

PREPARING CITIZENS:
REVIVING A LOST EDUCATIONAL ENTERPRISE

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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We have not had democratic classrooms since the 1960s. Even then they were a rarity, a few teachers working in isolation. There was a great deal of imaginative exploration, which veered off in different directions. There was legislation such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Head Start, Upward Bound, and New Careers. All instigated and encouraged experimentation, yet these never coalesced into a broader, institutional democratic vision for education. Progressive as well as radical educators were interested in access and equity for marginalized populations but did not produce a critical democratic praxis. This dissertation project will specifically document what happens when elementary students have an opportunity to engage with democratic principles through critical understanding of the Bill of Rights. It will demonstrate how a teacher committed to social justice pedagogy interprets the demands of corporate driven reforms to enact rigorously democratic praxis that embraces students from nondominant populations as well as dominant students in the Cultural Linguistics Civics Project. The ultimate goal of the research study is to document students' knowledge and attitudes about their rights as guaranteed in the United States Constitution.

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This research, dissertation, this work is dedicated to Dr. Art Pearl who has the attitude and the substance of genius: he continually and convincingly conveyed a spirit of adventure in regard to research and scholarship, and brought unwavering energy and excitement to teaching the Bill of Rights, even at the age of 93! His infectious enthusiasm and unlimited zeal have been a major driving force throughout this study, and without his guidance and persistent engagement this dissertation would not have been possible.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Framers of the Bill of Rights did not purport to “create” rights. Rather, they designed the Bill of Rights to prohibit our Government from infringing rights and liberties presumed to be preexisting.
(Brennan Jr., 1989)

“Majority rules!” gleefully announced a 5th grader responding to my question, “How would you define democracy?” Most students nodded their heads in agreement. Momentarily stunned by vivid images of the tyranny of the majority and silenced voices of dissent, I stood mutely, if only for a moment. Teachers are rarely speechless for long, and I followed that question with another.

“Hmm, how many of you have heard about the Constitution, or the Bill of Rights?” I noticed one student tentatively raised her hand, and then let it slide down to her lap when it appeared that I might ask her to share her thoughts. This is my class, and these are my students. I teach 5th grade. As a public school teacher, I’m adept at *wait-time*, the practice of allowing children time to consider what they know, what they think, and how (or if) they want to take the risk to respond to a question. I glanced around the room and waited for the children to mull over the question. Jorge’s (all names are pseudonyms) hand suddenly flew up, along with his excited “oh-oh-oh!” I nodded in his direction, the non-verbal signal for him to share. He suddenly blushed, and stammering, declared, “Uh, um, I mean, I’ve heard of them. I just can’t remember what I heard. Like it’s something to do with being a free country, right?”

“Ah ha! So, it looks like we’re going to have some fun discovering how important rights are to our democracy, why they’re at risk, and what we can do about it.” Thirty-two faces considered me with a mixture of doubt, curiosity and skepticism. They seemed

to assume that since they *live in a democracy*, they know what it's all about. My response initiated the yearlong civics course.

Tensions surge between my work/identity as the 5th grade teacher of 30-plus students (the numbers of students in the class can change throughout the year, as families relocate seeking economic security and stability), five days a week, 8 hours a day, with my work as a researcher. The layers are thick, messy and transform the way in which I approach each job (thus the choice for concurrent, transformational design for the methodology, which will be further discussed in Chapter 3). I straddle dual, concurrent roles as insider/outsider, and participant observer/public servant, enmeshed in implementing oppressive tests and rules, as I simultaneously work from within, to transform them. This research documents and analyzes the students' work.

Children are all too familiar with high-stakes, benchmark assessments, yet were not familiar with the documents that form the foundation of our country or the rights they are guaranteed by the Constitution, when they first entered fifth grade. The cost of incessant testing and the agenda behind the constantly publicized, unfunded mandates seems clear. Students are trained to unquestioningly comply with adults' demands, instead of being taught to consider, evaluate and respond critically to what is presented as knowledge. They become immersed in a maze of competition against one another to achieve the highest score, rather than learning to work along side each other, to collaborate on identifying critical questions that could challenge the ongoing reproduction of political, environmental and economic injustice. Ted Gup, (2008, p. A37) quoting Robert M. Hutchins in his commentary in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, reminds us,

‘The object of the educational system, taken as a whole, is not to produce hands for industry or to teach the young how to make a living. It is to produce responsible citizens.’ He warned that, ‘the death of a democracy is not likely to be an assassination from ambush. It will be a slow extinction from apathy, indifference, and undernourishment.’ I fear he was right.

I tell the students in my... class that they are required to attend. After all, we count on one another; without student participation, it just doesn't work. The same might be said of democracy. Attendance is mandatory.

Problem Background

Our country is at a critical juncture (Kumashiro, 2008; Miller-Lane, Howard, and Halagao, 2007). The Bill of Rights, established as the first ten amendments to our Constitution, has undergone attack since its inception, but never to the extent that it is now. There have been numerous attempts to undermine the Bill of Rights, such as the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, the suppression of habeas corpus during the Civil War, the Espionage Act passed during World War I, and the attack on the First Amendment during the 1950s in what has become known as McCarthyism (Zinn & Barsamian, 2006). The Espionage Act was used to imprison thousands of people early in the 20th Century. It remained dormant until 2013, when it was pulled out of storage to be used against Chelsea Manning for making public, information that exposed the unjust detainment of innocent people at Guantanamo Bay. The Espionage Act was also used to make a plausible case against Edward Snowden for revealing,

... an inconvenient truth about the activities of the authorities of his country. He revealed to the world that the American government systematically controls the behavior of millions of his [fellow] citizens through mass registering and listening to their telephone, Skype, Facebook, email and chat activities. Snowden's revelations uncovered an ugly face of the American administration (Schell, 2013).

Curiously, there is no evidence that anyone died or that national security was in any way undermined as a result of the leaked information. These actions juxtaposed with the current education policies in the United States, give Herb Kohl's (1998, p. 235) words a particularly ominous ring,

Most people who preach basic skills aren't serious about children becoming educated and sensitive citizens of a democracy. To be a citizen in a democracy means to be dangerous to anyone who wants to exert unquestioned authority and marginalize unpopular ideas or silence voices of protest.

Prior to 2001, the repeated attempts to dissolve the Bill of Rights were all short lived. What makes these threats ominous now is that the attacks seem to be unending and are actually more widespread. Consider the National Security Agency (NSA), a secretive government agency created in 1947 as part of the Cold War. Never before did the United States have the capability of spying on every phone call, email or text message, all in the name of protecting democracy. In addition to this uncontrolled violation of privacy, our rights, movement, right to petition, speech, assembly, due process and freedom of the press are dissolving before our eyes. Bill Moyers

(http://www.democracynow.org/2007/1/16/bill_moyers), the highly regarded journalist warned that,

The third pillar of American democracy, an independent press, is under sustained attack, and the channels of information are choked... Quite literally, it means that virtually everything the average person sees or hears, outside of her own personal communications, is determined by the interests of private, unaccountable executives and investors whose primary goal is increasing profits and raising the share prices. More insidiously, this small group of elites determines what ordinary people do not see or hear.

With the June, 2013 dismemberment of the once groundbreaking Voting Rights Act of 1965, many states now demand that in order to be eligible to vote, certified papers must be shown, depriving substantial numbers of people of color, the poor and the elderly the right to vote. Police have killed unarmed African American men, yet are neither indicted, nor held accountable for their actions. We are approaching an apartheid state (Feffer, 2014; Alexander, 2012; Massey & Denton, 1993). Communities of Color and other marginalized groups are herded into prisons; suffer extremely high unemployment, and are denied meaningful education resulting in ever-rising poverty and isolation both socially and economically (Alexander, 2012; Howard, 2010).

Those ignorant of the Bill of Rights are vulnerable to the rampant propaganda that such piecemeal removal of our humanity and values is to our benefit (Finney, 2010). Soon, restrictions may exist on where an individual is allowed to move within the country, or the requirement that people carry proof of “where they are going; or which

groups can marry, restrictions on where someone can or can't be employed. Piece by piece, bit by bit it becomes easier to accept each piece as part of the new system” (Finney, 2010). Currently, there is little action to protect these long standing rights. A crucial factor for the health of a democracy is an informed citizenry. I want to ensure students know their rights before we all forget they ever existed.

I began teaching the Bill of Rights when I first entered the maze of my own classroom in 2000. That journey has its roots in the 1950s and 60s amidst the socio-political upheaval of the civil rights movements and the Vietnam War. It led me through a circuitous route to a career in teaching. I took to heart President Lincoln’s words from the Gettysburg Address, “a government of the people, by the people and for the people.” I interpreted teaching as my role to educate children to become informed, active citizens, capable of working with others to organize against policies, practices or wars against countries that have not threatened or harmed us; to move society toward greater and greater public good, or to put it as the framers of the constitution did, “create a more perfect union.”

According to Neumann (2008), the decline in civics and social studies instruction, along with the near myopic focus on reading and math, began over three decades ago by a media fabricated literacy crisis, which was followed by the mid 1970s call for accountability and tough standards.

The momentum established by those back-to-basics advocates accelerated during the 1980s as a result of *A Nation at Risk*, the report prepared by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, which promoted an *economic utility* [my italics] purpose for public schooling. *A Nation at*

Risk claimed that our economy was suffering and that American-registered corporations were losing ground in the global market place because of the inadequacy of our education system. According to the report, America's future economic success required better management of its human capital: "Knowledge, learning, information, and skilled intelligence are the raw materials of international commerce." The ensuing pursuit of "excellence" in the production and management of human capital inspired public schools. But it was not only reading and math education that underwent revision, but also social studies. Judging by the conditions in our democracy described above, the school reform effort that began in the mid-1970s, coalesced in the 1980s, and continues today, has done little to strengthen democracy and may actually be weakening it (Neumann, 2008, p. 333-334).

Neumann further contends that during this time, the conservative reforms that directed attention to getting schools *back to basics* limited students' study of social issues and institutions in classrooms. The intense focus on reading and math, and the growing focus on standardized testing to measure student achievement began to cramp the curriculum in many schools, particularly to the detriment of social studies and issues-centered curricula. It is difficult for standardized tests to measure students' ability to reflect critically, debate social issues and the possible outcomes of different policy solutions. Since politicians might find critical thinking troublesome, and employers might find such thinking in their employees less than desirable, as it does not make for a docile workforce, one begins to understand how these subjects became marginalized. Neumann (2008 p. 336-337) posits

that when students actively engage in critical examination of social structures and institutions,

They threaten those whose positions of power may be undermined by demands for a more just and equitable society; hence, those most interested in maintaining the status quo will seek to minimize this sort of student activity. Thus we have arrived at this place where “the cultivation of virtues, knowledge, and skills necessary for political participation” in schools has been subordinated to the demands of economic productivity. We are busily creating a society in which citizens are more educated or perhaps trained but participate less in the political process than they did a half century ago.

Currently, since the social studies are not included in benchmark testing, school districts allocate little time for them in elementary school, and almost none for teaching about the United States Constitution or the Bill of Rights. Yet I consider teaching these subjects to be non-negotiable. One of my students shrewdly observed that, "If you don't know your rights, you don't have them!"

Problem Statement

The Bill of Rights has made it possible for the United States to remain the longest existing nation that has not undergone significant governmental transformation. The Bill of Rights has kept alive the limited democracy that *we still* retain. Yet our government’s current obsession with standardized, one-size fits all curriculum, high-stakes testing and score-based teacher evaluation, has resulted in students who graduate wholly unprepared to take their place as active informed citizens. (Kumashiro, 2008; Kumashiro, 2009;

Ladson-Billings, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Ravitch, 2010). Students are woefully ignorant about their rights, and what those rights mean.

A visiting practicum student from a local University's teacher education program, stunned by the gap in her civics knowledge, commented with obvious discomfort that the 5th graders in my class knew more about the First Amendment than she did. She was dumbstruck to hear students explain the five specific rights of expression, offering evidence for their explanations. Unfortunately, this bright, engaged, future teacher is highly representative of a majority of high school graduates. Administered every four years, the 2010 National Assessment of Education Progress assessment results showed that three out of four students in the United States “lack a basic understanding of democracy, of how the U.S. political system works and what it means to be a citizen of this country. Fewer than half the country's eighth-graders were able to identify the purpose of the Bill of Rights” (Tucker, 2011).

The era of standardized testing has pushed aside the study of civics, education about democracy, and the Bill of Rights (J. Hagopian, personal conversation, 2014). This, despite the fact that teaching the Bill of Rights is mandated in the 5th grade Oregon Social Science Common Core Standards (Civics and Government; *5.15. Identify principles of U.S. democracy found in the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights*, retrieved from: <http://www.ode.state.or.us/teachlearn/subjects/socialscience/standards/adoptedsocialsciencesstandards8-2011.pdf>), few teachers actually teach them (Cortez, I.; Leaton, T.; Bumstead, A., personal conversations, 2011-2015). Teaching the Bill of Rights has become passively required curriculum since it has not been included in the Smarter Balanced high-stakes tests. Nation-wide, teachers face the threat of having their

professional reviews and paychecks tied to students' scores on Smarter Balanced high-stakes tests. Far too many feel pressured by their school districts to focus on how to train students on how to take these tests, rather than teaching them how to connect prior knowledge and experience to their learning. In the local school district, all staff development has been funneled into hours and hours of direct-instruction *training* on strategies that promote a narrow interpretation of the Common Core State Standards, and more on how to prepare students for the latest iteration of high-stakes tests, the Smarter Balanced (SBAC) assessments.

We may succeed in teaching students to become proficient at navigating the intricate, online SBAC formats, and memorizing correct answers for these exams, but that will not prepare them to work collectively to grapple with enormous social, economic, and environmental issues; questions that have no *one correct answer*. Understanding their rights may begin to help close this gap in their knowledge. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2012),

The return on the hundreds of billions of dollars invested in education each year must be measured not just in terms of individual success in educational attainment and in the job market or even national economic growth. It also must be gauged by how well the next generation of Americans is prepared to solve collective problems creatively and collaboratively (p. 10).

Purpose of the Study

This mixed-methods research examines what happens when elementary students are given the opportunity to engage with critical, democratic principles (Pearl & Knight,

1999) that reinterpret and *extend* the scope of the Common Core State Standards. Since students cannot deeply understand democratic principles if they do not have a chance to experience them (Pearl & Knight, 1999; Apple & Beane, 1995), *Cultural Linguistics* is one hour per week, year-long unit that I intentionally aligned to the Common Core, in order to have the freedom to address issues including the Bill of Rights, which as I stated earlier, are the foundations of our democracy.

Based on over a decade of teaching 5th grade, I've observed that students' retention rate of classroom information has been, and continues to be an issue (Hmelo-Silver, 2004). Students who are positioned as passive recipients of decontextualized, specialized knowledge, may learn to correctly answer questions on a test, yet rapidly forget the information once the test is over (Friere & Macedo 1987; Delpit, 2012; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1992, 1995; Gay, 2002; Kumashiro, 2009). This study will document a more active, engaged student experience, as opposed to the passive, rote memorization of specific details. Other studies present the Bill of Rights as a stand-alone unit (Patrick, 1991; Gottlieb, 1992). This unit is part of a larger, critical understanding, and integration of democracy within the classroom. A government of the people, by the people, and for the people is not a passive enterprise. It requires ongoing, hard work. A democracy requires that the citizens are educated (Glaeser, Ponzetto, & Shleifer, 2007) and have sufficient knowledge in order to understand how shared decisions have to be made for the public good. As President Roosevelt wrote in 1938,

Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education. It has been well said that no system of government gives so

much to the individual or exacts so much as a democracy. Upon our educational system must largely depend the perpetuity of those institutions upon which our freedom and our security rest. To prepare each citizen to choose wisely and to enable him to choose freely are paramount functions of the schools in a democracy (Message for American Education Week, September 27, 1938).

Research Questions

The enforcement of ongoing high-stakes testing that now form the basis for teacher evaluation creates roadblocks that make it daunting, if not nearly impossible for teachers to provide critical social studies and civics instruction at the elementary level, since they are not part of current high-stakes tests. This research examines what happens when elementary students are given an opportunity to engage with critical, democratic principles (Pearl & Knight, 1999) that reinterpret and extend the narrow scope of the Common Core State Standards. The main research question is how do students engage with the democratic principles through the lens of the Bill of Rights.

The quantitative sub-questions are:

- What are elementary students' attitudes toward the Bill of Rights?
- Is there a significant difference between attitudes in those who experience the year-long Bill of Rights curriculum, and those who do not?
- What do the students in my class know about the Bill of Rights, compared to other elementary students?
- Is there a significant difference between the knowledge of the students in my class and that of other elementary students?

- What are the changes in my class? (Compare by gender, race, ethnicity and SES).

The qualitative sub-question is:

- What happens when elementary students have an opportunity to engage with critical, democratic principles?

In the following chapter I provide the literature for the framework that was used to analyze these questions.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Until the 1960's, civics education, which teaches the duties of citizenship, was a regular part of the high school curriculum, but today's college graduates probably have less civics knowledge than high school graduates of 50 years ago. (American History and Civics Act of 2003, p. 1)

Theoretical Framework

The Bill of Rights was controversial when first presented to the Founding Fathers in 1787, and it still is. A document that many consider the model of civil liberties was, in actuality the result of a great compromise. It was offered to alleviate fears about a powerful central government established under the basic Constitution. Some states would never have approved the Constitution had the Bill of Rights not been included in the document (Amar, 1991). Yet the document was not concerned with establishing social equality, as so many students are led to believe. Delegates to the Constitutional Convention accepted James Madison's plan for determining a state's representation in the U.S. House of Representatives. Northerners regarded slaves as property, and therefore should receive no representation. Southerners demanded that Blacks be counted with Whites. The "Three-fifths Compromise" proposed by Madison, allowed a state to count three fifths of each slave in determining political representation in the House. Under the terms of the Constitution (the Three-Fifths Compromise), slaves constituted only three-fifths of a person (Retrieved from http://www.aaregistry.org/historic_events/view/three-fifths-compromise on March 25, 2015). James Madison argued that, "the nation ought to be constituted 'to protect the minority of the opulent against the majority'" (as cited in Alexander, 2012, p. 25). It has been left up to those who have followed to reinterpret

these Constitutional rights to include People of Color, women and other abled individuals. Still, as Cornel West (1993, p. vii) reminds us, “the basic aim of a democratic regime is curb to the use of the government’s arbitrary powers against its citizens.” It then follows that citizens need to be educated about the rights they are guaranteed, in order to maintain the rights and balance of powers established under the United States Constitution.

Civics education. Civics, defined by Merriam-Webster, is the study of the rights and duties of citizens and how government works (m-w.com. (n.d.). Retrieved May 19, 2014, from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/civics>). Civics education was first introduced during the 19th century, in the form of Horace Mann's *common school* (Tyack & Hansot, 1981; Warren, 1988). All children were to be educated together regardless of their background, religion, or social standing, to ensure that all children could flourish in America's democratic system. Mann held that these “institutions would be guided by the two great principles of republican government. First, the schools would inculcate belief in “native, inborn equality... practically... by their being open to all, good enough for all, and attended by all” (Warren, 1988, p. 246). According to Tyack & Hansot, “Horace Mann’s generation did not so much believe that they were discovering new truths as reminding their fellow citizens of moral and civic convictions they all shared” (p. 6). The effort to create good citizens required teaching the basic mechanics of government and imbuing students with loyalty to America and her democratic ideals. That involved large amounts of rote memorization of information about political and military history and about the workings of governmental bodies at the local, state, and federal levels. It also required conformity to specific rules that described conduct inside

and outside of school. “This kind of civic education would ensure that all children would be melded, if not melted, into an American citizen” (Retrieved from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/civic-education/> on March 25, 2015).

Up until the 1960's, civics education was a regular part of high school curriculum, yet by 2003 over half of the states in the country had no requirements for students to take even one course in American Government (Senate Bill 504, 2003, p. 1). The American History and Civics Act of 2004, sought to reverse what was described as an alarming trend, that students knew little of U.S. history and civics. Yet a 2012 survey by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Education (CIRCLE) concluded that,

Social studies courses such as history, civics and economics provide students with necessary civic skills and knowledge to be effective 21st Century citizens. However, since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act, many states have shifted focus away from social studies and... the scope of assessments have become increasingly narrow... using multiple-choice only tests that focus primarily on memorizing information rather than demonstrating civic skills (Godsay, Henderson, Levine & Littenberg-Tobias, 2012).

Referencing the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores of 2002, three-quarters of the Nation's 4th, 8th and 12th graders were not proficient in civics knowledge; one-third lacked even basic knowledge, making them “*civic illiterates*” (Senate Bill 504, 2003, p. 1). The Bill argued, “Children are not learning about American history and civics because they are not being taught it. American history has been

watered down, and civics is too often dropped from the curriculum entirely” (p. 1). The NAEP results from 2010 reflected that little had changed over eight years. The New York Times reported that fewer than half of American eighth graders knew the purpose of the Bill of Rights on the most recent national civics examination (Dillon, May, 5, 2011). The article went on to quote former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor,

Today’s NAEP results confirm that we have a crisis on our hands when it comes to civics education... divisive rhetoric and a culture of sound bites threaten to drown out rational dialogue and debate. We cannot afford to continue to neglect the preparation of future generations for active and informed citizenship.

The NAEP scores demonstrate that far too many students neither understand the Bill of Rights, nor the U.S. Constitution. Students that graduate unprepared to take their place as active informed citizens, then become the uninformed teachers for the next generation of students in this country. Further, evidence from the NAEP study highlights,

“a profound civic empowerment gap... as large and as disturbing as the nationally recognized reading and math achievement gaps.... There is widespread recognition that political power is distributed in vastly unequal ways among U.S. citizens. As the American Political Science Association’s Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy memorably put it, “Citizens with low or moderate incomes speak with a whisper that is lost on the ears of inattentive government, while the advantaged roar with the clarity and consistency that policymakers readily heed” (APSA Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy, 2004,

p. 651). Less poetically, but equally as powerful, Bartels (2008) more recently argued that “political influence seems to be limited entirely to affluent and middle-class people. The opinions of millions of ordinary citizens in the bottom third of the income distribution have no discernible impact on the behavior of their elected representatives (Levinson, 2010, p. 316).

This research undertakes civics instruction in the elementary grades focusing on the Bill of Rights, the foundation for our democracy (<http://www.ushistory.org/gov/2d.asp>). Barber, a political theorist argues that, “The rights and freedoms of all Americans depend on the survival of democracy. There is only one road to democracy: education” (1998, p. 232). If the health of our democracy depends upon education, then civic education must be the precursor to civic engagement. Michael Downing, the Deputy Chief and commanding officer of the Los Angeles Police Department's counterterrorism unit stated during a telephone interview on CNN (February 21, 2015), that civic engagement, social responsibility and public service are crucial to interrupting terrorist recruitment as they benefit the entire community, especially those individuals who are prone to being “isolated, balkanized, or discontent.” Civics education deployed through a critically democratic, culturally responsive lens can provide the platform to transform standardized, decontextualized curricula into social justice inquiry. Culturally responsive teaching grapples with issues of educational inequality that can result in disenfranchisement and isolation. It requires a reflexive praxis (reflecting on, problematizing, reconceptualizing, and then revising the teaching) on the part of teachers as well as students (Friere, 1970; Gay, 2010; hooks, 2010; Howard, 2012; Ladson-

Billings, 2006) to help “students develop the knowledge, skills, and values needed to become social critics who can make reflective decisions and implement their decisions in effective personal, social, political, and economic action” (Gay, 2000, p. 131).

Still, educating all children to become social critics able to act for the good of the community demands more than a singular focus on culturally responsive, reflexive, critical pedagogy (Gay, 2000). It depends upon an *active engagement* with civics that is too often absent from social justice curriculum (Rubin, 2007). Critical civics instruction intentionally integrated into culturally responsive praxis teaches nondominant students to advocate for themselves as well as their communities, and teaches dominant students how to work as allies. Darling-Hammond (1996) articulately expresses this argument:

As we incorporate the largest wave of immigration in our history, our success in embracing and enhancing the talents of our new and previously uninvolved members will determine our future. Repairing the torn fabric that increasingly arrays one group against another will require creating an inclusive social dialogue... This suggests not only education *for* a democracy... but education *as* democracy (Glickman, 1995)—education that gives students access to social understanding by actually participating in a pluralistic community by talking and making decisions with one another and coming to understand multiple perspectives (p.6).

Civics in the democratic classroom. What may be considered a traditionally conservative platform, teaching students the Bill of Rights, becomes a profound social justice agenda. “Put simply, our democratic society requires a vibrant public educational system that produces well rounded and broadly

educated citizens, not just students who are trained to excel on multiple choice tests” (Ravitch, 2010, p. 2). The National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) affirms the need for civics. They argue that our founder’s vision of “*liberty and justice for all,*” requires that citizens are educated with the “knowledge, attitudes and values to both guard and endorse the principles of a constitutional democracy” (Retrieved from <http://www.socialstudies.org/positions/powerfulandpurposeful>). The NCSS (2009) further argues that,

The marginalization of social studies education at the elementary level has been documented repeatedly. According to a report by the Center on Education Policy, since the enactment of the “No Child Left Behind” federal education policy (NCLB), 44 percent of districts surveyed have reduced time for social studies. That percentage rose to 51 percent in districts with “failing schools.” Denying students the opportunity to build social studies vocabulary and background knowledge can lead to lower literacy levels and, ironically, increases the achievement gap. In many states, reading and math test scores become the sole measurement of learning. Even when social studies is included in high-stakes testing, both novice and veteran teachers tailor their teaching to the content requirements of the test, rather than to meaningful learning of core concepts. As a result of educational practices steeped in the “teach to test” phenomenon, teaching and learning are reduced to that which is necessary for students to do well on state tests rather than providing a well-rounded

program to ready students for life as active citizens in the twenty-first century.”

Kahane & Middaugh (2008) based their research, a two-year study of school civic opportunities, on surveys of approximately 2500 students. They found that students’ race, academic tracking, and average socioeconomic status (SES) of the school was, in fact, a determining factor in the availability of the civic learning opportunities, with higher SES schools, students who are college-bound, and white students are afforded more opportunities than low-income students, those not heading to college, and students of color.

Equal access to high school civic learning opportunities becomes more pressing when we consider that low-income citizens, those who are less educated, and citizens of color are under-represented in the political process. Based on a review of relevant research, the American Political Science Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy (2004) reported: “The privileged participate more than others and are increasingly well organized to press their demands on government... Citizens with low or moderate incomes speak with a whisper that is lost on the ears of inattentive government, while the advantaged roar with the clarity and consistency that policymakers readily heed (p. 3).

Further, Rubin, (2007) asserts that research in civic education has primarily focused on students’ knowledge of “facts about U.S. history and government that can be readily measured with close-ended surveys and tests” (p. 453). Commonly, researchers are interested in the extent to which students have mastered the material that teachers present,

using narrowly defined measurements of civic engagement in order to quantify students' future civic engagement. Rubin ((p. 453) contends that,

Urban students and students of color tend to lag behind their suburban and white peers in such measures (Lutkus, Weiss, Campbell, Mazzeo, & Lazer, 1999).... The notion of civic engagement found in this literature is limited by researchers' conceptions as well, instantiated in quantifiable activities such as intent to vote or how often the student reads the newspaper, without attention to students' own definitions of what it means to be an active citizen.

A review of relevant literature reflects a dearth of current scholarly research on the effects of civics education at elementary levels. The majority of the studies focused on middle and high school level, or on civics instruction in higher education (Kahne, & Sporte, 2008; Kahne, & Middaugh, 2008; Kahne, Chi, & Middaugh, 2006; Leming, Ellington, & Schug, 2006; Mann & Patrick, 2000; Patrick, 1991; Leming, 1985). I have found little evidence of research on civics at the elementary level, despite the Bill of Rights being included in the 5th grade standards. It is time to revive this lost educational enterprise.

Democratic principles. Pearl and Knight's seminal work, *The Democratic Classroom, Theory to Inform Practice* (1999), provides the theoretical framework for this research. The authors describe seven principles that are crucial for a democratic classroom (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1. Pearl and Knight’s seven principles of a democratic classroom



Legitimate authority: through persuasion and negotiation. The first of the seven principles, legitimate authority, requires educators to engage students through fairness, transparency, persuasion and negotiation rather than authoritarian control. Teachers are not elected by their students to lead a class. They must work to establish a legitimate authority through persuasion and negotiation as distinguished from either authoritarianism or anarchy. According to Pearl and Knight (1999, p. 98),

Nowhere is disrespect for democracy more consistently taught by practice and policy than in school. In a great majority of classrooms, students learn that the teacher is boss and whatever she or he says goes, that there is no available mechanism ... by which a student can adequately defend him or herself against a charge of misconduct... [or] rectify perceived unfair treatment.

Legitimate authority requires that teachers recognize the power they hold, and continually reflect on how they wield that power. Teachers become better when they think deeply and critically about why students should be learning what they are teaching, and how to

present the material to make it relevant to students. This applies all to subjects, from math (Boaler, 2013) to social studies, to science, and to civics.

Duncan-Andrade & Morell (2008) agree that teachers can find areas to negotiate with their students, which results in greater buy-in on the part of their students. Those seriously invested in persuading their students will create students who are more engaged in the learning.

Inclusion. The second principal, inclusion, while integral to legitimate authority, warrants separate consideration. Pearl and Knight (1999) argue that inclusion establishes a learning environment where everyone is an equally valued contributor to the learning community. This includes those receiving Special Education services (SPED), classes in English language development and students on behavior plans (IEP). Every student must be involved in the learning community, with every student supporting every other student, and everyone a valued contributor to the learning community. All students remain in the classroom for Cultural Linguistics instruction, with no *pullout* (removal from the general classroom) for Special Education instruction, double-dose instruction, or behavior correction during this sacred hour.

Pearl and Knight's principle of inclusion to embraces an authentic (Valenzuela, 1999) ethic of care. Nel Noddings (2005) describes an ethic of care as being relational, "containing carer and cared-for" (p. xv), one that is characterized by engrossment and motivational displacement. Geneva Gay connects the importance of care to nondominant students, "Caring is one of the major pillars of culturally responsive pedagogy for ethnically diverse students. It is manifested in the form of teacher attitudes, expectations

and behaviors about students' human value... for their psychoemotional well-being and academic success" (as cited in Howard, 2010, p. 45-46).

Ethic of care. Angela Valenzuela (1999) builds on the ethic of care (including relations of reciprocity), applying Bourdieu's theories of capital that categorize students as either having the benefit or disadvantage of economic, social, and cultural capital. This framework identifies the capital of White, middle-class students' as having more value than that of non-White, educationally marginalized students. Such a hierarchical, deficit lens places nondominant students at an immediate disadvantage upon entering school, since the majority of teachers are White and middle-class. Valenzuela argues that teachers have to break through their cultural and socio-economic hegemony to embrace the wealth of knowledge and experience all students share. "Caring theory addresses the need for pedagogy to follow from and flow through relationships cultivated between teacher and students" (p. 21). She distinguishes *authentic* care from an *aesthetic* form of care that views students through the performance lens of how they behave and how well they perform academically. Aesthetic care manipulates students to conform to dominant structures at place in the school, masked as social-emotional and academic concern (p. 61). Authentic care embraces the whole child, and provides "students with the opportunity to counter the institutional silencing that prevents their full and active participation in shaping their futures" (Cammerota and Romero, 2007, p.17).

Capital constructs. The reproduction of educational inequities that subjugated students face, turns the lens of the critical democratic classroom towards Bourdieu's (1985) theoretical construct of the forms of capital, which articulate how key social, economic and cultural forces are connected to educational practices and outcomes

(Weiss, Bouffard, Bridglall, & Gordon, 2009). Hegemonic educational systems reproduce the structures of dominance that maintain their power, conferring “entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee” (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 84). A majority of teachers in this country have benefitted from these structures, and are blind to the honors bestowed through their cultural, social and economic capital. Many attribute their academic success to *merit*— if one works hard enough they will achieve their goals—unaware that belief in *meritocracy* is itself a result of privilege. Teachers may assume that students are not making adequate academic progress due to individual cultural, environmental or biological reasons, unable or unwilling to identify the structures that insure the reproduction of subjugation. This process of isolating, shaming and blaming the students and their families, exemplifies Pearl & Knight’s conception of deficit thinking (1999). By examining their role in the reproduction of economic, social and cultural capital and therefore the exacerbation of educational inequities, teachers can strive to become allies to their students, rather than handmaidens to oppressive agendas that exacerbate educational inequities.

Goodness. Further, this research is significantly informed by Lawrence-Lightfoot’s (1994; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) notion of a *search for goodness*. Social science research has tendency to focus on "pathology and disease rather than on health and resistance" (p. 8). She actively seeks out "goodness," with the awareness that goodness, much like democracy, will always be imperfect.

Curriculum. Pearl and Knight’s third principle is creating relevant curriculum that recognizes the needs of the students and the community, and further directs attention

to the need for critical, culturally responsive pedagogy (Delpit, 1995, 2002; Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008, Yosso, 2005).

Curriculum is the reason for schools. Everyone believes schools should be places where what students learn is important... [Yet] Very few students believe what they are learning in school is important. And these few cannot make a case for the importance of school knowledge for the solution of important personal or social problems (Pearl & Knight, 1999, p.122-123).

Current standards demand we teach students to master knowledge that was pertinent for the past. Students need to be educated to deal with a future most adults cannot even imagine. The authors argue that ideally everything that is taught would have instant utility (Knight, 2001). This means teachers would put children to work learning to solving real problems, engaging students in projects (small enough to be *doable*) for the public good. Additionally, since the only way to affect public policy is to negotiate, students need to learn to really listen and then meaningfully negotiate with one another. This requires practice gathering information to use logic and evidence in their negotiations.

Cultural linguistics. Cultural Linguistics (CL) is the sixty minute, weekly, year-long unit that builds on and extends Pearl and Knight's democratic focus to address the putatively objective lens of white-stream curriculum that perpetuates the norms and beliefs of the dominant culture (Grande, 2004). Many critical scholars (Delpit, 2012; Howard, 2011; Bell, 2010; Cammarota, & Romero, 2007) call for reflexivity toward the linguistic, socio-economic, cultural, gendered and racial bias of standardized curricula to

encourage students to critically explore the standard curriculum content and consider other standpoints, other stories. Jean Anyon (2006, p. 38-39) argues that educators and researchers must actively problematize the curriculum to expose the hidden ideologies: “Who chooses what counts as knowledge? Why is it designed and implemented in certain ways, and to which groups? Further, how is curriculum linked to political and economic power? Why is certain knowledge available to certain groups, and not others?” This is especially crucial at the elementary level, as nondominant students begin to comprehend that who they are and what they bring may not be valued in the school setting.

Pearl and Knight (1999) describe democratic curriculum in terms of its relevance to students’ lived experience. In their constructivist model, curriculum is intimately connected to collaboration. The authors argue for an inquiry model involving problem-solving, providing the “problems to be solved are perceived by students to be real and important” (p. 210). In this model, students can be recruited to participate in the instruction in the form of peer or cross-age tutoring. All students can access and engage in forms of community service when it is integrated their educational experience.

Bill of Rights. The fourth principle highlights the four basic rights that are found in the First Ten Amendments to the Constitution of the United States (The Bill of Rights): Rights of expression, rights of privacy, rights to due process (presumption of innocence, right to counsel, right to a fair trial before one’s peers, right to appeal and protection against cruel and unusual punishment), and right to movement (not be a captive audience). Schools have shown little respect for individual rights. These afford all students the rights guaranteed them by the constitution; likewise, they are given the opportunity to practice and fully understand these rights. According to Pearl and Knight

(2000), “Rights, like all dimensions of democracy, are not to be discovered through Foucaultian archeological digs; rather, they are created by students in interaction with each other with the help of persuasive and negotiable authority” (p. 198). They contend that students need the opportunity to actively experience rights within the classroom context. Pearl and Knight push beyond rote memorization, encouraging students to consider critical questions. How important are student rights? Why was the Constitution amended before it could be ratified to include a Bill of Rights, and why was it considered so important? Are the same rights important today? Is it necessary to have checks and balances in a government? How well has the Bill of Rights worked? What is necessary today to prevent governmental abuse of power? Pearl and Knight call for students to undertake penetrating research and analysis in order to appreciate the fragility of democracy and why it always will be an unfinished project. Indeed, the authors argue, the critical study of history encourages students to make independent evaluations of historical events or individuals who have been deified as well as those who have been demonized. This aligns with Tyrone Howard’s call for relevant pedagogical practices that have meaning for students’ social and cultural realities (2003). Yet while Howard points out that an additional, and possibly more important benefit of culturally responsive pedagogy is to increase the academic achievement of nondominant students, I contend that increasing the academic achievement is an important starting point, not the primary goal. Culturally diverse students need to be prepared and armed with their rights, if they are to work across differences for positive change.

Working collectively. The fifth principle is working collectively to develop the means to continually acquire knowledge through discovery, discussion, analysis,

conceptualizing, hypothesizing and debating; the skills required for informed and responsible democratic citizenship. The most effective way for students to feel authentically empowered is to work collectively to bring about meaningful change. A democratic education requires that “all students are prepared equally to be informed, responsible citizens, equally skilled in the participation process” (A. Pearl, personal communication, October 17, 2009). This translates into classroom activities that create opportunities for students to work collaboratively and thereby develop the ability to engage in the civil exchange of ideas with a wide range of others. It means that students are encouraged to listen attentively to other people and take pains to understand the message that is being conveyed. Further, it requires that students collaborate in order to develop coherent proposals based on logic and evidence as they practice negotiating differences when possible or learning to hold one’s ground when differences are not negotiable (Pearl & Knight, 1999).

Optimum learning environment. The sixth principle is establishing what Pearl describes as the optimum learning environment for all students. An optimal learning environment, much like a democracy, is an ideal that is always striven for, yet never fully achieved. It is an hospitable (J. Goode, personal conversation, May 7, 2014) classroom that strives to be free from shame, encourages students to risk the disequilibrium required to learn, eliminates unnecessary discomfort, engenders feelings of usefulness and belongingness, meaning, competence, and hope. According to Cornel West (1993, p. 15),

The major enemy of black survival in America has been and is neither oppression nor exploitation but rather the nihilistic threat—that is loss of hope and absence of meaning. For as long as hope remains and meaning is

preserved, the possibility of overcoming oppression stays alive. The self-fulfilling prophecy of the nihilistic threat is that without hope there can be no future, that without meaning there can be no struggle.

Equally important to the learning environment are excitement, the opportunity to be creative and a sense of ownership, with students engaging in work to benefit themselves and their community, not for the teacher or the system.

Pearl and Knight (2000, p. 215-220) describe ten features needed to create an optimal learning environment: a) encouragement to take risks along with physical safety, b) the elimination of unnecessary discomforts, including boredom, humiliation, loneliness), c) clarity about why what is taught is important to know, as well as clarity about expectations, d) a sense of competence, e) belonging to the learning community that includes the whole class (which the authors describe as the flip side of inclusion), f) usefulness; putting what they learned to work, g) hope; the belief that students have something worthwhile to contribute to the world, h) excitement – the thrill of discovery, i) creativity, j) ownership; a sense that school work will benefit the student and/or the student's community, and not a decontextualized activity required by teacher or the system, and finally k) feelings of contribution derived from participating in a project that changed the world.

Incorporating critical praxis to enact the Pearl and Knight's crucial requirements extends the democratic classroom into a hospitable learning environment for nondominant students. Praxis is a reflexive, multidimensional approach that recognizes and supports the language, culture, knowledge and experience as well as students' agency, making space for what Ladson-Billings (1995, p. 160) described as culturally

relevant pedagogy-- pedagogy that prepares students for their work beyond the classroom.

I have defined culturally relevant teaching as pedagogy of opposition (1992c) ... specifically committed to collective, not merely individual, empowerment. Culturally relevant pedagogy rests on three criteria ... (a) Students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order.

Kevin Kumashiro's (2009) anti-oppressive approach applied to the elementary classroom further situates this research within a critical, democratic context. While Freire (1970) challenges teachers to engage in ongoing critical reflection, Kumashiro directs anti-oppressive educators to critically investigate their daily practice in order to create lessons affirming social justice. Kumashiro argues for troubling knowledge, making it complicated and problematic, yet not rejecting it. He defines anti-oppressive teaching as working "paradoxically with knowledge... to simultaneously use knowledge to see what different insights, identities, practices, and changes it makes possible while critically examining that knowledge (and how it came to be known) to see what insights... it closes off" (Kumashiro, 2009, p. 8). Moreover, Kumashiro argues that teaching in and of itself, is never wholly anti-oppressive. Teachers can be anti-oppressive in one context, yet quite oppressive in another. Much like Pearl's definition of democracy (1999), the anti-oppressive teacher is akin to an ideal, asymptotically approached, never quite completed.

Equality. Equality is the seventh principal of Pearl and Knights' democratic

classroom. “Every democracy claims it, pledges allegiance to it, none come close” (A. Pearl, personal communication, June, 2009). Providing all students access to an *optimum learning* environment is the first step.

Equality is a vital component of democracy. Equality is also difficult to define and difficult to achieve, no matter how defined. The history of the United States can be written in the blood of those who struggled to achieve equality. During the 20th century difficult and bitter struggles won women the right to vote, industrial workers the right to organize, and minorities a measure of their civil rights. Each struggle reduced inequality. Sadly, history teaches us that progress made can also be progress lost (Knight & Pearl, 1999, p. 220).

No student is more equal than another, and while English is the dominant language in this country, students have a right to express themselves in their home language as they acquire a new one.

The LatCrit lens articulated by Solorzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) acknowledges and affirms the cultural, linguistic and experiential knowledge students bring to the classroom. Through this lens, equality necessitates culturally responsive teaching. It renounces terms such as *defiant* from the arsenal of adjectives attributed to students of color and instead, considers the realm of resistance. As mentioned earlier, for a rapidly growing number of students, education is a subtractive process that divests them of essential social and cultural (and spiritual) resources, leaving them vulnerable to academic failure and life-long struggles. “Rather than students failing schools, schools fail students with a pedagogical logic that not only assures the ascendancy of a few, but...

jeopardizes... access to those among them who are either academically strong ... or belong to academically supportive networks” (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 30). Pearl and Knight’s vision of equality addresses these issues to demand that equality embrace equity.

Each of these principles is critical to a democratic classroom, but for purpose of this dissertation, my research will focus on the Bill of Rights, the foundation for our democracy (Brennan, 1989). Together they fuse into a cohesive, critical praxis, yet for the purpose of this dissertation the focus will be on the Bill of Rights since it forms the foundation for any movement in the direction of democracy.

Civics Engagement in Elementary, Middle, and High School

Gainous and Martims (2011) based their study on the effectiveness of civics education on surveys of American students, testing whether or not “civics instruction enhances students’ political knowledge, political efficacy, and their voting intent” (p. 232). The authors refer to the three outcomes they measure as “democratic capacity” (p. 232). Such capacity is necessary but not sufficient to produce engaged citizenry capable of working collectively for the benefit of everyone.

Ellington, Leming and Shug’s study (2006), found “that most American students graduate from or leave high school with little basic knowledge of history, civics, economics, and geography.” Their findings, based on tests, surveys and research, demonstrated that there are many in positions of power including policy makers, academics, educators, as well as the general public who are increasingly concerned by this trend. The authors argue that,

In an ever more complex world it is imperative that a critical mass of American citizens have a better understanding of history, current affairs, and political and economic institutions. Arguably, the very future of the American Republic could be at stake. [Yet] social studies get little time in elementary schools. Teachers reported that social studies in general, or associated subjects such as... civics, received relatively little instructional time compared to other subjects... Seventy percent of second- and fifth-grade teachers spent less than four hours per week teaching social studies. By comparison, 11% of the same teachers spent less than four hours teaching math and 8% spent less than four hours teaching reading. (Leming, Ellington & Schug, 2006, p. 322).

The authors also found that in elementary schools, social studies subjects such as history and geography are more often are "integrated" within language arts or science rather than as discreet subjects.

In an earlier study, Patrick (1991) identified four keys to improving civic education in secondary schools, "(1) systematic emphasis on core ideas and issues, (2) analysis and appraisal of core ideas and issues in primary documents, (3) analysis and appraisal of core ideas and issues in judicial cases, and (4) active learning of core ideas and issues by inquiring students with the help of supportive teachers" (p. 227). The author noted the emphasis was ideas and issues, in each of the four areas. This study preceded the ongoing assault on the Bill of Rights that began after September 11, 2001, and therefore was not concerned about the dissolution of our Constitutional rights.

Avery (1989) investigated research regarding the development of political tolerance among children and adolescents. The study found adolescence to be an especially important time for the development of critical political awareness and tolerance. Avery argued that teachers must implement a multifaceted approach to reducing intolerance and increasing support for critical, democratic principles.

Content based on concrete situations or rights dilemmas is unlikely to increase tolerance if the students' environment is not itself, an arena for the diverse viewpoints. On the other hand, an open and supportive classroom climate that does not consciously help students to see connections to a wider community is also limited. Citizenship education is best served when content and classroom climate reinforce one another in a spirit of genuine inquiry into the conflicts inherent in a democratic society (p. 172).

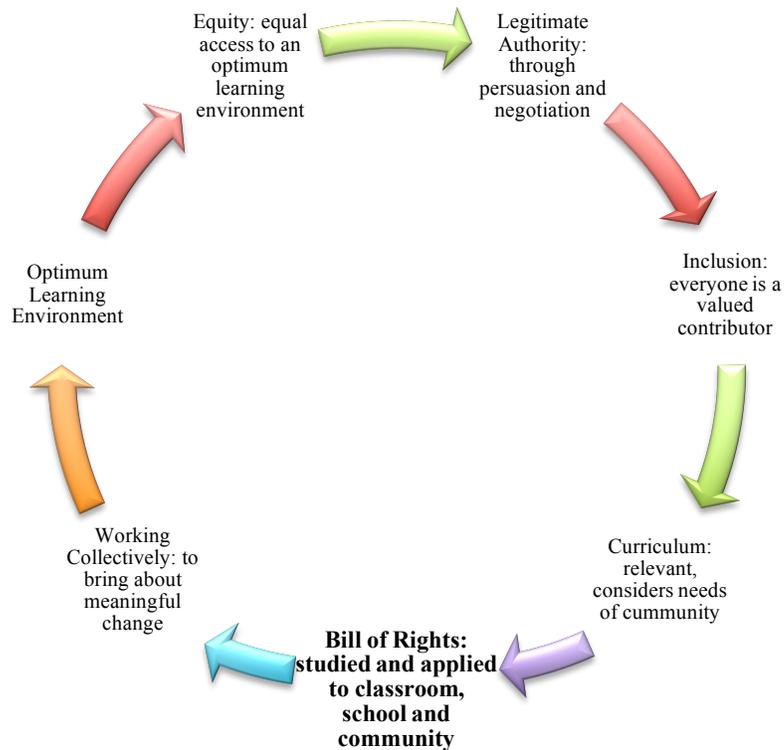
Conclusion

Dating back to Thomas Jefferson, presidents have warned against the danger of allowing a closed, narrow group of business and government officials to concentrate power over the individuals in our society. Frances Moore Lappé describes this as a symptom of *thin democracy*, “something done *to* us or *for* us, not *by* or *with* us” (Lappé, 2006, p. vii). Such democracy, she asserts is at risk of being usurped by private interests or extremist groups, left, right or Tea Party. Lappé (2014), Pearl and Knight (1999), Goodlad (2002), Amy Goodman (Democracy Now. Org), Bill Moyer, among other scholars and journalists, calls for the emergence of a democracy in which Americans are educated to realize that democracy is not a spectator sport, but rather *something we do*. Either we live it or we lose it (Lappé, 2005). Students need to learn democracy by doing

it and the first step is to understand their rights. This dissertation documents an inclusive, democratic, classroom grounded in the Bill of Rights. The purpose is to educate informed citizens able to negotiate with others in a pluralistic society, for the good of the community. While the Bill of Rights forms the basis for the research, Pearl and Knight's (1999, 2000) seven principles, which include authentic caring, and culturally responsive pedagogy, provide the framework for a critically democratic pedagogy of hope (see Figure 2.2).

This framework provides a solid foundation to explain themes that emerged when examining the student created artifacts, the pre-and post-assessments and the student interviews. The use of the framework demonstrates the engagement of all students, and

Figure 2.2. Cultural linguistics theoretical framework: preparing informed citizens



and how a curriculum can cross socio-economic, cultural and Special Education boundaries. The following chapter explains the methods used in this study to examine how students viewed the experience of learning about how their rights can impact their school as well as their community.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Research firmly demonstrates the limited knowledge and appreciation students currently have for their rights as guaranteed by the United States Constitution (Dautrich, 2011, NAEP, 2011; Dillon, 2011). There is minimal research or educational dialogue in public schools about how to prepare informed citizens with the skills required to work collectively to address pressing issues. To that end, educators must reclaim the right to teach students the Bill of Rights as a springboard to critical civic engagement. While this by no means represents the depth and breadth of what students will need to know to become active citizens, it is crucial first step if we are to regain an inclusive, informed, participatory democracy. This need not be a stand-alone effort on the part of teachers; by reaching out to include the knowledge and experience of community members, the lessons have an opportunity to come alive. Elders offer critical knowledge and wisdom to support students in identifying critical issues in their community (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005).

What happens when elementary students are given an opportunity to engage with critical, democratic principles (Pearl & Knight, 1999; Abdi & Carr, 2013) that simultaneously align, reinterpret and extend the narrow scope of the Common Core State Standards? What attitudes do elementary students have toward the Bill of Rights? What do they know about the Bill of Rights? The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the implications of civics instruction with a focus on critical and democratic ideals.

The Bill of Rights curriculum is intentionally aligned to the *Common Core State Standards For English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies* (CCSS) in

order to alleviate any concerns that school administrators may have regarding the project's appropriateness, and timeliness: "Civics and Government: Understand and apply knowledge about governmental and political systems, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens" (Oregon Department of Education, 2014). The specific standard from the CCSS is 5.15: "Identify principles of U.S. democracy found in the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights."

This year-long civics unit was implemented within the context of a broader critical unit created by the District's Cultural and Linguistic Development Coordinator and myself entitled Cultural Linguistics. The curriculum was designed to address the myriad of issues students face on a daily basis, including racism, classism, immigration, language, ableism, gender identity and poverty. In the context of a larger community, The Bill of Rights provides a framework for students to learn to work collaboratively and across differences toward positive change. The class takes place on a weekly basis for a minimum of one hour per week, yet the democratic ideas are embedded throughout the day, from language arts, to math to science, to what happens on the playground at recess. Students consider whose voices are privileged and whose voices are silenced or missing in areas of literature, marine science, and environmental science. In math and science students are encouraged to consider what questions are asked, how can we collaborate to solve them, and how we can bring our knowledge to bear on what we are learning.

The class also included community members and knowledgeable Elders as participants and co-creators of local knowledge and understanding. Students worked as a whole class, in small groups, as well as individually to apply their learning to issues they identified as important and "doable" (A. Pearl, personal conversation, 2009).

Theoretical Approach

This theoretical framework extends the archetypal democratic theoretical framework developed by Knight and Pearl (1999), merges critical pedagogy (Darder, 1991; Morell & Duncan-Andrade, 2008), with theories of an authentic ethic of care (Noddings, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999), utilizing mixed-methods research. The mixed methods approach is required in order to move through what happens in one classroom, compare it to the results in a comparable classroom, and demonstrate the profound need for critical civics engagement at the elementary level in all elementary classrooms. As addressed in Chapter II, the advocacy/participatory approach assumes that change is necessary, and further, that this research is designed to inspire that change (Bell, 2010; Lather, 1991). This refers to what is taught in elementary classrooms, as well as how it is taught. As a teacher-researcher, I am socially, culturally, linguistically, and economically situated. Teaching is not neutral nor are those who teach, and, “Content is never devoid of context” (Carr, 2103, p.40). Acknowledging that I am a political being, I bring a critically democratic, social justice lens to how I teach; one that prioritizes the students that are in my classroom (Apple, 2000, 2013; Kumashiro, 2009; Delpit, 2012; Shor, 1992) over standardized agenda. This research positions me in multiple roles. I am the teacher, researcher, curriculum designer, and curriculum theorist, who is directly accountable for the academic, social and political consequences of this research (Barab & Squire, 2004). So while it borrows from action research, the curriculum does not grow out of what students identify as interesting. First they need to understand their rights and the power of civic engagement. My ultimate goal is to transcend the *tyranny of the local* (Harvey, 1989; Goodson, 1995) to advance theory that would be viable in other

elementary grade classrooms across the country. I hope to have demonstrated how teachers can align democratic, social justice pedagogy with mandated standards, thereby protecting teachers from censure as they educate a new generation of critical, informed citizenry (Apple, 2013; Morell & Duncan-Andrade, 2008).

Design Overview

Site of study. Maple Elementary School (fictional name), located in a small Pacific Northwest town, is my current teaching assignment and therefore was the site for this research. Built in 1926, the school is situated in an older, upscale neighborhood adjacent to a University and considered one of the more privileged schools in the school district. The school prides itself on parent involvement, social justice and high academic achievement, yet as one parent commented, “the [South Region] schools are built around a social justice philosophy, which ironically ends up being justice for the privileged” (Parent communication, November 15, 2013).

Participant population. The participants were ten and eleven-year-old students enrolled in local public elementary schools. The study included an intervention group and a control group. The intervention group was comprised of students enrolled in my 5th grade classroom. The school’s population is predominantly white, privileged children from highly educated families, although the demographics are changing as the number of children of poverty on free or reduced lunch tuition (McKinney-Vento) increases in the school. Additionally, as of fall of 2014, the school now houses a full-time behavior program, which provides services for children identified with severe behavior issues. All students are *mainstreamed* and participate in the CL classroom activities.

The control group was comprised of 5th grade students from two comparable

schools in the same school district. The students were matched as closely as possible with consideration to gender, ethnicity, race, economic and immigration status, as well as the scores on the initial surveys.

While the entire class participated in the curriculum, students were purposefully selected from the intervention group for four composite case studies based on *easyCBM* scores (District mandated assessments in reading, math and science), race, gender and socio-economic status.

Data Collection Methods

The central premise of this study was to understand the ways in which students' attitudes and understanding of the Bill of Rights change over the course of one school year, when enacted through an authentically caring, critically democratic, social justice pedagogy (see Table 3.1). Equally important was to compare the quantitative outcome of a class that engages in an integrated, year-long Bill of Rights unit with one that does not. Therefore a transformative concurrent mixed methods approach was required to accomplish both the comparison, as well as develop a robust description of the experiences of the intervention group (Creswell, Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). The principle methodology of this study was qualitative with a strong quantitative complement. Student artifacts, interviews, classroom discussions, along with anecdotal information served as evidence of students' experience. While these provided the majority of the data analyzed, pre- and post-assessments allowed for both intra- and inter-group comparisons. The primary unit of analysis was the students' experience, documented through the artifacts and narratives created by the students as they progressed through the intervention.

Table 3.1. Quantitative data collection dates, types and approximate analysis dates

Questions	Timeline	Data Collection Type	Participants
<p>What are elementary students' attitudes toward the Bill of Rights? Is there a significant difference between attitudes in the intervention and control group?</p>	<p>Administered 2 times: 1st, September 2014, 2nd, June 2015</p>	<p>Attitude assessments analyzed shortly after being administered, scores organized for both control and intervention group, correlated for each group.</p>	<p>Intervention Group: 30 elementary students from my classroom</p> <p>Control Group: 30 elementary in comparable class in same region</p>
<p>What do the students in my class know about the Bill of Rights, compared to other elementary students? Is there a significant difference between knowledge in the intervention and control group?</p>	<p>Administered 2 times: 1st, September 2014, 2nd, June 2015</p>	<p>Knowledge assessments analyzed shortly after being administered, scores organized for both control and intervention group, correlated for each group.</p> <p>Pre-post learning gains, control/ intervention group, quality of work and attitudinal differences</p>	<p>Intervention Group: 30 elementary students from my classroom</p> <p>Control Group: 30 elementary in comparable class in same region</p>
<p>What are the changes within intervention group?</p>	<p>Analyzed after final survey and assessment, June, 2015</p>		<p>Intervention Group: 30 elementary students from my classroom</p> <p>Control Group: 30 elementary in comparable class in same region</p>

The subjects were not randomly assigned because 4th grade teachers independently create class lists for students progressing to the 5th grade. The research

included two groups: an intervention group who experienced the curriculum and the control group, who received a limited exposure to the Bill of Rights. The intervention group was comprised of 5th grade students assigned to my classroom at the start of the school year. The control group was comprised of 5th grade students who attended two elementary schools with demographics that are similar to Maple Elementary School. The control group did not receive the same civics intervention as the intervention (or treatment) group. They received the civics instruction traditionally implemented in their schools.

Quantitative Aspects of Study

The quantitative aspect of the study was semi-experimental since, as stated earlier, participants were not randomly assigned. It included a pre- and post-assessment, which provided two data points for each group. This allowed for in-group and between-group analysis using simple, descriptive t-tests. The data also included a final essay that was rated according to the Common Core, Smarter Balanced Assessment scoring guide, by two independent raters. Correlation was used to determine the reliability of the scores.

Since so much of the literature discusses students' ignorance of their rights (Dautrich, 2011, NAEP, 2011), the study began with a assessment on student attitudes, as well as a knowledge assessment about what is in the Bill of Rights (see Appendix A and B). The assessments each included 12 questions and took approximately twenty minutes to complete. The maximum possible on the knowledge assessment was 12 points, and the maximum possible on the attitude assessment was 48 points. These were given to the control and intervention groups. I concluded the research with post-assessments on both knowledge and attitudes in June 2015. English Language Learners were offered support.

Initially there were 30 students in the intervention group and the control group. Three of the students in the intervention group left the school and others entered well after the semester was underway. Therefore I had complete data on 27 students. Twenty students in the control group were matches for those in the intervention group, leaving a total of 49 students.

Qualitative Aspects of Study

The qualitative data in this study utilized a descriptive approach that focused on student-produced artifacts: journals, posters, narratives, and a class book about their experience (see Table 3.2). At the start of the year, each student received a journal in which to express their learning in words and pictures on a weekly basis. These journals served as a venue to express thoughts, pose questions, take notes, or draw a response to what they learned. Collaborative, classroom journals were recorded with Livescribe pens that simultaneously captured student written notes and audio files of classroom discussions. The posters were cooperative, creative interpretations of what students understood about their rights, and why rights are important. The narratives are comprised of various assignments, aligned to the CCSS, such as student created skits, stories, essays and poems. The Cultural Linguistics book was the culminating artifact, incorporating students' testimonials about their experiences in the course.

In addition, students participated in public presentations during a rally at the County Courthouse in support of two local youth, Kelsey and Olivia Chernaik, whose climate change case was being heard in the Lane County Circuit Court. The children created posters and short speeches to deliver at the rally, also attended by the city's Mayor.

Table 3.2. Qualitative data collection dates, types and approximate analysis dates

Questions	Timeline	Data Collection Type	Participants
What happens when elementary students have an opportunity to engage with critical, democratic principles?	September 2014 through June 2015 Weekly: journals discussions, Monthly: posters	Student artifacts: Journals, posters, discussions using Livescribe pens, public presentations, essays, interviews/testimonials (CL book)	Fictionalized composite case study: Eight students from intervention classroom

Additional research data includes four fictionalized composite case studies. According to Yin (1994) “the case study report can itself be a significant communication device... the description and analysis of a single case often conveys information about a more general phenomenon” (p. 130). Eight case study participants were purposefully selected out of the intervention group to more fully understand their experience as well as the effectiveness of the intervention. Four students from academically high performing groups, and four students from academically lower performing groups (as defined by the District’s easyCBM assessments) were selected for the composite case studies based on gender/sexual identity, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and race. A discussion with the school’s administrator supported the need for fictionalized composite case studies (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001) to insure the privacy of the subjects. Parents in this community are highly educated, highly informed, and rightfully protective of their children. Indeed, many of the parents are also professors at the University. While the results do not reveal particularly sensitive information, the notable activist parent groups could take issue if children (theirs or others’) were even remotely identifiable. Therefore, in order to protect the students and their families from undue stress or agitation, composite case studies were crucial. Furthermore, as Barone (2001) points out a

composite, “fictional case study offers teachers an important opportunity to imagine questions about their own practice that may have been previously unimaginable” (p. 740).

Curriculum overview. The Bill of Rights curriculum is initiated with discussions and activities designed to help deconstruct the idea of culture: what makes us who we are and how we perceive the world around us. Before we can discuss the rights we have, it is important to recognize who we are, what similarities we share and the differences we bring to the classroom. In the first discussions of culture, White, middleclass students often assume they don’t have one, because they are *normal*. Activities such as the *culture cubes* (See Appendix F) allow students to explore who they count as family, what spiritual or religious beliefs they have, what food their families cook (or prefer), the gender with which they identify, their ethnicity/race, and the languages that are spoken at home. The cubes are then a game: everyone stands in a circle, tosses theirs in and then choose a cube that is not their own. Laughter and surprise ensues as students try to figure out which cube belongs to each child. We finish the game with a discussion about how much there is to learn about people, about cultural practices that we share, and which are new to us. This forms the basis for the discussion of rights, and informs discussions across the curriculum: what ways of knowing or expression might be culturally bound? What do we call *normal* or *obvious* that is actually based on prior knowledge or personal experience? How can we share what we know in such a way that others can learn from us? When we move into the Bill of Rights, it becomes clear that these rights apply to everyone, not just a privileged few. This is an emergent curriculum, which means the lessons respond to concerns that students bring to class, as well as current events or issues that arise in the community or are in the news. While teaching each of the rights is non-

negotiable, the activities and extensions may vary according to what community members/activists are available, and the excitement and ideas that are ignited in the students. An outline for the roadmap of the year-long curriculum is presented in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3. Bill of Rights year-long experience summary.

Month	Rights Addressed	Activities/Discussions (Current events are incorporated as they arise)
September	Establishing Inclusions and Setting the Stage for the Bill of Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Danger of a Single Story (Ted Talk by Chimamanda Adichie) *T-Shirt Drawings *In Lak'Ech *Culture Cubes *Why are we in school?
October	<p>Constitution: What is it? Why do we have one? How did we get it?</p> <p>Introduction to Rights: First Amendment,</p> <p>Freedom of Religion (2 weeks) Freedom of the Speech (2 weeks), this includes a discussion of Tinker v. Des Moines School District Freedom to Assemble (1 week) Freedom of the Press and Petition (1 week, combined)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Dr. Pearl introduces the students to the Constitution: class discussion using journal and Livescribe pens *Students work in groups to translate rights into “kid-friendly” language and explore First Amendment <i>heroes</i> (Grace Lee Boggs, Ida B. Wells, Dolores Huerta and, Beth Tinker); share out to class what they’ve learned * Table discussions, students brainstorm what it means in their lives at school and at home *Online and library research during computer/library time *Student created posters, after discussion all the rights *Conversations between Dr. Pearl and individual students
	First Amendment: students apply what they learned (beyond creating posters). This is an emergent	* Student-created skits, student-created computer games, <i>Prezi</i> , <i>Powerpoint</i> ,

November	curriculum, and may vary each year, including current events related to social justice.	<i>Scratch</i> , games, interactive stories and animations. *Conversations between Dr. Pearl and individual students
December	Third Amendment: Rights of Privacy (privacy of the home against demands that it be used to house soldiers is applied to current times and students' lives)	* Dr. Pearl introduces rights of privacy *Table brainstorming what privacy means and what it looks like at school *Present work: to classroom, principal, other classes (possibly other schools in district) *Conversations between Dr. Pearl and individual students
January	(Review First and Third Amendments) Fourth Amendment: Rights of Privacy Fifth Amendment: Due Process, protection against double jeopardy, and rights of persons in criminal cases and in the areas of bail, fines, and punishment. (<i>Round-Robin</i> with other 5 th grade class, where I teach the other class about rights and my students explore environmental issues- my continues deeper engagement and inquiry into rights through this period)	*Dr. Pearl engages students in discussions: how does unreasonable search and seizure apply to students? * Discussion: protection against self-incrimination (pleading the fifth) and what that means in school *Posters of Third and Fourth Amendments * Conversations between Dr. Pearl and individual students
February	Sixth Amendment: rights of individuals during trials in civil cases Seventh and Eighth Amendment: Rights of individuals in civil cases, regarding bail, fines, and protection against cruel and unusual punishment.	*Dr. Pearl introduces these rights *Group research, classroom presentations of what students learn *Group posters on each amendment *Possible involvement in community action/activities involving rights and climate

		change issues.
March	Continuation of Due Process and Rights before, during, and after a trial	*Group essays, Prezi, Powerpoint, Scratch, or skits (determined by students)
April (Smarter Balanced Assessments absorb approximately two weeks of class time)	Connection of Rights to Community and beyond Cultural Linguistics Book	*This varies from year to year: article written by class for student centered publication, presentation to school board, preparing public presentation for local organizations (for example Community for Public Education), filming and editing skits for public, etc. *Interview students
May	Ongoing engagement and application of rights	*School/community presentations about what students learned and what it means in their lives.
June	The Bill of Rights review	*Student-created skits, student-created computer games, essays/stories, <i>Prezi</i> , <i>Powerpoint</i> , <i>Scratch</i> , games, interactive stories and animations to share what they've learned. *Community sharing across grades

Informed Consent/Assent

Student consent forms were created for this research project. At the beginning of the school year, every participant was given a student assent form (see Appendix A). As the intervention was part of the regular curriculum, as well as aligned with the CCSS, all students participated. However, students had the opportunity to opt out of participating in the project, which means that all of their scores, results and artifacts would have been excluded from the findings, without repercussion. None opted out. A passive consent form (see Appendix A) specifically for parents included the privacy section that

explained how their students' names and identities would be kept confidential. This allowed the project to protect the confidentiality of students and their families. Risk is addressed in the following section. As the primary researcher, I taught according to standards established by Eugene School District 4j and the Common Core State Standards.

Those who have had access to the majority of the data were me, Susan Dwoskin, the researcher on this dissertation project, as well as the dissertation chair and committee members. The second scorer also had access to the pre- and post-assessments and the final Bill of Rights essay. The data was stored in locked files on an external pass protected and virus protected hard drive, and stored in a locked file cabinet. The Livescribe audio recordings will be kept secure for future projects.

Risks and Benefits

There was minimal, if any, risk to the participants of this study. Subjects were not paid to participate since the research was based on curriculum aligned to current state and district standards, implemented in my 5th grade classroom, and took place during the normal school day. There was no cost to subjects, only their state regulated classroom time. There was no physical, medical, emotional, or psychological risks to the subjects, beyond those students normally experience in public school. All the subjects were assigned to my classroom and were free to refrain from participating in the study at any time, without repercussions (see Appendix A). There was no risk in this type of study for the school administration, as the study was aligned to current Common Core State Standards.

Analysis

Quantitative. The knowledge and attitude pre-assessments were administered to students the second week of school. Since children often zoom through a questionnaire or quiz with little consideration to their answers, both surveys were read aloud in both the intervention and control groups. A higher score on the attitude assessment indicated greater understanding. The attitude assessment was reverse coded since not all of the questions required a *strongly agree* answer. On the true/false knowledge assessment, a higher score indicated greater knowledge. Assessments provided two data points each, and were analyzed using simple, descriptive t-tests, since it was a small group. This allowed for both within-group and between-group analysis. Two scorers independently rated the final essays and a reliability coefficient was used to determine the accuracy of the scores. The inter-rater reliability coefficient [$r = .98, N = 26, p < .01$] indicated very little difference between the raters, and in the rare differences, the mean of the two rater's scores was used. Once it revealed a high level of reliability, the scores were used 1) to get an indication of what was learned, and 2) to get a comparison of the students' perspective of what was learned about, and attitudes towards the Bill of Rights. That was compared with the post-attitude and knowledge assessment. In those few instances where there was a distance between two raters, the mean was used to represent the scores.

Qualitative. I used the constant comparative method for coding and analyzing the weekly journals, posters, narratives and testimonials, to generate theory more systematically. This involved ongoing constant comparison throughout the year, in which previously coded text was checked to see if the new codes created were relevant. Constant comparison is a central premise of grounded theory. Newly gathered data was

continually compared with previously collected data (and the way in which it was coded) in order to refine the development of theoretical categories. This was done at each stage of the analysis (Glaser, 1965). Constant comparative method is defined as, “A method of analysis that generates successively more abstract concepts and theories through inductive processes of comparing data with data, data with category, category with category, and category with concept. Comparisons then constitute each state of analytic development” (Charmaz, 2006). I related the categories to Pearl & Knight’s (1999) framework as part of the interactive coding process, and also included newly emerging themes (see Figure 2.1).

According to Reissman (2008), in thematic analysis “content is the exclusive focus” (p. 53). She distinguishes it from grounded theory in that “narrative scholars keep a story “intact” by theorizing from the case rather than component themes” (p. 53). Further, Reissman argues that data are interpreted through the thematic lens that researchers develop, as well as the concrete purpose of the investigation. “There is a minimal focus on how the narrative was spoken (or written), or structures of speech...” (p. 54). Thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) are included whenever appropriate to provide a greater depth of understanding and reliability. “Thick description is an effective trustworthiness technique that will let readers and evaluators know that the research and its findings are grounded in rigorous methods and procedures” (Bowen, 2010, p. 870). In this investigation, thematic analysis of interviews was integrated with my observations as recorded in field note journals. Thematic analysis of the artifacts, which included the student created posters, journals, essays as well as classroom discussions, was ongoing throughout the school year, and was used in deciding which students would be included

in the fictionalized composite case studies. Composite case studies were purposefully selected to be both statistically representative and develop a thematic argument.

Representation

This concurrent mixed methods study seeks to describe and compare the knowledge and attitude changes that occur in the intervention group with those of the control group. In the next chapter, the quantitative data analysis is presented first in the form of tables of key findings along with a discussion of the results. Chapter V describes the qualitative data findings in order to present students' voices along with a descriptive analysis of the knowledge and attitude changes. Aligned with the transformational framework, the constant comparative method of analysis coalesces what the students learn, how they've applied the learning, the counter-narratives, and artifacts they produced.

CHAPTER IV

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Chapter IV will report the quantitative findings of this semi-experimental study about children's knowledge and attitudes toward the Bill of Rights. Pre-assessment findings for both the intervention group and control group are presented first, followed by the post-assessment findings for both groups. Essay results, correlations and paired *t*-test finding conclude this chapter.

Pre-Assessment Findings

The knowledge and attitude pre-assessments were administered in September 2014. For the purpose of this study data were analyzed with SPSS, using an independent samples *t*-test. The two variables of knowledge and attitude were combined into one score and every participant, intervention and control, was assigned as score for the pre-assessment and for the post-assessment. While there was no possibility for random assignment, every effort was made to assure that these were comparable by age, gender, ethnicity, economic background and academic performance.

Pre-assessment scores of intervention and control group. The intervention group pre-test scores ($M = 30.81, SD = 4.28$) and the control group pre-test scores ($M = 31.45, SD = 4.14$) were similar, $t(47) = .53, p > .05$, therefore there was no reason to believe that they came from different populations. The distribution of pre-assessment test scores for both groups is roughly normal with no severe outliers. The *t*-test also allows us to compare the mean scores of two groups, in this case, students who were receiving the year-long Bill of Rights curriculum and students who did not. Descriptive statistics for pre-assessment scores for both the intervention and control groups are reported below in

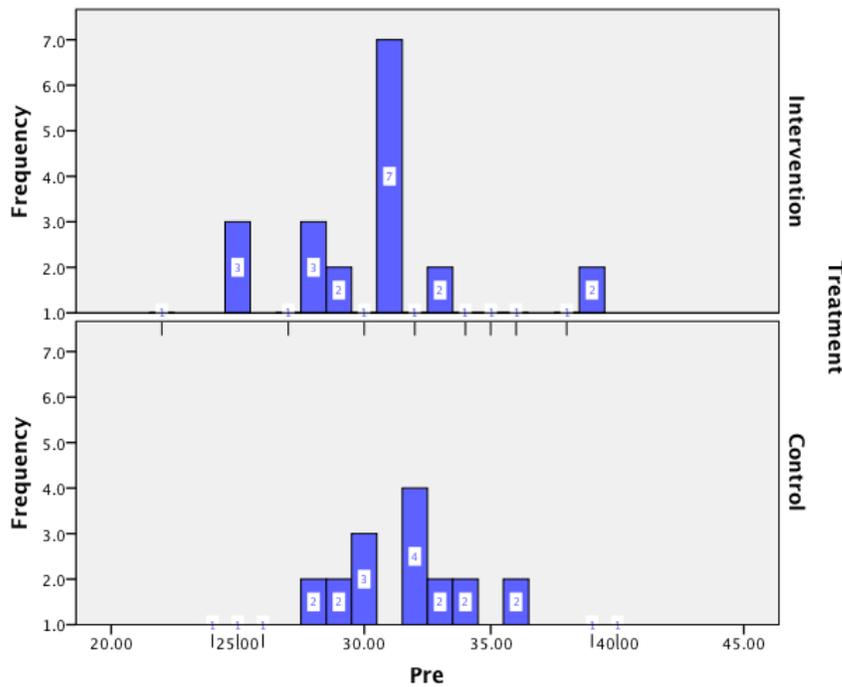
Table 4.1 (see Appendix C for raw data). Figure 4.1 provides a visual representation of score comparison.

Table 4.1. Descriptive statistics for pre-scores of intervention and control groups.

Variable	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Intervention group	27	30.81	4.28
Control group	22	31.45	4.14

Note. The distribution of pre-assessment scores for both the intervention group and the control group are roughly symmetrical with no severe outliers. *Three students in intervention group had incomplete data, and only 22 students in the control group could be matched, for a total of 49 students.

Figure 4.1. Pre-assessment comparisons for intervention and control group scores.



Post-assessment Findings

Post-assessment scores of intervention and control group. Post-assessment data were analyzed with an independent samples t-test. The two variables were students' scores on the post-assessment for the intervention group and the scores on the post-assessment for the control group. The intervention group post-assessment scores ($M =$

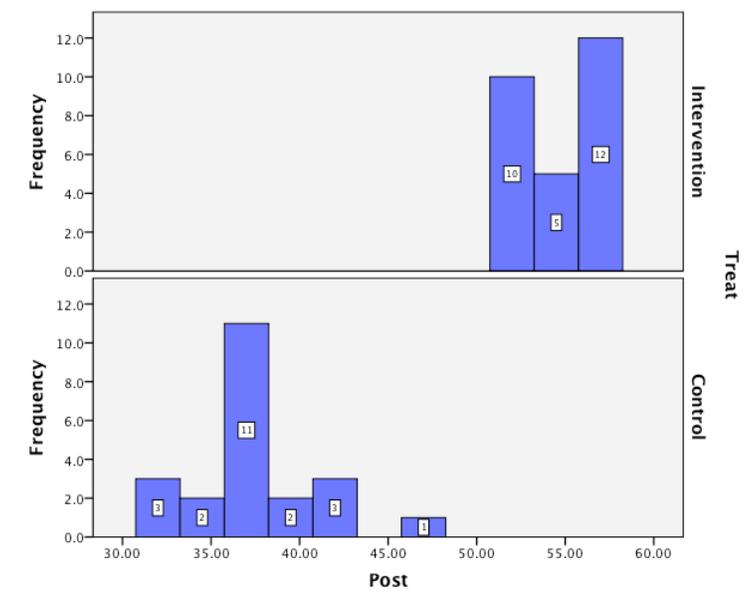
54.24, $SD = 2.10$) and the control group post-assessment scores ($M = 37.41$, $SD = 3.53$), were significantly different, $t(47) = 20.72$, $p < .05$. The differences between groups were spectacular, where the lowest of the intervention scores was higher than the highest score for the control group. Descriptive statistics for pre-assessment scores for both the intervention and control groups are reported in Table 4.2. Figure 4.2 provides a visual representation of score comparison.

Table 4.2. Descriptive statistics for post- scores of intervention and control groups.

Variable	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Intervention group	27	54.24	2.10
Control group	22	37.41	3.53

Note. The distribution of post-assessment scores for both the intervention group and the control group are roughly symmetrical with no severe outliers.

Figure 4.2. Post-assessment comparisons for intervention and control group scores



Final essay scores for intervention group. The data for the intervention group included a final essay that was rated according the Common Core Smarter Balanced Assessment scoring guide (see Appendix E), by two independent raters. One rater was a

Masters in Teaching student, the other was teaching colleague. The *x-axis* represents the scores assigned by the first rater, and the *y-axis* represents the scores assigned to each essay by second rater. The scores that raters reported did not deviate more than one point on any given area (see Appendix E). A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between the reliability of the rater's scores. There was a strong positive correlation between the two variables, $r = .98$, $N = 26$, $p < .01$. A scatterplot summarizes the results (see Figure 4.3), and the SPSS results are summarized in Figure 4.4.

Correlation between intervention post-assessment and final essay scores. A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was then computed to assess the relationship between the intervention group's post-assessment scores and the intervention group's scores on their final essay. There is not a significant correlation between the intervention group's post-assessment scores and their final essay scores, $r = .13$, $N = 26$, $p > .54$. Knowing a student's score on the post-assessment does not allow us to predict the student's score on the essay.

Within group comparisons for intervention and control group scores. Within group pre- and post-assessment comparisons were analyzed with a paired samples *t*-test. The two variables were scores on the pre-assessment for the intervention group and the scores on the post-assessment on the intervention group. The intervention group pre-assessment scores ($M = 30.81$, $SD = 4.28$) and the intervention group post-assessment scores ($M = 54.24$, $SD = 2.10$), were significantly different, $t(26) = 24.59$, $p < .05$

Figure 4.3. Relationship between the reliability of the final essay scores.

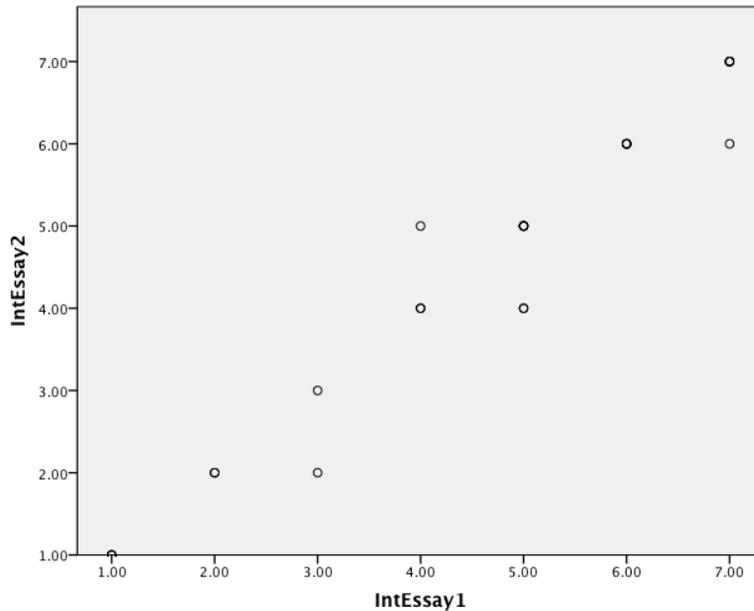


Figure 4.4. SPSS results of relationship between the reliability of the final essay scores.

Correlations

		IntEssay1	IntEssay2
IntEssay1	Pearson Correlation	1	.976**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	26	26
IntEssay2	Pearson Correlation	.976**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	26	26

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Interesting to note: the standard deviation for the intervention group post-assessment was significantly smaller than it was for the same group’s pre-assessment scores. They were closer together at the end of the intervention than they were at the beginning, which is an indication of how the intervention reached out to all students. It brought about a much more inclusive final result than might have been expected.

Teachers might expect that the more intellectually challenging the material we teach, the wider the gap might be between those who learn the most and those who learn the least (Gleason, T. personal conversation, July 18, 2015). Here we experienced the *opposite* result: instead of a widening of the knowledge gap between student scores, there was a substantial narrowing. The entire class was involved in the learning process, rather than a small section of the participants.

Paired samples *t*-test results. A separate paired samples *t*-test was run for the control group. The two variables were scores on the pre-assessment for the control group and the scores on the post-assessment on the control group. The control group pre-test scores ($M = 31.45$, $SD = 4.14$) and the control group post-test scores ($M = 37.41$, $SD = 3.53$), were significantly different, $t(21) = 10.56$, $p < .05$. Also interesting to note, the standard deviation for the control group post-assessment scores was also lower than it was for the pre-assessment, but the difference was not nearly as significant as was that of the intervention group. These results will be discussed further in Chapter VI.

CHAPTER V

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS

In Chapter V, I present the qualitative findings and provide evidence of early student responses to the Bill of Rights, the characteristics of those students who respond early, and those who respond later, if at all. I indicate this through their classroom participation in small groups, their efforts to create posters and develop skits and otherwise make their presence known. Since this unit takes place throughout the year, with considerable time spent on rights of expression, privacy and due process, I provide evidence of how students responded to each of these rights. I conclude with case studies to indicate whatever differences might have been by prior school performance, race and ethnicity, gender and social class, in addition to student evaluation of the curriculum as indicated in their final essays.

Putting the Classroom in Context

Every school year begins *en media res*, in the midst of some ongoing action: in the midst of children's lives, their parent's lives, and my life. Children walk into the classroom brimming with knowledge and experience; as filled with curiosity about their new teacher as I am about each of them. We may slide smoothly into our respective roles as students and teacher, or perhaps bounce into each other's lives as our expectations and paradigms collide. They arrive with curiosity about what 5th grade will be like, as I bring intentions of the knowledge and experience they need to acquire. It's always an intriguing dance, a tango of sorts, as they first encounter and begin to understand my style, and I begin to learn and understand theirs.

This past year was no different in that respect. At the start of the year, I received a

stack of cards from their previous teachers describing the wide range of student abilities and stories. Of course teachers discuss the incoming class: "... *Mildred is TAG [talented and gifted]-- really sweet but watch out for her dad, a real helicopter [a 'hovering' parent].... Gilbert is w-a-y low in math—just doesn't get it, but reads fairly well. And that other one, well, good luck getting any work out of him!*" I listen with a mixture of generosity and skepticism. I purposefully maintain a somewhat contrarian stance (as a dear friend often reminds me) because I prefer to avoid assumptions that another teacher's experience with students will predict my own. Actually, there are times I do my utmost to insure that doesn't occur, particularly in the case of students I hear described as *disruptive, disengaged, defiant and/or low performing*. These are the students that I find myself checking out in the cafeteria, and watching on the playground. These are the students I try to engage in small talk as they pass me in the halls, long before they are ever placed in my class. These are students whose needs propelled me towards this PhD in the first place. I once again looked out at the thirty-four faces that stared back at me, some with interest, some with apparent dread, and others with a look of well-rehearsed boredom. It was going to be another great year.

Setting. My classroom, Room 1, is located on the building's ground floor, a *daylight basement*; one door opens to the front lawn, the other to the dark hallway and stairwell up to the main floor. The room is also farthest from the office hence the nickname, *Outer Mongolia*. Left of the entrance to the room is a colorful poster with a quote from Wade Davis, "The world in which you were born is just one model of reality. Other cultures are not failed attempts at being you; they are unique manifestations of the human spirit" (Retrieved from <https://www.syracuseculturalworkers.com/products/>

[poster-other-cultures](#)). The inside of the door is covered with two maps representing the world: one is McArthur's Universal Corrective Map of the World (Source: <http://odtmaps.com/>) the other, a Gall-Peters Projection World Map, is a cylindrical equal-area map projection. These maps have been controversial since they were first introduced in 1983 because of their non-traditional position and presentation of the size of the United States and Europe in comparison with the rest of the world.

The earth is round. The challenge of any world map is to represent a round earth on a flat surface. There are literally thousands of map projections. Each has certain strengths and corresponding weaknesses. Choosing among them is an exercise in values clarification: you have to decide what's important to you. That is generally determined by the way you intend to use the map. The Peters Projection is an area accurate map.

(Retrieved from: <http://www.petersmap.com>).

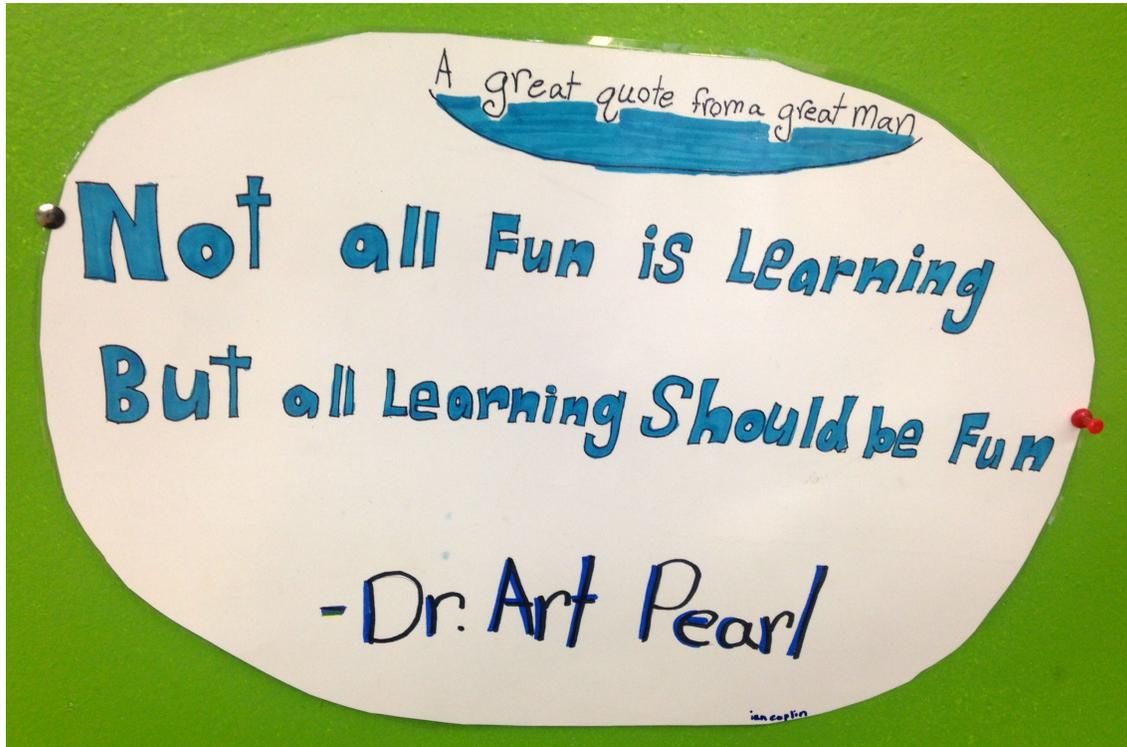
Needless to say, these maps tend to instigate lively discussions of perspective, often on the first day of school.

The school was designed over ninety-five years ago for a maximum of approximately twenty students per classroom, not the thirty-two to thirty-five that now fill the seats. Children sit at round tables (four to a table) rather than individual desks in an effort to encourage collaboration. It makes for a talkative classroom. My job is to make the majority of the talk constructive. While all learning should be fun, obviously not all fun is necessarily learning (A. Pearl, classroom conversation, 2009) (see Figure 5.1).

The northern side of the room is filled with windows that span nearly the entire

wall and provides natural light, especially during the dark, rainy, Pacific Northwest

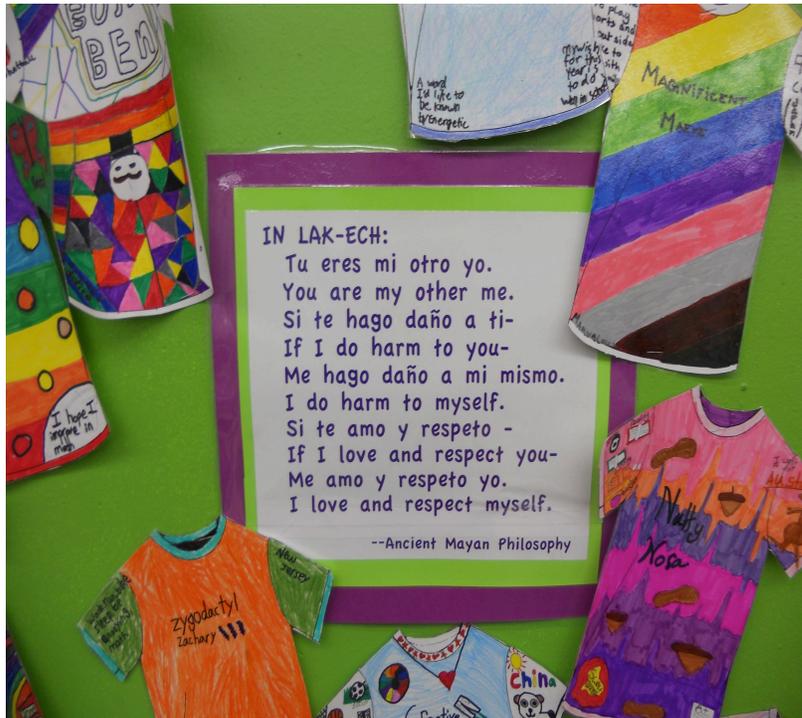
Figure 5.1. Students privately created a poster of one Pearl's precepts.



winters. In autumn they frame the vibrant green leaves of the old chrysanthemum and maple trees outside. Opposite the windows is the Smartboard with bulletin boards on either side, painted spring-leaf green to mirror the plants outside. Students' cubbies house their supplies and are located beneath the boards. That first day of school the bulletin board is starkly empty, except for a quote adapted from Luis Valdez' *Pensamiento Serpentino* (1977, p. 174) (see Figure 5.2). Years ago, I attended a screening of the film "Precious Knowledge," which documents the attack by the Tucson School District on the highly successful Mexican American Studies program. In the film, Curtis Acosta's class recited the ancient Mayan philosophy, *In Lak'ech*. At that time, I was teaching 5th grade in a dual-immersion, bi-cultural school. *In Lak'ech* seemed to encapsulate my goals for the children as well as connect to the mission of the school. Although it is now two years

since my reassignment to a privileged, monolingual school, the message seems equally important. And that nearly empty board will soon be filled with student work.

Figure 5.2. Classroom poster of In Lak'ech.



In Lak'ech
Tú eres mi otro yo.
You are my other me.
Si te hago daño a ti,
If I do harm to you,
Me hago daño a mi mismo.
I do harm to myself.
Si te amo y respeto,
If I love and respect you,
Me amo y respeto yo.
I love and respect myself.

Classroom culture. The first week of school is always a blur, a flurry of activity as teachers and students get acquainted, establish agreements we can all live by, and begin to build a new community and culture of inclusion. As mentioned earlier, I have discovered that *who* students were in previous classrooms, is not always who they choose to be in my classroom. I recall being told in my practicum experience, that teachers should never smile for at least the first week of class if they hope to establish a strong power base. I've never been able to pull that off—We're usually laughing by the first hour. While we discuss my approach to academics, the first three days are dedicated to meeting one another in a new context. Field notes from September 15, 2014 reflect both my concern and anticipation.

I hate to admit it.... I can't imagine this class will even come close to last year's class. Really, they wrote articles for the school newspaper about Dr. Pearl and about rights, a group spoke at CAPE [Community Alliance for Public Education] and then addressed the school board. They even took on Blanche's tough questions about rights and race- and did such a good job that she still remembers them. And what about publishing an article in Connections? I guess, to some extent I feel this every year. Ok, maybe not every year.... At the same time, I'm amazed -- all of the consent forms have been returned... the kids are all *in*; their parents are all supportive (and excited) that their child's teacher is working on this dissertation. No flack. Everybody -- my class and the control group -- have taken both surveys -- stress about Art's health.... The kids want to meet him— noticed him coming to my class last year, and want to find out what he's about. I explained that he's healing and plans to come soon—" Can we make him get well cards?" *That* was totally unexpected. I recall what Des said to me nine years ago, before I went into surgery, when I worried about the outcome. "What if it all turns out *better*?"

Students' Experiences as Study Participants

The data collection process began the second week of school. I handed out the student consent forms, and together we read them aloud. I explained what the study was about, and fielded questions.

"Will it be graded and on our report cards?"

"Do we have to learn it?"

“No, and yes,” was my answer both questions. I reminded them that, as it said in the letter to their parents, they could opt out of being in the study—but not out of learning the subject matter. Just as math, literature and human growth and development units are required subjects, so is learning about our country’s Constitution and the Bill of Rights. We talked about how long the unit would last, and I introduced them to the Livescribe pens. Most were excited to use them, so I agreed to create a sign-up sheet to give everyone a chance to use it. Next I handed out the knowledge and attitude assessments: administering them was unexpectedly problematic. Some questions seemed ambiguous, the syntax was more convoluted than expected, and some questions were double negatives. At the end of the day I texted my cooperating control group teachers to let them know that the assessments needed to be read aloud to their classes.

Still, there was more to glean from the data beyond mistakes and raw scores. I learned that only one out of thirty-four students rated the question, “The court system today is prejudiced against African American males” as a 4, *strongly agree*, and that student was a McKinney-Vento (living in poverty) multi-racial student, with an incarcerated step-father. A majority of the students were familiar with petitions, and strongly agreed that, “If you don’t like what the president is doing, you can sign a petition telling him to stop,” because the previous year they had petitioned the School District for healthier food to be available in the cafeteria. Yet many of these same students agreed with the statement, “It is unpatriotic to speak out against your government.” Quite a few also checked as *true* that, “According to the United States Constitution, schools should celebrate religious holidays.” Only one child in the class checked *false* next to, “If you are found innocent of a crime, and new evidence comes up, you can be tried a second

time for the same crime.” Further, during a subsequent discussion prior to the introduction of First Amendment rights, most children were convinced that driving, voting, and education were included in first amendment rights.

“Stealing time” is a phrase coined by Pearl (personal communication, June 23, 2009) to provide the space and time to teach democratic, social justice curricula. Cultural Linguistics is the umbrella title I use to justify the weekly hour of instruction. Pearl has been intimately involved in Cultural Linguistics since I first heard him present with Albert Ochoa at the University Bi-Literacy Conference in June 2009. Pearl has come to my class on an average of twice a month since 2009. Last year acute health issues postponed his first meeting about rights until October 15th. He rarely lectures to students, and this meeting was no exception. It was a sharing of ideas and information, as students were encouraged to interject their thoughts and questions to clarify any confusion. We pushed aside the tables to the outer edges of the room in order to make space for everyone. The session began with basic introductions: children shared their name and one interesting thing about themselves. (All the names in the dissertation are pseudonyms to protect student privacy.)

“Hi Dr. Pearl! I’m Stephanie and I have a cow.”

“Hi Dr. Pearl, my name’s Owen and I have ADHD. And I’m VERY funny.”

“Hi, my name is Sylvie and I’ve been to Japan four times.”

“Hi! My name’s Michael, and I love *Angry Birds!*”

“I’m Alisha, Dr. Pearl. I thought you’d never get here!”

Some of the responses were well-rehearsed responses, practiced each time a new student joined the classroom community, some were clearly attempts at entertaining

peers, and others were unpredictable, and spontaneous moments of sharing. It's curious to note that the October 15th journal entry from that night was precisely one month after the first entry.

So Art comes to *Outer Mongolia* to talk with the kids. It's not a perfectly organized presentation, but that's what seems to make it work so well. It's really more of a dialogue... sharing history with the kids as oral tradition, not something that's dry and dull on a printed page. History as lived experience, history as storytelling, a counter-narrative, - almost call and response with kids throwing in their ideas. They are free to "interrupt the guest" with their questions. And Art never embarrasses them - so each child seems to feel respected and the hands fly up.

Case Study Results

The fictionalized case studies, as mentioned in Chapter III, were purposefully selected, matched based on ethnicity/race, socio-economic status, scholastic performance (according to District 4j *easyCBM* scores) and gender. These case studies were created to accurately represent the students and the themes that arose during the year-long coding process. The composites reflect the students at this school, and their experiences during the implementation of the curriculum. While it would have been possible to create composite case studies of White, economically challenged, academically low-performing students, such case studies would not have met the criteria of including the effects of the curriculum on nondominant, academically low-performing students. The composite case studies are an accurate representation of the demographics of Maple Elementary, as well as those of school district. In this class, there were no children of Color who were

identified as Talented and Gifted, nor were they academically high performing. Still, these case studies may inadvertently serve to reinscribe stereotypical assumptions of race, gender and class, if taken out of the context and results of this research project.

The first case study, *Xander*, brings together data from multi-racial boys whose have experienced poverty and/or homelessness, and are academically low-performing students (below the 30th percentile on District 4j assessments). The second case study, *Selena*, is a composite of girls of Color from historically marginalized, economically challenged families, who are also academically low performing. While they did not qualify for Special Education services, they were historically pulled out of the general education classrooms for small group instruction, usually taught by Educational Aides (EA). The third and fourth case studies, *Janea* and *Adam*, are fictionalized composites of students who are White, academically high performing and/or identified as talented and gifted (TAG), socially and economically advantaged.

Themes. During the constant coding process, fifteen themes emerged: *awakening, connections, privacy, interest, finding voice, engagement, ownership, personal testimony, working collectively, respect for the teacher and Dr. Pearl, curriculum, classroom management, inclusion, rights in action and fun*. These were narrowed down to six primary themes, with the others falling into subordinate categories. The primary themes are *connections, engagement, ownership, inclusion, working collectively and rights in action*. An umbrella theme that seemed to weave them all together was *fun*.

Xander: a study in engagement, connection, and ownership. Fingers curled around the doorframe, he leaned in, poked his jet black, short-cropped hair around the corner, face turned upward to catch a glimpse of the classroom before he stepped over the

threshold. Xander slowly walked in with what seemed to be an interesting mixture of eagerness and trepidation. Nearly five feet tall and lanky, he wore an oversized graphic t-shirt, blue basketball shoes and gray basketball shorts. His shining brown eyes took in the details of the classroom—bookshelves, the large Japanese fans hanging above one bulletin board, the dolphin kite in the back of the room, and the whales that were clearly painted by children. He focused on me for a moment or two, then immediately cast his eyes downward as if to avoid either detection or confrontation. He focused on a book of poetry.

“Do you like to read?”

“Ya, I like to read.” He leaned over to scratch his ankle, his face turned upwards as he looked off to the right. He seemed to be somewhere else for a moment. Then he shifted his gaze and looking directly at me, continued, “My dad has this real old, real big book. And my mom and I read to each other at night. We read stories and poems from the book. I mean it’s a *big book*. So big that when we’re reading in bed, half of the book is on my mom’s lap and half is on mine.” He gestures toward his lap, demonstrating how they sit. “And we read all kinds of poetry from it.” He nodded and continued to check out the room. My early notes reflect a child adjusting to a new environment, new teachers, classmates, and in his case, a new family. He’d recently had to move in with his Aunt Gloria, who was serving in a foster capacity, meaning it would not necessarily be permanent. Field notes from September, 2014, reflect his aunt’s concern and my cursory observations:

Gloria tells me that Xander doesn’t respond well to orders [well, neither do I]. Seems he has taken lessons in learned disability to heart... I’m

seeing signs of a child absolutely terrified to be ‘caught’ making mistakes.

He’s not alone in that. Alaina is right there with him.... We started this year with Dweck’s growth mindset theory; still the transition for children to shift paradigms takes time.

Maple Elementary School is a low transition school, with the majority of children in stable living situations. Most of the students that begin school here in kindergarten remain through the 5th grade. This often presents a social/emotional challenge for students who enroll when they are in the intermediate grades, as they attempt to integrate into the cliques and social circles formed years earlier. Even as a seasoned teacher joining the staff two years ago, I recall the distinct *outsider* experience. Xander seemed to carefully observe student interactions before even attempting to make friends. Those first weeks he sat at his table in near silence while others talked and giggled. Sweatshirt hood drawn up over his head, he immersed himself in a new book I’d just purchased for the class, Tim Tingle’s *How I Became a Ghost* (2013). The *Amazon* book review had made it nearly irresistible, “a tale of innocence and resilience in the face of tragedy” (Retrieved from, <http://www.amazon.com/How-Became-Ghost-Series/dp/1937054535>). Book in his hands, Xander dove in and seemed to barely come up for air. He talked me to about the story, along with his reactions about what he read, but not to other kids. He thought it might be “too hard for them to take.” Indeed, he spoke to very few people the first few weeks, that is, until Pearl arrived.

Rights strike a cord. I had administered the knowledge and attitude assessments shortly after school started, but waited for Pearl to join us before beginning the unit. He initiated that first conversation on the Bill of Rights with an unexpected question, “Why

do you think you come to school?” Surprised laughter erupted from nearly all the children, then came the shout-outs until I requested raised hands, in order to understand what everyone said. Answers varied,

“To get good grades”

“So we can be smart”

“To get into a good college”

“To get a good job”

“Cuz my mom makes me”

They were as dumbfounded by Pearl’s response, as were the M.A.T. students that I taught last summer when they heard me quote him: “Actually, it’s so that you can become informed citizens, capable of working together to create the world you want to live in, rather than fit into a world that others have created, which probably won’t be to your liking.”

That first animated conversation with the students lasted for over forty minutes, as we built the case for the Bill of Rights. To wrap up the session, I asked students to work with their table groups to come up with 3 rights they felt might be important, and write them down. Most did, some didn’t, as their conversation took precedence over recording their ideas. Xander’s seat was in the front of the room, close to where Pearl was sitting. I fully expected him to have pulled out his book, or laid his head in his arms on the table. Instead, his CL journal was opened in his lap, and he was deeply engrossed in whatever he was writing. I walked over to his table and casually glanced down to discern what was so absorbing, half-expecting to see *Minecraft* style drawings. His face lit up with excitement as he raised his eyes to make contact with me. He silently pointed to the first

right he thought was important, “the right to speak up.” The second was, “the right not to have other people get into your stuff.” I was stunned. He had written nearly two full pages and was one of the only students to mention speech or privacy. I leaned down close to his shoulder and speaking quietly, I asked him about his work.

“You know about those rights?”

“Sure,” he responded as he glanced in Pearl’s direction.

“Where’d you learn about it?”

“Just heard it,” was all he would say. His eyes returned to what he had written.

Rules of engagement. The following week students continued working with their table groups to make posters about one of the five rights of expression. They all seemed engaged in planning, drawing, or researching more information to include in their posters. Xander’s table group chose to work on freedom of petition. After an initial foray into the project, he disengaged from the group project, and began doodling in his journal. I first checked with the group, and then whispered to Xander, “Don’t you think Dr. Pearl seems kind of bored?” (Pearl had just finished talking with one group.) He looked up from his journal, glanced at me, turned in his seat to catch a glimpse of Dr. Pearl, and then looked back at me and nodded.

“Can I go talk to him?”

“Good idea.” He pushed himself up from the chair, and walked over to talk with Pearl. They talked for nearly fifteen minutes. Even from across the room, I could see how involved Xander was in their conversation. He sat on the edge of the stool, alert and responsive. I detoured other children from interrupting the conversation, as I moved around the class answering questions and offering support. Later, Pearl filled me in on

some of the details of their discussion, which was supplemented by the Livescribe pen recording.

What a sweet kid! He's really trying to be happy. He mentioned his parents are having trouble, but didn't go into details... He's so enthusiastic! He said how excited he was about rights, but when I asked him why, he just smiled and shrugged his shoulders. So I asked if he knew about the specific rights we were learning, and he came up with freedom of the press and freedom of religion. As he groped for another, I asked him "What are you doing right now?" He laughed out loud, "*Freedom of speech!*"

Pearl asked if he wanted to learn about the other, freedom of assembly and petition. Xander asked what they meant-- he was not ashamed to admit to Pearl that he didn't know, and suddenly he seemed unconcerned about sounding 'dumb' (his usual m.o.). I kept glancing over to see how this *low performing* student was doing. He was riveted as Pearl explained what they meant.

"So, Xander, do you think you'll be able to remember these a week from now?"

Xander looked back at Pearl, and nodding replied, "Sure!"

Ownership. The following week Cultural Linguistics began with a short review of the racist origins of our country—most students were shocked to learn that the Constitution defined slaves as 3/5th of a person. They began to think about just whom *the people* were that Lincoln referred to in his speech when he said a "*government of the people, by the people and for the people*" (Gettysburg Address, November 8, 1863).

"Does anyone know how many times is *God* mentioned in the Constitution?"

Pearl challenged the class. “I can’t hear if you all shout at once. Just hold up fingers to show how many.” Hands flew up, displaying anywhere from one to 15 fingers (one hand flashed opened and closed to signify more than ten). Xander casually leaned back in his seat, one shoulder slumped to the side in an ever-so-cool move, held up only his thumb and first finger clearly in the shape of an *O*. He turned his gaze to Pearl, seemingly daring him to notice. Pearl glanced around the room. His eyebrows rose as he nodded, smiled and pointed to Xander’s hand,

“He’s absolutely right. *Zero. God* is mentioned *zero* [italics represent speaker’s emphasis] times in the entire Constitution.” There was a softly audible collective gasp in response. I’ll never know if it was in response to the answer itself, to the person who had answered, or both. Xander was careful not to glance around the room, as students looked in his direction, and the discussion continued.

It had been easily six weeks since we listed all the freedoms guaranteed by the first amendment, so on his first day back with the students, Pearl asked, “It’s been awhile since we last met. I’m wondering, can anyone tell me what’s guaranteed by the first amendment?” Hands flew up: Jannea’s first, of course, then Ellen, Freya, Leah, Isaiah, Jeffrey, Adam, Deana, Selena.... one by one, allowing the children time to think about it, more hands flew into the air—Jannea, Michael, and then Xander. Hands were waving at me, “*oh! Oh! OH’s!*” were erupting around the room as they tried to get my attention. I looked around the room, and surprised Xander by nodding in his direction. His eyes widened and he nodded back, “freedom of assembly... freedom of the press... freedom of religion.... He slowed down, face blushing as he shrunk down into his seat. Kids started to call out encouragement, not answers. He straightened up and continued,

“freedom of petition... and...” He started to reach for his hood to cover up his face in case he had the wrong answer, and added, “Freedom of speech.” The class erupted into shouts and spontaneous applause. Xander radiated relief and happiness. The solidarity present among the students at that moment was electrifying.

Keepin’ it real. After a week spent making First Amendment posters, the students wanted to share their learning by writing their own skits about rights of expression, along with rights of privacy. Once again Xander seemed to shut down. I asked what he’d like to do. He knew immediately what he wanted to do.

“I wanna work with Dr. Pearl,” was his decisive answer.

“Ok. So, go and ask him” I replied.

“Wait. Really?”

Within minutes, Xander, Chris, and Pearl were huddled around the table with Pearl helping them construct a fictional conversation between Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. about the Birmingham Children’s March (something we’d been studying in our reading group). They worked steadily for the rest of the period and had to be reminded to break for P.E. On the way to P.E., his face shining with excitement, Xander exclaimed,

“Wow, I can’t believe you let us work with Dr. Pearl!”

“Well, you asked me... guess you’d better be careful what you ask for!”

His happy laughter floated down the hallway as we walked toward the gym. The boys continued to write, research and rehearse their skit, finally performing it for the class, along with everyone else.

The final writing assignment of the year was the Bill of Rights essay. Xander

balked at my expectation that he would complete the work.

“Why do I have to write about it? I *live* it,” was his response. I told him that I couldn’t grade him on work he didn’t do. After extended negotiation, he finally agreed to present what he learned if I would accept it in the form of a *Keynote*. See Figure 5.3 for details from Xander’s final presentation.

Figure 5.3. First and last pages from Xander’s Bill of Rights presentation.

The slide is titled "1st Amendment" in a large, dark blue serif font. Below the title is a list of rights, each preceded by a small gold gear icon. The rights listed are: "Rights of Expression (it's not the smile on your face!)", "Freedom of Speech", "Rights to Petition", "Rights of Assemble", "Freedom of the Press", "Freedom of Religion", and "People of Color don't always have these rights- And that's a problem". Below the list is a section titled "What it all means to me" in the same large, dark blue serif font. This section contains a single paragraph of text, also preceded by a gold gear icon, which reads: "Dr. Pearl and Susan, it was really important to me to learn all this, because if I didn't know about these rights, I wouldn't have them. I knew about the rights of speech when I started the year, but now I know them all. It made me feel good to have fun laughing and learning at the same time. Sometimes we even got to make jokes about the rights. Which is really cool!"

1st Amendment

- *Rights of Expression (it's not the smile on your face!)*
- *Freedom of Speech*
- *Rights to Petition*
- *Rights of Assemble*
- *Freedom of the Press*
- *Freedom of Religion*
- *People of Color don't always have these rights- And that's a problem*

What it all means to me

- *Dr. Pearl and Susan, it was really important to me to learn all this, because if I didn't know about these rights, I wouldn't have them. I knew about the rights of speech when I started the year, but now I know them all. It made me feel good to have fun laughing and learning at the same time. Sometimes we even got to make jokes about the rights. Which is really cool!*

Selena: working collectively, awakening, and rights in action. The school secretary brought Selena's mother down to meet me after enrolling her children in school. School was over for the day, and I looked up at the sound of voices. A slight, light-skinned woman with reddish-brown hair, green eyes and a cautious smile stood in the doorway.

She told me she'd left her kids with a friend, so that she and I could speak privately. She glanced around the room quickly, then pulled out a chair and sat down at one of the round tables, clearly ready for business. I joined her. She immediately let me know that she was worried that her daughter might once again be placed in "small groups for the dummies," as happened in previous schools she'd attended. I mentioned that it was too soon for records to have arrived, but that I will definitely take the information under consideration as we planned group placements.

"Ok. Look. The thing is she's smarter than she pretends." The look on her face was enough to elicit from me a promise that I'd do my best to keep her daughter in the general classroom. Probably not the wisest move on my part, given that I had no idea of her academic strengths or limitations. Then her mother matched my promise with one of her own: she'd do everything to help her daughter keep up. Granted, I've heard this vow often. It can be a challenging one to fulfill when you're a single mom working a minimum wage job, and have three other children who also need your attention.

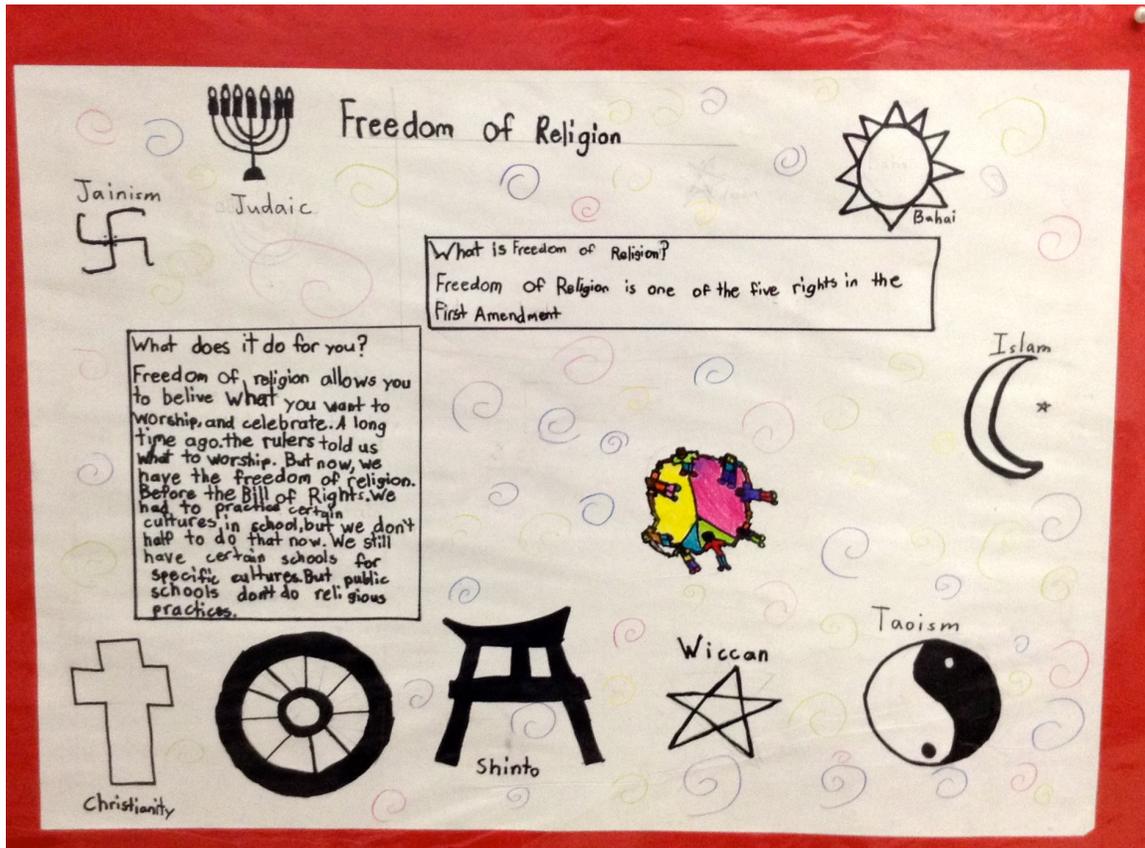
Her mother was right. Selena, a biracial child with curly light-brown hair, and warm-cocoa skin, was clearly gifted in learned disability. Whether it was reading, math or science, her go-to response those first weeks after her arrival was a wide-eyed, barely audible, clearly plaintive, "I'm confused." Her left shoulder would rise up and inward, as

she slowly slid down into her seat, seemingly in an effort to disappear. I observed as she performed this role to perfection for a few weeks before I whispered in her ear (as I have to numerous other children), “You’ve used up all those *I’m confused’s* you had up your sleeve. There are a truckload of *I wonder’s*, *I’m curious’s*, or even a few *where-do-I-go-next’s* to use instead. But those *I’m confused’s*? All used up.” She looked at me as though I’d just lost my mind, and then allowed a small smile to start at the edges of her mouth, as she tried out, “Ok, so.... I’m.... *curious* ... about this part.” That’s when the work began.

Working collectively. True to her m.o., when she first encountered Pearl, Selena was *confused*. Why was this *old guy* coming to our class? And why were her classmates *so* excited? It was only her second week in our classroom when students began work on 1st Amendment posters. Her table group was ready to jump in, but she was clearly not *up-to-speed* on what they were doing. She’d heard the class talk about rights but had disengaged from the classroom discussions, assuming they didn’t have much to do with her life. The posters, though, peaked her interest: artwork was involved! Her table had chosen freedom of religion and her drawing skills were clearly needed. Students pulled out their journals to explain the rights to her, as she drew symbols that might be useful on the poster. Artistic expression was her path of entry into the community, as well as understanding the Bill of Rights (see Figure 5.4).

Awakening. If the posters were her entry into the classroom community, then the skits awakened Selena to another perspective on her ability and her voice. Students have rights of movement in my classroom—the right to move to an open seat that will be more conducive to learning. Students can make that choice, and I reserve the right to change their seats for the same reason. Selena was invited by Deena to work with her table group

Figure 5.4. Group created poster about 1st Amendment right, freedom of religion.



on freedom to assemble, which as Selena pointed out, would probably require signs to show why they were assembling. In November, the class discussed the events in Ferguson, Missouri as well as the grand jury's decision not to indict Darren Wilson. Students discussed the events in terms of the Bill of Rights. Selena's posture was upright and alert, although she chose to remain silent during much of the animated classroom discussions. Her posters and final essay reflect the connections she made between the activities and current events.

"We should do a skit on Ferguson... only like-- as if--well, something like that could happen in Eugene. I mean, it could, right? Happen here?"

"Nuh unh, it couldn't," was Aidan's response. "That couldn't happen in Eugene.

Let's just do assembly—we could do it about the chemicals and stuff they put in our food, that we don't know about.”

Their conversation was audible from across the room, (as are many 5th grade conversations). Trevor, who sat at a nearby table interjected, “Let's ask Dr. Pearl what he thinks!” Pearl was clearly focused on working with Xander and Chris on their skit, looked up at the sound of his name—and Xander's playful poke.

“Well, sadly, yes. It's horrible, but these things continue to happen and could happen anywhere, which is why you all need to learn to work together to make this a better place!” Selena listened and just watched him for a minute, as if digesting his message and then turned to her tablemates.

“Let's do your idea about food. It'll be way more fun and won't make other kids so sad.” She seemed to feel she'd been heard, and that was most important. *Round Robin* is the period when my team teacher shares her climate change curriculum with my students and I teach her students about civics, rights and democracy. A week later, during their climate change session, Selena raised her hand. They were talking about carbon emissions and she asked,

“Well, we have the right to petition, so why don't we write letters to government to tell them what we think needs to change!” My team teacher was amazed. I was floored! Selena's awakening to her rights and her voice extended beyond the Cultural Linguistics hour, beyond our classroom discussions. Her work strengthened across the curricula. While she may not have passed the Smarter Balanced Assessments, her mother was *crying-for-happy* at the 5th grade ceremony as she hugged me and thanked me for the growth she saw in her daughter, in a positive direction. Selena's final essay reflected her

voice (and her humor),

I've had fun learning about rights this year. It was fun because it connected to everything, like the picture of the shark about to eat us [see Figure 5.5], because it represents that not only are our rights endangered, but we are endangered... think about it! Climate change! ... It was fun and important to go to the Courthouse [see Figure 5.6], because we got to be there acting out our rights to assemble, and petition and teach others, too!

(Excerpt from Final Bill Rights essay, 2015)

Figure 5.5. Class photo taken in May 2015 (Photoshop arrangement: D. Crooks).



Jannea: a study in inclusion and connections. Jannea is a bright child, identified as talented and gifted (TAG), the title used for academically high-performing

students whose parents have had them tested to qualify. Tall, with a peaches-and-cream complexion, and short-cropped dark brown hair, Jannea is bright, curious, kind, ingratiating (she rarely leaves any class without thanking the teacher), and funny. She is well integrated into the school culture. She is also independent, highly competitive, accustomed to knowing the correct answer, and prefers to work alone.

Figure 5.6. 5th grade students attend Rally for Our Children’s Trust at County Circuit Court. (Source: Register Guard, April 7, 2015). The students were rallying in support of two local youth, Kelsey and Olivia Chernaik whose climate change case was being heard before Judge Karsten Rasmussen Tuesday. (AP Photo/The Register-Guard, Chris Pietsch) (Retrieved from, <http://registerguard.com/rg/news/local/33393579-75/youths-file-federal-climate-change-lawsuit-in-eugene.html.csp>).



At the beginning of the year, she had moments in which she reminded me of Carol Dweck’s (2006) description of a bright child with a fixed-mindset, a belief that you

are smart because you are effortlessly successful. If I ever needed more proof of how wrong first impressions could be, she provided it. I later learned that I provided similar lessons for her.

When I first heard we were going to be learning about the Bill of Rights, I was thinking ‘WHHHAAAATTT?!’ I had not the slightest idea whatsoever about what the Bill of Rights could possibly be. I even thought learning about them would be boring! The only time I have ever been more wrong was when I thought the Harry Potter series wasn’t worth reading (Janea, personal communication. June, 2015)

Janea’s pre-assessment reflected the understanding of a child who is unfamiliar with most of the rights guaranteed in the constitution. She assumed that the statement, *If you are found innocent of a crime, and new evidence comes up, you can be tried a second time for the same crime*, would obviously have to be true, and strongly disagreed with the statement that, *The court system today is prejudiced against African American males, and other minorities*.

Inclusion. Janea seemed imbued with a generous spirit. She was willing to sit next to students that others avoided without complaint. When students formed groups to write their skits, she went out of her way to include a particular student who had historically been excluded from a great many classroom activities since the time he was in kindergarten. Stephen’s parents and I met the first week of school, and I clarified that he would not find it easy to *escape* from my classroom. I let them know that I do not put students’ desks outside the classroom and that they are not sent into the hallway to work, rather they have to request to do so. And even then, students need to have a reason they

can justify as to why the hallway would be an optimal learning environment. Jannea not only welcomed this young man into her group, she elicited his input as they wrote their skit on rights of privacy. Her efforts to include Stephen gave him access to an understanding and engagement with the Bill of Rights that may not otherwise have been possible.

Connections. Later in the term, rights and poetry came together as we read the poem Maya Angelou wrote for President Clinton’s inauguration,

History, despite its wrenching pain,
Cannot be unlived, and if faced
With courage, need not be lived again.

(Excerpt from *On the Pulse of Morning*, January 20, 1993)

The 5th graders read the poem, discussing what it meant to them: the darkness, the pain along with the hope it also represented. Sonia commented that even though, “... we have this Bill of Rights, lots of people act like we don’t.” Jannea raised her hand to contribute to the discussion,

“Building on what Avery said, the history of our country isn’t very pretty. It wasn’t easy for a lot of different people. I mean, well, it really still isn’t.... *But*... if we talk about it and learn about it, then maybe people won’t have to keep doing things that hurt other people.”

The week before spring break, we invited a local climate activist to speak to our 5th grade students about climate change. While most students seemed interested by her presentation, Jannea took detailed notes during the entire 45-minute presentation. The activist challenged the students to brainstorm a plan of action, one thing they could do in

the community to raise awareness of climate change. She mentioned that Kelsey Juliana and Olivia Chernaik, two local youth, were once again going before the court in just a few weeks. My team teacher and I looked at each other, and knew we'd have to give the students a chance to experience rights in action. It would be a huge rush, since we were about to leave for Spring Break, but we decided to go for it anyway. Emails flew back and forth throughout our week 'off', and we returned with a rough plan of how it would run. We wanted to make sure that students would experience something meaningful, to experience what it means to be agents of positive change. A tribunal was planned where students would have a moment to 'make their case' for protecting the environment for future generations. Most students decided to make posters about what they wanted protected, others focused on carbon emissions and the *trillionth tonne* (<http://trillionthtonne.org>), or ocean acidification.

Janea consulted her notes and came up with an alternative plan. Her uncle had lost his job as a logger, "because of the spotted owl" protection. She wanted to make a poster about protecting logger's jobs, but feared her classmates would meet it with derision. She was relieved that I sat down to discuss it with her. We talked about the rights of animals to exist, and the rights of humans to try to make a living. I asked if she would be interested in researching a possible compromise that would allow humans to respect and live alongside animals, which had been living in those areas since time immemorial? She thought about it, and turned to the computer to gather some information. She devised a plan to establish owl sanctuaries that would allow loggers into designated sites only. She asked if she would be allowed to speak about her ideas at the rally. "Of course." was my reply.

Inclusion revisited. She was surprised when her classmates supported the counter-narrative she presented. At the rally tribunal, the audience had been coached to respond to each child's poster presentation with a chorus of, "We will help you!" When Jannea approached the microphone and presented her case for saving *loggers jobs as well as some owls' habitat*, the audience was clearly taken off guard. Their slight hesitation reflected their mixed feelings and the rise in their voices turned the affirmation, "*We will help you!*" into a questioning, "*We will help you?*" Jannea, not missing a beat, stepped proudly off the podium and walked up to me, smiling.

"Did you hear how they made it into a question?"

"I sure did." She shrugged as I hugged her. I added how gratifying it was that she had the courage to speak her truth, even when it went against the grain. We'd been considering whose *voice is heard, whose voice is silenced* across the curriculum all year long, and this was no different. Dissenting voices need a place at the table, or in this case, at the rally. Maybe even more important, her classmates continued to stand in solidarity with her, along with her right to disagree. A month later she wrote a speech for our assembly on rights and climate change.

Democracy is not a spectator sport. It isn't something you can sit around and watch. You need to work with others to make a difference. Our founding fathers made a difference by making the Constitution and Bill of Rights so that citizens had the power to make change and that our basic rights would be protected. This is a team sport and it's time to get off the sidelines and help make a difference!

Dr. Pearl, a professor who has lived through many civil rights

movements has been with us this year. He said something that has stuck with me. He said, “If you don’t know rights, you don’t have them.” Today we are going to help *YOU* to know your rights so that *YOU* have them and can protect them. So what are our rights? I’ll bet that you are familiar with some of these rights, but some may surprise you. Who thinks kids have rights? If you think so, you’re correct. We are so lucky to be born in a country where not only adults have rights, but kids do too. Your rights don’t allow you to do whatever you want, but they do allow you do speak your opinion and change others’ lives. Your rights can *NOT* be taken away and even the littlest kids can make a change.

Still, it wasn’t until I received Jannea’s letter at the end of the year, that I understood how much this year meant to her. As I read it, I flashed back to the start of the year, and it reminded me of how much she had grown:

I’ve had an amazing year. My brain has grown much bigger, and my knowing of the world larger. I now know my rights and have them, I know more about my classmates. I know more about you. I truly don’t know how I would be ready for middle school if you hadn’t been my fifth grade teacher. I appreciate how you go deep into topics, make things silly and fun while learning, and still look into serious and interesting discoveries. I also appreciate that you are always willing to listen to what I think about things. Thanks for really getting to know me and for helping grow my brain.

Adam: a study in engagement, meaning and fun. Mid-year, this message from

the school's innovative, good-humored school chef, arrived by email,

I know you've been teaching government systems. Just want you to know that the message clearly is getting through. Adam came for breakfast today and said, "I don't really like the new lunch system. I liked it better when we came through the other doors. Should I start a petition?" (You may *think* they're not listening, Susan...) (R. Martin, personal communication, January 2015)

The pen is mightier. Adam is a bright, ten-year-old, described by his mother as a disengaged, disorganized, underachiever. He seemed intrigued by my teaching style, but not quite enough to put down whatever book he happened to be reading. In October, during Cultural Linguistics, I noticed Adam teetering on the back two legs of his chair, precariously balancing between the table and the back bookcase. He seemed absorbed in *The Giver*, a dystopian novel, and thoroughly oblivious to the Bill of Rights skits. He'd done a fine job writing a skit, which his group had performed well. Now he showed little interest in rights beyond the ones he covered in his group's poster and skit: privacy and the right to assemble. Thinking to entice him into the class discussion, I brought one of the *Livescribe* pens and a notebook to Adam, and invited him to take notes for the class. That interested him enough to put the book down. I was taken aback when I realized he'd kept up with the discussion. He was suddenly visibly attentive as he took copious notes (see Figure 5.7). At the conclusion of the period he asked if he could talk to Dr. Pearl about the Bill of Rights as he's seen other children do. We agreed and set a date.

The interview. The following week Adam had his chance to talk with Pearl. They sat next to each other, at one of the large round tables. Adam leaned forward, as if

physically getting himself into the conversation. Pearl began with a question, as Adam studied him.

Figure 5.7. Student Livescribe notes taken during cultural linguistics discussion.

United states has the most people in prison. The right of privacy is the most threatened. Black males have the most chance of being put in jail and native americans and latinos. rights of avoiding arrest rights after arrested rights at a trial rights after convicted, are the right of Due Process. Exclusion, Privacy, and due Process are the most threatened rights. The Government is spying on texts, phone calls, and emails. is it ok if they are stopping bad things from happening but spy without a right? Rights are suspended because of 13 year old war with no stop inside. if people don't know their right you lose them. 5 groups research Due Process and share research. 3 ways you can lose rights, neglect, war, forgetting them. guessing isn't the same as proof. in 1935 unions got the right together. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr did not approve in violence. But it will end you up in jail but not voluntarily. Gus Hawkins spent 24 years in congress.

“Adam, what kind of shape is the First Amendment in, in this country?”

Adam took a few moments to consider the question before he answered earnestly,

“Probably not the best, Sir. Actually, they’re threatened.”

“What did you learn about Rights of Privacy today?”

“That when you put stuff on social media it can be seen by the government.”

“That’s true. But what is privacy? How would you explain it?”

“Like how would I explain it to my mom and dad, or to my sister?” Adam wanted specifics about how he was supposed to answer the question. It was still early in the year, and he was adjusting to having a revered Elder in the classroom.

“Either—you choose.” Pearl answered with a smile in his voice that immediately put Adam at ease.

“Hmm, well, privacy is when you don’t have people always constantly getting in your personal bubble and watching you”

“So, Adam, how can the government invade your privacy?”

“Uh... oh geez... it invades it by watching every single one of your emails, and phone calls and even texts.”

“You’re right. Twitter and Facebook, too.”

“Facebook? Now that’s kinda scary.”

“Well, they couldn’t do this years ago, because the technology would have made it impossible... So how are we doing with teaching rights? Are you enjoying it?”

Adam stopped again to consider what he was being asked. He glanced at his shoes as he inhaled slowly, looked upward, toward the right before answering. He exhaled, “Well, I’m enjoying the conversation and the posters, but I don’t think our government is fulfilling our rights-- like, they aren’t always... uh, uh, letting us keep our rights.”

“Ok, so let’s go back to that-- the government, to the extent that we are actually involved in our government doing what we are asking them to do. There are two ways that we don’t/aren’t able to become involved in our government. First is that we just don’t do anything, and the other is that we don’t know enough. So we are here to work

with the second part. That's what I'm doing here, to help you know what your rights are, and as you get older and have more and more opportunities to influence your government, you can do what I call a citizen's responsibility, you can make the government respond to you. But you can't do that if we don't provide you with any knowledge about them." Pearl leaned back from the table, eyebrows raised as if in a query, a call to action, as he considered Adam warmly.

Adam reflected on what he heard and then responded, "So if you don't learn about them, they will kinda disappear. Or you won't know about them so you won't be able to tell the government that they are doing something wrong. Uh... Dr. Pearl? What percentage would say that doesn't know about their rights?"

"Oh gosh, that's a hard one to say, but I would guess that over half of our population does not know their actual rights."

"Wait-- over half *do* know or *don't* know?" Adam exclaimed, nearly jumping out of his seat.

"I would guess that over fifty percent do *not* really know their rights," Pearl responded as he shrugged his shoulders and shook his head before he continued, "Well, how would they? Would they know by watching TV? Or playing video games? Going to classes could help. But they don't talk about them.... If their parents know, then they might learn from them, but if schools aren't teaching about rights, then each generation, fewer and fewer people will know..." They both sat silently in contemplation for a moment, before Pearl continued, "That's why we're trying to get you to know your rights. Actually, we are trying to do more than just that-- we want you to talk to other children at Maple, so they have a chance to know about what you've learned."

“So, like, maybe we should talk to the School District so that every kid learns about their rights.”

“Actually, that’s the School Board. And last year’s class went to talk to the school board. Rights are in the state standards.”

“Wow! So even the state says we’re supposed to learn them?”

“Yes, but the way they’re taught is that kids just read them and take a test, but they don’t spend the time to really understand how they make a difference in everyone’s lives...One last thing, if we’re not having fun, we’re not doing it right. Are you having fun in this discussion?”

“Well, I’m having fun, but there are still a lot of sad parts in our history. *It’s interesting* is probably more of what I would say. I’m saying that you guys are doing a good job with teaching the rights and making it interesting.

I leaned in and asked Adam, “How can we make it more interesting?”

“Maybe, we could make up something like Jeopardy, or do skits.” Then he interrupted himself mid-sentence, “But there’s a good thing about skits, cuz we could show it to the 3rd and 4th graders, but Jeopardy would be just us. If we took a skit to another classroom, they would know more about what’s coming in 5th grade.”

“Well,” responded Pearl, “if we’re not going to change the world, somebody else is going to change it for us, so we’d better be involved in creating the change we want to see!”

“Ya, cuz they’d make it not very happy for anybody except themselves, but if we work as a team to change the world, then we can make it so that everybody gets a little of what they need, not just *SOMEbody* getting all of the power and making it so that only

they get what they want.”

Making it meaningful (ownership). The next day, Adam presented his ideas about writing skits to the class, and received unanimous agreement. Brandon, Adam’s tablemate wrote a rough draft of a petition informing kids about government surveillance and how anything they put on social media is monitored. Eva and Nora, tablemates to Adam and Brandon jumped in and helped type up a formal petition for the entire school to sign. The petition asked that those who sign agree to refrain from posting anything private or hurtful things about themselves or others. Eventually the team got signatures from the entire 4th and 5th grade classes, including teachers and the principal.

Later in the term, during lunch in the staff room, my team teacher shared an anecdote from her reading group earlier in the day. “Something was happening in the story [they were reading] where people were going to go into another character’s house to search for something. Suddenly Adam, along with at least three other kids shouted out, ‘*NOT* without a warrant!’” She started laughing out loud, as she finished up with, “I know who’s class they’re in! They’re sure learning their rights!” Adam was definitely engaged in learning, and excited about extending his understanding beyond the book.

The last day of school, I received this note from Adam:

You have been an amazing teacher. I am not just going to say that again and again in different words for this entire note. I am going to explain why....

You don’t actually shout for people to be quiet... you are way more effective because you have a way to calm us down when you are calm. Mostly it’s just because everyone respects you... One way that you are

compassionate is that if a kid acts up, you're not just thinking, "Oh, that's the kid that acts up." You find out why they're acting up and if you can help. You are also respected because you are very fun and yet hard both [sic]....

Before I was in your class, I felt like I was a terrible student. Now I feel way more confident because I feel like I can do more stuff now. For one, if I get a big assignment... I do a rough draft, get told by my mom and you, do another draft, and finally a final draft. I feel like I have learned how to work harder. I appreciate how you actually taught us the Bill of Rights, and you've actually taught us so well that I still remember them, which is very impressive considering my memory.... (personal communication, June 8, 2015).

It was indeed, an amazing year.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION, ANALYSIS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Introduction

The goal of this research study was to examine and document the effects of year-long, culturally responsive civics instruction at the elementary level. The research presented in this dissertation utilized both quantitative and qualitative strategies to examine what happens when elementary students are provided with the opportunity to engage with critical, democratic principles (Pearl & Knight, 1999) that reinterpret and *extend* the scope of the Common Core State Standards. *Cultural Linguistics* formed the springboard for the hour-long, weekly class that allowed to students immerse themselves in the principles that form the foundation of efforts to create a democracy. It is crucial to note that these experiences were *not* a decontextualized curriculum, limited to that one subject during that one hour. The Bill of Rights was the theme that was purposefully embedded across all subjects, woven into a net that supported all learning. The other lessons were not included in this dissertation since this study focused specifically on the Bill of Rights. Students made their own connections throughout the year and beyond, as evidenced by ongoing personal conversations with students and families.

Quantitative Research Questions

How do students engage with democratic principles through the lens of the Bill of Rights? This was the overarching question this study sought to answer. The research provides preliminary evidence that engaging students with democratic principles through the lens of the Bill of Rights may be effective in reaching through boundaries of race, culture, class, as well as SPED identifications.

Quantitative sub-questions (see Table 3.1)

1. What are elementary students' attitudes toward the Bill of Rights?
2. Is there a significant difference between attitudes in the intervention and control group?
3. What do the students in my class know about the Bill of Rights, compared to other elementary students?
4. Is there a significant difference between knowledge in the intervention and control group?
5. What are the changes within intervention group? (Compare by gender, race, ethnicity and SES.)

Qualitative Research Questions

How do students engage with democratic principles through the lens of the Bill of Rights? This was the overarching question this study sought to answer. The research provides preliminary evidence that engaging students with democratic principles through the lens of the Bill of Rights may be effective in reaching through boundaries of race, culture, class, as well as SPED identifications.

Qualitative sub-question (see Table 3.2)

1. What happens when elementary students have an opportunity to engage with critical, democratic principles?

Analysis of Quantitative Findings

Research question 1. As discussed in Chapter IV, the findings demonstrate that the Bill of Rights curriculum resulted in gains in attitude and knowledge for both the control group and the intervention group. The control group's pre-assessment scores ($M =$

32.45) were slightly higher than the scores for the intervention group ($M = 30.81$).

Research question 2. Post-assessment scores, as reported in the earlier chapter, reflect significantly stronger gains in the intervention group (see Table 4.2) with a 16.83 difference between their average scores.

Research question 3. Upon closer examination of those gains, the difference between the implementation processes used with the intervention group becomes apparent. Even though the control group made considerable gains, the standard deviation on the post-assessments ($SD = 3.53$) was within one point of the same group's pre-assessment standard deviation ($SD = 4.14$). In contrast, the interventions group's standard deviation was much lower on post-assessments ($SD = 2.10$) than on pre-assessments ($SD = 4.28$). The intervention group's results reflect a significantly reduced spread than that of the control groups. In addition, the score for highest control group was lower than the lowest score for the intervention group. The lowest learner in the intervention group learned more than the highest learner in the control group (see Table 4.2).

Research questions 4 and 5. The changes within the intervention group far exceeded expectations. A within group comparison of those students receiving the intervention reveals that one bi-racial student identified for SPED services scored higher than a White, TAG identified student. In all cases, the students were within five points of each other on the post assessments. Interesting to note was that the essay scores do not appear to correlate to the assessment scores. This draws attention to the necessity of providing students with the opportunity to both experience the curriculum, and express their learning in multiple formats and representations. Xander may not be very good at writing, but displayed his pro-democratic/civic engagement understanding in other ways.

While children like Jannea may be proficient writers and prefer essay formats, others chose to utilize technology to create interactive Bill of Rights *scratch* games (<https://scratch.mit.edu>), Prezi or Powerpoint presentations, while still others may find the best way to express their learning is in working collaboratively with peers to make posters, or write poems. Implementing multiple modes of representation allowed the Bill of Rights, year-long experience to cross over previous barriers of race, class (including homelessness), ethnicity, ableism, even transcending whether or not students' had been identified to receive Special Education services.

Interesting to note, that while the Bill of Rights is included in the Oregon State Standards, teachers feel pressured to teach those subjects that are tested and included in their evaluations by the district and state. The control group teachers generously shared that had I not included them in the study, they most likely would never have given even the few hours of time to the subject. It turned out that they felt embarrassed to administer the post-assessments, as they had not actually taught the subject. They therefore crammed in a short unit prior to giving the knowledge and attitude assessments. While their students made strong gains, whether or not they will be able to retain what they learned is uncertain. In contrast, students in the intervention group told me both verbally and in written form, "I will now have my rights for the rest of my life" (Personal communication, June, 2015).

Analysis of Qualitative Findings.

The Bill of Rights unit focused predominately on the First (rights of expression), and Third through Eighth Amendments (right of privacy and due process). These are rights that are applicable to the classroom, and students' experience while in school. The

unit only briefly touched on the Second Amendment, as the militia and guns are not considered applicable to most ten and eleven year-old children. The Ninth and Tenth Amendments, which are only discussed in class, state that citizens of this country are entitled to additional rights and freedoms not included in the ten amendments, and those powers not granted to the Federal government, shall be determined by the states and individuals.

This research was closely tied into community resources, beginning with Dr. Pearl, who attended the class on a near-weekly basis, and extending to local issues that included a lawsuit against the state of Oregon to protect natural resources (Our Children's Trust). Pearl brought a profound understanding of the Bill of Rights, and the Constitution along with an incredible record of inclusion that includes the New Careers program (1968). Kelsey Juliana and Olivia Cherniak's lawsuit against the state of Oregon to protect our atmosphere brought the rights of expression to our front door (Register Guard, April 8, 2015, Conca, August 2015). Student narratives, posters, skits, poetry, essays, and journals demonstrate the powerful impact the curriculum had on their lives. Parents' testimonials, while not explicitly included as part of this research, provided further evidence that the curriculum reached through the children, to positively influence their families.

Implications for Practice

"I am glad this is a year-long unit instead of three days, or a couple of weeks as many schools do. To fully understand the Bill of Rights takes longer than we even have in school." (Student, personal communication, June 3, 2015)

What I did that was different. This research is grounded in the theory of a

democratic classroom (Pearl and Knight, 1999), which means that the Bill of Rights curriculum is not implemented as a decontextualized fulfillment of an obligation. The case studies demonstrated that the year-long commitment transcends traditional rote memorization. It begins within the context of a democratic classroom, a necessary but not sufficient requirement to adequately teach about their rights. If students are to authentically engage with critical ideals of democracy, then they must first *experience* them, which is indeed the purpose of democratic classroom practices.

What was different about this classroom was the numerous ways that made it possible for students to become *actively* involved in the discussions and analysis, and remain involved throughout the year. Students were not *pulled-out* of class for any reason, including Special Education services, or behavior interventions. They used their creative, artistic skills to create posters, Prezi and Powerpoint presentations. They wrote and performed their own skits, and then chose to film them to share with others. They presented their learning to the greater community in public forums, all of which made the Bill of Rights a living document, not simply an historical artifact, which is so often the case (see Table 3.3).

This experiential unit connects to and engages with current issues. Students discussed and analyzed the National Security Agency (NSA), congressional debates on the issue and what happens with a change in the members of the Supreme Court. Students repeatedly commented that the length and depth of the study made it *real*. It was translated into their daily lives. Rights moved from being an abstract idea, to becoming an actual part of students' current existence. They had the opportunity to discover how rights applied not only to the news, (Ferguson, Eric Garner, Our Children's Trust), but

also to literature (The Giver, One Crazy Summer, Maniac Magee), and science (What questions are asked? What data is included?), which resulted in a sense of excitement, ownership and responsibility. Children were taught and practiced how to *disagree without being disagreeable*, how to support their position with *logic and evidence* and how to speak their truth to power.

Children had the opportunity to have individual conversations with Pearl, which made it possible for marginalized students to not only become engaged in learning about their rights, but to actually assume leadership roles in the classroom. All of these are essential attributes for a critically democratic classroom.

The research is aligned with my theoretical approach to teaching, and is significantly informed by Lawrence-Lightfoot's focus on *goodness*, rather than pathology (1994; 1997). I presume that each student enters the classroom with a wealth of knowledge that will benefit every other member of the classroom community. As suggested by many others, including Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis (1997), Pearl and Knight (1999), Kumashiro (2004), Morell and Duncan-Andrade (2008) and others, I approach teaching rights as an explicit act of inclusion, intervention and community building. Each year parents share how they have learned from their children's participation and engagement in a study of their rights. A year ago the pilot study yielded remarkable results. This past year the results were even more remarkable. Still, these results will not be easily reproduced.

Preparing teachers. The Department of Education (2012) calls for civics instruction to be included at all levels of education. It might be reasonable to assume that states, districts, schools and teachers should prepare to include civics instruction starting

with elementary schools. This will require that post-secondary education include such curriculum in their coursework, in order to prepare teachers ready to teach civics. This is currently not the case (p. 8). Additionally, the curriculum cannot be implemented in a decontextualized manner, but rather must be experienced within a larger, inclusive, authentically caring (Valenzuela, 1999), critically democratic framework (Pearl and Knight, 1999; Kumashiro, 2004) that stretches throughout the day. Teachers often believe that the Bill of Rights is all that they need to know about democracy rather than recognizing it as one aspect of a more comprehensive democratic theory, which could impact the outcome.

Implication for Policy

The Department of Education's *Road Map and Call to Action* (2012), reports that the "moment is ripe for reform because the state of civic knowledge and engagement among Americans is poor, even as the interest in civic learning and engagement among students, teachers, and faculty remains high" (p. 8). They continue to cite the results from the 2010 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, p. 8) civics assessment, which found that,

... only 27 percent, 22 percent, and 24 percent of fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth grade students, respectively, performed at proficiency, and a significant civic achievement gap persists between racial and ethnic groups. Even more troubling, NAEP documented recent declines in the overall civic knowledge of high school seniors between 2006 and 2010 (NCES 2011). As these data suggest, our public schools and postsecondary institutions are simply doing too little today to adequately

prepare Americans for informed, engaged participation in civic and democratic life. We must measure the success of civic learning and democratic engagement opportunities not only by whether they are provided to all students but also by *whether they are effective* [my italics]

The study by the Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts (cited in Pascarella, Seifert, and Blaich, 2009) reported that during their four years in college, over half of college students completing the surveys either demonstrated no growth or actually declined in valuing diversity, social and political involvement. These results underscore the need for both elementary and secondary schools and also higher education settings to “expand and transform their approach to civic learning and democratic engagement, rather than engage in tinkering at the margins. At no school, college, or university should students graduate with less civic literacy and engagement than when they arrived” (Retrieved from <http://www.ed.gov/civic-learning>, p. 12). This dissertation study draws attention to what reclaiming civic engagement can accomplish in one elementary fifth grade classroom. It underscores the importance, even in university settings, of coursework in civics that is contextualized within the broader critical democratic framework.

Implications for Theory

There have been limited efforts to bring democratic ideals into education. As far back as 1904, Margaret Haley, a union organizer for the National Education Association (NEA) told teachers in attendance that, “Democracy is not on trial, but America is” (as cited in Tyack, 1974, p. 257), arguing for greater freedom for teachers and students to engage in meaningful learning. Dewey (1916) sought “...to shape the experiences of the young so that instead of reproducing current habits, better habits shall be formed, and

thus the future adult society be formed, and thus the future adult society be an improvement on their own” (p. 79). While his ideas for a democratic schooling gained some traction among progressive educators, they were never given a chance to become a firm part of educational practice and ceased to have any impact in the changing education that took place after World War II (Tyack, 1974; Anyon, 1997). The importance of democratic theory in education was systematically excluded as corporate priorities took hold (Apple, 1966).

This dissertation study is an effort to revive democratic theory that extends, yet is fundamentally different from the democratic theory proposed by Dewey. Dewey’s progressive pedagogy emphasized “the centrality of student experience” (Cummins, 2001, p. 217). While in agreement with the importance of encouraging active student learning, rather than passive reception of information, the democratic theory presented in this study is informed by fundamental principles as distinct from vague opportunities for students to express themselves. This is not student centered, but rather *public-good centered*, as students are encouraged to work cooperatively on projects that make the world they live in a better place.

Limitations

There are a number of unique aspects of this study, and therefore it may not be easily replicated. My intense interest and investment in the Bill of Rights and the United States Constitution are currently not easily replicable, since these subjects are no longer a regular part of the curriculum in most areas of the country (U.S. Department of Education, 2012; APSA, 2010). Additionally, researchers may be hard-pressed to find community Elders with similar characteristics to Pearl, or the local climate activist who

introduced us to Our Children's Trust. It is important for teachers to explore their own communities for informed, engaging individuals familiar with current and past issues, who are willing to interact with their students.

While the research demonstrated positive results, it would have benefitted from stronger assessment tools that functioned as more direct, stand-alone assessments. Still, there is no reason to believe that with a more precise or better measuring instrument, the results would have been different. If anything, it is reasonable to assume that the results may have been even more dramatic. There is a limited amount of generalizability possible with a single study. So it is important that the study be replicated and more research conducted.

Finally, teaching the Bill of Rights as a distinctive feature of a democratic classroom might make replication difficult, and thus may be considered a limitation of the study. Still, none of these qualifications or limitations reduces the significance of the study and the dramatic improvement in the level of understanding of constitutionally protected rights achieved by this fifth grade class.

Future Research

This research needs to be replicated, with the recognition that teachers will likely have large differences in their knowledge of democratic theory and therefore large differences in their teaching practices. The research will need to take place across different grade levels, communities, in both more privileged areas, as well as with underserved populations. As previously stated, the research needs to extend to middle school, high school and post-secondary settings.

The CCSS for middle school and high school social studies do not specifically

call for in-depth civic instruction, although in 2011, Oregon adopted new social standards which expect eighth grade students to “Analyze important political and ethical values such as freedom, democracy, equality, and justice embodied in documents such as the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Bill of Rights” (Retrieved from, <http://www.ode.state.or.us/teachlearn/subjects/socialscience/standards/adoptedsocialsciencesstandards8-2011.pdf>). While present, clearly civic education is not promoted in the standards as a core subject.

While the terms “college” and “career” appear dozens of times in the standards, the 60+ page document mentions democracy exactly twice – the introduction claims that evidence-based reasoning is “essential to both private deliberation and responsible citizenship in a democratic republic” and a speaking/listening standard in 11th and 12th grade calls for the promotion of “civil, democratic discussions” (Retrieved from, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2014/03/12/why-the-common-core-flunks-on-civic-education/>).

Therefore, it is left for teachers to determine if and how to best educate their students about these core issues. High school teachers might choose to apply CCSS 11-12.RH.4, which asks that students “Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines *faction* in *Federalist* No. 10)” (Retrieved from, <http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=3350>). Educators will need to challenge themselves to stretch these standards to fit civic instruction that is authentic, engaging, inclusive and exciting rather than just *meeting the standards*. Middle school

teachers face the same challenge. They may choose to interpret the standards in such a way as to engage students in,

... literacy practices in or with their communities, or to create public literacy products like letters to legislators or public service announcements. Could individual teachers develop such projects and find standards that relate to this work? Certainly. But do the standards themselves highlight the democratic purposes of literacy? No. That commitment is not apparent (Mirra, 2014).

Educators might choose to implement the sixth through eighth grade literacy standard *6-8.RH.3*, which asks students to “Identify key steps in a text’s description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered)” (Retrieved from, <http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=3350>), through encouraging students to actually become involved in the process in their own community. Further research might support teachers to apply College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing 7, which expects students to “Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject matter under investigation. (Retrieved from, <http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=3350>).

As Mirra (2014) succinctly points out, the sample tasks “developed by Common Core-affiliated folk, involves close reading of the documents, but absolutely no interrogation or application of the democratic values inherent in the documents.” This is where the critical democratic principles (Pearl & Knight, 1999), provide the framework to transform passive student learning into opportunities for relevant, authentic, active

involvement and engagement (Rubin, 2007).

Conclusion

I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society, but the people themselves; and if we think them (the people) not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education. This is the true corrective of abuses of constitutional power (Thomas Jefferson, 1820).

The neoliberal assault on education has generated expanding systems of accountability that assign blame and punishment to individual students and teachers, “rather than on the inequitable school systems that have inadequately served them. Rather than improving quality of education, this vicious circle creates school climates characterized by compliance, conformity, and fear” (Picower, 2011, p. 1011). The enforcement of ongoing high-stakes testing that now form the basis for teacher evaluation creates roadblocks that make it nearly impossible for teachers to provide critical social studies and civics instruction, since they are not part of current high-stakes tests (Galston, 2004).

This has had a particularly devastating effect on the teaching of the Bill of Rights, and all other forms of civic education. It has notable significance because evidence shows we have done a very poor job of teaching the Bill of Rights (NAEP, 2011), and they are more threatened now than they have ever been in our history. This was the generating factor driving this research, to determine whether it was possible in the current setting to generate interest and excitement in learning about what the Bill of Rights was, and how important it was to students.

In March 2011, when the United States Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, addressed the iCivics Educating for Democracy Conference in Washington D.C. He

argued that the “need to revitalize and reimagine civic education is urgent. But that urgent need brings great opportunity—the chance to improve civic education in ways that will resonate for years” (Retrieved from: <http://www.ed.gov/civic-learning>, June 25, 2015). In 2012, the U.S. Department of Education subsequently released a forty-page document, *Advancing Civic Learning and Engagement in Democracy: A Road Map and Call to Action* (<http://www2.ed.gov/sites/default%20files/road-map-call-to-action.pdf>). The introduction lays the framework for the call to action, based on arguments first posited by our Founding Fathers. The authors contend that the teaching of civics is consistently sidelined in favor of reading, math and science.

Since its founding, America’s leaders have recognized that one of the most important purposes of educating the nation’s citizens is to protect and strengthen democracy. Education... must prepare all students for informed participation in civic and democratic life—so that all Americans are ready to tackle the challenges confronting communities and the nation.... Yet, unfortunately, civic learning and democratic engagement are add-ons rather than essential parts of the core academic mission in too many schools and on too many college campuses today. Many elementary and secondary schools are pushing civics and service-learning to the sidelines, mistakenly treating education for citizenship as a distraction from preparing students for college-level mathematics, English, and other core subjects. Many, if not most, institutions of higher education now offer civic learning as an elective but not as an integral component of preparing students to compete in a knowledge based, global economy (p. 1).

The document defines *civic learning and democratic engagement* as educational experiences “that intentionally prepare students for informed, engaged participation in civic and democratic life by providing opportunities to develop civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions through learning and practice” (p. 5). This aligns with Pearl and Knight’s democratic principles as outlined in Chapter II (see Figure 2.1), and is demonstrated by the results of this study.

The Department of Education calls for making civic learning and democratic engagement a *core expectation* for elementary, secondary and post-secondary students. The authors extend the call to action to apply to both under-graduate and graduate students (2012, p. 6), arguing that the purpose of schools is to prepare students for the global, competitive job market. This dissertation supports the urgent need for civic education beginning in elementary schools, and simultaneously complicates the limited vision defined by the Department of Education. Cultural Linguistics actively engages in educating children to become informed, active agents of change (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Pearl & Knight, 1999; Anyon, 2006; Lappe, 2006; Cammerota & Romero, 2007; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). It is not an add-on to existing curriculum rather it informs all the other areas that I teach. If we are to regain an inclusive democracy, schools must serve a much larger purpose than preparing students to merely become compliant members of a docile workforce (Apple, 2000; Bowles & Gintis, 2002). Pearl and Knight describe the purpose of democratic education as preparing students to work collaboratively across disparities, racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, gender, ability and socio-economic boundaries for the greater good of the community, not just to benefit a privileged few (1999).

It is a matter of grave concern that while the Department of Education purports to make effective civics a priority, *none* of the high-stakes assessments supported by the Department, and produced by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) address any of these *core issues*. In a climate where scores on SBAC assessments can result in the firing of an entire faculty or school closure, non-tested subject matter would indeed be *pushed to the sidelines* in deference to those subjects that may have a profound impact on students' lives, and teachers' livelihoods (Fausset & Blinder, 2015).

Further, Kahne and Middaugh's 2008 study of high school civic opportunities highlighted how students' race, academic track, and a school's average socioeconomic (SES) status were determining factors in the accessibility/availability of school-based civic learning opportunities that promote voting and broader forms of civic engagement. "High school students attending higher SES schools, those who are college-bound, and white students get more of these opportunities than low-income students, those not heading to college, and students of color" (p. 3). Such disparities play out long beyond student's K-12 experiences, becoming critical when considering that lower-SES citizens, those who have not benefitted from higher-education, and non-White citizens are under-represented in all areas of the political process (pp. 3-4). The often quoted review of relevant research by the American Political Science Association (APSA) Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy (2004), reported that privileged populations participate to a greater extent and have the resources to more effectively "press their demands on government... [while] Citizens with low or moderate incomes speak with a whisper that is lost on the ears of inattentive government, while the advantaged roar with the clarity and consistency that policymakers readily heard" (as cited in Kahne &

Middaugh, 2008, p. 4). The APSA report concluded that the future of our democracy is at stake.

Failure to take urgent and concerted steps to expand political participation and enhance democratic responsiveness — and failure to use democratic means creatively to temper rising social disparities — will surely endanger our longstanding democratic ideals. I would argue that democratic responsiveness requires a critical, democratic education (p. 2).

As a fifth grade elementary school teacher, committed to an inclusive democratic classroom, my research goal was to demonstrate how civics instruction, and more specifically, teaching the Bill of Rights in a culturally responsive, critically democratic manner results in learning that transcends socio-economic, racial, and academic performance barriers, rather than exacerbating them. While the case studies may seem to reinscribe existing stereotypes regarding race and class, the outcomes clearly demonstrate how the children in this year-long curriculum defied them. They worked collaboratively and made stunning gains. Unlike the finding from previous research (Kahne and Middaugh, 2008; APSA, 2004), these case studies illuminate how nondominant students are not only engaged, but in some cases even exceeded their *Talented and Gifted* peers. The findings demonstrated that all the students in this class, privileged, and nondominant students, including those receiving Special Education Services, achieved spectacular results that stretched beyond the classroom, impacting their families, community, and at times, even extending to the workplace (S.Adams, personal communication, February 19, 2015).

The democratic theory that informed the instruction includes the Bill of Rights as

one of eight fundamental principles of a democracy. As such, it makes all the other principles possible. Rather than specifically addressing the other aspects of democratic theory, this dissertation study focused on the Bill of Rights because it is required in Oregon fifth grade Common Core curriculum. The other principles are: “vision, authority, inclusion, knowledge, collaborative decision making with the goal of public good, an optimum learning environment, and equality” (Pearl & Knight, 1999).

Although attempting to ascertain the benefits of a fully implemented democratic classroom was beyond what was achievable in a fifth grade class in a small Pacific Northwest elementary school, a conscientious effort was made to have students experience as much of a democracy as possible. The class was remarkably inclusive, with almost every student actively and energetically participating in the project. As the teacher, I made a concerted effort to be a democratic authority; accessible, negotiable, persuasive, willing to listen to student grievances and recommendations, encouraging support of ideas with logic and evidence, facilitating group participation in projects, attempting to introduce conditions necessary for an optimum learning environment and equality in the form of equitably encouraging all students to understand and support the Bill of Rights.

The results of this study demonstrate that implementing the year-long civics instruction within a larger critical-democratic framework can and does engage students across boundaries of class, gender, language and ethnicity. The curriculum leapt across traditional boundaries, as evidenced by both the quantitative data, and narratives as well. The lack of correlation between the post-assessment scores and the final essays serves to further accentuate the need for multiple access points as well as varied measures for

assessment. If we are to accurately assess children's learning, understanding and engagement, we must also be willing to create diverse ways to evaluate, demonstrate, and showcase their learning.

It is worth noting that in previous years of teaching the Bill of Rights, a majority of girls in the class were deeply engaged, yet boys seemed to find it more challenging to connect with learning about their rights. This year was significantly different, with virtually all students, including boys, feeling engaged and connected. What made it different were the numerous opportunities for children to become physically active participants, rather than passive recipients. If the one activity didn't excite them, they could choose, or suggest another. Two boys expressed disinterest, if not disdain, for the artwork involved in posters. When I asked them if they had any thoughts about what they might prefer to do, they immediately requested the chance to work with Pearl. After a few minutes of coming up with different ideas, they were thrilled to have a chance to create a fictional conversation between Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr., based on the students own research, incorporating passages (which they paraphrased) from the Letter from a Birmingham Jail (King Jr, 1992). They clearly connected their fictional dialogue with freedom of speech, freedom to assemble and acting on the world to make it a better place for the greater good. Others, who weren't excited by performing, had the opportunity to use technology to connect, engage with and *own* their rights by filming the skits, creating *Keynote* presentations, and creating computer games for their classmates. Others collaborated on an active game they could play with classmates. Students, boys and girls, were encouraged to negotiate for the activities that they felt would best express their excitement and learning in the format that highlighted and

utilized their skills.

This year, the overarching findings established how students became enthusiastic researchers in their own right, engaging in discussions with family members, excited about their participation as democratic citizens. Parents noticed dramatic changes in their children. For this group, the Bill of Rights became a live document, something they owned. They began to perceive it more readily, recognizing how it involved them on a day-to-day basis. It was not simply an historical document to memorize and recite. Parents and students shared spirited, unsolicited testimonials on the positive impact of this experience. They offered stories of dinner table conversations that *blew their minds*, as fifth graders engaged in conversations that emphasized their learning, knowledge of, and engagement in classroom, community and real-world issues. One parent told me how stunned she was to discover that her quiet daughter expressed a deeper understanding, and could hold her own in a conversation with her eighth grader brother who was also studying the Constitution and Bill of Rights (Personal conversation, March, 2015). Another parent wrote, “Words aren’t enough to express our gratitude for the changes in [our daughter]. She went from being a defiant kid who didn’t like school to an engaged, enthusiastic one... I see how much you give these kids, and I see the results, and I am truly impressed” (Personal communication, June 2015). This is actually not about one teacher being *amazing* or a *miracle worker*. In fact, it is about involving students in active learning that holds meaning and relates to their lives. It was the *real-world stuff* that brought rights home. Students had the chance to consolidate what they learned by acting on the world to make it a better place for the public good.

This research illuminates evidence-based pedagogy and curriculum that are

informed and supported by research findings. The mixed methods approach provided the quantitative data that detailed *how much*, and *who*, illustrated by narratives that evidenced the when, why and even where the growth and learning occurred. While not based solely on practitioner professional knowledge, that intersection informs the work. This study was the result of a year-long unit based on critical democratic theory; theory that healed me like salt (Asher 2005). And the narrative continues: Just last week, the now 93 year-old Pearl asked 5th graders to list some problems they thought were worth researching -- hands flew up with concerns about climate change, social justice, animal abuse, abuse of technology, loss of jobs, ocean acidification, water.... The list went on and on. Finally, we looked at the list on the Smartboard, sitting silently, when one student raised her hand,

“WOW, before we had this talk, well, when I thought about the future, all I thought about was me. After the our talk, well, now I see the world is *SO* much bigger than just *ME!*” And that was just the *first* amendment.

APPENDIX A

STUDENT ASSENT FORM

University of Oregon
Student Assent for Participation in Cultural Linguistics Research Study (Ages 10-11)

I am interested in what students know about the Bill of Rights and the United States Constitution. I want to learn more about the conversations and ideas that demonstrate how students understand and experience democracy. You can help with this project if you would like to. You do not have to help if you do not want to. All you'll have to do is participate in the activities, discussions, and assignments like you normally would do in class.

Some of the activities you will do by yourself, others you will work on as part of a team. Also, you will keep a journal about the thoughts and ideas that arise during the class. A team journal will be kept at each table using a *Livescribe* pen that records group discussions while a student records the ideas. You will have a chance to write in the journal with the pen if you choose, but it will not be required.

You will take a short assessment at the start of the project and again at the end. These will not be a part of your grade. At the end of the year, the classroom thoughts and ideas will be published in a small book. You do not have to participate or be included in the book.

If you do not want me to include what you do in the classroom in my project, just tell me—you won't get into any trouble! But remember that you will still need to do the classroom activities and assignments, either way. Also, if you have any questions about what you'll be doing, or if you can't decide whether to do it or not; just ask me if there is anything you'd like me to explain.

If you do want to try it, please sign your name on the line below. Your decision to participate or not participate will NOT have any affect on your grades, your participation in the classroom, or your relationship with anyone in the program.

Everything you say will be kept confidential and your name will not be used. Your parent(s) have already told me that it is all right with them if you want to join in the project. Remember, you don't have to, and once you start you can rest or stop whenever you like.

Student's Name _____

Student's Signature _____ Date _____

Witness in lieu of signature: In my judgment, the student understands the information in this consent form and agrees to be in the study.

Witness Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX B

PASSIVE PARENT ASSENT FORM

University of Oregon

Informed Assent form for Participation as a Subject in Culture Linguistics Research Study

Investigator: Susan Dwoskin

Introduction

Your student is invited to participate in a research study about the effects of the Cultural Linguistics Civics Project, a culturally responsive curriculum based on The Bill of Rights and aligned with the Common Core State Standards, on the students in my 5th grade classroom at Maple Elementary School. Your child was selected as a possible participant because she/he is currently enrolled in the classroom.

Purpose of Study:

The purpose of this study is to explore the effect and impact of an age appropriate, culturally responsive, civics curriculum that is aligned to the Common Core State Standards. It will focus on the attitude 5th grade students have about the Bill of Rights and what they know about the Bill of Rights, the Constitution and democracy.

Description of the Study Procedures:

If you agree that your child may participate in this study, please do the following things: Share only the information you are comfortable sharing. Please be aware that your and your child's identity will be strictly confidential and that this information will be used only to fulfill dissertation requirements. Names and identities will not be disclosed in any publication. There are no reasonable foreseeable (or expected) risks. This study may include risks that are unknown at this time. You may choose not to have your child's scores and work included in the data of this research project, without repercussions. Your child will continue to participate in the lessons with the rest of the class, as it is aligned with the state standards and part of 5th grade curriculum. The student created Cultural Linguistics book will not include student names or identification, and is for classroom and dissertation use only.

Confidentiality:

- The records of this study will be kept private. The transcripts and field notes will be kept in a locked file.
- Access to the records will be limited to the researcher.
- Copy of Consent Form:
- You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records and future reference.
- Statement of Assent:
- Sign and return to your child's teacher only if you do NOT want your child to participate in this study.
- I have read (or have had read to me) the contents of this assent form and have been encouraged to ask questions. I have received answers to my questions. I prefer that my child NOT participate in this study

Study Participant (Print Name): _____

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C

PRE- AND POST-ASSESSMENT, ESSAY SCORES AND

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Intervention	PreKnowledge	Int PreAttitude	Int Essay Score	Control PreKnowledge	Control PreAttitude	C_t total	I Post Knowledge	I Post Attitude	I Post total	C Post Knowledge	C Post Attitude	C Post total
		3										
5	26	1	3	8	20	28	11	46	57	9	28	37
		2						45.	56.			
5	20	5	7	7	27	34	11	5	5	7	32	39
		2										
4	21	5	2	8	22	30	10	46	56	9	28	37
		3										
8	23	1	5	5	29	34	10	46	56	5	31	36
		3										
5	33	8	1	5	28	33	7	44	51	6	30	36
		3						41.	52.			
6	30	6	1	8	18	24	11	5	5	7	30	37
		2										
9	19	8	6	4	21	25	11	42	53	6	26	32
		2										
8	17	5	6	5	28	33	10	47	57	7	28	35
		3										
7	24	1	4.5	7	22	29	10	41	51	8	28	36
		2										
5	24	9	5.5	6	24	30	11	45	56	7	26	33
		3										
7	24	1	5	7	29	36	11	43	54	8	31	41
		3						44.	54.			
6	28	4	4			39	10	5	5			
		3										
9	33	9	1	7	32	36	10	45	56	8	34	42
		3										
8	31	9	2	8	28	32	11	45	56	8	33	41
		3										
6	29	5	6	8	24	40	11	45	56	8	30	38
		3										
9	24	3	4	9	31	28	8	44	52	10	38	48
		3										
9	24	3	6.5	7	21	26	11	45	56	9	33	32

6	21	7	5		32	11	43	54				
5	26	1	5	6	20	29	11	40	51	7	28	35
8	24	2	7		32	11	5	53.				
4	24	8	2.5		30	11	45	5				
6	16	2	6	8	24	32	10	42	52	8	29	37
8	23	1	7	6	23		11	5	54.	7	30	37
7	21	8	7	6	26		10	47	5	7	31	38
7	24	1	5	7	23		9	43	5	7	30	37
6	23	9	4	7	25		11	41	5	7	32	39
5	25	0	5				11	41	52			

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
PreInt	27	22.00	39.00	30.8148	4.27908
PreCon	22	24.00	40.00	31.4545	4.13726
PostInt	27	51.00	57.00	54.2407	2.10023
PostCon	22	32.00	48.00	37.4091	3.52757
IntEssay	26	1.00	7.00	4.5385	1.96430
Valid N (listwise)	22				

APPENDIX D

BILL OF RIGHTS ATTITUDE AND KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENTS

The Bill of Rights Attitude Assessment

Please circle the number that indicates how your thoughts about the following statements.

1=Strongly Disagree	2= Disagree	3= Agree	4= Strongly Agree
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1. If police are looking for a criminal, they should have the right to come into your house anytime they want. 1 2 3 4
2. It is unpatriotic to speak out against your government. 1 2 3 4
3. If everyone in the class is the same religion, then that class should be able to worship that religion in the public school classroom. 1 2 3 4
4. People should be allowed to get together to criticize the government 1 2 3 4
5. The National Security Agency should be allowed to secretly monitor all your emails, phone calls and text messages. 1 2 3 4
6. The government should be allowed to put people in prison without trial, if they suspect they might be a terrorist. 1 2 3 4
7. People never get arrested unless they are guilty. 1 2 3 4
8. If someone refuses to answer a question during a trial, that does not mean that he or she must be guilty. 1 2 3 4
9. The government has a right to do anything they want to a person, if the person has been found guilty of a crime. 1 2 3 4
10. The court system is prejudiced against African American males. 1 2 3 4
11. I don't think privacy is something that should be protected by the U.S. Constitution. 1 2 3 4
12. If the safety of the country is at risk, then I think it's OK to torture someone to get information. 1 2 3 4

The Bill of Rights Knowledge Assessment

Please circle T for statements you think are true and F statements that are false.

- | | | |
|---|----------|----------|
| 1. According to the United States Constitution, schools should celebrate religious holidays. | T | F |
| 2. If you don't like what the president is doing, you can sign a petition telling him to stop. | T | F |
| 3. It's against the Constitution to go on <i>Facebook</i> and make fun of another person at school. | T | F |
| 4. People have a right to protest by assembling in a public area, like a street or park. | T | F |
| 5. A right is the same thing as a privilege. | T | F |
| 6. You only have rights after you prove you are a responsible person. | T | F |
| 7. People have the right to say anything they want. | T | F |
| 8. The government has a right to listen in on your phone conversations and read your private emails. | T | F |
| 9. Police can only arrest anyone someone if they have a good reason. | T | F |
| 10. You can say or write anything about another person. | T | F |
| 11. If you are arrested, the government must tell you what crime you are accused of committing. | T | F |
| 12. If you are found innocent of a crime, and new evidence comes up, you can be tried a second time for the same crime. | T | F |

APPENDIX E

BILL OF RIGHTS ESSAY SCORING GUIDE

Score	Evidence/Elaboration
7	<p>The essay provides thorough elaboration of the support/evidence for the Bill of Rights that includes the effective use of class notes, discussions and/or handouts. The response clearly and effectively develops ideas, using precise language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comprehensive evidence (facts and details) from the class notes and handouts is integrated, relevant, and specific: • clear citations or attribution to class notes, discussions and/or handouts • effective use of a variety of elaborative techniques • vocabulary is clearly appropriate for the audience and purpose • effective, appropriate style enhances content <p>All of the rights of expression are present and clearly defined; clear understanding and explanation of rights of privacy, due process, double jeopardy, protection against gov't, current threats, includes some history of rights and the constitution, and includes personal meaning</p>
6	<p>The essay provides thorough elaboration of the support/evidence for the Bill of Rights that includes the effective use of class notes, discussions and/or handouts. The response clearly and effectively develops ideas, using precise language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comprehensive evidence (facts and details) from the class notes, discussions and handouts is integrated, relevant, and specific: • clear citations or attribution to class notes, discussions and/or handouts • effective use of a variety of elaborative techniques • vocabulary is clearly appropriate for the audience and purpose • effective, appropriate style enhances content <p>Most of the rights of expression are present and clearly defined, some explanation of rights of privacy, some explanation of due process, double jeopardy, protection against gov't, current threats, mentions constitution, and includes personal meaning</p>
5	<p>The essay provides thorough elaboration of the support/evidence for the Bill of Rights that includes the effective use of class notes, discussions and/or handouts. The response clearly and effectively develops ideas, using precise language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comprehensive evidence (facts and details) from the class notes, discussions and handouts is integrated, relevant, and specific • clear citations or attribution to source material • effective use of a variety of elaborative techniques • vocabulary is clearly appropriate for the audience and purpose • effective, appropriate style enhances content <p>Some rights of expression are present and are somewhat defined, some explanation of rights of privacy, some explanation of due process, double jeopardy, protection against gov't, current threats and personal meaning</p>
4	<p>The response provides adequate elaboration of the support/evidence for the Bill of Rights that includes the use of class notes, discussions and/or handouts. The response adequately develops ideas, employing a mix of precise and more general language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adequate evidence (facts and details) from the class notes and handouts. is integrated and relevant, yet may be general

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> adequate use of citations or attribution to class notes, discussions and/or handouts adequate use of some elaborative techniques vocabulary is generally appropriate for the audience and purpose generally appropriate style is evident <p>Some rights of expression are present, some rights of privacy are included, general mention of due process, protection against gov't current threats, and personal meaning</p>
3	<p>The response provides uneven, cursory elaboration of the support/ evidence for the Bill of Rights that includes uneven or limited use of class notes, discussions and/or handouts. The response develops ideas unevenly, using simplistic language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> some evidence (facts and details) from the source material may be weakly integrated, imprecise, repetitive, vague, and/or copied weak use of citations or attribution to source material weak or uneven use of elaborative techniques: development may consist primarily of source summary vocabulary use is uneven or somewhat ineffective for the audience and purpose inconsistent or weak attempt to create appropriate style <p>Vague explanation of rights, vague explanation of current threats, vague description of protection from gov't , some personal meaning</p>
2	<p>The response provides minimal elaboration of the support/evidence for the Bill of Rights that includes little or no use of class notes, discussions and/or handouts. The response is vague, lacks clarity, or is confusing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> evidence (facts and details) from the class notes, discussions and/or handouts is minimal, irrelevant, absent, incorrectly used, or predominantly copied insufficient use of citations or attribution to source material minimal, if any, use of elaborative techniques vocabulary is limited or ineffective, little or no evidence of audience and purpose <p>Limited mention of rights, Limited mention of protection from gov't, limited explanation of current threats, no mention of rights of privacy, no mention of due process , limited personal meaning</p>
1	<p>Insufficient (includes copied text), In a language other than English* Off topic Off purpose</p> <p>No mention of any rights, no mention of protection from gov't, or current threats, no clear understanding of rights, or personal meaning</p> <p>* Language is a consideration according to CCSS, but is NOT a consideration in this class (I enlist translators, including colleagues and parents, if needed.)</p>

APPENDIX F
CULTURE CUBES



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