class, it was no less true for him. I explained that many people have what they initially feel as conflicting beliefs about the proper purpose and scope of government, but what they learn is that their initial belief system may have been too simple for their

complicated intellectual arguments. I've created the pastiche in figure 10 as indicative of the study participants' questions that were asked while taking the survey.

How can I choose between these if I know that one is for smaller government and I want larger government? – Cali

But if I'm a liberal, how can I want government to stay out of gay marriage? –Sandy

I DON'T UNDERSTAND MR. Q.! I WANT GOVERNMENT TO DO MORE SOCIALLY AND ECONOMICALLY BUT I THOUGHT I WAS A LIBERAL. - MARCY

Figure 11: Uncertainty

The students were beginning to realize that complicated issues and beliefs take a more complicated organizational framework. Despite their questions, or maybe because of their questions, they were becoming more personally and civically aware.

The Essay

The culminating activity of the unit on political parties asked students to write a reflective essay on their personal political ideology, synthesizing what they had found out about themselves that they did not know at the beginning of the unit. The participants had researched, reflected, analyzed, discussed, as well as evaluated. Now it was the moment of truth. I was hoping to read in their own

words if the variety of authentic instructional activities and assessments had paid off in terms of their reported learning and by consequence being able to engage in the world around them in a more confident manner. On the other hand, I was worried that the development that I had observed and discussed would not be as great as I hoped.

As I read their essays, the level of personal growth and the recognition of what their newfound knowledge meant for their future democratic and civic endeavors more than mitigated my concern. Figure 15 cites the participants' personal reflections on the political party unit, specifically highlighting the changes the unit made on their civic mindset, knowledge, and future actions. Of all of the statements and the resultant changes that the students were acknowledging in their essays, I was happy with the variance of civic engagement stated in their answers. The students demonstrated civic engagement by stating that they would vote, discuss, persuasively argue, accept the power that knowledge brings, and even be more polite in how they expressed their opinion. But most importantly to me, the students expressed confidence in their ability to be engaged citizens by learning about themselves and their beliefs. They reported that learning about themselves empowered their sense of collectivism by engaging their willingness to be a part of a larger number without giving up their individuality.

I had no clue, what each party stood for. –Tim

I have learned where I fit into the political system of America. Before this knowledge I wasn't planning to be a voter because not only did I not know my party, but I didn't know all the major issues. Knowing the information I now know, I am more likely to vote because I know my stand on the issues. –Tim

Before coming into this section I had some ideas as to what I am. –Chris

But after learning this information (party's platforms) I can decide for myself and be able to backup my decision. And then when I am able to vote, I can place and educated ballot. –Chris

I had always thought that I would be a Republican just like my parents. –Dana

Now I am very confident. I am confident enough to vote, and for the first time, I even talked about government with my family and knew what I was talking about!!!–Dana

I had a decent idea of what my political opinion were before I came to Government class. –Joyce

It (this class) has helped me to better articulate my thoughts about certain subjects, and seem more polite about it at the same time. –Joyce

I mean before this, I really had no opinion of anything that was going on because I had no clue what anyone was talking about. -Jackie

Now, I can be like everyone and voice my beliefs and back it up with the knowledge I gained. I am proud of what I am! -Jackie

I wasn't sure if I knew the true meaning of all parties. - Lisa

I became able to understand my feelings towards beliefs and explain why I feel so strongly about these ideas. I feel prepared to vote in an election. -Lisa

Before this unit started, I thought I belonged in the Green Party. –Marcy

I know I belong to the Green Party. This unit and corresponding essay made it more likely that I would participate in the future. I could be an outspoken advocate for the Green Party initiatives, by starting to talk at home, then just talking more about it with my friends. –Marcy

Figure 12 Layered story

Additionally, they were able to link their feelings to the unit, and by extension, to the authentic opportunities that were provided. Yet, while all the answers were not as enlightening as the ones in figure 11, there was nothing that was reported as lessening their civic engagement. Only Tammy articulated a response that was not typical of the aforementioned responses. She recognized that while she had learned a lot about who she was and how her beliefs fit into an ideology as evidenced by her statement, “To be honest, I didn’t even know the difference between a democrat and a republican,” she still expressed doubt about her future actions. By stating, “I am still unsure if I would want to vote,” she illustrated a layer of civic engagement that contrasted sharply with the rest of the participants. While they relished their ability to fit within a new peer group, Tammy had put her acceptance on hold by simply being skeptical about her willingness to vote. These activities, while being informative were not enough to alter her civic efficacy. After I read her essay I asked her about her response. She stated that she just wanted to live simply and raise horses. Further she explained that by engaging in the world of politics and political parties she believed that her life would somehow become unnecessarily complicated, and participation was thus unwelcome. I had my negative case. All in all, I felt that the unit and its authentic activities were a success. I knew that I had made some progress with my students and how they perceived the role they would and could play, in their society. Now I hoped to build upon the momentum the participants had begun to demonstrate by leading them through a week and a half long simulation that replicated the

final week of a fictitious primary election campaign for senator in the great state of Quartuchia!

Quartuchia: Can something so obviously fake be authentic?

If knowing what political party they might want to join was all it would take to be civically engaged, then my students had already achieved that lofty goal. On the other hand, if the goal was more elusive than just party affiliation, then I knew that they needed to take their knowledge and willingness to engage to the next step. At this point, both the students and the real world were paralleling nicely. It was the beginning of the second week of October and election season was upon us. Both the midterm elections and our in-class primary campaign elections were about to head into overdrive. The primary election was the largest, most involved authentic assessment of the semester and of the study. The simulation was conceived by the University of Virginia's Center for Politics and specifically the Youth Leadership Initiative. The center provides free downloadable and editable materials for teachers. While the simulation originated with materials from the Youth Leadership Initiative, I either edited or added many materials to the simulation in order to extend and personalize the students' experiences. This was to be the highlight of the American Government portion of the study and I was practically ecstatic to begin the simulation. I was riding a fairly large wave of progress into our classroom campaign season, and I wanted to

continue to build upon the foundations that the students had articulated in their political ideology essays.

My first task was to develop a sense of excitement about the simulation, as well as a belief in their ability and readiness to partake in a detailed civic exercise. I explained to the students that I would be sending out a card that I needed them to complete so that I could assign them to groups of ideologically similar students in order to conduct a classroom election. I said, *“Tomorrow we will begin a competition to see who will become the next senator from the great state of Quartuchia.”* The students looked at me apprehensively, but said nothing. *Did he just say Quartuchia?* their looks seemed to suggest. *“Yes, I said Quartuchia. You haven’t heard of it? It is a wonderful little state that exists where southern California used to be.”* I showed them a map of the US that a former student had altered to include Quartuchia as the 51st state. I explained that this project was the next extension of the course-long theme of learning how government worked and how they could be involved. I sent out a card that surveyed their political preferences and their technological strengths. Additionally, I asked if they had any desire to be journalists. That night I categorized the students into five political campaigns and one news outlet. Due to ideological differences, only one group had more than two study participants paired for this project. It was critical that the students be placed with other students who had similar political affiliations, as I expected that they would create a coherent campaign message. Based on the political affiliations of the students, there were five campaigns. Four of the

campaigns considered themselves to be Democrats, while one was an independent campaign. The independents were a mixed group, consisting of members with right leaning tendencies, and even included one self-identified Libertarian.

The premise of the simulation was fairly simple. The students were in the last week of the campaign before the primary elections were to be held. The students were running for an open Senate seat in the fictional state of Quartuchia and were divided into groups of four to five based on their party affiliation as determined during the last unit. Their goal was to work with their team to develop a statewide campaign strategy by analyzing voter demographics, party affiliation, and polling data, while writing and delivering speeches, making campaign posters, managing fundraising and finances, being interviewed and handling the press' investigations into various ethical dilemmas and interest group influence, and finally making three campaign commercials. The commercials were shown to other classes in the social studies department and became the platform by which those classes voted for candidates in the election. There were over 250 votes cast for the various candidates or nearly 10% of the high school student body. Due to the fact that there was only one independent campaign, it was running unopposed in the primary, while the four Democratic campaigns were in a heated head to head competition for the nomination.

Leading by example

Once the students were assigned to their particular campaigns, the students were directed to select who would fulfill the following campaign roles: Candidate, Campaign Manager, Financial Advisor, Media Advisor, and Polling Advisor. It was interesting to observe the participants advocate for a particular job over another. Tammy announced to her group that she was “Practically neurotic about organization” and would make an excellent campaign manager. While Joyce, the student who concluded in her political ideology essay that she needed to “articulate my thoughts about certain subjects, and seem more polite about it at the same time,” fiercely pursued the candidacy of her independent group. I was impressed by Joyce’s willingness to be the candidate as she was applying the insight that she had gained from the political parties unit. In an informal interview after the first day of the campaign, I asked Joyce about wanting to be the candidate, and she told me that her family was comprised of dedicated Libertarians and that she had grown up in an environment that was “open to political discussions, although not always the most politically correct type.”

“Why do you need to be more polite?” I asked.

She answered, “Well, it was easy to discuss issues at home around people that are similar to you, but class was different because there are so many different beliefs.” I was actually proud of her growth and maturity, but even more so when

I knew that as the lone Libertarian, she would have to make campaign promises in terms of her campaign's platform.

As the first day ended, two of the study participants, Chris and Joyce, were candidates, while Jackie and Tammy became campaign managers and Tim became the lead editor of the journalist group. As I walked around to each of the groups, I was struck by the fact that out of eleven possible leadership positions in five different campaigns and a news organization, five of the eleven study participants were the leaders of their respective campaigns or group. All five of the leaders were also five of the students who demonstrated the most civically engaged responses in the political ideology essay. I did not think that this was just a coincidence.

One of the most difficult yet important components of the simulation for the students was to be able to influence people that may not know to vote for them. I had arranged that every other American Government teacher would have their classes view the campaign commercials and vote on the candidates that they believed were the best. As each campaign had to create three different commercials, I needed to come up with a system that would reward the arduous, daily grind of the project and discourage the group that would simply make good commercials but otherwise run a terrible campaign. I accounted for this by coming up with a three-pronged daily tracking poll carried out by the journalists and me. Each day that the students worked on their campaigns in class, they had

a chance to raise funds and be evaluated. The journalists and I honed in on four categories when evaluating the campaigns: knowledge of issues by all campaign members, focus and teamwork by all members, the quality of decision making, and the quality of their campaign's plan to help the citizens of Quartuchia. We ranked the campaigns every day using a rotisserie scoring system, where the campaigns earned points based on where they ranked in each of the three categories. The points were totaled each day and then posted on the chalkboard. The team with the highest score was able to show all three of their commercials to the outside classes, while the team with the fewest points would only be able to show one commercial. In the end, this system worked precisely the way that I had hoped in two important ways. First, the campaign that won was also the campaign that was able to show all of its commercials. Second, and most importantly for my study, was that this system enabled me to interview and observe the students on a daily basis.

The Grind

Each day I had a variety of tasks to perform in the simulation. Sometimes I was the technology coordinator and at other times simply a casual reader of the journalists' newspaper articles. But most germane to my role as action researcher was the time that I spent evaluating each group for the daily poll tracker. Like all good plans, what seems foolproof on paper doesn't always work as well in practice as it could have. The daily tracking was similar. I believed that I would

be able to interview or observe both the overall campaigns and associated students, while also making a focused attempt to observe and interview the study participants. This did not happen. I was only able to interview and be a participant observer on an every other day basis. Even then, I did not speak to every participant on each of those days. As a result, I found myself growing frustrated. I believed that the students were partaking in an authentic exercise that would be essential to my study but felt compelled by the sheer volume of needed help to scale back my daily attempts at systematic observations. Yet, I was indeed able to make some important observations. Uniformly the students were excelling at taking their campaign's beliefs and issues and adapting them to the individual districts in Quartuchia. This demonstrated to me that they were intellectually engaged in making the simulation as authentic as possible. As I observed the campaign that included Dana and Tammy, I inquired about their rationale for the types of commercials they were making and how it related to the specific districts in Quartuchia. Tammy, the campaign manager, replied that they were going for a "plain folks" commercial in district one as there was an older, wealthier population that they believed would buy into their message. They contrasted that thinking with their decision to make a "bandwagon" commercial in district eight. A "bandwagon" commercial is one where the campaign tries to imply that voting for the candidate is what everyone is doing. Under Tammy's leadership, her group produced a video that had modern hip-hop music to back up the fast-paced images and youthful spin on the issues. Jackie and Sandy were struggling with the

difficult task of running a campaign while the candidate and media advisor were at home sick. The two dealt with this adversity admirably by taking control of tasks that they were not specifically assigned, while keeping to the spirit of their campaign's initial plan of action. Upon asking how things were coming along, Jackie responded that this project was "so hard without everyone here to contribute." I knew that they were overwhelmed by the volume of tasks each campaign was responsible for as well as the steady level of rising pressure that was placed on the campaigns by the articles the journalist group was writing and the clear evidence of the daily tracking poll. I agreed with their assessment and countered with a statement on the value of teamwork while praising their ability to work through difficult circumstances. But it was the campaign that Lisa was running that was making the most progress. Early in the campaign week I asked Lisa about the issues her campaign was attempting to address. She showed me the group's platform, and on it was a focus on what they perceived as civil rights issues. She explained to me that they were for legalization of gay marriage and were pro-choice but also wanted immigration reform that was protectionist. I asked them to explain their stance on immigration reform, and they noted that they thought that there were too many illegal immigrants and they needed to be charged as criminals and deported.

"Are there just too many illegal immigrants in the country or is it something else?" I asked.

Lisa responded, “Illegals take jobs away from Americans.”

I replied that that was possible, but that they also lowered the cost of products and often worked in conditions that were intolerable by American citizens. I asked her why, as Democrats, they weren’t considering a path toward a legal right to work here in the US.

She stated, “ They don’t deserve to work here.”

I was somewhat stunned, yet this was her consistent position since we had studied and discussed the Declaration of Independence. Knowing her position I did not press her on the efficacy of her leadership on this position for her campaign. Yet, later in the week I stopped by their group to inquire on their progress, and I saw that their stance had softened on illegal immigration and now fit a more uniform ideology marked by a link from illegal immigration to civil rights. I was ecstatic! “What changed? I asked.

Lisa, speaking for the campaign, said that they “had discussed how they could be for the rights of all people to marry whomever they choose, and a woman’s right to decide issues concerning her body, and not support a person’s desire to make a livable income without being ruled a criminal.”

I really was floored. It wasn’t whether I agreed with their position; rather it was that they had a discussion about issues that pertained to their beliefs and came to a new position that aligned with their political philosophy. This was

growth through civil discourse and respect for each other's viewpoints. It also demonstrated a level of maturity that I had not seen prior to this activity, as well as an overall shifting of beliefs while participating in authentic assessments. While I knew that I could not verify if this assessment was the cause of their change of heart, I also knew that without it, the discussion would have been less likely to come up let alone be dealt with.

Campaign Reflections

At the end of the campaign, I asked students to write a reflective essay analyzing the campaign process and what they learned from it, providing me with additional insight into their beliefs about this particular type of assessment. Some of the students' responses are listed in the pastiche labeled figure 13. Their responses indicate overall support for authentic assessments like a simulation compared to traditional methodologies, as well as some of the struggles that they faced because of the simulation. In addition, I saw a level of excitement and focus that did not exist during more traditional work. Tammy and Lisa actually asked me if "they could get started immediately" and the bell had not even rung yet. Most importantly, the participants learned that by working together they could figure out what the fictional people of Quartuchia wanted and how they could serve them without compromising their own beliefs. To me this was true indication of civic engagement.

The pros of this learning exercise were that we have a first hand experience of what goes into a campaign. It also gave us the initiative to want to work hard because we want to win this election. –Chris

I never knew, before this lesson, that journalists could be biased and make a difference. I thought they just wrote about things that happened. For example I am a moderate leaning Democrat and my writing reflects that. In the end I learned an enormous amount of new information...and I learned that the best way I can contribute is to vote and have my voice heard. -Tim

By doing this campaign simulation, we got to really know how things work.- Marcy

The pros to this project is that instead of doing other normal school work a student could get a stronger reality of what actually goes on in the real world.- Jackie

Most students...want to use the knowledge they learn in real-life situations. Students always ask, When am I going to use this in life? By using an alternative from traditional class time and grading, students are more focused, involved, and interactive.- Lisa

I learned that campaigning is a very hard process. I learned that if you work together and talk (to each other) things become easier and less overwhelming. -Annie

I think that this simulation is a better way to learn because it is hands on learning. I think you value it a lot more because you come out of it with experience. – Tammy

As much as I dislike politics, this was an extremely informative and it teaches students to not be so trusting of everything they hear in the news. My campaign in particular, experienced some bad press, and that reflected badly upon our campaign, even though I believe we were doing quite well. This simulation shows how difficult it must be for politicians to do this in the real world and how often journalists may twist what is said. It encourages students to take initiative in the political system, and that's what I enjoyed most about it. - Joyce

It gave me a deeper look into politics and showed me I do care and I will listen and vote but just not be a part of the campaign itself. –Sandy

Figure 13 Campaign Reflections

The only downside that I noted was the overall lack of interest by the participants to actually work in a real life campaign. Only two participants stated that they

would be willing to volunteer in an election. The participants stated interest, difficulty, and an overall lack of current knowledge as reasons for not wanting to actually campaign. Overall, I felt that the campaign simulation was an excellent example of the value of authentic assessment increasing civic engagement. The students were engaged in civic discussions, debates, and challenges on a daily basis. Additionally, they were challenged about a process in which they, for the most part, underestimated the complexity. While they were acutely aware that they were not actually running for an office, Chris' reflection about wanting to win being a motivational factor in thoroughly engaging in the grind of the simulation reflected a more important insight. If students are challenged to think deeply about democratic structures such as elections, in a manner that is real and relevant to them, there can be positive civic advances. The key is to be able to make these types of advances more frequent. Lisa's opening line to her campaign reflection sums up this insight. She wrote, "Does taking a quiz or test really analyze your beliefs and comprehension? Most students would disagree and want to use the knowledge they learn in real life situations." I could not have said it better myself.

Having completed the political party and election units, one particular event stood out in both their discussions and writings on the branches of government. There is an immense amount of factual knowledge for students to take away from this unit. Information such as how many members are in the House of Representatives as opposed to the Senate, compared with the number of

possible years a President may serve, often makes this unit seem like preparation for *Jeopardy*. Like every teacher of my high school's American Government and Economics curriculum, I also felt the inevitable ticking of the clock propelling the days closer to the time when I'd have to shift from the former course of studies to economics. Maybe it was due to the fact that we had just completed a large-scale simulation that integrated multiple units of information that I was struggling to balance my desire to replicate the real world in my classroom. I made the decision to continue to work toward activities that were authentic to the decision making process that engaged citizens need to make.

As we studied the demographic characteristics of the members of the three branches of government, we had a particularly interesting discussion of what the numbers meant. After doing research on the formal qualifications of the various members of the three branches of government the students compared requirements with the information they had learned about the aggregate age, gender, race, religion, and educational background of the current members of the branches. The students were to discuss their feelings about two questions. First, they had to reconcile why they thought there were such differences between the formal and informal qualifications of our leaders, and then decide if they felt that Americans were well represented. As I walked around the room and observed their discussions, I heard a variety of viewpoints expressed. Every group, which included every study participant, agreed that they wanted those they considered to be the best and the brightest to lead our country. Yet divergent viewpoints

abounded. Annie commented, "Race and gender shouldn't matter at all. The only thing that matters is if you can do the job well." Tim agreed with Annie's sentiments. Marcy and Dana, both female and racial minority students, countered that ethnicity and gender did indeed matter. They stated in separate conversations, that the lack of women in Congress was evidence of sexism, while the lack of racial and ethnic diversity minimized the "the values and beliefs" of a diverse nation. I asked the class to come up with some form of consensus within their groups. After a few minutes it was evident that the only consensus was that they had agreed to disagree. In every group, the majority opinion was that characteristics such as gender, race, and religion did not matter, but there was at least one person who held to his or her beliefs that it did matter. I have to admit that I was hoping that the minority position would influence more of the majority, but that did not happen. As there were study participants spread out in every group in the class, I wanted to know specifically what they thought. For homework, I asked them send me their responses via Nicenet, one of our two online classrooms. In all cases the participants answered question one in a *yes* or *no* manner, and then explained their response. Six of the ten respondents argued for the *yes* option compared to four *no* responses. Chris' response is indicative of the responses that supported a *Yes* response. He wrote,

Yes, I believe Americans are well represented. It doesn't matter what race or gender you are, you can represent anyone. Even though most people in the House and the Senate have never been

poor or uneducated doesn't mean they don't understand what you're going through. If we chose to elect those who are in a sense equal to us, then the job won't be done as well because their not fit for that job. Yeah, they may understand what people are going through but they won't be able to actually help out the situation because of their background and level of education.

Dana, on the other hand, reported, "I don't think that America is well represented. I feel we should have a mix of racial backgrounds and a mix of genders. I think that not having lot of different races hurts our country. Different races have different ways of thinking and different beliefs and values... I think that we should be more diverse in our political system." I was struck by the lack of overall nuance in their answers, but not entirely surprised. Not one student indicated how this situation could be altered. The most common reason students cited for believing that Americans are well represented is their perception that elected and non-elected leaders (Supreme Court) were/are well educated. Essentially, the majority argued that bright people are needed to run the nation, and therefore the fact that they are disproportionately Caucasian men was irrelevant. Their answers did not question the efficacy or wisdom of this distribution, let alone whether contextual and cultural differences in our leaders mattered at all. Considering that we had just simulated an election, and all campaigns had attempted to modify their platforms for the constituents of the fictional state of Quartuchia and its respective districts, it was not unreasonable that they believed that represented

leaders are as egalitarian as they were. Yet, I could not help feeling somewhat less elated than I had after the previous two units.

Second Survey

Both the American Government half of the course as well as the first two marking periods were coming to a close. I wanted to survey the students to see how they would report on any growth they had experienced. The second survey mirrored the questions from the baseline survey, but I added three new questions because I wanted to learn about contextual features of their thinking that I had not been able to identify from the first survey. The second survey is included in *Because civic engagement develops over a lifetime*, I was not sure that I would see any real differences between the responses in the first and the second surveys. Yet I did, and overall, the changes were positive. One participant, Joyce, did not take the second survey, so the raw aggregate numbers are smaller than the baseline survey. When I first looked at the data, I thought that there had been little change. But, Joyce was my most civically engaged individual from the beginning of the study. Therefore when I disaggregated Joyce's responses from the baseline survey, I found that there was indeed a substantial change.

From the time the baseline survey was administered to the to the time of the second survey, I found that there were improvements in the students' perceptions of the importance of voting, how government addresses the needs of young people, their overall perception of themselves as citizens, confidence in

discussing issues affecting the country, the importance of the rights, welfare, and tolerance of opposing viewpoints, and staying informed about issues that impact government. While none of these improvements was massive, I was pleased that students themselves perceived improvement in such a brief amount of time.

In addition to the Likert scale responses discussed above, questions one and three in both surveys were free response questions. There was a small amount of change in the responses. Question one asked, “What is the number one problem facing the country that needs to be addressed?” and the responses from each survey were similar. Both survey responses focused on healthcare, unemployment and the economy, and ending the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Question three had marked differences from the first survey to the second. The students responded to the prompt, “How could you make a meaningful difference in your community?” The participants responded differently than they had in the first survey. The responses are explicated in the pastiche in figure 14. Only two responses include volunteering specifically, while three others suggest helping out in a manner that is similar to volunteering. I have indented and highlighted the responses that demonstrate a greater range of civic engagement.

The majority of the responses advocate leading efforts or using their human capital to perpetuate and empower others to do the same. Eight of eleven responses to the identical question in the first survey advocated volunteering as the path to meaningful differences. In the second survey the number of responses

that support volunteering decreased to five. I am not suggesting that volunteering is a not an excellent way to help communities, but I also know that as the students must complete sixty hours of community service in order to graduate, it is the most likely choice of communal involvement. The responses in the second survey demonstrate to me a more nuanced and mature application of civic ideals. Now they are suggesting that they will not simply be volunteers, but rather they might create the opportunities for others to volunteer as well.

By helping out around the community.

Helping out with like homeless shelters or blood drives. Just being active in the community.

Create and awareness group...maybe about keeping our world safer and clean.

Donate and commit my time, my things, and **my knowledge** at any place that needs a little help.

Helping out **going into a career** that will help people like nursing.

I could maybe **talk to people more**, and maybe let them have a **better understanding of some** problems that they might not know, but I might know that is going on in the world today. Also, by volunteering.

Help out at the community center or at the elementary schools

I could **send out letters** and spread my opinion to others and to the *leaders*.

Join different programs such as giving food to the needy and **neighborhood watch groups** in order to maintain safety and security in your community.

Volunteering in my community

Voting for someone who will see through the things I want

Figure 14 Pastiche: Survey 2 Question 3

New Beginnings

During the second half of the course the students studied Economics. I had initially designed the teacher research study to take place only during the American Government portion of the course. Not only was this the most straightforward course to develop civic engagement, but was also the course of choice for nearly all of the studies that I had reviewed when conducting literature review. Yet, I knew that there was content in the curriculum that bridged that gap between civics and economics. Therefore, I extended the length of the study to see what I might learn about their civic development through the same types of authentic methodologies employed in the American Government portion of the study.

Two related examples are illustrative of the maturation process of my students. The first example came as we debated whether the benefits of the free enterprise system are as great as their economics textbook suggests. The students had to read a small section of their text for homework and come prepared to discuss the material in class the next day. To begin our discussion I asked the students which of the benefits of free enterprise was most important and why. Seven of the ten participants (Tammy was not in class) stated that having legally protected economic rights was the most important benefit. The main argument was that individual freedom was guaranteed through this concept. As Annie noted, “These give us our own little bill of rights, but for economics.” The other

three students responded that open opportunity was the most important. It was nice to see their connection to democratic constructs in economics class. I then asked two follow up questions. The first was, “When you think of your house, do you have many things that you don’t use?” The students smiled and shared mutual experiences of all of the things stockpiled in their rooms. Lisa, noted that she had pairs of shoes and purses that still were either in their box or still had their tags on them. I then asked if Americans consume too much, too little, or just the perfect amount. Every study participant raised his or her hand indicating a “too much” consumption verdict.

At this point, the class engaged in a shared reading of a *New York Times* Op-Ed article titled “What’s Your Consumption Factor?” by Jared Diamond. The premise of the article is that every American, as a resident of a first world nation, consumes 32 times as much as the average resident of a third world nation. Diamond argues that this is an unsustainable level of consumption and that something will have to change, particularly in the rates that first world nations enjoy. I asked the students if the benefits of free enterprise, as they had read in their textbook was a contradiction to this article. They looked at me with blank faces. I rephrased, re-asked, and rephrased some more. Still the looks were blank. Finally, Tim raised his hand and said, “Well, if I believe that everyone who has equal rights to property can purchase whatever they want, and this can raise standards of living, then I see a contradiction with the fact that everyone cannot actually consume all that he or she wants.” It was a brave moment, as not one

student wanted to address the all too apparent reprimand of a lifestyle and economic system that is perpetuated by consuming more than it can sustain. I elicited a few more responses, and each had the same sheepish commentary that Tim had. Students verbally noted the contradiction, while their body language implied disagreement. Finally we came to the moment of truth. I asked the students if they would be willing to cut down on their consumption in order to benefit the sustainability of the world's resources. The students were to write down their response and hand it in to me. I wanted the truth and not answers that might be less than truthful because they did not want to look greedy. Only two of the ten students responded that they would change their consumption habits. Cali indicated, "I want to make a change and benefit the country by saving, which helps the world." But overwhelmingly, the students' responses were more indicative of two parallel tracks. The first was denial. Marcy wrote, "I don't feel like I consume much. I go to the Salvation Army and all." The second path was more disconcerting. Chris stated, "Yes, I think I should have the same consumption as my parents, even though this could be detrimental to the world. After all, why should I not have it?"

At this point I was worried about the gains that I had seen during American Government. Where were the students who wanted to start shelters and food banks, or use their human capital to help others? Were they only interested in engaging if it did not threaten their sense of deserved material well being? I

hoped that as the semester wore on, I might see some additional civic development.

It took some more time, of course, but I actually saw this development in the last unit of the semester. The students were studying economic challenges such as unemployment, inflation, and poverty. As a culminating activity to a unit that can otherwise feel disheartening, the students were researching groups that provide aid to those in need. Using former President Bill Clinton's book *Giving* as a resource, I provided the listing of aid groups and let the students choose two groups to research. Then each student reported to two other students what they had found and whether they would be willing to give to the particular organizations. I briefly questioned the eleven participants as to their willingness to give. Of the 22 organizations analyzed, the students indicated that they would be willing to give to 18 of them. Three of the four organizations that they said they were not interested in did not have the resources to effect the change or giving that the organization required. Only one student noted that the type of aid given would not have a big enough impact to justify her investment of time. It was nice to see that students were implementing economic thinking without an outright denial of helping others.

As we were ending the discussion on the aid organizations, I said, "Raise your hand if you think that it is possible to end poverty." To my surprise, ten of the eleven participants raised their hand. When I asked why they had so much

confidence, they shared comments like, “If people are willing to use their time and knowledge to help” or “Yes, but ignorance (of the problem) is a huge problem.” It was reassuring to hear that they were still connecting improvements to society to increases in human capital and not just random acts of kindness or engagement.

It was at this moment that Tammy raised her hand and asked, “Mr. Q, I realize that we are at the end of the semester, but I was wondering if we, as a class, could raise some money to give to one of these organizations?”

I responded that they could if the class wanted to and could agree on a group. Tammy then asked the class which organization they wanted to give to and whether they would want to bring in money for an organization. The class debated the various organizations that they had researched, weighing the pros and cons of each. All were deserving, they agreed, so they went on to develop a two-part criteria to help their decision-making. Joyce argued that they needed to give a gift that would be an investment to a poor community and not just a “one time deal.” Tammy stated that since they did not have the time as high school students and that the class would be over in a couple of days, that they should donate to Heifer International. Lisa agreed, stating that a gift to that group would enable the community to share the benefits with each other and actually “lower their poverty.” In the end, the students donated \$20 to Heifer International to buy a flock of chicks, whose offspring would be shared among the community. Every

single study participant agreed to give money. I was proud, not only due to their giving, but because their leadership and willingness to partake in an act of civic engagement motivated others to act as well.

Methods of Analysis

Introduction

The process of collecting data is only one piece of the study's puzzle. As a teacher researcher the next step was analyzing the data that I collected. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) state that data analysis "involves working with the data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesizing them, and searching for patterns" (p. 147). Much like the ongoing and multi-layered data collection process, I realized that I needed to analyze data on a continual basis, providing me with the opportunity to come to understand the participants' maturing sense of civic engagement. While Bogdan and Biklen (2003) advise not to get bogged down in too much analysis during the data collection stage, they do suggest that researchers must make some decisions about the data as they are being collected in order to inform the direction of the data collection (p. 148).

Reflective Memos

Philosophical Analysis

I wrote reflective memos on some of education's greatest philosophers and the application of their theories. Over the course of the data collection period, I also read works by Dewey (1997), Freire (1971), and Vygotsky (1978). I connected salient concepts and quotations from the readings to further my analysis and interpretation of my data by writing reflective memos about the authors. Each of these philosophers enabled me to analyze my students, and by

extension my data, in ways that compared and contrasted their theories to what I observed and studied in my classroom. Dewey's (1997) work particularly resonated with my study. I analyzed the educative experiences that I was creating for my students with specific focus on whether their experiences were authentic enough to avoid being noneducative, as well as impactful enough to influence future learning experiences. I analyzed my study through the dialogical lens that Freire (1971) advocates. It was critical to my study to ensure that I did not perpetuate a banking model of education, but instead opened doors, which might facilitate greater understanding of my students place in the world and motivate them to be active participants and critics. Through Vygotsky, I analyzed my study to create learning experiences that did not exceed my students' zones of proximal development.

Midpoint Memo Analysis

At the midway point of the study, I wrote a memo that provided me a platform to reflect and plan what data I had collected and analyzed, as well as how the emerging questions were going to be answered during the rest of the study. This memo was critical to my analysis as well as to evaluating how close I was to answering my question. The midpoint memo gave me a chance to review the field log, student work, and survey data while reflecting upon the themes that were beginning to emerge.

Surveys

Surveys provided me an opportunity to analyze the participants' responses over time. I administered two surveys, one during the first week of the study which gave me baseline data, and one at the end of the American Government portion of the course. I compared both surveys to determine if there had been a change in the participants' responses concerning their attitudes, knowledge, or reported behaviors. I used students' responses to help me determine the extent to which their civic engagement increased.

Student Work

I collected and analyzed various types of student work in order to evaluate the students' level of civic engagement. I found that by collecting homework, classwork, essays, and group project materials, I could analyze both their current status and progress toward civic engagement. The students' work gave me samples of their development over time, which allowed me to reflect upon their challenges and their growth.

Coding

I analyzed my observational field log data and student work in order to pursue emergent themes and patterns that were developing in my study. As I read and reread the field log and analyzed pertinent student work, I summarized particularly important observations into a keyword(s) that represented the observation. These keywords or codes became the basis for sorting and tracking the relevant data in order to identify the patterns that emerged. As I developed individual codes, I created an alphabetized index that noted the relevant page

number in the field log and the related codes as they emerged from the analysis so that I could uncover “similarities and differences, to notice a variety of relationships and patterns with and among the codes”(Ely, Vinz, Downing, & Anzul, 1997).

Bins and Theme Statements

Once I had created my coding index it was possible to see areas of overlap between them and create categories or bins of related codes. I developed a graphic organizer to help visualize the bins and link them to my research question. Ely, Vinz, Downing, & Anzul, (1997) argue that separating “coded data into bins helps to bring some order to the mass or otherwise unmanageable data” (p. 164). As the data became manageable I created “statements of meaning” or theme statements that allowed me to “present the essence” (Ely, Vinz, Downing, & Anzul, 1997) of the bins and write them as preliminary findings.

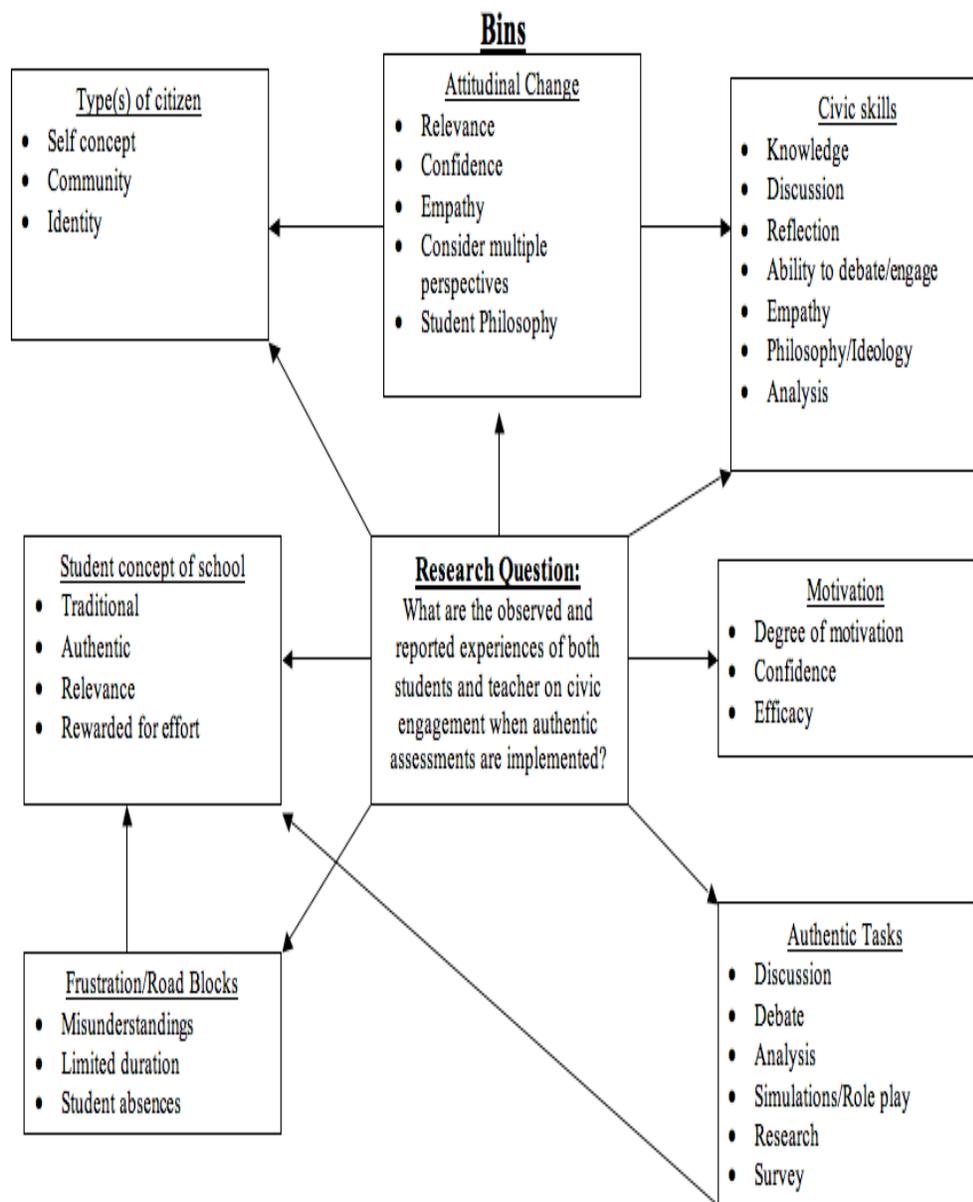


Figure 15 Bins

Findings

Introduction

The purpose of my study was to examine the relationship between authentic assessment and improving civic engagement. Civic engagement is a complicated developmental process of the individual as a citizen, and by definition implies active participation. By attempting to replicate some of the types of activities that engaged citizens partake in, I sought to ensure that the experiences that the students had were what Dewey might term educative experiences, paving the way for students' potential future growth and civic involvement. The findings presented below are organized as theme statements and were developed out the intense study, documentation, and observation of my grade 12 American Government and Economics class.

Civically engaged students demonstrate key content knowledge, discuss their knowledge with others both within and outside of class, debate civilly, employ critical thinking, and understand complex issues from multiple perspectives.

Engaging in authentic assessments is not a pass on limiting the content knowledge the students were responsible for learning. I found that my students learned considerable content and were able to use it to make sophisticated arguments about various topics. Yet it was a negative example that reaffirmed my commitment to increasingly using authentic assessment. There were times when a lack of content knowledge initially hindered my students' ability to civically

engage. The fact that only one of the eleven study participants had read the Declaration of Independence exemplified the content deficit with which students began my course. Yet by reading the document and discussing the implications of its contents, my students were able to grapple with difficult text as well as use their newfound knowledge to make an argument about the line of reasoning found in the Declaration. While I did not always find their arguments persuasive, their attempt to use what they had learned was crucial at such an early juncture of the course.

The students wrote summative essays at the conclusion of the Political Parties and Voter Behavior unit, impressively articulating their beliefs about their own political ideology. The unit was almost solely designed with authentic assessments to guide the students on their path of political discovery. Their successful responses demonstrated that they could take authentic assessment such as the “find a corner” activity, where they had to decide how they felt about an issue by moving to a corner of the room and then publicly defending it facilitated their ability make a cogent and convincing argument about their political ideologies.

By the time the class had taken on the campaign simulation, the students were making a variety of intellectually difficult decisions ranging from how they would use demographic data and synthesize it with polling data, while infusing their campaign’s platform and strategy. Each of these activities could not have taken place without a developing knowledge base.

Once the students were able to demonstrate the use of the key content knowledge, it was critical that they, on their own, demonstrate that they were using this knowledge both within and outside of the classroom. This process developed slowly but picked up momentum during the unit on political parties as the students civilly debated their beliefs. Almost on a daily basis the students spoke to each other about the stances various political parties had on issues that mattered to them. Tim, a Democrat; Annie, a Republican; and Joyce, a Libertarian, who regularly sat next to each other in class, had interesting discussions about policy and ideology, often bordering on debates. The discussions were passionate enough that without knowledge of the context, an observer might have misperceived their interactions as arguments. The students also reported that they spoke about class content outside of the classroom. Dana stated in her political ideology essay that she had “even talked about government with my family, and knew what I was talking about!” Similarly, Joyce noted that she now had conversations about the news with her Dad that she never had before. Additionally, there were changes in the way that students perceived the impact of their speaking. One of the highlights of the study was to observe Joyce’s attempts to modify her language so that she would not be perceived as offensive. As the students became increasingly focused on the content through multiple authentic assessments, they were able to enter a wider world of civic engagement than they had access to prior to the intervention.

By exposing the students to simulations and scaffolding the tasks, the participants learned to employ critical thinking skills. Simulating real-life decisions requires critical thinking, but the degree to which they were able to achieve this skill was exemplified in three of the main simulations the students participated in. As the level of difficulty and specificity increased in each simulation, so did the students' level of critical thinking. During the first week of the semester, the students were involved in a simulation to create an economic and political system for Freedonia. The tasks were broadly assigned as I simply wanted the students to engage in multiple decision-making situations ranging from developing a domestic policy agenda to a their stance on foreign intervention. Through observation and discussion, I found that the students were able to accomplish the assigned tasks but struggled to synthesize the range of options with which they were presented. This was not surprising, considering it was the first week of the course and the first simulation. By midpoint of the second marking period and the third and largest simulation, the primary campaign, the students needed to make detailed critical decisions on multiple occasions every day. The participants made decisions ranging from how to synthesize the issues they personally believed in with the interests of the state and districts they were campaigning in. They had to decide where to spend campaign contributions, how to craft campaign commercials that conveyed their beliefs without alienating voters, and how to answer questions from the media. Critical

thinking had become the norm. By making the authentic assessments focus on real-life decision-making, civic engagement increased for the students.

Students demonstrated greater civic engagement by understanding complex issues from multiple perspectives. This was one of the most difficult transitions for the students to make. In order to understand others' viewpoints, one must be able to incorporate his or her own perspective with the content knowledge, be able to civilly debate, and yet employ critical thinking about the outside perspective and consider its relationship to one's own point of view. It was simply a cognitively demanding task. In the baseline survey I asked the students if they felt it was important to express concern for the rights and welfare of others and demonstrate tolerance and respect for opposing viewpoints. When I compared the initial survey with the survey I administered at the end of the government course, there was some minor growth in their self-reported understanding. Three students reported increased levels of understanding toward others' perspectives, yet two reported decreased levels. While this gain was modest at best, it was their daily work that suggested to me that they had indeed attained this level of understanding. I made the realization that as the authentic assessments became richer, so too did their understanding of multiple perspectives. In particular, the campaign simulation challenged the participants to convey messages that would encourage support from a varied audience.

The use of authentic assessments including simulations, research, debate, and discussion allows students to become more motivated to be civically engaged and develop civic self-identity.

Of all of the important growth the students demonstrated during the study, none was more impressive than the development of their civic self-identity and their motivation to be civically engaged. I believe that the advances made in this particular area of the students' development will have the long-term "educative" impact that Dewey argues is most important. I found that it was difficult to separate motivation and civic identity and analyze them separately as I am not sure which developed first or if they happened simultaneously, but I am confident that the two work hand in hand.

The students began the class and the study with a low level of personally developed civic identity. During the first week of the study only one of the students was able to raise his hand and explain to me what he believed was the purpose of government. Yet, by the end of the study, the students were able to make complicated and nuanced arguments about the proper purpose and scope of government that was rooted in their newly developed civic identity. Whether arguing the proper roles of federal and state governments during a crisis or linking this viewpoint to the role of citizens in between crisis, students demonstrated clearly that their own civic identity had deepened. While much of students' respective civic identities had existed at the beginning of the study, over the course of time, they were able to recognize how to synthesize their newly learned

knowledge with the influences from parents and family. For example, eight of the ten participants stated in their political ideology essays that their parents had instilled in them a sense of right from wrong and this sense was an important sociological influence on their political beliefs. Yet, in the brief time that the students participated in the study, they commented in those same essays that learning and discovering who they were provided a needed counterweight to their parents' philosophy, enabling them to step out of the shadow of their parents' influence and feel confident expressing who they realized they had become. In many instances what they learned was in alignment with their parents' viewpoints, but they felt it was critical to distinguish that they had learned new knowledge and this was essential to knowing themselves. Cali's last sentence of her political ideology essay was indicative of this development stating, "I think I truly figured out what I really am."

Most the participants reported on their baseline survey that they felt that volunteering in their community was the best way to address its needs. While there is nothing innately wrong with this answer, the students in the study must earn sixty hours of community service in order to graduate. In effect, the school district has told them that volunteering is the height of civic engagement as the extension of their civic identity. By the end of the study the students' feelings had changed. No longer were they regurgitating what had been told to them, but rather, they had developed independent beliefs that would manifest themselves in a variety of civic outcomes. When answering the same question in the second

survey, the students responded with a much greater emphasis on being the leaders who developed the opportunities for others to be civically involved. This transition belies an adjustment in emphasis from a mentality that is rooted in the minimal experience that they had been taught was appropriate, to a nuanced position that is linked to their civically developing selves as individuals. There were improvements in the students' perceptions of their overall view of themselves as citizens; confidence in discussing issues affecting the country; the importance of the rights, welfare, and tolerance of opposing viewpoints; and the importance of staying informed about issues that impact government.

The motivation to be civically engaged became an extension of their civic self-identity. Once the students felt that they knew who they were, they expressed their motivation to be involved in a myriad of ways. Many stated that they would now vote, while others felt that they could be a positive influence on their friends and family by discussing and educating them. Jackie noted that she could "be like everyone and voice [her] my beliefs". Finally, their willingness to donate money to purchase a flock of chicks for people that they would never meet demonstrated their motivation to reach out beyond their classroom and nation's boundaries to help those in need.

Challenges a teacher faces when helping students to become civically engaged include students' limited initial philosophical development, rate of philosophical maturation, and length of time allotted to study their engagement.

Teaching is an educative activity of identifying struggles and finding ways to conquer them. When I designed my study I knew that there would be difficult moments where I would not feel that the students civically engaging as much as I had hoped. Prior to the study, I envisioned that the students would have tremendous civic epiphanies upon which they would act by speaking at city council meetings and writing letters to their representatives every week. Realistically, that did not happen. But, I did not think that the challenges I felt would become a recurring theme in a study focused on increasing students' civic engagement. Yet, week after week, I felt frustrated by the students' difficulty adhering to their previously stated belief system. My frustration stemmed from my unrealistic expectations. I assumed that the 11 participants in my study represented the most civically engaged students in the class. As I had no real way of knowing whether or not I was correct, I placed undue pressure on seeing quickly increasing levels of civic engagement. When this did not happen as rapidly as I wanted, I became frustrated. This led to two of my most important insights. Developing civic engagement takes time and patience due to the fact that by engaging in civic growth, the students needed to challenge their presupposed beliefs and attitudes. The extension of this finding was that I realized that civic engagement does not progress in a linear fashion.

I also knew that I did not have the kind of time that I wanted. Civic engagement is a process that is developed over a lifetime, and the only way of knowing the extent of their development was to create a longitudinal study. Yet

knowing the extent of their development was to create a longitudinal study. Yet the duration of my study was limited to the four months students were enrolled in my course. My frustration was felt almost immediately as the students juxtaposed an idea of government that seemed rooted in universal human rights and ideals of the founding fathers, but created a government that would be authoritarian during the Freedonia simulation. Yet only a week later I was buoyed by the discovery that the students that had a Hobbesian worldview also supported an enlightened dictatorship in the Freedonia exercise. This implied that they may have a philosophical foundation, but one that was not yet evident to the participants themselves. They needed to discover it on their own, and I would have to assist them to do so. This reality provided an additional insight. The students were learning rapidly, but as I had never studied their progress systematically, my own learning was not adapting as fast as the data I was collecting from the students. Once I started seeing the forest instead of the individual trees, I realized that their progress was like the stock market, often fraught with downturns, but trending upward toward the continuation of the investment.

Next Steps

“Problem-posing education bases itself on creativity and stimulates true reflection and action upon reality, thereby responding to the vocation of men as beings who are authentic only when engaged in inquiry and creative transformation.”

–Paulo Freire

As this process nears completion, I am struck by the wisdom and guidance that Freire articulates not only for all people, but particularly educators. This study has cemented my belief that students can and will become more civically engaged if we allow them to reflect and act upon reality. This first necessitates that teachers develop methods of study to push the boundaries of traditional education and that we reflect upon the meaning that we are helping our students derive.

Now that the study has been completed for over two months, I am intrigued to know whether the wonderful gains that my students made have taken root. As May approaches and primary elections near, I wonder if my students are going to vote. I wonder if they are debating the state of their city, nation, and world. This curious wondering, leads me to want to build structures in our school to foster the kinds of civic development that is required for a diverse citizenry. I want to challenge my fellow educators to think about the elevated civic mission that schools are entrusted with and to collaboratively rise to meet that challenge.

There seems little political motivation to have our students become fully authentic individuals. As we see budget austerity settle in around the country, I worry about the limiting effects that short-sided thinking can lead to. By observing my students wrestle with who they are and develop a philosophy that they can use to engage the world at both a younger age and for a longer duration of time, I am optimistic that people with high levels of civic engagement can solve intractable problems. By allowing our students to pursue learning that has relevance, meaning, and presupposes future action, education can change the world.

I look forward to sharing the experiences that I have had while conducting this study with other educators. As I write curriculum for a new global issues course, I have had many discussions with my colleagues about organizing the class in a manner that challenges the status quo by pushing the boundaries with authentic assessments. It is essential in a globalized world that we prepare students by designing authentic assessments that are transferable across mediums and platforms, while developing civic opportunities that connect across cultural and national boundaries.

As a teacher researcher and reflective practitioner, I will have multiple opportunities to develop authentic assessments for my students, research various outcomes, and implement meaningful changes every semester. Through reflective practice I have learned to pay attention to details whose meaning would have

escaped me prior to this study. I now have developed the tools to become a better teacher that is more responsive to the students' needs.

Finally, I am heartened by the development of professional learning communities where educators can collaborate to study their practice, but more importantly our students' progress. As we struggle to push back against the dominance of test preparation that currently permeates our schools, authentic assessment offers a counter weight to those pressures. While I can be heartened by the progress my students made in a semester's amount of time, how much more could they advance if we, their teachers, dedicated ourselves to engaged inquiry and creative transformation?

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Appendix A

August 30, 2010

[REDACTED]

I am currently taking courses toward earning a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Moravian College. As an action research program, Moravian challenges its prospective degree candidates to further their own, and the profession's, knowledge and pedagogy through implementing systematic learning experiences in the classroom.

As a prerequisite for completion of the Master's degree program, I am required to conduct an action research study examining my teaching practice and its effects on my students. From August 30th through November 3rd, I will be studying the effects of authentic assessment on civic engagement in my 12th grade American Government classroom. As a social studies educator, it is my goal to help facilitate the development of civically engaged students and citizens.

In order to accomplish the goal that I have set for my students, I will gather and analyze a variety of data. The data will be composed of student surveys and interviews, student work, observation, and assessments. All of the students' names, as well as the name of the school will be kept confidential. Only my name, the names of my sponsoring professors, and Moravian College will appear in this study. No names will be included on work samples or in any reports of my study. Minor details of a student's writing may be altered to ensure confidentiality. All research materials will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. I am asking for your permission to conduct this study by collecting and analyzing student data.

As the name teacher-researcher implies, I will play a dual role. Yet the role of researcher will always be secondary to my primary role of teacher. As such, all of the students in my classroom will receive the same instruction and assignments as part of the curriculum. Participation in my study is completely voluntary and will not affect the students' grade in any way. Any student may withdraw from the study at any time by contacting me through either a letter or an email. The parent or guardian may also withdraw the student through a letter or an email. If a student is withdrawn, or the parent or guardian chooses not to have him or her participate in the study, I will not use any information pertaining to that student in my study and the student will not be penalized in any way.

If you have any questions pertaining to my classroom study, please feel free to contact me at ext. [REDACTED] or by email. My faculty sponsor is [REDACTED]. He can be contacted at Moravian College by phone at 610- 861-1482 or by email at jshosh@moravian.edu.

If you do not have any questions, please sign the bottom portion of this letter and return it to me. Thank you very much for all of your help.

Sincerely,
Matthew Quartuch

I attest that I am the principal of the teacher conducting this research study, that I have read and understand this consent form, and that I have received a copy. Matthew Quartuch has permission to conduct this study.

Principal's Signature: _____ Date:

Appendix B

August 30, 2010

Dear Parent(s) or Guardian(s),

I am currently taking courses toward earning a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Moravian College. These courses assist me in implementing the most effective research-based strategies in order to provide meaningful learning experiences for my students.

As a prerequisite for completion of the Master's degree program, I am required to conduct an action research study examining my teaching practice and its effects on my students. From August 30th through November 3rd, I will be studying the effects of authentic assessment on civic engagement in my 12th grade American Government classroom. Authentic assessment is a way of designing and assessing activities that have a direct real-world application or simulates a real-world activity. In social studies this may mean writing a letter to our representatives or simulating a political debate. Civic engagement on the other hand, is the process of being involved in societal decisions through the use of analysis, community involvement, skill development, and empathy concerning multiple points of view. As a social studies educator, it is my goal to help facilitate the development of civically engaged students and citizens. Research suggests that employing these activities and assessments will help increase civic engagement in students.

In order to accomplish the goal that I have set for my students, I will gather and analyze a variety of data. The data will be composed of student surveys and interviews, student work, observation, and assessments. All of the students' names, as well as the name of the school will be kept confidential. Only my name, the names of my sponsoring professors, and Moravian College will appear in this study. No names will be included on work samples or in any reports of my study. Minor details of a student's writing may be altered to ensure confidentiality. All research materials will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

As the name teacher-researcher implies, I will play a dual role. Yet the role of researcher will always be secondary to my primary role of teacher. As such, all of the students in my classroom will receive the same instruction and assignments as part of the curriculum. Participation in my study is completely voluntary and will not affect the students' grade in any way. Any student may withdraw from the study at any time by contacting me through either a letter or an email. The parent or guardian may also withdraw the student through a letter or email. If a student is withdrawn, or the parent or guardian chooses not to have him or her participate in the study, I will not use any information pertaining to that student in my study and the student will not be penalized in any way.

If you have any questions pertaining to my classroom study, please feel free to contact me at [REDACTED] ext. [REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED]. My faculty sponsor is Dr. Joseph Shosh. He can be contacted at Moravian College by phone at 610- 861-1482 or by email at jshosh@moravian.edu.

If you do not have any questions, please sign and return the bottom portion of this letter. Thank you very much for all of your help.

Sincerely,
Matthew Quartuch

I understand that Mr. Quartuch will be observing and collecting data as part of his teacher research on improving civic engagement through authentic assessment. My child has permission to be a participant in the study.

Student name:

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C

January 9, 2011

Dear [REDACTED]

I am currently taking courses toward earning a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Moravian College. These courses assist me in implementing the most effective research-based strategies in order to provide meaningful learning experiences for my students.

As a prerequisite for completion of the Master's degree program, I am required to conduct an action research study examining my teaching practice and its effects on my students. My initial study parameters consisted of the dates August 30th through November 3rd. I have found that studying the effects of authentic assessment on civic engagement, it is necessary to extend the data collection period through the end of the first semester. As civic engagement changes slowly over time, the dates of my study have been adjusted accordingly.

Participation in my study is completely voluntary and will not affect the students' grade in any way. Any student may withdraw from the study at any time by contacting me through either a letter or an email. The parent or guardian may also withdraw the student through a letter or email. If a student is withdrawn, or the parent or guardian chooses not to have him or her participate in the study, I will not use any information pertaining to that student in my study and the student will not be penalized in any way.

If you have any questions pertaining to my classroom study, please feel free to contact me at [REDACTED] or by email. My faculty sponsor is Dr. Joseph Shosh. He can be contacted at Moravian College by phone at 610- 861-1482 or by email at jshosh@moravian.edu.

If you do not have any questions, please sign and return the bottom portion of this letter. Thank you very much for all of your help.

Sincerely,
Matthew Quartuch

I attest that I am the principal of the teacher conducting this research study, that I have read and understand this consent form, and that I have received a copy. Matthew Quartuch has permission to conduct this study.

Principal's Signature: _____
Date: _____

Appendix D

January 9, 2011

Dear Parent(s) or Guardian(s),

I am currently taking courses toward earning a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Moravian College. These courses assist me in implementing the most effective research-based strategies in order to provide meaningful learning experiences for my students.

As a prerequisite for completion of the Master's degree program, I am required to conduct an action research study examining my teaching practice and its effects on my students. My initial study parameters consisted of the dates August 30th through November 3rd. I have found that studying the effects of authentic assessment on civic engagement, it is necessary to extend the data collection period through the end of the first semester. As civic engagement changes slowly over time, the dates of my study have been adjusted accordingly.

Participation in my study is completely voluntary and will not affect the students' grade in any way. Any student may withdraw from the study at any time by contacting me through either a letter or an email. The parent or guardian may also withdraw the student through a letter or email. If a student is withdrawn, or the parent or guardian chooses not to have him or her participate in the study, I will not use any information pertaining to that student in my study and the student will not be penalized in any way.

If you have any questions pertaining to my classroom study, please feel free to contact me at [REDACTED] ext. [REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED]. My faculty sponsor is Dr. Joseph Shosh. He can be contacted at Moravian College by phone at 610- 861-1482 or by email at jshosh@moravian.edu.

If you do not have any questions, please sign and return the bottom portion of this letter. Thank you very much for all of your help.

Sincerely,
Matthew Quartuch

I understand that Mr. Quartuch will be observing and collecting data as part of his teacher research on improving civic engagement through authentic assessment. My child has continued permission to be a participant in the study.

Student name: _____
Parent/Guardian Signature: _____
Date: _____

Appendix E**American Government and Economics
Baseline Survey**

1. Thinking about the next few years, what is the number one problem facing the country that you would like to see addressed? (Free Response)

2. How much difference do you believe YOU can personally make in solving the problems of your community?
 - a. A great deal of difference
 - b. Some difference
 - c. A little difference
 - d. Almost no difference
 - e. No difference at all

3. How could you make a meaningful difference in your community? (Free Response)

4. Did your mandatory community service make it _____ in the future?
 - a. More likely that you would volunteer
 - b. Less likely that you would volunteer
 - c. It had no effect on my likelihood to volunteer
5. How often do you talk about politics, government, or current events with your parents, family, or friends?
 - a. Often
 - b. Sometimes
 - c. Not very often
 - d. Never
6. How important is voting to you personally?
 - a. Extremely important
 - b. Very important
 - c. Somewhat important
 - d. A little important
 - e. Not important at all
7. Does the government attempt to address the needs of young adults (17-25)?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

8. Did each of the following events make you more or less likely to participate in politics and voting? Rate them according to the scale below with 1 being not likely and 5 being very likely.
 - i. The attacks on September 11th, 2001
 - ii. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan
 - iii. Barack Obama being elected president
 - iv. President Bush's 8 years in office
 - v. The state of the environment
9. Which of the following political parties do you think that you will/do belong to?
 - a. Republican
 - b. Democrat
 - c. Independent
 - d. Libertarian
 - e. Constitution
 - f. Green
 - g. I don't even know what any party really stands for
10. Which of the following statements best reflects your view of Barack Obama's election and his time served as the President of the US?
 - a. It's about time an African American was elected!
 - b. It proves that race is no longer an issue in society
 - c. He's an amazing President
 - d. He's a terrible President
 - e. He's an average President
11. What type of citizen are you? In order to score yourself as Excellent you must: actively analyze information regarding societal issues, volunteer or belong to a community group, actively discuss/speak/debate issues with family/friends/ etc..., and consider opposing attitudes/arguments/lifestyles when evaluating your own viewpoints. Excellent (1-5) Poor
 - vi.
 - vii.
 - viii.
 - ix.
 - x.
12. How confident do you feel discussing issues that affect our country? (1 being low confidence and 5 being extremely confident)
 - i.
 - ii.
 - iii.
 - iv.
 - v.
13. Rank the following activities from best to worst in terms of their ability to make you feel empowered to participate in thereby influencing

government. Use number one as being the LOWEST QUALITY and nine being the HIGHEST QUALITY

- a. Simulations/role play
 - b. Current Events-reading and discussing
 - c. Debating issues
 - d. Posting responses on Nicenet
 - e. Class discussion of issues affecting the US
14. In American democracy is it important for YOU to express concern for the rights and welfare of others, and demonstrate tolerance and respect for opposing viewpoints? Strongly agree (1) - Strongly disagree (5)
- i.
 - ii.
 - iii.
 - iv.
 - v.
15. How important is it for YOU as a resident/citizen of the United States, to stay informed about issues that impact our government at every level? (1 Being not important at all and 5 being Extremely important)
- i.
 - ii.
 - iii.
 - iv.
 - v.

Appendix F**American Government and Economics
2nd Survey**

1. Thinking about the next few years, what is the number one problem facing the country that you would like to see addressed? (Free Response)

2. How much difference do you believe YOU can personally make in solving the problems of your community?
 - a. A great deal of difference
 - b. Some difference
 - c. A little difference
 - d. Almost no difference
 - e. No difference at all

3. How could you make a meaningful difference in your community? (Free Response)

4. Did your mandatory community service make it _____ in the future?
 - a. More likely that you would volunteer
 - b. Less likely that you would volunteer
 - c. It had no effect on my likelihood to volunteer
5. How often do you talk about politics, government, or current events with your parents, family, or friends?
 - a. Often
 - b. Sometimes
 - c. Not very often
 - d. Never
6. How important is voting to a democratic society?
 - a. Extremely important
 - b. Very important
 - c. Somewhat important
 - d. A little important
 - e. Not important at all
7. How important is voting to you personally?
 - a. Extremely important
 - b. Very important
 - c. Somewhat important
 - d. A little important

- e. Not important at all
8. Does the government attempt to address the needs of young adults (17-25)?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 9. Did each of the following events make you more or less likely to participate in politics and voting? Rate them according to the scale below with 1 being not likely and 7 being very likely.
 - i. The attacks on September 11th, 2001
 - ii. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan
 - iii. Barack Obama being elected president
 - iv. Barack Obama's time in office
 - v. President Bush's 8 years in office
 - vi. The state of the economy
 - vii. The state of the environment
 10. Which of the following political parties do you think that you will/do belong to?
 - a. Republican
 - b. Democrat
 - c. Independent
 - d. Libertarian
 - e. Constitution
 - f. Green
 - g. I don't even know what any party really stands for
 11. Which of the following statements best reflects your view of Barack Obama's election and his time served as the President of the US?
 - a. It's about time an African American was elected!
 - b. It proves that race is no longer an issue in society
 - c. He's an amazing President
 - d. He's a terrible President
 - e. He's an average President
 12. What type of citizen are you? In order to score yourself as Excellent you must: actively analyze information regarding societal issues, volunteer or belong to a community group, actively discuss/speak/debate issues with family/friends/ etc., and consider opposing attitudes/arguments/lifestyles when evaluating your own viewpoints. Excellent (1-5) Poor
 - i.
 - ii.
 - iii.
 - iv.
 - v.
 13. How confident do you feel discussing issues that affect our country? (1 being low confidence and 5 being extremely confident)
 - i.

- ii.
 - iii.
 - iv.
14. Which type of activity helps you learn the best?
- a. Lecture, notes, readings, and quizzes/tests
 - b. Scenarios, simulations (like the campaign), playing
 - c. Combination of the two
15. Which of the following characteristics do you think is most important in order to be a good citizen? Use number one as being the LOWEST QUALITY and nine being the HIGHEST QUALITY.
- a. Being able to actively analyze information regarding societal issues
 - b. Volunteering or belonging to a community group
 - c. Actively discussing/speaking/debating issues with family/friends/acquaintances etc..
 - d. Consider opposing attitudes/arguments/lifestyles when evaluating your own viewpoints.
 - e. Staying informed of issues/problems in society
 - f. Protesting an issue
 - g. Voting
 - h. Being patriotic
 - i. Obeying the law
16. Rank the following activities from best to worst in terms of their ability to make you feel empowered to participate in thereby influencing government. Use number one as being the LOWEST QUALITY and nine being the HIGHEST QUALITY
- a. Simulations/role play
 - b. Current Events-reading and discussing
 - c. Debating issues
 - d. Posting responses on Nicenet
 - e. Class discussion of issues affecting the US
 - f. Listening to lectures and taking notes about various issues
 - g. Reading the Government/Economics textbook
 - h. Doing research
17. In American democracy is it important for YOU to express concern for the rights and welfare of others, and demonstrate tolerance and respect for opposing viewpoints? Strongly agree (1) - Strongly disagree (5)
- i.
 - ii.
 - iii.
 - iv.
 - v.

18. How important is it for YOU as a resident/citizen of the United States, to stay informed about issues that impact our government at every level? (1 Being not important at all and 5 being Extremely important)

- vi.
- vii.
- viii.
- ix.
- x.