INVOKING STUDENT VOICES AS A THIRD SPACE
IN THE EXAMINATION OF A NATIONAL IDENTITY

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INVOKING STUDENT VOICES AS A THIRD SPACE
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Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

This research was designed and conducted in order to examine the life experience of secondary students as they negotiate government/civics course work in the development of a national identity. Critical to a nation’s future, it is an exercise of a civic obligation to (a) examine the language and discourse of government/civics programs of study and the historical metanarrative of required K-11 civic education as social constructs with the narrative potential to affect the identity and agency of youth and (b) better understand the impact of “pedagogical places” on students’ structured consciousness of a national identity. Within the framework of a social constructionist epistemology, this qualitative investigation employed a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology complemented by the data collection tool of in-depth interviewing with the intent to understand the lived experiences of the students and the meaning students ascribe to a specific experience through storytelling. The conversation generated at the intersection of the interview and the resulting narrative revealed that students’ structured consciousness of a national identity is consistently influenced through their knowledge of conceptual interpretations and relationships, a search for association between identity of self and identity of country, and a knowledge of other as encountered during government/civics coursework while only indirectly affected by the historical metanarrative of required K-11 social studies coursework.
Interestingly, “pedagogical places” as a Third Space for civic education manifested through student voice, appear to play a competitive role to the traditional civic education classroom in the students’ structured consciousness of a national identity. These findings (a) profoundly address the gap in the current body of civic education knowledge that underrepresents the voice of students and (b) suggest greater attention should be paid to the opportunity for student self-discovery and to the durability and trustworthiness of content material as vital in the civic education of students. As the civic education of students continues to expand beyond the traditional social studies classroom to other “pedagogical places” for learning, to compete, civic-related curriculums must incorporate space for student agency, interest, and lived experiences.
DEDICATION

For my Dad

From whom I learned –
To appreciate solitude and the gift of living every single day,
perseverance and courage in the presence of adversity,
and love.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A report released on the 19th of June of 2013 by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences’ Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences, drew attention to the findings of one particular study. Those findings suggest a far-reaching consequential relationship that daily occurs, often unnoticed, throughout classrooms in America - learning critical to a nation’s future that takes place within the context of humanities and social science coursework.

The report, *The Heart of the Matter*, “advocates three goals in which the humanities and social sciences play a central role:

- Educating Americans in the knowledge, skills, and understanding they will need to thrive in a 21st century democracy
- Fostering a society that is innovative, compelling, and strong
- Equipping the nation for leadership in an interconnected world (AERA, 2013, p. 1).

Although these three objectives root the importance of social science research and education in a socially relevant context, it is my personal experience of over 30 years teaching in a civic education classroom, that has most significantly impacted my curiosity and passion to engage in a specific heuristic inquiry to better understand how students come to discern their roles and identities as active citizens and leaders.

Moustakas (1990) describes such a journey of inquiry as “a process of internal search
through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience and develops
methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis” (p. 9).

Approximately 7 years ago, my daughter decided to move to England. She had
been teaching high school in both Oklahoma and Colorado for the past 8 years and
wanted a change of scenery as well as a professional challenge. An Anglophile at heart,
I had visited England several times during the year I spent teaching in the Netherlands,
as well as twice during my husband’s medical school years for rotations in international
medicine and socialized medicine.

The more familiar I became with the social and cultural aspects of England, a
correlating observation surfaced – the land of castles and knights, English language and
traditions, and endless neighborhoods of Victorian architecture and quaint cottages I had
encountered during the early years of my visits, was irreversibly being altered. I can
best liken the experience to meeting up with someone you have not seen in years and
being shocked by his or her appearance. That moment is marked, as our expectation of
their countenance does not align with our memory or what we know. The iconic
England of my recent trips was now indistinguishable from most any other multicultural,
metropolitan and somewhat cultureless city and country.

Two factors encouraged my decision to discover the reason(s) behind this
significant and disquieting change; first, my daughter was now a resident of this country,
teaching in its schools and second, I had determined to pursue my research coursework
for my doctorate outside of the United States at The University of Bath. Over the course
of the year that I subsequently spent in England, my personal and professional
interactions with not only the culture but also professors, peers, and students and
teachers in their secondary schools led me to an explanation. The deculturation of England was primarily the result of a mass and somewhat unchecked and geographically focused immigration within a condensed amount of time that did not allow for the societal processes of either assimilation or cultural merges to take place.

Essentially, this experience and observation galvanized my desire to investigate and to answer those personal questions that followed:

*Is it possible that this national deculturation could be replicated in the US?*

*Does the concept of a national identity exist and if so, does it have a developmental point of origin? Is it impacted by civic education and/or the culture of a society?*

*Are separate and identifiable cultural entities vital or harmful to a diverse world?*

**Statement of the Problem**

Constructed within a socially and personally pertinent conceptual framework and focus, this qualitative study is designed and was conducted in order to *examine the life experience of secondary students as they negotiate government/civics course work in the development of a national identity*. It is an exercise of a civic obligation to examine the language and discourse of government/civics programs of study as social constructs with the narrative potential to affect the identity and agency of youth. Fairclough (2001) discusses this type of sociolinguistic relationship in the context of a convention through which common sense assumptions are ingrained and from which ideologies are promulgated. This oft-negligent attention to ideologies and the narratives in which they are embedded are “very rarely figured in discussions of language and power within
linguistics” (Fairclough, 2001, p. 2). It is the *commonsense* aspect of this interaction around which an entire institution, namely education, is fashioned. It is also the concept of *common sense* that has numbed the general public in its obligatory vigilance of the language and discourse of educational policies enacted daily throughout today’s classrooms. There are, according to Marshall (1985), “fundamental assumptions built into the school system that make people resist, not bother, give up, laugh at participation” (p. 363) and in general, simply ignore the curriculums from which their children are taught.

**Purpose of the Study**

The collection of the data—a textual inquiry of government/civics curriculums as life history narratives and the reflection on the lived experiences of students—has as its aim, to better understand the meaning of the phenomenon, the experience. “We gather other experiences because they allow us to become more experienced ourselves” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 62). This knowledge may be garnered using any number of qualitative instruments - journals/diaries, biographies, observations, interviews, literary descriptions, and portraiture - to name a few. Classroom observations and literary descriptions (collection and review of government/civics curriculums and syllabi) are two supportive data collection devices employed for accuracy of the data in the process of triangulation with the primary data collection tool – the interview. It is the intersubjective and interpersonal nature of the action of interviewing that best complements my history, my experience and my skills as a former secondary teacher and which are also, therefore, advantageous in my role as researcher. This intersubjective relationship through a common experience leads to what Merleau-Ponty (2002) refers to as the
phenomenological world – the sense which is revealed where the paths of my various experiences intersect, and also where my own and other people’s intersect and engage each other like gears . . . It is thus inseparable from subjectivity and intersubjectivity, which find their unity when I either take up my past experiences in those of the present, or other people’s in my own. (p. xxii)

This dialogical relation constrained by the phenomenon is best explored via the lifeworlds of students. Van Manen (1990) proposes four fundamental and potentially universal existentials in the lifeworlds of all human beings that provide effective avenues for reflection on a lived experience especially with the objective of generating rich, thick data for research purposes. Those existentials are “lived space (spatiality), lived body (corporeality), lived time (temporality), and lived human relation (relationality or communality)” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 101).

**Research Question**

The key question around which this inductive research process is designed and dedicated to producing data directly related to the phenomenon that I seek to understand is:

*How does the lived experience of secondary social studies impact students’ structured consciousness of a national identity?*

Expanding on that question is:

- What influence do government/civics courses have on the structured consciousness of a national identity?
- In what ways has 11th graders’ K-11 social studies coursework, as participants reconstruct it, affected their development of a national identity?
What role does the traditional civic education classroom play in relation to other “pedagogical places” as a Third Space for civic education manifested through student voice, in the structured consciousness of a national identity? For clarity, I use the timeframe of K-11 as it aligns to the study site’s *required* social studies program of coursework.

**Conceptual Framework**

Silverman (2010), in his articulation of the differences in methods and theories among qualitative researchers, referred to them as the various “languages of qualitative research” (p. 104). As a social constructionist, this expression made perfect sense to me as a means to understanding the relationship of the variety of ways possible for looking at a particular phenomenon. As a human science, phenomenological research is the study of lived experience, it is the explication of phenomena as they present themselves to consciousness, it is the study of essences, it is the description of the experiential meanings we live as we live them, it is a search for what it means to be human and it enables us to discover what lies at “the ontological core of our being” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 13). As the focus of the research-related issue of this study is the primary data collection tool of interviewing, an examination of this lived experience using a hermeneutic phenomenological interviewing strategy best aligns with the theoretical framework underpinning this research. This particular methodology involves the study of those lived experiences as they affect our view of the world and appeal to our sense of commonness in “describing the meaning of a concept or phenomenon that several individuals share” (Marshall, 1985, p. 362).
The following concepts are pivotal to conducting the social research involved in this exploration, especially in their capacity as categories for the organization of ideas and observations (Bulmer, 1984). As relevant variables they serve as the building blocks for the development of theory (Bryman, 2012) pertinent to this study.

**National Identity and Civic Education**

As a social constructionist by nature, I am suspicious of assumptions. I am most vigilant when engaging in the social practice of discourse and the power relationship that exists with language (Fairclough, 2001). In order to situate the written presentation of this research project in an egalitarian atmosphere of shared knowledge, it is essential to clarify for mutual understanding pivotal concepts apposite to this particular body of work.

Discussions of civic education, the study of the rights and duties of citizenship, frequently do not touch upon the concept of a national identity. Conversely, the topic of a national identity almost certainly incorporates the use of the words *civics* or *citizenship*. Both civic education and national identity initially bring to mind thoughts of country, nationality, and associatedness and are, therefore, correlative, but also distinct. For clarity in this research, I offer their operational definitions:

*National Identity* as a social identity is *emic* in nature (Pike, 1981), therefore, meaning is constructed internally by each individual based on his or her social experiences; value is determined by the individual. Examples of other social identities are age, sexuality, gender, religion, and ethnicity (Allen, 2011).

*Civics and Civic Education* are *etic* in nature (Pike, 1981); therefore, external stimuli provide not only the tools for making of meaning but also the associated value.
Lived Experience

Phenomenological research is rooted in lived experience with the aim of constructing reflective opportunities for the individual whose memory through language brings meaning to the phenomenon being studied (Van Manen, 1990). Through the telling of stories of their lived experience when negotiating government/civics coursework, students are afforded a “methodologically privileged location from which to comprehend [their] human agency” (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, 2008) in the development of the phenomenon of a national identity.

Structured Consciousness

Gurwitsch (1964) postulated that all phenomena are subject to two structural parameters – the intensity and salience (comparative prominence) of the experience. This dimensional schematic of human consciousness permits the hierarchical organization of our awareness of lived experiences. Essentially, this process enables us to discriminate, associate, and structure events in our lifeworld as measured by their strength and relative importance.

Pedagogical Places

Schools traditionally serve as places of learning, but learning is not confined to within the four walls of a classroom. Foran and Olson (2008) address this notion when commenting that

While the inside experience, especially the classroom, appears to be the dominant place set aside for pedagogy in schools worldwide, there are teachers, students, and curricular moments that have garnered pedagogical meanings by engendering and embracing relational moments removed from entrenched notions of classroom practice. (p. 177)
All experience serves to potentially educate. Each interaction between the individual and the lived experience of a phenomenon provides fertile ground for accumulating knowledge, a pedagogical relationship not situationally limited to the formal context of a classroom.

**Third Space**

As I considered students straddling of “pedagogical places” and the government/civics classroom in the context of their civic education, I sought current and relevant literature that would address this bifurcated experience. Using Homi K. Bhabha’s (1994) work on cultural hybridity and Vygotsky’s (1978) Zone of Proximal Development, several authors are re-conceptualizing the traditional boundaries of the institution of education (Aoki, 1993; Britsch, 2005; Cook, 2005; Hulme, Cracknell, & Owens, 2008; Wilhelm, 2010) in their construction of “Third Spaces” for learning.

Cook (2005) identifies three ways in which third spaces are currently conceptualized in education: as bridge building between marginalized and conventional knowledges and discourses; as ‘navigational’ spaces enabling students to bring “funds of knowledge” from home to bear on school learning; and as a place where the integration of knowledge and discourses from home and school will produce new forms of learning. (p. 85)

Although the majority of the literature focuses on the blending of home and school cultures, I suggest the civic education classroom is capable of creating a “Third Space” where all outside school, civic related experiences as voiced by students may be recreated, nourished, and produce meaningful knowledge.

This study’s proposed hermeneutic phenomenological interviewing is positioned in the context of the social construct of an interactive relationship – that of the
researcher/self and the participant/other. The dynamics of these socially constructed roles in qualitative research are dependent upon a relationship that can be observed and studied within a framework in which knowledge of the world and self is not only produced through social interaction but is, therefore, relative. The selection of a hermeneutic phenomenological study stems from a belief in the unique value of this researcher’s particular situation to interact with secondary students and teachers through a common experience. Friesen, Henriksson, and Saevi (2012) highlight the pivotal role of interpretation in exacting greater authenticity of meaning in qualitative research by pointing to three components of the researcher-to-researched relationship in a hermeneutic phenomenological study.

Firstly, any description of lived experience by participants needs to be seen in the context of that individual’s life situation. Secondly, interpretation is implicated as researchers make sense of data by drawing on their own subjective understandings and life experiences. Thirdly, interpretations are filtered through a specific historical lens and arise in a particular social-cultural field including that which relates to the specific co-creating researcher-researched relationship involved. (Friesen, Henriksson, & Saevi, 2012, p. 22)

The focus of this exploration rests “on the assumption that there is a structure and essence to shared experiences that can be narrated” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 104). Foundational to this premise is the concept of shared experiences that can be powerfully articulated through the language of life stories in the production of rich, thick and meaningful data.
Significance of the Study

Various related articles have been written on the topic of government/civics curriculum and the concept of a national identity (Banks & Nguyen, 2004; Epstein & Shiller, 2010; Lewis, 2012; Murray, 2008; Parker, 2010; Pike, 2010; Sheldon, 2012; Tilly, 1995), but underrepresented and researched are the voice and viewpoint of students. This study seeks to explore and provide description and interpretation of the origins and influences on the construction of a national identity from the perspectives of those voices previously unheard. My goal is to contribute a significant body of knowledge to that space in the literature that presently ignores the discursive power of youth through personal narratives that reconstruct their understanding of a national identity.

In addition, the data produced by this unique study involving students as narrative resources for first-hand accounts of the lived experience of negotiating government/civics courses of study is significant in its potential to impact a wider audience of individuals beyond the population directly involved in this study. Although the findings are not generalizable and are contextualized, they remain credible, authentic, and potentially empowering. Above all, the feelings, perceptions, experiences and the meanings derived from those lived experiences may prove to be reflected in the voices of students, facilitating the development of “a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 66).

Lastly, government entities interested in knowing about the effectiveness of their policies and aims of their programs of study for government/civics from a bottom-up and in-the-field mentality may profit from an examination of the findings of this research.
Various educator associations (National Education Association, American Federation of Teachers, etc.), parent organizations (Parent Teacher Organization, assorted state parenting education networks, etc.), and civic education organizations (NCSS, CIRCLE, CCE, etc.) may be advantaged in their decision-making and advocacy efforts related to global, national and local education policy, curriculums, and student learning for the 21st century. As the U.S. Department of Education seeks to increase students’ abilities to engage in decision-making processes, students themselves may be informed by the findings of this research as they develop skills and encounter opportunities to become active participants and advocates for their own education.

Conclusion

Social and personal conditions empower this endeavor to discover socially constructed meaning resulting from the interaction and relationship between secondary students and the curriculum of government/civics coursework. Chapter I sets the stage for the statement of the problem and the purpose of the study, followed by the introduction of the research question and the conceptual framework in which the language and the significance of the qualitative research is revealed. Chapter II presents a systematic review of the literature and research involving factors influencing the focus of the study – civics education, national identity, and standards and curriculums as narratives. Chapter III outlines the design of the research investigation, the analytical approach and theoretical framework of the study. Also included are the potential safeguards to be employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the data and the role of the researcher within the context of a qualitative approach to producing knowledge. Chapter IV presents the distinct profiles of each of the student participants through their lived
experiences and offers the reader an opportunity to directly engage in his or her own hermeneutic relationship with the text in the hopes of acquiring a deeper and more authentic understanding of the phenomenon under study. Chapter V proffers the findings of the research within a hermeneutic phenomenological framework. Chapter VI discusses those findings, the relationship of those findings to existing literature, potential policy and practice influence, and concludes with implications and recommendations.

As confirmed in numerous government and independently commissioned reviews and reports, the social sciences play a key role in the development of children able to not only function in the 21st century, but also progress, contribute and flourish. The knowledge and targeted skills provided through the lived experience of government/civics coursework in particular are essential in the preparation of informed and engaged members of a society. My 30 plus years of experience as a teacher of social science courses and my countless interactions and relationships with students in my classroom and other places of pedagogy led to this phenomenological research. Van Manen (1990) most accurately reflects my personal thoughts and emotions concerning this particular qualitative methodology. “It is always a project of someone: a real person, who, in the context of particular individual, social, and historical life circumstances, sets out to make sense of a certain aspect of human existence” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 31).

A review of the literature illuminated a distinct gap in knowledge related to the concept of national identity. The most significant resources for understanding the phenomenon, the voices of children, were not only underrepresented but also essentially silent. The insight and wisdom that may be gained through a well-designed hermeneutic
phenomenological research project may serve to better inform future decisions made by government officials, administrators, and educators as well as students and their families.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH REVIEW

Introduction

A historical and broad canvassing of fields, debates, research studies and literature pertaining to my enquiry yielded substantial information and provided the opportunity to situate my research in the context of this current literature as well as to continually reflect on my chosen topic of research. As I analyzed, synthesized and assessed a wide range of significant written contributions, at some point in this process three concrete observations emerged: first, a gap in the literature does exist relating to students as research participants whose voices contributed to an understanding of the social construct of a national identity; second, as a direct consequence of the first observation, my particular enquiry is, therefore, not only justified but also warranted; and third, the knowledge produced by my research could potentially contribute to an underdeveloped knowledge base of the influence government/civics courses and pedagogical places as Third Space have on the structured consciousness of students’ national identity.

A sturdy research question/hypothesis can only be built upon a broad back of knowledge. Chaiklin (2013) articulates this notion best when writing, “It is hard to ask good questions if one does not know anything (or very much) about the topic being
investigated” (p. 2). The dilemma, during what Chaiklin refers to as the “Orientation
phase” (p. 2), is in the refinement of choices from among the numerous scholarly works
that are readily available and pivotal to the development of the primary focus of this
particular inquiry – civic education and national identity.

**Civic Education**

Schools and teachers in the design and construction of their social studies
curriculums and in the design and construction and presentation of their daily lessons,
consistently endeavor to position themselves between indoctrinator and impartial
imparer of knowledge. Their professional and personal grapple with this ethical
consideration (Hess, 2002) is routinely and of late, more prolifically confronted as they
interact with students through the pedagogical tool of subject matter content. A
condition made more frequent in response to state standard-driven courses of study.
Unique and complicating for courses in the humanities is their very nature, that is, the
exploration of humanness via history, literature, philosophy and the arts. Specific to this
study is the concept of civic education and its accompanying instructional components.

From a historical perspective, Wegner (2013) describes the concept’s origins in
the Progressive Party of 1914’s spokesperson, Theodore Roosevelt, and his call for a
more forward-thinking response to the advent of WWI – citizenship education
(predecessor to civic education) – institutionalized through the then Bureau of Education.
Even though by the 1920s and ‘30s a more “democratic, participatory and progressive
version flourished” (Wegner, 2013, p. 715), Wegner reminds the reader that the historian,
Gary Gerstle still described its implementation as “a battle between liberty and coercion”
(Wegner, 2013, p. 715), a tension somewhat argued even in contemporary times.
Quigley (2000), rather cynically, accounts for the projection of this institutionalized program into the 1960s as one that “tended to be catechistic and dull, but that [they] carried on for more than half-a-century sustained by the patriotic euphoria of two world wars and the ‘circle the wagons’ mentality of the early years of the Cold War” (Quigley, 2000, p. 1). Although the nomenclature has evolved to the use of the word civic, the intent of the process of civic education “to train young people to be good citizens and to engage in civic life” (Levine & Higgins-D’Alessandro, 2010, p. 21) remains essentially the same. At a recent iCivics conference, "Educating for Democracy in a Digital Age,” the Secretary of Education Arne Duncan (2011), called attention to the foundational and enduring importance of a civic education:

Our founders, from George Washington to Thomas Jefferson, understood that informed citizens were the lifeblood of a healthy democracy. They understood that civics education was the first bulwark against tyranny. A half century later, Abraham Lincoln said that education was ‘the most important subject which we as a people can be engaged in.’ Lincoln believed that, for every citizen, an appreciation of ‘the value of our free institutions’ was ‘an object of vital importance.’ (Duncan, 2011, para. 4)

With what, when and where to teach firmly ensconced in state and national standards, only the how to teach remains as the purview of the teacher. In this context, cognizant of his or her influence on malleable students, and aware of studies that confirm the weightiness of an affective government course of study in secondary school on the future civic involvement of today’s youth (Hess, 2004; Levinson, 2012), many teachers often judiciously struggle with aligning their own political and civic identities with authentic instruction.

The number of articles and documents focusing on the concept and pedagogy of civics and civic education appears to be almost limitless. While several authors theorize
or proselytize as a strategy for presenting their argument, others are noticeably responding to contemporary political and civic educational conditions, especially the current marginalization of civics education in response to the implementation of expansive state standardization and curriculum reform. This second category of literature provides a more sound, realistic and usable basis of knowledge for synthesizing, evaluating and contrasting.

**A Global Perspective**

Over the course of the past quarter-century, school systems around the world have been adjusting their curriculums to strengthen the role of civic education. Concepts of globalization, multiculturalism, supranational citizenship and the invalidation of ethno-nationalistic forms of identity have led to a more complex notion of the meaning and purposes of civics and citizenship coursework in schools (Johnson & Morris, 2010). This paradigm shift in many non-US countries deserves a brief research synthesis in order to more effectively situate the status of the currently fashionable emphasis on civic education (Deneen, 2012) in the US.

Osler and Starkey (2006) draw attention to two impacting and game-changing concepts – globalization and migration – in the implementation of citizenship coursework into the educational system in England. “Within multicultural democracies there are perceived tensions between the need to promote national unity or cohesion and the need to accommodate and indeed support, a diverse range of cultural communities within the nation state” (Osler & Starkey, 2006, p. 436). Citizenship education, according to the authors, is the educational response to these tensions. Boss (2010)
marks the introduction of this “educational response” by characterizing it as “a shift from a passive to an active notion of ‘citizenship’” (p. 1).

Expanding on Osler and Starkey’s (2006) observation, Banks (2011) described the phenomenon of the conflux of social exclusion in many nation-states at the same time diversity levels are rising in these same nation states.

The structural exclusion of many racial, ethnic, and language groups in nation-states throughout the Western world – and the increasing levels of diversity in these nation-states – have created serious concerns and questions among scholars and theorists regarding ways in which democratic multicultural nation-states can provide cultural recognition and rights to diverse groups while maintaining national unity. (p. 143)

Using the 1995 International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) survey of civic education, Osler and Starkey (2001) inspected programs of study in Australia and 15 European and Asian countries, noting in their findings the presence or absence of three specific criteria – the promotion of “human rights as shared values, positive references to cultural diversity, and conceptualized minorities” (Osler & Starkey, 2001, p. 287). The ultimate determinate of effective citizenship education lies, according to their research, in its potential contribution to “the development of justice and equality in society and challenge [to] racism and xenophobia” (Osler & Starkey, 2001, p. 287).

Unique to this category of citizenship education literature was a study conducted by Schulz, Fraillon, and Ainley (2013) that attempted to measure students’ knowledge of civics and citizenship content as part of the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS, 2009). Although the study was based on a comprehensive data collection in 38 countries from Europe, Latin America and the Asian-Pacific region, the
information presented during the discussions of the conceptual framework of the assessment, the study design and methods, the particulars of the test items used for measurement and the cross-national nature of the study itself added a depth of understanding to the concept of citizenship on an international basis. Most interesting and pertinent to my research on civic education in the U.S. within a global context were the following findings:

- Outcomes of civic and citizenship education have both cognitive and affective components . . . regardless of whether civic and citizenship education is provided through a designated subject in the curriculum or as part of a cross-curricular approach involving a number of subjects.
- Considerable variation [was revealed] amongst and within countries in the extent of civic knowledge.
- It is possible to define, describe and to establish a common measure of a broad core of internationally comparable aspects of knowledge and understanding of civics and citizenship knowledge amongst 13 to 14 year olds with the potential for ongoing and future research on the nature of learning outcomes of civic and citizenship education. (Schulz, Fraillon, & Ainley, 2013, p.351)

The authors also foresee the possibility of this civic knowledge scale as a comparative tool for future use in longitudinal studies of students’ cognitive abilities in an international context.
A National Perspective

With regularity, the concepts of civics and government are used interchangeably. In this discussion and for purposes of clarity the following operational definitions are offered:

- Civics – “a particular place with a particular history and particular polity” (Deneen, 2012, p. 338). Civic education is, therefore, construed as an education in citizenship (Deneen, 2012), a concept described by Thomas Jefferson involving the duties, interests and rights incurred as a bona fide member of a particular nation state (Schaub, 2012).

- Government – while there are ample scholarly articles, books and essays on democracy, civics, and citizenship, the same cannot be said of the concept of government. I eventually resorted to the National Assessment Governing Board’s (NAEP) Civics Framework for the 2010 National Assessment of Education Progress for the definition. Government may be described as the formal institutions and processes of a politically organized society with authority to make, enforce, and interpret laws and other binding rules about matters of common interest and concern. The term government also refers to the group of people, acting in formal political institutions at national, state, and local levels, who exercise decision making power or enforce laws and regulations. (NAEP, 2010, p. 17-18)

After a close examination of these two concepts (my interaction with the scholarly definitions), my understanding of their meanings does not allow for a synonymous connection. While they are connotatively related, civics explicitly indicates an entity
possessing a location with a knowledgeable past. One organizational component of that civic entity is government, of which there are many types dependent on the particular entity and its historic past. In fact, more closely related to the word *civic* is the concept of *citizen*—as one who is a member of a particular place.

From a historical perspective, civic education encompassed three major objectives (Deneen, 2012).

First, [civic education mandated] a knowledge of one’s own history, at once a focus on the history of one’s nation and more broadly the long tradition from which one’s nation arose . . . Second, civic education literally involved civics, an education in how laws are made, and how citizens can take part in the activity of self-governance. Third, civic education necessarily involved an inculcation of virtue: only a virtuous citizenry could responsibly and moderately exercise self-governance, that is, the capacity to limit both individual and national appetite and vice. (p. 339)

As basic tenets since the establishment of this country, these objectives have guided the teaching of American Government and civics education (regardless of the title of the class). What is missing from these historical objectives of civic education is the contemporary context of a pluralist society. Parker (1997) draws attention to the gap between civic/citizenship education and multicultural education, a shared political framework that is ignored. He offers a contrasting three-part approach to weaving the social education of equity, justice and inclusion into a civic education.

- First, educators should provide sustained opportunities for students to deliberate with one another the problems of school and classroom life, and teach them how to do this well.
- Second, educators should create environments in which caring relations are expected, coaxed, and modeled . . .
- Third, educators should stand firmly against oppressive practices, in school, such as boys squelching girls’ voices and topics during deliberation; lowered expectations for girls, African Americans, Latinos, and second-language speakers; and discouragement of discussions of
difference and domination itself (e.g. racism; sexual harassment) (Parker, 1997, pp. 228-229).

**Philosophical foundations of civic education.** If we agree that an informed citizenry is essential to the maintenance of a democratic form of government and that a democratic form of government is essential to a free and independent populace, several profound questions arise as to the logistics of accomplishing the pivotal component – an informed citizenry – of this conviction. First, what are the particular values and proclivities of which the citizenry are to be informed? Second, to whom does a nation task with the responsibility of informing the citizenry? Third, who is the citizenry; more to the point, what defines a *citizen*? While all three questions are significant in their own right and each worthy of its own disquisition, this study will perhaps shed light on only the first two questions and exclusively from the perspective of their relationship to the structured consciousness of a national identity in today’s secondary students.

Levine and Higgins-D’Alessandro (2010) refer to the impact civic education teachers have on students in compulsory driven social studies classes and question precisely “*which* civic values and habits they are trying to develop, and why” (Levine & Higgins-D’Alessandro, 2010, p. 21). Before analyzing several moral philosophies that underlie civic education in the United States, the authors suggest that in the teaching of this program certain “trade-offs” must be considered and evaluated. The first involves the civic opportunity gap. “Educators may have to choose between emphasizing the sheer number of students they reach versus the distribution of those students across segments of society and thus the equality of civic participation by social class” (Levine & Higgins-D’Alessandro, 2010, p. 21). A second trade-off references a long-held
pedagogical conundrum – the exercise of power, especially in the classroom. In this case, “whether any particular group of adults (e.g., parents, teachers, policymakers, or taxpayers) has either the responsibility or the right to inculcate these values in youth” (Levine & Higgins-D’Alessandro, 2010, p. 21). The final tradeoff is related to the dilemma of refashioning the individual or the institution. “If young people do not engage with a public institution (e.g., do not vote), that could be because they lack some mental state that we wish they possessed . . . or it could be because the institution is severely flawed and does not deserve to be engaged” (Levine & Higgins-D’Alessandro, 2010, p. 22). In a frank discussion of the values that inform civic education, Levine and Higgins-D’Alessandro (2010) offer the opportunity for valuable and potentially instructive insight into defining which ones are suitable and worthy of reflecting the virtues of a nation.

In a direct examination of the relationship between civic education and character education in the context of the social studies, Hoge (2002) challenges the 1994 National Council of the Social Studies (NCSS) position statement. His interpretation of the text suggests “social studies educators need to augment their traditional instruction with examples of civic virtue and opportunities for participation” (Hoge, 2002, p. 103) in order to reaffirm the goal of civic education in the face of current trends of low voter turnout, sparseness of civic and increasing cultural diversity without adequate social homogeneity. Hess (2004) addresses the issue of low voter activity as a result of the average individual’s dislike of the contentious nature of politics and governance. She suggests that incorporating purposeful opportunities for students to engage in political issues discussions in the classroom enhances democratic thinking and may counter the
low level of civic activity by “teaching young people to deal forthrightly and effectively with the plethora of political controversies facing society” (Hess, 2015, p. 261). Hoge goes on to claim that the NCSS position statement overlooks an already existing relationship between “character education and citizenship education and social studies taught for the purpose of improving our modern liberal democracy” (Hoge, 2002, p. 103). Hoge cites two of the Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education (Lickona, Schapps, & Lewis, 2002), a product of The Character Education Partnership (CEP), as proof of an enduring emphasis on sought-after character traits at the core of educational tenets. The first of those principles (which references the traits of caring, honesty, fairness, responsibility and respect) “derives from the fact that such values affirm our human dignity . . . serve the common good . . . and they define our rights and responsibilities in a democratic society” (Hoge, 2002, p. 104). The fourth principle, according to Hoge, declares that “the school itself must . . . become a microcosm of the civil, caring, and just society we seek to create as a nation” (Hoge, 2002, p. 104).

Murphy (2004) solves the dilemma of which civic values should be taught in schools. “Many liberals and conservatives, though they disagree strongly about which civic virtues to teach, share the assumption that such education is an appropriate responsibility for public schools. They are wrong” (Murphy, 2004, p. 221). Not only does he find the concept of civic virtue an unproductive educational goal, he also contends the process undermines the ethical platform on which our educational system is constructed. Furthermore, he maintains, “the attempt to impose these partisan conceptions of civic virtue on America’s students violates the civic trust that underpins vibrant public schools” (Murphy, 2004, p. 221). By eliminating moral and civic
education altogether, Murphy solves the quandaries over which civic values should be taught in the classroom and the teacher’s individual agency in navigating the spectrum between indoctrinator and impartial informer. At the root of his objection to civic schooling is its “incompatibility with the conscientious pursuit of truth, which is the necessary aim of all academic schooling” and “for public schools, there is the additional and very important concern about undermining civic trust” (Murphy, 2004, p. 265).

For Murphy and others of a like mind, there is a social contract between parents and schools that girds an educational system and provides schools with their intellectual authority. In essence, civic trust is contingent upon a school’s academic allegiance to truth-seeking and for Murphy, the pursuit of a civic education abuses the social contract by “deliberately imposing some moral agenda under the guise of academic study and thereby violate[s] the civic trust that parents have placed in them” (Murphy, 2004, p. 265). Involving a more theoretical approach to what he terms, “the civic education crusade,” Bankston (2013) in reacting to a report entitled, A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy’s Future (2012), sees “the contemporary civic engagement movement as an extension of our national educational faith” (Bankston, 2013, p. 629), an effort he perceives as an intent to develop a civil religion which happens to be accompanied by a plethora of complications, especially at the higher education level (Bankston, 2013). In his book, Public Education – America’s Civil Religion: A Social History (2009), Bankston traces the background of the history of American education as civil religion and links the merging of the service component of civic engagement with the learning component of civic education as an offshoot of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Additionally, Bankston refers to a singular belief, touted in the national
report, *A Crucible Moment* (2012) – “education offers the means of meeting the individual needs of all Americans and reconstructing American society” (Bankston, 2013, p. 632), a notion that confirms the relevance of Levine and D’Alessandro’s third trade-off (the dilemma of refashioning the individual or the institution). For Bankston (2013), associating a religious and faith-like characteristic to the institution of education is a dangerous course as, “it tends to lead us to assume rather than to examine . . . we tend to take education as a panacea” (Bankston, 2013, p. 632).

Both Murphy’s objection to the replacement of truth-seeking in civic education with a civic moral agenda and Bankston’s concern with a religious tone in civic engagement are sub-texts to a greater consternation – what civic education is able to do and what it should do. Is it the role of educational systems and teachers to inculcate students with a set of specific civic virtues and “capacities to be civic problem-solvers” (Bankston, 2013, p. 632) and if so, I refer the reader to the second of my three philosophical foundation questions - to whom does a nation task with the responsibility of informing the citizenry? Will educators themselves be required to possess problem-solving skills and specific virtuous characteristics so as to be able to authentically and efficaciously teach the related curriculum elements in the civic education of youth? Heilman’s (2001) study, *Teachers’ Perspectives on Real World Challenges for Social Studies Education*, explains the intricacy of this issue. “. . . not only are real world contexts very important, the complexity, range, degree, and contexts of teachers’ beliefs matter” (Heilman, 2001, p. 724). In the end, educational research often fails to adequately explore the multifaceted lived experiences of the individual teacher and his
or her subsequent identity construct and its impact on his or her personal and professional positions and abilities as an educator in a civic education classroom.

A revisit of these various philosophical principles has been recently prompted by contemporary alerts from various individuals and organizations in recognition of what Johanek (2012) terms a “civics recession” (p. 57). This decline has been marked by a diminishing emphasis on civics in schools (O’Connor, 2011), a 30% variance in students’ civic knowledge between schools in the U.S. (Torney-Purta, Barber, & Richardson, 2005), a reduced role played by civic education in public schools in the last 50 years (Education Commission of the States, 2013), and a “civic opportunity gap” (Herczog, 2012, p. 20). Two additional circumstances underscore this atmosphere of anxiety - only 40% of states mandate civics-related assessments (Godsay, Henderson, Levine, & Littenberg-Tobias, 2012), and findings from a NAEP study that showed only one in four high school students scored proficient in their knowledge of citizenship (Damon, 2012).

Although civic education has proven critical to the effective navigation of citizenship skills in adulthood (Levinson, 2012) – an essential requirement for maintaining a democracy and republican form of government - the American public appears to have settled into a complacent acceptance of these disturbing situations.

**Legislative action.** In order to authentically locate the salient position of social studies within the contemporary U.S. educational system, an examination of the impact of governing legislation may provide the most effective panorama. Since the non-traditional insertion of national legislation (i.e. No Child Left Behind in 2001 and Race to the Top in 2009) into the affairs of the country’s educational systems (Younis, Levine, & Hamilton, 2009) a distinct and pervasive paradigm shift in the purpose, function, and
methods of instruction and assessment of education has been implemented. Federal policies emphasizing reading/writing, math and science as core curriculum subjects (Estroff, 2013) have resulted in the diversion of essential resources away from now peripheral subjects, such as the teaching of social studies. For those who seek to make sense of these initiatives (“sensemaking,” according to Fiss & Hirsch, 2005) the identification of patterns of meaning depends on salient cues from the environment. Further environmental cues serve as evidence of the marginalization of social studies, and in particular, government/civics coursework in the US:

- There exists a greater emphasis on teaching global civic skills over historical civic-related content knowledge (Damon, 2012), suggesting a belief that skills are independent of historical background knowledge as opposed to, in this case, the belief that civic skills hinge on the background knowledge of a nation
- Only eight states have statewide, standardized tests specifically in Civics/American Government. Of those eight only Ohio and Virginia require students to pass that test for graduation (Turney-Purta et al., 2005, p. 9).
- Common Core standards, a collection of common trans-state standards, designed by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association and drafted by a collaboration of teachers, administrators, and other professionals as English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics CCSS, were approved by 45 states in 2010. The explanation for why only the ELA and mathematics disciplines were chosen for common
standards was based on the rationale that they included skills necessary for all other content areas.

A Local Perspective

Situated within the context of the State of Ohio, the status of social studies and civic education follows a similar path. The State of Ohio is currently among 19 states working together in a consortium to construct a common set of PK-12 assessments in English and Math with a focus on preparation for college and careers. This consortium, Partnership for Assessment and Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) excludes any of the social studies subjects. The state adopted the Common Core State Standards in 2010 and subsequently produced Ohio’s New Learning Standards (Ohio Department of Education, 2010). Only Math and English Language Arts (ELA) were initially targeted by the states, but educational leaders and teachers then developed a set of standards for Science and Social Studies. A further exploration of the Department of Education website and an attention to the language/narrative of the information there suggests that only the “most important and useful concepts within each subject each year will be studied” (Ohio Department of Education, 2010). Specifically related to “math concepts, critical reading, writing skills, and better foundations in science and technology” (ODE, 2010). Typical and traditional social studies-related skills or concepts were not mentioned.

One landmark piece of state legislation recently enacted that directly influences both secondary education in the State of Ohio, in general, and civic/government education in particular to this study is Senate Bill (SB) 165. Major provisions related to the social studies are outlined below:
• A specific civic document focus apparent in the curriculums of history and government
• An end of course exam in American Government with 20% of all questions required under law pertaining to founding docs.
• Only ½ unit of American History and ½ unit of American Government (now segregated from the Social Studies) is required for graduation from high school (a minimal requirement as each school district is free to require additional units)
  o Compared to 4 units of math, 3 units of science, and 4 units of ELA, and 2 further units from social studies
• Downgrading of World History to an elective (Senate Bill Number 165, 2012, March). Reversed by House Bill 367 passed December 2014 and to be implemented in year 2017 (Maguth & Moore, 2013).
  o ½ course credit required for graduation; no standardized end of course exam

The obvious squeezing of civic education into a peripheral role of importance in the education of this nation’s youth promises dangerous consequences to the maintenance and preservation of a representative democracy through an engaged and informed citizenry.

**Status of Civics Education PK-12**

A number of influential organizations invested in the advancement of civic education dot the national landscape and each have carved out a particular niche in what
has become contested space. A brief overview of each is intended to paint a mural of some of the main stakeholders in contemporary civic education.

- Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools – a collaboration of 60-plus coalition partners focused on policy changes at national, state, and local levels.
- Published in 2011 a report, the Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools, that targeted leading challenges for civic learning, best practices in civic education, and recommendations for all interested parties in civic education.
- Center for Action Civics – under the auspices of the Mikva Challenge, aimed at encouraging and supporting Chicago high school students as participants in various aspects of the political process as an effective exercise in authentic civic education.
- Center for Civic Education – a network of public and private sector organizations throughout all 50 states and several countries outside the United States that sponsors the Civitas International Program which assembles leaders in civic education throughout the world to collaborate on improving democracy in their homelands. The center also sponsors various programs involving students, teachers, curriculum administrators, researchers and others. An additional programs for civic education in democracy include: We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution, We the People: Project Citizen, and Foundations of Democracy
• The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement – administers numerous research projects on civic education at all levels of learning in areas relating to the participation of young people in civic and political life.

• Fordham Foundation – a local institution (Ohio) committed to advancing educational distinction for every child by promoting education reform especially for those students most at-risk economically and educationally.

• National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) – through an affiliation with the National Center for Educational Statistics, NAEP conducts systematic and uniform assessments of various academic subjects, including civics, economics, geography, and U.S. history throughout the US. Subsequent reports provide feedback of student progress as well as supplying assessment over time.

Although not legislative by nature, the influence of corporate and market entities deserves consideration as a major influence on the civic education paradigm shift away from nation building and towards concepts of multiculturalism, internationalism, globalism and transnationalism. Educational researchers and theorists Eisner (1979) and Pinar (2004) for some time have targeted the explicit external influences of capitalist systems and private enterprise as the driving forces behind the purposes and goals of a compulsory education in the US. More recently, Spring (2011) examined the intersection of the philosophical movement towards the globalization of U.S. education (measured by the language of the benchmarks in state standards) and the influence of
nongovernment (NGOs) and intergovernmental institutions (e.g. World Bank, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, etc.) as political players in world education (Spring, 2011). His conclusion was that both the standards and accompanying assessments reflect a purposeful attempt to produce “knowledge required to function [in the] everyday life of a global economy” and with the intention to enable comparisons of the “achievement of national school systems” (Spring, 2011, p. 80) by corporate and market entities.

**Educational standards.** In the US, the learning standards for civic education as citizenship education, is primarily the purview of the individual states. While all states have standards for social studies education (Torney-Purta et al., 2004) individual states have different approaches for “dealing with or not dealing with civic education” (Reiss, 2012, p. 58). Mirra, Morrell, Cain, Scorza and Ford (2013) reported in *Educating for a Critical Democracy*, “within a climate of intense standardized testing, the long lists of standards do not give social studies teachers the time to employ best practices,” noting that only “13 states possess standards that provide students with a strong civic core” (p. 3). An article by Torney-Purta and Vermeer (2004) described a report by the Education Commission of the States of a study involving synthesized civics standards data from 45 states, concluding that “current standards too often offer encyclopedic coverage of details about government structures” (p. 14). In 2012, The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) published a report on the “standards, course requirements, and mandatory assessments relevant to civic education in all 50 states plus the District of Columbia” (CIRCLE, 2012). Their analysis of the
frequency of NCSS’s 10 Themes located in state social studies standards, by general category is illuminating in its representation of the ideological focus in this country.

Table 1. Frequency of state standards, by general category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Number of States with the Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time, Continuity and Change</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power, Authority and Government</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People, Places and Environment</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production, Distribution and Consumption</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Ideals and Practices</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science, Technology and Society</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Connections</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture &amp; Diversity</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real World Application</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals, Groups, and Institutions</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Development and Identity</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Throughout this Fact Sheet, the District of Columbia is counted as a state, so the total is 51.)

Table 1 (CIRCLE, 2012, p. 3) exhibits evidence that in all 50 states some notion of civic principles and practices, economic concepts (production, distribution, and consumption), geographic concepts (people, places and environment), government and politics, and methods of evaluating change (through progress and decline) over time are
targeted objectives of what must be taught in secondary social studies classes. Three additional civic-related themes were earmarked for their frequency as well. Those themes were Historic Documents, Civic Skills, and Contemporary U.S. History. The number of state standards incorporating those specific civic-related themes was 48, 41, and 35 respectively. If we drill down further to the language of standards and curriculums, the knowledge they provide indicates a greater emphasis on civil rights, cohesive society, tolerance, humanity and other global/moral concepts as opposed to traditional concepts of political rights, individual rights, and the story of a country’s culture and progress (Campbell, Levinson & Hess, 2012).

A tool used by states for structuring educational standards is the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework. As it relates to social studies, its goals are:

- to enhance the rigor of civics, economics, geography, history, etc.
- building the critical thinking, problem solving, and participatory skills of students to help them become actively engaged citizens in the 21st century
- emphasizing the acquisition and application of deep content knowledge through an inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning (Herczog, 2014, p. 165)

The C3 framework is an in-depth and broad structure that will serve to inform teachers of civic education through the Four Dimensions that “center on the use of questions to spark curiosity, guide instruction, deepen investigations, acquire rigorous social studies content, and apply knowledge and ideas in real world settings.” (Herczog, 2014, p. 165)

Standards and Curriculum as Narratives

The examination of standards and subsequently aligned curriculums as narratives is a crucial component in the examination of civic education in the US. Experience has taught me that few writers do not leave their social, political, moral, and/or spiritual
beliefs and values in their written words and meanings. Some may be more overt, but all attempt to narrate (tell a story from their perspective), expose (convey, from their perspective, information or explain what is difficult to understand), or persuade (convince the reader to accept a particular point of view or take a specific action). In Egan’s (1997) discussion of the narrative of curriculums, he introduces the reader to curriculum jargon and to the invested voices known as “stakeholders.” What is pertinent is not necessarily who or what group is represented as the stakeholders, but rather the concept of authorship and the belief that through the knowledge derived from an exploration into the background of an author or the voice of a stakeholder, a greater and richer understanding of one’s literary output can be realized and appreciated. Egan (1997) also explores a notion he terms, “The First Idea: Socialization,” commonly understood to mean a process in which an individual or group is made fit for cooperative, social living. Curriculums as grand narrative “are deeply sedimented within culture and serve to sustain cultural understanding as tacit and shared. As such they are powerful but limited in their form, scope, and evaluation and limiting in the ways that they construct and constrain an individual’s cultural identity” (McVee, 2004, p. 893).

Approaching the investigation of curriculums as narratives, situated in the context of a hermeneutic conceptual framework, seems the most effective method of answering the research question. Denzin and Lincoln (as authored by Perakyla, 2005) describe written texts as one end of a continuum of “empirical materials in qualitative research” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 869), traditionally subjected to a text analysis. The functionality of curriculums as coercive life history narratives, more specifically renders their analysis best suited in this research design to the application of narrative
inquiry in the form of a hermeneutical informal text analysis. McEwan (1997) draws a concrete relationship between the coercive narrative and educational narratives when he describes the cogent aspects of both. Coercive narratives “operate behind the scenes, the glue that helps to bind us into provincial communities of belief [in the] persuasive aspect of the hidden curriculum” (McEwan, 1997, p. 87). Similarly, as educational narratives “are concerned with the serious matter of getting one’s way [in] short, they possess a rhetorical force . . . a persuasive function” (McEwan, 1997, p. 87). It is this “textual power” that demands critical examination for its truth, its uses, its epistemic quality and sociopolitical motivation (Fenstermacher, 1997). In addressing these corporeal elements of narratives and by extension, curriculums, we address their subjectivity as life histories in terms of communication and as a system. When we enquire into curriculums as narratives, McEwan (1997) suggests we ask:

Whose voice is represented here? What procedures were followed in its composition? What agreements were made in terms of selecting the narrative elements? What was agreed regarding the eventual form that the narrative took . . . [and] how the narrative that is embedded in a practice is developed and on what it brings to light? (pp. 90-91).

Goodson (2013) clarifies this essential need to situate life stories in both a “historical and cultural setting if we are to investigate and understand individual and personal meaning-making” (Goodson, 2013, p. 32).

Our initial reaction to reports and reviews produced by governing bodies and independent investigators or teams often commissioned by those institutions, is to deem them objective. As a seasoned reviewer of literature, however, I have learned to move past natural assumptions and actively question and systematically evaluate all corpora of written work. Apple (2002) advises that the schooling process is inherently ideological
and political and therefore should always beg the question “Whose knowledge is of most worth” (Apple, 2002, p. 32)? These particular documents as educational narratives, are subject to McEwan’s (1997) categorization of two modes of functionality – coercive and emancipatory – for evaluation purposes. Of the many educational narratives/documents (e.g., Common Core, SB 165, Academic Content Standards, Ohio’s New Learning Standards, and various government/citizenship curriculums) none may be measured as authentically emancipatory, “giving expression to personal experience” (McEwan, 1997, p. 88). We are left with McEwan’s critical theory and description of coercive narrative, “subtly persuasive: functioning coercively as a conservative social force to bind belief and action to dominant power structures and established institutional forms” (p. 87). In his “taxonomy of narratives,” Fenstermacher (1997) supports McEwan’s delineation based on functionality in the case of educational narratives.

These are narrative discourses framed within some sociopolitical, cultural, or economic context, such that the tellings are couched in the matrix of both micro and macro forces. As such, the narratives function in various ways, sometimes to inhibit or narrow our possibilities, at other times to expand them (Fenstermacher, 1997, p. 122).

These specifications furnished by McEwan, Fenstermacher and Apple served as significant criteria during my “reading, summarizing, comparing and contrasting, synthesizing and mapping” (Thomson & Kamler, 2010, p. 152) of literature.

**National Identity**

The final category of articles directly addressed the phenomenon at the heart of my research – a national identity – and as a result, they were most informative. More significantly they clarified the situational aspect of my research within the field of
literature related to the influence social studies courses have on the structured consciousness of a national identity.

**From an International Perspective**

Elaborately and artistically Colls (2011) approached the definition of a national identity by counting down what it is not and thereby arriving in the final paragraph of the article with a multifaceted description of what it is. Colls suggests that national identity by its very nature, is not likely to be adequately explained by an anthropology or social psychology . . . the best approach is probably broadly historical – combining some scholarly understanding of the national past, with a cross-disciplinary interest in why certain collective memories and emotions matter more than others. (p. 575)

Unlike Osler (2009), Colls (2011) views politics as central to the establishment of a national identity. “All political organizations are obliged to stand for the national past in some way. In countries where national identity still matters, feeding on the national past is an entirely normal aspect of political life” (p. 575). Beyond its relationship with history, according to Colls, “we need our myths [of origin and coming together], nations could not exist without them” (p. 575). Most instructional for me as I am sure his opinions are to the majority of his other readers, was the challenge to traditional thinking on the subject of national identity. For Colls it is not dependent on the state, it exists primarily in oral tradition, it should not be mistaken for national values but it is value-laden, it is not a collection of societal values and attitudes at a specific moment in time, it is often built over time and in the course of the emergent nation-state, it does not rest on any one particular incident in a nation’s history, it has not always been referred to as *national identity* and in fact, should be sought in “the idea of the law and the
Constitution as organic, living traditions” (Colls, 2011, p. 578). National identity is not
to be confused with icons or symbols nor can it be determined by defining who one is
not (i.e., the other). It is “based on an *a posteriori* sense of self . . . and underpins
society with long-run perspectives [although] renewal is never guaranteed” (Colls, 2011,
p. 580), and it is reliant upon the need to identify (Colls, 2011). Ladson-Billings (2006)
delves into the issue of identity through *other* as an American self-esteem problem.

We constantly understand ourselves through the mirror of other nations. We say
our schools are failing because we score lower than Singapore and Finland on some
standard measure. We say our nation is not productive enough by comparing ourselves
to the Chinese or the Germans. We say we are living up to democratic principles by
comparing ourselves to totalitarian regimes (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 106).

Locating a national identity, according to Colls (2011), is entirely achievable if
one looks to “little local histories” and his enumerated list of possible locations. He
describes globalization and its contemporary emphasis on free markets, multiculturalism,
and transnationalism as anti-sympathetic “to the principle and practice of national
identity” (Colls, 2011, p. 582). This particular statement directly contrasts with current
school policies of globalized citizenship education formats. Colls’ girdling of the issue
of national identity enabled me to critically review related literature, to design the
structure of my interviews with students and teachers more precisely and to provide the
opportunity to produce richer and thicker data.

Extending their investigation of citizenship education, O’Connor and Faas (2012)
and Osler and Starkey (2001) explored the intersection of curricula with discourses of
citizenship and national identity, but only O’Connor and Faas (2012) attempted to define
the concept of national identity and introduce the impact of migration on national identity as “a crucial part of the individual’s response to the uncertainty of globalized society” (pp. 51-52). For the authors, this reaction is opportune in that, “national identity seems to provide advantages because mutually recognizable identities minimize transaction costs given that they carry ‘knowledge’ values about norms and values of identity holders” (O’Connor & Faas, 2012, pp. 51-52). Addressing this characterization, I question whether or not any national identity may be first, universally convincing and second, reliable when considering all individuals who purport a particular national identity. In obvious agreement with my position, Osler and Starkey (2001) also note, “today the notion of a single national identity is increasingly questioned” (p. 287).

A multi-volume text entitled *History Education and the Construction of National Identities*, served as a meaningful resource in preparation for developing and conducting my research. Although the third volume’s focus on history education and the construction of identities was most relevant, other volumes also addressed salient queries in education and will be useful for future enquiries. In volume three, the authors provided unique insights into students’ perspectives of national identity in the context of historical narratives encountered in structured educational programs. There is no direct comparison to the average American student’s experience as the populations interviewed in this article were Spanish and Argentinian students participating in their home countries’ educational systems. Of considerable importance though, was my first opportunity to interact and learn from the overall research design, methodology and implementation of data collection, and discussion of the authors’ findings. In my initial search of material related to my field of interest, few bodies of literary work involved the
actual process of interviewing students and presentation of the voice of students. An incidental, but certainly not minor, advantage of this particular piece of literature was its bibliography. The article by Latin American scholars Carretero, Lopez, Gonzalez, and Rodriguez-Moneo (2012) offered several intriguing references that heretofore I had yet to encounter. A final contribution of this article beyond its overall content and research design was the authors’ approach to the teaching of history as narratives “generated in a social context constituting a fixed model for the specific narratives that people create in the process of consuming them” (Carretero, Lopez, Gonzalez, & Rodriguez-Moneo, 2012, p. 154). This statement was a confirmation of my research argument—viewing history and/or government/citizenship curriculums as narratives and as social constructs negotiated by students in the production of their national identities.

**From an American Perspective**

As a social construct, the concept of identity is located within a context. An examination of the existing literature by American authors rendered a plethora of scholarly texts focused on the major issues related to a national and, in this case, an American identity. Three primary factors separate a comparison of any country to another when investigating the origins and constructs of a national identity – history, geography and the resulting culture. The interaction of these three components produces a distinct influence on the mechanisms involved in the conception or definition of a national identity. I have chosen to view this concept through the lenses of truth, lived experience, cultural/social/political identity, and globalization. As relevant and impacting variables these themes lend even greater depth to the knowledge sought in this particular research.
**Truth.** The tricky thing about truth is the ease with which it may be disguised, most especially to those who are uninformed. Huntington (2004), a professor and chair of the International and Area Studies at Harvard University, addresses the influence of truth on what are perceived as the traditional components of an American identity.

Thinking about American identity has involved the wide acceptance of two propositions that are true but only partially true and yet often are accepted as the whole truth. These are the claims, first that America is a nation of immigrants, and second, that American identity is defined solely by a set of political principles, the American Creed. (p. 37)

Huntington takes issue with these axioms primarily as they exclude the established society that drew immigrants to these shores and ignore the culture that gave birth to the American Creed.

The distinction between settlers and immigrants, for Huntington (2004), is rudimentary. Settlers leave an existing society, usually in a group, in order to create a new community . . . They are imbued with a sense of collective purpose. Implicitly or explicitly they subscribe to a compact . . . that defines the basis of the community they create and their collective relation to their mother country. Immigrants, in contrast, do not create a new society. They move from one society to a different society. Migration is usually a personal process, involving individuals and families, who individually define their relation to their old and new countries. (Huntington, 2004, p. 40)

This contrast of intent, of purpose of settlement, is seminal to the construction of many of the components perceived as an American identity – a Christian faith/religion, the values and morals (especially related to work) expressed by Protestantism, the English language, and customs, beliefs (i.e., law, government) and culture (i.e., the arts, philosophy) of our mother country, Great Britain (Huntington, 2004). The proof of this argument is in the longevity of this notion even into contemporary times as well as specific contemporary issues such as illegal immigration. Zelinsky (1992), as quoted by
Huntington (2004), describes this phenomenon in his “Doctrine of First Effective Settlement.”

In new territories, the specific characteristics of the first group able to affect a viable, self-perpetuating society are of crucial significance for the latter social and cultural geography of the area, . . . In terms of lasting impact, the activities of a few hundred, or even a few score, initial colonizers can mean much more for the cultural geography of a place than the contributions of tens of thousands of new immigrants a few generations later. (Huntington, 2004, p. 41)

Lind (1995) challenges Huntington’s notion of an enduring concept of national identity based upon a settler as opposed to an immigrant founding population. Lind’s truth proffers not a single America but an America divided into three ‘nations’ (as cited in Lewis, 2012, p. 182) from an ethno-cultural identity perspective. The first America incorporated three parts: “defining the national community as the Anglo-Saxon race, the common ethic as protestant Christianity, and the political creed as federal republicanism” (as cited in Lewis, 2012, p. 182). The second, post-Civil War America was “more broadly defined as a white Christian [later Judeo-Christian] federal democracy” (Lewis, 2012, p. 182). And the third America, made different by the Civil Rights movement, the women’s movement and the more recent non-European immigration, has evolved into a “third new and even more diverse ‘nation’ . . . often described as Multi-cultural America” (Lewis, 2012, p. 182).

America as a nation founded upon an ideology (i.e., American Creed), invites objections both to the premise of the ideology and to the particular characteristics of that ideology. Culture and ancestry as alternate foundations of nation formation (Schildkraut, 2014) can be described and identified using tangible examples such as cuisine, dress, the arts, traditional beliefs, governments, hierarchies, ethnic descent, lineage, and heritage.
Ideologies “as the foundations of the social representations shared by (specific) groups, and as the basis of their self-identity” (van Dijk, 1999, p. 454) lend themselves to hermeneutic disputes based on the ambiguity and delineation of the ideology itself. For example, Schildkraut (2014) disputes the creedal perspective of being an American by advocating her position that “past practice – and enduring attitudes – reveal just how false it has been to assume that a person only needs to adopt the Creed in order to be welcomed into the American community” (Schildkraut, 2014, p. 442).

**Lived experience.** As a phenomenologist, my method of making sense of the world is rooted in lived experiences. It is my daily interaction with my environment and the people in it and the hermeneutics I apply to those interactions that construct personal meaning. Van Manen (1990) describes the concept as involving “our immediate, pre-reflective consciousness of life: a reflexive or self-given awareness which is, as awareness, unaware of itself” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 35). Dilthey (1985) offers the following account:

> A lived experience does not confront me as something perceived or represented; it is not given to me, but the reality of lived experience is there-for-me because I have a reflexive awareness of it, because I possess it immediately as belonging to me in some sense. Only in thought does it become objective. (as cited in Van Manen, 1990, p. 35).

In overlaying the notion of identity onto Van Manen’s and Dilthey’s phenomenological and hermeneutic explications, Frie (2011) argues “the sense of who we are, is grounded and maintained in our ongoing pre-reflective experience (Frie, 2011, p. 47). The agency of an individual, through the ability to sustain one’s awareness of self in a motile and multi-cultural society, leads to what Frie (2011) refers to as “continuity . . . a form of a pre-reflective self-awareness that exists over time” (Frie,
Within this pre-reflective self and sense of continuity, a balance of self-reflection, self-interpretation and articulation of identity are possible (Frie, 2011).

It is impossible to self-reflect without a sense of self on which to reflect. Lived experiences provide the avenue for the construction and recognition of self. When considering a national identity, an individual must desire to identify with what he or she perceives as a nation, be it through a common descent, history, culture, language, or creed. Our individual experiences with the concept of nation or nationality contribute to our experiential sense of self that Ewing (2004) suggests, “is the condition for reflective self-knowledge and self-identification” (as cited in Frie, 2011, p. 51).

Cultural/social/political identity. It has been my experience in life and most especially as a teacher of history, government, and sociology for over three decades that the lines between and among these identities are often blurred when attempting to define one’s self or a member of a particular nation according to these terms. Lewis (2012) expatiates on what he terms the ‘US national culture’ and what it means to be an American.

. . . the U.S. is a nation with a still clearly dominant common language and a dominant, widely shared culture of beliefs, ideas, values, practices, and attitudes that its people are committed to, or at very least, believe they are committed to. And although the historical reality is that particular cultural groups have claimed and achieved ascendancy during particular time periods, the underlying national culture, individualist and universalistic, serves to continuously undermine the efforts to permanently define ascendancy in racial, religious, ethnic or gender terms. (Lewis, 2012, p. 178)

Based upon ethnic and social theories, two models of national identity were used by Rodriguez, Schwartz, and Whitbourne (2010) in their investigation of meanings and positive and negative connotations attributed to ‘American identity’ as they intersect
with ethnicity and personal identity. “According to the *ethnic pluralism model (EPM)*, individuals can simultaneously maintain a positive identity with their nation while remaining identified with their heritage culture” (Rodriguez et al., 2010, p. 326).

Strikingly different, the *social dominance theory (SDT)* proposes that ethnic and national identities are destined to come into conflict in cases where the individual’s ethnic group was subjugated through conquest or domination by the majority culture. Individuals who identify with a conquered or subjugated ethnic minority group are perceived to be, and ultimately see themselves as, subordinate to majority group members. (Rodriguez et al., 2010, p. 327)

The ultimate outcome of their study determined that the role of personal identity correlated to a positive attachment to their conception of an American identity in contrast to the role of an ethnic identity that correlated to a negative conception (Rodriguez et al., 2010).

The mere mention of the word *politics* serves as a catalyst for a variety of thoughts and emotions for most individuals who reside in America. For clarity and common ground and in the context of this particular research, let us define *politics* as activities associated with the governance of a country or nation. As such, a political identity like *politics* is focused on the social construct of nationhood. Embree (2009) enumerates the components of a national identity based upon a polling analysis of six key policy issues by Juliana Horowitz, associate director of research of the Pew Research Center for People and the Press. Those seven dimensions are 1) gender, 2) generation, 3) race, 4) region, 5) education, 6) income, and 7) religion (Embree, 2009). In expounding the significance of this itemization and subsequent analysis, Embree (2009) suggests “it is difficult not to consider one’s own positions on the main policy
issues of the day, thus to locate oneself in the political situation, and hence to discern one’s own political identity (Embree, 2009, p. 137).

**Global education.** The explosion of technology and the resulting pervasiveness of children’s access to worldwide communication underlie the current shift from what traditionally was a domestic-centered orientation to one of global centricity. “There is, therefore, an increasing awareness among students that a great many issues – the environment, health, the economy, nuclear weapons, international conflict – are intertwined at a global level” (Carlsson-Paige & Lantieri 2005, p. 108).

Two points of view on the concept of global education are delineated by Pike (2000).

For some, global education is tantamount to giving a broader geographical perspective to the social studies curriculum so as to equip students to compete more effectively in the global marketplace. For others, it represents a fundamental reevaluation of the content, organization, and purpose of schooling in line with a transformative vision of education in a planetary context. (p. 64)

If one considers the multitude of various viewpoints that fall somewhere between these two interpretations, we are left with the conundrum that currently affects the continued discourse on its future implementation and direction of social studies in American schools. By extension this quandary also serves as an additional and perhaps conflicting ingredient in the construction of a national identity. Anderson’s (1990) “globalization of American society in economic, political, and cultural terms is a reflection of a worldwide trend that is decreasing the homogeneity of any one nation’s culture at the same time as increasing its degree of commonality with others” (as cited in Pike, 2000, p. 68).

Although Pike (2000) himself takes issue with Anderson’s (1990) assessment,
concluding “the global education movement does not signal a globalization of education; rather it reflects the development of more globally-oriented models of national education” (Pike, 2000, p. 71), Markstrom (2010) sees a risk for identity formation with an educational emphasis on global education. In her particular study of identity formation of American Indian adolescents, Markstrom (2010) cautions “One risk of globalization is that a confusing array of images present to American Indian adolescents via the global media may weaken identifications to and identity formation within their local cultures” (p. 528). For minority populations with culture-based identifications and identities, “adolescents may not perceive the value of their own rich cultures and traditions” (p. 528).

**Summary**

A focus on the three spaces in which civic education exists – global, national and local, the status of civic education PK-12 in the US, standards and curriculums as narratives and national identity from both an international perspective and subsequently situated American perspective using the filters of truth, lived experience, cultural/social/political identity, and global education paints not only for me, the researcher, but also for the reader, an understanding of the broad canvas of existing literature on the concepts of civic education and national identity.

Experience has taught me that few writers do not leave their social, political, moral, and/or spiritual beliefs and values in their written words and meanings. Some may be more overt, but all attempt to narrate (tell a story from their perspective), expose (convey, from their perspective, information or what is difficult to understand), or persuade (convince the reader to accept a particular point of view or take a specific
action). Akin to the study of a national identity, a literature review must also be critically presented and evaluated in context for authentic meaning.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study is a journey through what Delamont describes as the “Mecca Gate” (Delamont 2005, p. 88). In contemplating the choices that educational researchers make, Delamont considers four options, analogous to the four great gates in the poem “The Gates of Damascus” by James Flecker. “In educational research this is the gate we leave by when we are secure in our epistemology, in our methodology, and in our understanding of what education is, what its purposes are and why it matters. It is the Mecca Gate we choose when our research is guided by what we believe to be morally right, true and good” (Delamont, 2005, p. 88). This particular research project focuses on the construct of identity within the social setting of the secondary civics classroom and is informed by not only compelling global issues but also by personal issues both pedagogical and intellectual that have been formed over the course of three decades of teaching in the social sciences.

Just as research and practice are and should be deemed interdependent partners in the quest to constantly improve the aims of education and pedagogical effectiveness, the overarching epistemological and theoretical framework within which this study was conceived and designed and which will be implemented, analyzed, and reported, is grounded in the belief that meaning and knowing are derived from social interactions
and constructs. Interviews, observations, text analyses, and hermeneutic phenomenological analyses are the intended data collection and analysis tools that will be used to interpret how students and teachers fashion meaning as it relates to the concept of national identity.

The social, economic, and political state of contemporary world affairs provides a crucially timed justification for this study. Concepts of globalization, multiculturalism, shifts in world order, immigration policy, and racial equality/inequality dominate conversations in the work place, at the home table, in the houses of government, and in conference rooms at multi-national summits throughout the world. The purpose of this exploration is to advance an understudied yet potent dimension in discerning the potential roots of national identities through the voices of children. Specifically,

*How does the lived experience of secondary social studies impact students’ structured consciousness of a national identity?*

Expanding on that question:

- What influence do government/civics courses have on the structured consciousness of a national identity?

- In what ways has 11th graders K-11 social studies coursework, as participants reconstruct it, affected their development of a national identity?

- What role does the traditional civic education classroom play in relation to other “pedagogical places” as a Third Space for civic education manifested through student voice, in the structured consciousness of a national identity?
From its inception, this body of research has been guided by two goals. First, to produce meaningful and useful knowledge and second, to answer the question—How does the lived experience of secondary social studies impact youths’ structured consciousness of a national identity? In order to investigate the meaning of a lived experience in relation to the specific phenomenon, secondary education government/civics courses of study, the most appropriate framework is a heuristic-phenomenological methodology. Phenomenological research aims to gather rich, thick description that may be obtained using the tool of narrative interviewing (Lester, 1999).

Complementing this qualitative methodology and a social constructionist epistemology, the data collection tool of in-depth interviewing was constructed and implemented with the intent to understand the lived experiences of the narrator and the meaning they ascribe to an experience through story-telling (Creswell, 1998). One particular consideration of this tool for gathering data is the potential for an inequitable power relationship between the researcher and the researched. “Research is often done by people in relative positions of power in the guise of reform. All too often the only interests served are those of the researcher’s personal advancement” (Seidman, 2006, p. 13). A countermeasure to this potential for exploitation is a heuristic approach to not only the structure of the interview but also as a reflection of the self-imposed attitude of the researcher. As a classroom teacher I have been practicing heuristic inquiry for decades, never knowing at the time a title for my method existed. As stated earlier, a goal of this study is to fill the gap in literature of an underrepresented resource in
educational research – the voices of students and teachers. As a dialogue of cooperative sharing, heuristic inquiry forges avenues of reciprocal communication, minimizes constraints of power, and optimizes (especially in this instance) opportunities for shared experiences. “The persons in the heuristic interview must be willing to say freely what they think and feel relevant to the research question, and what emerges in their awareness when the phenomenon becomes the focus of their attention and concentration” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 47).

Embedded in the research questions are key concepts previously enumerated in Chapter I. While central to the theoretical underpinnings of this particular social research, the sources for making meaning of these concepts are the perceptions and attitudes of students as they interact with and develop their unique “interpretations” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 159). In the context of the development of a national identity (the focus of this research), these interpretations occur not only in government/civics classrooms but in the daily lives of children as well. What is basic is not a certain set of texts, or principles, or algorithms, but the conversation that makes sense of these things.

A hermeneutic phenomenological interview and the resulting narrative is that conversation. “It is the process of making sense with a group of people of the systems that shape and organize the world that we can think about together” (Grumet 1995, p. 19). The choice for qualitative data collection tools and a corresponding method of analysis is rooted in the directives of the research question and aligned with the epistemological and theoretical framework of this research project. The data sought is not quantifiable in nature nor is it concerned with objectivity, predictability, or internal
validity (from the perspective of constructing a reality). Instead, the data sought is autobiographical, thematical, phenomenological, and cultural - all of which are most productively analyzed through an interpretive approach to qualitative research.

**Qualitative Research Perspective**

I was once advised in a methodology class discussion on research design to think in reverse, to first ponder the question “Is what you are learning in relation to the phenomenon that you want to understand?” and then to consider the possible qualitative tools for data collection and analysis that would most suit arriving at the answers. In applying this sage suggestion to my research question(s) it was a relatively simple process to eliminate certain methods and hone in on the most efficacious – the interview.

Characteristic of a study framed by social constructionism, language is seminal to the collection and analysis of my data and by extension, the knowledge it produces; consequently, I began my design with a vigilance to generating valid and credible data informed by Kvale’s (1994) work, *Ten Standard Objections to Qualitative Research Interviews*. To best situate this research within the field of literature and academia, I offer the following alerts:

- The scientificness of this study lies in the production of rigorously structured and obtained systematized knowledge.

- Conscious and continuous reflectivity throughout the construction, implementation, analysis, and reporting of this research project was undertaken so as to maintain an active objectivity and dedication not only to the collection and analysis of data but to the phenomenon as well.
• I house no notions of having produced knowledge that is completely free of bias as I consider this situation in all research, impossible. Instead, I suggest that interviews of both an intersubjective and interpersonal nature, as are those in this study, generate a wealth of useful and unique information otherwise unobtainable and also unable to be easily replicated (a quantitative measure of reliability) or generalizable.

• The credibility and trustworthiness of this research is located in its circumstances of “multivocality” (Tracy, 2010) through data collected with multiple student participants that reflect purposive sampling.

• As the structure of all interviews was open ended with only a pre-planned reference to the topic of national identity as a common focus for all co-researchers in the initial question, all subsequent questioning was spontaneously constructed “to help uncover the participant’s views but otherwise respect[s] how the participant frames and structures the responses” (Marshall & Reason, 2007, p. 101) – a process that ensures not only the reliability of the data collected but its authenticity and agency.

Once again, I suggest that my lifelong classroom experience and epistemological and ontological viewpoints recommended an approach marked by the strength of “flexibility, which allows, even encourages, exploration, discovery, and creativity” (Marshall & Reason, 2007, p. 138). A qualitative methodology is conducive to investigating a particular aspect of the lifeworld as it is experienced and to participating
in the description of the meaning that is constructed as a result of that interactive experience (Van Manen, 1990).

Holliday cautions the qualitative researcher of the skepticism that surrounds this “ideological minefield” (2007, p. 15). To counter these positivist-influenced assertions, she advises “a significant aspect of qualitative research is the need for researchers to show their workings, to reveal how they have managed the subjectivity inherent within this research paradigm. This is the major way in which rigor can be maintained, and it makes the writing of the research a central element in achieving accountability” (Holliday 2007, p. 42). Gough and Reid’s qualitative research criteria to ensure a robust data collection and analysis design, using the markers of “credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability” (2000, p. 68) have been incorporated in this study and will be directly referred to in relation to the various proposed data collection methods.

**Role and Obligations of the Researcher in Qualitative Research**

All research has its limitations. For qualitative research one predominant shortcoming, at least according to die-hard quantitative methodologists, is the position of the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection, analysis, and presentation of findings. This potential for subjectivity especially during the acquiring, recording, managing and reporting of the data phase of the research design, if unchecked may significantly shape the inquiry and thereby compromise the validity of the research. While phenomenological qualitative research tends to embrace the lived experience of the researcher as advantageous to the production of meaningful description, there still remains no sanction of an unregulated infusion of the self of the researcher. Quite like the process of making lemonade out of lemons, reflexivity “has been posited and
accepted as a method qualitative researchers can and should use to legitimize, validate, and question research practices and representations” (Pillow, 2003, p. 175). It was the goal of this researcher to practice a vigilance of self throughout this study by means of journals and a modified audit trail, which according to Creswell and Miller (2000) provide “clear documentation of all research activities and decisions” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 128). As a former practitioner currently engaged in educational research, I did not want to smother my informed perspective and the rich dimension that it may have added to the creation of new knowledge. Instead, as so aptly expressed by Peshkin (1988),

The point is this: By monitoring myself, I can create an illuminating, empowering personal statement that attunes me to where self and subject are intertwined. I do not thereby exorcise my subjectivity. I do, rather enable myself to manage it – to preclude it from being unwittingly burdensome – as I progress through collecting, analyzing, and writing up my data. (p. 20)

Within the context of any data collection/analysis methodology but most especially within a qualitative approach, the relationship between the researcher and the sources of data is a weighty factor in determining the quality of the research. In hashing out the role of the researcher in qualitative inquiry, Richardson (2000) writes, “self-reflexivity brings to consciousness some of the complex political/ideological agendas hidden in our writing. Truth claims are less easily validated; speaking for ‘others’ is wholly suspect” (p. 254). As a proponent of ethnographic studies, she proffers the following reflexive questions as criteria for self-evaluation during and after the data analysis phase:

How does the author come to write this text? How was the information gathered? Ethical issues? How has the author’s subjectivity been both a producer and product of this text? Is there adequate self-awareness and self-
exposure for the reader to make judgments about the point of view? Do authors hold themselves accountable to the standards of knowing and telling of the people they have studied? (Richardson, 2000, p. 254)

The epistemological basis for this research and its design is founded upon the belief that knowledge is produced through social constructs, processes, relationships, and interpretations. In this qualitative study, the researcher is an active participant and is not required to maintain a disconnect from who or what is being studied to ensure the validity of the collected data or the findings. The experience and expertise of the researcher is embraced when those qualities lend themselves to the production of rich and meaningful data and analysis. “There is a personal element in research in the sense that doing research is moved by a desire to explain and understand that always points back to self-understandings and self-constructions” (Usher, 1996, p. 36). In the end, qualitative social research is a method by which personal ways of knowing the world may be expressed through the humanness of the researcher.

**Structure of Data Collection, Participants, and Sampling Strategy**

“Investigation, the first moment of action as cultural synthesis, establishes a climate of creativity which will tend to develop in the subsequent states of action” (Freire, 2001, p. 181). No words could better articulate or provide a clearer definition for the process of designing and yet simultaneously elucidating the criteria by which the robustness and cogency of the research design may be measured. A systematic approach to the discovery of pertinent facts using qualitative data collection tools and the subsequent interpretation of that data in an effort to produce knowledges (Griffin, 2012) is an objective of this research/project design.
Although this research study was conducted within the context of a regular education atmosphere, working with children under the age of 18 (i.e., at-risk population) can be problematic when considering accessibility. Bryman (2012) advises:

- Use friends, contacts, colleagues, academics to help you gain access; provided the organization is relevant to your research question, the route should not matter.
- Try to get the support of someone within the organization who will act as your champion. The person may be prepared to vouch for you and the value of your research. Such people are placed in the role of ‘sponsors.’
- Usually you will need to get access through top management/senior executives. Even though you may secure a certain level of agreement lower down the hierarchy, you will usually need clearance from them. Such senior people act as ‘gatekeepers.’ (p. 435)

I followed Bryman’s (2012) advice. Having lived, coached and taught in the city where I chose to conduct my research, sponsors and gatekeepers from the school system were not only approachable, but also already aware of my personal and professional background and reputation. Van Maanen and Kolb (1985) refer to this strategic planning and hard work in gaining access to social settings relevant to the research problem to be studied. They also mention a third criterion – ‘dumb luck’ – that also applied to my research site selection. A traditional midwestern city, home to two college/university campuses and several large commercial operations, yet encased in an important state agricultural region, provided a sampling base relevant to my research questions. What follows in Tables 2-6 is an overview of pertinent information that furnishes the reader with a “feel” for this community.
Table 2. Demographic population totals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Population in the Midwestern community</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>26,119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Population</td>
<td>12,441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Population</td>
<td>13,678</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Population by race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>26,119</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>23,818</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>929</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>625</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Other Race</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>&lt; 1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4. Population by race and gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race and Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>12,441</td>
<td>13,678</td>
<td>26,119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>11,281</td>
<td>12,537</td>
<td>23,818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Other Race</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Demographic household type

Number of Occupied Homes in the Midwestern community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Type</th>
<th>Number of Homes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10,733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family led homes</td>
<td>6,244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband-wife family</td>
<td>4,625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other family</td>
<td>1,619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population of male led with no wife present</td>
<td>406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population female led with no husband present</td>
<td>1,213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population of Nonfamily homes</td>
<td>4,489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population living alone</td>
<td>3,802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population not living alone</td>
<td>687</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6. Demographic population of multigenerational homes

Homes in midwestern community with multiple generations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Population:</th>
<th>10,733</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home has three or more generations:</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home does not have three or more generations:</td>
<td>10,492</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Content provided by the U.S. Census bureau for the years 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014)

Other pertinent and miscellaneous information has been provided by the local Chamber of Commerce in Table 7.

Table 7. Quick facts provided by the Chamber of Commerce

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People Quick Facts</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Foreign born persons, percent, 2008-2012</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Language other than English spoken at home, pct 5+, 2008-2012</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• High school graduate or higher, percent of persons 25+, 2008-2012</td>
<td>90.3%</td>
<td>88.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Homeownership rate, 2008-2012</td>
<td>60.9%</td>
<td>68.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Median value of owner-occupied housing units</td>
<td>$124,500</td>
<td>$133,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Per capita income in last 12 months (2012 dollars), 2008-2012</td>
<td>$24,090</td>
<td>$25,857</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
Table 7. Quick facts provided by the Chamber of Commerce (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People Quick Facts</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Median household income, 2008-2012</td>
<td>$40,341</td>
<td>$48,246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Persons below poverty level, percent, 2008-2012</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Voter turnout 2014</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Geography Quick Facts

| • Land area in square miles, 2010 | 16.31 | 40,860.69 |
| • Persons per square mile, 2010 | 1601.40 | 282.3 |

Data Collection

A qualitative study, in which interviews and observations are the primary means of collecting data, demands a concerted effort be made to manage and maintain the production of data. “One of the main difficulties with qualitative research is that it very rapidly generates a large, cumbersome data-base because of its reliance on prose in the form of such media as field notes, interview transcripts, or documents” (Bryman 2012, p. 565). In this study, the population for this research project involve a practicable, more feasible sample of students. Logistical details were designed based on (a) an experienced perspective of a secondary classroom environment, (b) experiential knowledge gained from a previous pilot study of this research project, and (c) the goal of conducting a viable research project.
Two distinct yet complementary and supportive data collection phases will occur over the course of this research project. What follows is a description of the sample population, recruitment procedures and justification as well as an overview of those phases and their accompanying rationale and/or method of data collection.

**Characteristics of Study Population**

High school 11th graders (juniors) enrolled in Advanced Placement (two classes) and General (two classes) U.S. Government courses.

**Recruitment Procedures**

As this research involves the data collection tool of an in-depth interview and does not involve a large number of participants, random selection (as a statistical concept) is prohibitive. Rather, the focus of this qualitative study is “a compelling evocation of an individual’s experience” (Seidman, 2006, p. 51). The proposed time commitment for each student is approximately three hours spread over the course of three separate interviews.

Purposive sampling will be used to guide the selection of the sample population from the four U.S. Government classes participating in this study. This method of purposeful sampling allows the researcher to sample a small number of units or cases that maximize the diversity relevant to the research question and representative of the widest variation of students within the limits of the study (Seidman, 2006). Initially, all students in these four classes will be offered the opportunity to participate. The first two weeks of observation in the classroom will serve as the contact period prior to the actual interviews. This approach affords the researcher the opportunity to then apply the method of purposive sampling and then to build a foundation for the interview
relationship. Seidman (2006) also suggests that this time may also expose potential participants with whom a good interviewing relationship may not be likely to develop.

**Rationale**

To assess and reflect the maximum range of people which constitute the population and whose lived experiences are relevant to the larger population and, therefore, not idiosyncratic. The characteristics of the school population are listed in Table 8.

Table 8. Population demographics of Midwestern High School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more races</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free-Lunch</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced Price Lunch</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (US News and World Report, 2013)

**Criteria for Number of Participants (10 Students)**

- sufficiency (sufficient numbers to reflect the range of participants in U.S. Government classes)
- saturation (of information)
• time – for effective organization and management of data (gathering of data, transcription of data, analysis, etc.)

Justification for Sample Population

Gurwitsch (1964) postulated that all phenomena are subject to two structural parameters— the intensity and salience (comparative prominence) of the experience. In order for participants to more authentically discriminate, associate, and structure events in their lifeworld as measured by their strength and relative importance, 11th graders and teachers currently and actively engaged in interacting with government/civics curricula best offer this opportunity.

My research problem seeks to examine life experiences of secondary students negotiating government/civic coursework. This study does not attempt to provide categorical truths but rather to (a) explore and raise questions about a particular phenomenon by looking at a variety of samples within the parameters of a situation (features and process) that addresses the research query and (b) provide detailed/thick descriptions of the lived experiences of the participants in a manner that addresses the purpose of the research.

Phase One – Pre-interview Data Collection

Purpose: To establish a productive relationship between co-researchers (researcher and researched) characterized by the qualities of an effective, interpersonal connection—a positive perception, trust, familiarity, and safeguarded expression of emotions.
Research activity: Unobtrusive observations of AP and General Government classes conducted in four different classrooms under the guidance of three government teachers.

Duration: Two consecutive weeks at the beginning of the research placement; entire length of the class period – approximately one hour per period.

Number of observations: Two to three days per week; three to four observations per day (dependent on the convenience and appropriateness of daily lesson plan determined by all teachers).

Population: 11th grade U.S. Government classes

Justification: Creating a comfortable atmosphere of security and trust by minimizing a negative perception and maximizing the opportunity for familiarity through repeated contact will lead to a positive classroom experience transferable to the interview experience. These unobtrusive observations serve to gather anecdotes of lived meaning. As Van Manen (1990) suggests in his book *Researching Lived Experience*, “In collecting written descriptions and conversational interviews [during interview phase] one looks for the emerging themes after one has gathered the material; in collecting anecdotes [during observation phase] one has to recognize what parts of the ‘text’ of daily living are significant for one’s study while it is happening” (p. 69).

**Phase Two – Data Collection (Interviews)**

Purpose: Extend development of interpersonal relationship between researcher and students to that of intersubjective, shared interviewing through which meaning is made in relation to a particular phenomenon.
Research activity: Continued observation and addition of in-depth heuristic phenomenological interviews with individual students from the sample population.

Duration: 6 weeks

Student Interview Schedule (Appendix E)

Number of student sample population: 10

Number of interviews per participant: 3

Length of interviews: 1 hour

Methodology: Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Data collection tool: In-Depth Interviewing; Audio-recorded

A three-step process (Appendix D) guides the data collection activity (interviewing) in order to bring about a more direct contact with the experience as lived (a reflective activity of textual labor).

- Interview One: Focused Life History
  - Objective – Reconstruct early experiences (constitutive events)
  - Participants’ Focus – A review of their life history prior to their experiences in civics or government/citizenship courses

- Interview Two: The Details of the U.S. Government Coursework/Class experience
  - Objective – Reconstruct lived experience of U.S. Government course
  - Participants’ Focus – Articulation of the concrete details of their present lived experience of U.S. Government course
• Interview Three: Reflection on the Meaning
  
  o Objective – Make meaning by focusing on how the factors in their lives interact or have interacted with their present situation (student in government/citizenship course)

    intellectually

    emotionally

  The goal of the researcher is to provide trustworthy data. As an essential element of the interpersonal relation between researcher and participant, trust is key to the generation of trustworthy data. But how does one establish trust in the context of a non-permanent interaction? Ferrin, Dirks, and Shah (2006) perlustrate this less-studied situation of the social nature and context of trust through third-party persons, especially as it tends to be descriptive of educational research when the others are introduced to the researcher and at times, selected by a teacher, staff, or management with whom the others already have formed a basis for trust. Ferrin, et al. (2006) ascertained and my experience verified:

  • Third parties become a potentially valuable resource for forming trust beliefs.
  • An employee [a student/other] may learn about a third party’s level of trust in the coworker [researcher/self] and may also learn about some of the third party’s experiences with the coworker [researcher/self]. By doing so, the employee [student/other] may obtain valuable clues about the coworker’s [researcher’s/self’s] trustworthiness.
• . . . an employee [student/other] who has had no direct experience with a
given coworker [researcher/self] can still come to an informed judgment
about the coworker’s [researcher/self] trustworthiness via third parties.
(Ferrin et al., 2006, pp. 874-875)

This opportunity for trust transferability, especially in circumstances which involve a
vulnerable population (i.e., children), is monumental in the acquisition of social
capital by a researcher whose data collection is temporal or difficult in its accessibility
but whose data must always be trustworthy. In previous and similar educational
research settings and again, in this particular study, teachers have been a crucial factor in
the reliability of my data.

**In-Depth Phenomenological Interviewing**

At the methodological heart of my research is the primary data collection tool of
interviewing, an examination of the lived experiences (Van Manen, 1990) of U.S.
Government students, using a phenomenological interviewing strategy, one that best
aligns with the theoretical framework underpinning this research. The focus of this
exploration rests “on the assumption that there is a structure and essence to shared
experiences that can be narrated” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 104). Foundational to
this premise is the concept of “shared experiences” that can be powerfully articulated
through the language of life stories. I argue the importance of interrelatedness and
intersubjectivity in the creation of a qualitatively safe relational environment of
phenomenological interviewing in which both the researcher/self and participant/other
are unconstrained by issues of perception, trust, familiarity, and emotional vulnerability.
As human beings, we take for granted the social and psychological dynamics at play during the numerous conversations of which we are active members on a daily basis. Unless preparing for an interaction, we generally operate instinctively and innately. For the researcher/self, this situational dichotomy of structural conversation, one empirical and purposeful the other visceral and fluid, can be problematic. How to bridge those two forms of dialogues and combine the ease and comfort of personal communication with the targeted production of discourse may be answered in an analysis of two concepts – interrelatedness and intersubjectivity.

**Interrelatedness**

The outline and strategy for providing substance to this argument is the navigation of the concept of interrelatedness – through the indicators of perception, trust, familiarity, and emotion – as it frames the negotiating relationship between the self and other in the pursuit of meaning making through shared experiences. The dynamics of this socially constructed role in qualitative research is dependent upon a relationship that can be observed and studied within a framework in which knowledge of the world and self is not only produced through social interaction but is, therefore, relative.

**Perception.** Phenomenological constructionism is attentive to the life world of individuals and the identity each constructs as he or she negotiates social experiences (Potter, 2012). Generally, during an initial research interview there has been no previous parley of life histories or exchanges of narratives for the purpose of scientific conversation. The territories of self and other have yet to be established, there has been no “shaping and creating of identity and perception through experience, performance and interpretation” (Mead, 1934, p. 135) before this first interaction. At the center of our
axiological being is the way in which we perceive ourselves, and closely associated is our belief about how others perceive us. This social-psychological concept, the “looking glass self” coined by Cooley in 1902, has been proven to be a significant factor in guiding behavior and affecting relationships (Carlson, Furr & Vazire, 2011).

The goal of the researcher is to provide opportunities for intersectionality between the other and shared lived experiences of temporality, spatiality, corporeality, and relationality (Van Manen, 1990) to produce rich, thick descriptions of understanding that are useful and meaningful to both self and other. Decades of teaching various social studies courses in secondary school classrooms and daily interacting with young adults yielded the experience and expertise with which I was able to communicate, via an efficacious perception, a shared knowledge of the social constructs and processes involved in the lived experience of education.

**Trust.** But what factors determine trust in the context of research conversation? Some elements are more obvious than others, such as honesty and transparency of research intent and design, self-confidence and efficiency in managing unpredictable moments, and genuineness and authenticity of speech. Some aspects of trust less evident and perhaps more controversial, such as a vulnerability expressed through the movement of the researcher “from the knower, to the one who explores his own knowing processes as well as the participant’s” (Hoskins & White, 2013, p. 186).

The students’ positive perceptions of me contributed greatly to their feelings of security and stability during our interview sessions and my classroom observations. An additional factor of profound importance—not only to a trustworthy relationship
between the students and me but to the trustworthiness of the data as well—was the third-party effect; an influencing context I defined earlier in this chapter.

**Familiarity.** The historical dominance of quantitative methodology in scientific research has contributed to the complexity of the third indicator of interrelatedness—familiarity. In an effort to breed the pursuit of objectivity as proof of credible and reliable data, positivists epitomize a distanced researcher. In opposition to a qualitative methodology in which an engaged researcher purposefully attempts to establish a relationship of disciplined familiarity, this traditional criterion for value free quantitative data continues to divide academics and the literature they produce.

From a personal perspective, when conducting research conversations with secondary students, an absence of familiarity would inhibit meaningful and worthwhile dialogue. A study by Brockner and Swap (1976) proved that even without interaction, “the more frequently [a] person has been seen, the more participants rated that person positively and wanted to interact with him or her” (Caprariello et al., 2011, p. 558).

Although purely coincidental, during the first two weeks of my research, I attended classes regularly, positioning myself in the back of the classroom as a passive observer with the intent of establishing a visual familiarity with the students. Beyond a brief introduction and description of my research by the teachers in whose classes I would eventually be conducting conversations, I had little if any interaction with the students. By the end of the second week, students felt comfortable enough to ask lesson related questions as well as to initiate pleasantries.

In keeping with Maslow’s (1943) schema for understanding human behavior, feelings of comfort and safety correlate with familiarity and are located on the same
level of need as trust. Even though some literature contends that familiarity promotes aversion (Norton, et al., 2007) others contend that this assumption is “not based on live interaction” (Caprariello et al., 2011, p. 557). A final conjecture that familiarity may lead to bias in the collection and analysis of data is countered by Kvale (1994) in his observation that “bias in research cannot be completely avoided, but countered by carefully checking for effects of bias in subjects and researchers” (Kvale, 1994, p. 155).

**Emotion.** In some respects, emotion as an indicator of interrelatedness, is the most difficult to discuss, especially in the context of hermeneutical research. Granek (2013) most aptly and succinctly describes why:

> To think of the research dynamic as being hermeneutical is to see oneself as being in relationship, as being equal to, as being co-created, and thus, opening up the possibility of influence, interpretation, and affect running in both directions . . . one recognizes the inherent mutual vulnerability, and possibility for both points of sameness and difference. (pp. 183 – 184)

I contend that it is this issue of vulnerability that may lie at the heart of some individuals’ propensity for a quantitative versus qualitative methodological approach to research. Perception, trust, and familiarity tend to be victimless indicators of interrelatedness, but self or other is open to being “wounded” by emotion. “Often the dangers consequent on this [emotional work in the field] are not recognized. In some instances researchers have been made quite ill (physically and emotionally) through their experiences of denying, ignoring or managing emotions” (Holland, 2007, p. 208). That researchers have sought and continue to seek deeper understandings of phenomena such as violence, homelessness, rape, and other emotionally charged social conditions suggests that a greater good outweighs this personal sacrifice.
A review of the literature did uncover researchers concerned about the potential for objectification of emotion and the creation of “emotion-free” methodologies. Referencing Game’s (1982) counter argument to these responsive actions, Holland (2007) reminds the reader of the unparalleled significance of emotions in the making of meaning. “Emotion is a way of knowing the world, emotions are the means by which we make sense of, and relate to, our physical, natural and social world. So emotion has epistemological significance since we can only ‘know’ through our emotions and not simply our cognition or intellect” (Holland, 2007, p. 198). This insight, void of the emotional centrality of the interrelatedness between the self and other in the context of a conversation of discovery, would be lost. In the final analysis, for Ezzy (2010), “it is the emotional structure of the relationship, as much as a well thought out cognitively articulated approach to questions, that underlies good interviewing practice” (Ezzy, 2010, p. 164).

As facilitators to establishing interrelatedness in qualitative research, perspective, truth, familiarity, and emotions serve to chip away at the natural barriers to producing rich, thick descriptive data. They enable the other and the self to move beyond perfunctory speech to authentic and relational speech. In addition, there is an equally salient dialogical concept essential to producing true knowledge through the interview process: intersubjectivity.

**Intersubjectivity**

A plethora of literature abounds concerning the definition, nature, origin, and location of “intersubjectivity.” Most agree that Husserl cited this interaction as seminal to his methodology of phenomenology where it continues to proliferate. For Husserl, “in
the context of phenomenology, intersubjectivity is inseparable from the concept of experience” (Thompson, 2005, p. 1) and refers to the process of making meaning through a relationship with others. For those philosophers not supportive of phenomenology (i.e., Habermas, Apel), the essence of intersubjectivity is located in the communication tool of language (Thompson, 2005). And if the waters were not muddied enough, Smaling (1992) suggests that besides Husserl’s and Habermas’s types of intersubjectivity, there are five more varieties of methodological intersubjectivity--“consensual, regimented, explicit, argumentative, and dialogical” (Smaling, 1992, p. 169). Within the scope of this research a pithy perusal of dialogical intersubjectivity would most effectively illuminate the relationship between the self and other in the qualitative research conversation.

As my study explores the interview process as both dialogue and a double hermeneutic (other is an interpreted text to self and self is an interpreted text to other), Smaling’s (1992) characterization of this interaction provides a conceptualization that frames and situates the meaning of this relationship:

- For the benefit of valuable communications between the persons concerned, they must seek to realize certain aims
  - a minimal respect for each other
  - an unconditional positive regard for each other may be facilitating
- The participants must have some understanding of personal, paradigmatic, societal, cultural and ideological differences, which may influence their communications. (Smaling, 1992, pp. 172-173)
In my ultimate quest, to understand how children arrive at an understanding of the concept of national identity through a process of interaction with the government curriculum, I am unable to accomplish this goal without the participation of others (most especially, the children themselves). In order to systematically approach the production of this knowledge, I am dependent on a relationship between myself and others, one in which the fluid, interactive, and interrelated nature of this exchange of selves creates authentic meaning that is “co-constructed” (Granek, 2013, p. 181). This is the essence and imperativeness of intersubjectivity.

The strategy for semantically repositioning, at times, the relational nomenclature of researcher and participant to one of self and other advances the intent of interjecting a human element into this study of communicative interaction in hermeneutic phenomenological interviewing. I have considered the concept of intersubjectivity and four common sense indicators of the concept of interrelatedness as facilitators of conversational spaces (qualitative interviewing) in which authentic meaning is negotiated through a narrative of lived experiences. More specifically I have addressed perception and its assessment potential for truth in data; trust and the acquisition of social capital; familiarity and its direct correlation with a sense of comfort and safety; emotion as epistemologically essential to producing knowledge; and intersubjectivity as seminal to co-constructed meaning-making.

Telling stories is a meaning-making process. Analogous to Aristotle’s characterization of a story as having a beginning, a middle and an end, this research begins with early experiences with the concept of a national identity (or meaningfully related concepts) in the context of the participant’s life history, focuses midway on the
participant’s reconstruction of the details of a national identity (or meaningfully related concepts) within the context in which it is occurring, and ends with making explicit the structure of meaning of the lived experience through the connection of a national identity and life. Seidman (2006), in *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*, suggests,

> When we ask participants to reconstruct details of their experience, they are selecting events from their past and in so doing imparting meaning to them . . .

> When we ask participants to tell stories of their experience, they frame some aspect of it with a beginning, a middle, and an end and thereby make it meaningful, whether it is in interview one, two, or three . . .

> But in interview three, we focus on that question in the context of the two previous interviews and make that meaning making the center of our attention. (Seidman, 2006, p.19)

For Seidman, as well as Vygotsky (1986), experience expressed through language is a meaning-making process.

**Data Analysis**

The purpose of analysis in research is threefold—management of data, recording and obtaining information relevant to the research question, and description, explication or interpretation of findings. When applied in the context of this study, that analysis involves (a) the examination of educational documents as narratives that inform and direct the education of a nation’s youth and (b) the interview data. This movement of raw to processed data, this reduction of data to themes, underpinned by a social constructionist philosophy of meaning-making, fosters the production of an effective analysis that illuminates an understanding of the ‘how’ of the story (narrative), an objective of the research equally as important as understanding the story itself, for it is in the “how” of the story that meaning is made.
Documents

Documents, as a source of contextual data in qualitative research, often do not serve as the primary corpus of facts or descriptive information that contributes to the understanding of the meaning of a particular phenomenon. Instead, their function is more often associated with validation of data through a strategy of triangulation, “an approach to the development of measures of concepts, whereby more than one method would be employed in the development of measures, resulting in greater confidence in findings” (Bryman, 2012, p. 392). This methodological blueprint characterizes the motivation behind the use of textual life history narratives in a multifaceted examination of the ideologies, policies, and expectations expressed in national curriculums. As such, this unobtrusive approach to collecting contextual data will employ an informal hermeneutic text analysis. This type of less structured reduction of narrative text is acceptable, as Denzin and Lincoln (2005) note “Especially in research designs where the qualitative text analysis is not at the core of the research but instead is in a subsidiary or complementary role, no more sophisticated text analytical methods may be needed” (p. 870).

This study analyzed the text of government/civics curriculums and syllabi as life history narratives “with qualities that encourage the projection of human values upon the material” (Kaplan, 1986, p. 768). Congruent with policy analysis which “always considers resources and objectives, means and ends together, never separately” (Wildavsky, 1979, p. 10), textual analysis approach to the examination of the narrative of national curriculums in this research is situated in the belief that “discourses, and in
this context policies, do not merely represent social reality but help as well in creating them” (Nudzor, 2009, p. 507).

We are reminded by Fairclough (2001), “that the exercise of power, in modern society, is increasingly achieved through ideology, and more particularly through the ideological workings of language” (Fairclough, 2001, p. 2). This study advances the understanding of educational policy as expressed in state curriculums as a conduit for what Foucault terms a “sovereign, communal meaning” (Foucault, 1986, p. 118). More precisely, this study seeks to know what understanding is socially constructed at the intersection of the phenomenon of curriculum and with an interpretative informal text analysis. In support of this argument, Hendry (2010) confirms, “Narrative explicates the imbalance that is prompted by a question, lived experience, or puzzling phenomenon” (Hendry, 2010, p. 73). The everyday pedagogical experience of a nation’s educational system and particularly its youth, in which the narrative of government/civics curriculums are made manifest through a “historical context [that] is interrogated and elaborated” (Goodson, 2013, p. 5) through stories, is a structure amenable to a phenomenological hermeneutic analysis.

**Interview Data**

The organization, analysis, and synthesis of data were guided by Moustakas’ (1990) eight-point *Outline Guide of Procedures*, in which:

1. All data (observations, interviews, notes, etc.) are gathered for each participant/other.

2. An immersion period in which a portrait of each participant’s experience is constructed for initial understanding through a process of revisiting data.
3. An annotation phase of interaction with the data.

4. A return to the initial data for alignment with the now-annotated account for the purpose of noting absences, inconsistencies, and/or non-essential depictions of the participant/other.

5. The above analysis is repeated for each participant/other.

6. Recurring qualities and themes are noted in order to arrive at a composite description of the experience being investigated.

7. Appropriate excerpts from all students are thematically categorized and from those organized excerpts subthemes may emerged; excerpts are then realigned with the appropriate correlating subtheme.

8. The extrapolated themes and essential meanings related to the concept of national identity are incorporated in the synthesis and characterization of the experience/phenomenon under study.

In order to address the validity of the interview data, students were provided the opportunity to correct, clarify, confirm or edit their individual narratives. This process of member checking was a significant contribution to the overall credibility of the primary data.

This procedure for analysis, combined with the specified approach to data collection, 1) enables the efficacious exploration of experiential narratives as resources for developing an apprehension of a specific human phenomenon, and 2) in turn, provides the means by which answers for the designated research questions can be sought.
Trustworthiness

Anticipated or unanticipated, each of the methods of data collection requires scrutiny regarding its contribution to the validity and reliability of the research data it may produce. Merriam (2002) considers the strategies of “triangulation, member checks, peer review/examination, researcher’s reflexivity, adequate engagement in data collection, audit trail, and rich descriptions” (p. 31) as safeguards against untrustworthy data. As evidence of concurrence, this research design includes multiple methods of data collection (triangulation), sequential interviews with both teachers and students that allow for continued discussions of interpretations and opportunity for subsequent clarification should the need arise (member checks), conscious self-inquiry, reflection and research organization through the systematic process of researcher journaling and note taking (reflexivity and audit trail), and multiple contacts and communications with teachers and students in the context of the milieu of the classroom (rich description) over the course of six to eight weeks (adequate engagement in data collection).

Limitations of the Study

As my first significant undertaking, I am consciously aware of the potential for unanticipated circumstances that may obstruct or even bridle the interpretation of the findings of my research. Having spent a year at the University of Bath in pursuit of a Master’s Degree in Research in Education, systematic engagement with the research skills required to produce meaningful and trustworthy data ingrained the need for reflexivity especially in qualitative research. I will, therefore, address two limitations to this study. First, when sampling the population, I paid great attention to constructing a study group that would reflect the diversity of the student body. In all aspects save one,
the eventual sample population succeeded in that construction. As participation in my study was voluntary from among all students in U.S. Government courses I was dependent on those students who chose to enlist; only one student of biracial ethnicity (Caucasian/African American) came forward. Of the eventual 10-student sample population, an additional two students of diverse ethnicity (i.e. Latino, Chinese) did participate in this research and contributed meaningful, useful, and distinct views of seeing the world through the phenomenon under study. While I was unable to perfectly replicate the ethnic variation of the population, the sample group did provide rich, thick details that infused the data in ways that were not only credible and trustworthy, but also representative of an ethnically diverse population.

A second genuine limitation was the availability of students over time (i.e. the duration of their entire interaction with U.S. Government coursework). This situation may effect the breadth of the conceptual and relational content material to which they were able to reconstruct a relationship with the concept of a national identity. Potentially, this could be premise for a future body of research.

Critical Investigation

This approved (Appendix A) research design is well grounded within an aligned epistemological and theoretical framework. The essential/guiding research question anchors the development of the literature review, the type of data to be collected, the analytic approach and various analyses to be used, and provides the parameters for the focus of the study and the supporting questions to be answered (Bryman, 2012). Key concepts were identified, around which evidence for the justification of this study was
proffered. The tools for both phases of data collection were enumerated and are tested against Gough and Reid’s (2000) criteria for evaluating qualitative research:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Strategies proposed in this study</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>Purposive sampling</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prolonged engagement with data</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Persistent observation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Triangulation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Member checking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transferability</td>
<td>Purposive sampling</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Thick description/text</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dependability</td>
<td>Triangulation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inquiry audit</td>
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<td>Confirmability</td>
<td>Audit trail</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Autobiography</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Journal/Notebook</td>
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</tbody>
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(Gough & Reid, 2000, p. 68)

The research methodology was situated in a conceptual framework driven by the specific concepts located in the essential/guiding research question, and several qualifiers that denote a valid qualitative research methodology and good data were referenced and applied. Throughout the discussion of the details of the research design, attention to its practicality (i.e., time, logistics, and viability) as well as potential difficulties and possible avoidance remedies were entertained. While a thorough effort was made to anticipate any number of practical and ethical issues related to this research, it was impossible to “cover every base.” What remained was to answer the question
through the voices of children: How do students fashion meaning as it relates to the concept of national identity?
CHAPTER IV
PARTICIPANT PROFILES

What I have discovered during this heuristic voyage of learning is the value of listening, especially to a traditionally marginalized populace. Smith, Schankler, and Chew (2014) describe listening as a creative act. Although their particular study applied the phenomenon of listening to the genre of music, I suggest that their findings are germane to my student interview experience. Smith, et al., discovered that listeners perceive what they hear differently dependent on (a) their background and (b) their familiarity with what they are hearing. For them, understanding this relationship between the listener and the music (speaker) allows for the advancement of our understanding of what is perceived in this process of receiving and responding. In my role as a hermeneutic phenomenologist, my perception and interpretation of the data – the narratives of students – is a form “of engaging in a dialogue between something that is old (a fore-understanding) and something which is new (the text itself)” (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2013, p. 26).

I have chosen to dedicate a chapter to the voices of the student participants in this study as they navigated their experiences in government and other social studies classes and units throughout their K-11 educational experience and their meaning-making of the concept of a national identity. My decision to do so occurred only after I had completed the reductive process of thematic analysis. The residual data, the essence of the students’
lived experiences and their identity and agency as expressed through their voices deserves and compels elevation. My commitment to augment the importance of the words of the students in a separate chapter, while non-traditional, is not unique. Gilliam (2006), in her dissertation *We Take From It What We Need: A Portraiture Approach to Understanding a Social Movement Through the Power of Story and Storytelling Leadership*, chose to design a separate chapter to showcase the portraits of her participants as did Alba (2012) in her dissertation *Portraits of Successful African Immigrant Faculty on U.S. Campuses*. Their decisions cite the power of story-telling in the illumination of meaning; like Gilliam and Alba, I believe focusing the reader’s attention on the essence of the students responses to their lifeworlds allows a broader audience to intimately interact with the data and reflexively engage with the phenomenon under exploration.

Contrary to bell hooks’ (1994) belief that students tend *not* to be comfortable exercising their right to “free speech” – “especially if it means that they must give voice to thoughts, ideas, feelings, that go against the grain, that are unpopular” (hooks, 1994, p. 179), the forthrightness and sincerity with which the students in my study generously articulated their “thoughts, ideas, feelings” was extraordinary. I am reminded by this experience of an appropriate and telling observation by Quayle (2007) “to be heard is a privilege not equally extended to all persons” (p. 8).

**Profile of Alan**

Alan is a 17-year-old junior at Midwestern High School who has spent the majority of his years living in Midwestern town. He characterizes himself politically as “leans towards the left” but not liberal and socially as “introverted” when it comes to
weekends and parties, since he would rather stay home. In contrast, based on my classroom observations and the comments from several of his U.S. Government classmates, he is not only an extrovert in class, but also a comedian of sorts. He participates in speech and debate, Boy Scouts, Art Club, Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA), and other school organizations and credits a number of those involvements as his being pushed into by his parents “who want their kid to be in sports or need to teach them lessons.”

Although born in Mississippi, the family moved to Las Vegas for a 2-year stint when Alan was 6 months of age. His description of life in Mississippi centered on what he termed “a lack of decency.”

From what I can recall, basically my dad lived there for work. Then, just in general, Mississippi with the large amount of Confederate flags. This is the story that my parents like to tell: My sister had this little baby doll. It was like a little black baby. Whenever she carried it outside in Mississippi, everyone would judge our family. Because there was a lot of racism in Mississippi, there probably still is, I have not gone back. But, we only spent six months in Mississippi, so I was born and then I left . . . We did not really get along with the people in Mississippi, I think . . . My parents are not necessarily super politically accurate. So, I do not think that they were necessarily offended by just the . . . I think it was in general just the uneducated-ness of the, I do not know the correct word . . . (Alan, Student Interview One, 9-24-14)

Although the majority of his memories have their geographical origins in Ohio, Alan considers Ohio a “better fit.” By this, he referenced the stability of his father’s job (a self-employed business) that “rooted” both him and his family to this state and area. Interestingly, Alan is well traveled (Australia, England, France, Canada, Mexico and South America) and both his mother and father would have preferred to relocate more often but were committed to his father’s business. When discussing the concept of
national attachment, he explained that he does not have “a strong connection to any. I do not necessarily have any nationalism.” In a later reflective interview (Alan, Student Interview Three, 10-7-14), during the process of making meaning, Alan determined,

I would say my entire family is pretty cynical . . . But, I think I am the most verbal. I definitely think me being a skeptic was because my parents were not super-forceful about the Declaration and you know. It is family values and American way and you know American Dream. We were very, I guess, independent, in a personal sense. Like, we did not need to be an American. We were just the Petika family. I think that definitely shaped more than school, how I view the country. (Alan, Student Interview Three, 10-7-14)

When referencing world nations and cultures, once again, Alan referred to the attitude of his parents:

It is really interesting, because my parents do not like to be called tourists. They really prefer to just observe the local culture and kind of go to where the actual people go; which is a lot more interesting than . . . I guess a lot of U.S. people whenever they go traveling sort of separate themselves from the country and then they just look at the stuff and take pictures. My dad does not like to do that. I think we definitely have a more hands-on experience with the culture. (Alan, Student Interview One, 9-24-14)

In his reconstruction of his social studies classrooms beginning in elementary school and progressing forward until (but not including) his present U.S. Government class, what is first and foremost in Alan’s evaluation is the repetitiousness of content. Although he acknowledged additional detail and depth of content based on longitudinal age development, he questioned the changing perspectives from which similar topics are taught.

We were talking about the Indians, but we are not really taught about what we are being taught about the Indians. We are not necessarily told what happened to the Indians right away. I think that is a bit of a dark note in U.S. history. We are also taught about the Constitution. It is basically all of those things that people call to whenever it is like the US. We believe in this, this or this. Those facts are taught from the Americans I think. (Alan, Student Interview One, 9-24-14)
During our third interview, while reflecting on the overall social studies educational stream, Alan more pointedly pinpointed his relationship with the pedagogy of history.

I think, basically, Thanksgiving comes along; the teacher is—let’s have a day about Thanksgiving and we will have a little dance or whatever. You guys can dress up as Indians. I think, in a sense, they are trying to show you a little bit of that time back then. Without trying to show you the gritty stuff, I guess. The fact or what happens after Thanksgiving . . . I think it is where most lies are, which is sort of that strange place where they are not lying. It is just a very selective representation of the truth. (Alan, Student Interview Three, 10-7-14)

Alan shared strong beliefs concerning religion, the American Dream and generational identity. Politically speaking, he sees religion as a part of the life of a majority of the population even though he does not believe it necessarily has to be and he references what he considers the rather agnostic country of England, which has yet to “sink into the ocean.” For him, he equates the deep-seatedness of religion in most families as a tradition-like experience while additionally suggesting that there are also many families that do not profess any identity related to religion. Alan, when talking about the American Dream, finds it funny that everyone could possibly have the same dream, something he refers to as the “default dream.” For him, that aspect of an American identity, like the rest of U.S. culture, was “rewritten post WWII” as the product(s) of an environment of returning soldiers economically and psychologically infused with the possibility of a new American nation. Each subsequent generation, beginning with the baby boomers through to the millennial generation, have impacted and redefined America through their lived experiences with the socio-economic and political world (i.e., technology, war protests, Watergate, etc.). “I am a strong believer
of nurture over nature. I definitely think that the way a person is raised is the way they operate,” (Alan, Student Interview One, 9-24-14)

The bulk of Interview Two was dependent on the students’ description of their interaction with their U.S. Government class. In his Advanced Placement (AP) class, Alan values the pedagogical style of the teacher.

[Teacher] has a pretty good relationship with our class, I think. Because, a lot of us from speech and debate and he is the aide . . . So, we already have a rapport or something along those lines. Usually, he has a power point. The content on the power point is pretty scarce, which is nice. It is usually basic concepts of government, the systems, democracy stuff. It is nice, because I guess it gives him more time to actually talk about what the content is, instead of just giving us information. It is a lot more open than a lot of social studies, which I enjoy, because I guess it keeps it natural. I think that helps in learning . . . But, it is, I guess the content he is talking about does not seem like he is reading it off a sheet of paper. But, instead he is just saying, not what he feels, but what he himself knows and finds interesting. I think one of the things that happens whenever you have a really, I guess, free-flowing class is that a lot of times he will reference present-day things that involve with the government that he is talking about. I enjoy that. It definitely gives a good, I guess, connection with the student and what is going on. Because, they can be like, ‘Oh well it is just like . . .’ I do not know, something personal. (Alan, Student Interview Two, 9-30-14)

Even though my interviews with the students occurred at approximately the eighth–tenth week of U.S. Government classes, Alan recalled having already addressed the topics of democracy, tyranny, governing systems, state and national relationships and their operations, bills, checks and balances, federal system, documents (i.e., Constitution, Declaration of Independence), the written word of law, and representative government.

As we expanded our conversation to the formal curriculum, Alan proposed a relationship between what is the teacher’s decision to teach and state curriculums and teaching standards:
You are really given a specific set of things that you have to teach your students. Then, you teach it to them. Really, the only way for them to scale how well you taught it to them is a test. So, I think in that sort of system, broad discussions about the morals of what a group of people did is not necessarily encouraged as much just reading a book and then doing five multiple choice questions. (Alan, Student Interview Two, 9-30-14)

While Alan attributes his opinions on civics to what he has learned in the educational system, he credits his awareness of the world and its events to himself. According to him, in order to achieve a higher quality of learning for most students, teachers should “give them the tools they need and explain to them how they work and then have them determine for themselves how to use them” (Alan, Student Interview Two, 9-30-14). Having one’s personal opinion, to which he/she identifies, is for Alan about the tools one is given.

I think if you give someone the ability to make their own educated opinion on something, even if everyone has the same opinion on it, it is still their opinion. It is a lot different in that sense, than if you just give them an opinion. (Student Interview Two, 9-30-14)

It is the most common thing that teachers do, give an opinion, Alan suggested. The majority of teachers just give facts or raw information. When “your own personality, your own person is in the class and is actively participating in the criteria this definitely helps you learn it” (Alan, Student Interview Two, 9-30-14). It is not surprising that Alan ranked his AP Government class first for personal value.

Alan was clear in his distinction between citizenship and national identity. Citizenship was for him, related to living in a country, and in America in particular, “where anyone can be who they are” (Alan, Student Interview Three, 10-7-14). National identity he defines as:

• at some level, a sense of nationalism
• pride in where you are from
• belief in the national philosophy
• changing, dependent on one’s developmental level

When queried about his own national identity during the meaning-making process of Interview Three (and reflecting on the details of his lived experiences in Interviews One and Two), Alan initially elucidated, “I think I choose to not be part of a nation and instead be kind of my own person, I guess.” But after further exploration of the concept, he finds the U.S. government hypocritical (preach but do not practice), not what was intended by the founding fathers, too large (both the government and the army), and too centralized, Alan arrived at the essence of his national identity.

I think I understand who I am in relation to this country. I understand how this country operates and how I should operate with it. So, I think, in a sense, I do have that sort of national identity. But, I do not think that is a very strong one. (Alan, Student Interview Three, 10-7-14)

Alan concluded our interviews with a projection of how his future activities as a citizen might be imagined. In his illustration he will be a productive member of society, a functioning and helpful person who will work for what he believes is right and in that sense, participate in changing the world.

Well, I think the thing about this country is that everyone sort of has... like in order for something to happen, everyone should agree on it. That is what democracy is. It is the majority rules... So, I think really the best way to change the country would be to believe in what you believe in and vote for what you believe in. (Alan, Student Interview Three, 10-7-14).

Profile of Frankie

Frankie is a 17-year-old student enrolled in numerous Advanced Placement (AP) courses, one of which is AP Government. Socially, she identifies herself through her
friendships and “the stuff I do.” That ‘stuff’ involves playing tennis, participating in the band and on the school newspaper, The Blade. Most of her friends share the same political views (trending liberal) and she chastises those who are not actively aware of what is going on in the world.

I am not sure if there is any way you can really change that, it is just people's mentality. The best way is you have to do it yourself. I do read a lot, I read articles every once in awhile, I listen to the news. You kind of have to take that step yourself. (Frankie, Student Interview Three, 10-10-14)

Born in China, Frankie is the only child of Chinese parents who immigrated to Canada when she was two years of age and where she holds citizenship. While she does not remember life in China, she does have vivid and fond memories of her seven years in Canada.

I think I remember when we first moved there, we were not exactly like... we did not have that much money. We lived in a neighborhood. I do not really remember much of it, but my parents said it was a neighborhood where there were other immigrants, like a neighborhood where immigrants lived. So, it was not a great neighborhood, but it was not... I do not think it was dangerous or anything. It just was not like ‘high-end.’ It was like a normal neighborhood where people do not really have that much to start with so far. When I was in Canada, my parents did not want me to give up my Chinese heritage, I remember we went every Saturday we would go to this University in Canada where a lot of Chinese people would gather, like gather together and . . . it was basically like a school for Chinese kids. Because, they do not really have the opportunity to do that since they are not in China. (Frankie, Student Interview One, 9-29-14)

Frankie and her parents then moved to Midwestern, by way of a brief time in Pennsylvania, where a lack of a Chinese community served as the catalyst for the move to Ohio. As a result of her experiences, Frankie explained, “For me being part of the Chinese community within living in an American city it has always been a part of what I remember” (Frankie, Student Interview One, 9-29-14).
Those feelings are most pronounced as she compares her concept of family to the average family living in Midwestern where the concept also often includes extended family – grandparents, aunts, and uncles. “As a term for me, family has always just been me and my parents. Extended family, I have not had that much experience with them. They all live in China” (Frankie, Student Interview One, 9-29-14).

The culmination of her cultural experiences has also profoundly marked her perception of self.

My identity has a lot to do with my background. I have gone to a lot of different places. I have experienced a lot of different things, obviously. Even though, I have not lived in China for long I have been back there. What it is like in China, the atmosphere is really different from what it is like in Canada and America. Those experiences kind of make my own identity. (Frankie, Student Interview One, 9-29-14)

Frankie was extremely articulate in her discussion of culture and how this particular concept has been constructed as a result of her lived experience. Especially in her introduction of her background in Interview One, Frankie covered numerous topics related to but not limited to: tension between family’s focus on maintaining Chinese culture with her desire to become more familiar with American culture, visits to China and her ability to communicate through not only language but cultural demeanor (i.e., body language), contrast in purpose and attitudes of Chinese and American educational systems, and a concept she admires in the U.S. but finds absent in China – sarcasm. This overriding awareness of the different cultural aspects of China and America, combined with her experience living in Canada, were factored into her conclusion that “I guess I do not consider myself having a really strong national identity. I just kind of immerse myself in different cultures.” (Frankie, Student Interview One, 9-29-14)
An additional belief constructed as a result of her interactions with various cultures and peoples is her strong belief in practicing cultural sensitivity.

Just because someone’s culture is different from yours, does not give you the right to criticize them for what they do. For me, that shifting that I had to do, then this cultural and all these cultures that have been merged in me has taught me that you have to be sensitive to other people's cultures as well. Like you may not understand, always understand the way they do things, but you should still respect them. (Frankie, Student Interview One, 9-29-14)

Based on Frankie’s extensive reflection on her concept of culture and its dependence on nationhood, her appropriate and timely shift to the concept of national identity as qualified by culture was not surprising. Frankie’s unique background of experiences lent itself to this transition.

It [America] is such a big country, different regions of it. There are so many different opinions. I just think identifying yourself as having one national identity is not, well for me at least, because I have been in so many different places, it is not an accurate way of describing myself. I would consider myself a Canadian, I consider myself Chinese, I am an immigrant in America and I like the fact that I am more, that I have all these different backgrounds that can support me for my true identity. (Frankie, Student Interview One, 9-29-14)

After reflecting a bit more on her national attachments and the sources for those affinities, Frankie eventually conceded, “I guess really I do have an American identity” (Frankie, Student Interview One, 9-29-14). A continuance of our discussion ended in a qualification of her national identity:

For me, American identity, that is a really big part. But, it is also not dealing with part of myself. From all of these other experiences I have had in my life, this American identity is not the only part of myself that I really think of. (Frankie, Student Interview One, 9-29-14)

During our second interview in which we focused on constructing details of her lived experience in U.S. Government class, Frankie chose to examine the connection
individuals do or do not make to their country. For her, the degree of knowledge one has about his/her country and its impact on self determines one’s feelings of a connection. “If you never really bothered to learn about how your country works and how it affects other people as well, I feel like you never really have an official connection to it” (Frankie, Student Interview Two, 10-6-14). Because of her awareness of what is going on in the U.S. currently, through what she has learned in government class, in [the school] newspaper class, and on her own, she feels more of a connection with the U.S. than with China or Canada. Frankie cited several resources from which she gathers information to construct her viewpoints - Twitter, Vox, the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, CNN, National Public Radio (NPR) and Time magazine. Influenced by traditional sources of learning and pedagogical places, she is adamant in her perception of the cultural of large nations, such as the U.S. and China, as non-singular in identification, but rather represented by multiple cultures constantly and fluidly in flux.

In our third and final interview, Frankie drew a distinction between her cultural self, which is Chinese, and her political and civic self that she describes as being more connected to the US. She also possesses an emotional connection to certain countries based on friends, peers, homes in which she has lived and schools she has attended. This connection she shares between both the U.S. and Canada. In the end, having come full circle back to the concept of a national identity, Frankie firmly described the criteria for its construction.

How much you participate in government and how much you pay attention to what they do also influences a big part of your national identity, if you are more empathetic or more involved. Then, I think, it gives you more perspectives on your national identity as well. (Frankie, Student Interview Three, 10-10-14)
As Frankie is currently in the process of determining whether or not to apply for U.S. citizenship, several of her details in interviews one and two reflect this conundrum as well as the focus of the interview. During the first interview (focus on details of historical background pre-US Government class) the emphasis of her comments dealt with her experience seeking a Green Card for “permanent residency” and the bureaucratic obstacles her family has faced in its procurement. In her second interview (centered on details of experience in U.S. Government class), Frankie highlighted the concept of citizenship – its ambiguity for her in relation to the US, expectations and obligations of those who have citizenship in the US, and its link to the nation’s government as more than an official document.

Our reflective interaction during interview three produced her thoughts on initially not wanting to seek citizenship in the US, “a conscious choice then.” But as a result of becoming more aware of politics and government combined with the fact that she is considering taking up permanent residence here, she has concluded that citizenship would be an opportunity for her.

I feel if I disagreed with a lot of the views and the Constitution, that I probably would not be as inclined to participate in government and become a citizen as well. There are things I disagree with right now, but I do not think it is enough. Like, fundamentally, when you look back at that, I think I agree with the whole idea of the Constitution as well. So, because I agree with that, makes me more inclined to become a citizen. (Frankie, Student Interview Three, 10-10-14)

From an emotional perspective, Frankie likened the experience of citizenship as being “tethered” with the ability to belong to and call some place home, rather than being transient.
The details concerning her reflection on pre-government social studies classes were limited and somewhat episodic. She expressed an affinity for what she has learned about the history and culture of the 1920s and 1930s, and the social programs of the U.S. during the 1940s beginning with Roosevelt’s New Deal and social security through to the programs of Medicaid and Medicare. Important for her is the impact and importance of those particular times and policies in U.S. history on contemporary society. Although colonial times are important, Frankie would like to see social studies classes move on to more modern times and discussions of shifting political atmospheres (i.e., 1980s and 90s with Reagan and conservatism).

Frankie finds her U.S. Government class “more of a relaxing atmosphere. It is like more something that would . . . I am willing to learn about.” She credits her evaluation to the fact that some classes (i.e., math and calculus) require only one answer when problem solving. Government, on the other hand, often has several different solutions, compromises, and moralities that often lead to classroom debates. “I like how in government and language [class] there are different ways to explore certain ideas and how to make something work. That is one reason why I like more discussion-oriented classes, like that in government and language arts” (Frankie, Student Interview Two, 10-6-14). In her comparison of an advanced placement class versus a general class, Frankie suggests the classroom environment is different based upon the clientele’s propensity for what is perceived as an essential element for interest and learning: debate. In support of her contention, I can affirm a significant number of students who participate in the Speech and Debate Club can also be found on the rosters of several AP Government classes.
Frankie recommends that government courses be required for graduation from high school. “When you are going off into the real world and you do not really know how it works, I do not think that really benefits you that much.” Knowledge of national and state governments and the spheres in which they function, the contents of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution and the contexts in and purposes for which they were constructed are examples of those benefits. For Frankie it is important for students to:

. . . know how the decisions impact them in their lifetime. Also, how they can make decisions for themselves. If you just kind of breeze by without really knowing what is going on and what is going on around you, I do not think that is really fair. But, if you know how government works and you know how you can participate in certain times and how it impacts . . . even if you do not think it will impact you, it probably will. It is like the whole thing with Isis, where people think that is only going to stay in the Middle East. It is never going to have an impact on the United States. That is not really a legitimate excuse for being apathetic. So, I would guess it kind of comes back to the fact that being apathetic to government and being apathetic to how it works and it impacts people. I do not think it is fair as a citizen to not care about what is going on, and about how decisions are made by the government and how it can affect you as well. (Frankie, Student Interview Two, 10-6-14)

Profile of Jon

Geographically, Jon’s lived experience is primarily domestic. Although born in Kansas, when he was only a few months old his family moved to Ohio. Since that time Jon has resided in [Midwestern] and during our interview mentioned having once traveled to Philadelphia for a church mission trip. He is an avid high school soccer player and member of [church’s name] Christian Church, both sources for the majority of his friendships, understandable as Jon attended a Christian elementary school before enrolling in the local public high school that he now attends.
Religion is a cornerstone in Jon’s life and he spoke proudly of his lifelong association with the church and the mission work in which he participates. “I like to help other people and I like to spread the word . . . my strongest ties are to the church” (Jon, Student Interview One, 9-25-14).

An additional passion for Jon is his interest in civics although he admitted his interest developed over time. He recollected studying the Pilgrims, religious freedom, the American Revolution, the Civil War, World War I, World War II, the Enlightenment, inventions, the Cold War and “foreign things” over the course of his formal schooling. Jon admits to the classroom as being the major source of his civic and historic knowledge but suggests that since engaging in his U.S. Government class; he has become more active in seeking outside resources for self-learning. Jon beams when he tells me about his experience in his U.S. Government class.

I did not really know how government worked though. So, I did not know executive, judicial and legislative branches. I did not know what any of those did. I just knew they were there. I am excited. I basically know what they do now, but I am learning more about what they can do and how they influence what my life is. (Jon, Student Interview One, 9-25-14)

It was even more obvious during our second interview that Jon completely enjoys his time in government class. With the exception of our discussion on national identity, Jon was the most articulate and provided the largest amount of data while constructing details of his experiences with the concept of government and government class. His teacher’s introduction of relevant terms, vocabulary, textbook work, discussions, videos and lectures that provoke interest through ancillary stories and information have served to pique Jon’s attention to the foundations of the American government (i.e., individual
amendments located in the Bill of Rights, Declaration of Independence, Constitution – as specifically alluded to by Jon in Interview Two, 10-1-14).

Jon did not hesitate in his description of the impact of his U.S. Government class on his identity as an American citizen:

Voting is a big one, because as Americans [it is] your right to vote. I turn 18 next year, so I will be able to vote in the next presidential election. Doing your research, knowing what you are voting on and who you are voting for. Not, just saying I have to vote and I will just vote for this, this and this. Doing research is definitely a big one . . . I feel like if you live in America and you are under the government, you should know how it works and how it impacts you personally or your family . . . So, when you grow up you can made educated decisions on things you have learned when you were in government class. Just not going off of what you have heard or things that you were told to think. So, you know how the government works. (Jon, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14)

Our third interview produced data that reflected Jon’s meaning-making journey, best expressed in his culminating comment:

I did not really think I had different opinions on what I could have thought through government. I always thought, well I am a Republican, I am this and this and that is about it. But, I did not ever think about why I am this and this and how it compares to other countries and how it ranks. (Student Interview Three, 10-8-14)

Reflective of his epiphany, Jon ranks his U.S. Government class first according to the criterion of personal value.

Everyday events in Jon’s life serve as triggers for his feelings of national identity. First, as a hunter, Jon is quite cognizant of the Second Amendment and his right as an American to bear arms. Second, as a soccer player at the beginning of each match “we do the National Anthem.” During the Anthem, Jon thinks “about our freedoms and the troops defending the flag” (Jon, Student Interview One, 9-25-14). Third, every week while attending church, Jon is reminded of his right to freedom of religion as he
expresses his faith. Lastly, having to submit his birth certificate and proof of U.S. citizenship for his new job also reminded Jon about his identification with this country. During his third and final interview, Jon mentioned an additional aspect that significantly contributes to his national identity:

I am getting my opinion and exercising my right [voting] that I have been given as an American citizen and that has been fought for. It has been defended. It is a simple right that not very many people think that it has been fought for (Student Interview Three, 10-8-14).

For Jon, the American national identity and its freedoms have been uniquely earned. When asked how he will engage in future civic activity, he responded,

I guess you could say teaching the next generation on what government is. Not necessarily leading them in what I think, but giving them a general idea of what government is, how it came to be and what your rights are. (Jon, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14).

Jon also expects to own his own firearm, own property, pay taxes, purchase goods locally and put money back into the economy, keep up with politics, and finally,

I guess giving your opinion on who you think should run the country . . . Know who you are voting for and what you are voting on. Not necessarily everyone from your same political party might be the best choice throughout the country. So, definitely keep the research and also I guess sharing your opinion, so whoever is or is not elected you know that you had your say. I guess you could say if you did not vote . . . you cannot really get upset, because you did not exercise your right. (Jon, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14)

Profile of Mala

Mala is an exceptionally civic-minded 17 year old. She describes herself as having always been “very independent” and “competitive” and American for a very long time (a reference to family background). Her father, an attorney, graduated from Notre Dame (Indiana) and her older brother currently attends Fordham. No coincidence that
both schools are affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church, as her family is steadfastly Catholic and has been for generations. “My family was pretty much Catholic. I went to Catholic school, we go to Catholic church every week and we are very social justice oriented Catholics.” Her mother is a kindergarten teacher at one of the local schools. Mala herself attended a local Catholic elementary and junior high school and entered the public high school in the ninth grade. She professes a Catholic identity but added a qualifier, “I think when I look at the Catholic Church and Pope Francis and their stance is on helping those who have less and stuff like that, I really more identify more with that side of being Catholic” (Mala, Student Interview One, 9-25-14)).

In addition to her self-declared Catholic identity, Mala’s political identity stems from her family interactions. Her father, a lawyer, once worked for a judge and for Congressman Ralph Regula, who personally escorted Mala and her family around the Capital building and congressional offices during their visit to Washington, DC.

So, I have always been raised around politics, news and stuff like that. I never really got into [it] until my freshman year and I joined speech and debate. I do the category of U.S. Extemporaneous. Which is, you go to tournament, draw 3 questions that are politically oriented and you have to come up with a 7-minute speech, with only 30 minutes of preparation. No notes. So you have to be really aware of everything going on. (Mala, Student Interview One, 9-25-14)

A self-professed feminist who enjoys exploring causes such as immigration, social justice, and the child migrant crisis, Mala has written essays on increasing legalized immigration, fixing the broken immigration system and has even formally contacted her elected representatives about those particular topics.

Like a number of her U.S. Government classmates, besides participating in speech and debate, she is a member of The Blade newspaper staff. “I have become
known as the PC parade; the politically correct; that kind of thing. I think eventually I want to go into some sort of social justice career. I really like that.” Several of her good friends on *The Blade* staff are conservative, but she enjoys sitting through a whole lunch period engaging in fun debates, just “going back and forth” (Mala, Student Interview One, 9-25-14)

Mala recently attended a weeklong politics camp sponsored by the American Political Institute at Georgetown University.

It was so interesting to be around a bunch of other people who were so politically aware and who were my age. They also have really strong stances. It was also, there is kind of a spectrum there. It was mostly really liberal people, but there were also some really conservative people and there were some good debates. I love debating! I will always play the devil’s advocate. I just love debating people. (Mala, Student Interview One, 9-25-14)

Before deciding to pursue a career in social justice, she had considered politics, but after her Georgetown experience, “I realized politics is really cutthroat.” (Mala, Student Interview One, 9-25-14). One rather positive, impacting experience at the politics camp was her organized experience at DC’s Central Kitchen.

They employ convicted felons and teach them to cook food. They use all these different aspects of the community. They cook healthy school lunches in impoverished schools and then they set up healthy food access in food deserts, I guess they called them and how one charity can help all of these different aspects of the community. Helping the kids to be healthier, helping those who were in prison to break the cycle of poverty and all of that. I thought it was really cool how like one charity can do all these different things and make the world a better place. I thought maybe that was a lot more personality than politics. (Mala, Student Interview One, 9-25-14)

As she reflected on her social studies classes beginning in elementary school, Mala provided details of highs and lows in her learning. In spite of the fact that she was able to name each of her classes since fourth grade, she mentioned only three particular
classroom lessons. In the seventh grade, a teacher she enjoyed involved the students in creating a rather large diagram “that took up the whole wall of our classroom with every event in WWII. So, I liked that.” In the eighth grade the students were required to select a current event and then assigned a particular day on which to present their research and lead a discussion. “I thought that was a really great thing to do, because that is what sort of started getting me interested in following the news” (Mala, Student Interview One, 9-25-14). And in her junior year, in preparation for the culminating Advanced Placement U.S. History exam, the class was able to only reach the WWII era, leaving the students to cover the remaining half a century or so on their own. Mala’s solution for this predicament is to

Make the links as you go. Also, a lot of the foundational stuff I have been getting since fourth, fifth grade. Which is over and over and over. If we would just build on what we learned before, instead of having to review it and rehash it all year . . . (Mala, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14)

During our second interview, Mala made the transition to describing, in detail, her experience in her current social studies class, U.S. Government. Conversational, always linking to current events, project-oriented, debate-filled and relevant are all elements that contribute to her analysis of the class as “probably the best balance I have in any of my classes . . . a good balance of staying on track, but also enjoying ourselves.” She told me that this style of pedagogy moves her to be engaged and learn more. “. . . if it is relevant to my life or to things I am doing in speech, if I know why it is important, I will be much more motivated to learn it” (Mala, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14). At the time of our interview sessions, topics related to the foundation of U.S. Government – the Constitution, amendments, democracy and variations on democracy, Supreme Court,
government and its authority and obligations to the people – are those she addressed in her reflection on her government class.

What impact has U.S. Government class had on Mala? “It forces me to maybe think about my personal views in contrast with what would maybe be best for the country” (Mala, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14). As a student, she related her understanding of the reciprocal nature of the education system and government.

The government wants to have an educated society. It works towards the benefit of everyone. Then, when you go to vote you can make informative choices. You can be a better part of the workforce and it helps the economy to have more educated workers who are more productive. (Student Interview Two, 10-1-14)

Mala believes that what she learns in U.S. Government class is directly applicable to position statements, debates and discussions that are most valuable to her.

Most of the stuff we learned this year in government I kind of already knew just because it is in my area of interest. I thought it was fun to actually have my classmates know and care. A lot of times during class everyone is just apathetic. But, when we were debating the amendments, people actually cared about these political issues and stuff. I thought it was fun to see people getting riled up and standing up, you know, and yelling at each other over gun rights and things like that. (Mala, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14)

Mala concluded her meaning-making third interview on the topic of U.S. Government class with a surprisingly intuitive comment for someone her age.

In my classroom there are people who care a lot, there are people who do not care at all and we have people who feel very strongly on both ends of the political spectrum in my classroom. There are people that do not do their homework. There are people who do other classes’ homework during class or on their phones. There are people who answer questions in class and people who do not. [There are] people who ask questions in class, [which is] probably more important than answering questions. (Mala, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14)
Mala’s lived experiences of diversified cultures are those she describes as domestically regional and most frequently encountered during family trips with a few associated with speech camps and political summer camps. First in her recollection was “the way some people talk, that was a big one.” Besides her discussion of the various regional cultural differences of the individuals who attended the politics camp at Georgetown, Mala cited her particular interaction with a host family at a recent speech and debate tournament at Wake Forest, North Carolina.

It was very southern. They served fried chicken and people talked with a twang. It was very traditional southern. We went to my speech coach mother's house for dinner one night and it was very southern hospitality kind of deal. It was different. (Mala, Student Interview One, 9-25-14)

In her rumination on the concept of national identity, Mala drew a correlation between degree of affinity for America and historical versus contemporary educational focus. “I think if we had history and government classes that focused more on how everything impacts now, I think it would be more relatable” (Mala, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14).

Mala identifies as an American but associates more with a global citizenship/identity. She credits this kinship to having “a lot more in common with people my age around the world than necessarily [I] do with other people in America.” Her conduit for this knowledge is having grown up on the Internet and being in contact with people, through Internet sites such as Reddit, from all around the world all the time. “We use the same product. We use the same words. [We have] so many views in common” (Mala, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14).
In relation to her country as a leader for democracy, she is most proud of and strongly identifies with America’s altruism towards other countries or peoples in need. She also remembers two particular national situations that promoted, for her, a more cognizant sense of American identity—domestic terrorist attacks and worldwide competitions (i.e., Olympics). “Other than on like Veterans Day and things like that we do not focus on it at all, national identity.” According to Mala, other sources of national identity are defense of particular rights of the people (i.e., Second Amendment, First Amendment, etc.), a common past, the American Creed (doctrines), and common values that bind everyone together.

Probably, like we have been doing in this interview, the best way for the people to understand their identity, they have to think of it themselves. You cannot just tell them what the American identity is. So, I think you need a lot of exploration-type things . . . you have to sort of like feel something about being an American. Otherwise, you are not going to go out and vote and participate . . . I think everybody, probably cares about something about American identity in some way. They just may not realize it. (Mala, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14)

As she discussed her attitudes on citizenship for immigrants, Mala suggested, 

. . . getting citizenship is sort of like you signing [a] social contract. Saying that you understand everything the government is doing for you and you understand what you should be doing for it and you understand your rights to vote and things like that. (Mala, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14)

As a future active citizen, Mala intends to be involved and remain interested in politics and government. She also sees herself “constantly staying up to date on the news, voting, writing my elected officials or being part of an interest group. I guess I will always be an involved American” (Mala, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14)
Profile of Jason

As a 17 year old, Jason has spent his life in two midwestern states. He spent his first seven years in Midwestern and then moved with his parents and three siblings to a nearby state where his father took a job as a youth minister in a small church. They remained there until 2 years ago when his father completed his master’s degree in psychology and decided to move back to Midwestern.

Religion serves as Jason’s master identity. His father, grandfather and uncle have all served in their churches as ministers. His Christian faith definitely influences all aspects of his life from “political stuff” to his social identity. Throughout our interviews, Jason frequently expressed his thoughts through a spiritual lens. I was not surprised that as he listed the various freedoms on which this country was founded – speech, press, ownership of property – that freedom of religion is the one to which he has the strongest affinity. In fact, Jason questioned the emphasis on political correctness at the expense of the freedom of religious beliefs:

You have to be so politically correct today . . . You have to be so politically correct today: you have to be careful of what you say. You have conservative major celebrities for example, the Duck Dynasty guys and Truett Cathy, the guy who started Chick-fil-A. They come under fire for stating their beliefs against gay marriage and all of this stuff. Because it does not align with their Christian beliefs, I think overall, that sort of conservative America is sort of a problem or under attack I guess I could say. (Jason, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14)

What Jason remembered most from middle school was talking to another student about his church youth group and Jesus. “It was the first time I had ever had a teacher tell me that I cannot be talking about religion in school. That really upset me” (Jason, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14). In the end, Jason chalked it up to an example of political
correctness characteristic of (name of midwestern state), “believe it or not” (Jason, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14).

In addition to religion’s influence on his social identity, so too is his self-described lower-middle class economic identity.

Having a family of six is sort of like a strain on the budget and everything. We live in a house that is literally just big enough . . . I think, it just, you know, living in a small house, it is hard to have friends over. You do not really want to have people, ‘Oh man, come hang out at my super small house.’ (Jason, Student Interview One, 9-26-14)

As a result, Jason tends to “hang out” with peers whose families are not as well off either.

The majority of his friends attend his church, an experience he thinks is “nice.”

Politically, Jason has evolved from a strictly conservative stance to one now more associated with a middle-of-the-road independent position. He attributes this progression to having aged and begun to “think for himself.” “I guess, when I was younger I sort of looked up to my parents and grandparents who are more conservative and stuff. That is one major thing about being a teen is finding your own identity” (Jason, Student Interview One, 9-26-14).

It was apparent during our interview that Jason has pondered and developed his own personal conviction on the concept of government.

I believe that the government should be very small and that it should be left up more to the states and smaller bodies that can more accurately govern, based on how the people feel about something. I think there should be less regulation on things . . . Just enough that it allows [the] people to be successful in life and really accomplish what they want. (Jason, Student Interview One, 9-26-14)

Jason is critical of the current administration’s foreign affairs policies. As a result of his friendship and communication with a young girl living in the Ukraine, Jason
is particularly interested in our [the US] relations with Russia. He advises those in charge to “make our warnings a bit more sincere” (Jason, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14) by monitoring Russian leaders to determine that they are actually following through on what they say they are doing. Also based on his lived experiences, Jason suggests that the U.S. and its people, as a whole, are misidentified by the rest of the world as conservative and traditional. Instead, as part of our American identity, he believes that we have and take advantage of our rights to be whatever we want to be and make our own individual choices.

In Interview Three, Jason continued to expand on the concept of political correctness:

I think that political correctness actually offends more people than it helps. If you are politically correct towards a minority, then you are leaving out the majority, too. For example, they are politically correct towards Muslims . . . and their beliefs. But, when it comes to being Christians, they do not really . . . they can say whatever about them. If a Christian is against gay marriage, you know, they are terrible or how dare they. But, you never hear them complain about any major Muslim figures being against gay marriage and I am pretty sure they are too. Because they are politically correct, they do not want to offend them in anyway. Not saying [the] Pledge of Allegiance to the flag anymore, because of political correctness, I think that takes away from our patriotism, nationalism and pride in our country. (Jason, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14)

Jason’s reconstruction of his past social studies classes differs from the majority of his peers because of his two-state social studies education: 7th grade U.S. history; 8th grade government; 9th grade, no social studies class; 10th grade, World Studies; and 11th grade U.S. History. What he remembers from elementary school is studying various world cultures. These courses served to spark Jason’s love of “anything political”
and historical. In his discussion of the teaching of current events in social studies courses, he noted,

I do not think that most modern-day history or government classes really focus on modern-day issues. If you are teaching from a book that came up with issues that happened 10 years ago, for example, it is not relevant necessarily. It is relevant to a point to see this has happened and this is what they did about it. I think we need to be more active in modern-day issues, so we are more apt to fix those issues. (Jason, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14)

Astutely, Jason sees the benefit of government concepts and relationships being taught from an objective perspective in traditional civic education classrooms as opposed to the natural bias that may accompany learning about government from one’s parents.

Government ranks second behind computer programming class for personal value according to Jason. What he finds worthy is the way in which his teacher often relates government concepts to current events. It combines relevant topics, “what everybody is talking about,” with the more traditional fundamentals of government. Some of those concepts Jason lists as systems of governance (i.e., dictatorships, monarchies), democracy, republics, representative democracy and federalism. “We get a lot done in class” by approaching, for example, the Constitution by non-traditional methods.

[Instead of making] . . . us read the Constitution . . . he [the teacher] will make us read an article that someone wrote about the Constitution, about their views. . . So I think that was neat, because I had never looked at it from that perspective before. I think it is good to look outside of the bubble of what is normally taught to people. That way you can sort of make your own ideas of what the government really is. (Jason, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14)

For Jason, experiencing government class provides a basis and a structure on which he is able to conduct his own explorations of self-learning.
I think it is very important that they teach government classes because I think one thing that America needs most right now is people that can think for themselves and not just follow . . . you know, where ever the rest of the crowd is going. (Jason, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14)

Although Jason equates the concept of civics with that of government, citizenship is “basically saying where you belong in a way” and you follow the rules of the government of the nation. “A citizen is basically their own person, but they are part of a larger collective.” Jason claims that the decision to become a citizen or maintain citizenship in America or any other country “is because they agree with how their government is set up and how society runs in that particular country” (Jason, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14).

As part of his description of his national identity, Jason mentioned his core beliefs that never change. He recounted his freedom of religion and other aspects of the American Creed found in our nation’s documents, oaths and pledges that align with his Christian identity. And what if he were teaching a class on the concept of national identity? “I would cover the power of voting and the right to be able to choose who you elect to office” and other liberties enumerated in the Bill of Rights, such as freedom of speech and the right to peacefully assemble or protest.

. . . the thing is a lot of people do not protest on certain things because they want instant results and the fact is that protesting is a very slow result, but over time protesting and free speech will win out in the end. If there is a large enough cry for something. (Jason, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14)

Jason cautioned against the concept of indoctrination that can occur if teachers impose their beliefs on students in the teaching of civics and the documents that serve as the foundation of our government. He also returned to a grievance that he referenced throughout our interviews – political correctness and the loss of individual rights.
When we were little kids in elementary school, for example, we would get up and say the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag . . . Over time, you realize they stopped doing the Pledge of Allegiance in schools, because it might offend people. I think that more rights are being taken away. For example, there is less patriotism and nationalism these days than there was when I was in middle school. I have noticed a change from when I was in elementary and middle school and up to this point. (Jason, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14)

Jason plans on being politically active, perhaps running for office somewhere in some sort of city or county government. He will continue to listen to people and their ideas “because I like to listen to everybody first, see what they are thinking and then sort of pair it with my beliefs from my parents and that I have grown up with . . . and make my own path from that.” Oh yes, and “vote” (Jason, Student Interview Three, 10-10-14).

Profile of Ben

During his introductory interview, Ben described himself as a 17-year-old junior at Midwestern High school with three older brothers, one who has already graduated from college and two currently attending college. His father served on the local school board and is the Director of Operations at a local dairy, while his mother works at the local community hospital. Indicative of his truncated style of conversation, “As far as I know, I think everybody has been born in the US” (Ben, Student Interview One, 9-29-14).

It is obvious that at the core of Ben’s social identity, although Christian and from an upper-middle class home, was his association with The Blade, the school’s newspaper. There was a sense of pride in his voice as he spoke about this lived experience.

You always wonder how a newspaper or magazine gets designed, right? As far as curiosity... I guess I wanted to find out the process and what you have to go through. I really have come to like it. I enjoy writing too . . . I spend a lot of time in there. I mean we have worked nights and everything where
we eat dinner and I guess work on the [news]paper . . . I guess you talk to different people on staff. You have a variety from sophomores to seniors, so you tend to talk to people you would normally never talk to. (Ben, Student Interview One, 9-29-14)

Even as he continued to engage in another topic in our first interview, he returned to detailing his relationship with his peers whom he had met through working on The Blade.

When it was my first year on staff, I was kind of intimidated by other people because, I guess, I was less than they were or something. But I guess it forces you to get out of your comfort zone and actually talk to people and get to know them. You actually might be surprised, because you will really like the people you meet. At least that is what I have learned from the experience. (Ben, Student Interview One, 9-29-14)

Ben’s desire for a smaller government underscores his political identity as a conservative, as do many of his choices for information – CNN, Fox News, CBS and Drudge Report. “A lot of kids my age do not tend to watch the news or anything like that.” Ben, although he does not know why, enjoys watching the news. For him, it is a way to stay up to date on politics albeit, he tries “not to be too political” (Ben, Student Interview One, 9-29-14).

As Ben reconstructed, in Interviews One and Three, his lived experiences with social studies coursework, he was able to journey back to the fourth grade and studying about Native American Indians – Mound Builders and the Hopewell. Sixth grade coursework focused on Egypt and other ancient civilizations, especially in the Middle East, from a cultural perspective (non-political). Seventh grade built upon eastern civilization this time in Greece and Rome and added eras of the Middle Ages, the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. Eighth grade involved American History, but to Jason it was more “like American/European history” with a spotlight on Europe. Ninth grade World Studies topics most remembered by Jason were on Vietnam,
Indochina, the Ho Chi Minh Trail and the spread of communism. And finally, in tenth grade U.S. History he recalled the teacher’s selection of 20th century World Wars as the focal points for the entire academic year, which, not surprisingly, concluded with the Cold War.

Government class is exemplified, by Ben, through his interpretation of the pedagogical style of the teacher:

He will talk to us. He will have notes on the slide [PowerPoint], but he goes more in depth. He explains, it may be a broad saying on the overhead projector and he will go in more depth and give us examples. He will sometimes show a video. We did the Boston Massacre, I think it was two weeks ago. He showed a video of the Boston Massacre and how it was portrayed in the American sense and how it was portrayed in the British sense, so he gives us good examples. (Ben, Student Interview Two, 10-6-14)

The beginnings of America, the Articles of Confederation, Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights (the liberty amendments, especially) are topics and concepts that have been covered to date in Ben’s government class. Once again, his discussion gravitated to inclusion of his teacher.

He talked about the Articles of Confederation. Usually, a teacher would just say, ‘They are weak and that is why we did not use them,’ but he actually explains why they were weak and why we decided to just scrap it and write a new Constitution. So, we actually learned why. (Ben, Student Interview Two, 10-6-14)

Besides providing examples of objectivity when examining historical events and background and depth to presentation of historical facts, Ben related his teacher’s skill at integrating the concept of relevance during his instruction to his (Ben’s) authentic learning.

I would say it [lesson notes] highlights what is in the textbook and brings out new [ideas] and he will relate it to what is happening today or something like that . . . I guess you are learning real-life stuff. Not like you are not
learning in math or something. You are learning about what happens in
everyday government and what . . . Yeah, it gives you a sense of what is
happening in everyday life. Why does this happen. I like the real life
correlation between the two. (Ben, Student Interview Two, 10-6-14)

Behind science and math, courses he finds most beneficial to his future aspirations, Ben
ranked government as personally valuable.

 Freedoms of speech, religion, the press and the liberties and choices we have as
Americans underlie Ben’s sense of a national identity.

 You can go to school to become this or you can go get a job. You can go
for a trade. You can take your life in any direction you want without fear of
being... without someone telling you what you have to do for the rest of your
life. If you do not like your career here, you can totally change gears and go
over here and do this career. That can be completely different from what
you were previously doing. (Ben, Student Interview Three, 10-10-14)

 We are the “land of opportunity,” a country with a lot to offer and a government “run by
the people” through elected officials, conditions that Ben does not find emulated in
many other countries. For some, these descriptions may seem cliché-like, but for Ben
they are honest assessments of what factors into his interpretation of his national identity
(Ben, Student Interview Three, 10-10-14).

 If Ben were teaching a course on national identity, he would include essential
topics of the history and origins of the country: “where you came from, how your
country came to be, why they decided to . . . I keep thinking of the American
Revolution . . . what your country was founded upon.” (Ben, Student Interview Three,
10-10-14). Ben also mentioned a topic untouched by his peers when responding to this
particular query – national pride.

 I guess you could talk about... relating back to history, like when they
brought down the Berlin Wall. That would be a good example of pride, I
guess. It showed that . . . I mean . . . we are not going to stop communism,
but kind of help Russia, China and communism for their people. Sense of American pride. (Ben, Student Interview Three, 10-10-14)

Cultural identity was the final topic proffered by Ben, using compare-and-contrast methods to other countries in order to establish a distinct and correlating cultural description. If the topics he enumerated were not taught as foundational to a course on national identity, Ben foresees losing “kind of like the pride you have... Because you have accomplished something; understanding what people went through” (Ben, Student Interview Three, 10-10-14).

Commenting on citizenship, Ben remarked, “You do not think about this really. You take it for granted.” He also believes that the civic activity of voting is a responsibility and (1) not voting is a dereliction of duty, (2) should not be a privilege to noncitizens and (3) to be the best voter, “I would say you just need to be informed in whatever your ideals are... some research on candidates or pieces of legislation... like social issues” (Ben, Student Interview Two, 10-6-14).

**Profile of Jenni**

A homegrown 16-year-old young lady, Jenni has lived with her family in the Midwestern area since her great-grandparents immigrated from Calipia, Italy. She relishes her genealogical connections that have been naturally incorporated into family birthdays, get-togethers, parties and even bimonthly family dinners.

[It] was just a tradition they [great grandparents] carried. My great grandma did it all the time, they met at their house, they ate, they had a big dinner and everybody requests what they want to eat. Every time we go, she asks the grandkids. ‘What do you want to eat?’ We all get together and that is just something we do. That is something we have done ever since I grew up and that is all I have known. (Jenni, Student Interview One, 9-26-14)
Family is, without a doubt, one of the most significant aspects of her identity. “Family matters, family comes first; I do not ditch family things to go hang out with friends” (Jenni, Student Interview One, 9-26-14).

At school, choir and drama club serve as her social family. “We are like family. You work together for so long and then you just automatically become a family. You work together every day . . . We see each other every day.” In her description of drama club in particular, Jenni appreciates the diversity of its members. “There are jocks, nerds, cheerleaders, soccer players . . . We are not all the same and it does not matter. It does not matter when you get in there, because all of that stuff goes away” (Jenni, Student Interview One, 9-26-14). Even having attended a private school until sixth grade before eventually enrolling in the seventh grade in the Midwestern Schools does not appear to have diminished her attachment or feelings of acceptance.

Jenni noted regional distinctions as she detailed her lived experiences traveling within the U.S. to Florida, Tennessee, South Carolina, along the east coast and most especially, her visit to Chicago.

I love that place. If I could live there I would. City life appeals to me . . . They live in the fast lane all of the time. Being here, it is so . . . I have always felt this place is home, but I would love to live someplace else. I have lived here all my life. I just want to experience something else. Just the difference between the people there and the people here . . . how do those people really live in the fast lane like that? What changes their aspect on things? (Jenni, Student Interview One, 9-26-14)

On the nature of her political identity, Jenni attaches her parents to the Republican Party and notes her agreement with her parents’ description of that party’s ideology. Never verbally identifying herself as a conservative, she does express her opposition to abortions and government’s role in their performance. Likewise, she
disapproves of Obamacare as it relates directly to her parents, because “my parents are working people and I will be a working person and when my money goes to you and you do not do anything, that upsets me” (Jenni, Student Interview One, 9-26-14). Her criticism of government itself centers on spending money that it does not have. During our second interview Jenni provided an explanation for why she believes government is dysfunctional – it is too large and opaque. “I want to understand what they see and what I can see that they do.” She believes that it is vital for children “to understand what type of government we do have” so as to be informed and watchful (Jenni, Student Interview One, 9-26-14).

During our first interview, Jenni was able to recollect with detail her lived experiences as a student in various social studies classes, perhaps, as she tells me, because “history is my favorite thing” (Jenni, Student Interview One, 9-26-14). Although she does not remember paying attention during elementary school as she spent most of her time talking, she does begin to explicitly recall her junior high school experience. A World History course in seventh grade did not have much appeal to her, not compared to her eighth grade and eventual 10th grade encounters with U.S. History. Jenni was capable of articulating an endless stream of content related to the Industrial Revolution through all the wars and various time periods (i.e., the 1920s especially). Possibly, this ability can be attributed to her style of learning.

I am a note taker. I take notes all of the time. That is how I learn. Even when the teacher is ‘do not take notes, you do not have to take notes’ . . . I am still writing it down. It does not matter . . . I think it is just having a reference and me being able to go... I can fill up about two or three pages of notes a day . . . My mind works and so it is picturing that and rereading the stuff and it going through my head actually makes it a lot better for me. I can picture what I wrote and be like okay, yeah. It is more so of... people
are like ‘I do not study that way, blah, blah, blah.’ ‘I was like, I do.’ (Jenni, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14)

In addition to Jenni’s account of her learning style, she recalls a particular aspect of (government teacher’s) teaching style when responding to students who incorrectly answer a question.

. . . if it is wrong, he will tell us why it is wrong and he will correct us on it and stuff . . . He will ask ‘who got number three’ and we will go over the question and if we got it wrong he will go over it with us. (Jenni, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14)

Jenni gives credit to the teacher’s pedagogical methods for her growing interest in government. She readily talks about studying the background of American government, the Articles of Confederation, various types of governments, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights and specific amendments related to prohibition, women’s suffrage, and the right to “plead the fifth.” While being introduced to and discussing these historic topics in class, her teacher will relate them to current events and situations.

It is kind of better that way, because we understand it coming from the focal point of us and seeing what we see. I like to learn that way, in more contemporary [terms] so I can understand and my friends understand, too. (Jenni, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14)

In her appreciation of having (teacher’s name) as her government teacher, she makes a comparison. “I guarantee some people [teachers] walk in and are just like . . . well, this happened and I want this done and they [the students] are like, why? They cannot say why” (Jenni, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14).

Jenni was unable to supply an understanding for the concept of civics but had no difficulty elucidating her concept of citizenship. It is a belonging . . . “being in a place
and it being territorial” (Jenni, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14). She did also mention accompanying duties and responsibilities, something that they talked about in class.

Many of the elements that assist Jenni in her construction of the concept of citizenship appear in her details concerning her concept of national identity. That she is able to choose her religion, to speak what she believes, and to embrace the cultural aspects of her environment (i.e., language, dress, food, arts, monetary system, etc.) defines her national identity. In the future, Jenni has plans to actively participate in the election process by voting, become involved in community affairs and perhaps even serve on the board of a local organization.

Profile of Rose

Rose, at 16 years of age, is a young junior in high school. She identifies her mother as “white Caucasian” and her father as “fully black” with an ancestry of documented slaves. She has an older half-sister who is “fully black” and a younger brother and sister. Both her mother and father attended public school in the area and many of her extended family live nearby.

Socioeconomically, she classifies her family as lower-middle class with “enough for certain luxuries, but not like the big luxuries that most middle classes have.” Rose’s mother works in the fast-food industry and her father is employed in construction.

Although Rose’s description of her family and economic background was somewhat truncated during our first interview, she was significantly more detailed in her assessment of her social identity. She is currently a member of Drama Club, Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA), orchestra, choir, and Upward Bound and has, in the past, participated in Speech and Debate. She attends church but “only on Wednesdays when
they have their youth groups” and accompanied by her friend. Taekwondo is her sport but she had to stop as the 6-month contract was too expensive for her parents and the 3-month contract was even more costly. As a result, she is waiting until she acquires a job and then plans on paying for it herself.

Her biracial ethnicity most defines her and she easily describes the resulting tensions in her social life:

I always just feel more comfortable around black people, I do not know why, I just do. It is weird. I guess it is probably because I grew up more around my black side of the family than my white . . . . I am always around them. At school there are more white people here than black people, so I am around them more. It is just that when I was younger, I know my black cousins more than I do my white cousins. I just always feel safer around black people than white people. (Rose, Student Interview One, 9-24-14)

Rose considers that while there are “a lot of white people” in Midwestern, there are also “Asians, Hispanics and black people here.” Even so, she continues to attempt to explain her innate gravitation towards being black:

. . . white people, I do not know how to say this... but sometimes they will do and say things that they do not necessarily understand. Not wrong, but they just say stuff sometimes. I am like oh yeah, okay. But then black people, like the ones I hang around, they get it and they understand and they always include me. (Rose, Student Interview One, 9-24-14)

Because she is light skinned, Rose is often thought to be Hispanic by outsiders and for her, that is okay; “I inform them so they know.” Anecdotally, many of her white peers tend to comment on her hair when they first meet her.

They always want to touch it. I do not mind that they touch it and stuff, it is just that it makes it stand out more than... like black people say it, too. ‘Oh, I wish I had your hair, you have the good black people hair’ and stuff like that . . . (Interviewer: Is there bad people hair?) The regular black people hair is nappy and kinkier or like Afro curls and mine are like Afro curls, but not like super small and tiny, like kinky Afro curls (Rose, Student Interview One, 9-24-14).
As Rose describes her cultural affiliation, she defines herself as biracial because “when I was little I did not really notice there was a difference between my parents.” She knew that they were different “colors” and she had dolls that “one was like my mom and one looked like my dad” and Rose knew that the dolls were different “colors” but didn’t “notice it was a ‘thing’ until I got older and realized I was biracial.” When I asked Rose to expand upon her word choice of realized she answered, “I think about the fourth grade . . . my elementary school was like a whole bunch of white kids. There were a couple of black kids and three or four mixed kids” (Rose, Student Interview One, 9-24-14).

For Rose, her biracialness informs me that I may not look black, but I still am black. I cannot just claim one race and claim the traditions and the way one race works instead of the other. I like both of my races. Sometimes, I do not like the stuff (i.e. her hair) they give me, but I like both of them. (Rose, Student Interview One, 9-24-14)

In examining her political identity, Rose chose to refer to a few of her beliefs that correspond to some of the leading contemporary social issues. She is pro gay marriage, pro gun control, and has mixed emotions on abortion (i.e., pro in cases of rape or sexual assault, not sure otherwise) but essentially supports a woman’s choice. She does qualify her initial confident stance:

I would say if I was put in that situation, I would like to think I would keep the baby, but I have never been in that situation, so I do not know. I do not know the mindset that those people are thinking in, so I do not feel it is fair to just like judge people like that. (Rose, Student Interview One, 9-24-14)

Rose continued to touch on her political identity and beliefs in the context of our second interview – U.S. Government. “I believe that the government should always have the
best interest of the people in mind” (Rose, Student Interview Two, 9-30-14). Like many of her classmates, her rights as documented in the Constitution and especially the Bill of Rights and subsequent amendments appear to be the source of her affinity with this country. Unlike her classmates she also alluded to John Locke’s treatise on the rights of man as an influencing document in the founding of this country. The Puritans and their historical quest for the freedom to worship as they chose, Rose contrasted with the current religious intolerance of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). This disparity she uses to reinforce her connection with America as a defender of the practice of freedom of religion.

As she reconstructed her lived experience with the various social studies classes and their contents, she remembered first, a test on the location of the states in the fifth grade. Sixth grade social studies emphasized world cultures of which the Krishna deity and the country of the Philippines are two reports for which she was responsible. In seventh grade the class explored the world and most significant for Rose was learning about the gods of Olympus (Greece). Basic American History was taught in the eighth grade followed by World History during Rose’s first year in high school. According to Rose, “… major wars and their effects on everything” was the focus in the ninth grade (Rose, Student Interview One, 9-24-14). The success and fun she experienced in the previous year’s U.S. History course and a more mature approach to covering the historical facts were the primary influences on her decision for enrolling in Advanced Placement (AP) Government this year. During our meaning-making interview (Student Interview Three), Rose revealed never having been taught, to any notable degree, about the concepts of national identity or citizenship “except when we were little and we found
out that when you are born in America you are a citizen” (Rose, Student Interview Three, 10-7-14).

Although she is sometimes intimidated into not speaking her mind during AP Government class, she admitted this self-imposed silence is due to feelings of inadequacy, especially when compared to the eloquent speech of several of her classmates who have experienced multiple discussion-based AP classes. Rose enjoys the daily discussions on both historical and relevant contemporary topics that are encouraged by the teacher, as well as hands-on projects, research, and ancillary readings typical of the methods by which she learns civic skills and content. “Now since government [class], I realize the mindset of people and like what they were thinking back then.” She also appreciates the spontaneous debates and monologues in government.

[it] is good to get people's opinions on different things and see what they are thinking . . . because then you get other people’s viewpoints, so if you might have thought something that meant something, but it did not actually mean that then . . . [it may] sound more like a reasonable explanation than what I was thinking. (Rose, Student Interview Three, 10-7-14). Her advice to those who live in this country: “You have to know how somebody is running your country, so if you do not like it, you can figure a way to change it” Rose, Student Interview Three, 10-7-14).

Rose conveyed a serious attitude as she spoke about one aspect of the role of a citizen of the US.

Just express it [your citizenship] well, express that America is a decent country because we are a good country, most of the time. Just express it well. [When] our school takes us on a field trip and we go to the zoo there are other schools there and they [teachers] are like ‘you guys have to be good, because you are from Midwestern and you want to represent Midwestern
well.’ So, just the representation of how you act. (Rose, Student Interview Two, 9-30-14)

In addressing the citizenship process and illegal immigrants, Rose is sympathetic to those who want to live in the U.S. permanently but cannot afford the financial cost. But for someone who “just does not want to become a citizen, so I am just going to live off you, then that is not okay” (Rose, Student Interview Three, 10-7-14).

As we began to explore the concept of national identity, Rose seized the opportunity to declare, “I am an American and that is just who I am. That is a part of me. I grew up as an American and that is just who I am” (Rose, Student Interview Three, 10-7-14). The individual rights proclaimed in numerous civic documents, our Constitution and opportunities for a good life, according to Rose, “set us apart from other countries.”

To provide a visual example of what she sees as “opportunities”, Rose narrated the following story.

I do not really like school, but I appreciate the fact that we have the resources to go to school and other kids in other countries cannot. I was watching this documentary one time and this... I think it was in Africa... There is this little girl and she wishes she could go to school, so she could become a doctor. But, she could not go to school, because her family was poor. She had to walk miles a day and all we do is get on a bus for like a half hour and we are at school, so we have a lot of privileges like that. (Rose, Student Interview Three, 10-7-14)

If she were teaching a class on national identity, Rose would incorporate the following:

• data from interviews and/or surveys in which non-Americans express their opinions about America/Americans

• the foundations of America and knowledge of the intimate lives and thoughts of the Founding Fathers

• American government and how it functions
• various races and “how they fit in America” (e.g., Native Americans, immigrants – historical and contemporary)

• the detailed process of citizenship

She would include these topics so as to (a) “get a good look at what other countries think,” (b) give students an idea of what the colonists experienced as they decided on and fought for independence, (c) participate effectively in the civics of this country, (d) discover why people coming to this country do or do not identify with this country, and (e) understand the mechanics of becoming a citizen and be better able to participate in the conversation.

Her suggestion for creating a less complicated process by which immigrants might be more inclined to connect with America and American ideals and beliefs is to teach them

history for the most part; because, that is an easier way. I feel that would be like an easier way for them to like . . . get the identity. If it is more . . . if we are in present day now, it would be kind of hard, I feel like it would be . . . I do not know how to say this . . . it would be easier for them to understand why we are Americans if you go back and given them the history. (Rose, Student Interview Three, 10-7-14)

How will she participate in civics in the future? Increase her knowledge on the concept of citizenship and “vote when I turn eighteen” (Rose, Student Interview Three, 10-7-14).

Profile of Sophie

Sophie was born in Mexico and moved with her parents to the U.S. (San Antonio, Texas) when she was 6 months old. Although a large number of her family members still reside in Mexico and San Antonio, Sophie and her family migrated to Midwestern when she was 2 years old and became U.S. citizens during her fifth grade school year.
I can still remember going to the ceremony in Cleveland. It was the really big deal to my parents, especially. I do not think I understood how big of a deal it was, because I was raised in Midwestern. I did not feel Mexican, even though I am. (Sophie, Student Interview One, 9-25-14)

She also recalled how proud and happy the other members of her family who still live in Mexico were of Sophie and her parents’ new citizenship. As Sophie detailed this time in her life and her feelings about her dual citizenship, she told me,

It is really cool to be able to see where I am from and to be able to speak Spanish and to see that I have this whole other side to me. But, at the same time I am still . . . I live in Midwestern, I am a student at the high school and I have such a head start compared to my cousins, especially, because we are all so close in age. (Sophie, Student Interview One, 9-25-14)

Sophie makes this comparison with the image of her last visit to Mexico and its unfathomably dangerous environment, particularly for those who do not live there.

“People are not really aware of how terrible the situation is there. People live in fear.”

She related a number of stories involving her family members who still reside in Mexico and their experiences. It is, Sophie confided, “super dangerous to know (people who live in the US) . . . because right away when people are from the United States, especially in foreign countries, they assume that they are rich. To them, they are even if they are not” (Sophie, Student Interview One, 9-25-14).

Sophie expressed her appreciation of how privileged she is, compared to her extended family living in Mexico, to have the things she does and specifically she initially mentioned not something material, but instead, an environment of safety. To this she did add,

I am able to drive my own car. I have a nice house. I have my own clothes and they are not used to that. We are definitely a lot different, but in the same way we are kind of all the same in the way that we talk to each other.
and the way we think. It is just the things we are used to [that] are completely different. (Sophie, Student Interview One, 9-25-14).

Sophie described visiting family members in San Antonio as “knowing you are in an American city with an American style and everything in English, but the people all speak Spanish. You cannot survive down there not knowing Spanish, pretty much” (Sophie, Student Interview One, 9-25-14). Her time spent with family and friends in Mexico and Texas and her cousins’ pop culture references that she “does not understand” serve to remind her of her Americanness. “I guess I do feel a lot more Americanized by them. When I am with them especially” (Sophie, Student Interview One, 9-25-14).

During our third interview as Sophie reflected on her previous description of those visits, she made meaning of the concept of Americanness:

I would say how over here there is so much opportunity . . . the story of my dad and how my dad grew up in Mexico and then he went to college in Mexico and then he moved here. He was able to make so much more with his life than he would have been able to there. On top of the financial situation and being pretty well off, he also is secure here. There is no chance of him, I mean there is a chance obviously, but it is much less dangerous. I would say that I also have the same opportunity in the way that I can, I can just start from wherever I want. (Sophie, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14)

Based on her life experiences, Sophie also pointed out “some Americans do not take advantage of getting an education.” She hears their complaints about having to go to school, to sit in classes and have to just memorize facts and have their intelligence level be evaluated on their ability to regurgitate those facts. Sophie disagrees with this measure of intellect.

I would say that it is what you make it. If you want to learn, then you do learn. If you want to just memorize the stuff and forget about it as soon as the test is over, that is on you. I would say that he/she [has] such a privilege [being] here and being able to learn and learn much more than you would
learn in the school system down there [Mexico]. (Sophie, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14)

When asked to imagine having a conversation with one of her cousins in Mexico considering moving to the United States, Sophie suggested that she would caution him that he will “definitely stand out” and that he may never feel American.

I would say that there are a lot of things that set you apart from them. Like, having an accent, people tend to judge thought and intelligence based on how they are presented . . . I would say that and I would say that your name will always set you apart from everybody . . . Culture will be so different. You might be the cool kid there, but you are not going to be the cool kid over here. You are going to be someone who is really different. I would say that one of the things about learning the language would be kind of hard. Here and especially at the high school, when kids that come are foreign they do not just throw them into regular classes . . . they have them in separate classes. They have them in all of these different programs that just do not really help them with learning the language. They are just going at their own pace. It is not like a sink or swim. People tend to learn better with a sink or swim, at least I do, because it is like you have to learn the language. (Sophie, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14)

In examining her own identity tensions, Sophie generously shared her personal and authentic experiences.

It is kind of terrible actually, because I feel that I do not fit in with them [family]. But, at the same time I am never going to be American. Even though I am a U.S. citizen, I am never going to be white. It is a terrible place to be, like right in the middle. I do not feel comfortable with saying that I am American, even though people forget that I am even Mexican. But, there is still always that one person that my last name is Hernandez. They know that it is very Hispanic. It kind of sucks to be honest, because I am not with them. But, I am not an American, like a white person. (Student Interview One, 9-25-14)

Sophie does admit that this is a self-imposed perspective “that I do not fit in with everybody.” But she also cautioned that “some people do not realize the jokes they make or the things they say . . . they do kind of bother me.” I asked her if she ever considered talking with her close friends about these experiences, but she replied that
she has not, “I do not want to make them feel uncomfortable” (Sophie, Student Interview One, 9-25-14). Sophie continued,

I know that some people are . . . they are not racist, but they say these things that I do not think they realize are hurtful or not something you should say. I do not want to make them feel uncomfortable by saying I do not like that. Then, everybody gets this tension. I have said that before when people make jokes and I make a face like that is not okay. They right away get really uncomfortable. (Sophie, Student Interview One, 9-25-14)

Sophie would rather be accommodating as she does not like to make people feel uneasy.

“So I do not really talk to people about it.” She appears to suffer from the “waiting for the other shoe to drop” syndrome. About the time she begins to feel comfortable and accepted, usually someone will inadvertently make a joke to which she is sensitive and then I remember I am not. That I am not born in the U.S. and I never will be born in the US. That is just how it was. For a while, I honestly did really resent my parents for it. They were really sad. ‘Sophie is losing her identity. She is losing her culture.’ (Sophie, Student Interview One, 9-25-14)

As Sophie came full circle through our series of interviews and culminated the details of her lived experiences of identity tensions, she arrived at a moment of resolution for herself.

I think that the mix of them would be the culture and the language that I have with Mexico and the opportunity and the culture in America . . . American culture too. For example, I can name many actors in movies, American actors, in movies and I cannot really name any Mexican actors in movies, you know? So, it is just culture, in the way food, dress, beliefs, things like that. But, then it is American as a different type of culture, you know . . . It is like a mix of cultures. (Student Interview Three, 10-8-14)

As we moved to discussing the concept of a national identity, Sophie’s details explain her affinities with America – a progressive policy of equal rights, a Constitutionally supported environment in which expression and debate are valued, a
governmental system of checks and balances and a law enforcements and judicial system for protection and redress. If we look deeper into her selection of sources of connections, it is not surprising that for Sophie, they counter what is absent from Mexican culture.

Addressing the current illegal immigration influx from Mexico, Sophie was prophetic:

I do not think that they [illegal immigrants] will ever identify themselves as American, even if they are like children that are illegally immigrating, because it has so much to do with culture, I think. Culture and where you were born, those two things. I think about some people who are born in Mexico and then they are raised by Americans or whatever. They identify themselves as American. (Sophie, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14)

Sophie does not recognize herself as conservative or liberal, Republican, Democrat or Independent. She referenced the Dream Act and current U.S. immigration laws and understandably so as these political issues are profoundly relevant to her lived experience.

. . . for how close Mexico is, it is funny that the U.S. has no idea what is going on down there and how terrible the situation is for families, so when I see all of this to deport immigrants, I just roll my eyes. It is like you have no idea. They are not escaping because they want jobs, they want security. I guess that gives me perspective to other countries too. Why do they want to move to the US? Because of security, freedom, freedom of speech, freedom of religion and you can vote for who you want as president. (Sophie, Student Interview One, 9-25-14)

As an articulate and opinionated young lady of 17 years, Sophie acknowledges and values her AP U.S. Government class. It is in this class, compared to all others, that she has an opportunity to be able to have an opinion, because you cannot really have an opinion about a math equation. Or, you cannot really have an argument over grammatical sentences or anything so it is the only period you can have an opinion, not that you can have an opinion, [but] you can express your opinion. In that you can take a side, argue with another student, because
otherwise, you cannot really do that. Maybe, sometimes in English class when we are reading controversial literature or something. I think in *Blade* [newspaper class] too, we discuss controversial subjects, but that also relates back to government, pro-life and everything that goes back to government. (Sophie, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14)

Sophie credited our interviews with provoking her thoughts on students being able to express their opinions in class.

I did not notice until you kind of said, what other class can you do that in? Because, I do not really think about it, you know. I do not think that I am arguing. Because, it is just like I do it everyday. I do not argue everyday, but I take government class everyday. So, I do not really appreciate that I get to have a voice in there. I just do. (Sophie, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14)

“I think government (class) does a really good job of tying in everything that we have learned [in social studies classes]. You understand why . . . you get to see behind the scenes.” Sophie remembers hearing about the Declaration of Independence since elementary school, but the impact of government class has been to clarify what actually “went into it, like who worked on it . . .” (Sophie, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14)

I think that government class has made me want to be more aware of situations going on around me in present day, especially, because of [student’s name] and other students battle back and forth. For the most part, I know what they are talking about. Sometimes, I have no idea. So, I want to look into knowing things about our senators and things about stuff like that. Honestly, I do not know much about that. So, it definitely makes me more curious as to the United States government. (Sophie, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14)

Even though Sophie was articulate in her details concerning her previous U.S. social studies classes, what is glaringly obvious to her is that most ended without ever having reached modern times. Learning about colonization, the Revolution, foundation of America, the Civil War, Industrial Revolution, World War I and World War II are necessary aspects to American History, but “it is also, even better, to know about what is
going on around you, present time, 10 or 20 years ago, because we never really get past . . . the 60s. We never really pass them” (Sophie, Student Interview One, 9-25-14). Sophie does not fault her teachers but rather realizes that they run out of time.

I have to learn that for myself. I have to go out and look into the newspaper and see what is going on, otherwise . . . Some students do not even have the drive to do that, you know. I want to know what is going on. Some students just do not care. I think that they should emphasize present-day issues because otherwise students will not learn. They only learn because they have to in government class. They are not going to learn anything about what is going on and they are not going to know who to vote for, you know. (Student Interview Three, 10-8-14)

Like many of her peers, Sophie enjoyed participating in this research project and was attracted to taking part in the interviews largely as an opportunity to be heard, to have a voice.

We are the generation that is supposed to do something big, I guess. But, if we do not know what we are talking about, we are not really going to get there . . . I have seen students try to make a change of some sort and nobody cares to listen to them. (Sophie, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14)

It is Sophie’s belief that many students do not have a voice because either they are too afraid to speak or they do not have confidence in their intelligence or their ability to articulate that intelligence or perhaps, that they do not know the subject or topic very well. For Sophie, the ability to “say what you think” with knowledge and confidence has served as a motivational tool.

It is things like that, that made me want to join Blade and have a voice. [To] say what I think and also, just the people . . . like my opinions are similar to some people's and so then we all kind of group together. (Student Interview Three, 10-8-14)

It will not surprise the reader, as it did not surprise me, that Sophie’s two most valuable classes are The Blade and U.S. Government.
Sophie looks forward to voting and scrutinizing politicians and those who run for
government offices. She plans on staying informed and up to date on government
activities and policies and, oh yes, using her voice.

Profile of Betsy

Betsy described her family as being her two brothers and her mother. Her father
died when she was 10 years old and this left her mother, who did not finish high school,
as the primary financial provider. Her mother worked at Walmart until she was injured
on the job and unable to work. Betsy portrayed her socio-economic status as upper-lower
class, a condition that she believes has profoundly impacted her identity in the way in
which she views economics and self-motivation as it relates to overcoming a deficit.
She bears no sympathy for those who use their financial plight as a rationale for lack of
success or anything else.

Unlike some of her peers in the study, Betsy did not cite religion or travel
experiences as significant influences on her construction of a national identity. What
religious affiliation she does possess, supports her conservative leanings, and her
domestic-only travels have contributed to her position on the supremacy of states rights
over federal. “States best represent individuals as opposed to the Federal government
and an extended Federal government” (Betsy, Student Interview One, 9-26-14).

Betsy identifies herself as conservative based on her emphasis of states right over
federal and her concern that the federal government tends to lose sight of the will of the
people the larger it becomes. Through her speech and debate associations and other
clubs to which she belongs she enjoys the ability and opportunity to debate issues that
are often political.
An extremely involved young lady, Betsy is active in speech and debate, *The Blade* [school newspaper] and various organizations at the school. These particular involvements may serve her well in her desire to become a lawyer and a Congressional representative.

Betsy is especially proud of an American “heritage” and firmly believes in the exceptionality of this country as expressed in its founding documents (i.e., Declaration of Independence, Constitution, Bill of Rights). It is her conviction that America’s promotion of democracy, equality, freedom and other egalitarian ideas serve as counternarratives to the civic and religious philosophies to which a number of other countries adhere.

We are a large country so we outstretch for miles and miles, further than actual land we own. I think that is an issue with other countries that disagree with us putting ourselves in places where we think we belong and they do not think we do . . . It is a human issue where, I think, it is people just disagreeing with how we do things and that is why they continually think that they have to react with targeting us or disliking us. (Betsy, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14)

During our meaning-making interview Betsy drew attention to the variety of opinions represented in this vast country, such as, “Someone who wants to vote for someone, because they are a woman or because they are the same race or because they have the same belief as them religiously.” She admits she is “intrigued” that candidates “who could work their entire lives in government and know the ins and outs of it, know how things work, know foreign and domestic affairs, know plans to fix things” and would in general better the nation as a whole could instead ironically have the voters then vote for someone else, “just because they are similar to them or because it propels an idea.”

Betsy recounted her own lived experience at the age of 8 with this election mind-set.
I remember seeing Hillary Clinton, as a candidate, saying, ‘Mom, I want Hillary Clinton to win.’ She said, ‘Why? She is a Democrat. Why do you want her to win?’ I said, ‘Because she is a woman. I think it would be cool if we had a woman president.’ Looking back now, it is really strange to think that was the basis I thought that the entire United States government should be run upon, was the fact that Hillary Clinton was a woman. I did not know anything else and my first natural response was team girl, let’s go for [the] presidency. (Betsy, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14)

Her interest in the social studies took off upon her arrival in high school and her exposure to a more in-depth relationship with World and U.S. History coursework.

Although she relished the content, Betsy did pass a negative judgment on the prolificness of worksheets, which she diminishes as a way to engage students.

Government class, on the other hand with its content and the pedagogical style of her government teacher, “has influenced me so much,” Betsy raves,

With AP government, I am in a class with about 20 other people who have different ideas, different beliefs, different life experiences and you have this melting pot of true American democracy. There are all these different ideas, swiveling around and stewing. As soon as one topic is brought up, there is a flash of who believes this, what do you believe, what do you think and do you even know what we are talking about? . . . I think government is such a great way to get into people's minds as well. It is not necessarily about the history of government, but it is the history of what people do when they have power. That is the way I like to look at it. In class you can tell when other people are thinking something or what they generally are displaced by. A lot of subjects that come up, thus far we have already had some that are a little touchy. Instantly an emotion or a thought or something pops out to them and it is written all over them. When they say it, it becomes a debate, an agreement or it becomes just a talking point for all of us to get around. To see what other people have experienced or what they have come upon based on what they have seen. (Betsy, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14)

The method, used by her government teacher, of providing relevance to the content being taught in the classroom is a compelling way of engaging students by making government come alive, according to Betsy.
“... when he is telling us about an issue that was 300 some years ago with the forefathers or even 200 some years ago with the Supreme Court cases, cases with congressman, whatever is going on 200 years in the past, he likes to relate it to a modern day issue. (Betsy, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14)

She and her classmates are able to associate in a more authentic environment to the historical content of government. “This is something we already (have) experiences with; especially, in society with so many social medias today, so many different outlets for information” (Betsy, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14).

Betsy’s enthusiasm for the process of government is also manifested through her participation in speech and debate. She competes in the congressional debate category and dons the role of a congresswoman as a representative of the United States.

So, whenever going into government it is always funny to hear what someone else says or what someone else thinks. They usually start their sentence when they think something or feel it . . . I feel that . . . or I think that . . . For me, it is always hard to say those words, because I do not want to say that. I want to say, ‘This is how it is . . . ’ I like to be more definitive and more logical rather than spreading my feelings and thoughts. It is more, but this is how things are. This is what reality is. I think that plays a huge role in why government is such a step up from any other class. (Betsy, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14)

The Constitution itself is sacred to Betsy. “It is not just a piece of paper with rules on it. It is a document that will always be the embodiment of our country . . . It has to be taught;” a condition she has found lacking in school, prior to U.S. Government class.

. . . it has this huge concept behind it . . . it literally is why you are here and why you get to do what you do. Why you get to go to school. I think most people . . . it is not something they are going to take back with them, because unless you have strong feelings for it and unless it interests you again, unless you make that important connection, a lot of people are just going to go with the bare minimum of ‘this is what the Constitution says.’ (Betsy, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14)
Betsy places this lack of civic interest squarely on the shoulder of the families of those apathetic students and cites the abysmal statistics of Americans who are eligible to vote that do not show up at the polls on election days. “So, that means the majority of families in the United States are not really involving themselves with government or telling their kids about it or giving them their sentiments. It has just gone on for generations of people” (Betsy, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14). Antithetic to the expectations of the Founding Fathers, who expected citizens to fulfill their civic obligation and promote the democratic ideals of the country through consistently voting, Betsy suggests that

We like to whine about it and contest it, but once people just grow older and if things have not gone their way, they become extremely cynical, like most parents are now. I know my mom is extremely cynical. They do not show their appreciation for what has happened before them. They only show their resentment towards the negative things. So, you do not really get the great things that happened because of the Constitution or because of our forefathers. You only get the negative things . . . (Betsy, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14)

Betsy believes in parents providing experiences that involve their children in the government of this country so that the reality of its importance is made apparent and understandable. “I think that is a problem as a society we face, where we do not value government as much as we really should.” Betsy also faults teachers who do not stress the importance of a particular concept. “They will say that it is important, but they will not tell us why” (Betsy, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14).

In our conversation on the concept of a citizen or citizenship, Betsy noted the presence of a clear definition of the concept in the dictionary; yet, were the populace queried, the number of different definitions that would be provided would be substantial.
“Some will say it is someone who is legally allowed to be here. Some will say it is someone who appeals to the American lifestyle and happens to live here.” As she considered the duties and obligations of a citizen of any country, she asked me the question, “what can you do to better society as a whole?” Succinctly, she answered her own question: “I think as a citizen of the United States, you have the duty to participate in democratic elections and in local government” (Betsy, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14).

Betsy relates her national identity to her perception of the founding principles of this country – enumerated freedoms, justice and equality.

The whole perception of Americans is so far out of what we really are. I really think all of us are just striving for this equilibrium of liberty, justice, pursuit of happiness, equality. Striving to make things better. I think that is also just a human thing. (Betsy, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14)

Betsy clarified her notion of “equality” as “equal as in opportunity-wise and having the same chance” (Betsy, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14). She also expanded on a particular freedom – freedom of speech – as a means of generating a volume of opinions from which a process of reduction may produce the best solution, articulation, idea, etc. Betsy realizes that if we listen only to our own individual thoughts, we will never be able to hear someone else voice his/her opinion.

While you can disagree with it, while you cannot believe it, while you can even be persuaded by it, at the end of the day it all comes down to you are a singular person. You are only able to perceive what you have lived. (Betsy, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14)

Not mentioned in the Constitution is a final freedom that Betsy believes is embodied in the people of this nation: “bettering what you can better and helping those who need help. I think that is a definite freedom that America gives you is the ability to
do that. A lot of other countries you cannot” (Betsy, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14).

To this power to act, Betsy heartily identifies.

In order to develop a national identity, Betsy suggests first, develop some kind of understanding of how the governmental system works; second, construct a working knowledge of “the great things that came out of forming a democratic system; third, explain why America is a good country; and fourth, arrive at a realization of the position of the individual within the context of community.

I think national identity is also important for the fact that you have to realize that your national identity, it is not just you. It is coming up on 300 some years of people living in the same country, not the same situation exactly, but maybe. Also, having these experiences that they had to build with yours. (Betsy, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14)

Betsy concluded our series of interviews by looking forward to her vision of herself as an active citizen. Her goal is to become the ultimate citizen, beginning with exercising her much-anticipated right to vote in the 2016 elections. Through her right to vote she hopes to not only support those candidates and policies that align with her ideals but also to try to make changes in the things that are not working. She reminded me that she “can exercise my right to petition, which I love to do and comes with more freedom and my ability to continually reprimand representatives who do not do what I like” (Betsy, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14). Betsy’s anticipated path for her future is college, law school, a judgeship, and if “permitted” to become a representative in the United States Congress.

Summary

All interviews were conducted on site in a designated room dedicated to the privacy and comfort of the student. Each student participated in three, one-hour
interviews over the course of three weeks. Two weeks of classroom observations were conducted prior to the commencement of the three-step interview process of data collection. Table 9 furnishes an overview of the demographics of the student sample population in this study.

Table 9. Demographics of students at Midwestern High School

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Ethnicity/Race</th>
<th>Student Voices on Govt. Class</th>
<th>Student Perceptions on Nat. Identity</th>
<th>Rank Govt. Class</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>11th</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>&quot;... you are learning real life stuff. Not like you are not learning in math or something. You are learning about what happens in everyday government and what... yeah, it gives you a sense of what is happening in everyday life. Why does this happen. I like the real-life correlation between the two.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;I guess... I think this country has a lot to offer. I guess the government is run by the people, because we elect our representatives. It is controlled by the people and you do not see that in very many places in the world. I think that is a neat thing about America, because you have a direct say in what happens in the government by voting. I think that is the most interesting part of our country.&quot;</td>
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Ben, Student Interview Two, 10-6-14

Ben, Student Interview Three, 10-10-14

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Table 9. Demographics of students at Midwestern High School (continued)

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<th>Grade</th>
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<th>Student Perceptions on Nat. Identity</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Govt Class</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mala</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11th</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>(reflecting on a recent government class debate on the Second Amendment)</td>
<td>“I have so many commonalities with other Americans. I identify as an American. I identify more . . . it is not like my primary identity that I associate with myself. I associate more, just like a citizen of the world. [It is] such an inter-dependent age, like growing up on the Internet and being in contact with people from all around the world all the time. I feel like I identify less as an American than people of previous generations.”</td>
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Mala, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14)
Table 9. Demographics of students at Midwestern High School (continued)

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<tr>
<td>Sophie</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11th</td>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>“I think that government class has made me want to be more aware of situations going on around me in present day. Especially, because of (student’s name) and other students battles back and forth. For the most part, I know what they are talking about; sometimes, I have no idea, so I want to look into knowing things about our senators and things about stuff like that. Honestly, I do not know much about that, so it definitely makes me more curious as to the United States government.”</td>
<td>“I think it [national identity] has a lot to do with two things. That is where you are born and the culture you are surrounded with when you are growing up . . . I think that I identify myself as Mexican. Not only because I was born there, but [also] because I was raised in a Mexican-culture home.”</td>
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Sophie, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14

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<tr>
<td>Jenni</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11th</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>“I like learning about amendments; that is cool to me. I did not really know or understand the facts of the amendments. Everybody is like, ‘oh it is unconstitutional.’ People would say it is unconstitutional and I [was] like ‘I do not really understand what you are talking about.’ That is pretty awesome to me. It is an eye opener and makes more sense now, now that I have learned it all.”</td>
<td>(in response to articulating her sources of national identity) “Understand[ing] the government system, especially, for sure . . . because you cannot [just] throw something at somebody and be like okay, ‘here, know your national identity and then . . . just go on with your life.’ That is not how that is supposed to work, especially, if you are trying to teach them something new. I think they [we] should learn, at least a little bit of the background of government, but especially today's government. Just so they [we] understand what is going on, how to handle it and why our national identity is what we have.”</td>
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Jenni, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14

Jenni, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14

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<td>&quot;I think government is such a great way to get into people's minds as well. It is not necessarily about the history of government, but it is the history of what people do when they have power. That is the way I like to look at it. In class you can tell when other people are thinking something or what they generally are displaced by. A lot of subjects that come up, thus far we have already had some that are a little touchy. Instantly an emotion or a thought or something pops out to them and it is written all over them. When they say it, it becomes a debate, an agreement or it becomes just a talking point for all of us to get around. To see what other people have experienced or what they have come upon based on what they have seen.&quot;</td>
<td>“I think for people struggling to find theirs [national identity] or even people who say 'I would love to move to Britain or move’ . . . it seems like they have not had an experience or had any real world application of why America is a good country. I think something that needs to be brought up in classes, is not just saying the negatives of things we have done or saying what did not work because we are going to remember things that did not work, they ended in a travesty. Something that would be beneficial is also trying to engrain that there were really great things that came out of forming a democratic system. [For example], how they are allowed to travel to another country, because we have a democratic system</td>
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<td>11th</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>&quot;I did not really know how government worked, so I did not know [the] executive, judicial and legislative branches. I did not know what any of those did. I just knew they were there. I am excited. I basically know what they do now, but I am learning more about what they can do and how they influence what my life is.&quot; Jon, Student Interview One, 9-25-14</td>
<td>&quot;I am getting my opinion and exercising my right (voting) that I have been given as an American citizen and that has been fought for. It has been defended. It is a simple right that not very many people think that it has been fought for. They are thinking, ‘we fought our wars just to keep us free’ and different things. But, one of the things that a lot of people in different countries [inaudible], is that we can vote for our governments. They can vote in [those] different countries, but usually there is like one other person on the ballot. Which would be the person who obviously wins, so that is not really voting.” Jon, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14</td>
<td>1st</td>
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</table>
Table 9. Demographics of students at Midwestern High School (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Ethnicity/Race</th>
<th>Student Voices on Govt. Class</th>
<th>Student Perceptions on Nat. Identity</th>
<th>Rank Govt Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alan</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>11th</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>“I think one of the things that happens whenever you have a really, I guess, free-flowing class is that a lot of times he [government teacher] will reference present day things that involve the government that he is talking about. . . . someone in the class will usually chime in. I am not saying that person may be me, but . . . it is usually me. I enjoy that. It definitely gives a good, I guess, connection with the student and what is going on. Because, they can be like, ‘Oh well, it is just like . . . I do not know, something personal.”</td>
<td>“I guess for a person to identify with a country would be for them to have, in some level, a sense of nationalism, I guess? I guess for them to be proud enough to be like, ‘This is my country and I belong to it.’ I guess, it is pride in where you are from. I guess, if you live in the U.S. where our national philosophy is life, liberty, pursuit of happiness, or whatever, I guess it helps to believe in that, to be a national... I do not know what you want to call it... but, someone that sees themself as part of the country. If they believe in that. I also think that they do not necessarily have to.”</td>
<td>1st</td>
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Alan, Student Interview One, 9-24-14

 Alan, Student Interview Three, 10-7-14

(table continues)
Table 9. Demographics of students at Midwestern High School (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Ethnicity/Race</th>
<th>Student Voices on Govt. Class</th>
<th>Student Perceptions on Nat. Identity</th>
<th>Rank Govt Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11th</td>
<td>Biracial</td>
<td>(in response to her lived experience of previous social studies classes – prior to government class)</td>
<td>“I am an American and that is just who I am; that is a part of me. I grew up as an American and that is just who I am. Um... like I said before, our rights and stuff that we have. Because, that sets us apart from other countries. Other countries, like Cuba and North Korea, they do not have rights like we do. So, stuff like that. Like the Bill of Rights, freedom of press, assembly, petition, speech and religion. Then, the amendments, like the 19th Amendment giving the women the right to vote, yeah that one . . . So, yeah, just like the certain amendments and rights that we have that are in the Constitution and stuff like that. That is what makes us Americans. Rose, Student Interview Three, 10-7-14</td>
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1st
Table 9. Demographics of students at Midwestern High School (continued)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Ethnicity/Race</th>
<th>Student Voices on Govt. Class</th>
<th>Student Perceptions on Nat. Identity</th>
<th>Rank Govt Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frankie</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11th</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>“[in calculus and math] there is just one definitive answer or there is one concept or theorem formula that covers a way to solve a problem; whereas, in government it is several different solutions. There are compromises that are made or congress cannot make any compromises and it is always these different solutions to all of these different problems. No one really knows what [is] the right thing to do, so that is one of the things I kind of like about learning about government. It is to explore like the many concepts and different eras and how people's ideals change. The government structure changes as well.” Frankie, Student Interview Two, 10-6-14</td>
<td>“I just think identifying yourself as such—one national identity—is not, well for me at least, because I have been in so many different places, it is not an accurate way of describing myself. I would consider myself a Canadian, I consider myself Chinese, I am an immigrant in America and I like the fact that I am more, that I have all these different backgrounds that can support me for my true identity . . . I guess really I do have an American identity. In the aspect that I do like the fact that people here have so many more opportunities to express themselves . . . Here, you have a chance, kind of, [to] speak up for what you really want.” Frankie, Student Interview One, 9-29-14</td>
<td>1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Ethnicity/Race</td>
<td>Student Voices on Govt. Class</td>
<td>Student Perceptions on Nat. Identity</td>
<td>Rank Govt Class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12th</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>“I think that government class has helped going into detail and highlight certain things, you know that make us Americans. Just like laws and stuff and how the government actually manages itself, in a way. I mean, they teach you the concept... you have the three branches of government and you are an American so you are free and you have liberty, democracy and all of that stuff. But, you take government class and you realize you are a democratic republic and not just a direct democracy and stuff like that. You go into detail about what exactly you are, as an American... I think it is very important that they teach government classes, because I think one thing that America needs most right now is people that can think for themselves and not just follow, you know, wherever the rest of the crowd is going.”</td>
<td>“There are some parts of my American identity that never change. I am always... there are core beliefs of being American. You know, like your basic liberties. The Pledge of Allegiance, one nation under God. You have it on currency and stuff. I guess that sort of aligns with my beliefs in a way...” (in response to reflecting on our series of interviews) “I was able to evaluate myself and look deeper inside and... when I actually have to not say the first thing that comes off of my mind, but think about it. It actually helps me review myself to see how I am and how I define myself as an American.”</td>
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Jason, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14
CHAPTER V

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative investigation, *Invoking Student Voices as a Third Space in the Exploration of a National Identity*, is to advance an understudied yet potent dimension in discerning the potential roots of national identities through the voices of children. Specifically,

“How does the lived experience of secondary social studies education impact students’ structured consciousness of a national identity?”

Expanding on that question:

- What influence do government/civics courses have on the structured consciousness of a national identity?
- In what ways has 11th graders’ K-11 social studies coursework, as participants reconstruct it, affected the development of a national identity?
- What role does the traditional civic education classroom play in relation to other “pedagogical places” as a Third Space for civic education manifested through student voice, in the structured consciousness of a national identity?

In order to investigate the meaning of a lived experience in relation to the specific phenomenon, secondary education government/civics course of study, the most
appropriate framework is a heuristic-phenomenological methodology. Complementing this qualitative methodology and a social constructionist epistemology, the data collection tool of in-depth interviewing was constructed and implemented with the intent to understand the lived experiences of the students and the meaning they ascribe to an experience through story-telling.

The collection of the data—a textual inquiry of government/civics curriculums as life history narratives and the reflection on the lived experiences of students—has as its aim, to better understand the meaning of the phenomenon, the experience. Classroom observations and literary descriptions (collection and review of government/civics curriculums and syllabi) are two supportive data collection devices employed for accuracy of the data in the process of triangulation with the primary data collection tool, the interview. As the focus of the research-related issue of this study is the primary data collection tool of interviewing, an examination of this lived experience using a hermeneutic phenomenological interviewing strategy best aligns with the theoretical framework underpinning this research. This particular methodology involves the study of those lived experiences as they affect our view of the world and appeal to our sense of commonness using a three-step process over the course of a three week interview schedule with no more than a one week break between interviews:

- Interview One – a focus on the life history of the student as it intersects with their experience in social studies units/courses
- Interview Two – the production of detail of their experience in U.S. Government class
• Interview Three – a reflection on the meaning of these experiences (detailed in Interview One and Two) in relation to their structured consciousness of a national identity

Over 400 pages of interview data, 2 weeks of observation data and hundreds of pages of ancillary documents were collected in the course of this study. The data then underwent the following systematic eight-point procedure for analysis:

1. Thirty hours of interview data, 20 hours of observation data and hundreds of pages of documents related to civic education, curriculum, and national, state, local, and professional policies and legislation were gathered.

2. A portrait of each student’s experience was constructed with the goal of developing an initial understanding through a process of revisiting data. Data was tentatively coded with the objective of capturing the phenomenon under study. Each passage was labeled so as to designate its location in the transcript.

3. Interaction with the resulting data underwent an annotation phase, a hermeneutic procedure, in order to develop a particular narrative that elucidated the theme while attempting to maintain an authentic representation of the essence of the student’s lived experience.

4. The annotated narrative was aligned, for accuracy, with the initial interview data and a focus on discovering and noting any stylistic passages, inconsistencies or non-essential detail.

5. This analysis process (enumerated above) was repeated for each student’s data.
6. Recurring characteristics and themes were identified and connections between students’ experiences and connections to existing pertinent literature were noted.

7. Depending on their appropriateness, excerpts from all students were then categorized according to theme. From those organized excerpts subthemes emerged. Excerpts were then realigned with the appropriate correlating subtheme.

8. The extrapolated themes and subthemes and the essence of the student’s meaning-making as it related to the concept of national identity were incorporated into the synthesis and characterization of the experience/phenomenon under study.

In order to address and ensure the accuracy, authenticity and credibility of the data, students were provided the opportunity of member checking. Interestingly, the only editing by students involved errors in grammar and speech. Purposive sampling, prolonged engagement with the data as described above, triangulation of student data, thick description, persistent observation, and researcher journaling were all employed in order to establish not only the credibility but also the dependability, confirmability, and trustworthiness of the data.

The data was collected over the course of a two-phase schedule. Phase One involved two weeks of observation in the government classrooms immediately followed by Phase Two, a three-step, in-depth phenomenological interviewing process. Ten 11th grade high school government students constituted the sample population. Each student participated in three 1-hour interviews for a total of 30 student interview hours,
providing the primary source of data for this research project. In addition to the interview process, classroom observations combined with various related document searches served as the data collection tools for analysis.

Student’s reconstruction of early experiences (formal constitutive events) with social studies concepts, their reconstructed lived experiences of the U.S. Government course, and the meaning made through a structured focus on how the factors in their lives interact or have interacted with their present situation as students in government class as related to the concept of a national identity resulted in the production of the plentiful and detailed data. That data was thematically analyzed and ultimately generated the following results related to the knowledge sought:

1. Government/civics courses consistently influence the structured consciousness of a national identity through conceptual interpretations and relationships, a search for association between identity of self and identity of country, and a knowledge of other.

2. Through a historical metanarrative, K-11 social studies coursework indirectly affects the development of a national identity.

3. The traditional civic education classroom plays a competitive role in relation to other “pedagogical places” as a Third Space for civic education manifested through student voice, in the structured consciousness of a national identity.

Data Demographics: A Case of a Midwestern Municipality, College Town, and Agricultural Community

Sample population. Purposive sampling was used to guide the selection of the sample population from the four U.S. Government classes participating in this study. As
previously stated, 10 students, six girls and four boys, all high school juniors from a
town in the midwestern US, composed the sample population. As the study high school
offers both Advanced Placement and General U.S. Government classes, the sample
population was chosen from both.

School description. The county seat of a primarily agricultural midwestern
region and home of a nationally-renowned liberal arts college, the community in which
the study-site high school is situated has been named an “All-American City” and
“dreamtown” by Demographics Daily for its outstanding quality of life. Several
corporate headquarters and over 300 businesses are located there and the town boasts a
population in excess of 26,000 according to the 2010 census report. Ethnically, both the
county and the town are homogenous by all standards, with the U.S. Census Bureau
reporting 91.2% of the town’s population as white followed by 3.6% of the population as
black and 95.7% of the county’s population as white and 1.5 % of the population as
black.

In both the county and the town, all other races and ethnicities combined make
up less than 5.1% of the total populations. The local Chamber of Commerce describes
the socioeconomics as 91.9% of the county population with an income above the poverty
level and an employment status of married couples, husband and wife both in the labor
force, as the largest segment of the population at 45.1%. Median household income of
the county registers at $48,375.00 and 76.1% of those working traveling under 29
minutes to their job. Educationally, 10 public high schools (of which the study site high
school is the largest) service the county with an overall graduation rate of 91.8%. Table
10 proffers additional descriptive information of the study site school as measured against other high schools in the state.

Table 10. State Department of Education’s 2012-13 School District Report Card for Midwestern High School

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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>3,513</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Performance Indicators: A-F grade based on how many students passed state tests in each grade and subject. At least 75 percent of students must pass to get credit for the indicator. Performance Index: A-F grade based on a weighted average reflecting the performance of students on state tests. Value-Added: A-F grade based on a statistical measure reflecting whether students are making a full year of progress in one year of school, regardless of their level at the start of the year. (Schools are also graded on value-added for specific groups of students including gifted students and students with disabilities.) Annual Measurable Objectives: A-F grade based on how much a school closes the achievement gaps between different groups of students, including students of different races/ethnicities and students who are from low-income families, have disabilities or are learning English. Graduation Rate: A-F grade based on how many students graduated high school within four years of starting.

The sample population was chosen to reflect the demographics of the high school population as closely as possible. The table that follows (Table 11), provided by a *U.S. News & World Report* (2013), delineates those demographics.
Table 1. Midwestern High School student population and study sample gender and ethnicity demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Category Percentage in</th>
<th>Percentage of the Study Sample</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student population</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings

The following section discusses the findings of the current study.

Finding. *Government/civics courses consistently influence the structured consciousness of a national identity through conceptual interpretations and relationships, a search for association between identity of self and identity of country, and a knowledge of other.*

Throughout all three interviews, it was apparent the students had a strong connection to their government class. As we navigated their lived experience of government class and their concept of a national identity, three distinct threads were woven across their narratives. Those thematic links were conceptual interpretations and relationships, an association between identity of self and identity of country, and knowledge of other.
Q: What influence do government/civics courses have on the structured consciousness of a national identity?

F: Government/civics courses significantly influence the structured consciousness of a national identity through conceptual interpretations and relationships, a search for commonness between identity of self and identity of country, and a knowledge of other.

Themes
1. Conceptual interpretations and relationships
2. Commonness between identity of self and identity of country
3. A knowledge of other

Subthemes
1. Articulated concepts related to civics; semiotics; socially constructed relationships
2. Relevance; commonality; value systems
3. Relation to self; equivalency

Figure 1. Reduction and thematic analysis process: Research question 1
Conceptual interpretations and relationships. All 10 students referred to concepts related to the Constitution and discussed in their government class. What surprised me was not that the students were making a connection to the concepts they were learning in government class, but that every student articulated beyond just the reference and verbalized how his or her particular lived experiences intersected with each of these rights articulated in the Constitution and especially the Bill of Rights. They personalized their interpretation of these civic concepts and in so doing detailed a relationship with a particular concept.

Articulated concepts relating to civics. Eight of the 10 students described civic-specific concepts; most frequent were those enumerated in the Bill of Rights – right to bear arms (Second Amendment), freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, freedom of speech (First Amendment), the right not to incriminate one’s self (Fifth Amendment) or the remaining amendments, such as the right to vote for women (Nineteenth Amendment). For Jon,

The First Amendment is the big one. One time, we went to Washington DC. It was right after they got Osama bin Laden and it was crazy there. It was for a class trip. People were gathering there, some cheering and some not so much. It is their freedom to do that. I mean people may not like that we can protest or not necessarily protest, but assemble for whatever we want to talk about, but it is our right to, peacefully. Got to have that. (Jon, Student Interview One, 9-25-14)

In relationship to her self-identity, Betsy fluently and passionately reconstructed her structured consciousness of a national identity as it relates to freedom of speech.

I think one of the biggest ones [her connection to a national identity] is freedom of speech, just because I am completely adherent to the belief that everyone deserves to be able say what they think, because that expresses so many more opinions that you could ever be able to articulate yourself. So, I think that is one of the fundamental freedoms I am always going to fight for
is the belief that you should be able to say what you want to say or write what you want to write. While you can disagree with it, while you cannot believe in it, while you can be persuaded by it, at the end of the day it all comes down to you as a singular person. You are only able to perceive what you have lived. If you think one way, then you are never going to be able to see another point, unless you can hear someone else voice their opinion . . . That is your right, your natural right, I think that is a natural right . . . your ability to say what you want . . . to say what you think with as much conviction as you can . . . (Betsy, Student Interview One, 9-26-14)

All 10 students referred to additional concepts and symbols such as life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, checks and balances, protection of rights, federalism, states’ rights, opportunity for citizenship, national anthem, democratic form of government, and the most oft mentioned – the right to vote. The documents – Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Federalist Papers—housing many of these concepts were also a large part of their narrative as was a particular document that failed to produce some of these direct and indirect guarantees of liberty – the Articles of Confederation. As a citizen of both Mexico and the United States, Sophie made meaning throughout our interviews not only from formal knowledge but also from a comparative context as well.

Here we have checks and balances and stuff like that. We do not have the chance of Barack Obama becoming all of the sudden a dictator; it is very unlikely. We have all sorts of different checks . . . There is always a branch higher than you and there is always a branch lower than you. They will always check on what you are doing and that you will check on what someone else is doing . . . Unlike there [Mexico]. (Sophie, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14)

Jason expressed a more general-to-specific perspective when voicing his thoughts concerning his national identity as influenced by government class.

Just like laws and stuff and how the government actually manages itself, in a way. I mean, they teach you the concept.... you have the three branches of government and you are an American so you are free and you have liberty,
democracy and all of that stuff. But, you take government class and you realize you are a democratic republic and not just a direct democracy and stuff like that. You go into detail about what exactly you are, as an American. (Jason, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14)

Either through use of specific concepts evoked by the amendments to the Constitution or through more broad civic concepts located in several of the other founding documents, all students summoned formally learned ideas and notions being taught in their government course to saliently characterize their construction of a national identity. Mala best summarized the process of that construction as

Probably, like we have been doing in this interview, the best way for the people to understand their identity, they have to think of it themselves. You cannot just tell them what the American identity is. (Mala, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14).

Semiotics. Within Mala’s summarization of the students’ abilities to engage in constructing their national identity is an additional insight – the role of agency in the process of meaning-making. If we confine ourselves to the hermeneutics of her words, then we are able to discern that students may come to understand or make meaning of the concept of a national identity as they are provided opportunities to explore or interact or develop relationships with the world, as in this case, with civic-related concepts. It is this sense or realization of agency in “think(ing) of it themselves” that declares to the student that he/she is capable of knowing, of making meaning as he/she experience his/her lifeworlds.

It was the presence of this particular sub-theme throughout all 10 students’ interviews that surprised me above all others—not in necessarily the meanings that they construed but in their ability to do so skillfully and deeply. For example, during our
third interview, Jason expounded upon his interaction with the interview process itself in exploring a national identity.

... Overall what I got out of this, I was able to ... through you questioning me, I was able to evaluate myself and look deeper inside and ... when I actually have to not say the first thing that comes off my mind, but think about it, it actually helps me review myself to see how I am and how I define myself as an American. That is one thing I like about this, because it has allowed me to look deeper into myself and see what I was really thinking ... Yeah, who you really are, because deep down you have your core beliefs and ... at the surface you are always bound to change. But, deep down inside you have some core beliefs that you will never ... [that] truly define who you are. (Jason, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14)

I was reminded during one of the interviews that meaning-making does not always have at its epicenter a serious focus. According to Rose,

Because, I mean as an American ... You have different customs. The way you are raised to work around stuff would be different. In America we are like raised with democracy or the republic and how we work [civically function] as when we are Americans. So, if I would go over to the UK or somewhere, it would be different. The Parliament, it is kind of like the Congress ... A little bit. But, it is still different, because they have the queen and we have the president. We get to elect the president and they are kind of stuck with her. (Rose, Student Interview Three, 10-7-14)

Semiotics and structured consciousness have a significant kinship in the production of meaning. Both are social constructs that can be observed in the exploration of interactions and relationships. Specifically, in our exchanges during which students actively associated, discriminated, interpreted and built detailed descriptions and examples of a national identity in connection to various learned concepts from their government classes, the students produced knowledge and made meaning through each uniquely structured consciousness. In considering his national identity, one student served as an outlier to participating in the process just described.

He made no mention of specific or broad concepts with which he associated as he
portrayed a national identity during our first interview, although by the time we had
worked our way through all three interviews, he did reveal some “sort of national
identity.” According to Alan,

I guess, if you live in the U.S. where our national philosophy is life, liberty,
pursuit of happiness, or whatever; I guess it helps to believe in that, to be a
national... I do not know what you want to call it... but, someone that sees
themself as part of the country, if they believe in that. I also think that they
do not necessarily have to . . . I think I choose to not be part of a nation and
instead be kind of my own person, I guess. (Alan, Student Interview One,
9-24-14)

Socially constructed relationships. As described by the students themselves,
discussions in government class are not solely related to “traditional” topics of the
history of government in the United States or the structure of that government. Mala,
who spends time out of class reading the news and following current national issues,
appreciated government class where she can talk with her peers about those issues.

The things on the notes [class notes] are not really that interesting. They are
interesting, but they are pretty basic. But when we get [government teacher]
talking about court cases or things going on in other states right now and
specific examples of interesting things related to the topics, it is a lot more
enjoyable for everyone. (Mala, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14)

Jason suggested that “. . . it is more of current events in our government class” (Jason,
Student Interview Two, 10-2-14) and Ben noted that government class “gives you a
sense of what is happening in everyday life. Why does this happen. I like the real life
correlation between the two” (Ben, Student Interview Two, 10-6-14). In another
government class, Jenni described a similar emphasis on current events.

Most of the time when we talk, it is when we talk about today’s government,
he [the teacher] will relate it to . . . or when we talk about historical he will
relate something to today’s government . . . so, it is kind of better that way,
because we understand it coming from the focal point of us and seeing what
we see. It is kind of better that way . . . I like to learn that way, in more
contemporary, so I can understand . . . (Jenni, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14)

These ventures into current events appear to enable the majority of the students to make connections relevant to their everyday lives and to promote students’ thoughtful interactions with contemporary as well as historic civic concepts in the formation of their national identity. One example of this relationship building was expressed by Betsy.

Another one [characteristic of her national identity] would probably be . . . and I do not think is necessarily defined in the Constitution, but one that we [Americans] have adhered to over time . . . is just genuinely helping those who are less fortunate. I really do not mean it as in someone who is in an economic sense, as in . . . I mean it in all senses. It should be a general rule, I think, of humans, but, I think America embodies it really well; helping someone who needs help or aiding where there is a discrepancy between the two different courses, whether it is mentally safe, physically safe or if it is economically. If there is something that makes you unequal, I think America gives you . . . the opportunity to balance out, or at least better the situation they are in. (Betsy, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14)

Ben spoke to conversations in government that reflect his identification with America as . . . the land of opportunity. You can make any decision you want. You can go to school to become this or you can go get a job. You can go for a trade. You can take your life in any direction you want without fear of being . . . without someone telling you what you have to do for the rest of your life. (Ben, Student Interview Three, 10-10-14)

Van Manen (1990) proposes that one of the ways in which we experience and form a relationship with our lived world is through interaction with others. By this contact we move beyond ourselves for a sense of purpose and meaning. In reflecting on their relationship with America, as a “lived other,” students were able to articulate specific and meaningful connections that defined their national identity. “I think being an American you have to understand, you have to sort of like feel something about being an American” (Mala, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14).
Two students, Sophie, with dual citizenship (US and Mexican) and Frankie, who has yet to apply for U.S. citizenship but is of Chinese descent and holds Canadian citizenship, had yet to arrive at a complete understanding of this type of relationship with America. In their words,

"... technically, I am an American citizen, but I identify myself as Mexican. I think that I identify myself as Mexican not only because I was born there, but because I was raised in a Mexican culture home. I think it is also because they [parents] have accents and were raised in Mexico, that I see myself as Mexican. (Sophie, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14)

I just think identifying yourself as such one national identity is not, well for me at least, because I have been in so many different places, it is not an accurate way of describing myself. I would consider myself a Canadian, I consider myself Chinese, I am an immigrant in America and I like the fact that I am more, that I have all these different backgrounds that can support me for my true identity. (Frankie, Student Interview One, 9-29-14)

Although Sophie was more resolute in her rationale for determining her national identity, Frankie appeared to progress throughout our interviews as we moved from the historical to the current phenomenon of government class and then to meaning-making in relation to a national identity. Her original description of a relationship to nation as delineated above evolved through opportunities for detailed reflection and reconstruction of lived experiences to an eventual awareness and final description of national identity in Interview Three as:

"For me, a national identity is part of, not really the national part, but more of a community you are in. I mean, the thing that is most pronounced for me is probably the United States. Since, even though, I have lived in Canada for the same number of years, I never really had a chance to form the same kind of identity with it, because I was really young and I did not really think of that stuff before. (Frankie, Student Interview Three, 10-10-14)

**Association between identity of self and identity of country.** All 10 students viewed their relationship with the nation through a lens of shared values. Akin to their
process of determining the saliency of taught material in the classroom according to their personal measure of relevance, students exhibited a stronger connection to the conceptual ideals and policies of the nation when those ideals and policies reflected a commonness between themselves and the country. In order to explore this association process, I chose to focus on those specific avenues of connection – relevance, commonality, and value systems.

**Relevance.** Nine of the 10 students discovered a pertinent connection between their government course and their concept of a national identity; the one remaining student did not positively or negatively articulate any connection. For Rose, this association emerged in an understanding of the civic-related concept of federalism.

...then we got here and they were like, the federal government can do stuff like this and the states can do stuff like this.... but the federal government cannot do this.... and the states cannot do this.... So, I did not really know much about that, because they [previous social studies classes] did not really talk much about it. I knew like it was the federal government and then the states government. I knew they were all intertwined, I just did not know exactly how. We [government class] are talking more about that which helps me understand more of how our government works. You have to know how somebody is running your country. So, if you do not like it, you can figure a way to change it. (Rose, Student Interview Two, 9-30-14)

Once again, in Rose’s description of an active national identity, she demonstrated a sense of agency rooted in civic knowledge. This expression of her relationship with her new-found civic knowledge has for her, the relevance through which she made meaning.

Frankie elucidated her ideas about a reciprocal bond between country and denizen. Her words were exceptionally illuminating as they were spoken by a young lady with single citizenship – Canadian – but who was born in China and is of Chinese
ancestry. Her lived experiences brought a unique depth to the meaning she associates with this relationship.

I think it [US government class] creates more of a connection. I guess what I would say is that your connection to your country is more of what you learn about it and what you learn about how it impacts you, than necessarily just citizenship . . . As of right now, I probably feel more of a connection with the United States than with Canada or China, because I am more aware of what is going on in the States as of right now. I never really had the chance to learn about the Chinese government, though I do know about Hong Kong . . . When it comes to politics and government, I would say [I am] more connected to the United States in terms of that . . . Because, how much you participate in government and how much you pay attention to what they do also influences a big part of your national identity, if you are more empathetic or more involved. Then, I think, it gives you more perspectives on your national identity as well. (Frankie, Student Interview Three, 10-10-14)

A connection grounded in relevance for Betsy is the idea of the Constitution and her national identity. As Betsy became aware of the ideology embedded in the Constitution and judged it to be relevant to her personal beliefs, she naturally adopted this document as an exemplifier of her national identity.

I think constitution it does not get talked about the feeling and concept behind it as much before you go into government class. The Constitution is the groundwork for which we stand. It is funny; you can have whatever opinion you want on the Constitution. I have heard, especially in debate, this one kid always stresses that we should just throw out the Constitution and write a new one, because it is not applicable anymore. But, you can have that belief, because the Constitution gives you that belief and it lets you say that. (Betsy, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14)

In their everyday practice of living, each and every student was able to reconstruct his or her lived experience and associated conceptual understandings of not only the phenomenon of government class, but also of how this particular phenomenon interacts with their individual quotidian lives. Whether the students were aware of their developing epistemologies or not, the “aha” moments were significant and memorable.
**Commonality.** In the biological sciences, organisms innately identify friend or foe through chemical, physical, or other various cues related to their *commonness*. These shared traits do not imply a logical connection (relevance) but rather a natural connection. As this example relates to this study, students’ criteria for identifying with this country were the presence or absence of the *commonness* of beliefs and ideals. As a result, while several students were able to use particular civic vocabulary to describe their relationship with their national identity, other students articulated less government-specific terminology but still government-related associations. For instance, Jason very succinctly and viscerally declared, “The Pledge of Allegiance, one nation under God. You have it on currency and stuff. I guess that sort of aligns with my beliefs in a way” (Jason, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14). Jon also had no difficulty in identifying his Second Amendment rights as a source of commonality with U.S. ideology.

The biggest one that lets me know I am an American, is my Second Amendment right. I am a hunter. I like to hunt. In fact, most of my friends hunt, too. As things have been going on, different regulations on assault rifles and different things, as I view it, if you take the Second Amendment right or the weapons away from the citizens, the people who are not abusing them, the people who are abusing them are the ones that are going to have them. So, how are we going to defend ourselves? (Jon, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14)

Although Alan’s narratives somewhat consistently served as outliers to the norms, his meaning-making in regards to his sense of a shared attribute with his interpretation of a national characteristic was somewhat surprising.

I guess, just living in the country, especially in the U.S. where we are really this melting pot of a million different ethnicities and cultures, concepts and ideas. Really and truthfully, there is no one true American Dream. Everyone has their own idea. Being a citizen of America means being who you are in a world where anyone can be who they are. (Alan, Student Interview Three, 10-7-14)
From a more pedagogical perspective, Betsy shed light on not only her individual contemporary construct, but did so from a panoramic context.

I think national identity is also important for the fact that you have to realize that your national identity, it is not just you. It is coming upon 300 some years of people living in the same country, not the same situation exactly, but maybe, also having these experiences that they had to build to yours . . . I think that is part of it. People need to come to that understanding. (Betsy, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14)

Regardless of their ability to craft their words so as to draw a clear picture of their shared traits with this country, or any country for that matter, using concrete concepts from a government curriculum or more abstract concepts generated in government class, students were able to substantially form and verbalize their connections to this nation through a pathway of commonality.

Value systems. One could argue that if you share something, through a common understanding and attachment, then a value of some sort is implied. The differentiation in this study from this implication is the use of the term value system and its accompanying meaning involving a “set of connected things or parts that form a complex whole.” Examples of students’ data are intended to reflect the emphasis on a set of multiple and relational values as opposed to one that is singular and simple.

Throughout our first two interviews, Frankie vacillated between not having an identity with the United States, to having a conditional identity with the United States. By the time of our third interview, she was able to apply the detail we had explored during our first and second interviews to produce her culminating understanding of her relationship with the US.
Um, I guess really I do have an American identity. In the aspect that I do like the fact that people here have so many more opportunities to express themselves. Like protesting or the fact that your comments [most of the time] are not going to be put down by other people. Here, you have a chance [to] kind of speak up for what you really want. (Frankie, Student Interview Three, 10-10-14)

Rose, like Frankie and the majority of her peer participants, chose to address the value system of freedoms with which she identifies herself with this country. In particular, she spoke to the freedoms of speech and the press.

You are allowed to say what you want as long as it does not hurt other people. You can think the way you want to think, but that does not necessarily mean that it is right or that it is better than anyone else. You can think however you want to think. I think that is important also. I like the fact that people are free and that they can . . . I do not know. I just like the fact that people can believe and do things the way that they want to do them as long as it keeps other people safe. I just like that. (Rose, Student Interview Three, 10-7-14)

As a final example of a relationship with the nation positioned in the context of a shared value system, I return to Betsy’s reconstruction of a national identity. For a second time, Betsy’s style of language use was sincerely and passionately felt but pedagogical and cautionary.

So, if you are forming your basis as an individual and your identity on your nationality, then you should definitely have some kind of understanding of how the governmental system works. There is no way you could really say you are an American or say that you have the skill set to have a national identity if you do not understand your own nation. I think with being a citizen of the United States you should have a relative understanding of the process... the democratic process of how it works. (Betsy, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14)

As an ancillary observation, when I asked students at the conclusion of our third and final interview about actually being taught the concept of a national identity, all of
the students could not recall any formal pedagogical instance. Mala’s comment typified those of her peers.

I think in our government classes a lot of times where we sort of make fun of it, like ‘Oh, America... only in America would... you know, happen.’ But, I would say other than on like Veterans Day and things like that we do not focus on it at all, national identity. (Mala, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14)

I mention this to draw attention to the fact the majority of the students who participated in this research had little or no focused interaction with the concept of a national identity prior to this experience. While they may have had various opportunities over the course of their lives to have contemplated or even considered what it meant for them to be American, this exercise of context and exploration of the significance of an experience was for all students a fledgling encounter, situating that experience in language as a meaning-making process.

Knowledge of other. Before we can identify other, we must be cognizant of self, as the two concepts (other and self) are relational. Because they are connected, the characteristics of the unfamiliar other are often easier and better examined from the known position of self. As the students navigated their construction of a national identity, one method of fine-tuning their definition or example was to describe other.

Relation to self. As Jon pointed to the protection afforded by this nation’s government to the people living within its borders, he did so in relation to other. “[Its] the general security that we have in America that most countries do not have.” He also cited, as an example of this nation’s belief in equal opportunity, “The ability to go to school. Get an education. Some countries, they do not let girls go to school. They only
let men go to school” (Jon, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14). In both descriptions, Jon assigned to those countries, a lack of the national qualities to which he identifies.

Similarly, Jason incorporated a contemporary world situation as he touted his national identity as related to this nation’s ideology of

Democracy and freedom of religion. That is one reason why I do not think or why I think the terrorists do not like America, for example, because there is freedom of religion. I am allowed to be a Christian and somebody else is allowed to be Jewish or Muslim. They do not like that idea, they believe that the entire world should be Muslim. (Jason, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14)

In their process of assembling knowledge, both Jon and Jason first drew attention to their particular affinities to America before expanding to ancillary beliefs or information of other to bolster the credibility of their awareness of the world within the context of a national identity.

The agency of the people of this country to elect law-making members of Congress and the freedom to pursue our individual interests as members of this nation were two topics employed by Ben and Jenni during their interviews. According to Ben,

I think this country has a lot to offer. The government is run by the people, because we elect our representatives. It is controlled by the people and you do not see that in very many places in the world. I think that is a neat thing about America; because you have a direct say in what happens in the government, by voting. I think that is the most interesting part of our country. (Ben, Student Interview Three, 10-10-14)

From Jenni’s reconstruction of her national identity as it intersects with her government class,

We set our minds to something and we do it and they [those who target Americans] do not have that mindset, because they have someone telling them what to do, or is telling them how to work or telling them what their life is going to look like in 20 years from now. I just think that they see we have this mindset that we can do what we please. We can go to college, we
can go to work, we can work to make a living. They are like, we cannot. We are told what to do. (Jenni, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14)

Rose’s topic for contrasting with other countries was our right, as inhabitants of the United States, to be heard by the proper government authorities concerning a grievance or just cause.

Like, some other countries do not let you petition and stuff like that. Over here, as long as you are not hurting anybody else or anybody else's rights, then you could petition . . . Because, that sets us apart from other countries; other countries, like Cuba and North Korea they do not have rights like we do. (Rose, Student Interview Three, 10-7-14)

Beyond the Constitutional rights expressed by a number of the students, Rose also directed my attention to a particular privilege everyone has in this country as she told the story of her reaction to a recently viewed documentary.

I guess, I mean, I do not really like school, but I appreciate the fact that we have the resources to go to school and other kids in other countries cannot. I was watching this documentary one time and this . . . I think it was in Africa. . . . I think it was down more in the Third World part of Africa. There is this little girl and she wishes she could go to school, so she could become a doctor. But, she could not go to school, because her family was poor. She had to walk miles a day and all we do is get on a bus for like a half hour and we are at school. So, we have a lot of privileges like that. (Rose, Student Interview Three, 10-7-14)

The intercultural nature of Frankie’s and Sophie’s lived experiences provide a salient opportunity to learn about one aspect of the complex notion of a national identity – immigration. Although born in China to Chinese parents, Frankie with her nuclear family moved when she was 2 years of age, eventually becoming a citizen of Canada. At the age of nine, she once again moved, this time to the United States. Sophie and her family immigrated to the United States from Mexico when she was 6 months old for job opportunities. Like her parents, she holds citizenship (since she was 5 years of age) in
both Mexico and the United States. Frankie’s and Sophie’s relationships with this country and their views on national identity are colored by their experiences both past and present.

There are still problems, but I think compared to a lot of other countries it is one of the better things here . . . I like the satirical nature, especially in the media. They do not sugar coat a lot of stuff. They can be very biased, but I like the fact that they do not really sugar coat anything. They just say the hard facts and there is nothing that can really stop them from doing that. For some reason, I just really like the fact that we can have all these shows like John Stewart or Colbert Report where they can properly criticize the issues that are going on, but, inform us what is really going on as well. For me, [for my] American identity, that is a really big part. (Frankie, Student Interview 1, 9-29-14)

Although Frankie initially believed that she would never seek citizenship in the United States, her 7 years in this country appear to have impacted her decision. “Even before I took AP government, I started thinking more. I started thinking more about it and about the fact that maybe I could be able to vote someday. I think that would be a good opportunity for me” (Frankie, Student Interview Two, 10-6-14).

Sophie chose to focus on the opportunity for a quality education here in the U.S. as compared to Mexico as she observed,

. . . A lot of Americans, not a lot of Americans, some Americans do not take advantage of getting an education. They complain about school, they kind of do not want to go to school, blah, blah, blah. But, they do not realize it is such a privilege to be able to go to school. They will say school is all memorization, it is only if you have a good memory; that is what they judge being intelligent off of. That is not true. I would say that it is what you make it. If you want to learn, then you do learn. If you want to just memorize the stuff and forget about it as soon as the test is over, that is on you. I would say that he/she would have such a privilege coming over here and being able to learn and learn much more than you would learn in the school system down there [Mexico]. (Sophie, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14)
While *other* for the majority of her student participant peers referred to another country or countries, for Sophie, *other* was also represented by her lifeworld in Mexico.

. . . My dad who grew up in Mexico and was very, very poor and bettered himself, went to college and then moved over here to the United States and we have such a better life than we did. For example, I will see pictures of our house when we lived in Mexico . . . and it is like this tiny little thing. My parents are dressed very humbly. I look at us now and I think how much progress and how proud my dad should be of himself and my mom too. So, I definitely think it is a chance for opportunity. Because, I see my aunts and uncles on my dad's side who also prepared themselves, went to good colleges, but they are still living down there and they still, regardless of how prepared they are, they are struggling still. So, I just look at how in the United States it can get you so much more, like a good college, and perseverance can get you so much further than it can somewhere else. [In] some other countries you are stuck with what you are born with. (Sophie, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14)

*Equivalence.* Defining *other* does not always imply an opposite characterization; there may also exist a relationship of sameness or similarity. For Mala her identity as an American appeared to be energized by her identity with *others* around the world.

I have so many commonalities with other Americans. I identify as an American. I identify more, [although] it is not like my primary identity that I associate with myself; I associate more, just like a citizen of the world. [It is] such an inter-dependent age, like growing up on the internet and being in contact with people from all around the world all the time. I feel like I am identified less as an American than people of previous generations. I also identify more as a millennial with people by age. I have a lot more in common with people my age around the world, than necessarily I do with other people in America. Especially, even within America, my generation has so much in common; so many views in common. We use the same products. We use the same words; things like that. I belong to America in a way, but I would not say it is sort of a big deal. I do not know how to describe it. (Mala, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14)

Jason acquiesced to the notion of sameness between two religions that represent very different geographic regions in the world. At issue for him was the difference in
treatment of the two religions as a result of what he terms “political correctness” in the United States. I did not mark this interesting perspective on the concept of other during our third interview but as it emerged during the thematic analysis, I have to admit to a moment of profound personal meaning-making. In his narrative, Jason envisioned political correctness in the United States as other in illustrating a condition of similarity between what most would consider polar opposite religions/faiths.

I think that political correctness actually offends more people than it helps. If you are politically correct towards a minority, then you are leaving out the majority, too. For example, they are politically correct towards Muslims and their beliefs. But, when it comes to being a Christian they do not really . . . they can say whatever about them. If a Christian is against gay marriage, you know, they are terrible or how dare they. But, you never hear them complain about any major Muslim figure being against gay marriage, which I am pretty sure they are too. Because they are politically correct, they do not want to offend them in anyway. Not saying the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag anymore, because of political correctness, I think that takes away from our patriotism, nationalism and pride in our country. (Jason, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14)

Relationships, as social constructs, are fluid, contextual, and continually being defined and redefined. At that moment in time, the three weeks during which interviews were conducted, the students’ descriptions of other were dependent on the intersection of their individual lived experiences and their interaction with government/civic concepts and coursework within the framework of a national identity. All students used the method of describing their knowledge of other to assist in their meaning-making of a national identity. What was most intriguing was their balanced approach in locating other as both different and similar.
Table 12. Student perceptions of government/civics course related to structured consciousness of national identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptual Interpretations and Relationships</th>
<th>Student Perceptions of Government/ Civics Course</th>
<th>Students’ Structured Consciousness of a National Identity and Its Relationship to their Government/Civics Course</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Articulated Concepts Relating to Civics</td>
<td>“... your connection to your country is more of what you learn about it and what you learn about how it impacts you, than necessarily just citizenship. As a citizen, if you never really bothered to learn about how your country works and how it affects other people as well, I feel like you never really have an official connection to it. Whereas if you bother learning about it, basically from experience in learning, that you can form more of a connection with this country... Because, how much you participate in government and how much you pay attention to what they [government] do also influences a big part of your national identity, if you are more empathetic or more involved. Then, I think, it gives you more perspectives on your national identity as well.” Frankie, Student Interviews Two and Three, 10-6 &amp; 10-14</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Semiotics</td>
<td>“I think national identity comes from being a citizen. When you are a citizen you have, you do have an understanding. You have the ability to use your rights and to express what you feel. I think national identity is coexisting with citizenship; they are encompassed in one, albeit an American. When you are a citizen and you have this national identity, you are able to illustrate what you believe with more conviction. You understand what you are talking about.” Betsy, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14</td>
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Table 12. Student perceptions of government/civics course related to structured consciousness of national identity (continued)

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<tr>
<td>3. Socially Constructed Relationships</td>
<td>. . . I think I understand who I am in relation to this country. I understand how this country operates and how I should operate with it. So, I think, in a sense, I do have that sort of national identity.” Alan, Student Interview Three, 10-7-14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Association Between Identity of Self and Identity of Country</td>
<td>1. Relevance</td>
<td>“Probably, one thing that defines me most as an American, I think, and one of my major beliefs and creeds, I guess is just Christianity in general. My parents and family are Christian. I tend to focus more on Christian viewpoints of political stuff. I tend to take a conservative path for the most part . . . My thought is that some of them [founding fathers] probably had different, I do not know, beliefs I guess. Some of them were Christians, I believe. But, also some of them were not. I think that is one reason why they made freedom of religion in America is because of those opposing views with each other. That way they would all be able to believe what they wanted to . . . I mean as a Christian, if I see, for example, some Muslim person, I am not going to be biased or prejudice against them. They are in America; they have their freedom of religion too.” Jason, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Commonality</td>
<td>“I like how America is not really drawn together by race or ethnicity. It is more like values. Americans are so attached to their freedoms - freedom of expression, freedom of assembly. I love to see protests going on. With the whole way I like debate, I like [that] American’s value debates and they like debates to happen. They do not try and squash them down, like they do in other countries.” Mala, Student Interview One, 9-25-14</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Value Systems</td>
<td>“Yeah, it is always good to have people striving for goals, I mean that is what it should be. You do not want to strive to be at the bottom, you want to strive to be at the top. You want to be successful, I guess that is the American Dream, I guess you would say.” Ben, Student Interview One, 9-29-14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Other</td>
<td>1. Relationship to Self</td>
<td>“My dad who grew up in Mexico and was very, very poor and bettered himself, went to college and then moved over here to the United States and we have such a better life than we did. For example, I will see pictures of our house when we lived in Mexico for six months and it is like this tiny little thing. My parents are dressed very humbly. I look at us now and I think how much progress and how proud my Dad should be of himself and my Mom too. So, I definitely think it is a chance for opportunity. Because, I see my aunts and uncles on my dad's side who also prepared themselves, went to good colleges, but they are still living down there and they still, regardless of how prepared they are, they are struggling still. So, I just look at how in the United States it can get you so much more, like a good college and perseverance can get you so much further than it can somewhere else. Some other countries you are stuck with what you are born with.” Sophie, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14</td>
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<td>2. Equivalency</td>
<td>(in response to being asked to design a course on a national identity)</td>
<td>“I would probably first ask the students look up some general rights that Americans have and some general rights that someone, say in Europe, might have and compare them to what we have. If they have more, how do those that are extra affect them—positively or negatively? Then, I would also have them look, I would say look deeper into government structure and how ours is structured versus theirs. Because, in Europe there could be a king or queen, there could be a republic, there could be a dictatorship, because they are all different countries.” Jon, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14</td>
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**Finding.** Within the context of a historical metanarrative, K-11 social studies coursework indirectly affects the development of a national identity.

By the time the students reach their senior year in high school in the Midwestern Schools, they will have spent 11 of those 12 years engaged with social studies coursework (Table 14). This extended system of related studies that currently has at its core an overarching goal of civic awareness and proficiency, begins in kindergarten with the introduction of democratic principles and culminates in the study of government during the junior year in high school. A closer review of the scope and sequence of social studies coursework K-11 (Appendix B) provides an overview of the guiding themes and major content concepts according to each grade in school. As students were asked to reflect on their experiences with various social studies units and courses
throughout their education, one theme in particular materialized from their narratives—the presence of a historical metanarrative. Within this framework, four further motifs appeared by which the students brought meaning to the metanarrative. Those subthemes were ideology, shared history, belongingness, and trustworthiness.

**Figure 2. Reduction and thematic analysis process: Research question 2**

F: Through a historical metanarrative, K-11 social studies coursework *indirectly* affects the development of a national identity.

Q2: In what ways has 11th graders’ K-11 social studies coursework, as participants reconstruct it, affected their development of a national identity?
**Ideology.** My first interview was designed to provide a space for the students to construct details of their experiences with each of their social studies units or classes, beginning with their earliest recollection up to and until their government class. In the context of their life history, the goal of this interview was for the students to reconstruct and narrate the sequences of constitutive events that led to the phenomenon of their participation in the government classroom. Like the second interview, during which the students were asked to recreate the details of their contemporary experience of government, this elicitation of details allowed for the students to make sense of how these factors interacted to bring them to their current understanding of a national identity.

As a tool devised to generate prereflexive connections, initially students were asked to participate in a word association exercise in which vocabulary, often located in the founding documents studied in elementary and secondary school, are representative of components of the American Creed. Table 13 displays their responses.

The students, expanding on their associations with particular aspects of the American Creed, also expressed their ideological connections linking their experiences with the social studies curriculums to an understanding of their national identity. Alan sourced the Constitution as the warehouse of American ideology. “We are also taught about the Constitution. It is basically all of those things that people call to whenever it is like the US. We believe in this, this or this” (Alan, Student Interview One, 9-24-14). He also pointed to the Declaration of Independence as a reference from the beginning [of formal social studies education] as sort of a political idol. These are, this is the literature that formed our country, so they are very . . . it is an important part of our history. It would make sense that we did not gloss over it. I have definitely learned of it since third grade. (Alan, Student Interview One, 9-24-14)
Table 13. American creed word association exchange

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>American Creed Word</th>
<th>Ben</th>
<th>Mala</th>
<th>Sophie</th>
<th>Jenni</th>
<th>Betsy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Liberty</strong></td>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>I think of liberty, equality, fraternity and the French Revolution.</td>
<td>Human Rights; United States</td>
<td>Oh my gosh, . . . um probably the Statue of Liberty, freedom for sure.</td>
<td>Freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equality</strong></td>
<td>Fairness. Equal opportunity, I guess . . . it is like the same.</td>
<td>I like it because it is very broad. You can talk about gender equality, racial equality, LBGT equality and how we do not have equal rights amendments that have passed yet.</td>
<td>Far from it.</td>
<td>Probably, Brown versus Board for sure. Just segregation for sure. We are all equal, so....</td>
<td>Working on it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Democracy</strong></td>
<td>The people. They say... or they set the laws that should be set and they vote on the policy of what they think is right for the country.</td>
<td>There are probably better examples of democracy, but we are still the first ones. We are the one that everyone thinks of when you say . . .</td>
<td>A privilege.</td>
<td>What we have been learning in government from the past, like 1768, like a certain time period . . . um.</td>
<td>Best expressed in the United States of America. Numerous positive adjectives involving that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individualism</strong></td>
<td>To believe what you want. To think different than others would.</td>
<td>. . . I think a lot of people are one thing; they like pick and choose their own beliefs. That is kind of how it was intended to be with the Constitution.</td>
<td>Rewarding once you have it . . . I think that knowing everything that you think and how you feel and showing that without trying to be like everybody else is what individualism means to me.</td>
<td>Maybe my own person. Being able to be who I am.</td>
<td>A freedom to express one’s self.</td>
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(table continues)
Table 13. American creed word association exchange (continued)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>American Creed Word</th>
<th>Ben</th>
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<th>Betsy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Human Rights</strong></td>
<td>Natural born rights, like you are entitled to this. This should be given to you day one, you should not have to earn it or anything like that.</td>
<td>I think I like the UN, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and I would like to work for a place like that some day . . . we have never really been isolationist. I think Americans overall are pretty concerned with human rights, I guess.</td>
<td>The United States probably comes to mind with human rights.</td>
<td>Um, being able to have my own rights and doing my own thing and having the rights that I do, especially for giving a speech and freedom of religion and being able to do that.</td>
<td>Universal issue as opposed to just a national one. American government has done so in all of our various systems that provide monies and support for those who lack certain things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Representative Government</strong></td>
<td>Democracy. Representative, you vote for a candidate who, I guess you would say, reflects your ideals . . . but you base that on research, what they have voted for in the past or what they believe . . .</td>
<td>I think of Congress.</td>
<td>Probably just the United States again.</td>
<td>Let me think. Probably, government action most likely.</td>
<td>Best form of government of which I am aware. People who are to represent the will of the people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rule of Law</strong></td>
<td>. . . the law is set this way and it can be, there is no gray area. It is pretty clear cut. If you choose not to abide by it, there will be consequences. If you stay within the law, then you are. . .</td>
<td>I think of the writing that we read a couple of weeks ago [in government class], about how people are naturally free, but they like to organize themselves under the rule of law. It makes everyone's lives easier.</td>
<td>. . . it should be enforced. It should exist, I guess, is a better way of saying it.</td>
<td>Being able to . . . you have your right to laws. We have our Miranda Rights and stuff like that. So, we do not have to and we have the trial by jury and . . .</td>
<td>Rights, justice, equality, fairness, ensurement, protection, safety, justice, ensured justice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
Table 13. American creed word association exchange (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>American Creed Word</th>
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<th>Betsy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Private Property</strong></td>
<td>Personal ownership . . . I guess it shows that you took initiative. You strive for or to have something.</td>
<td>Private property, I would say is a pretty American thing . . . I think having your own private property is something that distinguishes America as more of a capitalist society.</td>
<td>I think that in the U.S. and the Constitution how it says that, it definitely follows through with it. Here you can have your own things and you can show off that you have nice rings or nice cars. In other countries you do not have that, because people can just take it from people and they can threaten you and you have to give it up.</td>
<td>That is what we own. That belongs to us, especially when they said that in the past that someone could have taken your property, even did not matter who you were, the government could have come in and taken your property. But, if you buy that property, it belongs to you.</td>
<td>Mine. I mean just ownership.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>American Creed Word</th>
<th>Jon</th>
<th>David</th>
<th>Rose</th>
<th>Frankie</th>
<th>Jason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Liberty</strong></td>
<td>Mostly freedom and the rights we have.</td>
<td>I think of freedom. Then when I think of freedom, I also think of the Liberty Bell.</td>
<td>Freedom.</td>
<td>Flag and United States. Like liberty, property, Declaration of Independence.</td>
<td>Just nationalism and being able to do whatever. Being free of any sort of outside influence.</td>
</tr>
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(table continues)
Table 13. American creed word association exchange (continued)

<table>
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<th>Betsy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equality</strong></td>
<td>Mostly the race issue. We used to have separate, segregation about equality, so everyone is treated and has equal opportunities in their life to succeed or not succeed. Equal rights to pursue what you want to pursue.</td>
<td>I do not necessarily think that, I mean has the U.S. been determined to be like the least Democratic institution? I think the reason is, that congress basically filibusters anything they do not like. So, in truth, all power is held by, how many people are in Congress?</td>
<td>Equal between genders and sexes and stuff like that.</td>
<td>I think of slavery. I guess. On equality, we still have a ways to go.</td>
<td>Everybody is equal and they are able to do anything the other person does.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Democracy</strong></td>
<td>Your right to view your opinions and vote.</td>
<td>Voting.</td>
<td>United States.</td>
<td>United States.</td>
<td>The right to choose what the government does.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individualism</strong></td>
<td>I guess you could say the right to be who you want to be and pursue what you want to pursue.</td>
<td>Not many people like it.</td>
<td>I do not know. . . Like the actual rights of the individual person, so like the pursuit of happiness . . .</td>
<td>Protests, like protesting. Standing up for something that is not popular notion.</td>
<td>Having your own personal identity without somebody telling you who you are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Creed Word</td>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>Mala</td>
<td>Sophie</td>
<td>Jenni</td>
<td>Betsy</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Human Rights</strong></td>
<td>I am not too knowledgeable on human rights, but I know different things here and there.</td>
<td>Something we need to work on.</td>
<td>The natural rights we were born with.</td>
<td>The UN.</td>
<td>The respect for any sort of human: white, black, yellow and anything along those lines, no matter who you are or what color, race or ethnicity you are equal. I think that America is a very giving place. We have a lot of respect for individuals. You have the right not to be oppressed by anybody. Or, to be told that you cannot do something because of a certain ethnicity or belief.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 13. American creed word association exchange (continued)

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<th>Jenni</th>
<th>Betsy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Representative Government</strong></td>
<td>A group of people that were selected by us to represent us.</td>
<td>Good, as long as you have a representative who actually represents you.</td>
<td>How the government has reps like the Senate and the House of Rep. They take in consideration our best interests, what we think and they try and interpret that into helping us get what we want.</td>
<td>Probably, United States again. Basically, that about how in government you do not always get the chance, I mean you vote for representatives, but that does not necessarily mean that from then on they are not going to do everything that you want them to do. Like representative government, it is flawed but I think it is the best way possible to express the views of the people.</td>
<td>Having somebody represent you. You get to elect somebody that will show your beliefs in front of Congress, for example.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rule of Law</strong></td>
<td>Well, not everyone necessarily likes having restrictions and laws. They keep people safe. They help keep your own property safe. Protection, security.</td>
<td>It is a law, it is a rule. I guess the function is hopefully, to better the country and to make sure everyone is happy.</td>
<td>Like, the way laws work? They keep us safe and protected.</td>
<td>Do not really know. The first word that just came out is the Supreme Court.</td>
<td>Being able to govern the people. Have the people abide by the law. I think laws are very necessary. It keeps people from doing bad things.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
Table 13. American creed word association exchange (continued)

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<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Private Property</strong></td>
<td>I own my own car. I bought my own car. To respect the things I have. To respect the things other people have.</td>
<td>Whenever one person possesses the majority of wealth or power it is not a good situation. For the rest of the people. I think it is part of the American Dream.</td>
<td>If it is our property that we bought and we own, it is ours.</td>
<td>The first thing that popped up was John Locke, he writes about life, liberty and property. He is a property owner as well. A lot of what people are about comes from protecting your own property.</td>
<td>Being able to have your own space without government or anybody else being able to tell you what to do with it or any sort of thing along those lines. Private property also, I think, goes along with privacy. I consider myself, like my identity to be of my private property.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mala, who was inclined throughout all three interviews to represent a world-oriented perspective, described what she had learned about America over the course of her social studies classes as it applied to the concept of a national identity.

I would say that it is ideological, because a lot of people in other parts of the world still would like to come to America to this day, because of all the opportunities, the American Dream, everything that is sort of associated with America, sort of cliche. It embodies self-improvement and the idea that no matter who you are or no matter what you look like, no matter what family you come from, you can do what you want to do in America. You have all these freedoms, these opportunities, you can start a business. Lots of immigrants start businesses, a lot higher proportion than native Americans. I think because they feel they have something to offer America, in addition to the things we offer them. They just want to be a part of such a society, especially, if they come from a place where they did not have opportunities like that. (Mala, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14)
Ben employed his knowledge from his World Studies class to make the comparison between the direct democracy of ancient Greece to that of a representative democracy as a foundational and identifying concept of the US.

Greece was a democracy. We are a democracy. The people of Greece voted directly on issues and we do not. We have representatives who represent us. I think representative is definitely easier, just because getting everybody to vote is pretty tough, especially for minor issues like if you had to get everyone to vote for a road to be built, in Hawaii for example. Why would some of us want to vote for that? It has no impact on us [those who do not live in Hawaii]. Definitely because of population size, it is more logical to use a representative system than a direct democracy. (Ben, Student Interview Three, 10-10-14)

Thinking back on a recent class day in government, Jenni explained, “We were talking about something that had to do with property.” Although she could not remember what had prompted the discussion, the topic was about our right to own property as an American and “how they used houses for barracks for soldiers and stuff” during the American Revolution, something she had learned in her American History class. And now, having studied the Bill of Rights, she soundly declared, “We do not have to do that anymore.” (Jenni, Student Interview One, 9-26-14)

The various ideologies alluded to by each of the students have their origins in a variety of units and coursework covered by social studies education over the course of their 11 school years. A perusal of the social studies scope and sequence K-11 chart (Table 14), which arranges the relevant conceptual content according to grade level, adds additional clarity to the findings and to the meaning-making process exemplified by each of the students.
Table 14. Required social studies curriculum K-11 by theme/course, Midwestern Public Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Theme/Course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>A Child’s Place in Time and Space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Grade</td>
<td>Families Now and Long Ago, Near and Far</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Grade</td>
<td>People Working Together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Grade</td>
<td>Communities: Past and Present, Near and Far</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Grade</td>
<td>Ohio in the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Grade</td>
<td>Regions and People of the Western Hemisphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth Grade</td>
<td>Regions and People of the Eastern Hemisphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh Grade</td>
<td>World Studies from 750 BC to 1600 AD: Ancient Greece to the First Global Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighth Grade</td>
<td>US Studies from 1492 to 1877: Exploration through Reconstruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninth Grade</td>
<td>Modern World Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenth Grade</td>
<td>American History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleventh Grade</td>
<td>American Government</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Shared history.* Students graduating from the study site high school are required to take three social studies courses – Ninth Grade World Studies or AP European History, Tenth Grade General or AP U.S. History, and Eleventh Grade General or AP American Government. The State of Ohio requires only one-half semester of American History and one-half semester of U.S. Government and 2-year-long social studies electives. The study site school system has resolutely decided to continue to follow the more traditional social studies course of study by maintaining both year-long American History and U.S. Government.
It is additionally interesting to note that in conjunction with a state-wide movement to require a World History course in high schools, at the study-site school, the requirement already exists. There are also a number of social study electives offered during the 11th and 12th grades. Those courses are:

- Advanced Placement European History
- Advanced Placement Psychology
- American History: A Pop Culture Journey (on-line only)
- Classical Middle Ages (semester)
- Holocaust and the Dangers of Indifference (semester)
- Psychology (semester)
- Revolutionary History (on-line only)
- Sociology (semester)
- World Geography (semester)

The Appendix B chart provides an overview of both the elementary school social studies units and their accompanying themes and content as well as the secondary school social studies required courses, their themes, descriptions, and content. Additionally, Table 15 displays Ohio’s New Learning Standards skills topics for grades K-8 according to the elementary social studies strands. Taken in total, students in the study-site school system are provided multiple opportunities, spanning 12 years of a formal education to develop an understanding of and interaction with a shared history of this country from an international, national, state, and local perspective. Jon expressed the influence this particular curriculum has had on his national identity when he suggested,
I would have to say it would be knowing and wanting to know the history of America. Knowing where you came from and how America was made. It could also be the struggles that America went through to get different freedoms, races that (got) their freedoms, like civil rights. I know we talked about that. (Jon, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14)

Table 15. Ohio Department of Education new learning standards, skills topic descriptions: K-8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strand</th>
<th>Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>Historic and Thinking Skills Heritage Early Civilizations Feudalism and Transitions First Global Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>Colonization to Independence A New Nation Expansion Civil War and Reconstruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>Spatial Thinking and Skills Places and Regions Human Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Civic Participation and Skills Roles and Systems of Governments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>Economic Decision Making Production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scarcity and Markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Financial Literacy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mala reconstructed a tradition from one of her junior high social studies classes that led to her civic interest in current events.

One thing I remember is in 8th grade we had to pick a current event every week. A different person was assigned each day and we would discuss in class. I thought that was a really great thing to do because, that is what sort of started getting me interested in following the news. (Mala, Student Interview One, 9-25-14)

Like Mala, in regards to encouraging civic responsibility and action through the use of current events, Sophie suggested a pedagogical solution using the example of the Holocaust.
If you think about it, they teach us about the Holocaust and almost everybody in the high school has an opinion about the Holocaust, you know. Almost everybody is the same, obviously the same opinion that the Holocaust is a terrible thing. But, I think if they [the teachers] opened our eyes to other things going around right now, they [the students] would definitely have an opinion and maybe even like raise their voice and say something about it or do something about it. (Sophie, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14)

For both girls, relevance was the key to engagement and making connections to the content material. Of greater significance was their adoption of a sense of agency as a response to meaningful knowledge connections.

The narrative excerpts of Jon, Mala, and Sophie are representative of their interactions with a shared history metanarrative and the resulting meaning they reconstructed, which only indirectly was associated with their identity with this country. The majority of the student participants fell into this same category. Only one student made a direct correlation between the master idea of a shared history and a national identity.

There is so much more history that we are not able to fully comprehend. We may look back on slavery and say, wow that is such a terrible idea, but at the time people were saying . . . you know, they are not people. We cannot wrap our heads around that. We cannot in good faith say, yeah. I think that is something that is really hard for people to understand. But, it needs to be something that is focused on a little more regarding your national identity. If you realize and come to that understanding, that you are the way you are because of these 300 some years we have had here, then it becomes a lot easier to understand things on a basis of - I am just building upon or I can build upon what other people built me up to. I think that is an interesting part of national identity. (Betsy, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14)

**Belongingness.** A profound majority of the students expressed a clear and definitive association with this country within the context of a close or intimate relationship. At times that relationship was articulated using links to civics-related
concepts or historiography, and at other times the more salient bond was related to a lived experience. Mala provided an example of the latter,

I like how America is not really drawn together by race or ethnicity. It is more like values. Americans are so attached to their freedoms and freedom expression, freedom of assembly. I love to see protests going on. With the whole way I like debate, I like [that] Americans value debates and they like debates to happen. They do not try and squash hem down, like they do in other countries. (Mary Grace, Student Interview One, 9-25-14)

Through Mala’s strong association with and interest in the act of formally arguing or discussing civic issues, philosophies and principles, she drew a connective parallel to her knowledge base of the historical metanarrative of Constitutionally enumerated freedoms of this country and their resulting manifestations. Similarly, Betsy, with verbal precision, told a story of belongingness using a nationalized historic figure. Although the story only indirectly supports her identity with this country, it does subtly express the representation of a significant aspect of the discernible civic privilege and obligation of voting – an affinity for the object of one’s vote.

When I was 8 years old, it was the first local election I had ever seen where I actually understood relatively what was going on. Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton were competing for presidency votes from the Democratic Party. McCain and Sarah Palin at that point had pretty much gotten their spot for [the] Republican [Party]. Since my mom is a Republican, she was rooting for them, although she dislikes Sarah Palin, a lot. I remember seeing Hillary Clinton as a candidate and saying, ‘Mom, I want Hillary Clinton to win.’ She said, ‘Why? She is a Democrat. Why do you want her to win?’ I said, ‘Because she is a woman. I think it would be cool if we had a woman president.’ Looking back now, it is really strange to think that was the basis I thought that the entire United States government should be run upon, was the fact that Hillary Clinton was a woman. I did not know anything else and my first natural response was team girl, let’s go for the presidency. (Betsy, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14)

Two students who incorporated more direct features of the historic metanarrative in their communication of that attachment to a national identity were Jon and Jenni.
History is my favorite subject now. It used to be one of my least favorites. It was not really taught as in how America was made, it was based on how Europe and all of these different countries became part of [America] and I was not really intrigued with that . . . Last year was my favorite year so far in U.S. history, because it was U.S. history . . . That was what intrigued me, but I am more excited about this year than I have ever been. I finally get to learn about how my government works. (Jon, Student Interview One, 9-25-14)

As she journeyed back through her recollection of her social studies courses, Jenni singled out her meaningful identification with the grand narrative of U.S. History.

Starting when I got to [junior high school] we did World History . . . Some of that appealed to me, but that is just not who I am. World History is not really me, unless it has to do with Italy . . . Anything that has to deal with U.S. history appeals to me. (Jenni, Student Interview One, 9-26-14)

Again, during a subsequent interview, Jenni more definitively elucidated her sense of national belongingness through her interpretation of the civic-minded concept of citizenship.

. . . we learned part of that, I think, in history. Just like, because it is one of the amendments, if you are born in the United States you are a citizen of the United States. [With] citizenship, I believe that you belong here. (Jenni, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14)

Jon and Betsy both navigated their emotional connection with America as related to a civic action of voting, but while Betsy addressed the condition of belongingness to the selection of a candidate, Jon confronted his personal conundrum of the lack of conveying one’s ties to this country by not engaging in the privilege of civic agency through voting.

Most people I have talked to right when they are turning 18, about where I am, when they can vote for the presidency, they are excited about it. The last time we voted in [city of study site high school] for some bills, there was less than half turnout. Most of my friends were like, ‘Why don’t people come express their freedom to vote on what they think?’ It is because it is
not really taught or expressed by most people anymore. It is just whatever . . . (Jon, Student Interview One, 9-25-14)

A significant aspect of the historical metanarrative deals with the rights and privileges of members of this nation and the saliency of those opportunities. Jon’s apparent disappointment is directed not at a particular individual or individuals who elected not to vote, but at the apathy, the indifference to a relationship, that lies beneath the decision not to join in a communal and civic opportunity of expression. Jon attributed this situation to a lack of pedagogical emphasis or initiative.

Trustworthiness. Is it possible to trust, to depend on the historical metanarrative? For nine of the 10 students during our interviews this was never a question. Those students confidently relied on the credibility of the information they were using to construct meaning. One student ascribed his overall distrust and cynicism of what he had been taught by his various teachers of social studies to particular events – U.S. relations with Native American Indians and the narrators of history in general. According to Alan:

In kindergarten, 1st grade and 2nd grade we learned about the Native Americans, but they are extremely different than the way we are taught now. Then they [teachers] talked about Thanksgiving, they said how the Native Americans helped us colonize the Americas and how we were friends; they [Native Americans] are one of the people who helped build this country. Then, whenever you go to middle school and high school, they kind of point out, we may or may not have just stolen their land. They were not necessarily helping us as much as they were begrudgingly being kicked off their home. I think if I were to have been not told that original piece of information or not have been told the actual information, I do not think I would have had the same viewpoint as I do now, which is, sort of, people want to believe that we did not basically steal this entire country from the Native Americans. But, we kind of did. I think it is really, I do not know. I guess what I am saying is I have been taught to not believe. (Alan, Student Interview Three, 10-7-14)
Alan continued to expound upon a topic on which he obviously had a developed opinion.

I think, basically, Thanksgiving comes along and the teacher is ‘let’s have a day about Thanksgiving and we will have a little dance’ or whatever. ‘You guys can dress up as Indians.’ I think, in a sense, they are trying to show you a little bit of that time back then, without trying to show you the gritty stuff, I guess. The fact of what happens after Thanksgiving . . . I think it is where most lies are, which is sort of that strange place where they are not lying. It is just a very selective representation of the truth. (Alan, Student Interview Three, 10-7-14)

Trust is a relational element and its presence is frequently based on honesty and transparency. For Alan, as a result of his lived experiences with what he has been taught in the classroom over the course of several years, the data gathered from our interviews suggests an issue of trustworthiness for him. “That term, history, is determined by the winners. I do not necessarily agree that should be how it is thought, I guess.” (Alan, Student Interview Two, 9-30-14)

**Saturation.** It is important to note a significant finding related to students’ culminating evaluation of their social studies experience. Although not closely connected to their concept of a national identity, the importance of this discovery lies in the unified voices of the majority of the students and their resourceful advice worth noting.

Even though the students expressed an understanding of the purpose behind the presentation of various civic and historic social studies topics woven throughout the length of their formal education, the students vocalized the following symbiotic observations:

- a repetition of foundational concepts throughout the years that in their redundancy lessened their impacting knowledge
• coursework that never achieved its targeted completion era, decade or period
  of time
• a lack of emphasis on modern times – issues, events, people, policies, etc.

As an example, Mala commented, “a lot of the foundational stuff I have been getting since 4th, 5th grade. Which is over and over and over. If we would just build on what we learned before, instead of having to review it and rehash it all year” (Mala, Student Interview One, 10-1-14). . . And Sophie chimed in with her frustration,

. . . Actually all of my history classes that I have been a part of, we never get to modern day society. It is not that it is pointless, because it is good to know about the history of the United States, but it is also, even better, to know about what is going on around you, the present time, or 10 or 20 years ago, because we never really get past not WWII, but the 60s. We never really pass them. (Sophie, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14)

Frankie, too, would prefer to address modern times in her social studies classes. “I know colonial times are important to learn about, I just feel like I want to move on and move on to more modern times and see how that really started changing” (Frankie, Student Interview One, 9-29-14). Along with his peers, Alan concluded, “. . . the thing is that I feel like I have been learning the same thing in school since second grade” (Alan, Student Interview One, 9-24-14)

As you would expect, some students were able to run the gauntlet of grade levels in school and each grade’s accompanying social studies theme according to either particular eras or geographic locales. Interestingly, during the third interview when applying the details of what they had learned over the course of their cumulative social studies units or courses in relation to their national identity, their dependence on the overarching historical metanarrative was discernible. The pervasiveness of a feeling of
saturation, of repetition of civic and historic information by the majority of the students interviewed, served as the most pronounced indicator of the perceived metanarrative.

Finding. The traditional civic education classroom plays a competitive role in relation to other “pedagogical places” as a Third Space for civic education manifested through student voice, in the structured consciousness of a national identity.

As students navigated the first two interviews and reconstructed details of their experiences in social studies units and courses from kindergarten through their 11th grade U.S. government class, as one would expect, their anamnesis prompted stories of the classroom. Those descriptions focused on teachers from whom they learned concepts and understandings of the nation and its history, of the world, of community, of civics, and of themselves. Some of the students also recalled, in their evaluation, classrooms in which the erudition was made difficult or uninteresting largely as a result of the pedagogical style of the teacher, more specifically, the teacher’s ability to connect the content material to the personal sphere of the student and to design space in which students were encouraged to develop and express their voice.

With the transition to meaning-making in the third interview and through subtle guidance, students broadened their reservoir of sources of civic knowledge to include other pedagogical places – places where learning occurs outside the traditional classroom. Family, religion, friends, travel, media (especially the Internet), extracurricular activities, and various unique lived experiences, were those sources of civic education most often mentioned.
Q: What role does the traditional civic education classroom play in relation to other "pedagogical places" as a Third Space for civic education in the structured consciousness of a national identity?

F: The traditional civic education classroom plays a competitive role in relation to other "pedagogical places" as a Third Space for civic education in the structured consciousness of a national identity.

Theme: Traditional Civic Education Classroom
Subthemes:
*Teaching Styles
*Opportunity for Voice
*Relevance of Content Material

Theme: "Pedagogical Places" as a Third Space for Civic Education
Subthemes:
*Influences (i.e. family, religion, activities, etc.)
*Lifeworld

Figure 3. Reduction and thematic analysis process: Research question 3
The traditional civic education classroom. For the purpose of this study and in alignment with the context in which this research was conducted, the civic education classrooms referenced in this chapter pertain solely to those encountered by the sample population at Midwestern High School. Situated in this milieu, the themes that emerged from the data profoundly reflect the structures of the students’ lived experiences. Within their civic education classrooms, teaching style, opportunity for voice, and the relevance of content material were most influential in their understanding of government/civics as it intersects with the concept of a national identity.

Teaching style. Nine of the 10 students were generous in their explanations of their relationships with the process of learning and in particular, the impact of the teacher’s pedagogical style on learning. Students were able to speak to both sides of this influence, addressing methods that were engaging, attention getting, and motivational as well as those that were dispassionate, uninteresting, and disconnecting.

Alan targeted the qualities of an effective teacher

. . . with history, where it really is based on the teacher’s presentation more than other classes. I think it really depends on the teacher’s care about the subject . . . I think there [are] a lot of things that you can relate to how to teach history. Which is, you give them [students] the tools that they need and you explain to them how they work and then you have them determine for themselves how to use them. I think [the process] may have its flaws, but at the same time [it] would get a higher quality of learning for a lot of students. (Alan, Student Interview One, 9-24-14)

Before leaving the topic, Alan bore a responsibility for his own learning. “I think you take out of school what you will. It depends mostly on what you find interesting in school. I only learn something if I actually find it interesting” (Alan, Student Interview One, 9-24-14)
The need for more research-related projects in the civic education classroom was the theme of Jon’s dialogue, even to the point of offering advice to social studies teachers.

Do more projects that force kids to go out and do research because, if you go out and look at different things that are happening in the news or government, not everyone watches the news like I do. Who thinks the news is fun? I would say get the students more involved with outside research, while keeping a happy medium with what you tell them or show them [in the classroom]. (Jon, Student Interview One, 9-25-14)

Jon continued to elaborate on the necessity for project-based lesson plans that consistently involve student interaction with the civic content as

Projects make you go out and do more research; or, something hands-on that makes you think more. Rather, than just the in-class ‘write down and do what you are supposed to do and then you will be fine.’ I think doing more project-based stuff is more helpful than what most teachers do; by helpful, just forcing the student to go out and do more research and not having everything that is in the book that they can [just] look up . . . You have more respect for what you are researching because you are the one that researched it. You are the one that did the work, so you have a little more respect for the work you are doing. (Jon, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14)

Jon closed our conversation with an insightful comment concerning lecture-based versus hands-on civic classrooms. “Lecturing is for the people [students] who just listen” (Jon, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14).

Directly linked to a previous experience in one of her social studies classes, Mala reconstructed an example of a pedagogical practice that adversely affected her ability to relate to or find interest in the content material.

I was not a big fan of the teacher. He kind of tried to put his viewpoints on us a lot and did not really foster debate and things like that. It was not a very engaging class. You kind of had to teach yourself. The class was teacher centered. I mean, it was mostly he would hand out questions and we would sit there in class and complete them. There was not much discussion at all. (Mala, Student Interview One, 9-25-14)
Like the rest of her peers, Mala was resolute about how she best learns, makes meaning and is best taught.

I feel like I learn a lot more in the discussion-based classes. Looking at my [a former class] when it was just question and answer, question and answer. I did not really get much out of it. I learned the information, but I did not really care; whereas, in seventh and eighth grade when we could discuss everything, ask questions, ask each other questions, ask the teacher questions and look things up on the internet. It is a lot easier to take things in the direction you understand or that you care about. (Mala, Student Interview One, 9-25-14)

Conversation, project and debate-based U.S. Government class was Mala’s example of an environment that encourages knowledge seeking, and provides relevance to content material and current events as well as a sense of agency. “Once you become more informed and you learn to make informed decisions, I think you become less wanting to make decisions that you do not know about.” (Mala, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14).

Jason took a more unorthodox path when reflecting on and describing impartial sources of civic education.

I think everybody has to start somewhere. If you were just taught politics and government from your parents, it would be really different than what it probably actually is. I think through government and history classes or social studies classes, it is able to be a more intermediate [objective] if used both sides equally without bias. But, if you learned it from your parents, for example, it would be from one side or the other and not really towards the center.

Jason shared his experience at Buckeye Boys State as it impacts his U.S. Government class. At Boys State, the delegates were responsible for organizing and conducting civic-related sessions, which Jason believed

. . . helped us learn better about the government, but (also) helped us mature in a way, too, because we realized we cannot just let someone else do this for us. We have to do it ourselves, so we took initiative in learning and
doing . . . I think it is very important that they teach government classes, because I think one thing that America needs most right now are people than can think for themselves and not just follow . . . you know, where ever the rest of the crowd is going. (Jason, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14)

Ben had nothing but praise for his government class to the exclusion of mentioning any other.

He [government teacher] will talk to us. He will have notes on the [PowerPoint] slide, but he goes more in depth. He explains, it may be a broad saying on the overhead projector, and he will go in more depth and give us examples. He will sometimes show a video. We did the Boston Massacre, I think it was two weeks ago. He showed a video of the Boston Massacre and how it was portrayed in the American sense and how it was portrayed in the British sense. So, he gives us good examples . . . I would say it [lesson notes] highlights what is in the text book and he will relate it to what is happening today or something like that . . . You are learning about what happens in everyday government. Yeah, it gives you a sense of what is happening in everyday life. Why does this happen. I like the real life correlation between the two. (Ben, Student Interview Two, 10-6-14)

A self-proclaimed note-taker, Jenni “takes notes all of the time. That is how I learn.” Even when [government teacher] tells the students that they do not have to write down what he is teaching, Jenni is “still writing it down” (Jenni, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14). Understanding the historical “stuff” is difficult for Jenni, whereas contemporary concepts are much easier for her to comprehend. With this in mind, she connected to a specific example of how the pedagogical style of her government teacher effectively assists her learning.

Most of the time when we [government class] do talk, it is when we talk about today's government; he will relate it to . . . or when we talk about something historical he will relate it to today's government. When we did the amendments, he was relating all that stuff to what is around us, focus around the contemporary stuff. So, that helps; that I am sure helps . . . We [classmates] talk about that and say this is all contemporary stuff. [A classmate] says it helps him a lot, too. So, it is kind of better that way, because we understand it coming from the focal point of us and seeing what we see. It is kind of better that way I guess. I like to learn that way. In
more contemporary, so I can understand and my friends understand too.
(Jenni, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14)

Rose also struggles, at times, with what she feels are complex civic concepts in
government class, but the teacher’s method of encouraging open discussions aids in her
effort to simplify and make meaning of the concepts in the context of the give-and-take
of class communication and at times, argumentation.

I think sometimes somebody will say something and then it will trigger
other responses in the room. So, that is good to get people's opinions on
different things and see what they are thinking when people say certain
things or have certain things happening. Then you get other people's
viewpoints. So, like if you might have thought something that meant
something, but it did not actually mean that. Then, somebody else would
think that and that sounds more like a reasonable explanation, than what I
was thinking. (Rose, Student Interview Two, 9-30-14)

Sophie’s contribution to our discussion was insightful and relevant to current
issues in civic education. Her thoughts are uniquely significant as they originate from the
viewpoint of a civic education student.

I think government class, as much as they do not want to say it, is there to
strictly teach you government and they do not really care what your opinion
is or what you have to say. It is not that they do not care, I guess they just
do not have time for it. So, I guess it is kind of synonymous. But, they . . .
they are like we have 46 minutes and you are going to learn about this
because the principal says we have to do it and why, because the
superintendent says we have to do it and then so on and so on. So, I think in
all of my history classes, sometimes we had discussion, but it is usually not
common, because the teacher is just trying to drill this information into your
head. (Sophie, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14)

A second point of dislike for Sophie is the teaching style of note taking, especially from
teacher-created PowerPoints. Having to write and to pay attention to the teacher who is
usually explaining and providing additional information to what is already on the slide is
a task that appears to frustrate her.
It makes it complicated, like I miss out on details, because I am busy writing whatever he wrote up [on the PowerPoint]. I feel like students write away, even if the notes make no sense whatsoever and were completely bogus. Putting them up on the board, students immediately would just start writing them down because that is what we are used to. So, usually we do notes. (Sophie, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14)

For Betsy, her U.S. Government teacher is also her Speech and Debate Club advisor. This situation appears to be seen by Betsy as beneficial.

I think it helps with the basis of learning too. I know what he is saying and what he genuinely means. I have heard so much [teacher/advisor] advice over my two or three years now in speech and debate. I trust him more. I trust that what he is telling me is truthful. I also know, kind of, who he is. So, if he says something that I disagree with I know he does not mean it to offend me, I know he means it just because that is how other people can perceive it. It gives me, I think, a better understanding of how he teaches, what he is teaching and also remembering what he is teaching. (Betsy, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14)

She does have an opinion on a teaching technique that she would like to see incorporated in her U.S. Government class, as Betsy suggested

I think what we need more of, which will help other people also understand the governmental system of the United States, is if we do more hands-on learning. That is the best way I know government and how I know the ins and outs of how Congress works . . . I think that would be a lot more beneficial in class if we were to have more hands-on activities, where people actually do have to take on the persona of someone who is in government. To help them understand how the process really works. (Betsy, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14)

An overriding topic that consistently emerged from the students’ data and best articulated by Betsy is the concept of relevance as it intersects with authentic learning.

People have a common trait in them, where we get intrigued by things that relate to us. So, the one way that gets everyone going in class is that if you bring up one topic which becomes controversial in modern day society, everyone wants to chime in with their opinion. Or, even if it is the next topic it becomes even more engaging. I do not think that is just AP Government. I think it is a general thing regarding communication. If you
say something that someone can relate to, has experience with or they are passionate about, they are going to want to talk more. They are going to want to learn more. They are more intrigued. (Betsy, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14)

Betsy was forward-thinking in her final comment on learning in the civic education classroom and all classrooms in general.

There is not going to be the same ability to teach the same way you did about 20 years ago, just because our minds of this generation are completely different. We are used to fast pace. We are used to things being faster. We are used to things being at our capability and being there easier for us than working for it. I think that since the mentality has kind of changed of a generation, teachers need to adapt a little bit, even if they are not as fast paced. Just to kind of be able to teach in a different way that will get to kids more often. That is, things that interest them. (Betsy, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14)

**Opportunity for voice.** Every student conveyed a robust relationship with the concept of voice. Every student quoted the First Amendment and its guarantee of Freedom of Speech; however, six of those students specifically illustrated voice as a civic action. AP U.S. Government class was also consistently described as a place where open discussions were encouraged and participation in those discussions was open to all and actively prompted by the teacher. Some mention of class discussions was alluded to by students in General U.S. Government but distinctively less in occurrence than in the AP class. Additionally, three students provided atypical responses with their reconstruction of meaning focused not on the use of voice but on the disuse of voice.

Frankie was the first of the six to portray the opportunity of voice as a civic action. As a 7-year resident of the United States, she drew attention to what longtime residents in the U.S. tend to overlook when calling to mind the freedom in the media to use one’s voice satirically.
I have already mentioned this, but I like the satirical nature, especially in the media. They do not sugarcoat a lot of stuff. They can be very biased, but I like the fact that they do not really sugarcoat anything. They just say the hard facts and there is nothing that can really stop them from doing that. For some reason, I just really like the fact that we can have all these shows like John Stewart or Colbert Report where they can properly criticize the issues that are going on, but inform us what is really going on as well. For me, American identity, that is a really big part. (Frankie, Student Interview One, 9-29-14)

Both Jon and Ben, in detailing their thoughts on citizenship and national identity, respectively, factored in the responsibility and importance of voice as a civic action. “I guess giving your opinion on who you think should run the country . . . So, whoever is or is not elected you know that you had your say.” (Jon, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14)

Ben was a bit more comprehensive in his reconstruction.

I guess . . . I think this country has a lot to offer. The government is run by the people, because we elect our representatives. It is controlled by the people and you do not see that in very many places in the world. I think that is a neat thing about America, because you have a direct say in what happens in the government by voting. I think that is the most interesting part of our country. (Ben, Student Interview Three, 10-10-14)

Also, in relation to her concept of national identity, Betsy highlighted the saliency of voice – both hers and others.

If you think one way, then you are never going to be able to see another point, unless you can hear someone else voice his or her opinion. I think that is one of the biggest freedoms that I embody. That is your right, your natural right. I think that is a natural right . . . Your ability to say what you want think . . . to say what you think with as much conviction as you can so that you resolve all issues that are in your head. (Betsy, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14)

Rose extended her version of the civic action of voice to include the caveat, “You are allowed to say what you want as long as it does not hurt other people” (Rose, Student Interview Two, 9-30-14); and Sophie emphatically suggested to teachers that “if they
opened our eyes to other things going around right now, students would definitely have
an opinion and maybe raise their voice and say something about it or do something about
it” (Sophie, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14).

Sophie continued her deliberation on the concept of voice but this time as it
intersects with government/civics class.

Government class is just structured differently. You get to give your
opinion on things. You get to have a voice. Like I said before, you are not
going to have an opinion on mathematic equations. You just kind of sit
there and learn. You can say what you think about . . . a law that was passed.
I think that is kind of cool. (Sophie, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14)

Along with Sophie, Alan made meaning of the concept of voice as it intersects
with the environment of the classroom, but expanded his narration to include all
secondary education classrooms.

I am kind of a difficult student, I guess. I try to have a voice. Then, there is
a 45-minute period and I can only . . . I guess, I definitely feel like I talk too
much in you know . . . because you only have a certain amount of time in a
period. Whenever you are in that period you really are not expected to say
anything, most of the time. (Alan, Student Interview Two, 9-30-14)

Three students, Jenni, Rose and Sophie, passionately recalled particular lived
experiences of disuse of voice. Ardently, Jenni spoke about an interaction with her sister.

Some people just bottle up what they have to say. I do not believe that is
how it works . . . My sister is like that and I hate that . . . I tell her you have
a right to open your mouth, I hope you know that . . . you can say what you
want to say. You do not have to sit here and be like, well . . . and sit back
and not do anything. I think everybody deserves a chance to do that.
Everybody deserves a chance to open their mouth and say what they have to
say. (Jenni, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14)

Rose’s reflection pinpointed an even more personal understanding of the subjugation of
voice.
I have ideas sometimes, but sometimes I just do not say them [in government class]. Because, I feel like if I say them, they would come out not the way I am thinking. People would be like, wow, and I would be like, sorry, because they have all taken AP [Advanced Placement] classes before and like higher up classes than I have. So, I feel like if I am going to say something, sometimes they will think I am stupid or something . . . so I am just not going to say anything. (Rose, Student Interview Two, 9-30-14)

Sophie spoke to the position of those who do not engage with the opportunity for voice.

I think that they do not have a voice, because they are either too afraid to speak or they do not think they are as intelligent maybe, or the person they are going up against is intimidating and more intelligent. Or, it is a subject they do not know very well. (Sophie, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14)

The students’ narrative expressions of the essence of the opportunity for voice meaningfully approached the eminent position of agency as exhibited through voice in the construction of not only the phenomenon of a national identity but also in the recognition of the uniqueness of self.

Relevance of content material. A third factor in the interaction between the students and their civic education classroom that is seminal to a structured consciousness of a national identity is the integration of relevance in the presentation of content material. Students, dependent on the pedagogical environment of the classroom, expressed a responsiveness to learning that strongly correlated to the relevance of the subject matter.

Alan’s association with the concept of relevance as a motivating factor in his openness to incoming civic information appeared to rest squarely on the shoulders of his teacher and his method of truncated PowerPoints.

It is nice, because I guess it gives him more time for him to actually talk about what the content is, instead of just giving us information . . . The content he is talking about does not seem like he is reading it off a sheet of
paper. But, instead he is just saying, not what he feels, but what he himself
knows and finds interesting. (Alan, Student Interview Two, 9-30-14)

As he continued his reconstruction of a typical class period in U.S. Government, Alan
expanded his thoughts on the content itself.

I think one of the things that happens whenever you have a really, I guess,
free flowing class is that a lot of times he [the teacher] will reference present
day things that involve the government [concept] that he is talking about. I
enjoy that. It definitely gives a good, I guess, connection with the student
and what is going on [currently]. Because, they can be like, ‘Oh well it is
just like . . .’ I do not know, ‘something personal’. (Alan, Student Interview
Two, 9-30-14)

For Frankie, relevance of the content material was determined by similar and yet
different criteria. Her initial story-telling involved a comparison of the subject of math
to that of government/civics.

Calculus and math are always just one answer. You know, there is just one
definitive answer or there is one concept or theorem formula that covers a
way to solve a problem; whereas, in government it is several different
solutions. There are compromises that are made, or Congress cannot make
any compromises, and it is always these different solutions to all of these
different problems. No one really knows what [is] the right thing to do. So,
that is one of the things I kind of like about learning about government. It is
to explore like the many concepts and different eras and how people's ideals
change; the government structure changes as well. (Frankie, Student
Interview Two, 10-6-14)

Transitioning from her comparison of the nature of differing coursework, Frankie began
to encapsulate her concept of relevance around a particular and constant pedagogical
method characteristic of her civic education classroom – the action of discussion.

I like how in government and language [arts] there are different ways to
explore certain ideas and how to make something work. That is one reason
why I like more discussion oriented classes, like that in government and
language . . . It [government class] definitely welcomes discussion. I like
how you can incorporate current events as well. That shows how the
government is reacting to different circumstances going on in the world . . .
We have people in there that really like to spark debates . . . I feel like for
some people, government is just learning it from a textbook and in a classroom environment; whereas in AP Government we are willing to look at government and how it goes outside of the classroom and has also in the outside world as well. (Frankie, Student Interview Two, 10-6-14)

In agreement with Alan, Frankie credited her U.S. Government teacher and his teaching methodology for the infusion of a structure of relevance, apparent during his lesson planning and presentation.

[Teacher’s name] knows a lot. I have had [government teacher] before for a speech and debate coach. He knows a lot about the government and knows a lot of stuff. That kind of piqued my interest as well in politics and government. So, not necessarily the class, but more of [teacher’s name] and all of the people and experiences from the past few years and the classes I took before AP Government. (Frankie, Student Interview Two, 10-6-14)

Journeying through the meaning-making interview process, Frankie eventually and remarkably connected directly with a particular civic ideal made manifest in the document, the U.S. Constitution.

Most of the decisions we [the United States] have had to come to, even 200 years in the past—like the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution—how they wrote the Constitution may get more vague, so that I can interpret it differently. I think it [the Constitution] gives us more opportunities for discussion and looking at different ways a problem can be solved. Instead of just having one strict Constitution listing the different ways that gives me step-by-step instructions, instead of how the Constitution really is, which is more vague. So, you have more opportunities for discussion and to solve problems. Plus, times change and so you know how the government changes as well, so you can apply that to the Constitution too. (Frankie, Student Interview Two, 10-6-14)

Somewhat similar to Frankie, Jon too identified with a particular civic icon, the Bill of Rights. According to Jon, although he had been taught about this document in previous social studies units and classes, he only came to understand its representation as a symbol of the particular freedoms and rights foundational to this country this year
during his U.S. Government course. That knowledge sparked a personal connection for Jon that appears to have engendered a desire to further his experience.

I would like to look more into how they thought up the Bill of Rights. What their thought process was. How they eliminated certain things. Just how they created the law, of how they thought things would work. (Jon, Student Interview Two, 10-6-14)

Mala mirrored Jon’s sentiment as she made meaning through her reflection on previous social studies units/courses and her current experience in U.S. Government.

. . . In the context of history I just think of it as something that happened a long time ago. But, learning this year some of the systems that we put into place are still working . . . like, having a confederacy or things like that. It is kind of interesting, just to know that it is not just something in the past. I think it makes me want to learn more, because, if it is relevant to my life or to things I am doing in Speech, if I know why it is important, I will be much more motivated to learn it. (Mala, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14)

As a self-proclaimed news-junkie and member of Speech and Debate Club, Mala disclosed a strong relationship with civic concepts and with her U.S. Government class.

I think government comes up a lot more, in following the news and things like that or just making conversation with people. Actually, understanding how government works is very useful. Government [class] is a lot more conversational and we are always linking to current events. There are a lot more projects that we do. A lot more debate than what goes on in math class . . . A lot of times during class everyone is just apathetic. But, when we were debating the amendments, people actually cared about these political issues and stuff. I thought it was fun to see people getting riled up and standing up, you know, and yelling at each other over gun rights and things like that. (Mala, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14)

Returning to the aspects of government class that have meaning and congruity with what she values in her personal life, Mala explained,

I spend a lot of time reading the news and following these issues. I can discuss them with mostly adults or other people in speech and debate who care, but not with most of my peers. So, I thought it was cool to be able to talk to them [government classmates]. Also, that is why I like the discussion part of class. The things on the notes are not really that interesting. They
are interesting, but they are pretty basic. But, when we get [teacher] talking about court cases or things going on in other states right now and specific examples of interesting things related to the topics, it is a lot more enjoyable for everyone. (Mala, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14)

The personal relationship between the identity of the teacher and the identity of the student appears to be at the heart of Jason’s determination of an atmosphere of relevance in the classroom. Both instances that he reconstructed for the purpose of detailing examples of his meaning-making, center on the quality of humanness. In his first description, Jason portrayed his teacher’s use of humor to bring a sort of relevance to the content material to be learned.

He was telling us, he first got up there and ‘today I am going to tell you how the Federal system is like cake.’ He then pulls up the first couple of slides and is talking about cake. Then, everybody is like, oh, okay and let’s talk about cake. He is like, ‘oh you thought we were going to talk about your favorite cake today?’ But, he was kidding. So, he was walking us through the Federal system, Confederate system and all that stuff. (Jason, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14)

In his second representation, it is the authors of our nation’s founding documents and of interpretations of those documents that served to connect Jason with the subject matter.

I think it is good that we learn about the people who wrote the actual documents. Then, we look at other people's thesis and stuff on those sorts of things. For example, we had to read an article that somebody wrote about how the Constitution was actually written by wealthy landowners that actually wanted to protect themselves and they did not really care much for the people. So, I think that was neat because I had never looked at it from that perspective before. I think it is good to look outside of the bubble of what is normally taught to people. That way you can sort of make your own ideas of what the government really is. (Jason, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14)

The civic education teacher in his U.S. Government class and his use of relevant examples, of anecdotal information, and visual tools (i.e. videos, documentaries) has, for
Ben, been an effective method of instilling relevance for students in the acquisition of civic knowledge and interest.

I would say it [lesson notes] highlights what is in the text book and brings out new [information] and he will relate it to what is happening today . . . you are learning real life stuff . . . you are learning about what happens in everyday government. It gives you a sense of what is happening in everyday life, why does this happen. I like the real life correlation between the two. (Ben, Student Interview Two, 10-6-14)

As an example,

He talked about the Articles of Confederation. Usually, the teacher would just say, ‘They are weak and that is why we did not use them.’ But, he actually explains why they were weak and why we decided to just scrap it and write a new Constitution. So, we actually learned why. (Ben, Student Interview Two, 10-6-14)

Ben’s emphasis on the importance of understanding the why of content material as an essential component of authentic learning, was echoed by other students as well throughout various aspects of this research.

Jenni’s reflection paralleled that of Ben’s, even though they are students in two separate U.S. Government classes.

Most of the time when we do talk, it is when we talk about today's government. He [the teacher] will relate it to . . . or when we talk about history [of government] he will relate something to today's government. When we did the amendments, he was relating all that stuff to being around us, focusing around the contemporary stuff. So, that helps; that, I am sure helps . . . So, it is kind of better that way because we [students] understand it coming from the focal point of us and seeing what we see. It is kind of better that way I guess. I like to learn that way, in more contemporary [terms], so I can understand and my friends understand too. (Jenni, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14)

Sophie’s evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching methods to provide relevance to the content material in her U.S. Government course was mixed. Her initial
response reflected a critical appraisal of the overall syllabus and its accompanying projected timeline for reaching contemporary government.

In [government teacher’s] class, since we are learning so far at the beginning, it is hard to apply that to nowadays, like to modern politics and all that. It is my hope for that class that I become more knowledgeable of modern day politics and everything going on. (Sophie, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14)

On the other hand, as she continued to build on her reflections of her civic coursework, she conceded,

I think government does a really good job of tying in everything that we have learned. You understand why, like last year how we learned about the Revolution and everything. With government you understand the whole thing behind what was the government and what they were deciding and why they took so long and so I think that is kind of cool . . . I think you get to see behind the scenes. Like what was going on. Because, back then you just learned or last year you just learned . . . yeah, that is the Declaration of Independence. Declaration of Independence, you know that word since you were really young, since elementary school; you just kind of see what went into it, like who worked on it and . . . especially that video, it was interesting to watch. Just stuff like that. You just see the behind the scenes is what I like to call it. (Sophie, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14)

Sophie, like Ben, referenced the importance of understanding why in ascertaining the relevance of content material.

I think taking government gives you an inside on why everything is the way it is in the political world. Also, like I said, [they] can apply it to modern things going on and it gives you an advantage over other students who did not learn about government or did not get to understand political parties and all sorts of stuff like that. (Sophie, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14)

A perfect segue into my upcoming presentation of data representative of the overarching theme of pedagogical places as third spaces for civic education learning could not have been intentionally scripted as effectively as does Betsy’s narrative. Her intrinsic illustration of relevance as expressed in her U.S. Government classroom and the
competitive alternative of other sources of information in contemporary society firmly situates the findings of this study.

If he [government teacher] were to say . . . today he gave the example of gay marriage. People have strong feelings on that subject. As soon as you bring up a controversial subject . . . people get really indignant or they get indignant about the subject . . . When he relates an old time issue to a modern-day one, it becomes more real for us because that is something we are associated with more, that is something we already [have] experiences with, especially, in society with so many social medias today, so many different outlets for information. There is an infinite amount of different opinions you will get. (Betsy, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14)

Only one student, Rose, did not address in any form, the concept of the relevance of content material during her reflection on her U.S. Government class. Quite unlike her peers, she detailed moments and instances of her personal difficulties as a student in what for her, is a subject of complex and opaque civics-related concepts and material. This lived experience appears to serve as an obstacle in her ability to engage in the various methods of generating relevance to the civic content presented in the classroom.

Other ‘pedagogical places’ as a third space for civic education manifested through student voice. From the perspective of civic education as a contested space (Maguth & Harshman, 2013; Weller, 2003), the data gathered from the students’ reconstructions of their experiences with civic education suggests influencing factors beyond or in addition to their contact with the traditional government/civic classroom. A broad range of meaningful social constructs was designated by the students that included, families, religion, extracurricular activities, culture, friends and the Internet. Various episodic life experiences, unique to the individual student, also occupied a space for civic education.
**Influences.** Five students drew direct connections to their families as a source of their civic knowledge and national identity, four students articulated this same relationship with religion and four students referenced the social experience of culture. Three students described the activity of travel as a contributing determinant, three pointed to an extracurricular activity, and two discussed friendships that enriched their understanding of civic identity. The most illuminating finding was the circumstance of nearly all students crediting their interaction with the Internet as a significant source of civic knowledge and influence on their structured consciousness of a national identity.

**Family.** The stories told by each of the students in relation to the impact their families have on their individual civic identities were uniquely intimate and personal. As a source of civic education, Frankie and Sophie’s perspective varied somewhat from Alan’s, Mala’s and Jason’s as their lived experiences are situated in the context of a multicultural background.

Alan’s examination of the influence of his family produced the following.

I definitely think me being a skeptic was because my parents were not super forceful about the Declaration and you know . . . family values and American way and you know, American Dream. We were very, I guess, independent, in a personal sense. Like, we did not need to be an American. We were just the [surname] family. I think that definitely shaped more than school, how I view the country. (Alan, Student Interview One, 9-24-14)

Mala’s civic interests seem to have been directly credited to her relationship with her father and his lived experiences, especially.

My family is very political. My dad is a lawyer now. He used [to], he had a lot of careers, he used to work for a newspaper. He worked for Congressman Regula. He then worked for a judge and now he is a lawyer. So, I have always been raised around politics, news and stuff like that. (Mala, Student Interview One, 9-25-14)
The source for one of Jason’s fundamental philosophies is located in his interactions with his family and by extension, his family’s religious beliefs. “I guess, when I was younger I sort of looked up to my parents and grandparents who are more conservative and stuff. That is one major thing about being a teen is finding your own identity.” Jason continued to define the source of his conservative identity as “probably following the Bible or some other conservative belief similar to the Bible.” (Jason, Student Interview One, 9-26-14)

As I mentioned earlier, both Frankie and Sophie brought to their remembrances and reconstructions the profound influence of their multicultural backgrounds on the structured consciousness of a national identity. Frankie recalled,

When I was in Canada, my parents did not want me to give up my Chinese heritage. So, I remember we went every Saturday we would go to this University in Canada where a lot of Chinese people would gather, like gather together and.... it was basically like a school for Chinese kids. Because, they do not really have the opportunity to do that since they are not in China. (Frankie, Student Interview One, 9-29-14)

Even within the context of her parents’ emphasis on the retention of her Chinese heritage, Frankie described the impact of her experience living in the United States (pedagogical place).

I know my cousin; they do not have a chance to do much of anything. China is really more focused on your academics. Where in the United States, and what I like about it here, if you want to apply to colleges they do not just focus on your grades or your standardized testing. They also look at other aspects as well such as volunteering or the activities that you do and college essays. If I was in China I would not really have a chance to do music, Blade, tennis; it would be mostly all academics. (Frankie, Student Interview One, 9-29-14)
What Sophie has learned in the course of reflecting on her multicultural status and experiences as it relates to her understanding of her national identity is expressive and insightful.

I am used to so many things and I do not realize how privileged I am to [be] used to these things. For example, just safety. Being able to go out to the grocery store after 6:00 p.m. and not being worried, you know? It is almost, it is kind of sad actually. They [family in Mexico] think they see me as this spoiled brat. I do not think that I am, but to them I definitely am. I am able to drive my own car. I have a nice house. I have my own clothes and they are not used to that. We are definitely a lot different, but in the same way we are kind of all the same in the way that we talk to each other and the way we think. It is just the things we are used to are completely different. (Sophie, Student Interview One, 9-25-14)

Religion. It was not unusual to read the students’ narratives and discover the close integration of religious and family values. Jason, Mala, Jenni and Jon all detailed this relationship. Jason conveyed such a union.

One thing that defines me most as an American, I think, and one of my major beliefs and creeds is just Christianity in general. My parents and family are Christian . . . My grandpa and my uncle are both preachers at their churches. I tend to focus more on Christian viewpoints of political stuff. I tend to take a conservative path for the most part. (Jason, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14)

Resembling Jason’s story, Mala detailed the religious affiliation of her family with the Catholic Church and the resulting interrelationship with their civic and national identity.

My dad's side of the family is all very Catholic. My grandfather is a deacon. My mom's father is Catholic, but her mother is not . . . My dad went to Notre Dame and I have gone to a church camp there a couple of summers. My brother goes to college [at] Fordham, a Catholic school. My family is pretty much Catholic. I went to Catholic school, we go to Catholic Church every week and we are very social justice oriented Catholics . . . Our Catholic church is very conservative in some ways. Around election season, when Obama was running for reelection, the homilies would become very political and saying if you vote for Obama you are killing babies and
superabortion centric. I did not like that at all. With being very feminist and stuff, I kind of do not know where I stand on that. I think when I look at the Catholic Church and Pope Frances and their stance is on helping those who have less and stuff like that, I really identify more with that side of being Catholic. (Mala, Student Interview One, 9-25-14)

Jenni, for whom “being Christian and everything, having that freedom of religion . . . That is what being an American is to me (Jenni, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14); for Jon, whose weekly church attendance reminds him “there are obviously different religions and I respect that, because we have [that] freedom” (Jon, Student Interview One, 9-25-14); and for Jason and Mala, their faith is a distinct pedagogical place for civic education.

Culture. The language, clothing, food, music, material possessions (tangible characteristics) as well as attitudes, belief systems, social customs and other intangible characteristics collectively serve as a pedagogical place where students’ civic education also occurs. As Rose considered her national identity compared to other national identities, she contemplated

We have different . . . we probably wear a different brand of shoes. Like, right now Vans, Keds and Converse are really [popular] and Sperrys. I am sorry. I hate those shoes so much . . . Anyway, they are like really popular over here and if you go over to the UK . . . they might not wear Sperrys, thank God, I hope they do not. But, they probably do not wear . . . I mean we probably have similar shoes that we wear, but probably just like some would be different, because in America people like this and over there they like that. (Rose, Student Interview Three, 10-7-14)

As a pedagogical place, Jenni’s experience with an individual from another country was a teaching tool for the concept of national identity.

I know a lot of people from England. So, like knowing their cultural differences from us, is like well we do things like this, this and this. You guys do . . . Gareth, we call him Gaas, he would talk about certain things in this country and we are like, ‘What, what are you talking about?’ He is like,
‘You guys’; because he always says we do stuff different. I was like, ‘That is our cultural aspect, that is what we do.’ (Jenni, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14)

Jason was a bit more generic in his depiction of culture as an influencing factor.

“I think I get most of my American identity from civilization in America for the most part, the general population, because If everybody acts a similar way . . . then you know . . . ” (Jason, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14). Sophie’s lived experience of both Latino and American cultures has enabled a unique third space from which to develop her civic knowledge and understanding of a national identity.

I definitely feel like I am more American, even though I speak fluent Spanish and I understand what they are saying. The pop culture references I do not understand. The things like their slang when they refer to going places. I do not understand what they are saying, because it is just foreign to me. The school systems and everything is different down there [Mexico]. For example, for lunch they can just walk off campus and go do their own thing. Their school is from 8:00 to 12:00, so it is really different to see what I am used to is just different. (Sophie, Student Interview One, 9-25-14)

Sophie’s dual citizenship has led her to an experiential awareness of multiculturalism.

I think that the mix of them [nationalities] would be the culture and the language that I have with Mexico and the opportunity and the culture in America . . . American culture too. For example, I can name many actors in movies, American actors, in movies and I cannot really name any Mexican actors in movies, you know? So, it is just culture, in the way food, dress, beliefs, things like that. (Sophie, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14)

Wisely though, Sophie cautioned against the use of stereotypes to define cultural and therefore national identities.

I think that it reflects certain countries with like stereotypes I guess. So, like when someone says they are from England, you automatically assume that they are higher end and more intelligent than you are. When someone says they are a citizen of Mexico, you assume they look very Mexican and they cannot speak English and stereotypes like that. Then, when you assume
someone is from a country in Africa, you assume they are dark colored. I think that the stereotype automatically runs through your head whenever you say, I am a citizen from so and so. Which is so unfair. It is very unfair. But, I think that it is a common thing. (Sophie, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14)

Travels. In relating their lived experiences traveling in countries outside the United States, Alan, Frankie and Ben all delineated their national identity from the experienced environment. Alan began by enumerating those countries he and his family have visited.

I have been to Australia, England, France, Canada, Mexico all parts of South America . . . It is really interesting, because my parents do not like to be called tourists. They really prefer to just observe the local culture and kind of go to where the actual people go, which is a lot more interesting. I guess a lot of U.S. people whenever they go traveling sort of separate themselves from the country and then they just look at the stuff and take pictures. My dad does not like to do that. I think we definitely have a more hands on experience with the culture. (Alan, Student Interview One, 9-24-14)

In summation, Alan appears to step outside himself and view Americans from the standpoint of the French, British and Australians.

I think in different regions they kind of assume what Americans are in different ways. The French, specifically, definitely have a strong opinion about Americans . . . It seemed like we definitely avoided talking about being from the US in France. Because, every time we did they would be like, ‘Oh, you are from America,’ which is not necessarily the ideal circumstance. In places like England or Australia I think it is not necessarily as much hatred as it is just, ‘Oh, you are from the United States?’ I think they are less opinionated, I guess. They are more curious. (Alan, Student Interview One, 9-24-14)

Once again, Frankie’s multicultural background allows for an authentic learning experience as she navigates her cultural experiences.

My identity has a lot to do with my background. I have gone to a lot of different places. I have experienced a lot of different things, obviously.
Even though I have not lived in China for long I have been back there. What it is like in China, the atmosphere is really different from what it is like in Canada and America. Those experiences kind of make my own identity . . . I am not really familiar with Chinese culture, but I do not want to just give up on it. Since it is a big part of my parents’ lives and they try to make it a big part of mine as well. But, at the same time I kind of want to be more familiar with my surroundings, like in with America. (Frankie, Student Interview One, 9-29-14)

Having traveled to Canada, Ben’s learning experience centered on his newfound awareness of the cultural difference in language and in particular, accents. “I have been to Canada. . . . They all have the Canadian accents, so you can kind of tell; um... I guess... language is the biggest part [difference]. There is some French over there” (Ben, Student Interview Three, 10-10-14).

**Extracurricular.** Two particular extracurricular activities emerged in the course of the analysis of data. Several of the students in U.S. Government are on the staff of the school newspaper, *The Blade* and three of the students in U.S. Government actively participate in the Speech and Debate Club and compete in civic related categories.

Mala is on the staff of *The Blade* as well as a participant in the Speech and Debate Club. In reading her interactions with both entities, as well her time spent at a politics camp, it is obvious that each serves as a strong influence on her civic education outside the government classroom.

I am on the [high school] *Blade* newspaper staff. I have become known as the ‘PC parade,’ the politically correct; that kind of thing. I think eventually I want to go into some sort of social justice career. I really like that. The child migrant crisis really drew my attention. I wrote to my elective representatives about that and I like things like that . . . I actually went to politics camp this summer at Georgetown University for a week. I went to the American Political Institute and it was very cool . . .

Some of my good friends on *The Blade* staff are very conservative and we have these fun debates just for fun. We can sit there for a whole lunch
period and just go back and forth. Some people just wonder why I like to do that.

A lot of people do not like to debate, but I love it. My older brother did debate, the debate side of speech and debate. So, with being competitive we always have debated . . . Americans are so attached to their freedoms and freedom expression, freedom of assembly. I love to see protests going on. With the whole way I like debate, I like (that) American's value debates and they like debates to happen. They do not try and squash them down, like they do in other countries. (Mala, Student Interview One, 9-25-14)

Reflecting on her participation in Speech and Debate, Mala said:

I never really got into [it] until my freshman year and I joined speech and debate. I do the category of U.S. Extemporaneous, which is, you go to tournament, draw three questions that are politically oriented and you have to come up with a seven minute speech, with only 30 minutes of preparation. No notes. So you have to be really aware of everything going on. Extemporaneous. I know a lot of stuff about politics and I really enjoy that. (Mala, Student Interview One, 9-25-14)

Ranked first on the list of classes most valued, Sophie chose The Blade. Her explanation for this ranking can be located throughout her narrative.

I think Blade is an opportunity to express your opinion and what you think of it . . . I think in Blade too, we discuss controversial subjects, but that also relates back to government, pro-life and everything that goes back to government . . . I am on The Blade so we do a lot of stories on that stuff. But, I have to learn that for myself. I have to go out and look into the newspaper and see what is going on, otherwise . . . Some students do not even have the drive to do that, you know. I want to know what is going on. Some students just do not care . . . Like, in The Blade room that is all they argue about, is like political events and stuff like that. They really do, because they know what they are talking about. (Sophie, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14)

During the final interview, as Sophie was producing meaning concerning the salience of her identity in regards to civic action, she commented,

It is things like that, that made me want to join Blade and have a voice. Say what I think and also, just the people that it . . . like my opinions are similar to some people's, and so then we all kind of group together. (Sophie, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14)
Betsy was a tad more illustrative in her story of the relationship of her civic education through participation in Speech and Debate and what occurs in the normal course of her U.S. Government class.

I think it [alignment of government class with Speech and Debate Congress] is a direct correlation, because in government class we just talk about everything that Congress has done, everything that is happening with the judicial system. On the weekends I will be talking about proposing new legislation that has to do with the issues we are talking about in government class. So, it is kind of like, subsidizing my education. I am doing more over here, learning more about the world currently and applying Old World skills of government. It is a huge combination and they go hand in hand together. They are like a cute couple that just works all of the time. (Betsy, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14)

Friends. Although Sophie and Mala revealed the meaningfulness of their friendships through the experience of staff membership on the school newspaper, Frankie’s socially constructed friendships are integral as a pedagogical place through which she developed an American identity and the desire to participate in civic actions.

Before, voting never really appealed to me. But, I mean now that I have become more aware, like of political atmosphere, I think I would like to become a citizen eventually. I would like to be able to vote on policies that I believe in. I used to not have a strong political preference. When I first moved here to America and you have all of these different parties. I had to learn a structure of how the government here works. I was more focused on just learning it than actually trying to have an opinion of my own. I was just trying to adjust to how things are here. Now that I am in high school and a lot of my friends are in speech and debate, a lot of them have to keep up with how politics are working. I am starting to get interested in it as well. So, I think that eventually I want to get my citizenship so I can be able to vote. (Frankie, Student Interview One, 9-29-14)

Internet. As a space for civic education, the Internet resoundingly plays a role as one of the most significant pedagogical places. From a sociopolitical perspective, the Internet can serve as both an opportunity and as a liability even to the point of danger. Frankie described those sites she most often browses.
On Twitter I follow a lot of news agencies. I have some apps as well, so those kind of keep me up-to-date about what is going on right now around the world . . . I have Vox, Wall Street Journal, New York Times and I also have CNN and NPR. I like listening to radio, to NPR in the morning, because I do not really like listening to radio music . . . I also have Time magazine. (Frankie, Student Interview One, 9-29-14)

As she continued to dilate her rationale for employing these non-traditional places for civic education, Frankie added,

*The Blade*, journalism, I think that also plays a big part, like journalism in America and [the] media and how information is distributed much more freely in the United States than most of the other countries. So, that also plays a part in how government works and how you are freer to express yourself. But, government also plays a large part in this as well. (Frankie, Student Interview Two, 10-6-14)

One of the students, Mala, pointed to the Internet as a source of her identity as a global citizen.

I associate more, just like a citizen of the world, like, such an interdependent age, like growing up on the Internet and being in contract with people from all around the world all the time. I feel like I am identified less as an American than people of previous generations. I also identify more as a millennial with people by age. I have a lot more in common with people my age around the world, than necessarily [I] do with other people in America. (Mala, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14)

Mala named a particular web site from which she learns about domestic and international events, primarily through chatting with other young people.

I mean, [my] personal experience, just like more on the Internet, communities like . . . I go on Reddit. Reddit has a lot of, like they call them sub-Reddit that are for teenagers. It is mainly made up of younger people. (Mala, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14)

Vox Media is a web site that Mala also visits as “a source that is kind of written to help people understand the news, especially geared toward young millennial-type people.
They had a lot of question and answer type things. I read from a lot of different news sources.” (Mala, Student Interview Two, 10-1-14)

As a contrast to the majority of the students who tended to visit what are considered “liberal” web sites and news stations, Ben identified Fox News and the Drudge Report as sources for “staying up-to-date.” He also added the television stations of CNN and CBS as he conceded that he is “not a big fan of Internet reading” (Ben, Student Interview Two, 10-6-14).

While Jason did not specify any particular Internet sites that he visits, he did provide data that confirms his consistent use of the Internet as a source of civic education, especially as it relates to current events.

To my knowledge of how the government is run, probably 75% comes from government class and then 25% comes from Internet sources and my own personal time. If it comes down to current events and other things like that with modern day government it is mostly, at least 80% of that is done by me; about 20% in government class maybe. (Jason, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14)

Jason did credit the foundational significance of his government class in relation to his non-traditional education of current events.

That [knowledge of contemporary issues] mostly comes from my own resources like the Internet, books I take home from the library or something along those lines. I think that because of government in schools, it has set up a structure that I can build off of to learn myself in my spare time. (Jason, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14)

The traditional civic education classroom currently faces the challenge of the growing importance of other pedagogical places as sources for students’ civic learning. Students’ narratives affirm the location of non-traditional civic education in the spaces
of family, religion, cultural encounters, travel abroad, extracurricular activities, friendships, and most notably, the Internet.

Several isolated civic-related learning moments emerged from the data and therefore, necessitate a distinct sub-thematic examination. These lifeworlds, or lived experiences outside the classroom and unique to the individual student are what follow.

Lifeworld. Throughout the three-step interview process of focusing on their life history as it intersects with their experiences in social studies units/courses, of detailing their experience in U.S. Government class, and of reflecting on the meaning of these experiences in relation to their national identity, several of the students reconstructed consequential, isolated moments in their lifeworlds. While the students’ narratives are, at times, somewhat opaque and intricate in their meaning-making, they provide windows into the students’ connections with the world as they position themselves within their understanding of the concept of a national identity.

Said Frankie:

Yea, I know some people, like Chinese kids here. They do not really want associated with the Chinese culture that much. I know there is Chinese New Year and there are other festivals. Recently, there was this one holiday a couple of weeks ago, [but] even I am not that familiar with Chinese culture either. It is about the moon, celebrating the moon. The moon cakes, there is something that Chinese people make. I am not really familiar with Chinese culture, but I do not want to just give up on it, since it is a big part of my parents’ lives and they try to make it a big part of mine as well. But, at the same time I kind of want to be more familiar with my surroundings, like in with America . . .

When I first moved to the United States, I was not very happy about that. It was just a completely new environment. It is probably not very fair, but the first impression I had was kind of that Americans were kind of egotistical. They are full of themselves. I was kind of bitter, too, because moving here after living somewhere for seven years was not always an easy adjustment for me. So, I was very cynical towards this. Now, that I have become more
familiar and I have met more people and I kind know what it is really like, I
do have a more American identity, more than I had in the beginning as well.
(Frankie, Student Interview One, 9-29-14)

I do not really have that much family here. My friends, my peers and like all
of the people I know who have influenced me. My house, the house I
have lived in for the past few years, stuff like that. I think that is the
emotional connection for me . . . (Frankie, Student Interview Three, 10-10-14)

Jon:

One of the classes I am in at our church views most Christians as
Republicans and conservatives. I have several friends who are Democratic.
They do not always agree with me. Being friends and interlocked in the
church, we can have different conversations and not necessarily agree, but
not necessarily disagree, both have wrongs and both can work on things . . .
(Jon, Student Interview One, 9-25-14)

Every time I go out onto the soccer field we do the National Anthem . . .
[and] I am thinking about our freedoms and the troops [that] are defending
flag. (Jon, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14)

Mala:

When I started high school and I started liking politics, I thought maybe that was
what I wanted to do. But, then going to Georgetown, going to the camp, I
realized politics is really cut throat. I did not really like that environment as
much. So, then one of the sessions we had was about, I forget what they called it,
it was like charity or something. It was this DC Central Kitchen, I do not know if
you have heard of it? They employ convicted felons and teach them to cook food.
They use all these different aspects of the community. They cook healthy school
lunches in impoverished schools and then they set up healthy food access in food
deserts, I guess they called them, and how one charity can help all of these
different aspects of the community. Helping the kids to be healthier, helping
those who were in prison to break the cycle of poverty and all of that. I thought
it was really cool how like one charity can do all these different things and make
the world a better place. I thought maybe that was a lot more personal than
politics . . . (Mala, Student Interview One, 9-25-14)

I think after a tragedy hits, there is one really cool thing about America is there is
such a huge national pride. I do not really remember much about 9/11. But, I
remember I was in preschool and my brother was in kindergarten. There was a
walkathon at the school and everybody dressed up in red, white and blue. Even
when there are smaller acts of terrorism, like the Boston bombing, and things like
that, everyone just really comes together and puts aside their own partisanship or their own ethnicities and things like that. It just comes together. (Mala, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14)

Jason:

When I was in middle school, I was talking about Jesus to somebody. Just talking to them about youth group or something. It was the first time I had ever had a teacher tell me that I cannot be talking about religion in school. That really upset me. . . My parents told me, do not worry about it. She just meant that the teachers could not talk about it. At that point, I just think that the way schools were set up down in Virginia, I think they were very politically correct down in Virginia more than here, believe it or not. (Jason, Student Interview One, 9-26-14)

Jenni:

I have a friend from England. He looks at me totally different, ‘the way you speak and the way you act.’ He is like, ‘Are you all obese?’ I am like, ‘No, you have not paid attention.’ He is like, ‘The way you guys do things is so much different than what we do.’ I was like, ‘Yeah.’ But, some of the things are the same. It just depends on how you look at it. We were talking about how they always have type, the way they talk, I was saying it was ‘sandwich’ and they say ‘buddy.’ I was like, he says ‘That is so weird, do not say sandwich.’ I was like ‘Fine, then I will not say sandwich’ . . . (Jenni, Student Interview One, 9-26-14)

I believe there is definitely a territory thing. We are all citizens. Even though people... of course there are immigrants hopping the borders. Me and my mom talked about it and she is like, they are not citizens.’ I am like, ‘Yeah, I know.’ They do not have any records here. This is not where they are from. She says, ‘It takes a lot to be a citizen.’ Especially, because my mom's friend was, like I said, she got married to a British man. It has taken so much time for him to get all of his stuff over here and to try and gain everything to be a citizen. I do not think he is, right now. I think he still has his Green Card for all I know. I am not sure. But, yeah, that is what I believe citizenship is, being in a place and it being territorial. I am a citizen of the US, a citizen of Ohio and a citizen of [town where high school is located]. (Jenni, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14)

Rose:

Then, I started GSA this year, which is the Gay-Straight Alliance. I go to church, which is weird with GSA . . . in church . . .

Then the abortion thing is, I have very mixed emotions on this because I have never been in a situation where I have had to have one. I feel if you have been
raped or sexually assaulted you should be able to pick because you were not like, ‘Oh, hey I want to have sex with you’ and then you get pregnant. You did not choose that. I feel women like that should be able to pick whether they want to keep the baby or not . . . I feel like people who just have sex and get pregnant should not be able to get one, but if you have to legalize it for the sexual assault victims, then you have to do it for everybody. That is why I would probably [be for] legalized abortion. I would say, if I was put in that situation, I would like to think I would keep the baby, but I have never been in that situation, so I do not know. I do not know the mindset that those people are thinking in. So, I do not feel it is fair to just like judge people like that . . . (Rose, Student Interview One, 9-24-14)

When we watch the Olympics you are like ‘Yay, American! America, you better win this event!’ Stuff like that . . . I remember watching the swimming, the summer ones with the swimming. I remember Michael Phelps getting the Gold medal. (Rose, Student Interview Three, 10-7-14)

Betsy:

My mom is extremely cynical about this topic. She does not care for illegal immigrants. She does not care for the whole situation they have been put in. It is really hard looking at it and thinking there are millions of people here who are illegally here. They have committed a crime, so that part of me it hurts. If you have committed a crime against the United States, I do not think that is fair. For me, that is one of those things that we are here to preserve—justice, equality and above all fairness. If people who have been working for decades to try and get here are not allowed to come, you come here illegally, break one of our laws, I think that is already your first strike . . .

It is funny, we actually had a piece of legislation in [Speech and Debate] Congress to make it mandatory for all citizens to vote at national elections. I would actually be for that. That would be, for me, that would be the ideal situation in America. I do not want it to be the Australian version where you get fined if you do not vote. That is obviously, seems like overboard. That does not seem American at all. (Betsy, Student Interview Two, 10-2-14)

I think the biggest example is because I do Congressional debate. It adds... before, when you are younger you do not necessarily know the ins and outs of how government works or of exactly what the occupation holds. But, being a congressman and representing the people it might be just me, but when I do it I have a certain conviction to it that makes me want to better, it makes me want to make things better. I think that in itself has made me become a much more optimistic and much more problem solving person, where speech and debate has allowed me to become a whole new persona . . . I think that is the biggest thing
that has changed my perception. I know I disagree with my family a lot more often than I used to. Especially, now that I perceive things completely different because of [Speech and Debate] Congress and because I always either play devils’ advocate or because I can see things in a more problem solving, here is a new plan, here is an new idea way. People who have not had that kind of experience working the ins and outs of government I have had; it is kind of, it is a real realistic example of how Congress works. We do everything based on the Constitution and also based on our rules by the National Forensic League. That is the best interpretation of how the government works for me and has made me a much more skilled governmental analyst. (Betsy, Student Interview Three, 10-9-14)

Sophie:

The last time I visited was in seventh grade, because things in Mexico have gotten very dangerous. People are not really aware of how terrible the situation is there. People live in fear. My dad's side of the family all live in Mexico. They raised them really well, all my aunts and uncles have really good professions. They are all like doctors and lawyers. Even they live in so much fear and they are not able to go out and buy nice things, because they cannot show people they have nice things. Down there, they do not even know that my dad exists and that he lives in Midwestern. Like friends of the family, they do not know. It is super dangerous to know... because right away when people are from the United States, especially in foreign countries, they assume that they are rich. To them, they are and even if they are not . . . (Sophie, Student Interview One, 9-25-14)

I would say that there are a lot of things that set you apart from them. Like, having an accent, people tend to judge thought and intelligence based on how they are presented. If you say something and you say it in an accent, people might think what you are about to say is not intelligent. But, really they have no idea. If you think about it, they are switching languages in their head. You have to be pretty smart to do that. I would say that and I would say that your name will always set you apart from everybody. (Sophie, Student Interview Three, 10-8-14)

Conclusion

As students develop their structured consciousness of a national identity, they are cogently influenced by their daily interactions with civic concepts, by their exploration of the similarities between their identity and that of this country and through an increased understanding of the government/civics of other nations and their people. The
students are also incidentally subsidized in the evolution of their structured consciousness of a national identity through the overarching historical metanarrative of their previous K-11 social studies coursework. Outside the traditional civic education classroom, students are increasingly coming to rely on a variety of “pedagogical places” as a third space for civic-related learning in the structured consciousness of their national identity.
CHAPTER VI
INTERPRETATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

What I take with me from this experience, what will forever shape how I envision the world of research, is my obligation to those whose participation enabled me to explore, to learn, and to contribute to a body of knowledge. Until I actually sat across from students willing to authentically expose their lived experiences and share those moments with generosity and a certain degree of vulnerability, I undervalued the concept of the word “appreciation.” Most transforming was the realization that trust lies at the heart of the relationship between the participant and the researcher and that without this essential element, the data may be untrustworthy as well.

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of secondary education students as they navigate their U.S. Government coursework in order to understand the impact of the intersection of this experience with their structured consciousness of a national identity.

The research questions designed to best investigate this phenomenon were:

- What influence do government/civics courses have on the structured consciousness of a national identity?
- In what ways has 11th graders’ K-11 social studies coursework, as participants reconstruct it, affected their development of a national identity?
• What role does the traditional civic education classroom play in relation to other “pedagogical places” as a Third Space for civic education manifested through student voice, in the structured consciousness of a national identity?

Upon completion of the systematic inquiry into the research questions, three major findings emerged.

1. Government/civics courses consistently influence the structured consciousness of a national identity through conceptual interpretations and relationships, a search for association between identity of self and identity of country, and a knowledge of other.

2. Through students’ navigation of a historical metanarrative, K-11 social studies coursework indirectly affects the development of a national identity.

3. The traditional civic education classroom plays a competitive role in relation to other “pedagogical places” as a Third Space for civic education manifested through student voice, in the structured consciousness of a national identity.

Findings and Interpretations of Themes

In this final chapter, I intend to expand upon the three major thematic findings with a discussion on their related implications for both the classroom and research. Those interpretations of the findings include:

• Theme One: As civic concepts and relationships experienced in the U.S. Government course are seminal to the structured consciousness of students’ national identities in terms of (a) comparing identity of self with identity of country and (b) defining civic “others”, greater attention to and opportunity for self-discovery is vital in the civic education of students.
• Theme Two: As the historical metanarrative of K-11 social studies curriculums provides opportunities for students to experience a national ideology, a shared history and a sense of national and cultural belongingness, attention to the durability and trustworthiness of content material is crucial.

• Theme Three: As the civic education of students has moved beyond the traditional social studies classroom to other “pedagogical places” for learning, to compete, civic-related curriculums must incorporate space for student agency, interest, and lived experiences.

These interpretations/discussions of the findings (Table 16) advance the conversation of civic education as a contested place with an emphasis on curriculum reform and targeted pedagogical planning and skills in order to (a) more effectively incorporate “pedagogical places” in the traditional classroom and to, thereby, (b) more powerfully meet the personal needs and style of learning of the individual student.

Discussion on the Related Implications

Greater attention to and opportunity for self-discovery is vital in the civic education of students.

In all 50 states some notion of civic principles and practices, economic concepts (production, distribution, and consumption), geographic concepts (people, places and environment), government and politics, and methods of evaluating change (through progress and decline) over time are targeted objectives of what must be taught in secondary social studies classes. Three additional civic-related themes—Historic Documents, Civic Skills, and Contemporary U.S. History—are standards included in 48, 41, and 35 states respectively (CIRCLE, 2012). One hundred percent of students
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participating in this research were able to define their national identity in terms of vocabulary esoteric to government/civics coursework. Furthermore, if we apply the ultimate determinate of effective civic education in its potential to affect the individual’s
sense of justice and equality in society (Osler & Starkey, 2001), then the U.S.
Government students at Midwestern High School are receiving an impressive education
in civics based on their narrations.

Additionally, the students are accomplishing the second major objective of civic
education according to Deneen (2012) – an education in how laws are made, and how
citizens can participate in self-governance. Again, all students understood the basic
process and path a bill takes to become law. During their reconstructions of their
experience in government class, students even applied that knowledge to expressions of
their identity with this nation in relation to what they consider a right and privilege as
part of this civil practice of governance. Voting, participating in various civic
organization, keeping abreast of current events involving federal, state and local
governments as well as paying their taxes were targeted as ways in which the students
expected to be civically engaged in the future. This appears to support the literature that
suggests, civic education is critical to the effective navigation of citizenship skills as
young people transition into adulthood (Levinson, 2012).

Interview three required students to self-reflect, self-interpret and then articulate
their identity with this nation as experienced through their civic education. The meaning
each student attributed to this location in his/her lived experience varied specifically
according to the number of students interviewed. According to Frie, each individual’s
experiences with the concept of nation or nationality advance his or her experiential
sense of self that allows for reflective self-knowledge and self-identification (Frie, 2011).
For some students, it was their Christian faith and the freedom of religion this country
espouses; for some it was the values, morals and beliefs, which for them are dispersed
throughout the Constitution; for others it was the culture (past and modern-day) deep-seated and present in the civic-related aspects of their everyday experiences. Collectively, these relationships reflect many of the components categorized in literature as perceptions of an American identity (Huntington, 2004).

Relevance is a key factor in any association. Appropriate to this research, is the connection between an individual and a nation as well as the relationship between a nation and the rest of the world. Contemporary concepts of globalization, multiculturalism, and supranational citizenship have imposed a more complex approach to updating the meaning and purposes of civics and citizenship in the coursework of traditional government/civics education classrooms (Johnson & Morris, 2010). This paradigm shift, especially within multicultural democracies where current issues of immigration have led to the dilemma of advocating national unity and at the same time recognizing and upholding a diverse range of cultural communities within the nation state, is often problematic. Civic education appears to be the educational response to these tensions (Osler & Starkey, 2006). Although burdensome and difficult for multicultural students like Frankie, Sophie and Rose who found it problematic and somewhat exclusionary to be unable to participate in our national myths of origin, something nations could not exist without (Colls, 2011), there must be a space in civic education for constructing pathways of relevance for students who identify with a differing cultural heritage and who also seek to connect with the culture of this nation.

A first step in building a space for inclusion may lie in a conversation about national values. The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) requires that “citizens have the knowledge, attitudes and values to both guard and endorse the
principles of a constitutional democracy” (NCSS, 2013). Although the C3 framework developed by NCSS addresses key concepts and skills for civic education, it also incorporates concepts of civic virtue, democratic principles and point of view as well, even beginning these discussions in the second grade (NCSS, 2013). But, which civic values and habits are civic education teachers trying to develop and why (Levine & Higgins-D’Alessandro, 2010)? Three students, Alan, Sophie, and Jason broached that same conundrum during their reflections on teaching styles in the civic education classroom.

One of the more pertinent findings of this study was the significance of national value systems in the student’s ability to either form an identity with this nation or not. While the majority of civic education organizations supports the third major objective of civic education, the inculcation of virtue (Daneen, 2012), and reflects the beliefs of the founding fathers in a virtuous society necessary for the maintenance of a representative democracy, the literature is in opposition for reasons of trade-offs and violation of civic trust. The civic opportunity gap is one trade-off that occurs when particular civic values and civic participation are not recognized or engaged in by all students of varying socio-economic classes. A second trade-off involves the power imbalance in the classroom – does any one particular entity have the right to dictate what is of value? The final trade-off suggests that in the inculcation of civic value systems, the individual student is being remade when he/she happens to lack a relationship to the civic value or values being taught (Levine & Higgins-D’Alessandro, 2010). As for issues of civic trust, it is the education system’s understood contract with parents of those students in the civic education classroom, that any partisan conception of civic virtues foisted on a captive
audience is a violation of that trust (Murphy, 2004). The literature concerning the teaching of civic virtue and civic values in this research neither supports nor denies my findings, but rather serves as a voice of caution in the civic education of students. The authors remind educators and those associated with the education of a nation’s youth that analogous to a double-edged sword, there may be both positive and negative aspects and outcomes to a child’s need to self-discover when confronted with codes of civic being to which they are unable to relate.

In exploring their structured consciousness of a national identity, every student provided an example of a country or group of people who do not experience the freedoms, rights, beliefs, and other cultural and civic characteristics that define this country. Even those students with a multicultural heritage or dual citizenship alluded to the advantages of citizenship and the opportunities of living and civically participating in America through comparisons of countries and peoples with whom they are exceptionally familiar. In a study on the intersection of what is considered the American identity and ethnicity and personal identity, it is possible for individuals to maintain a wholesome identity with their nation while concurrently continuing to identify with their heritage culture (Rodriguez, Schwartz & Whitbourne, 2010). That same study also found that individuals who identify with a marginalized ethnic minority group are viewed as such and come to view themselves as inferior to the majority culture (Rodriguez et al., 2010). While the majority of the students did not apply a salient factor to their American identity when compared to others, four of the students did assign a status of superiority as they contrasted particular aspects of their national identity with others. Contemporary issues of illegal immigration have exacerbated the question of a
national identity in this country, especially for those who view citizenship as the criterion for national membership (Huntington, 2004).

As students discussed the government/civic characteristics of other countries they had experienced in the classroom, without exception they were generous in their acceptance of the diversity of those they mentioned. Both Alan and Mala identified themselves as having such a commonality with other teens around the world that it constituted more of a feeling of global citizenship at times, than an American identity. For Sophie and Frankie, whose nuclear and extended families reflect a strong cultural heritage not representative of this country, they continue to intensely identify with their countries of birth. And for the remainder of the students who expressed a singular American identity, they were still egalitarian in their belief of the right of the individual to identify with the nation of their choice.

Attention to the durability and trustworthiness of content material is crucial to K-11 social studies curriculums.

The majority of the students’ reconstructions of their K-11 social studies experience involved remembrances of learning about the Pilgrims and their flight to the New World for religious freedom, the establishment of a democracy, the beliefs expressed in the Declaration of Independence and other founding documents, The American Dream, and a country that embodies self-improvement and opportunities regardless of one’s circumstances at birth or throughout life. Their responses were not surprising, as the schooling process, of which the curriculum is a primary aspect, is considered inherently ideological and political (Apple, 2002).
As grand narratives, curriculums are fashioned within and by a particular culture with a purpose to nourish and preserve that culture. What is to be learned about the national culture is implicit and communal (McVee, 2004). As educational narratives, curriculums may be categorized as either coercive or emancipatory (McEwan, 1997). As students in this study described beliefs and actions bound to a power structure or institution (McEwan, 1997), then it is reasonable to conclude curriculums also serve as coercive narratives. Further literature on curriculums as narratives with an ideological foundation (Goodson, 2013; Fenstermacher, 1997; Schildkraut, 2014; van Dijk, 1999) support my findings.

One of the first objectives of a civic education is to develop a knowledge of one’s own history, the history of the nation and the traditions on which that nation arose (Deneen, 2012). The historical metanarrative with which students have interacted over the course of the past 11 years has served to ingrain those long-held customs and beliefs through their numerous social studies units and courses. At the same time, this inculcation has also promoted a notion of shared history; one with which most students, over the course of repetitious learning, relate to their own. Betsy’s description of her national identity is grounded in this premise; she is who she is in relation to those in this nation who have gone before her. An organized and standardized understanding of the national past allows for collective memories and emotions (Coll, 2011) and iconic words and phrases such as democracy, freedom, American Revolution, civil rights (words used by the students), tend to serve as triggers for those nationalistic emotions and identifications. History, through or as a metanarrative, is socially constructed around a
Akin to the more formal sense of a shared history is the personalized concept of belongingness. The students not only displayed a common knowledge about the history or historical events of this country but the majority also disclosed an adoptive connection to America. The concept of citizen and citizenship, linked by Thomas Jefferson to the duties, interests and rights afforded a bona fide member of a particular nation state (Schaub, 2012), infuses an action-based and therefore, personal quality to the historical metanarrative, a shift from a passive to an active notion of citizenship (Boss, 2010). As members of a nation we are part of a living entity that exists primarily in oral tradition, with societal values and attitudes built over time, especially in the course of our emergence as a nation-state. The K-11 social studies experience provides an a posteriori sense of self for students of civic education and is the groundwork for a society with protracted perspectives in which reaffirmation is not guaranteed and on which the need to identify is acute (Colls, 2011).

From Frankie’s, Sophie’s and Rose’s multicultural viewpoints, their sense of belongingness was less pronounced and differing in relation to the historical metanarrative, based on a shorter amount of time spent in U.S. schools, an extended family association deeply rooted in cultural heritage, and a status of biracial ethnicity, respectively.

The K-11 social studies experience was viewed by all students as developing from a simplistic and positive viewed knowledge base, to a more complex, broad, and somewhat more negative or controversial knowledge base. Granted, students’
educational abilities to comprehend historical content material must be taken into account when planning and presenting lessons, but the actual truth of the lesson must be told within an authentic context. From a postmodern perspective, the purpose of a metanarrative is the legitimization it affords a society in its pursuit of a preeminent idea or vision. If we teach students the historical concepts on which this country was founded as espoused in the American Creed (i.e. freedom, equality, individualism, representative democracy, etc.) but do so in historical contexts that are only partially true representations, then teachers undermine or delegitimize the civic education of a nation’s youth. Throughout our interviews, each and every student to some degree critically detailed a moment or moments in his/her K-11 social studies experience as unreliable, contradictory or inauthentic based on what he/she deemed more credible and trustworthy information. Attention to a dependable, cohesive and truthful context in which stories are told and content is taught in the traditional civic education classroom is imperative, chiefly as it is challenged by the opportunities and dangers of the Internet as an outside source of information.

Attention to the incorporation of space for student agency, interest, and lived experiences in civic-related curriculums is essential if the traditional civic education classroom is to effectively compete with other “pedagogical places” as a relevant place for civic learning.

Eight of the 10 students produced pages of transcription in their reconstruction of the influence of teaching styles on their personal learning in the traditional civic education classroom. Over a decade of classroom experience served as fodder for their agency of voice, and as a result, it was actually necessary for me to subtly guide their
conversations back to the topic on which the interview was focused. The most unforeseen finding was not their obvious investment in the topic of pedagogy but that throughout their entire experience in civic education, they recollected never having been taught the concept of a national identity or even the process or criteria for those seeking American citizenship. As both concepts are possible pathways for eliciting personal relevance between the student and the civic related content material as well as an opportunity for voice, I was somewhat surprised at this discovery. Perhaps, historical metanarratives which are limited in form and scope (McVee, 2004) combined with the ever increasing lists of standards to be taught, result in a situation that does not give social studies teachers the time to employ best practices (Mirra, Morrell, Can, Scorza, & Ford, 2013). Possibly, these are also reasons for students’ criticisms of the lack of what is covered in the civic education classroom – contemporary times and current events. All students remarked on the repetitious and often unnecessary learning of the same events or topics over the course of their K-11 experience and their frustration at never reaching modern history, a period to which they can relate and in which they have a pertinent interest.

In my review of the Common Core Standards, the Ohio Academic Content Standards, and Ohio’s New Learning Standards none suggest a narrative that would address the interests or personal lived experiences of the individual student. Therefore, they are like similar education narratives, unable to be classified as emancipatory (McEwan, 1997). The C3 Framework, sponsored by NCSS, is the exception. Dimensions Three and Four in particular, construct space in which students’ expressions of their personal lived experiences may be voiced as they evaluate and communicate
through activity-based lessons which are intended to hone essential civic skills (NCSS, 2013).

From a more positive perspective, all students noted that the nature of government/civics lends itself to opinions, debates, and discussions and that when these opportunities for voice are incorporated into a lesson, their interest levels, attention, engagement and authentic learning peak. As with students’ comparisons of other in regards to defining their own national identities, they also used this same process in singling out their opportunity for discussions in government class, most frequently contrasting math and science. As an example, Sophie succinctly made this point when assigning to government concepts the opportunity to have an opinion, whereas one cannot genuinely have an opinion about a math equation.

In the current contested space of civic education, the traditional classroom is compelled to rethink and redesign what has been its long-established pedagogical approach to developing informed citizens who dependably engage in civic life. As this space becomes increasingly crowded, the findings from this research suggest that the traditional civic education classroom should undertake an examination and implementation of teaching styles that most effectively incorporate the needs of students - their agency, interest, and lived experiences. As teachers, we are able to teach concepts in most any manner we choose, but unless we wrap those concepts within a layer of relevance, the individual student is less likely to associate any meaning with the experience.

As manifested through student voice, “pedagogical places” as a Third Space for civic education poses a powerful challenge to the traditional civic education classroom.
Students’ easy access to technology and particularly the Internet has dramatically extended their theater of learning far beyond the traditional classroom. With this expanding availability of knowledge, students’ dependence on classroom instruction as the nexus of their acquired understandings is proportionally shifting. What also appears to be shifting is students’ awareness and use of their own capacity to self-teach.

Students in contemporary civic education classrooms arrive daily, each with his or her own lived experiences and ways of knowing the world, a world profoundly broadened by what is available to be self-taught through use of the Internet. Besides backpacks and books, students bring to the classroom their lived curriculums (Aoki, 1993). At the intersection of civic education curriculums and lived curriculums is the potential for authentic, relevant and useful learning to occur. The expression of those lived curriculums through the voices of those who have experienced them requires instructional attention to the value of creating third spaces for learning in the classroom. Embracing the concept of a multiplicity of curricula (Aoki, 1993) as a resource for civic education with the possibility for diversity of contributing perspectives may address issues of relevance, active participation, and self-discovery that are currently obstacles to dynamic learning in the civics classroom.

As local and communal influences (i.e., religion, family, extracurricular activities, friendships) as primary sources of knowledge, have waned with industrialization and urbanization, the vacuum has increasingly become filled by an emphasis on globalization. This global centricity has been fueled by the ever-expanding access to technology, especially in the form of the Internet and the World Wide Web. The findings of this research, supported by the literature, acknowledge a growing awareness
on the part of students that issues concerning the environment, the economy, international conflicts, civil rights, and others are interwoven at a global level (Carlsson-Paige & Lantieri, 2005). Although students continued to cite family, friends, religion and culture as heavily influencing their national identity, at least three of the students expressed a strong connection to a global identity. From this standpoint, according to Anderson (as cited in Pike, 2000), research also confirms the increasing influence of globalization on the economics, politics and culture of America and other nations is also decreasing the homogeneity of those nations’ cultures and being transplanted with a notion of global commonality. Colls (2011) agrees as he describes globalization and its contemporary emphasis on free markets, multiculturalism, and transnationalism as anti-sympathetic to the principle and practice of national identity.

The literature suggests that education is viewed as a panacea (Bankston, 2013), but for the students participating in this research, this is not the case. Their lifeworld experiences of travel, both domestic and international, their multiculturalism and cultural identity tensions, their politics, interactions with current events and world issues, and exposure to friends from countries outside the U.S. (both in person and on the Internet) have soundly and meaningfully impacted their structured consciousness of a national identity. For some students, findings indicate that these experiences have proven a challenge to that identity and for some, a confirmation.

In aggregate, the increased association between the concept of globalization and contemporary socio-economic and political issues, the squeezing of civic education, and the opportunity for immediate and almost effortless access to information through technology have intersected to produce an expansive reliance by students on pedagogical
places as a Third Space in their civic education. This challenge to the traditional civic education classroom can be viewed as a blessing of sorts; it could begin or at least add to the conversation of how to best meet and sustain the educational and life needs of today’s students in civic education classrooms.

**Main Implications and Recommendations**

This section presents three implications generated by my study. First, this research confirms my expectation that civic-related concepts and relationships encountered in government/civics courses play an important part in the structured consciousness of a national identity. When students were provided opportunities by their teachers to engage in activities of reflection and interpretation, culminating in the communication of ideas and new knowledge, the students expressed a greater interest in and retention of the conceptual focus of those activities. Of even greater significance was the emotional connection students experienced through increased insight into their own identities in relation to this nation. It is imperative that government/civics teachers in secondary education classrooms create relevant venues that offer students pathways to self-discovery.

One promising avenue through which students of civic education are afforded greater opportunity to reflect, interpret, communicate, invest and engage in systematic activities of self-discovery is the C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards. The four dimensions of the C3 Inquiry Arc guide the student’s natural inquisitiveness through experiential learning and actions of *developing, planning, applying, evaluating, using/applying, communicating/interacting,* and *taking action* as they explore and examine the world of civic education. Where the C3 Framework differs from previous
and current ineffective methods of civic education instruction is C3’s focus on instructional reform with a goal of student inclusion in designing curriculum and lesson planning. With an emphasis on inquiry teachers and students, collaborate in the construction of content using subject specific disciplinary concepts and tools, produce data and its resulting knowledge through the evaluation of sources and use of supporting evidence, and impart what they have learned using skills of communication, organization, transferability, and finally, interaction through their presentation of knowledge in venues outside the classroom. At the heart of this educational structure is the opportunity for student voice as a third space for learning throughout each phase of the C3 framework. It is this recognition and implementation of student interest and agency that dramatically increases the likelihood of creating a prepared and engaged populace of knowledgeable and active civic-minded adults—the goal of civic education.

Second, the students’ interactions with and recollections of K-11 social studies curriculums were experienced as a historical metanarrative as anticipated. With this knowledge, curriculum and instruction stakeholders should be compelled to re-examine the transitional points within the overall elementary and secondary school social studies program. Students in this study repeatedly called attention to a system of civic education that lacked cohesion, fluidity, and a structure that seamlessly built new knowledge based on previous learning. To foster students’ trust in their teachers and in the subject matter being taught, relevance, durability and a cohesive evolution of the content material is required. The majority of students were unable to connect their U.S. Government class with their previous social studies coursework in any way that was directly meaningful to their structured consciousness of a national identity. If the purpose of civic education is
to develop informed and active citizens, then government and civic-related opportunities for knowledge should be woven throughout students’ K-11 social studies curricula.

Lastly, students no longer restrict to the classroom what once was considered formal education. They also increasingly do not perceive their teachers as one of their primary imparters of knowledge according to this research. All students in this study cited sources outside the traditional civic education classroom as contributing to their structured consciousness of a national identity. While family and religion were the origin for many of their fundamental pre-reflective values shared with what they perceived as similar national values, their more recent measure of identification appeared to be increasingly influenced by the media and the Internet in particular as places for gathering civic-related information.

The majority of students who access the Internet regularly visit sites that (a) complement and support their political ideology and (b) provide opportunities to chat with others of their same age living in various places around the world. In the first instance, students do not appear to research the credibility and reliability of the information, but rather accept it *carte blanche*, and at a minimum, accept the information almost as they would that of a classroom teacher.

For the traditional civic education classroom to compete with these other pedagogical places of civic learning, my research leads me to suggest an open-mindedness to the possibilities of creating ways in which to incorporate that which attracts students to these spaces – opportunities for agency and voice, the pursuit of personal interests, and reliance on knowledge already gained through individual lived experiences.
Future Research

The implications and recommendations of this research have centered on PK-12 classrooms of civic education primarily from the perspective of students. The next step in the continuation of this study is to address the pivotal role of teachers in the traditional civic education classroom. In fact, the groundwork has already been laid to begin the conversation and research with the teachers of the students who participated in this study. As partners in the daily interaction of civic learning, this balanced approach to providing in-depth and complementary knowledge and perspective is an opportunity to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the intersection of the phenomenon of government/civics coursework and the construction of a national identity.

A second interest of mine for future research is an investigation into civic education as a contested space. Over the past 3 years, in the course of my inquiry into the phenomenon of civic education in this country, an interesting number of stakeholders involved in civic education emerged. Their individual philosophies, policies and standards bear critical examination for their epistemic qualities and motivations. As narratives, they should also be subject to a systematic scrutiny that answers the question: *Whose voice is represented here?*
REFERENCES


Center for Civic Education. (n.d.) Retrieved from: http://www.civiced.org

Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement. (n.d.) Retrieved from: http://www.civicyouth.org/about-circle/


Gilliam, K. (2006). We take from it what we need: A portraiture approach to understanding a social movement through the power of story and storytelling leadership (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3252324)


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

TIMELINE OF STUDY
May 2014

Dissertation Proposal Defense
Tuesday, May 13

July 2014

IRB Approval
July 14

September 2014

Observations
Tuesday, Sept. 9 – Tuesday, Sept. 23
Interviews
Wednesday, Sept. 24

October 2014

Interviews
Transcripts ➔
Friday, October 10

November 2014-January 2015

Transcripts ➔
Profiles ➔
Narratives
Manage Data and Analysis

February 2015

Doc Committee Meetings
Jan. 15-30

Dissertation Defense
February 26
## Eleventh: American Government

### CIVIC INVOLVEMENT

- Students can engage societal problems and participate in opportunities to contribute to the common good through governmental and nongovernmental channels.

- Opportunities for civic engagement with the structures of government are made possible through political and public policy processes.
- Political parties, interest groups and the media provide opportunities for civic involvement through various means.

### CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND SKILLS

- Democratic government is enhanced when individuals exercise the skills to effectively participate in civic affairs.
- Issues can be analyzed through the critical use of information from public records, surveys, research data and policy positions of advocacy groups.
- The processes of persuasion, compromise, consensus building and negotiation contribute to the resolution of conflicts and differences.

### BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THE US CONSTITUTION

- Principles related to representative democracy are reflected in the articles and amendments of the U.S. Constitution and provide structure for the government of the United States.
- As the supreme law of the land, the U.S. Constitution incorporates basic principles which help define the government of the United States as a federal republic including its structure, powers and relationship with the governed.
- The Federalist Papers and the Anti-Federalist Papers framed the national debate over the basic principles of government encompassed by the Constitution of the United States.
- Constitutional government in the United States has changed over time as a result of amendments to the U.S. Constitution, Supreme Court decisions, legislation and informal practices.
- The Bill of Rights was drafted in response to the national debate over the ratification of the Constitution of the United States.
- The Reconstruction Era prompted Amendments 13 through 15 to address the aftermath of slavery and the Civil War.
- Amendments 16 through 19 responded to calls for reform during the Progressive Era.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade and Course</th>
<th>Theme</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>11. Four amendments have provided for extensions of suffrage to disenfranchised groups.</td>
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<td>12. Five amendments have altered provisions for presidential election, terms, and succession to address changing historical circumstances.</td>
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<td>13. Amendments 11, 21 and 27 have addressed unique historical circumstances.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT</strong></td>
<td><strong>14. Law and public policy are created and implemented by three branches of government; each functions with its own set of powers and responsibilities.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>15. The political process creates a dynamic interaction among the three branches of government in addressing current issues.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>ROLE OF THE PEOPLE</strong></td>
<td><strong>6. In the United States, people have rights which protect them from undue governmental interference. Rights carry responsibilities, which help define how people use their rights and which require respect for the rights of others.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>17. Historically, the United States has struggled with majority rule and the extension of minority rights. As a result of this struggle, the government has increasingly extended civil rights to marginalized groups and broadened opportunities for participation.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>OHIO’S STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS</strong></td>
<td><strong>18. The Ohio Constitution was drafted in 1851 to address difficulties in governing the state of Ohio.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>19. As a framework for the state, the Ohio Constitution complements the federal structure of government in the United States.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>20. Individuals in Ohio have a responsibility to assist state and local governments as they address relevant and often controversial problem that directly affect their communities.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>PUBLIC POLICY</strong></td>
<td><strong>21. A variety of entities within the three branches of government, at all levels, address public policy issues which arise in domestic and international affairs.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>22. Individuals and organizations play a role within federal, state and local governments in helping to determine public (domestic and</strong></td>
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<td>Grade and Course</td>
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| GOVERNMENT AND THE ECONOMY | The actions of government play a major role in the flow of economic activity. Governments consume and produce goods and services. Fiscal and monetary policies, as well as economic regulations, provide the means for government intervention in the economy. | 23. The federal government uses spending and tax policy to maintain economic stability and foster economic growth. Regulatory actions carry economic costs and benefits.  
24. The Federal Reserve System uses monetary tools to regulate the nation’s money supply and moderate the effects of expansion and contraction in the economy. |

Ohio Department of Education       Social Studies New Learning Standards       9-12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade and Course</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Content</th>
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| Tenth: American History | HISTORICAL THINKING AND SKILLS  
Students apply skills by utilizing a variety of resources to construct theses and support or refute contentions made by others. Alternative explanations of historical events are analyzed and questions of historical inevitability are explored. | 1. Historical events provide opportunities to examine alternative courses of action.  
2. The use of primary and secondary sources of information includes an examination of the credibility of each source.  
3. Historians develop theses and use evidence to support or refute positions.  
4. Historians analyze cause, effect, sequence and correlation in historical events, including multiple causation and long- and short-term causal relations. |
| | HISTORIC DOCUMENTS  
Some documents in American history have considerable importance for the development of the nation. Students use historical thinking to examine key documents, which form the basis for the United States of America. | 5. The Declaration of Independence reflects an application of Enlightenment ideas to the grievances of British subjects in the American colonies.  
6. The Northwest Ordinance addressed a need for government in the Northwest Territory and established precedents for the future governing of the United States.  
7. Problems facing the national government under the Articles of Confederation led to the drafting of the Constitution of the United States. The framers of the Constitution applied ideas of Enlightenment in conceiving the new government.  
8. The Federalist Papers and the Anti-Federalist Papers structured the national debate over the ratification of the Constitution of the United States.  
9. The Bill of Rights is derived from English law, ideas of the Enlightenment, the experiences of |
| INDUSTRIALIZATION AND PROGRESSIVISM | 10. The rise of corporations, heavy industry, mechanized farming and technological innovations transformed the American economy from an agrarian to an increasingly urban industrial society.  
11. The rise of industrialization led to a rapidly expanding workforce. Labor organizations grew amidst unregulated working conditions, laissez-faire policies toward big business, and violence toward supporters of organized labor.  
12. Immigration, internal migration and urbanization transformed American life.  
13. Following Reconstruction, old political and social structures reemerged and racial discrimination was institutionalized.  
14. The Progressive era was an effort to address the ills of American society stemming from industrial capitalism, urbanization and political corruption. |
| FOREIGN AFFAIRS FROM IMPERIALISM TO POST-WORLD WAR I (1898 – 1930) | 15. As a result of overseas expansion, the Spanish-American War and World War I, the United States emerged as a world power.  
16. After WWI, the United States pursued efforts to maintain peace in the world. However, as a result of the national debate over the Versailles Treaty ratification and the League of Nations, the United States moved away from the role of world peacekeeper and limited its involvement in international affairs. |
18. An improved standard of living for many, combined with technological innovations in communication, transportation and industry, resulted in social and cultural changes and tensions.  
19. Movements such as the Harlem Renaissance, African-American migration, women’s suffrage and Prohibition all contributed to social change.  
20. The Great Depression was caused, in part, by the federal government’s monetary policies, stock market speculation, and increasing consumer debt. The role of the federal government expanded as a result of the Great Depression. |
| FROM ISOLATION TO WORLD WAR (1930 – 1945) | 21. During the 1930s, the U.S. government attempted to distance the country from earlier interventionist policies in the Western Hemisphere as well as retain an isolationist approach to events in Europe and Asia until the beginning of WWII.  
22. The United States mobilization of its economic and military resources during World War II brought significant changes to American society. |
| --- | --- |
| The isolationist approach to foreign policy meant U.S. leadership in world affairs diminished after World War I. Overseas, certain nations saw the growth of tyrannical governments, which reasserted their power through aggression and created conditions leading to the Second World War. After Pearl Harbor, the United States entered World War II, which changed the country’s focus from isolationism to international involvement. | 23. Use of atomic weapons changed the nature of war, altered the balance of power and began the nuclear age.  
24. The United States followed a policy of containment during the Cold War in response to the spread of communism.  
26. The Cold War and conflicts in Korea and Vietnam influenced domestic and international politics.  
27. The collapse of communist governments in Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R. brought an end to the Cold War. |
29. The postwar economic boom, greatly affected by advances in science, produced epic changes in American life.  
30. The continuing population flow from cities to suburbs, the internal migrations from the Rust Belt to the Sun Belt, and the increase in immigration resulting from passage of the 1965 Immigration Act have had social and political effects.  
31. Political debates focused on the extent of the role of government in the economy, environmental protection, social welfare and national security. |
| The United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.) emerged as the two strongest powers in international affairs. Ideologically opposed, they challenged one another in a series of confrontations known as the Cold War. The costs of this prolonged contest weakened the U.S.S.R. so that it collapsed due to internal upheavals as well as American pressure. The Cold War had social and political implications in the United States. | 23. Use of atomic weapons changed the nature of war, altered the balance of power and began the nuclear age.  
24. The United States followed a policy of containment during the Cold War in response to the spread of communism.  
26. The Cold War and conflicts in Korea and Vietnam influenced domestic and international politics.  
27. The collapse of communist governments in Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R. brought an end to the Cold War. |
| SOCIAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES (1945 – 1994) | 28. Following World War II, the United States experienced a struggle for racial and gender equality and the extension of civil rights.  
29. The postwar economic boom, greatly affected by advances in science, produced epic changes in American life.  
30. The continuing population flow from cities to suburbs, the internal migrations from the Rust Belt to the Sun Belt, and the increase in immigration resulting from passage of the 1965 Immigration Act have had social and political effects.  
31. Political debates focused on the extent of the role of government in the economy, environmental protection, social welfare and national security. |
| A period of post-war prosperity allowed the United States to undergo fundamental social change. Adding to this change was an emphasis on scientific inquiry, the shift from an industrial to a technological/service economy, the impact of mass media, the phenomenon of suburban and Sun Belt migrations, the increase in immigration and the expansion of civil rights. | 23. Use of atomic weapons changed the nature of war, altered the balance of power and began the nuclear age.  
24. The United States followed a policy of containment during the Cold War in response to the spread of communism.  
26. The Cold War and conflicts in Korea and Vietnam influenced domestic and international politics.  
27. The collapse of communist governments in Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R. brought an end to the Cold War. |
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<tr>
<th>Grade and Course</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Concept</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ninth: Modern World Studies</td>
<td>HISTORICAL THINKING AND SKILLS</td>
<td>1. Historical events provide opportunities to examine alternative courses of action. 2. The use of primary and secondary sources of information includes an examination of the credibility of each source. 3. Historians develop theses and use evidence to support or refute positions. 4. Historians analyze cause, effect, sequence, and correlation in historical events, including multiple causation and long- and short-term causal relations.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>5. The Scientific Revolution impacted religious, political, and cultural institutions by challenging how people viewed the world. 6. Enlightenment thinkers applied reason to discover natural laws guiding human nature in social, political and economic systems and institutions. 7. Enlightenment ideas challenged practices related to religious authority, absolute rule and mercantilism.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT (1600 – 1800)</td>
<td>8. Enlightenment ideas on the relationship of the individual and the government influenced the American Revolution, French Revolution and Latin American wars for independence. 9. Industrialization had social, political and economic effects on Western Europe and the world.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Age of Enlightenment developed from the Scientific Revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries. A new focus on reasoning was used to understand social, political and economic institutions.</td>
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<td>AGE OF REVOLUTIONS (1750 – 1914)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Age of Revolutions was a period of two world-encompassing and interrelated developments: the democratic revolution and the industrial revolution. Both had political, economic and social consequences on a global scale.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IMPERIALISM (1800 – 1914)</td>
<td>10. Imperial expansion had political, economic and social roots. 11. Imperialism involved land acquisition, extraction of raw materials, spread of Western values and direct political control. 12. The consequences of imperialism were viewed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
implications for the entire world. This “new imperialism” focused on the underdeveloped world and led to the domination and exploitation of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>ACHIEVEMENTS AND CRISES</th>
<th>13. Advances in technology, communication and transportation improved lives, but also had negative consequences.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1900 – 1945)</td>
<td>14. The causes of World War I included militarism, imperialism, nationalism and alliances.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>15. The consequences of World War I and the worldwide depression set the stage for the Russian Revolution, the rise of totalitarianism, aggressive Axis expansion and the policy of appeasement which in turn led to World War II.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>16. Oppression and discrimination resulted in the Armenian Genocide during World War I and the Holocaust, the state-sponsored mass murder of Jews and other groups, during World War II.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>17. World War II devastated most of Europe and Asia, led to the occupation of Eastern Europe and Japan, and began the atomic age.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

| THE COLD WAR | 18. The United States and the Soviet Union became superpowers and competed for global influence. |
|              | 20. Religious diversity, the end of colonial rule, and rising nationalism have led to regional conflicts in the Middle East. |
|              | 21. Postwar global politics led to the rise of nationalist movements in Africa and Southeast Asia. |
|              | 22. Political and social struggles have resulted in expanded rights and freedoms for women and indigenous peoples. |

| GLOBALIZATION | 23. The break-up of the Soviet Union ended the Cold War and created challenges for its former allies, the former Soviet republics, Europe, the United States and the non-aligned world. |
| (1991 – present) | 24. Regional and ethnic conflicts in the post-Cold War era have resulted in acts of terrorism, genocide and ethnic cleansing. |
|                | 25. Political and cultural groups have struggled to achieve self-governance and self-determination. |
|                | 26. Emerging economic powers and improvements in technology have created a more interdependent global economy. |
|                | 27. Proliferation of nuclear weapons has created a challenge to world peace. |
|                | 28. The rapid increase of global population, coupled with an increase in life expectancy and mass migrations have created societal and |
Environmental concerns, impacted by population growth and heightened by international competition for the world’s energy supplies, have resulted in a new environmental consciousness and a movement for the sustainability of the world’s resources.

### Ohio Department of Education  New Learning Standards  K-8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Content</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>A Child’s Place in Time and Space</td>
<td>The kindergarten year is the time for children to begin to form concepts about the world beyond their own classroom and communities. <strong>Culture</strong>, <strong>heritage</strong> and <strong>democratic principles</strong> are explored, building upon the foundation of the classroom experience. Children deepen their learning about themselves and begin to form an understanding of roles, responsibility for actions and decision making in the context of the group setting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Grade</td>
<td>Families Now and Long Ago, Near and Far</td>
<td>The first-grade year builds on the concepts developed in kindergarten by focusing on the individual as a member of a family. Students begin to understand <strong>how families lived long ago</strong> and <strong>how they live in other cultures</strong>. They develop concepts about <strong>how the world is organized spatially</strong> through <strong>beginning map skills</strong>. They build the foundation for understanding <strong>principles of government</strong> and their <strong>roles as citizens</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Grade</td>
<td>People Working Together</td>
<td>Work serves as an organizing theme for the second grade. Students learn about <strong>jobs today and long ago</strong>. They use biographies, primary sources and artifacts as clues to the past. They deepen their knowledge of <strong>diverse cultures</strong> and their <strong>roles as citizens</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Grade</td>
<td>Communities: Past and Present, Near and Far</td>
<td>The local community serves as the focal point for third grade as students begin to understand <strong>how their communities have changed over time</strong> and to make <strong>comparisons with communities in other places</strong>. The study of <strong>local history</strong> comes alive through the use of artifacts and documents. They also learn <strong>how communities are governed</strong> and <strong>how the local economy is organized</strong>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fourth Grade</td>
<td>Ohio in the United States</td>
<td>The fourth-grade year focuses on the <strong>early development of Ohio and the United States</strong>. Students learn about the <strong>history</strong>, <strong>geography</strong>, <strong>government</strong> and <strong>economy of their state and nation</strong>. Foundations of U.S. history are laid as students study <strong>prehistoric Ohio cultures, early</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade Level</td>
<td>Theme</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fifth Grade</td>
<td>Regions and People of the Western Hemisphere</td>
<td>In grade five, students study the Western Hemisphere (North and South America), its geographic features, early history, cultural development and economic change. Students learn about the early inhabitants of the Americas and the impact of European exploration and colonization. The geographic focus includes the study of contemporary regional characteristics, the movement of people, products and ideas, and cultural diversity. Students develop their understanding of the relationship between markets and available resources.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sixth Grade</td>
<td>Regions and People of the Eastern Hemisphere</td>
<td>In grade six, students study the Eastern Hemisphere (Africa, Asia, Australia and Europe), its geographic features, early history, cultural development and economic change. Students learn about the development of river civilizations in Africa and Asia, including their governments, cultures and economic systems. The geographic focus includes the study of contemporary regional characteristics, the movement of people, products and ideas, and cultural diversity. Students develop their understanding of the role of consumers and the interaction of markets, resources and competition.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seventh Grade</td>
<td>World Studies from 750 BC to 1600 AD: Ancient Greece to the First Global Age</td>
<td>The seventh grade year is an integrated study of world history, beginning with ancient Greece and continuing through global exploration. All four social studies strands are used to illustrate how historic events are shaped by geographic, social, cultural, economic and political factors. Students develop their understanding of how ideas and events from the past have shaped the world today.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eighth Grade</td>
<td>US Studies from 1492 to 1877: Exploration through Reconstruction</td>
<td>The historical focus continues in the eighth grade with the study of European exploration and the early years of the United States. This study incorporates all four social studies strands into a chronologic view of the development of the United States. Students examine how historic events are shaped by geographic, social, cultural, economic and political factors.</td>
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APPENDIX C
IRB APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

NOTICE OF APPROVAL

July 15, 2014

Teresa Gillmore-Mason
3242 McCoy Road
Wooster, Ohio 44691

From: Sharon McWhorter, IRB Administrator

Re: IRB Number 20140426 “Intersection of US Government Secondary Students and a National Identity”

Thank you for submitting an IRB Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects for the referenced project. Your protocol represents minimal risk to subjects and has been approved under Expected Category #7.

Approval Date: July 14, 2014
Expiration Date: July 14, 2015
Continuation Application Due: June 30, 2015

In addition, the following is/are approved:

☐ Waiver of documentation of consent
☐ Waiver or alteration of consent
☒ Research involving children
☐ Research involving prisoners

Please adhere to the following IRB policies:

• IRB approval is given for not more than 12 months. If your project will be active for longer than one year, it is your responsibility to submit a continuation application prior to the expiration date. We request submission two weeks prior to expiration to insure sufficient time for review.
• A copy of the approved consent form must be submitted with any continuation application.
• If you plan to make any changes to the approved protocol you must submit a continuation application for change and it must be approved by the IRB before being implemented.
• Any adverse reactions/incidents must be reported immediately to the IRB.
• If this research is being conducted for a master’s thesis or doctoral dissertation, you must file a copy of this letter with the thesis or dissertation.
• When your project terminates you must submit a Final Report Form in order to close your IRB file.

Additional information and all IRB forms can be accessed on the IRB web site at:
http://www.uakron.edu/research/orssa/compliance/IRBHome.php

Cc: Jennifer Milam – Advisor
Cc: Valerie Callanan – IRB Chair
☑ Approved consent form/s enclosed
APPENDIX D

OBSERVATION AND INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Observation Protocol

In order to gain access to the phenomenological experience of the U.S. Government class as well as afford the researcher the opportunity to select potential participants and build a foundation for the interview relationship, classroom observation is an essential component to this research study. These unobtrusive observations serve to gather anecdotes of lived meaning. As Van Manen (1990) suggests in his book, *Researching Lived Experience*, “In collecting written descriptions and conversational interviews [during interview phase] one looks for the emerging themes after one has gathered the material; in collecting anecdotes [during observation phase] one has to recognize what parts of the “text” of daily living are significant for one’s study while it is happening” (p. 69).

Interview Protocol

In order to support and assist the objective of gathering rich, thick data, Van Manen’s (1990) four universal existentials – spatiality, corporeality, temporality, and relationality – in the lifeworlds of all human beings will serve as the contextual avenues for reflection as students and teachers participate in the interview process.

Three step interview structure, process and guiding questions:

- **Step One – Interview one – Life History**

  A review of the participant’s life history up to the time he or she experienced the U.S. Government class. Questions center on:

  How did the participant initially conceive the concepts of citizenship and national identity?

  What have been his or her life experiences related to the concepts of citizenship and national identity?

- **Step Two – Interview two – Contemporary Experience**

  Focus - detailed description of the participant’s experience in U.S. Government class. Questions center on:
What is it like for the participant to be a student in and/or member of a U.S. Government class?

What are the details of the participant’s learning and work as a student in a U.S. Government class?

• Step Three – Interview three – **Reflection on Meaning**

This step addresses the intellectual and emotional connection between the participant’s experience in the U.S. Government class and their previous life experiences with the concepts of citizenship and national identity. Questions center on:

Combining the participant’s exploration of the past (a clarification of those events related to citizenship and national identity) and description of his or her current experience in the U.S. Government class in order to establish an atmosphere of reflection in which meaning can be made

What does it mean to be a citizen of the US?

What is the participant’s perceived national identity?

Given what the participant has said in interview one and two, how does he or she make sense of the concept of a national identity and/or the concept of citizenship (especially in the context of his or her life experience)?
APPENDIX E

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW SESSIONS SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Study Hall/ Mtg Period</th>
<th>Interview 1</th>
<th>Interview 2</th>
<th>Interview 3</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jon</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>September 29</td>
<td>October 6</td>
<td>October 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mala</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>September 25</td>
<td>October 1</td>
<td>October 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sophie</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>September 25</td>
<td>October 1</td>
<td>October 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenni</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>September 26</td>
<td>October 2</td>
<td>October 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Betsy</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>September 26</td>
<td>October 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
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<td>Frankie</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>September 26</td>
<td>October 2</td>
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