Effects of incorporating multiculturalism in a high school civics classroom for increased student interest and engagement

Alison Beatt Ellertson
Hamline University, aellertson01@hamline.edu

EFFECTS OF INCORPORATING MULTICULTURALISM IN A HIGH SCHOOL

CIVICS CLASSROOM FOR INCREASED STUDENT INTEREST AND

ENGAGEMENT

by

Alison B. Ellertson

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Primary Advisor: Trish Harvey
Secondary Advisor: Jen Munsch
Peer Reviewer: Jessica Bomstad

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Introduction

"Without practice there is no knowledge" - Paulo Friere

Background of the Researcher

As a high school social studies teacher, I have always valued diversity and learning about new cultures, whether it was in the workplace or at school. I am continually intrigued by the stories and perspectives of people who have grown up differently than me and my family. To me, learning from others is one of the best education lessons that a student can receive. I find that I learn more about other cultures through my interaction with students versus an in-service training or journal article. Before I started teaching, I felt a strong passion about learning from others, although I did not fully understand my own perspective and privilege in the world. I grew up in a predominately white community. There were not a lot of lessons learned from people that came from different backgrounds than me. I yearned for this as I became older and that is part of the reason I chose to go to Augsburg College and to become an educator. In turn, this has shaped my research question: *What are the effects of incorporating a multicultural unit in a high school civics classroom for increased student interest and engagement?*

My first true experience with learning from another culture was my time tutoring while in college. I learned an incredible amount about the Somali culture. Through the relationships I established, I was able to gain a new perspective and develop empathy and

compassion for the lives they were living. I received a rare glimpse at a community in which I had no prior experience. It was extremely helpful in understanding the people I shared a community with, I was able to experience invaluable conversations.

I student taught at a high school in Minneapolis. I felt prepared for this venture, but I did not realize how much I still had to learn. I walked in on my first day in 2012, eager to teach and mold young minds. I had just recently graduated with my bachelor's degree and felt as though I had a firm grasp on other cultures and perspectives. I was unaware of my own bias and was not in tune with how I might appear to the students, most of whom had grown up surrounded by peers from incredibly diverse and sometimes difficult backgrounds. My mentality was that "all students can learn." I still believe this, but I have revised it; "all students can learn, but not all students come to that learning from the same perspective." I remember seeing my first class I was going to teach. The students were kind and introduced themselves. I thought, wow, this is great, students from all different backgrounds! I was happy to see this diversity; this was what I wanted in a classroom. Unfortunately, I did not have the tools to encompass all these perspectives, speak in a way that was inclusive and be prepared for some of the uncomfortable conversations that were going to arise.

There was one classroom discussion that I will always remember. We were talking about the gay marriage act that was being debated in Minnesota. The question on the ballot was going to read "Do you want the Minnesota Constitution to reflect the definition of marriage as between only a man or women?" At this time, Minneapolis was littered with 'Vote No!' stickers and lawn signs. We were discussing the upcoming vote

in one of the classes I student taught. There were two students who both came from households with same-sex parents. This was new to me; considering all the people that I knew, none came from a same-sex household. For all the time I thought I was open minded, I realized that I had not even given a thought to a student of mine having same-sex parents. Until then, I had not given any thought to how I addressed situations like saying "when your mom and dad…" when giving examples or trying to relate. I did not exclude on purpose, but for the first time it occurred that just because I support same-sex marriage does not mean it comes across in the way I teach. And should it? And just because I value other cultures and perspectives does not mean I am not still teaching from my own. Student teaching helped me understand this better.

The first step in becoming a teacher of social justice and multiculturalism is to take into account my own perspective of the world and how it has been influenced in the ways in which I am privileged and the ways I might not be. I will never be able to completely understand where all my students are coming from, but I can do my best to make them feel like their voice is valued and that their culture matters to the conversation of high school social studies.

I first became interested in being a teacher for social justice and multiculturalism during my time spent student teaching. I was not sure where to start or who to ask. After getting my first full-time teacher job, I still was not quite sure. The first place that I really began to challenge my thinking and translate that into meaningful work in the classroom is when I took the Social Justice course at Hamline University. I was able to speak freely and openly to people who all had different experiences. I was able to read new authors

and become passionate about the topic. The course helped me see my privilege and the perspective I bring to what I teach.

I also joined the Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (SEED) group at my school. SEED is a program where teachers read books from different cultural backgrounds and then hold discussions once a month. It gives teachers a safe place to bring up challenges in their classroom without feeling they will be judged. SEED allowed me to better empathize with my students and put a critical lens on how I conduct my classroom. It has been a great place to expand my knowledge and discuss with colleagues that are in the same school culture as myself. The group has challenged me to see past what I sometimes expect from students and take a look at some of the bias I was unaware that I had. The group has also reassured me that I can not alone change the world or beliefs of all those at my school. All I can do is try my best to use the tools I have to be a teacher that students feel is safe and open to everyone.

What is Multicultural Education

Multicultural Education has a wide variety of definitions. There are many different strategies and ideas for making your classroom a multicultural environment. There are very simple things such as hanging up pictures and quotes from a variety of people or taking the time to have the class learn about their classmates and their traditions. To me, it involves making students feel safe to be who they are and also educating students on different perspectives. EdGlossary (2014), an online glossary dedicated to education reform, defined Multicultural Education as follows; "Multicultural education refers to any form of education or teaching that incorporates the histories, texts,

values, beliefs, and perspectives of people from different cultural backgrounds" (p.2). I like this definition because it is concise but also includes all the various way in which multiculturalism can be infused into a classroom.

One could write an entire capstone on why multiculturalism should be an essential part of any classroom. The United States is becoming more and more diverse in its cultural backgrounds. Students are coming from new places each year. In order to teach effectively, educators need to be aware of basic traditions and value systems of these students. Educators already have a lot on their plate, so it is important to instill into students the importance of getting to know their classmates and having a classroom that fosters and respects new cultural knowledge. This, in turn, sets up students for success, prepares them for real life challenges and shapes them into active and engaged citizens. When students look from new perspectives they begin to see injustices they might not have been aware existed.

Role of the Researcher

"As an educator, one of my goals is to awaken in my students a sense of this radical interconnectedness, for I believe it can play a crucial role in working toward social justice" (Keating, 2004, p. 97).

Multicultural education, especially in social studies, is designed to help point out the flaws that lie within America's democracy. My job is to try to translate the ideals of democracy such as justice, inclusion and equality into educational policies and practices (Gay, 2009). This is no small feat. I think this is where many people find themselves overwhelmed; I know I was when I started my journey of becoming a teacher who

incorporated multicultural perspectives into my classrooms. I have learned that my role is not to change the world but to do my best to help students see social studies from a perspective different than their own.

Also, my role is to research and observe my own teaching and hope that translates into more engagement for my students. Through my research and application, my role is to create a classroom environment that fosters multiculturalism and ignites students to ask more questions and to become more involved and interested in their learning. When students feel they have control over their learning and see themselves reflected, it becomes something they can relate to and apply to their lives. My role is to use the tools that I have, improve and learn new ones through my research and finally take action by surveying and interviewing students. I believe through these aspects, I can make myself a better teacher, enable students to understand other perspectives and improve student engagement.

Guiding Research Questions

This study is designed to explore how incorporating a multicultural perspective into a unit can increase student engagement. The plan is to improve my teaching through research and enable students to grow through changing their outlook on certain topics throughout the unit of choice. The question that guides the research is as follows: *What are the effects of incorporation of a multicultural unit in a civics classroom for increased student interest and engagement?* There are also more specific questions and subtopics to look at within this research question.

    a.   In what ways will I incorporate multiculturalism into my classroom? What activities will have the greatest impact?

    b.   What was the effect of my research on the classroom environment?

    c.   How will I measure student engagement?

    d.   How do I adjust my teaching to fit in with diverse student backgrounds?

Overview

In the first chapter, I addressed why I was interested in doing this research. I have looked at multiculturalism and social justice in reference to education and the effect it can have on how students view certain events and concepts in social studies. I explained my role as researcher throughout the process and what questions help guide the research and action that is to be taken in class.

In Chapter 2, I will examine the literature and evaluate research that is pertinent to my research question. My literature review paints a clear picture of the different aspects of multiculturalism since it spans many different areas and has several different definitions. I will examine different strategies for implementing multiculturalism as well as how to increase student engagement. Chapter 2, will help set a clear definition of what multiculturalism will mean in terms of my research and will reveal empirical data that displays how it can affect a classroom positively and increase student interest.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to explore my research question. *What are the effects of incorporating a multicultural unit in a high school civics classroom for increased student interest and engagement?* The literature review will incorporate the subtopics that fall within my research question. First, I will explore multiculturalism and why it is important for all educators. Then, I will examine classroom environment and what my role is to create a healthy and respectful atmosphere that can, in turn, foster multiculturalism. Thirdly, the literature review will delve into student engagement. How is it best measured? How does it increase when students can find connection to their cultural backgrounds in the material? Finally, I will be reviewing student backgrounds. How does a student cultural and ethnic background affect what they bring into the classroom? Why is it important to be aware of students' backgrounds when incorporating multiculturalism into a classroom?

Multiculturalism

What is multiculturalism? There are many educators who have an idea of what it might incorporate but it can become overwhelming because there are many different approaches and definitions. As a whole, multicultural education is about social change through education (Quarles, 2011). When exploring multicultural education, Quarles asserted that students should feel free of bias and have a sense of power over what they are learning and what they might want to learn in the future. There is a lot of commitment that goes

into this practice and it takes time and evolves as the teacher does. According to the
Handbook of Research on Multiculturalism, the definition of multiculturalism is as
follows:

> A field of study designed to increase educational equity for all students that
> incorporates, for this purpose, content, concepts, principles, theories and
> paradigms from history, the social and behavioral sciences. (Banks &
> McGee-Banks, 2004, p. 54)

> Emily Style (1998) claimed that a curriculum should function as both a window
and a mirror, this enables students to reflect and reveal most accurately both a
multicultural world and the student themselves. When thinking about what
multiculturalism means, it is "enabling the student to look through window frames in
order to see the realities of others and into mirrors in order to see her/his own reality
reflected" (Style, 1998, p. 154). This allows for conversations that allow students to look
through various frames of references or as Style would describe, seeing through different
mirrors.

> Style (1998) summed it up best when it comes to multicultural education when
she asserted that:

> All students deserve a curriculum which mirrors their own experience back to
> them, upon occasion- thus validating it in the public world of the school. But
> curriculum must also insist upon the fresh air of windows into the experience of
> others. (p. 155)

In conclusion, multicultural education needs to be personal to students. They need to relate to what is being taught and they also need to see the perspectives of other cultures when being introduced to a new topic or idea, especially in social studies (Banks, 2004). Students should be able to see themselves in the curriculum but not to the point where they are only see themselves. It is important that they are given opportunities by their teachers to be challenged in looking through new frames of reference, with the challenge, comes new understanding. The goal with this research to use a multicultural framework and all its benefits to create a more engaged classroom. Secondly, this increased engagement in the classroom will transfer to the key standards of 9th grade civics, like civic engagement and citizen responsibility.

Why Classrooms Need Multiculturalism

There are several reasons why multiculturalism should be an integrated part of any classroom, no matter its location or background. The United States is becoming more and more diverse. As of 2012, nearly half of all public school students were non white (Ford, 2014). The need for multiculturalism should not just be for educators that support the notion, but a set of ideals that should be become common practice. Multiculturalism is for all students, not those of color or those that seek out different experience. Ford (2014) argued that students will never learn how to interact with those of a different culture if they only stick with their own background. Multiculturalism offers books, videos, literature and biographies that help students understand the perspective of cultures that they do not belong. Students need multiculturalism in their curriculum because it not

only allows them to see different perspective but helps them become better citizens, communicators and agents for change (Banks, 2004).

Ford (2014) also asserted that multiculturalism enables students to be critical thinkers and enables them to understand their world beyond what is going on in the classroom. This inspires students to enact change. In many cases, students are faced with issues that they see as unfair or unjust. If issues are taught from multiple perspectives it gives students a better idea of how to promote meaningful change, even if that includes trying to enable other students to understand ideas, problems and societal issues from different points of view. This idea is reflected in this quote by Ford (2014) as follows:

> The voices of all groups must be heard and validated. The purpose of teaching multiple perspectives is to develop an understanding of diverse perspectives that can lead to an understanding of what motivates the behavior of others. (p. 61)

As mentioned before, as the United States becomes increasingly more racially and ethnically diverse, the response to this needs to be felt in our education system. Often times, as a society becomes more diverse, it it meant with hostility, prejudices, anxieties and racial discrimination (Gay, 2003). In late 2015, we can clearly see this with the reaction of prominent political figures to the Syrian refugee crisis. It is crucial that teachers have a multicultural framework and background, so they can educate students on different cultures, religions and current political situations, in order to alleviate the stress, anxiety and fear we often see when new groups of people are introduced in the United States. Multicultural education is critical for improving the academic success of students of color and preparing the youth for democratic citizenship (Gay, 2003). These concepts

not only display why multiculturalism is important but also why its crucial for students to master these components in 9th grade civics.

Finally, multicultural education allows for deeper academic rigor (Au,2008). If we want students to be better prepared to be active citizens as well as ready for college, they have to challenged intellectually, which is exactly what multicultural education does. Au (2008) argued that "A multicultural perspective is not only inherently more interesting, it also more complex - and more fully truthful, if we dare to use that word. Further, academic rigor is impossible without the multiple perspectives that multicultural education provides" (p. 1). When students get different perspectives to a historical event or piece of literature, they are able to understand and analyze it at a deeper level, creating a more challenging and engaging classroom environment.

In sum, multicultural education is needed for a variety of reasons. All students deserve to be heard and represented. It allows students to see beyond what is going on in the classroom and create active, educated and engaged citizens. Multicultural education helps students go on to understand other backgrounds and perspectives which can help deter racism, prejudice and anxiety in the future. Finally, it challenges students academically, producing students who can think critically from a variety of perspectives.

How do you implement multicultural education. This leads many educators to ask themselves, what should I be incorporating? Educators should make sure they are paying attention to sub-groups, so they are not lumping ethnic backgrounds together. "To view each racial/cultural group as if they are monocultural is not only incorrect but also creates or reinforces stereotypes" (Ford, 2014, p. 62). This sounds difficult to implement,

but when speaking about different cultures, it is important to place emphasis on what makes that group unique, this is can be as easy as taking a few extra minutes. Also, when explaining traditional dress or food, it is crucial to explain the background so students do not get just a narrow view of a particular culture.

Another essential for implementing multiculturalism, for white educators, is to make sure they are evaluating their own assumptions and privilege and realigning their perceptions from there (Howard, 2006). Howard asserted that it is important for educators to make sure are looking back at past dynamics and present dominance and how white educators have been changed their superiority. In order to have a successful classroom that fosters multiculturalism, educators need to aware of their own privilege and be able to listen carefully to what others' perceptions are of us.

Implementation of multicultural education also happens in stages. It first starts at the surface, with smaller changes such as welcome signs in a variety of languages (Au, 2014). The next stage is transitional and involves certain units of study. Certain areas of study include creating a unit on Native Americans or people of African background. The ultimate goal, in terms of instruction, is to have structural changes, where you see elements from your separate multicultural unit, integrated into what you teach everyday (Au, 2014). Finally, there is the social change stage, where the curriculum helps lead to change outside of school. This is when students go out and change the nature of their community. Students might look at starting a letter writing campaign, investigating bias in the media or as broad as trying to improve their community.

What are the challenges. When implementing multicultural education it is important to be aware of the challenges that can face an educator. It is difficult to sometimes put our own cultural views away while we are trying to accept someone else's' (Parrish & Linder-VanBerschot, 2010). A person's cultural identity is very personal to them and disregarding or disrespecting that can cause disengagement or a strain on the relationship that has been built with that student. The most common way educators do this is by assuming that a behavior by a student is part of their human nature or personality when it is more closely related to their cultural background (Parrish & Linder-VanBerschot, 2011). Also, one of the biggest challenges is to look beyond our cultural values, which we usually perceive as the "right" way and truly accept and acknowledge another culture.

Some other challenges Parrish and Linder-VanBerschot (2010 spoke to were knowing what the most effective instructional strategy will be for a particular group of students and how these strategies should be adapted for cross-cultural use. Parrish and Linder-Vanberschot (2011) outlined the key challenges that educators face will addressing multicultural education:

1. Understanding and appreciating the cultural differences of students in order to make the appropriate instructional decisions that will enhance their learning;

2. Becoming aware of one's own cultural preferences for what they are and not assuming they represent the "right" way to think;

3. Determining which student behaviors represent cultural values and are therefore less prone to modification to accommodate the instructional situation;

4. Accepting the dual responsibility of educators to acculturate and respect

individual student cultural backgrounds.

5. Accepting that research-based instructional strategies are also culture-based and

therefore may be at times inappropriate or in need of adaptation. (p. 10)

It is essential for educators to understand their student's cultural backgrounds because of

the challenges they face when trying to implement multiculturalism. When educators are

more familiar with their student's backgrounds, the challenges still arise, but are dealt

with more efficiently. Parrish and Linder-Vanberschot (date) simply call this "being

aware". The more aware you are, the better you get integrate different cultural

components into the instruction.

It is difficult for educators to take a critical look at the language that is used in

instruction as well as how the curriculum being taught might favor one cultural group

over the other. It is crucial that educators reflect objectively on how they present

information and how students of other cultures might process the information. In social

studies in particular, it can be easy to teach with the assigned curriculum without taking

note of how it might make another group of people. There are many different

perspectives on any given time in history or politics, so it's important to address these in a

way that does not show dominance. How can white social studies educators, make sure

they are not asserting their cultural dominance on to topics? When teachers are aware of

the challenges as prescribed by Parrish and Linder-Vanberschot (2011), it can assist

educators to look more critically at their own practices.

Another challenge to incorporating multiculturalism is combating the idea of "colorblind" racial education. This is the concept where we see White people adhering to "equality for all" but still seeing the Black community as inferior (Tarca, 2005). Another example of being "colorblind" is insisting that race does not matter and that as a teacher, you don't see skin color. This, in turn, dismisses students of color and qualities that make them an individual (Tarca, 2005). As mentioned by Parrish and LInder-Vanberschot (2011), dismissing someone's cultural background can lead to disengagement. The important question to ask is, what are the negative effects of being a colorblind teacher and how does it challenge a true multicultural view of education?

When asked about colorblind teachers in an interview for *Rethinking Multicultural Education,*   as cited in Au,2014,Sleeter said: " For example, if you take a kid who is of Mexican descent and you say, 'I don't see a Mexican kid, I just see a kid' you are preventing yourself from knowing something about that student's culture and community, and an important part of the student" (p. 12). Educators feel they are being equitable when they do not see color but it goes against the foundation of what multicultural education is centered around.

In the civics classroom, staying up-to-date on current events is a crucial component to the course. In terms of addressing colorblindness in this regard, it is important for educators to move past this concept in order to understand the current social movements that are currently taking place in the United States, like Black Lives Matter. Michelle Anderson was also interviewed for *Rethinking Multicultural Education* (as cited in Au, 2014) and was asked about how mass incarceration is technically

"colorblind" but lead to starkly racialized results and how that affects young people of color. She responded by stating:

> The mythology of colorblindness take the race question off the table. It makes it difficult for people to even formulate the question: Could this be about something more than individual choices? Maybe there is something going on that's linked to the history of race in our country and the way race is reproducing itself in modern times. (p. 58.)

In order for an educator to effectively have a conversation surrounding the modern issues of race, they have to be able to cast aside the idea of colorblindness, which is a huge challenge to implementing multiculturalism across U.S. classrooms.

There are many challenges to implementing a multicultural classroom, from diverse backgrounds, colorblindness, to teacher training and comfort level. One of the more difficult challenges to overcome is school standardization. Multicultural education is ever-evolving, but with the push for "raising standards" and standardized testing, the ideas of multiculturalism can begin to get lost. When teachers are more focused on facts versus perspectives, the important nurturing of a fuller understanding of society then gets lots (Bigelow, 2014). Bigelow argued, as Parrish and Linder-VanBerschot (2014) also did, that students learn and know ideas and concepts in different ways. If we subject students to a data-heavy assessment, it does not assess how they see other perspectives (Bigelow, 2014). If teachers are often focused on standardized tests, the importance of multicultural education will often fade into the background.

In sum, the challenges of multicultural education can create difficulties for teachers wishing to implement this style into their classroom. When looking at what strategies to implement, getting other educators to overcome the idea of colorblindness and the daunting idea of standardized testing, it can seem impossible. Despite these challenges, the benefits to the students and society are worth the obstacles that might stand in an educator's way.

Classroom Environment

When creating a classroom that fosters multiculturalism, it is important to have the right classroom environment and instill a sense of community where students feel comfortable sharing their experiences and learning how to interact with students from backgrounds different than their own. Van Tartwijk, den Brock,Vledmand and Wubbels (2008) cited that creating a positive working atmosphere is the first concern of many beginning secondary teachers. One of the main components of a multicultural classroom is an environment where students feel empowered and supported by their peers. One of the common challenges that beginning teachers run into is the "potential misunderstanding between students and teachers with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds" (Van Tartwijk et al., 2008, p. 453). Commonly, when teachers are trying to create relationships with students, they can be statements or ideas that are misinterpreted because there is a gap between what the student says and how the teacher processes what has been said. Often times, this can lead to frustration on the part of both the student and the teacher. Other times, this type of miscommunication can be viewed as discrimination and the student can feel devalued or punished because their response did not fit the

mainstream (Weinstein, Curran, & Tomlinson-Clarke, 2003). Therefore, it is important create a classroom environment where meaningful conversations can take place to work through misunderstandings and to learn from them.

According to Van Tartwijk et al. (2008), classroom management involves creating an environment that facilitates both academic and social learning. Teachers are better equipped to handle behavioral issues when they are more knowledgeable about their students' backgrounds and cultures. Weinstein et al. (2003) also implement the idea of learning about student backgrounds in their Culturally Responsive Classroom Management approach or CRCM. They asserted that:

> In order to be culturally responsive, we must acquire "cultural content
> knowledge." We must learn, for example, about our students' family backgrounds,
> their previous educational experiences, their culture's norms for interpersonal
> relationships, their parents' expectations for discipline, and the ways their cultures
> treat time and space. (p. 270)

When teachers have the ability to access this type of information, they can understand their students better, cutting back on miscommunications or frustration and allowing the teacher - student relationship to flourish. Sometimes, what seems like a disruption or misbehavior to the educator, might be interpreted differently by the student. If students are in a multicultural classroom environment, these situations happen less frequently and usually allow the classroom to run more efficiently. Continuing on the importance of classroom management and environment, Van Tartwijk et al. (2008) described the four contemporary themes for classroom management:

1. The importance of positive teacher-child relationships. This includes the concept of a "warm demander" which works with students of color. A warm demander are responsive, caring and supportive but still holding high expectations of their students.

2. Classroom management as a social and moral curriculum. This means paying attention to the consequences of teachers' managerial decision for students' social, moral and emotional development.

3. When looking at reward and punishments, making sure to be proactive and not let the rewards and punishments you set forth dictate your classroom's behavior.

4. In order to have a classroom environment that is positive, supportive and community driven, teachers have to take into account student's age, ethnicity, cultural background and socio-economic status. (p. 454)

When following these themes for classroom management and environment,it assists educators create the type of classroom where they can have more difficult and challenging conversations with students. Van Tartwijk et al. (2008) stated that teachers that following the themes listed previously usually believe that teachers should follow democratic principles in social situations as well as the classroom and emphasize students to exhibit self-discipline.

In order to have a classroom that fosters a multicultural environment, teachers have to "understand the ways that schools reflect and perpetuate discriminatory practices of the larger society" (Weinstein, et al., 2003, p. 271), Teachers have to be aware of the societal roles that give certain people different roles and how these affect the power those

people perceive to have or not have. This has to be established because practicing multiculturalism can not be be something that stops when students leave the room. Also, recognizing how the school reflects certain discriminatory practices allows students who might not feel they have as much power feel validated and more comfortable with their classroom environment.

Finally, it is crucial that there is parent involvement. This can often be overlooked when thinking about a multicultural classroom. As the researchers above stated, knowing a student's background is crucial to building an inclusive classroom environment (add names/dates here). If you want the ideals you instill in the classroom to transfer, parent involvement is key. Sometimes, certain parents might still value education but when adhering to their culture, aren't as involved. Therefore, teachers should look it as a cultural difference versus a lack of interest in their child's education (Weinstein et al., 2003). It is also important to keep communication open, even with parents who might be learning English as a second language. It's easy to brush these parents off but instead teachers should be encouraged to engage in conversation to understand their expectations even further (Weinstein et al., 2003). Also, parent involvement can create social capital for parents who might be low-income or a part of a non-dominant group. "Parental groups can provide a network through which parents acquire valuable information and support, enabling them to contribute to both their children's academic success and their cognitive and social development." (Chang, Park, Singh & Sung, 2009). Often times, parents in the minority can feel left out, causing them to not be as involved. When parent involvement is higher and encouraged by the educator, it translates into a child's life as

well. School should not stop at home, it should be recognized and integrated into their home lives and parent involvement is crucial to that.

Therefore, to foster a multicultural education in the right environment, a few key concepts have to be in place. The teacher should understand the background of their students in order to cut back on misunderstandings and to keep up inclusivity. Also, teachers need to be supportive and open to relationships with their students as well as recognizing the ways in which the school structure itself might affect the environment in the classroom. Finally, parent and family involvement is key not only to behavioral success but creating an environment where the people at home feel included in the education. With this groundwork, 9th grade civics can become a class that connects classroom learning, to homelife and homelife to classroom learning.

Community in the classroom. Creating a classroom community takes effort for both the teacher and the students (Kohn, 2004). When there is sense of belonging within a classroom, students are more likely to engage. When this type of environment is present within a classroom, students feel at ease to be themselves and are more easily respond and investigate other perspectives. If the students do not feel a part of the classroom environment, the foundations of multiculturalism will not have an impact. Paulo Freire asserted that the classroom environment should aim to "create possibilities for the construction and production of knowledge rather than engage simply in a game of transferring knowledge" (1998, p. 49). This includes a classroom where students are learning from each other and not simply being taught about other perspectives through notes and textbooks.

Jones (2012) declared that it is the school's responsibility to provide students with knowledgeable teachers that will promote a classroom climate where all students are heard and where they can learn from one another. Kohn (2004) wrote, "all of us yearn for a sense of relatedness or belonging, a feeling of being connected to others" (p. 119). When teachers can enable students to feel this way about the classroom, they feel they are a part of something more than just school and can be engaged knowing they are going to be both challenged and accepted within that particular classroom community. This sense of belonging is especially important to students in the non-dominant group of society.

There are a few steps in the process for enabling students to feel like they have a safe community to be themselves and to speak freely. According to Jones (2012), there is a need to set clear parameters for the conduct of inquiry and classroom dialogue. Students need to see that they have control over their learning, when students of all backgrounds feel like have ownership in something, they will be more likely to feel they are apart of a community. Dewey (as cited in Jones, 2012) also spoke to the fact of how important it is for a student to feel as though they have a vested interested in their classroom:

[B]eing a unique member of a meaningful group is important for both the individual and

the group… the more democratic a group is, the more the group experience builds

unique perspectives and interests of its members, and this the more the group

experience becomes a source of educational development for all involved. (p. 60)

When classrooms operate in this fashion it not only contributes to the perspectives that they see but helps shape them into responsible citizens, that can make rational decisions

and become involved in issues that hold importance. The process of creating this type of

community is no easy feat but the effects can be tremendous to creating a positive and

inclusive classroom environment. "When students feel they are valued members of the

community and that their opinions and contributions are important, there are fewer

distractions from the work of the classroom and fewer behavior problems." (Jones, 2012,

p. 61) As a teacher-researcher, my objective is to take a combination of my teaching

philosophy, new found knowledge and classroom research to create a successful

classroom environment that enables a sense of community and multicultural perspectives.

  Safe Space classroom. In order to have a classroom environment that invites

students to challenge their bias as well as respect the different beliefs of other students, a

safe space needs to be created. According to Holley and Steiner (2005) safe spaces are

classrooms where students are willing and able to struggle with challenging issues. Also,

students feel they can freely express themselves around issues that include diversity,

cultural competency and oppression, all of which are components of a thriving

multicultural classroom. When Holley and Steiner spoke about safe classroom

environments, they focused on keeping students safe from psychological harm, "the

injuries individuals suffer at the hands of society" (p. 50). It is important for educators to

help support students when they are open to share their opinions.but to recognize that

what other students may say when speaking freely could potentially harm another

student. I would argue that this concept would be the most difficult to uphold when

creating a safe space environment. Educators need to be careful to not devalue anyone's

opinion but maintain that it is crucial for students to speak their truth. Holley and Steiner

(2005) asserted that students should feel comfortable to speak up even if it goes against the norms set by the instructor or other students.

Another component that is crucial to a safe space environment is the opportunity for students to grow in their beliefs. One of the main ideas I have been taught about multicultural education is that growth comes out of being uncomfortable approaching or speaking about a topic. In a safe space classroom Holley and Steiner (2005) found that, "Being safe is not the same as being comfortable. To grow and learn, students often must confront issues that make them uncomfortable and force them to struggle with who they are and what they believe" (p. 50). However, students must feel like the rewards (growth) must outweigh the possible consequences (embarrassment). If students feel that expressing their opinion will somehow put them at risk for ridicule, they will be less likely to participate in the uncomfortable conversations and such making it less likely they will grow in their cultural competency.

Holley and Steiner (2005) set forth some guiding principles for setting up a safe space classroom. First, do not punish students for unpopular views. This can be difficult when students might discuss something that harms or offends another student. At those junctures, it is important to talk through where that student is coming from and then rely on the students to express how that statement harmed them. Classrooms that encourage and regularly have difficult conversations will never be free of challenges or harm. Unfortunately, you can not protect all your students but this is true for outside the classroom as well. Hopefully, the classroom can become great practice for the difficult

conversations and situations that will arise from them as they navigate through the "real world."

A second key component Holley and Steiner suggest is making sure to " welcome discussion, be approachable and show that you are supportive (2005, p. 51). When educators abide by these parameters, it allows students to begin to question their beliefs and challenge their bias, which can be one of the more difficult things for students to overcome. It is equally as important that the teacher sets up classroom norms for discussions. That way, students are aware of what is expected and what the educator would like to see out of discussions. It is important that students are involved in this process as well. Teachers should also model what a discussion might look like, formal and informal.

In Holley and Steiner's research, they investigated how students look at what a safe space classroom should look like by surveying 121 undergraduate social work students. Their results outlined the key characteristics students look for when feeling like they are in a safe classroom. The most popular characteristic of an instructor was someone who was "Not biased; nonjudgmental; open" (p. 56). That was followed by an instructor who modeled participation; developed ground rules and was comfortable with conflict/raised controversial ideas. It was helpful to see what students would expect out of their instructor. Most of the work that surrounds safe space research is geared to what the researcher believes the teacher should do versus what the students want out of their instructor. The results also examined what students expected out of their peers. This was interesting and helpful perspective because when setting up a safe space with norms and

discussion guidelines it is helpful to know what students will expect out of one another.

The most popular answer was peers who had "Good discussion skills (e.g., respectful,

listened, followed ground rules)¨ (Holley & Steiner, 2005, p. 56). That was followed by

"Honestly shared thoughts, ideas, opinions, and facts; [and] Nonjudgmental and open to

new ideas or perspectives" (p. 56). The results are not necessarily surprising but help

connect what students hope to see out of the facilitator of the discussion as well as the

people partaking. Overall, when creating a safe space, it is important to remind students

that with uncomfortable conversations, comes growth. It is crucial that teachers set up an

environment that enables students to feel they can express themselves freely without

feeling they will punished for their views.

Safe Space circles. In order to create a safe space classroom, there needs to be

changes to the traditional way a classroom might run. For example, Lepp and Zorn

(2002) suggested making an actual circle when in comes time for more difficult

discussions. They asserted that: " Only when learning space is perceived as safe are

vulnerabilities exposed and masks removed. In this way, a willingness for sharing will be

established" (Lepp & Zorn, 2002, p. 383). Similar to the ideas of Holley and Steiner,

Lepp and Zorn see the benefit of building a safe space, opens up the classroom for

growth.

Lepp and Zorn (2002) saw the circle as a symbol of unity, harmony and

connectedness. When the the classroom is physically put into a circle, students can

communicate better with one another, creating a safer and more connected space. To sit

in a circle and talk is the most equal arrangement because everyone can see each other

and every individual sits equally close to the center (Lepp & Zorn, 2002). There can be many barriers to discussion within a classroom, besides the ones that might be going on internally or between students. The way in which a classroom is arranged can help students feel safe and more open to share.

> At the beginning of the first lesson I always sit with the class in a circle.... I want the group to understand that here they have the opportunity to explore themselves, their feelings, and to create together...we have to create a special environment in which each one is protected. (Cristen, 1996, pp. 8-9).

If students are sitting in a way in which they can only see the backs of their peers' heads, it is only emphasizing the teacher is the most important person in the room, which should not be the classroom climate (Lepp & Zorn, 2002).

Lepp and Zorn (2002) also gave some other ideas on how an educator can create a safe space and that can lay the groundwork for meaningful engagement, empower empowerment and growth:

1. Allowing students to get comfortable, not restricting their movements too much
2. Beginning class with introductions or greetings, sharing something with one another
3. Allowing students to have choice while in your classroom, for planning and activities

In review, when creating a classroom environment that fosters a climate of multiculturalism, there are few key components. First, educators should be aware of the cultural norms that are associated with behavior. It is important to look at classroom management critically and understand why students behave the way they do based on their cultural background. Along with this comes creating meaningful relationships with students and being aware of the environment their students are coming from. Secondly, it is important to create a classroom community. This includes making students feel they a part of something bigger and that can contribute to life outside the classroom and where students have and share mutual respect for one another. Finally, it is critical that the classroom is a safe space. This is a classroom where students feel they can express themselves, free from social or psychological harm. Taking into account cultural norms and background as well as creating a classroom community are important and necessary for creating a classroom environment that fosters multicultural education.

Student Engagement

Student engagement can include the willingness for students to participate in routine activities, contribute to discussions as well as completing daily work and larger assignments. When being observed, student engagement is one of the key areas school administrators gear their focus. Student engagement has varying definitions, as many concepts in education do. It can be an indicator as to how much a school is improving and help administrators determine if a teacher is doing their job well. For the purposes of this capstone, it is important to be familiar on techniques that will help engage my students more in conjunction with multicultural tactics. Ultimately, integrating multiculturalism is

important because it is beneficial to students but will also help engage students from all different cultural backgrounds. In order to do this, it is important to know how researchers are improving student engagement.

Increasing student engagement. There are various techniques educators can use to try and promote and increase student engagement. Harbour, Evanovich, Sweigart and Hughes (2015) prescribed some of the most recent research on maximizing student engagement. The goal, is to take these techniques, in combination with research on multiculturalism and classroom environment, to increase engagement in my 9th grade civics classroom. According to Harbour et al. (2015), student engagement promotes learning and achievement among students of various ages and abilities. Finn (1993) described engagement as a cyclical process beginning with behaviors of participation, such as attending school and responding during class, which under favorable circumstances then lead to a feeling of belonging in and identification with a school. In the long term, I would hope to see multiculturalism in every classroom, improving engagement and then increasing the sense of belonging and community amongst students to keep them interested in school. Harbour et al. (2015) asserted that there are three teacher behaviors that can be the most effective in engagement: modeling, responding opportunities and feedback.

Modeling is a technique used to help clarify what the teacher is doing as well as why they are doing it. Modeling will be useful in my capstone research because I will need to model appropriate discussions as well as modeling how to deal with and confront possible challenging and uncomfortable situations. " Furthermore, modeling supports

students by preparing them to taking both simple and complex tasks and behaviors, including addressing unclear concepts, making generalizations and problems solving" (Harbour et al., 2015, p. 6). There are few key components they make up a "good model" according to Harbour et al (2015), these include; being clear, consistent and concise as well as including demonstrations and also involving students. These are important aspects for me to remember as research begins in my classroom because I will need to model multiculturalism in a clear way that involves students. I think allowing an opportunity to role play various scenarios in class might be a great way to model possible responses and also allow students to be involved. Since I am hoping that some of the skills and conversations my students have translate to the real world it is important to remember that students often observe what I am doing and it is crucial to capitalize on additional teachable moments that might occur outside of instruction (Scott et al., 2012). Finally, "as a purposeful behavior, modeling engages students in a thoughtful learning and application of concepts, influences their behavior and affects their personal concept as a learner and individual" (Harbour et al., 2015, p. 8).

The second effective strategy for student engagement is Opportunities to Respond or OTR. These are defined as "an academic question, prompt or task present by a teacher and eliciting active student response" (Harbour et al., 2015, p. 8). These allow students a chance to engage with the teacher immediately after something has been presented by the teacher and make students feel they are contributing to class. Usually, OTRs are simpler questions that are asked on a frequent basis and come in the form of choral response. Although, OTRs can involve more complex questions for student engagement. According

to Harbour et al. (2015) results have shown that when students are given more opportunities to respond during instruction rather than passive listening, students had high levels of achievement and engagement. This will be beneficial to my teaching style because it will allow me to hand more of the conversation over to the students, leaving myself as more of a facilitator, which was what I wanted to experiment with my unit change. In sum, OTRs should be more frequent in classrooms where teachers want to see engagement increased. When student engagement is increased, we see a higher level of achievement as well.

The third effective strategy that Harbour et al. (2015) suggested is feedback. Feedback can include verbal and nonverbal responses to students wherein teachers provide information regarding student's academic or behavioral performance. In a classroom that promotes multiculturalism, feedback is essential. My feedback lets students know that I am being supportive and that they are in a safe space. If my feedback is too harsh or critical, it might keep them from sharing again. On the contrary, if my feedback helps support and encourage them (whether I am in agreeance or not), they will be more likely to participate. In relation, Harbour et al (2015) assert that ¨When teachers use positive feedback at increased rates, a number of benefits arise, including improvements in student achievement, engagement and behavior" (p. 9). It is important for me to let them know their point matters as much as anyone else's and positive, frequent feedback, helps with that notion. In order to give feedback that is meaningful, according to Harbour et al. (2015), it should be contingent, specific, frequent and credible. Another benefit to giving students feedback besides increased engagement is

stronger teacher-student relationships. When there is a strong relationship, you will see engagement improve but also the climate and environment of the classroom. Furthermore, when feedback is applied appropriately for desired student social and academic behavior, teachers can expect many students to respond with more engagement and less problematic behavior (Harbour et al., 2015).

Increased civic engagement. When looking more specifically at my civics classroom, there are models to help increase engagement there as well. I have noted the ways in which I can use general techniques to increase engagement in my classroom in conjunction with a multicultural approach. This next section will focus on the civic empowerment gap. As a civics teacher, it is important that the studentś interest goes beyond the classroom. I also need to make sure that all students have opportunities despite their backgrounds.

 Research has found that there can a specific achievement gap within civics as well. The civic empowerment gap is defined as: historically disadvantaged individuals, due to race and ethnicity, class, immigration status and beyond- have lower levels of civics motivation, knowledge, skills and participation (Levinson, 2012). Levinson (2012) also proposed that civic engagement can be dramatically increased in all youth through an action civics curriculum. Since the students that are less likely to participate in civic action are those that have been disadvantaged, it is critical for the implementation of multicultural education so they first feel connected to the classroom, then they can find a cause to stand behind, and hopefully become involved in action outside the classroom.

The action curriculum lays out clear guidelines, but it is important to note that civic

engagement gap is present because of outside factors:

　　Likewise, civic development depends on the social processes that take place

among individuals and groups in a setting, such as a classroom, as well as interaction

between settings; for instance the classroom, school, community and nation in which a

student takes part. (Stolte, Isenbarger & Cohen, 2014, p. 44).

That is why it is crucial that in order to get students involved, we have to remember their

backgrounds and ignite engagement inside the classroom that will transcend into civic

engagement in the real world. When students are civically involved, they can began to

see the change that is so often spoken about in multicultural classrooms. Stolte et al.

(2014) noted that civic learning experiences at school have a more powerful impact on

students coming from high-poverty neighborhoods, but poor and minority students have

fewer opportunities to engage in classroom learning opportunities such as debates and

service learning. Ninth grade civics students at my high school are required to participate

in five hours of youth service. I do not always realize the limitations that some students

might have in completing this project. It might not be an issue of interest but one of

logististics for the student.

　　It is also important to keep in mind students' personal experiences when it comes

to civic values and how this might contribute to how engaged or connected they feel to

the material. Rubin (2007) described that many poor students of color felt a disjuncture

between civic ideals they learned in school and their personal experiences with

discrimination, violence, economic injustices and violations of their Fourth Amendment

rights. However, the point of laying out an action based civics curriculum to encourage students to feel empowered rather than passive (Stolte et al, 2014).

Stolte et al. (2014) prescribed an action curriculum called CIVVICS (Civic Interactions motiVating DiVerse Individuals in Classroom Settings). It is based on the premise that in order to address the civic empowerment gap, civic educators must not only change what is occurring in classroom and for whom it is occurring but also, how it is occurring. Stoltle et al. (2014) described CIVVICS as such: "CIVVICS focuses on motivational processes in classrooms. By documenting social processes that promote or inhibit students' civic motivation in a classroom setting. CIVVICS can be used as a tool for further formative assessment and research" (p. 45).

When implementing an idea like CIVVICS into a classroom, it it important to still pay attention to the classroom's supports for developing relationships, autonomy, competence and a sense of relevance (Stolte, 2014). These are all components that affect how engaged students will be in civics and what they will want to be involved with when moving outside of the classroom. Also, there are four domains that are incorporated into CIVVCS. The first being awareness of relational and organizational supports. This includes how clear are the goals of teacher and why should these ideas be important to the students? How can the teacher make them personally relevant? This connects back to a safe space classroom. Students will be more likely to share their experiences if they feel comfortable.

The second domain of CIVVCS is classroom interactions. This looks at how the teacher interacts with students, is it creating a positive or negative climate? CIVVCS

specifically looks at if the classroom is warm, support, respectful and responsive to others' needs (Stolte et al., 2014).

The third domain is student engagement. This is used to look at how students are actively engaged over time in the classroom, as evidence by interacting with teachers and peers, asking questions and sharing insights.

The last domain focuses on how students support their own autonomy and also classroom leadership. These interactions can reflect directly on students' ability to form ideas about key democratic ideas such as fairness, freedom and equality (Stolte et al., 2014).

Overall, the CIVVCS framework has some valuable components for increasing student engagement both inside and outside the classroom, specifically with students that may represent minority or oppressed groups. This is an important framework to emphasize since my goal is to incorporate multiculturalism as a way to increase engagement and with the ideas of CIVVCS, it hopefully help translate meaningful change students can take outside the classroom.

In sum, student engagement can be achieved in several ways. There are techniques such as modeling, opportunities to respond and feedback, that will help engage students while also displaying to them what a multicultural classroom should look and feel like. Also, as a civics teacher it is essential that I am preparing students to be active and contributing citizens outside of the classroom and pay special attention to students that feel there is a disconnect between what the see in the classroom and what happens in their own lives. Again, by comparing a non-multicultural and multicultural

unit, I am hoping that student engagement and interest increases. In order to do this, I have to keep in mind generalized techniques for engagement as well as more specific, civic related tools.

Summary and Application to Classroom Research

In order to have a successful research experience in my classroom, it is imperative that I am well versed in the topics I am investigating in my own classroom. It all has to come back to my research question: *What are the effects of incorporating a multicultural unit in a high school civics classroom for increased student interest and engagement?* I first addressed multicultural education, what it is and why it is important for all schools to have. This section assisted me in creating an image of what I want my classroom to look and sound like. This research also allowed me to be aware of what I should be observing in my classroom as well as how I will eventually implement those aspects into my 9th grade civics class. Multicultural education is a broad topic with a plethora of definitions and strategies. It was important that I did research that reflected what I want to see out of my classroom and delved into strategies that will be most useful for my particular school climate. Most importantly, I learned that a multicultural classroom is ever evolving, that takes time, practices and constant growth.

As noted in my literature review, the environment that students walk into has an enormous impact on how open and responsive they will be to different perspectives and multiculturalism in general. Students need to feel supported both by their peers and their teacher. Students can expect uncomfortable times but from that comes growth. It is my job to ensure that my classroom is by definition and practice a "safe space." I can use

these new learnings about classroom environment to set my students up for new experiences and perspectives.

Finally, student engagement. My objective is to included all students in the discussion while also setting up a multicultural environment that fosters increased engagement. If I expect students to have a deep understanding of a concept or how to conduct themselves in a discussion, I need the tools to engage and pull them in. Students are reluctant to change if they do not know what teacher expects of them.

In chapter 3, I discuss the methods I used to conduct my classroom research. I outline the methodology of my research and include what type of quantitative and qualitative tools are involved. Chapter 3 also highlights the participants and setting of my research. Finally, I discuss how the data was analyzed and interpreted.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

The objective of my capstone is to illustrate how incorporating multicultural education can create a more positive learning environment and increase the engagement of 9th grade students. My research question is: *What are the effects of incorporating a multicultural unit in a high school civics classroom for increased student interest and engagement?* According to the *Handbook of Research on Multiculturalism,* the definition of multiculturalism is as follows:

A field of study designed to increase educational equity for all students that

incorporates, for this purpose, content, concepts, principles, theories and

paradigms from history, the social and behavioral sciences. (Banks, 2004, p. 54)

Multicultural education can have the power to provide inclusion and a safe space for students. By using the research methods that are described in this chapter, I hope to yield results that show increased student engagement and community.

I will be teaching my first two units of civics it will be taught the same way as I have been teaching the last two years. I will not be adding in as many perspectives and emphasising the struggle of oppressed groups. For the research collection, I will be adjusting the framework of my third unit, which covers citizenship. This includes being an active citizen, how to become a naturalized citizen, social issues as well as voting and political parties. I will be covering the same content I usually would, but in addition, I will share the narratives of marginalised groups of current and past time periods. For

example, while covering citizenship, we discuss the debates currently surrounding

citizenship and the difficulties many families face. For active citizenship, the class will be

looking at current events, specifically ones that deal with prominent social issues (Black

Lives Matter, Syrian refugee crisis). I will be incorporating more classroom discussion,

following the Safe Space model and allowing students more opportunities to experience

different perspectives. This will take the shape of activities, video clips, large and small

group discussions and a small research project. There are two goals; one, to increase the

class' knowledge on oppressed groups while also engaging students more deeply into

class and two, empower all students to continue to be active citizens.

Research Paradigm

My capstone research employed a mixed methods approach (Creswell, 2014). I

chose mixed methods because I felt it would give my research the most well-rounded

approach (Hughes, 2016). Also, since I am focusing a large part of my research on

engagement, I thought it would be best to have different ways of collecting data. This

will also help me avoid bias as well. When the mixed methods approach began to rise in

popularity, it was thought that all methods had bias and weakness, therefore the

collection of both quantitative and qualitative data help to neutralize the weaknesses

(Creswell, 2014).

Qualitative research. In order to display that students appear to be more

engaged, I felt I needed to show this through qualitative method. I used field notes as well

as interviews to collect this data. I feel as though the observations helped get a glimpse at

how the classroom environment changes from week to week. I believe the interviews

enabled me to get a more in-depth glance look at how the students feel about the lessons and discussions.

     Field notes. The written record of participant observer research are often referred to as field notes (Mills, 2014). A copy of my field note document can be found in Appendix A. Field notes are a strategy used in many different research environments and help keep a log of events and observations in the classroom. Unfortunately, a teacher who is teaching and also researching can not possibly be writing down everything. Mills (2014) gave a few suggestions on how a teacher-researcher should conduct their field notes. Since I was looking for a change in my students' behavior and engagement, I used the technique of *'look for bumps or paradoxes.'* I think this strategy worked best because of the behavior shift I'm looking for but also so I could detect bumps that might reflect a successful or unsuccessful implementation of multiculturalism. According to Mills (2014), these bumps can include unexpected responses to a curriculum change or unexpected response to new classroom management or seating arrangement.

     I used my field notes to note any changes in behavior I notice in students and also document where there might be an unexpected response or unintended consequences. My plan was to take field notes throughout the entire period, three times a week. I recorded every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. I know that my lessons and new strategies will not be perfect, but I believe in order to have a successful research paper, I should be able to point out the inconsistencies and challenges. This can be done easily with descriptive field notes.

Interviews. My second method was student interviews (see Appendix B). I selected a random group of students that I knew would be willing to be interviewed and "information rich" as asserted by Mills (2014). I selected twelve students from each class, from ranging ability levels and then randomly interviewed two students from that pool. This would be a total of six students being interview. Also, I conducted two sets of interviews. First, after the first week of the unit and then a second interview the last week of the unit. My goal with the interview process was to get a more detailed account of what students are thinking, feeling and perceiving. While interviewing can be a great way to gain information from students, I had to remember that the way I present the questions can influence the responses. It is also key to keep in mind that students might sometimes respond in a certain way because they feel like it will please me. Overall, I think with the combination of field notes, surveys and interviews, I gathered enough reliable data that will prove the validity of my research.

The interviews should provide additional details to complement the results of the student surveys (described later in quantitative methods) demonstrated in a more detailed manner, like the interviews. These interviews were done outside of the classroom and followed the guidelines as documented by Mills (2014). My interview questions are structured so they are both a combination of open and closed ended questions. Also, it is important to remember to give an appropriate amount of wait time, that way the student does feel pressured and I do not answer my own question. Finally, I took notes and also recorded the interviews. The notes allow the interviewer to review the information shortly after the interview and serve as a roadmap to help process the information given

by the interviewee (Mills, 2014). The interviews gave me a clearer look on how students feel about the unit implementation and if the changes that were made enabled students to think from different perspectives and what strategies worked the best and which ones fell flat.

Teacher journal. For my third qualitative method, I used a teacher journal. A copy of my journal template can be found in Appendix C. I journaled on the days where I was not taking field notes, so Tuesdays and Thursdays. The journal included a reflection as follows: where I saw students succeed, examples of where students struggled, areas for improvement and examples of increased interest and engagement. These journal entries were a chance for me to reflect on my own teaching practices and add an element to the data set that can not be covered in a student survey or interview. The journal entries also provide a source for where I can improve the next time I teach the unit.

Quantitative research. In terms of quantitative research, I used a Likert survey (see Appendix D). The survey was implemented at the beginning of the trimester and then again once after the multicultural units have taken place. This type of data collection allowed me to get a read on the whole class while the interviews will allow for a more focused, detailed look at the classroom environment.

Student survey. For my quantitative method of data collection I chose to to do a Likert scale survey. All students in my selected civics class took the pre and post unit survey. It was facilitated through Google Forms. This streamlined the data collection process and made the data more efficient to analyze. "The use of attitude scales allows teacher-researchers to determine what an individual believes, perceives or feels" (Mills,

2014, p.102). When using a likert scale, there were several responses the students can chose from. They chose from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A) Disagree (D) or Strongly Disagree (SD). All of these responses correspond to a number. In the likert scale my students used, the Strongly Agree (4) held the most numerical value while the Strong Disagree (1) held the least amount. The survey included how well students feel they are educated on different cultures, how involved they felt in the classroom and how interested they were in the material. I had students take the same survey at the beginning of the unit and then again at the end, which was about 3 and a half weeks later. The likert scale is beneficial because it helps illustrate to the teacher-researcher if the students are feeling negatively or positively to certain areas of the classroom (Mills, 2014).

Setting and participants. The study took place in a large suburban school in the upper Midwest. The majority of students come from residential communities, with a portion of the students coming from temporary housing with a small percentage of students being labeled homeless or in transient housing. There are currently over 2,800 students enrolled and 20% identify themselves into a minority group, 7% black, 4% Hispanic, 7% Asian. Also, about 27% of the student population is considered to be "economically disadvantaged." Academically, 85% of students were at or exceeded the state standards for reading with a 12% difference in proficiency between non-economically disadvantaged and disadvantaged students. The data was collected in the third trimester of the 2015-2016 school year during my first, fourth and fifth period civic classes. The unit took place from the second week in May to the first week in June. My first hour consists of a total of 21 students, 12 identifying as male and 9 identifying as

female. Fourth hour consists of 34 students, 17 identifying as male and 17 identifying as female. Finally, the fifth hour class consists of a total of 34 students as well, 21 identifying as male and 13 identifying as female.

Students have an option of taking Honors or Regular civics. The research was done in a regular civics class with 9th grade students. Students are required to take civics and geography as their social studies credit.. The civics course is required for graduation and therefore deemed a core class. I chose to do my study of a 9th grade civics for a few reasons. The first being that I feel like laying the framework for positive conversations surrounding multicultural issues is best utilized when done at the beginning of high school. Secondly, civics traditionally favors those who are dominant in American culture; relatively wealthy, white, men. My goal in implementing a multicultural unit to 9th graders, is that they see American government as something everyone should be involved in, not just the image they see of who has lead the country traditionally.

Ethics

All of my data techniques are in line with research ethics as prescribed by Hamline University and my school district. There is no risk in student participation. All results are held are confidential and anonymous. I will not record any information regarding participants' names, nor report identifying information in my thesis or research. Participation will be voluntary and participants will be allowed to opt out at any point and withdraw their voice and perspective from my work. I have received approval for my study from the School of Education at Hamline University and my district´s board on Research, Evaluation and Testing (RET).

Procedures

Creating the unit. The unit I adapted is unit three on citizenship and voting. The first component of this unit is students understanding the process of gaining citizenship. In order for this to fall into what would be a multicultural framework, students learned about the basics of becoming a naturalized citizen while also reading current event articles about the difficulties many immigrant families face while trying to gain citizenship. Also, students participated in a half a period round-table where they will analyze the basics of naturalization process and try to make improvements after reading about other perspectives. The round-table discussion followed a safe space foundations. Therefore, the class was in a circle, students started the discussion by sharing something about themselves and students chose how the discussion was structured (Lepp & Zorn, 2002). For example, they chose the order of the questions and who (student or teacher) would facilitate the discussions.

The second component involved being an active citizen, which will be addressed in the sub-section about the 9th grade social issue project. The third component of unit three is voting and how the president is elected. For this, students should be able to understand the basic requirements to vote as well as the process the president goes through to be elected. While accessing this information, students learned about the people in the United States that have been discriminated against when it comes to voting (Voter Rights Act, Jim Crow laws). Students were also presented with world perspectives on voting as well as exploring why the United States has such low diversity in race and gender when it comes to electing a President and how this issue should be addressed.

Students participated in a forum and prepare a plan for how the United States can fix the issue for lack diversity in American leadership.

The final component of unit three is examining political parties. Students are required to understand what a two-party system is, as well as how political parties gain their funding. In order to make it relevant to a multicultural education, students created their own political parties, building these parties based on the new information and perspectives they have gained through the first three components of the unit. Building their own political party with a platform, allowed students to incorporate their own ideas as well as the many issues addressed earlier in unit three. Alongside this, students were introduced to political parties from different countries, what they look like and how a multi-party system can create a different political culture within that society. They also used the Youth Leadership Initiative website to learn about the dangers of campaign donations and Political Action Committees (PACs). All of these lessons were designed around the multicultural framework described in chapters one and two. Unit three was designed to increase student engagement through multicultural principles as well getting students to reflect on how they can be an active citizen.

Social issue project. The social issue project allowed students to pick a topic they are interested in and present that research to the class. The objective is for students to feel like they are receiving current information about social issues currently affecting the United States. There are a variety of issues to chose from, each one affecting the United States currently. The project is designed so that students can research independently while engaging as an active citizen.

The project incorporates multicultural education in a few different ways. First, the project allowed students to gain perspectives on issues they might have interest in but might not be able to explain fully. Secondly, the project addresses social issues that are currently happening in the United States and that affect many different groups of people. Issues include poverty, immigration and global climate change. I would argue most people see poverty as a terrible thing but figuring out a way to solve this problem differs from student to student. By giving students the background information and then allowing them to come up with a plan to solve the problem, it allowed students the opportunity to use their research, background knowledge from class and personal viewpoint to create a well-rounded presentation of the social issue.

Incorporation of Safe Space strategy As spoken about in the literature review, I structured my classroom around the safe space model. There are few key elements that need to be present and documented while I am conducting my research. Holley and Steiner (2005) asserted that students must be willing and open to struggle with difficult topics and conversations. It is important that while I implemented my research, I observed how students expressed themselves, while also helping them to navigate difficult topics. It is also important that I was aware of any harm that could come to students because of something another student has said (Holley & Steiner, 2005). This can be an opportunity for growth for a lot of students, so it's critical that I am making note of these situations and possibly speaking with students that this has affected in my interviews. Finally, I need to make note of how I am teaching in a way that "welcome[s]

discussion, be approachable and show that you are supportive" (2005, p. 51). It is

important that I detail this information as a write about my results in chapter four.

Data analysis. Once the data has been collected from the likert surveys, field

notes, teacher journal and interviews, I found the themes within the data I have collected.

I used the convergent mixed method approach, where my goal is merge quantitative and

qualitative data to create a cohesive set of research results (Creswell, 2014). More

specifically, I used the side by side comparison technique. This is where the researcher

presents the quantitative results and then discuss the qualitative theme or start with

qualitative findings and then compare them to the quantitative results (Creswell, 2014).

"Mixed methods writers call this a side-by-side approach because the researcher makes

the comparison within a discussion, presenting first one set of findings and then the

other" (Creswell, 2014, p. 222). In terms of answering my research question, I made the

quantitative results first and then compare them to the qualitative themes. This allowed to

me to see where I think students have grown and with the quantitative results, I can write

better post-unit interview questions. Ultimately, the observation notes and interview data

I collect should correspond to how students are recording their beliefs, perceptions and

feelings on the student survey. I believe presenting my results in the side-by-side

approach will help ensure the research's validity and reliability.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I outlined several things. First, I described my overall plan for

changing my unit and development of an action research plan. I then outlined what I set

out to change about my classroom environment and what key elements I looked for in

my students' responses. I also highlighted how I incorporated the Safe Space strategy and what I needed to look for while conducting my action research. Finally, I described my research methods which include both quantitative and qualitative methods. For this, I used interviews, field notes and a likert survey. Being that I used a mixed method approach, I compared the quantitative results to the qualitative responses in a side-by-side comparison. The comparison method will help synthesize my data while also allowing exposing the themes of research.

In chapter 4, I will be sharing the results and findings of my classroom research. I will also be giving detail as to how the data was collected and specifics to which questions were asked in the likert surveys and student interviews. After an interpretation and discussion of the results, I will be sharing the themes that I found within the research. The themes should be a clear indication of how well my unit help expose multiculturalism and its assistance in increasing student engagement. Finally, along with the themes, I will make major conclusions about the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Introduction

I chose the topic of multiculturalism because as the United States' demographics change, the way in which educators approach their craft has to change as well. In my experience, what has happened in current events in the year 2016, such as the rise of groups like Black Lives Matter and continuing Islamophobia, that having an understanding and accepting nature towards others is not only essential for school but for navigating society as an informed and well-rounded citizen. We are all connected and the more people that can embrace that notion, less hate and discrimination will hopefully exist in the United States. Keating (2004) stated: "As an educator, one of my goals is to awaken in my students a sense of this radical interconnectedness, for I believe it can play a crucial role in working toward social justice" (p. 22).

The purpose of collecting the following data was to demonstrate a correlation between multicultural teaching methods and increased student engagement and interest. I chose a mixed method approach for a few reasons. First, quantitative data allows me to be to get the an idea of what my 86 civics students thought about the activities, lessons and information they were getting in class. Also, obtaining data that is measured in a way that is more objective helps the validity of my research. Second, engagement and interest can be difficult to measure, having qualitative data helps show in detail where students expressed or displayed increased engagement and interest.

Quantitative Data

I implemented surveys for my quantitative data. Students took a pre-unit survey at the beginning of our last unit on May 16, 2016 (see Appendix D). The second survey was taken after the unit test had been given on June 6, 2016 (see Appendix D). Students answered the questions on Google forms in a likert-style survey. The survey questions were designed to investigate whether or not students felt included in the classroom, if their interest grew from the beginning of the unit to the end and if they felt like they had learned more about different perspectives.

Pre-unit results. A total of 84 students took this survey; there were only two students who did not because they were absent. All students had access to chromebooks so there was no hinderance based on availability to technology. The survey was on a four point likert scale. Strongly Disagree (1) Disagree (2) Agree (3) and Strongly Agree (4). Students were not given a neutral response because it forced a response which yields more accurate results.

The first question asked was if students felt they could speak up in class, 42 students or 50% of students surveyed felt they strongly agreed with survey question number one, 26 students or 31% agreed with the statement and 16 students or 19% disagreed with statement one. To avoid bias, I did not give a lot of background information before students took the survey, so the definition of speak up will vary from students to student. Therefore, 81% students either strongly agreed or agreed they felt like they could speak-up in class. This indicates that majority felt comfortable sharing or speaking before the unit began.

The second question asked if students felt included in class. Forty students or 46.6% strongly agreed, 36 students or 42.9% agreed and 8 students or 9.5% disagreed. In terms of strongly agreed or agreed, 89.5% students felt as though they were included in class. Based on these results, I would be interested to see what I could do better as a teacher to get my results to 100% of students feeling as though they were included in class. This question demonstrates that out of my three civics classes, most students felt like they had a place in my classroom.

The third question asked was if students felt like they could learn from others. This question had some more variation, 31% students strongly agreed, 46% agreed, 21% disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed. This would be the first question where a student had indicated strongly disagreed. This question could be interpreted a few different ways. Students could look at as learning cultural values or history while whiles might have thought about if their peers could teach them what they are currently learning in school.

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Q1: I feel I can speak up in class	50%	31%	19%	0%
Q2: I feel included in class	47.6%	42.9%	9.5%	0%
Q3: I feel like I can learn from others	31%	46.4%	21.4%	1.2%

Figure 1: Results of first three pre-survey questions

The fourth question asked was: learning about different cultures and perspectives has helped me become more interested in civics. Thirty-two percent strongly agreed, 45%

agreed, 15% disagreed and 7% strongly disagreed. This demonstrates that there might be

a disconnect between different perspectives and new learning in civics.

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Q4: Learning about different cultures and perspectives has helped me become more interested in civics	32.1%	45.2%	15.5%	7.1%
Q5: The connection of current events to issues covered in class, assisted me to see how class relates to real life.	53.6%	32.1%	13.1%	1.2%
Q6: I feel like I am involved and engaged in the majority of class activities and discussions	33.3%	51.2%	15.5%	0%

Figure 2: Results of remaining pre survey questions

As displayed in Figure 2, over 50% of my civics students felt like current events

assisted in their interest in the class. In Figure 3, about 85% percent of students strongly

agreed or agreed that they felt as if there were engaged in the majority of what was

happening in class. In this instance, more students agreed with this statement than

strongly agreed.

Post-unit survey results. The post unit survey was given during class on June

6th, 2016. All students again had access to chromebooks. For this survey, 81 students

participated. This is three less than the pre-unit survey. Also, this survey was nine

questions instead of six, like the pre-unit survey. The first three questions of the post-unit

survey were the same as the pre-survey. The averages on the first three questions were

fairly similar. The results can be seen in Figure 5 as compared to the pre-unit survey.

For question one, *I feel like I can speak up in class,* the disagreed percentage

actually went up 4% while the strongly agreed declined by about 5%. I found this strange

because I felt as though through my observations, students were speaking more but we

were discussing more difficult topics which could account for the increase in students

who disagreed with the statement. For question 2, *I feel included in class,* the strongly

agreed and agreed dropped by 4% total and one student answered "strongly disagree" as

opposed to the pre survey where zero students had responded "strongly disagree." The

comparison of pre and post survey results can be found in Figure 5.

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Q1: I feel I can speak up in class	43.2%	32.1%	23.5%	1.2%
Q2: I feel included in class	40.7%	39.5%	18.5%	1.2%
Q3:I feel like I can learn from others	28.4%	38.3%	24.7%	8.6%

Figure 3: Results of first three post-survey questions

In figure 4, you can see the results of the remaining post survey questions. I

thought question sevenś results were the most interesting. Question seven dealt

specifically with the social issue project, it was interesting to see the results of a question

that targeted an assignment that I feel is vital to their understanding of what it means to

be an informed citizen. As shown in Figure 3, the survey results show that 43% students

strongly agreed that the project helped them see an issue from beyond their chosen

perspective and 37% percent agreed that the project helped them "see an important issue

from more than one perspective." I believe these results display that overall, the social

issue project is successful in assisted in different perspectives and I will discuss more

feedback from students in the results sections regarding interviews. I also believe these

results indicate there are ways in which I can improve the project as well.

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Q4: I found the Paideia (circle discussions) to be more interesting than writing down answers to questions on my own	38.3%	32.1%	23.5%	6.2%
Q5: The social issue project helped me see an important issue from more than one perspective	43.2%	37%	18.5%	1.2%
Q6: I feel I better understand the obstacles oppressed/marginalized groups have faced in order to be given the right to vote	43.8%	45%	10%	1.3%
Q7: Learning about different cultures and perspectives has helped me become more interested in civics	41.8%	32.9%	22.8%	2.5%
Q8: The connection of current events to issues covered in class, assisted me to see how class relates to real life.	51.9%	38.3%	8.6%	1.2%
Q9: I felt like I was involved and engaged in the majority of class activities and discussions	37%	42%	16%	4.9%

Figure 4: Results of remaining post-survey results

As the class moved through the unit, there was one topic that generated a lot of

discussion and I will discuss more in my analysis of my field note observations. It was

the issue of marginalized groups obtaining citizenship long after the Constitution has

been passed, Jim Crow laws and the recent Wisconsin voter ID law. Figure 4 displays

that when asked "I feel I better understand oppressed/marginalized groups have faced in order to be given the right to vote", 43% strongly agreed, 45% agreed, 10% disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed. The next two questions, were also specific to what had done in class during our third unit.

As shown in Figure 4, when asked if "learning about different cultures and perspectives help them become more interested", 41% strongly agreed, 32% agreed, 22% disagreed and 2.5% strongly disagreed. As for question 7 when students were asked if "the connection of current events to issues covered in class, assisted me to see how class relates to real life, 42% strongly agreed, 38% agreed while 8.6% disagreed and 1.2% strongly disagreed.

Key:
Pre Survey Results
Post Survey Results

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Q1: I feel I can speak up in class	50%	31%	19%	0%
Q2: I feel included in class	47.6%	42.9%	9.5%	0%
Q3: I feel like I can learn from others	31%	46.4%	21.4%	1.2%
Q1: I feel I can speak up in class	43.2%	32.1%	23.5%	1.2%
Q2: I feel included in class	40.7%	39.5%	18.5%	1.2%
Q3:I feel like I can learn from others	28.4%	38.3%	24.7%	8.6%

Figure 5: Comparison of pre and post survey results for repeated questions

In sum, based purely on the quantitative results, it is difficult to say if there was increased engagement but the post-survey results demonstrate an increased interest in current events, voting rights and interest in civics based on different cultures and perspectives.

Qualitative Data

I collected three types of qualitative data. I conducted student interviews with two students from each class for a total of six students. They were interviewed at the beginning of the unit and again after the unit exam. I kept a teacher journal, where I reflected on four different lessons. Finally, I took observation notes on six different occasions. The qualitative data helped me see where students seemed truly interested and engaged but also pointed out how I can improve this unit when I teach it again. The beauty of the qualitative results are that they assisted me in seeing how students not only engage in material but how they understand and process it, which was an unintended but very informative finding.

Interviews. I conducted a total of twelve interviews. The first set were completed on May 18th during 1st, 4th and 5th periods. I had randomly selected six students, two from each class and each student was given a letter, A, B, C, D, E, and F. The sample size consisted of three girls and three boys, four of whom who self identify as part of a marginalized or oppressed group. The first interviews were designed to get an idea of how the students currently felt about class while the second interview was intended to gauge their attitudes and perceptions of the unit we had just completed and that fell into a

multicultural framework. The following is a brief overview of the first round of interviews. The complete list of interview question can be found in Appendix B.

First Round. Student A was from first hour and was the first student that was interviewed. Student A is a male and identified himself as of Asian/American descent. Student A remarked that he felt they had a lot of good base knowledge on other cultures and " it sounds fun to study, depending on the culture. It's cool, there isn't just one way to live life." He also mentioned when asked that they would like to see more application of real life situations in classes, even in civics. Overall, he felt like they could share their opinions openly; "... not too much judgment, pretty chill."

Student B is was a little more reluctant to answer questions but I was still able to get some feedback. Student B is female and identified herself as Black. She did not have much to say when I asked about different cultures but explained this when asked about what the student found most interesting about the previous unit: "slave stuff, I think that it's interesting because back how they got treated and how it changed, yeah I can´t believe that even happened - it's terrible." Also, when asked what she would like to see in terms of different groups incorporated into class, She responded "Asian -- or Hmong, people think they're the same."

Student C had similar responses to Student B when it came to what they found most interesting. Student C is male and identified as White. When asked this question Student C responded "The most interesting thing would be how mistreated the slaves were - having to accept that. It wasn't hard [to accept] that is not made up. Not difficult to believe because of the time period." They both found this topic interesting, but for

different reasons. One thought of it as difficult to believe while the other student was more accepting of the cruelty given the context of the time period. When asked if they felt they could share their opinions freely, they responded "Yeah. Not if we were forced to say it. Everyone has different beliefs."

Student D was male and also identified as White. When asked if they know a lot about different cultures, Student D commented,"I have basic knowledge, we don't really go in depth." When I asked the student why it was it important to go more in depth they responded "I don't want to offend anyone." When asked about what was most interesting about the unit, he explained " I liked the Bill of Rights and the real-life situations." Finally, when asked if he felt like they could share their opinions openly class, student D remarked "Yeah, I think it's all about how you say it."

Student E was female and defined as NAtive American. Student E when asked if she knew a lot about different cultures responded "I don't know, Native American, I have Mohawk background." I asked a follow-up question of whether or not they felt like their background was well-represented. She responded: "Schools could do more, be more accurate." I was glad she mentioned this because I felt for a long time that curriculum could do more to incorporate Native voices and backgrounds. What Student E found most interesting about the previous unit was "The Bill of Rights, especially the last amendments. I liked the group discussions." Finally, when asked about sharing their opinion openly Student E simply said, "Yes."

The final student to be interview was Student F. Student F is female and identified as Palestinian- American is wanted it to be mentioned that she is Muslim.

When asked if she knew a lot about other cultures, they responded, "Yes, I feel like I know a bunch of cultures. I am Arab, and my family is from Palestine." I wanted to know about what is was like to assimilate into American culture. Student F replied: " It was easy to blend, I feel comfortable at Blaine. My parents try to school us on what is cool but we always know more." When questioned about what classes could do to incorporate different cultures she replied, "Human beings are naturally narrow minded, the more you know from different perspectives, the more open you are." Finally, when questioned about sharing her opinions openly in class she explained, "I don't care if others criticize me, that's how I was raised, so I'll always say what I want."

Second Round. I first asked Student A how they would define culture. His definition was: "Define it as the different ways that people live life, beliefs and whatnot." When asked about what he found most interesting about the last unit they replied: "I liked the electoral college. It was engaging, it was easy to understand and helped on the test. Watching the student news, and talking about winning states." I also asked if he had felt like they had been exposed to different perspectives throughout the unit Student A's response was, "Yeah, in terms of perspectives, its open and clear precieve however you want." He was also asked how engaging they found the unit on a three point scale, Student A reported a 2 (somewhat engaging). When asked why, he told me, "It was fun, it wasn't boring. I feel like - personally, I already knew the last unit so this wasn't a review, it was new new information."

Student B's definition had a similar theme but still remained different. What I liked about asking my students such a simple question, is the varied responses I received.

Everyone looks at the main idea of culture the same but explains it in their own terms. Student B's definition of culture was, "their race, what their family traditions are. Their color, Religion and stuff like family gatherings." When questioned about what she thought was most interesting about the unit student B replied: "I like the voting rights. The requirements to vote. It's important because - I want to vote. People in the U.S. should know that." In response to learning about new perspectives and how engaging they found the unit she reported: "I don't really know. Yeah, I paid more attention that in the last unit." "I would say a 2: somewhat engaging, I paid more attention, it actually has to do with where we are living right now."

Student C's definition of culture is as follows: "A person's beliefs and ways of doing things**."** When asked what they thought was the most interesting part of the unit he replied: " I liked the electoral college. It was .. I don't know, it kept me involved. It gave me an idea of how it works." When asked about if he was able to see new perspectives during the unit, student C was the first to mention the social issue project. They said the the project " it was useful to see the other side and we you feel like you're competing, it helps." Like the previous students, student C gave the unit a 2: somewhat engaging and commented that he "felt more involved."

Student D's definition of culture was a little bit more in depth. "The differences of different types of people in the world and sometimes different ethnicities. The events and things they do on an everyday basis." When questioned about what they found to be most important, student D remarked: "It's all pretty interesting. I liked the when we did the electoral college. A lot of times you learn things that don't matter, itś [electoral college]

something that is important." When asked about being exposed to different cultural perspectives in the unit student D said. "Yeah, it was helpful to see the other side [social issue project]. All the presentations, you have to the contrasting side. It would help learn some new stuff." He also gave the unit a 2: somewhat engaging and when questioned why said that " What makes it engaging, is when you have a teacher that makes it interesting. When a teacher is passionate or knows a lot."

Student E's definition of culture is as follows, "Different groups of people and they're related by their same beliefs, symbols that cultures use." She found political parties to be the most interesting part of the unit. "I have never learned that information before, I liked the Isidewith quiz." When asked about learning about new culture and perspectives they replied, "talking about Hillary and Trump was interesting, talking about the candidates showed people's opinions." Student E also gave the unit a solid 2: somewhat engaging commenting that "I feel like that last unit we did more timelines - we did posters. Yes, I thought the project was cool and small group discussions, I like variety."

Student F was the most candid of the interviewees. This was her response when asked what their definition of culture was, "So the word culture - I hate questions like these. Different aspects of what people are made of. Family, religion, friends, food and bonds with people." When questioned about what was most interesting during the unit student F responded: "The electoral college. Because the fact that someone could win the popular and not win the election is really cool. Even though people, even though the state's claim voted for one person, popularity majority depicts who wins." When

questioned about different perspectives during the unit Student F remarked, "Yes. There is a lot more relevancy, with the elections and we have very bad people running for president. The project as good for showing kids both sides." Student F was the only one out of the six students to rate the unit a 1: very engaging. When asked why she explained: Because there were a lot of activities that helped people learn instead of just "hey here's what you need to know."

Overall, the interviews allowed me to see a more candid view of what my students thought about the unit. Based on the students I interviewed, they found the electoral college an interesting topic and activity. Students that were interviewed also seemed to be more interested in this unit than the last one. I will explain more about how these interview relate to the quantitative data in Chapter 5.

Teacher journals. The teacher journals were designed originally to be recorded twice a week throughout the unit. As the unit progressed, I found it more useful to journal on the larger activities and lessons. I will discuss this more in my limitations section in Chapter 5. Therefore, I have four teacher journals documenting what I felt were the most challenging lessons for both myself and my students. The unit was comprised of ten activity or lesson days. The journals are broken down in chronological order. The journals are split into four categories; ' what I felt was a success today', 'where I felt students struggled', 'ideas for improvement of the lesson', and 'examples of increased student engagement or interest.'

5/20/16: Post Social Issue Project Discussion. I noted that students felt comfortable sharing with their classmates and that the students were organized and

excited to share their information. Students struggled in coming to compromises between the two different viewpoints and that is where I would have to step in a lot and assist students in finding common ground. Ultimately, I observed that students were prepared and eager to share their presentation. Students also traveled to other groups to find out out what their topics were, once they were done presenting, showing me that was an extended interested in what their classmates were researching as well.

There are a few minor changes I would like to make the project to make it more rigorous for students and steps I can take to ensure they are understanding how to come to a logical compromise with the person who shares their topic, but the opposite viewpoint. Based on my reflection of the project discussion, there was little downtime and students stayed on task and either presenting or discussing their topic. My journals relate to the survey data where 80% of students felt the project helped them see their topic from different perspectives.

5/26/16: Electoral College Reflection. Students enjoy the competition of this activity. It's a great exercise to explore how the Electoral College works and also discuss if they believe it is a fair system or not. In terms of engagement, the activity actually went the entire hour, including the discussion. Usually, there is ten minutes left to start the next lesson but students in all three classes were eager to debrief after the activity. Also, all three classes were able to come with alternative plans for the Electoral College helping demonstrate their interest in the topic.

Students love this activity. This was confirmed not only by my journal reflection but also by their interview responses. Three out of the six students mentioned the

Electoral College as one of their favorite lessons from unit 3. It was also evident that interest was high because students were eager to share their ideas on Electoral College and its "fairness." The majority of students were split on the issue - both giving valid reasons for its fair or unfairness. The lesson displays how ninth graders can critically analyze the U.S. electoral system.

5/28/16: Voting Rights Lesson Reflection. I noted that although the background information on voting rights was relatively brief, it still generated discussions in all three of my classes. Students were able to see are voting rights are infringed not only during the Civil Rights era and before but present day as well.

I was surprised by how interested students were in this topic. Again, showcasing the idea of relevancy within a multicultural classroom. Students were disheartened to see that this law discriminated against homeless people, college students and the elderly. I could see that most students were surprised this law had such a sweeping effects. It was enlightening to hear them speak about how they would change the law or those students who disagreed with a voter I.D. law completely.

6/1/16: Propaganda Lesson Reflection. Students seemed excited to work on their propaganda assignment since it allowed them to pick whatever presidential candidate they wanted. They had fun making up different forms of propaganda based on their notes. Classes also enjoyed seeing examples from past elections of different forms of propaganda, many asking to see multiple video clips or pictures.

Students usually also show increased interest in propaganda because it is a fun way to analyze an election but also because we are in the middle of a presidential election

currently. They like looking back at old videos and ads and apply what they learned about different types of propaganda. Also, during work-time on their assignment, students were excited to share their work with me and were steadily asking for guidance on their work - showing me they cared about their assignment and were engaged in what it meant.

Field note observations. My field note observations (found in Appendix A) were taken as the class was happening and students were interacting. They are similar themes to my teacher journals but the field notes are more informal and allowed to me catch students "while in action." I took field notes on six different lessons. I used one observation sheet for all three classes. The notes are blended together, representing comments and observations for all three periods. The field notes were divided into two categories: "student comments on oppressed/marginalized groups" and " Use of language." The following are the result of my note taking from what I heard students discussing or what I directly observed at the time of the lesson.

5/20/16: Social Issue Project Discussion. Students had a variety of topics. I noted that several groups exhibited critical thinking skills and empathy. For example, the groups in 4th and 5th period discussing immigration were asking questions such as; ¨what happens when families are deported?¨ and discussing Trumpś comments on not admitting refugees into the U.S. Other topics that engaged in higher-order thinking discussing included; ISIS, minimum wage and the death penalty.

I was impressed by the research my students had completed and their ability to take the current event source and incorporate it into their presentation of their side of the topic. I think this helped students see varying perspectives while also giving them an

opportunity to connect their topic back to what is currently going on in the U.S. and around the world.

   5/23/16: Citizenship. This was an interesting conversation with all three my classes. Students were hesitant to speak on the topic at first so I we went through the legal requirements of citizenship first. Then, we looked deeper at what it means to be a U.S. citizen.

- Discussing the difficulties of becoming a citizen. Questions asked by students: " How do you enter the country legally?" "Why can't everyone have automatic citizenship?"

- I asked, " What does it mean to be a citizen?"

    ○ " To vote."

    ○ "Be ready to stick up for your country."

    ○ "Follow the laws!"

- "What might becoming a naturalized citizen, mean to those people?"

    ○ "They might appreciate it at more."

    ○ "They might have, came here for a certain reason."

Students seem to have a firm idea on what it meant to be citizen but grappled with what it might mean to someone who was not born in the United States. And the class consensus was that citizenship might mean more to naturalized citizens, which I found to be a very interesting perspective for 9th grade students.

   5/25/16: How the president is elected.

- When asked - " What was important about Obama being elected?"

- ○ "America isn't racist." This comment caused a huge response in my 4th hour class. We stopped and let students share why they thought racism after Obama exists and informed the class that racism is still prevalent in the United States. Students listed off examples - Trump's views on Muslims, the recent killings of young black men by cops, racist comments by famous people.

- ○ Then asked - "So, what does Obama's presidency maybe represent?"

  - ■ "The U.S. is becoming more open."

  - ■ "The way the U.S. looks is changing."

The comment from my fourth hour class caused quite the uproar and with good reason. I was thankful that student had said that though because it opened up a really important conversation I wasn't sure if students were ready to have but they were. At a time in the year when students can lean more towards apathy, it was exciting to see their passion when it came to that particular comment. Overall, students in all three classes agreed that Obama represents a shift or change in what our nation looks like but that there is still racism in the United States. It was also agreed upon that election season should be much shorter.

5/26/16: Electoral College (after activity). Students really got involved in the electoral college simulation. I think part of it is that it is competitive and they want to see their candidate win. The activity helps them analyze the electoral college without realizing it until they are asked questions about its fairness and ability to represent the people. Students remarked on ways in which to make the Electoral College more fair or

what the U.S. election system would look like if the electoral college was done away with completely. As mentioned before, half of the students surveyed thought the electoral college was the most interesting part of the unit.

5/28/16: Voting Rights - Voter ID Law.

- "Why did the government restrict people from voting?"
    - "Keeping people away so they could get what they want."
    - "They liked that black people didn't have a say."
    - "The government was scared to let anyone but white people vote."

This was surprisingly my favorite lesson. I could tell students were choosing their words carefully. As noted above, students seemed to not just understand what voter restrictions are but why they might be put in place in the first place and how they affect the people they restrict. I was genuinely surprised by their responses and was excited to see that they were finding interest in the current I.D. law in Wisconsin. Students were interested in finding a way to make voting more open to all people. One student asked why there was not a standard issue I.D. for everyone. Students were able to relate this back to voting rights and understand the groups that were affected by this law.

6/1/16: Propaganda.

- After showing clips of propaganda - "Is this genuine, does it make you like the candidate more?
    - "Not really, I mean, I could see how some people would like it."
    - " I like seeing them as regular people."
    - "I like the ones that show the other candidate in a bad light."

I observed students being more interested the propaganda assignment than the discussion. They enjoyed the videos but it was more difficult to get responses after each video was shown. Students showed more interest when it came to creating their own political propaganda based on the candidate of their showing.

Summary

The intent of my research was to demonstrate that incorporating multiculturalism into a ninth grade classroom increases student engagement and interest. As demonstrated by the responses to some of my post-unit survey questions, the implementation of the social issue project, current events and discussion of voting rights, showed that students were interested in these topics and they helped them see new perspectives.

As for the qualitative results, the interviews displayed that students were interested in the electoral college and voting rights. Also, they felt comfortable speaking up in class and that the social issue project help them see their topic from a different perspective. Also, five out of six students gave the unit a rating of 2: somewhat engaging and one student gave the unit a 1: very engaging (1:very engaging 2:somewhat engaging 3: not engaging). The teacher journals displayed where I can improve as a teacher and where students displayed increased engagement like their ideas on how the electoral system should be changed and how the voter I.D. law is discriminatory and how the law could be approached differently. Finally, the field note observations were a more candid look at what students were saying and helped demonstrate increased interest and engagement by the responses they were giving to me and their classmates.

In Chapter 5, I will take the data presented and discuss my four major findings and align them with at least two different data tools. I will also discuss the implications, limitations and future research for the question, *What are the effects of incorporating a multicultural unit in a high school civics classroom for increased student interest and engagement?*

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions

Introduction

Chapter five is a culmination of my major research findings. It is a reflection of

what I have learned throughout my process in finding an answer to my research question:

What are the effects of incorporating a multicultural unit in a high school civics

classroom for increased student interest and engagement? Chapter five will also discuss

the limitations and implications of my research as well as how this can go in the direction

of further research. Finally, I will add my concluding thoughts on how this research will

affect me as I continue my journey as a classroom teacher.

Key Findings

The research I conducted allowed me to analyze the way in which I teach while

also seeing the effects of how incorporating new strategies into my classroom and

analyzing them accordingly. The following are the major findings that were revealed

through the results of my research. The key findings showcase that my research question

was answered, by incorporating multicultural education, students are more engaged and

interested when compared to the previous unit that was comprised of limited number of

multicultural elements.

Relevancy has an impact on student engagement and interest. One of the first

conclusions I was able to come to before even sitting down to analyze my data was how

much students enjoyed having topics and activities where they could see relevancy in

today's world. In terms of multicultural education, it is critical to connect students to the

world. As mentioned in my literature review, Ford (2014) stated that multiculturalism enables students to be critical thinkers and enables them to understand their world beyond what is going on in the classroom.

There are a few key areas where this can be seen in my data. First, in the student survey question; the connection of current events to issues covered in class, assisted me to see how content covered in class relates to real life. There were 81 responses to this question, 42 students strongly agreed with the statement while 31 students agreed with the statement. This question showed me that my original thoughts on relevancy had quantitative data to back it up.

The idea that relevancy is important to students can also be seen in the student interviews. I think the question from the post interview that embodies the idea of relevancy the most and elicited a response from class that are applicable to the outside world would be, "what did find most interesting about the last unit?"

Student F responded: "Yes. There is a lot more relevancy, with the elections and we have very bad people running for president. The project was good for showing kids both sides."

Student A´s response: "I liked Electoral College. It was engaging, it was easy to understand and helped on the test. Watching the student news and talking about winning states."

Student B's response: "I like the voting rights. The requirements to vote. It's important because - I want to vote. People in the U.S. should know that."

Finally, based on the data I collected in my observation notes during the discussion on voter rights, particularly the student´s interest the Wisconsin voter ID law. I noted that students discussed the topic longer than I anticipated while also coming forth with viable and logical solutions to make the law more inclusive or getting rid of the law entirely.

All three students showed that what they were learning was either helpful for the understanding the current election, watching current events and bringing back to class or it being something important to know so they go out one day in vote. These responses show that what they found most interesting also connected back to something relevant in today's world.

I believe relevancy and increased engagement was the most profound and highlighted finding from my action research. Now, I have a great foundation when teaching if I struggle with the idea of how to capture interest - bringing it back to what is relevant to the students assists in keeping them interested.

Students were engaged while participating in activities and discussions. There are a few different areas where this finding can be demonstrated. If looking first at the the survey results and the statement that reads: *I felt like I was involved and engaged in the majority of class activities and discussions,* out of the 81 responses 30 students strongly agreed with the statement and 34 students agreed with the statement. Therefore showing that 79% percent of all my 9th grade students felt involved and engaged in classroom activities or discussions.

Secondly, reflecting on my teacher journal data, there are several notes on where students showed increased engagement and interest in a few activities. For the electoral college activity I noted:

- In each hour, the discussion after the activity went longer than I had anticipated, by 5-10 minutes

- Students had varying opinions on whether the electoral college was fair or not

- All three classes were able to come up with alternative plans for how the U.S. election system should work.

Also, in the student interviews, three out of the six students found the electoral college activity to be their favorite part of the unit. This activity not only proving to be relevant to students but also something that engaged them and took their interest. In the second interview with Student F when discussing how engaging the unit was they responded:

Student F was the only one out of the six students to rate the unit a 1: very engaging. When asked why they explained: Because there were a lot of activities that helped people learn instead of just "hey here's what you need to know."

I also noted in another teacher journal about the class discussion on propaganda. I noted:

- Students were asking lots of questions about examples and videos of propaganda.

- Students were coming up to be quite often asking if I "liked what they had done so far" or "I thought this was cool, would this work?"

The activity for this lesson seemed to be more impactful for students. I could tell students were interested when they started sharing ideas for their propaganda with friends and would come to me seeking validation and feedback on their work.

As noted in my first finding about the importance of relevancy, students also showed increased interest during their discussion on the Voter I.D. law. I think it is important to note that this discussion proved to be something students connected to and also enjoyed speaking about.

Overall, the activities seemed to catch the interest and engagement of the majority of my students. Students seemed to more kean on participating when it required them to be more active in their learning.

Interest in civics increased when students are introduced to different cultures and perspectives. First, when looking at the survey data, there is one question and result that exhibited that this trend exists in my data. The question that correlations with this finding is: *Learning about different cultures and perspectives has helped me become more interested in civics,* 79 students responded to this question, 33 strongly agreeing and 26 agreeing totalling 73% percent of students. Based on just this data set, it displays that the vast majority of students felt more interested or engaged in a new perspective and therefore, increasing their interest in civics.

Secondly, when looking at the data the collected from the student interviews, student's interest grew when they were introduced to a new perspective or culture. Student B said: In response to learning about new perspectives and how engaging they found the unit they reported: "I don't really know. Yeah, I paid more attention that in the

last unit." "I would say a 2: somewhat engaging, I paid more attention, it actually has to do with where we are living right now."

Student E responded: When asked about learning about new culture and perspectives they replied, "talking about Hillary and Trump was interesting, talking about the candidates showed people's opinions." Student E's response was more subtle but showed that they were interested in other people's opinions, which in turn relates to seeing different perspectives, especially for 9th grade students.

Finally, when looking at my observation notes the discussion on citizenship, I could see that students were thinking critically and taking time to recognize life for people who were not born in the U.S. but yearned to have citizenship or went through the naturalization process. I noted comments like:

- "Aren't Native Americans the original citizens?"

- Discussing the difficulties of becoming a citizen. Questions asked by students: " How do you enter the country legally?" "Why can't everyone have automatic citizenship?"

- "What might becoming a naturalized citizen, mean to those people?"

  - "They might appreciate it at more."

  - "They might have, came here for a certain reason."

As I reflected on these comments, I saw students thinking beyond themselves and all it took was the type of questions I asked, they met my expectations and then some.

In sum, these data points reflect students not only being more interested in civics because of new cultural perspectives but also a deeper ability to empathize, which is such

an important component of multicultural education (Bigelow, 2014). This was shown in their voter I.D. discussion, their responses when talking about about immigration and their survey results which show that more than half the students are more engaged when learning about a new perspective or culture.

The Social Issue Project helped students think from a different perspective. One of the survey questions was specifically about the project: *The social issue project helped me see an important issue from more than one perspective.* There were 81 responses to this question. Thirty-five students strongly agreed and 30 students agreed, totalling 80% of my ninth grade students.

There were also a few interview responses that displayed that the Social Issue Project enabled students to think from a different perspective. Student C remarked: When asked about if they were able to see new perspectives during the unit, student C was the first to mention the social issue project. They said the the project " it was useful to see the other side and we you feel like you're competing, it helps."

Student D´s comments on the project: when asked about being exposed to different cultural perspectives in the unit student D said. "Yeah, it was helpful to see the other side [social issue project]. All the presentations, you have to the contrasting side. It would help learn some new stuff."

In regards to the interview, it was great to see students bring up the project without being prompted. It was reassuring to see students were able to connect seeing different perspectives with the project on their own.

The other data point where I see ample examples of the project helping students see new perspectives was with my observation notes. This is where I was able to gain more candid responses as I recorded what I had observed. As noted in my results, students were discussing various ideas and viewpoints on the topics that had picked. For example:

- Students with immigration as topic commented on several things - how to change the immigration process. Who suffers when families are deported? The threat people feel from refugees.

- The group on ISIS: the effect of this topic on the current election and thoughts about Muslim people.

- Group on minimum wage: benefits and drawbacks of raising the minimum age, who this would affect and improving the standard of living.

- Group on death penalty: how the death penalty gives families closure, points on why criminal rehabilitation is necessary.

I was impressed by not only their interest but their ability to thinking critically. It was evident through these observation notes that students were thinking beyond the requirements, again, showcasing how increased expectations can lead to more meaningful work and discussions by students.

In the case for each major finding and its triangulation of data results, I feel like I can conclude confidently that my work to incorporate a multicultural classroom increased student engagement and interest for my 9th grade students. Although not every student

strongly agreed or agreed with some of the statements mentioned in the above analysis, the majority of students felt more engaged and interested.

Connections to Literature Review

There are several instances where I get see connections with my literature review and my data. Ultimately, there are a few areas that do not connect which will be discussed in my section on limitations. When reflecting on my literature review and its connections to my data, it is evident that when certain guidelines for multicultural education are in place, you will begin to see your teaching take a shape that reaps a lot of benefits of a multicultural classroom.

The first connection that I saw take place from my literature review was multicultural education and critical thinking. Ford (2014) asserted that multiculturalism enables students to be critical thinkers and enables them to understand their world beyond what is going on in the classroom. This inspires students to enact change. I saw this connecting back to the student´s discussion on the Wisconsin voter ID law. Students were eager to understand the law and who it affected. They used their critical thinking skills to develop viable and logical plans to change the law or why it was unfair. They did this without much prompt but more so an interest in something outside of their local sphere.

A second connection that was unveiled through my data and with the literature review was the importance of different perspectives and how it leads for a more interesting class and a more rigorous course. Au (2008) stated that "A multicultural perspective is not only inherently more interesting, it also more complex - and more fully truthful, if we dare to use that word. Further, academic rigor is impossible without the

multiple perspectives that multicultural education provides" (p. 1). Although making my course more rigorous was not one of my intended goals, it was more of an unintended consequence of research question. The Social Issue Project was challenging for a lot of students and according to the survey data, allowed over 70% of my classes to feel as though they saw their topic from different perspectives.

A third connection I see within my research and my literature review is in regards to this statement made by Paulo Freire. Freire (1998) asserted that the classroom environment should aim to "create possibilities for the construction and production of knowledge rather than engage simply in a game of transferring knowledge" (p. 49). From the feedback I received during my student interviews, students commented on how they thought the unit was somewhat engaging but they enjoyed that there were more activities. As Student F stated after I asked why they rated the unit as very engaging, ¨because there were a lot of activities that helped people learn instead of just 'hey here's what you need to know'." Also, one of the survey questions asked students, *I found the Paideia (circle discussions) to be more interesting than writing down answers to questions on my own,* 68% of students either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Paideia discussions, like on citizenship and how the president is elected, was a new strategy for students and much more intricate than just transferring knowledge. Furthermore, almost every lesson in my 18 day unit included an activity. In order for my classroom to take the shape of what I had researched in chapter 2, I had to challenge the way students received the information.

Another connection to my research and the literature review is the style in which I teach and that ultimately, according to survey results, kept 79% of my students engaged. Harbour et al. (2015) asserted that there are three teacher behaviors that can be the most effective in engagement: modeling, opportunities to respond and feedback. I used the opportunities to respond style on a daily basis during my research. Opportunities to respond are defined as "an academic question, prompt or task present by a teacher and eliciting active student response" (Harbour et al., 2015, p. 8). These allow students a chance to engage with the teacher immediately after something has been presented by the teacher. First, I made sure that the questions I was asking would elicit a response. For instance, I would arrange questions in a way that forced students to put themselves into the place of the group we were talking about, or I would ask questions that would make students come up with a solution or an alternative. Following this model, I would also ask these questions immediately after the information was presented. This particular style of teaching helps increase engagement,¨ and I think it assisted in helping my students think at a deeper level.

Finally, I felt through the data I collected in my teacher journals, my observations, interviews and survey, that students felt comfortable in class and that they could share their opinions openly. For me, this is the most important component of a multicultural classroom. If students don't share their true thoughts and feelings, the likelihood of having meaningful conversations decreases. Holley and Steiner (2005) asserted that students should feel comfortable to speak up even if it goes against the norms set by the instructor or other student. According to the survey results, 75% of students felt they

could speak up in class. In a perfect world, it would be 100% but for a ninth grade classroom where students are often timid to begin with, I consider it a solid number. Also, all six students were asked in the first and second interview if they felt they could speak up in class and all six said they felt they could.

In sum, there are a lot of components to multicultural education and this research only grazes the surface. In terms of my own background research, there are several major connections to my literature review and my data collected in my classroom. These connections included critical thinking, academic rigor and new perspectives, interesting ways of conveying information, style of questioning and how comfortable students are sharing thoughts and opinions in class. These important trends display that my action research was successful in building a multicultural classroom environment.

Limitations

The nature of research is not perfect. There are complications and limitations that arise in every study. There were a few that arose during my research.

First, not all interviews were fully recorded. I was using a program that needed to be connected to the internet and during some of my interviews, there was not a connection. Luckily, I took diligent notes and would repeat back to the student what I was typing so I made sure it was accurate. Ideally, all interviews would have been recorded, as mentioned in my methods section but technology can fail sometimes. To continue on the topic of the student interviews, they are a great tool for understanding how students think but ultimately, it is impossible to remove all bias from the process, whether it is the phrasing of the question, the tone of my voice or the way in which the

student feels as they are being interviewed. I did my best to stay consistent but ultimately, there is no foolproof way to remove all biases from the interview process.

Secondly, with the quantitative data, all students were given the same instructions on how to take the survey and students were aware that this was part of my research in order to gain my masters degree. Although I never had a student address this with me, upon reflection, I could see how having students know that this is part of something that will benefit me, students might feel pressured to answer a certain way on the survey. I believe that the majority of students answered honestly but there is always the chance that a student or students felt they should change or reconsider an answer because they wanted to make sure I received the results I hypothesized.

The teacher journals were another area that did not go exactly as it was laid out in my methods. I intended to take a journal twice a week but decided once I started collecting data that I was going to only journal after what I felt were the larger themes or lessons in the unit. Therefore, I had a total of four journal entries as opposed to the six I would have had otherwise. I do not believe that this had a huge impact on my findings considering I had three other means of collecting data. The benefit of two other entries would be more detail on other lessons but my journals and observations had a lot of overlapping themes.

Finally, there is my own bias when collecting the data for the teacher journals and field note observations. There is a term called confirmation bias, this is where the researcher intentionally searches for the results they want to see in what they observe and reflect upon. The notes and journals I recorded were based on what I saw my students do

and say during those times. However,I think most researchers often highlight the areas that make their research look the best. This is why I was purposeful in including areas where I felt I could improve or where I saw students struggle. Since my qualitative and quantitative data connect in several different areas I feel the tendency for confirmation bias is low but I would argue that it is not completely absent.

Implications

The results and data analyses displayed several key ideas, relevancy is important for student engagement and interest, students will feel more involved and engaged in class when there are different perspectives, creating a project that students have ownership in creates more interest and students are more interested during activities and discussions. These findings are impactful on my teaching for several reasons.

First, it allows me to have data to back-up the idea that having relevant material in class is key for capturing student engagement and interest, especially if that relevant information is presented in a safe, multiculturally based classroom. It takes more time and effort to stay relevant but is crucial for ninth grade civics teachers who want to make their students more interested and engaged in civics.

Secondly, this research project showed me the importance of high standards and expectations. For example, the Social Issue Project is time consuming, and I am always nervous about the results but while doing my research; I made sure to set the expectations high and for the most part, my students impressed me. Ninth graders can get a bad reputation for not working diligently but when the expectations are in place, the majority of the students will try their best to meet or exceed them.

Finally, this research demonstrated the importance of being a teacher that continues to evolve. Teaching is not stagnant and never has been. To be a multicultural educator, one has to read, participate and research on their own and try to incorporate what they can back into their classrooms. My research has allowed me to see the just the small effects of incorporating new discussion styles, Safe Space Model, new perspectives and connections to current events. These are not huge changes but changes that can make a significant impact on how students are engaged and the way in which they view civics.

Future Research

Multicultural education is vast. There are so many more strategies and opinions about what a classroom should do and how it should operate. There are also many other ways to measure engagement and interest in students as well. The opportunities for further research for civics teachers is almost limitless.

In order to create classrooms that are more interested and engaged in civics, it would be interesting to see the other data tools in which teachers could use to measure two areas that can be very difficult to quantify. There is still a lot more research to be done on what the best strategies are for keeping students engaged and interest at a multicultural level. This type of research can be done in all different types of geographic or economic situations as well. For example, how different would the results look from a low income area in Mississippi as opposed to an affluent area of California. By changing a few variables, there is the opportunity for vastly different results.

In order to make multicultural education in civics successful, more research needs to be done to assist teachers in finding the best strategies, activities and format to make

their class more engaging and interesting. civics is important to how students view the

inception of the United States and its government, this is the foundation for a lot of other

social studies classes as well as common issues and controversies that arise in the news

and daily life. The better equipped teachers are, the better chance that student has to

being a contributing and well-versed citizen in U.S. society.

Final Thoughts

My plan for communicating the results of my study are fairly simple. First, I will

send my paper to the board that approved my research at the district level, Research,

Evaluation and Testing (RET). On a smaller district level, I will be sharing my findings

with my principle as he considering having me share out my research at a staff meeting.

I will also be putting my capstone on to Hamline´s digital commons for other educators

to see and possibly even learn from. I am excited to share this information with my

colleagues, especially those that I work with on a collaborative team, although that will

be in a more informal communication.

Over the course of the three and a half weeks I collected data, I was able to learn

about myself as a teacher and get a better glimpse at what my students want and enjoy

about their education. I was so interested in seeing how my intentional changes and

approaches to the class affected my students and then to get their detailed feedback was

something a lot of teachers wish they could have all the time. My research showed me the

power of discussion questions, especially when students see how it can directly impact

their lives. It displayed to me that they are not as complacent as we often think they are. It

was thrilling to see my students think and speak from new perspectives and become

engaged and interested in a class that can often be dry or unrelatable. There is still a lot of

work to be done on my part to become a better steward of multicultural education but I

feel like my heart and mind are in the right place and I'm excited for the challenges and

teachable moments ahead.

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APPENDIX A

Observational Field Notes Guide

Observational Field Notes
Date: **Time:**
Activity Observed:
Observations/Notes   **Student comments on oppressed/marginalized groups:**   **Use of language:**

APPENDIX B

Student Interview Question Guide

Interview Questions - First Interview
Date: Time:
Student (circle one) A   B   C   D E
Questions 1. Do you feel like you know a lot about different cultures, if so, which ones? 2. What did you find most interesting about our first unit? 3. What do you wish classes would incorporate more of (cultures, personal stories)? 4. If you were to go through this unit one again, would there be something you'd like to added or done differently? 5. Did you feel you were able to share your thoughts freely without others criticizing you?

Interview Questions - Second Interview

Date: **Time:**

Student (circle one) A   **B**   **C**   **D**
E

Questions

1. How would you define culture?

2. What did you find to be the most interesting lesson of this unit? Why?

 3. Do you feel like you have been exposed to different cultural perspective throughout this unit?

 4. How engaging did you find this unit?
  1.Very engaging   2.somewhat engaging   3.not engaging
why?

 5. If you were to go through this unit again, would there be something you'd like added or done differently?

6. Did you feel you were able to share your thoughts freely in class?

APPENDIX C

Teacher Journal Template

Date:

What I felt was a success today:	Where I felt students struggled:
Ideas for improvement of the lesson:	**Examples of increased engagement/interest:**

APPENDIX D

Likert Survey Outline

Student Survey (Pre-Survey)

1.   **I feel I can speak up in class**

1.Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Agree   4. Strongly Agree

2. I feel included in class

1.Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Agree   4. Strongly Agree

3. I feel like I can learn from others

1.Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Agree   4. Strongly Agree

4. Learning about different cultures and perspectives has helped me become more interested in civics

1.Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Agree   4. Strongly Agree

5. The connection of current events to issues covered in class, assisted me to see how class relates to real life.

1.Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Agree   4. Strongly Agree

6. I feel like I am involved and engaged in the majority of class activities and discussions

1.Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Agree   4. Strongly Agree

APPENDIX D

Likert Survey Outline

Student Survey (Post-Survey)

1. I feel I can speak up in class

1.Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Agree   4. Strongly Agree

2. I feel included in class

1.Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Agree   4. Strongly Agree

3. I feel like I can learn from others

1.Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Agree   4. Strongly Agree

4. I found the Paideia (circle discussions) to be more interesting than writing down answers to questions on my own.

1.Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Agree   4. Strongly Agree

5. The social issue project helped me see an important issue from more than one perspective

1.Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Agree   4. Strongly Agree

6. I feel I better understand the obstacles oppressed/marginalized groups have faced in order to be given the right to vote

1.Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Agree   4. Strongly Agree

7. Learning about different cultures and perspectives has helped me become more interested in civics

1.Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Agree   4. Strongly Agree

8. The connection of current events to issues covered in class, assisted me to see how class relates to real life.

1.Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Agree   4. Strongly Agree

9. I felt like I was involved and engaged in the majority of class activities and discussions.

1.Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Agree   4. Strongly Agree