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Civics English: Integrating Civics in Middle School English Language Arts Teaching

By

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Committee in charge:

Professor Sarah Warshauer Freedman, Co-Chair

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## Abstract

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by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Education

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English Language Arts has historically been tied to the civic purposes of schools, and this qualitative study of a social design-based project (Gutiérrez & Vossoughi, 2010) examines the intersection of language and literacy learning and youth civic engagement, a problem space I call “Civics English.” In this dissertation, I describe and analyze the experimentation and inquiry process of a Professional Learning Community of English teachers in a diverse middle school as they integrated civic learning and action into their English teaching practices. The dissertation examines this teacher team’s development and shifts through various tensions and challenges that arise, analyzing through the lenses of Cultural Historical Activity Theory the ways their Professional Learning Community operated as an English teaching activity system attempting to integrate the cultural activity of civic engagement, leading to the teachers’ expansive professional learning (Engeström, 2001) about possibilities and challenges of Civics English.

The English teachers implemented various civic action projects, including producing and sharing multimodal civic advocacy essays online, composing and presenting children’s storybooks about civics issues, and organizing and conducting a Town Hall with local leaders about civic dimensions of allyship and youth sports. This study looks at how, contextualized by these civics activities, they adapt and innovate customary English Language Arts practices, such as reading novels, writing in authentic genres with blended text types, and developing literacy and discourse. As the teachers encounter various tensions that arise in their attempts at Civics English, I present evidence of how these tensions emerge from the contradictions of two intersecting cultural activity systems, and what adaptations and innovations the teachers develop to overcome these tensions.

Integrating civics causes shifts in the teachers’ practices of literary study, writing, and classroom discussion, as they orient students’ learning towards public audiences, collective action, and discursive models of political and professional discourse. I identify how reading literature creates an imaginative space for civic deliberation. And I demonstrate how the Town Hall civics project shifts various dimensions of literacy and language activity by recontextualizing them. The potentials and the constraints of these shifts are examined through studying the teachers’ work, students’ language and activity, and the civic event’s efficacy as an English teaching focal point.

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated  
to the memory of  
Li-Ping Lai, my mother.

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## Preface

In US schools, academic language and literacy are in vogue. Where once classroom walls were lined with motivational posters, diagrams, and dioramas, teachers now adorn them with language supports called “Word Walls,” “Sentence Frames,” and “Discussion Moves.” This shift of attention to academic discourse opens access to those invisible resources of social and cultural capital that are part of the “hidden curriculum” (Christie, 1985; Apple, 1979) of schools, particularly the lexicon, linguistic structures, and pragmatics of performing language as a student, as well as the ideological aspects of that language (Voloshinov, 1986).

But as with any tectonic shift within the limited economy of schooling, the push and spread of one emphasis, such as explicit focus on academic English, produces a subduction zone of change in another aspect, such as attention to students’ identities and participation in school life. The laudable emphasis on teaching language as a means of access and participation can displace the necessary emphasis on access and participation as a means of teaching language.

Sometimes, the ironies are stark. To paint a picture, I would recount an experience where I sat with a team of teachers scoring writing assessments in which adolescent students wrote argumentative essays pertaining to issues of policing and mass incarceration. The criteria by which teachers judged these essays, such as the relevance and reliability of cited textual evidence, precision in the terms students used (and borrowed) to advance a claim, and their appeal to the biases and expectations of the intended audience, corresponded to political questions germane to the issues they wrote about: how is evidence weighed in the justice system, what term--from “broken windows policing” to “New Jim Crow”--gain popular acceptance, and how authorities along different partisan lines could be persuaded to act. The intellectual connections hummed with the vibrations of relevance.

Yet the team of veteran English teachers I sat with in this day-long collaboration remained uncertain at best, at loggerheads at worst, about how to direct traffic at the busy intersection between the linguistic and rhetorical demands of this academic writing and the civic and ethical negotiations of these questions of political import. They scored the essays dutifully, evaluating theses and paragraph transitions, sometimes forcing themselves to ignore what they knew about the students’ backgrounds and how much they felt or understood about the issues. On the other hand, their discussions with one another suggested some spark of inspiration that the writing demands of Common Core-based “performance tasks,” the complex and multi-layered literacy tasks now regnant in new standardized tests, might have more dimensions of relevance for students than “teaching to the test.” Could it be that our schooling in literacy might also be a schooling in citizenship?

The problem this study addresses is that Common Core-era US schools teach English as a tool for academic achievement towards college and career success, but neglect the aspects of identity, participation, and power involved in learning English language and literacy. Many of these aspects are tied to the Civic Education purposes of schools.

We need to know more about the relationships between English pedagogy and students’ civic activity and development. This dissertation consists of a qualitative study of a co-design partnership between myself as researcher and coach with a team of middle school English teachers. Together, we worked for a school year to attempt to contextualize English Language Arts learning explicitly in civic participation activities. Civic engagement, it is theorized, provides a relevant and meaningful context for students to read, listen to, write, and speak the kinds of language valued and needed in schools.

Utilizing social design experiments (Gutiérrez & Vossoughi, 2010), the study examines the practitioner inquiry of four Bay Area teachers implementing civic participation projects in their middle school English classes as contexts for teaching English, developed through a year of collaboration and learning as a professional learning community. This account of the teacher team's learning is supplemented by discourse and ethnographic study of four months in two of the classrooms where these projects took place, looking for the affordances and constraints offered by such practices through the classroom activity and the lenses of ten case study students. The result is a qualitative examination of the linkages and barriers between diverse youth becoming engaged citizens and becoming proficient users of the language of power.

In the first two chapters, I articulate a conceptual framework (Riggans & Ravitch, 2016) for this project, reviewing a variety of research that together argues for the relevance of a conception of "Civics English." Then, I explain why I turn to sociocultural theories of learning and activity and to the social design experiment approach of the project. I briefly summarize historical concerns in the field of English Language Arts, especially in the present era of Common Core State Standards, to justify attention to civic and democratic dimensions of schooling. I also discuss the state of research and practice in US youth civic education, pointing to the need for attention to justice- and equity-oriented learning and language that warrants this intervention and qualitative study. Then, I argue for the relevance of the theoretical framework I bring to examining English Language Arts and civic learning: sociocultural theories of development that draw on the legacies of Vygotskian, Bakhtinian, Deweyan, and other critical traditions. Finally, stemming from this theoretical approach, I articulate this project's research questions. In the second chapter, I detail the methodology of this qualitative study of co-designed pedagogical experimentation. Here, my aim is to explain why civics matters to English education, why this relationship warrants a sociocultural study (and what that means), and how a design study with teachers furnishes a viable opportunity for these research questions. I also describe the site, participants, and process involved in this project, highlighting the role of teachers learning in a collaborative team, shifting their instructional and cultural practices through experimentation and reflection.

In the third through fifth chapters, I share findings about tensions and possibilities that arise from experiments in Civic English from studying this co-design with teachers. In chapter 3, I explore tensions between public and private language, as well as related tensions between individual and collective action and different genres of discourse, as they bear on how English class activities can become forms of civic engagement. The next chapter examines the role of literature as emblematic of English as a traditionally humanities-based discipline, and how that positioning for English both heightens and limits its potential for civic development. In the fifth chapter, I show how a locally-based project of civic engagement furnishes deeper and more diverse learning opportunities in English, and I also unpack some of the challenges the teachers needed to overcome to make that kind of local project possible.

The dissertation closes with a conclusion discussing these findings and their implications for researchers of language, literacy, and civics, and for educators in their practice and inquiries around Civics English. In the end, I make the case that questions of civics already and always infuse our school practices, including the highly valued and crucial task of learning school language, and that explicit attention to and work on the civic mission of schools will have important consequences on student literacy and language learning. Reciprocally, teaching English contextualized by those civic concerns likewise stands to impact the present and future of our democracy.



## Acknowledgements

This dissertation has been a collective endeavor from the start. While I am keenly aware of its weaknesses and my responsibility for them, I am even more grateful that the contributions, accomplishments, and merits of this dissertation come from the many mentors, colleagues, students, and family who guided the project, collaborated with me, joined in its risks, and sustained us through these years.

First, I thank the teachers I worked with at Molina Middle School, whose names are pseudonyms in this writing but whose partnership I will always cherish. Nothing I write could credit them enough for their tireless diligence, day after day, to be great teachers and serve the youth of their school. I thank them for their willingness to experiment with me, for being the kind of colleagues anyone would envy, and for dreaming with and on behalf of kids in our community. Thank you to the students who volunteered their time and voices to the project and my research, whose names are also changed but who offered us so much inspiration; thanks to your families as well. I'm also grateful to the administrators, support staff, and colleagues at Molina and East Bay Unified who contributed to this and many joint projects before and since.

My work stands on the shoulders of giants who teach me to aspire to heights of scholarship and social good that I could only hope to achieve: my esteemed co-advisors, Sarah Warshauer Freedman and Kris Gutiérrez, and my honored outside member David Kirp, who all provided invaluable wisdom, feedback, example, and moral support for my work, from my first notions to the last days of my writing. I am stunned at my good fortune to have received the mentorship and attention of such towering figures in education, who nonetheless have looked out for me with such attention, care, and belief. My thanks will always be insufficient, but I hope my work for schools and youth will reflect my gratitude for your investment in me.

As soon as I thank those mentors from my dissertation committee, I must also thank Laura Sterponi, who has generously nurtured my intellectual curiosities and ambitions with incredible insightfulness, humanity, and kindness. I am immensely thankful for the teaching and guidance of many professors and faculty at the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Education: Claire Kramsch, Jabari Mahiri, Lisa Garcia Bedolla, Prudence Carter, Janelle Scott, Richard Sterling, Christine Cziko, Glynda Hull, Patricia Baquedano-Lopez, Heinrich Mintrop, and Randi Engle all privileged me with significant contributions to my growth as a scholar and person. I must also thank colleagues and classmates who have been my feedback circle, support structure, and friend group through these years of graduate school: Jennifer Higgs, Anthony Johnston, Kate Bernstein, Jaran Shin, Tracie Wallace, Letizia Allais, Betina Protzel-Hsieh, Natalee Kēhaulani, Theresa Burruel Stone, Kyle Booten, Arturo Cortez, Joanne Tien, Mallika Scott, Sarah Van Wart, and many more colleagues and classmates I have surely left out, who showed me what it meant to be a scholar and helped me believe I was one. We press on for the larger purposes of our work.

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Specifically, I want to thank my father, Teh-Tsung Lai, for his continual example, support, and love through my studies, without which I would have surely not made it. I hope that I have made you proud, dad. My brothers Nicky Lai and Sonny Lai have cheered me on and encouraged me through every step. Thanks, brothers.

Even as I thank all these people dear to me, they all know to whom I belong: my wife Elaine, my daughter Eden Jubilee, and me, we are three, *all like a family*, and they are everything to me. They've patiently supported me, cheered me on, helped me out, held me up, and carried me through every mountain and plateau. Thank you for love, laughter, and our life together.

Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Li-Ping Lai, who fought bravely against lung cancer through the duration of this study and its writing. My mom had a hunger for adventure and a heart for people that has made me everything good that I am. I wish you could have seen me finish, Mom. We did it.

# Chapter 1: Conceptual Framework for Civics English

## Introduction

From calls for the conservation of common culture (Ravitch, 2001; Hirsch, 1987; Bloom, 1987) to revolutionary cries for an emancipatory pedagogy (Freire, 2001 [1970]; Shor, 1999), influential advocates for literacy in education often appeal to its citizen-shaping potential (cf. Anderson, 2006; Graff, 1987). In today's evidence-based, reform-driven US educational milieu (McDonnell & Weatherford, 2013), such appeals to the civic import of the English Language Arts (ELA) are still pervasive. For example, in their preface to *New Directions in Teaching English*, Ernest Morrell and Lisa Scherff write, "English is a discipline that helps prepare engaged citizens who use language and literacy to speak the truth to power," articulating objectives for English education that go beyond instrumental and individual improvement and towards transformative social ends (ix, 2015). Reflecting this concern, some scholars have argued that the original framing of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which has profoundly impacted English teaching in US schools, pose an incomplete set of objectives, calling for complementing its "college and career readiness" objectives with civic goals as well (Herczog, 2013; Au, 2013).

Meanwhile, proponents of Civic and Citizenship Education across the ideological spectrum agree on the vital role of language, communication, and literacy towards democratic purposes of schooling. For instance, the Civic Mission of Schools (2003) underscores the civic importance of gaining the ability to "obtain information," "enter into dialogue with others," and "act politically" through "public speaking" and "petitioning and protesting." Beyond the importance of language skills for civic thought and activity, civic education researchers have found a strong correlation between levels of overall academic achievement and political knowledge and civic participation, a correlation irrespective of whether Civics is formally part of the curriculum or not (Niemi & Junn, 2005). In other words, the strong interdependence between learning the language and literacy of schooling and the knowledge and practices of civic participation is often noted, yet rarely investigated.

That is why this research project seeks to investigate the connections between English Language Arts teaching and civic engagement for young adolescents in a culturally and linguistically diverse school. In this dissertation, I seek to understand the interaction of civics and language through the work of English teachers who try to integrate them, in schools where pressing questions about youth literacy, language, and sociopolitical development can be observed. Through these teachers' learning and work, I look at how their students experience this integration of civic engagement and English learning. And I consider how English educators might design educative pedagogy that builds on these connections to enliven students' schooling experiences and interrupt inequality and disenfranchisement.

This dissertation addresses these problems through the qualitative study of a teacher inquiry project (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Goswami, Lewis, Rutherford, & Waff, 2009) patterned after social design experiments (Gutiérrez & Jurow, 2016; Gutiérrez, 2016; Gutiérrez & Vossoughi, 2010), where a team of four Bay Area English teachers in a Professional Learning Community (PLC) attempted to embed civic action into their English Language Arts (ELA) teaching for their diverse middle school students. This study looks at how these teachers, working in a co-design inquiry project with me as a researcher-coach, experimented in their own teaching, their collaboration, and their classrooms in order to gain a qualitative and practice-

based conception of how civic engagement and language might intersect in ELA pedagogy.

In this first chapter, I formulate a *conceptual framework* (Riggans & Ravitch, 2016) that reviews a variety of research to argue for the relevance of this study's investigation of civics integrated with English in the classroom, and to articulate its sociocultural theoretical lenses on teacher development and student learning.

That framework begins with a review of scholarly literature to demonstrate that recent shifts in English in the Common Core era require attention to civic and democratic dimensions of schooling and call for this kind of intervention and qualitative study. Then, I explain the theoretical lenses I bring to examining what I call Civics English. Those lenses include sociocultural theories of development that draw on the legacies of sociocultural, democratic, and critical traditions. Finally, stemming from this theoretical approach, I articulate this project's research questions. My aim is to explain why civics matters to English education, why this relationship warrants a sociocultural study (and what that means), and how a design-based project furnishes a viable opportunity for these research question.

## **Literature Review**

The task of teaching English in US schools has always had a civic and political purpose, though contemporary discourse about schooling tends to de-emphasize this relationship. This literature review argues that this de-politicization is a diversion in the history of English Language Arts teaching, and ultimately is detrimental to democratic discourse and participation. At the same time, a review of civic education literature points to the need for English teachers to take up a call to engagement with civics in English curriculum and practice, particularly justice-oriented civic action. A dearth of curricular openings for civics learning, disparities in civic preparation for youth from non-dominant communities, and the linguistic, literacy, and discursive demands of contemporary civic participation all speak to the importance of English teachers in the equitable civic development of youth. Approaching the overlaps from both disciplines, this review narrows towards a conception of "Civics English," a problem space in English teaching that recognizes the historical relationship between language and power in democratic societies and specifically seeks to engage youth in concrete civic action as one of the means and ends of teaching English Language Arts.

## **English Language Arts Literature Review**

The vision statement of the National Council of Teachers of English opens with an explicitly civic articulation of purpose: "NCTE and its members will apply the power of language and literacy to actively pursue justice and equity for all students and the educators who serve them" (NCTE, 2017). Given the history of English Language Arts in US schools, this alignment of language and literacy to the pursuit of justice and equity is commensurate, though the ideological orientation of the discipline and its shapers have not uniformly conceived of "justice and equity" the same ways. Indeed, English in US schools has always been both an instrument of democratic inclusion, opportunity, and participation *and* an implement of exclusion, disenfranchisement, and marginalization. The following review begins with that cultural-historical (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Cole, 1998) grasp of English Language Arts to contextualize this study's problem. From these beginnings, I then detect the civic underpinnings in debates throughout the modern era of the discipline, as well as current concerns in the

contemporary Common Core era that compel this study.

*English Language and Literacy as the Grammar of Democracy*

English as a schooled discipline formed historically as part and parcel of the citizenship project of US schools. Historically tracing the English Language Arts discipline underscores why Civics English puts together what has been compartmentalized and siloed, re-contextualizing language and literacy in the civic purposes of schools. Historical studies of American schooling and literacy (Salomone, 2010; Ovando, 2003; Brandt, 2001; Kaestle, Damon-Moore, Stedman, Tinsley, & Trollinger, 1991; Tyack, 1981) serve to remind us that what we now understand as academic English has always been embedded in diverse social and cultural activity that is also inherently political. Therefore, I do not advance Civics English as a teaching strategy or a curricular approach. Rather, I posit Civics English as an emphasis on and examination of the intersection of civics and English Language Arts that has historically always existed, remains key to issues in both fields, and requires current and consequential revisioning for the sake of schooling and democracy in the US.

The cultural-historical development of English Language Arts (including elements such as schooled literacy, canonized literature, standardized registers of English, etc.) reveals a tension between the maintenance of language and literacy as instruments of democratic inclusion and participation versus as contested boundary-markers for ascriptions of citizenship. In other words, the practices and products of English Language Arts serve as both tools for bringing children into the conversations of citizenship and as markers for excluding children from that discourse.

Since the early stages of the republic, architects of American democratic institutions designated to schools the responsibility to teach children literacy as an underpinning of civic life (Fuhrman & Lazerson, 2005; Kaestle, 1991; Cremin, 1988). Broadly speaking, the educational imperative was to produce an informed citizenry capable of the responsibilities of participatory democracy, appraised of concepts like the rule of law and the rights of citizens, and engaged in informed decision-making. From that vantage point, the history of schooled literacy can be seen as a progression of increasing mass literacy that carried with it social and political liberty (Cremin, 1988). However, from another vantage point, scholars have questioned the claim that the uniquely American consensus for common schooling and mass literacy early in its nationhood led to its broad equality and freedom. For example, Graff (2001) has noted that for many, including African Americans, women, and immigrants, the long-sought-after promise of literacy did not automatically translate into economic mobility or political power. Rather, literacy, and schools as the institutions built to control, distribute, and authorize literacy, served a variety of ends, many of them anti-liberatory, such as exercising social order, instantiating cultural hegemony, and assimilating into White Anglo-Saxon Protestant morals and mores. Throughout the 19th century, efforts to distribute literacy and schooled learning went hand-in-hand with the enforcement of narrow social norms and ascriptive ideologies. Yet those excluded from schooling and literacy (the poor, women, immigrants, etc.) rightly recognized the obvious fact that literacy was closely tied to socioeconomic opportunity (Cook-Gumperz, 1986). For African Americans and immigrants, while literacy accompanied emancipation or assimilation, many advanced economically without literacy, while the acquisition of literacy did not necessarily alter unjust conditions (Graff, 2001, 1982). This reminds us that rather than deterministically bringing about social change, literacy is always embedded in ideological

meanings within society, tied to legitimacy, conceptions of knowledge, and oftentimes, social hierarchies (Cook-Gumperz, 1986; Street, 1984).

That fact, while frequently overlooked by educators peering through an inherited ideology of education, is not lost on many youth who are distrustful of or disillusioned with the “hidden curriculum” of ideologies in schooled literacy (Apple, 2004). Nineteenth century schooling leaders like Horace Mann imagined Common Schools fulfilling the promises of democracy in providing literacy to all, with much of that energy channeled to producing reading and writing textbooks that defined and modeled school-based discourse that simultaneously transferred “selective traditions” of ideology, culture, belief, and politics (Provenzo, Shaver, & Bello, 2011). Conceiving of what now exists as English Language Arts as a cultural artifact produced by these civic objectives explains a lot of the discipline’s key concerns and longstanding debates.

A cultural historical perspective also necessitates thinking of civics from the perspective of political economies and the management of and contestation over scarce resources, including the symbolic capital of schooling and literacy. Chronicling the political economy of schooling, Kaestle (1991) documents the expansion of schooling in functional literacy as correlating with national initiatives for economic modernization, and indeed the link between literacy, economic productivity, and global competitiveness remains a tenet of national ideology, if not necessarily a correlation experienced by actual laborers (Hull, 1993; Kaestle, 1987). Ideological battles over language policies and English as the official language have often been tied to resurgent clamor for Americanization and assimilation during immigrant influxes; these ideological battles have often been fought in the terrain of schooling and language policies (Salomone, 2010; Carnevale, 2009; Ovando, 2003) and internationally (e.g., Samuelson & Freedman, 2010). These legacies of schooled literacy’s role in economic reproduction and competition, as well as in assimilation into dominant ideologies and cultural and linguistic hegemonies, also counteracts a romanticized view of literacy as a guarantor of democracy and equality. These varied and complex ways that schooled English is imbricated into the civic and political lives of Americans all point to strong ties that historians can trace and families and communities know by instinct.

### *Debating Democracy in Modern English Language Arts*

In the modern era, debates within the English Language Arts discipline have circled back to tensions and questions of access, equality, power, participation, and justice, questions that emanate from the democratic objectives of schooling. These debates include ideological struggles generalized under the “Reading Wars” (i.e. Whole Language vs. Phonics; Pearson, 1996; Edelsky, 2006 [1991]; Goodman, 1986), contestation over multiculturalism and traditional or canonical texts (Taxel, 1997; Banks, 1993; Hirsch, 1987), issues in multilingualism and language variety (Lippi-Green, 2012; Gandara, Losen, August, Uriarte, Gomez, & Hopkins, 2010; Delpit, 1988; Smitherman, 1977), and literacy under the standards and accountability movement and high stakes testing (Berliner, 2011; Sleeter, 2008; Pearson, 1993). These debates often appealed or alluded to issues of inclusion, access, diversity, and power, issues arising from the push back-and-forth between increasing access for excluded groups and maintaining the transmission and social reproduction functions of schools-- fundamentally civic questions. As these debates shaped English Language Arts as a discipline, they also expanded notions of how literacy is taught, what being “literate” entails, whom English serves, and how English is systemically evaluated, conditioning how English teachers work and how English classes

operate, even if only incrementally pushing against the “grammar” of schooling that keeps certain familiar, institutionalized English aspects of classrooms relatively rigid (Tyack & Tobin, 1994; Mehan, 1979).

Differences between Whole Language (holistic approaches to teaching reading) and phonics-based perspectives (emphasizing systematic and explicit instruction in word parts and patterns) might appear the more internecine and technical of these modern debates within ELA. However, as Edelsky (2006 [1991]) argued, the Whole Language perspective was political and ideological at root, and its emphasis on meaning and purpose for reading was packaged with civic beliefs about whose literacy practices should be modeled and held up in schools and whose knowledges and languages were meaningful. Edelsky’s book, entitled *With Literacy and Justice for All*, underlines the anchoring of Whole Language approaches to reading in social contexts, distributed cultural capital, and disruptions of dominant discourse hierarchies that maintain ideological control through schools. Yet Whole Language proponents are not the only ones to claim an underlying political cause for their perspective. Many advocates of phonics-based instruction on the other side of these debates have appealed to their own political justifications, such as the importance of transparent access to literacy knowledge for learners and their families, particularly children with differential access to English literacy or English language resources prior to entering the schooling system (e.g. International Literacy Association, 2018). The cultural historical connection between English and civic issues have always been embedded within these debates in English Language Arts.

The same could be said for the more overtly ideological debates within the English discipline between, as another example, “cultural literacy” perspectives like Hirsch’s (1987)—an appeal to a canon of knowledge and texts that “every American should know” for mutual intelligibility, common values, and maximal opportunity—and the contrasting civic priorities of multicultural education and multicultural literature (Banks, 1993), whose advocates took aim at the narrow set of experiences and perspectives reflected in textbooks and “classics” of literature. As disputes about the literary canon productively challenged English Language Arts teaching, so did disagreement about the status of non-English languages (Gandara & Hopkins, 2010) and “non-standard” English varieties (Perry & Delpit, 1998) in the classroom. These conflicts raged beyond the circles of educational practice and research into mainstream policy, media, and public debates at local and national levels, whether those debates centered on English-Only policies and resolutions about African-American Vernacular English, or banned or required texts and English teachers’ academic freedom. On one hand, these public tensions from the field of English can be seen as side effects of progressive, democratizing shifts in the discipline toward greater inclusion, wider participation, and more equitable possibilities for participation, redefining American democracy. On the other hand, the debates also reanimate and re-inscribe the contested boundary markers that schooled English has always served (Wiley & Wright, 2004; Putnam, 1998). These English issues are civics ones as well.

The social, ideological, and political roots of literacy and language development have also been brought to the forefront in various streams of scholarly research and theory (e.g. Ochs & Schieffelin, 2017; Gee, 2012; Gutiérrez, 2008; Cook-Gumperz, 2006; Ball & Freedman, 2004), challenging deterministic, de-politicalized, or individualized notions of literacies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Collins, 1995; Street, 1984; Scribner & Cole, 1981) and language acquisition (Kramsch, 2002; Lantolf, 2000; Firth & Wagner, 1997; Duranti & Goodwin, 1992; Schumann, 1986). Along with these theoretical and research perspectives, diverse scholars have also envisioned ways that literacy and language teaching can engage democratic and socially

transformative objectives in classrooms and out-of-school spaces (e.g. Garcia, Johnson, & Seltzer, 2017; Beach, Webb, & Thein, 2016; Gutiérrez, 2008; Morrell, 2008; Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007; Lee, 2007; Boyd, Ariail, Williams, Jocson, Sachs, McNeal et al., 2006; Luke, 2003; Powell, 1999; Cope & Kalantzis, 1993). The impacts of these articulations of equity, justice, and diversity-oriented English Language Arts continue to be seen in teacher preparation, teacher professional development, language and literacy curriculum, and English professional networks. Yet these socially transformational approaches to ELA have been constrained or funneled by the outsized influence of the standards and accountability movement in US schooling, most recently in the Common Core State Standards movement.

These modern debates in ELA which embed literacy and language development in social, political, and civic concerns compel this present study to examine the enactment of civics in various areas of ELA practice. This study examines the organization of classroom participation as an incubator for diverse democracies and in the curricular and pedagogical decisions ELA teachers make, including in the teaching of writing for social and civic purposes (Mirra, Morrell, Martinez, & Scorza, 2015; Flower, 2008; Morrell, 2004), the selection of literary texts to present windows and mirrors of the broader social world to diverse students (Boyd, Causey, & Galda, 2015; Devereaux & Wheeler, 2012; Au, 2011), and the means of apprenticing youth of all cultural and linguistic backgrounds in the discourses of academic language and literacy (DiCerbo, Anstrom, Baker, & Rivera, 2014; Snow & Uccelli, 2009; Bunch, 2006; Scarcella, 2003; Greenleaf, Schoenbach, Cziko, & Mueller, 2001). Rather than settling any of these debates, this project attempts to work with English teachers to innovate ELA practice, to tackle some of the civics questions at the heart of those debates directly.

### *Contemporary English Language Arts, the Common Core, and Civics English*

Researchers of language and literacy education with varying perspectives on the Common Core State Standards nevertheless agree on their far-reaching impacts on ELA teaching practice in US schools (Beach, 2017; Ajayi, 2015; Kibler, Walqui, & Bunch, 2014; Applebee, 2013; Pearson, 2013; Shanahan, 2013). These impacts are even deeper if understood as just the current manifestation of a larger and longstanding standards, accountability, and testing regime that narrows educational priorities (Berliner, 2011) as part of the neoliberalizing project of educational reform (Sturges, 2015). The Common Core's emphases on academic language, textual evidence, and college and career readiness order a set of distinctive priorities for English Language Arts (Coleman & Pimentel, 2013; National Governor's Association, 2010). These emphases are reshaping the practice of ELA teaching in vast segments of US classrooms, though whether for good or ill remains in debate (e.g. Tampo, 2018). For example, the CCSS places an explicit priority on academic argumentation, a type of writing and speech it privileges over narrative and expository writing for college and career readiness (Graff, 2003; National Governor's Association, 2010: Appendix A, 45). In addition, the Common Core's redefinition of schooled English also consists of the standards' emphases on literacy across content areas, critical thinking, real-world and disciplinary texts, academic vocabulary development, and evidence-based argumentation (National Governors Association, 2010). Yet often, insufficient attention is devoted to the sociocultural dimensions of the teaching of this academic language and literacy (Moje, 2015; Newell, Beach, Smith, & Vanderheide, 2011; Walqui & van Lier, 2010), and instead these discourses are treated as individualized proficiencies or knowledges for students to master and demonstrate in assessments.



One view is that the Common Core moves English Language Arts towards particular emphases, oftentimes away from social, civic, and political dimensions of ELA practice. However, others argue the Common Core provides opportunities for making academic language expectations more transparent and accessible to diverse learners (e.g. Kibler, Walqui, & Bunch, 2014).

On one side, the Common Core's focus on "college and career readiness" and the conspicuous absence of civic and democratic objectives, at least in initial versions of the CCSS, point to the CCSS's origin as a political document that sought consensus among liberal and conservative states, and therefore presented a politically "neutral" position, as K-12 teachers are expected to take (Mirra, Coffey, & Englander, 2018; Journell, 2016; Au, 2013; McDonnell & Weatherford, 2013). Despite the political controversy that has nonetheless followed the CCSS's adoption (Henderson, Peterson, & West, 2015), this avoidance of partisan political or civic positions in systems that structure inequality can slip into a depoliticized "silencing" (Fine, 1987), "color-blindness" (Reeves, 2012), or "backlash pedagogy" (Gutiérrez, Asato, Santos, & Gotanda, 2002) against equity- or justice-oriented educational goals. Such "neutrality" is not apolitical at all but can instead wind up serving a neoliberal prioritization of students as market commodities supplied with schooled knowledges and skills, rather than as democratic citizenry now and in the future (Hursh, 2013, 2005).

On the other hand, the Common Core and related current efforts in English Language Arts attempt to make visible the language of the "culture of power" (Delpit, 1988) in its call for explicit instruction in academic English and academically valued genres (Alim & Baugh, 2007; Cummins, 1999), including injunctions to provide access to complex texts (Pearson & Hiebert, 2013), technologically mediated new literacies (Kist, 2013; Drew, 2012), disciplinary literacy for English learners (Bunch, Kibler, Pimentel, & Walqui, 2013), and critical thinking and inquiry (Beach, Thein, & Webb, 2015). Many advocates for civic learning have found the Common Core's primacy for argumentative literacy to be an opportunity for development of dialogical thinking (Wilkinson, Reznitskaya, Bourdage, Oyler, Glina, Drewry, Kim, & Nelson, 2016), investigative critical thinking (Monte-Sano, de la Paz, & Felton, 2015), multimodal civic engagement for democratic participation (Dingler, 2017), and critical literacy (LaDuke, Lindner, & Yanoff, 2016). It remains to be seen whether ELA teachers in US schools implementing the Common Core will achieve those objectives, especially for those students historically pushed out of the social and civic resources of academic English.

Regardless of the direction or even the degree of Common Core's influence, apart from the CCSS, contemporary practitioners and researchers of English teaching continue to evolve with changing times, critiquing and innovating ELA practice as youth, communities, literacies, and the social contexts of school change (Morrell & Scherff, 2015). Youth navigate complex politics of identity and inclusion/exclusion in superdiverse communities that nonetheless confront narrow and polarized political discourses (Dabach, Fones, Merchant, & Kim, 2016). Digital texts, new literacies, and participatory media alter the conditions, demands, and possibilities of English teaching, evolving the critical literacy and communicative praxis that youth need to be civically informed and engaged (Garcia, Mirra, Morrell, Martinez, & Scorza, 2015; Avila & Pandya, 2013; Lankshear & Knobel, 2008). And the work of English teaching itself involves the navigation of multiple possible affiliations and demands, from school discourses of accountability and high-stakes testing to competency with their own biases and cultures, that require English teachers to become "shape-shifters" in their identities and practices (Hallman, 2015).

From the strong cultural historical ties between English Language Arts and civics, I argue that attempts to de-politicize English teaching are not only impossible, they run counter what English teachers and US youth need. Instead, a vision of ELA practice that embraces the sociocultural, political, ideological, and civic rootedness of language, discourse, literacy, media, and culture opens paths for effective and impactful practice, especially for non-dominant youth in schools. The project this dissertation is based on recognizes the possibilities and constraints of working within and through those current preoccupations in ELA practice, from civically rooted modern ELA debates about literature and language diversity, to Common Core-era emphases and oversights that institutionally condition teachers' work.

By investigating English teaching that explicitly integrates forms of civic learning, I aim to contribute to the field's understanding of needed ELA practice in the US political and educational context. But before locating more precisely what this study contributes to English Language Arts, I review research literature on youth civic engagement, locating the "civics" this project hopes to engage, and describing other recent studies connecting civics to literacy and language learning.

## **Youth Civic Engagement Literature Review**

Current scholarship on civic education and youth civic engagement has re-centered the essential task of teaching civics in US schools, but it has also challenged those narrow versions of civics that may contribute to processes of exclusion harmful to an emerging democratic polity. When appealing to civic goals as an educational objective, proponents often presume a straightforward and shared conception of civic education, which in reality is complex and contested. This review highlights scholarly arguments for the necessity of participatory and justice-oriented civic engagement, especially for youth from non-dominant communities, which attempts to address what has been called the "Civic Empowerment Gap" (Levinson, 2010). In addition, given the lack of institutional structures or opportunities for these kinds of youth civic learning in schools, this review points to the need for integrating civics across the curriculum, including in English Language Arts, to serve those objectives of participatory and justice-oriented civics in unique ways. Along these lines, I review some exemplars of research on practices I call *Civics English*, before outlining the needs for ongoing research that this study begins to address.

### *Civic Education towards Youth Civic Engagement*

With the standards and accountability movement, civic learning has often been left behind in the conversation of educational priorities (Galston, 2001). But a resurgence of interest in civic education, partially as a response to the extreme focus on test scores and market-based reforms, has permeated at least the scholarly conversation on US schooling and its ends. Much of this discussion has attempted to articulate what kind of civics is meaningful today, what counts as civic learning, and how to incorporate those students traditionally underserved in civic opportunity. As an example, the evolution of the research of James Banks, seminal advocate of multicultural education, toward globalization and citizenship (2004) is indicative of the ways civics has become a gathering point for scholars, foundations, and advocates concerned with

issues of equity and democracy. The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) Civic Education Study in 1996-2000 provided a jolt to the study of civic education's relationship to schools, conducting comparative case studies in 24 countries and collecting survey data in 28 countries (Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001; Torney-Purta, Schwille, & Amadeo, 1999). Those studies were significant not only for what they found about adolescents' views on civics (low priority in curriculum, high preference for community action, skepticism about political parties) but for their expanded focus beyond conventional political knowledge and participation to broader concerns of social justice, activism, and intergroup attitudes.

Civic education scholars have sharpened and complicated traditional notions of civics in ways long needed to apply to young people from non-dominant communities. Kahne, Westheimer, and others (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Kahne & Westheimer, 2003; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) have sounded the alarm for recognizing that social justice-oriented civic learning, which goes beyond fulfilling civic responsibilities and typical electoral participation, is the most potent, and most neglected, kind of civic education for traditionally marginalized youth. Youniss, Bales, Christmas-Best, Diversi, McLaughlin, and Silbereisen (2002) have pointed to the need in the 21st century for more expansive considerations of civic engagement under the revolutionary changes of globalization, information and communication technologies, and mass migration, which will require more participatory and dialogical processes of learning for youth and schools, industries, government, non-profits, and research. And Kirshner, among others (Kirshner, Strobel, & Fernandez, 2003; Kirshner, 2009; O'Donoghue, Kirshner, & McLaughlin, 2002), has linked civic learning with traditions of critical pedagogy and inquiry, promoting forms of participatory action research with youth outside of schools to engage as researchers and activists in social change.

Arguing similarly for a civics education involving not only understanding, but critiquing and changing social structures, Westheimer and Kahne (2003) delineate three conceptions of the "good" citizen: personally responsible, participatory, and justice-oriented. These conceptions are aligned with traditional, progressive, and advanced civic education perspectives, respectively. The traditional civics education involves learning the machinery of how government works, and charges students to behave responsibly, develop character, etc. Progressive civics education emphasizes the need to teach participation and involvement, and encourages students to participate in community service or solve problems by working through established institutions. Advanced perspectives take the Progressive impulse yet further, teaching critical assessment and recognition of failures and contradictions of the system, preparing students to be involved in working to change structures that reproduce injustice. Kahne and Westheimer bemoan the narrow focus of schools on the first, traditionalist perspective and its definition of the good citizen, often to the exclusion of the second and third, which are vital for a vibrant democracy and engaged citizenry. Civics education has long limited itself to the affirmation of "civic republican" or "traditionalist," and sometimes "liberal" or "progressive" ideals. But a truly democratic education of today's youth calls for the incorporation of explicit critical and social justice perspectives.

The historical moment calls for this too. A variety of readings of American political history legitimate this shift away the two-party rule of civic republican and liberal approaches to civics. Smith (1997) argues that the two civic myths of liberalism and republicanism insufficiently explain past and present negotiation of citizenship, and historians must account for the presence of "ascriptive inegalitarianism"—such as white supremacist doctrines or institutionalized

xenophobia—in the continual tug-of-war of civic ideals. This conception applied to civics education suggests that alongside the discourse of civic virtue and responsibility, alongside the discourse of individual rights and liberties, educating for democracy requires a critical stance that identifies and operates against these embedded ideologies of inequality.

### *Civics Gaps and Social Transformation*

Often, scholarly attention on the democratic goals of US schooling arises to present a counterbalance to commodification of students as laborers and schools as instruments of the market. Educational theorists such as Carnoy and Levin (1985) have argued that US educational institutions have always maintained this dualism, caught between market-based stratification and democracy-inspired egalitarianism, which reifies the division between those forces in the broader American political context. At the same time, Carnoy and Levin posit that “as social movements challenge [unequal class, gender, and race relations], schools—as a legitimate instrument of social mobility—are often the first State institution where structure and practices change to reflect the political power of those movements” (108). In other words, when schools return their focus on democratic education, this focus can portend a renewed attention to more tangible equality and broader participation in society in general.

However, schools turning their attention toward civic goals does not *ipso facto* lead to more democratically inclusive or egalitarian outcomes. On the contrary, mirroring legal and cultural structures that maintained exclusionary and assimilationist definitions of *citizens*, schools have historically been sites of contestation over how they also narrowly circumscribed the *citizens* they served (Moss, 2009; Tyack, 2001). Early civic education in the US introduced a “civic republicanism” conception of citizenship as a set of virtues enabling responsible participation in the republic (Heater, 2004). This limited conception often became a terrain of struggle when marginalized groups attempted to overcome structures of racial, gender, and economic hierarchy and inequity, structures reinforced by schools’ demarcations of citizenship. These social struggles persisted in changing meanings of citizenship and nationhood through eras of industrialization, territorial expansion and colonization, immigration and demographic changes, and changes in the technologies and practices of teaching of children and adolescents (Mondale & Patton, 2001).

The legacy of these differential historical experiences of civic education for non-dominant groups has led to what Levinson (2010, 2007) has constructed as a “civic opportunity gap” or “civic empowerment gap” that mirrors the racial achievement gap, where lower civic knowledge and participation according to traditional measures have marked the educational experience of non-white, poor, and immigrant adolescents (cf. Levine, 2009; Kahne & Middaugh, 2008). Like constructions of the “racial achievement gap,” the notion of “civic gaps” centers on perceived deficiencies in disenfranchised communities rather than centering the economic, social, and moral debt owed to these communities (Ladson-Billings, 2006). But the attention to “civic empowerment gaps” have shed light on how, unaddressed, these discrepant experiences of civic education have contributed to the further political marginalization of non-dominant groups. Civic education approaches that directly tackle these discrepancies will grab hold of the strains of critical, participatory, and transformative civic engagement for youth that America’s democratic future requires (Kirshner & Ginwright, 2012; Rogers, Mediratta, & Shah, 2012; Levinson, 2010).

Despite promising and powerful examples of this kind of critical, participatory, and

transformative youth civic engagement (e.g. Akom, Shah, Nakai, & Cruz, 2016; Kirshner, 2009; Rubin, 2009; Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Ginwright, Cammarota, & Noguera, 2006), a lack of institutional structure or pressure in most US schools to establish these practices makes them exceptional or community-based, out-of-school projects. Levine (2007) underscores that the lack of institutional investment in the US education system to schooling young people in democratic participation betrays the expectations American democracy places on schools to prepare citizens; in almost all US schools, Civics is relegated to a single, half-year course, not a discipline or department. The civic education and action that could engage non-dominant youth in participatory learning towards socially transformative democratic citizenship requires more than US schools currently make room for. Higher education advocates for civic education across the curriculum (Battistoni, 2017; Freedland & Lieberman, 2010) attempt to ameliorate this lack of institutional reform for civic learning, but sustained models and studies of civic learning and engagement woven into the disciplines, especially outside of Social Studies, remain too rare and much needed.

Therefore, this study seeks to explore how practitioners and researchers in the English discipline might contribute to experiments, examples, and examinations of school-based civic engagement that is critical, participatory, and socially transformative. At the same time, keeping in mind the need for viability as a widespread practice among English teachers, this research and project tries to imagine such civic engagement within schools and within the disciplinary demands of English Language Arts, as civic learning and action within schools can play a key role in civic futures (Peguero & Bondy, 2015; Pasek, Feldman, Romer, & Jamieson, 2008). Moreover, this study imagines such civic learning impacts beginning in early adolescence, in middle school, recognizing that much institutionally structured civic learning occurs in latter or post-secondary schooling, when many consequential opportunities to change young people's access and beliefs about their citizenship are already lost (Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Zaff, Malanchuk, & Eccles, 2008).

### *Towards Civics English*

The preceding review of English Language Arts and youth civic engagement converge in what I call *Civics English*. I define *Civics English* not as a specific curriculum or set of instructional strategies, but as *a space of inquiries and practices that begins with the interconnection of civics and English literacy and language as objectives in educational settings; develops through experiments of participatory co-design by teachers in ways situated to particular youth, communities, and contexts; and orients towards learning and innovating with languages and discourses of power towards justice-oriented and socially transformative ends*. Though the studies I review below vary in their origins and approaches, they represent recent projects in the problem space I outline as *Civics English*, which I describe further in this chapter's Theoretical Framework after this Literature Review.

As mentioned above, a growing body of research-and-praxis exemplars of youth activism, social engagement, and civic action has provided powerful and promising evidence of justice-oriented and socially transformative education, in and out of schools. I now focus specifically on those studies among this body of work that address literacy/language learning along with justice-oriented civic action for non-dominant youth (e.g. Mirra, Coffrey, & Englander, 2018; Stornaiuolo & Thomas, 2017; Haddix, Everson, & Hodge, 2015; Garcia, Mirra, Morrell, Martinez, & Scorza, 2015; Kirshner, 2015; Bishop, 2014; Cammarota, 2014; Winn, 2011;

Morrell, 2004) These studies, taken together, demonstrate three consistent themes that condition the prospects of Civics English and guide the nature of this study. First, a productive but challenging tension recurs between youth adopting and participating in dominant and hegemonic discourses versus sustaining their own powerful but often marginalized discourses, while at the same time breaking down those bifurcations that privilege or relegate certain discourses. Often, civic engagements transform traditional schooled or dominant literacy and language practices, renewing them with hybrid genres, new and remixed media, and empowering counternarratives. A second theme in many studies of civics and literacy learning is the question of how and how much adults or teachers should be involved in guiding, teaching, apprenticing, or facilitating youth activists' actions, decision-making, and participation. Third, many of these studies find evidence that collective youth action has powerful effects on youth participants' development of academic and political identities, experiences of democratic activity, and interest in ongoing civic engagement.

The first theme of these recent Civics English-related studies is the potentially productive but persistent tension between “dominant” and “marginalized” discourses, between whether students engaged in civic action should adapt their language to genres, registers, and media with political and academic legitimacy, or if adopting such discourses alienate, mask, or stifle youths' voices and expression, which should be presented and heard in the public sphere. These tensions exhibit the ways that language use and pedagogy are always laden with questions of power and politics, and the tensions are not necessarily constructive. For example, Morrell (2004) documents projects with youth researchers and organizers who can marshal the academic discursive tools of research, writing, and multimodal presentation to act for social change in public arenas, experiences that lead to lasting effects on youths' literate and civic identities. A starting-point theory of action for Civics English might recommend teaching non-dominant youth those highly valued languages of power through civic engagement as the primary objective of civics-embedded literacy.

However, other studies show that no simple, straight-line correspondence should be assumed between acquiring academic and political discourses and learning participation and gaining power. For instance, Journell and Castro (2011) introduces an ethnographic case study of immigrant youth in a civics class showing that culturally relevant civics pedagogy engaged students in academic discussion of the political process. But despite finding a similarly powerful apprenticeship in academic discourse for ELLs in a high school civics class, through their microethnographic analysis, Miller & Zuengler (2011) also find that apprenticeship in the social practices of academic and civic discussion does not necessarily ensure students' empowerment, nor are those discourses necessarily the linguistic capital that help youth gain access and participate in particular communities of practice. Indeed, literacy-and-civics researchers and teachers often find that powerful and lasting impacts are found in different modalities and genres than usually thought of as traditionally academic or political discourses, such as drama, autoethnography, poetry, and other arts (Wargo, 2017; Winn, 2011; Camangian, 2010, 2008; Quijada, Cahill, & Bradley, 2011). In fact, any glance at the current landscape of political discourse suggests contemporary civic engagement and proficiency in literacies require youth to navigate dizzingly complex and shifting ecologies of power and participation, often involving hybridized and remixed genres and discourses (Jenkins, Shresthova, Gamber-Thompson, Kligler-Vilenchik, & Zimmerman, 2016; Moje, 2016; Hull & Kenney, 2009). In this context, the complex relationship between what are traditionally deemed discourses of civic and academic power and what may be diverse and emergent discursive practices, genres, and media can

productively contribute to evolving understanding and transformation in youth civic engagement.

Civics English, then, involves *learning and innovating with languages and discourse of power towards justice-oriented and socially transformative ends*. This study is interested in how English teachers might conceptualize shifts in their practices of English Language Arts teaching when concrete civic action reconfigures what discourses, literacies, and language varieties have power and make impacts in real-world engagement.

A second theme within these studies is the role of adults, teachers, mentors, and the institutions that interact with youth civic actors as they engage in language- and literacy-based civic engagement. Against the neoliberalizing agenda of turning teachers into educational functionaries in a reproductive system, Mirra & Morrell (2011) argue that in democratic societies, teachers should serve as “civic agents,” whose work entails performing their vital roles in cultivating young civic actors, in partnership with local communities, towards effecting social change. But if youth civic action is centered on the development of youth as the actors, what roles should non-youth partners, like teachers or institutional supporters, play in fostering, apprenticing, or guiding that participation, particularly if the added goal of developing students in language and literacy is also attached? Some of the already cited youth civic action projects and their accompanying research take place under the auspices of community organizations, university-school partnerships, or other civic and political institutions, while a few others occur within schools in social studies or English classes. Each setting and set of adults may position themselves in different configurations when it comes to determining how youth civic action is structured, organized, directed, or facilitated.

In his studies of a variety of youth civic action projects, Kirshner (2008) derives a framework of alternative modes for adults guiding youth-led civic participation, categorizing them as “facilitation,” “apprenticeship,” and “joint work,” pointing out that they differ in degree of adult intervention and guidance, reflecting different conceptions of adult roles in youth learning. Kirshner (2015) acknowledges the need for different roles for adults in different circumstances, but points out that the assumption that constructivist, open-ended roles for adults will foster more freedom and empowerment can be misguided, as a socioculturalist perspective suggests that youth (like all learners) need to be apprenticed in participation in particular cultural practices, such as navigating the often-oblique channels of political power and civic change. These roles for adults are further complicated when the youth activity takes place in institutions that themselves play a (or *the*) dominant role in mediating the larger civic world for adolescents, such as schools or, in the case of Winn’s (2011) study of literacy with incarcerated girls, the juvenile justice system.

Because of these questions about the role of adults and institutions in the activity and learning of youth, I specify Civics English as *developing through experiments of participatory co-design by teachers in ways situated to particular youth, communities, and contexts*. Just as a repertoire for navigating and transforming civic spaces and literacies is required for youth activists, teachers need a repertoire for navigating and transforming the arrangements of adult-youth relationships, dynamics of power and apprenticeship, questions of youth agency and larger institutional and structural imperatives, and other integral factors. This repertoire should be the project of conscientious teachers as civic agents, particularized to where and with whom they work. As such, Civics English should not be a pre-fabricated and exported curriculum or strategy set, but a constantly revised and re-situated set of inquiries for teachers. I elaborate on how this occurs through co-design in this chapter’s Theoretical Framework.

The third theme I note in these related studies is the conclusion of many of them that civic

action results in the creation of powerful spaces and opportunities for civic identity formation, democratic activity, and learning. While these Civics English studies do not paint an over-idealized or simplistic and deterministic picture, pointing out constraints, critiques, and challenges of conducting youth civic action (cf. Vakil & McKinney de Royston, 2018; Tien, Ganding, & Serrano, 2018; Mirra & Rogers, 2016), they nonetheless agree that something noteworthy and transformative occurs in these projects. That noteworthy “something” can be granularly focused on certain objectives in language and literacy learning. For example, Jaeger (2016) details a project addressing the teaching of citizenship and Common Core-type writing, where fourth graders in a rural elementary school were taught evidence-based argument writing as an exploration and development of a ‘sociological imagination’ (Mills, 1959). The study found that contextualizing the evidence-based argument genre within teaching of sociological imagination-- and vice versa-- augmented both the investment in writing and the citizenship activity of students.

The transformative results of Civics English can also be located in the activity, identity formation, and social imaginations of youth/student participants. Mirra, Coffrey, and Englander (2018) examined high school English classes that employed sociocritical literacy practices (Gutiérrez, 2008) to explore civic issues through the figured worlds created in classroom discussion about literature and writing for civic purposes. Their study found students highly engaged and critically imaginative about civic issues as they intersected in their English classes, and also found that the teachers themselves developed recognition and practices of their own subject positions in relation to students and to civic questions, which they characterized as figured worlds of *Warrior Scholarship* for Coffrey and *Bridge Building* for Englander, grown from their own histories and identities as teachers.

Mirra et al.’s (2018) study most closely resembles the frameworks, purposes, and contexts of this study’s Civics English experimentation and inquiry. As they explore similar questions, they also point to the need for more studies in this problem space. They write:

Our findings raise intriguing questions for further study—beyond the scope of this article—about the extent to which teachers’ racial identities make certain figured worlds possible (or impossible) for them to foster in their classrooms. For example, is it possible (or desirable) for White teachers to promote warrior-scholarship? What other possible figured worlds beyond warrior-scholarship and bridge building can be added to the typology, and how do they relate to race, class, gender, and other social constructs? (19)

In response to this study’s overlapping recognition with Mirra et al of the Civics English problem space, I additionally define Civics English as *a space of inquiries and practices that begins with the interconnection of civics and English literacy and language as objectives in educational settings*. This study starts from the potentials as well as the named challenges of others I have reviewed here, trying to design new pedagogical approaches in English Language Arts practice that stand at this juncture with socially transformative civics, collaboratively working with a team of ELA teachers experimenting and striving to teach as civic agents.

### **Theoretical Framework**

As my review of literature showed, there is great promise in the prospect of sociocritical literacy and social language learning through engaging diverse youth from non-dominant communities in civic action. There also remain many questions about how that prospect might



unfold in schools and English classes, how ELA teaching might shift to integrate civic action, and what learning experiences might result from those shifts. This dissertation project pursues those questions through a theoretical framework that draws on traditions of sociocultural approaches to learning and language (Vygotsky, 1978; Bakhtin, 1981; Cole & Engeström, 1993), critical literacy (Freire, 2001 [1970]; Gutiérrez, 2008), and collaborative, participatory practitioner research (Kemmis 2006; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Dewey, 1956).

### *Teacher Change, Collaborative Inquiry, and Co-Designed Educational Experiments*

As an exploration of Civics English's possibilities and problems, this study centers on the professional practice of English teachers as they attempted to integrate civics. I do this by analyzing teachers as ELA activity systems among multiple intersecting activity systems, as conceived by 3<sup>rd</sup> generation cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) and the expansive learning theorization of Engeström (2001). I study how shifts in practices for this team of ELA teachers emerged from the contradictions and tensions that arose when their cultural activity of English teaching met and tried to merge with the cultural activity of youth civic action, to see what contradictions arose and what opportunities led to expansive growth in their practice.

I focus the lens for studying Civics English on teachers because I approach teachers' professional work as a key fulcrum of school change that can support social change. Specifically, viable models of shifting ELA teachers' practices towards integrating civic engagement remains an open question in the research around youth civic action and language and literacy. The exemplary studies and projects in the prior literature review demonstrate what is possible and what is challenging for exceptional teachers committed to the transformative power of student activism and action, including how academic discourse and literacy/language learning get reframed. Could such possibilities be created among veteran English teachers steeped in current, prevailing practices, beliefs, and concerns of ELA teaching? The forthcoming research questions at this chapter's end are framed around possibilities and tensions that teachers find, testing whether Civics English could be spread and scaled within the wider English Language Arts discipline. I focus this project's larger horizons of social and political change on the leveraging point of teachers in schools altering their practice.

In order to contribute to theory based on the practices of a single team of teachers, I turn to beliefs about teacher collaborative inquiry as democratic, participatory knowledge-building. This study is based on a yearlong design-based teacher inquiry project, methodologically inspired by Social Design Experiments (Gutiérrez & Jurow, 2017; Gutiérrez, 2016, Gutiérrez and Vossoughi, 2010). Social Design Experiments (SDE) combine Design Based Research (Fishman, Penuel, Allen, Cheng, & Sabelli, 2013; Cobb, Confrey, diSessa, Lehrer, Schauble, 2003), collaborative and democratizing partnerships between researchers and practitioners, and equity-oriented social transformation. I posit Social Design Experiments as a way of instrumentalizing the Vygotskian sociocultural, Deweyan pragmatist-democratic, and Freirean critical traditions. Like these traditions, SDE straddles theory and practice, participation and reflection, and learning and activity, all necessitated by the problem space of Civics English. Since this study asks not only the descriptive questions of what civics in English looks like, but also the interventionist questions of what potentialities and contradictions may be produced by concrete, contextualized practice, Social Design Experiments' aggregation of those various traditions offers a germane approach to putting Civics English into practice.

Stemming from the Learning Sciences, proponents of design-based research in education root their theory-building about learning in experimental practices conducted in designed settings

of contextualized activity, which allows researchers to explore learning outside of laboratories but still designed to stimulate and test learning in action. In a design-based project, the findings derive from rigorous study of both the implementation and the learning, which means accounting for the learning of teachers and designers as well as the student learning (Fishman, et al, 2013; Brown, 1992; Downing-Wilson, Lecusay, and Cole, 2011). As this study asks what teachers learn and how they change their professional practice in the process of integrating civics into English, design research's dual focus on the learning of teachers and of learners is critical. Because I seek to understand the relationships between phenomena (youth civic engagement and ELA), wishing to "rise to the concrete," our project's aim was to design an intervention to study and understand these relationships in execution.

This kind of locally-attentive design research still must articulate how it contributes to generalized knowledge. In contrast to the accepted and institutionally ratified *generalizability* of controlled experimental research, the ways that field-based methods like DBR can be guided by local and particular contexts yet apply more generally and contribute to broader theory-building are less well understood (Kelly, 2004). Into this gap, scholars from the sociocultural tradition contend that cultural-historical activity theories (CHAT) in the Vygotskian tradition provide Design Research with an "argumentative grammar," a framework for how valid theory creation can come from experiments that are committed to partnership with local practitioners and objectives, projects that are relevant to the specific cultural communities with whom they work, and analysis that recognizes contingency to particular histories, practices, and ecologies (Engeström & Sannino, 2014; Cole & Packer, 2014; Gutiérrez & Jurow, 2014). This research project attempts one particular instance of this argumentative grammar, utilizing theories of learning presented here with the unit of observation (the teacher PLC team), framework for change and learning (expansive professional development through collaborative inquiry), and qualitative evidence that pursues the *hows* and *whys* of a variety of practices of Civics English.

More specifically, SDE's priorities of equitable and democratic partnerships with participants requires a different orientation towards those usually considered research "subjects." In the Deweyan traditions of philosophical pragmatism and democratic education, taken up and modified by teacher action research and participatory action research (Kemmis 2006; Dewey, 1956), the findings of reflective practitioners in the laboratories of their workplaces provide one side of a critical dialogue. The other side is represented by the questions, theories, methods, and objectives of the research partners, who must juggle and struggle to prioritize and serve the interests of partners/practitioners, yet perform double-duty to obtain research results legitimate to their academic audiences. In pursuit of these dual objectives, I rely on conceptualizing the partner practitioners' learning process as a primary source for research findings, in a way that is theoretically articulated by frameworks such as CHAT and Engeström's (2001) expansive learning. In addition, I embodied these dual roles, in their tensions and opportunities, in my participant's role and daily work as both a researcher/co-designer and a coach/facilitator for the teacher team, described in subsequent sections of this chapter.

In these roles, I was guided by principles of SDE and participatory research traditions to attend to the goals, histories, and practices of my partners, and to learn them with an ethnographer's stance, with disciplines of observation, description, and thematization. However, at the same time (and sometimes contradictorily), I also undertook to engage them in dialogic planning and evaluation of Civics English experiments that remained authentic to their own endogenous conceptions of civics for youth, English teaching, and student learning. I took this as an inherent challenge of the study and methodology, one that ultimately yielded a collaborative

partnership that made evident what elements of the experiment would be sustained and sustainable by the teachers of the team, and where change would require systemic and circumstantial shifts. I make the necessary contradictions of this attempt at interventionist yet democratic co-design visible in the study's findings.

Perhaps under-articulated in DBR but at the core of the Vygotskyan, Deweyan, and Freirean traditions are their larger visions of social change and transformation from which research and action are launched (Gutiérrez, 2016). DBR captures the methods of learning research that simultaneously seek to build conceptual theory about learning and concrete practice of pedagogy through experimentation and collaboration. But Social Design Experiments and allied approaches (cf. Bang & Vossoughi, 2016) also inherit the objectives of sociocritical perspectives of schooling which orient this methodology not only towards individual change in learners but towards social change for equity and justice. And sociocultural theories of learning attempt to do this while apprehending the historically and culturally contingent nature of collectives and the learners within them. These concerns align with DBR's dual focus on local, situational relevance and generalizable theory applicable to a broader research/practice community. Design-Based Research is exciting for the prospect of not only studying what is, but what could be. Social Design Experiments as articulated by Gutiérrez and Vossoughi (2010) bring a necessary *critical* sensibility to Design-Based Research, extending the questions of "learning" and "development" beyond the cognitive realms of what and how individual children learn toward broader cultural learning and social change:

Social Design Experiments are... Cultural historical formations designed to promote transformative learning for adults and children... organized around expansive notions of learning and mediated praxis and providing new tools and practices for envisioning new pedagogical arrangements, especially for students from non-dominant communities. (Gutiérrez and Vossoughi, 2010, p.101)

### *Sociocultural Learning, Language, and Literacy*

In studying connections between youth civic action and English Language Arts, I approach learning, language, and literacy through sociocultural theories (Vygotsky, 1978; Bakhtin, 1981; Cole, 1998; Wertsch, 1991). These theories show the interrelated nature of teaching and learning and make clear the importance of accounting for the activity of both teachers and students in order to understand the activity inside classrooms, rather than isolating one or the other.

Prominent elaborations of the sociocultural tradition in education have described development in terms of increasing participation within communities, engaging in everyday activity or practices using the cultural tools and systems of those communities (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 2005; Rogoff, 2003; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 2001; Lave & Wenger, 1999, 1991). My analysis of activity in the school and classrooms accounts for the sociocultural interrelationship of participation in cultural activity, apprenticeship in tools/signs/mediation, and the development of thought, language, and action (Vygotsky, 1978; Cole & Engeström, 1993). "Interrelationship" is the operative word because sociocultural theory accounts for linguistic and social development among young people without assuming a unidirectional, adults-to-students socialization process. Instead, in the culture of a classroom, both adults and young people are involved in the reshaping of language in the course of collaborative activity, which is foundational to the design of this project's civic action-based

English teaching.

The theory behind this study's design project is that tools of language and literacy are most readily adopted when contextualized by meaningful use within communities, real or imagined, that use such language. While not dismissing the value of direct instruction in skills and knowledge or the cognitive and ideational processes involved in learning to speak, understand, read, and write, this theory aligns with the social and ideological turn in many theoretical approaches to language and literacy (Gee, 2012; Lantolf, 2000; Firth & Wagner, 1997; Collins, 1995; Street, 1984). If language and literacy acquisition are about learning to use the tools to participate—maybe to change—a community, how can we bring the real-world uses and users of academic language into the activities and practices of the classroom?

The question of language learning is one of how social actors are apprenticed, whether as participants within given cultural contexts or not (Freedman & Ball, 2004; Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Bakhtin, 1981; Voloshinov, 1986). From this perspective, language is always implicitly contextualized by civics in some sense, if civics is broadly defined as participation in common institutions and communities such as schools. Because academic language and literacy overlap with the discourse of certain professionalized or privileged communities (scientists, managers, civic leaders, etc.), how teachers present and how students adopt those discourses can be contingent upon whether they are or imagine themselves to be participants in those communities.

### *Sociopolitical Development*

As Stetsenko & Arievidt (2004) point out in their critique of dominant educational uses of Vygotskian thought, socioculturally-based understanding of language and thought cannot be divorced from sociopolitical practice and collective thought. Meanwhile, studies of youth sociopolitical development, particularly in contexts of violence, inequality, and/or marginalization, have underscored the mediating role of youth's schooling, language practices, political activity, and community involvement in their formation as thinkers and actors; who adolescents will become as future adult citizens depends on how they currently engage as participants in communities of civic practice, broadly defined (Flanagan, 2013; Kirshner & Ginwright, 2012; Daiute, 2010; Flanagan & Sherrod, 2010; Diemer, Hsieh, & Pan, 2009; McDevitt & Kiousis, 2006; Watts, Griffith, & Abdul-Adil, 1999).

A sociocritical approach (Gutiérrez 2008; 2002) allows for integrated analysis of civic development and language/literacy development with consideration of intersecting contexts, communities, and cultural practices. At the same time, this kind of ecological analysis of both actors and mediational context must attend to how inclusion, identity, hierarchies, and communities are negotiated by ELLs, their classmates, their teachers, and the class community as a whole.

### **Research Questions**

Based on this theoretical framework and the design project of the Professional Learning Community of English teachers I studied, this dissertation addresses the following three research questions:

*In the PLC meetings, what tensions surface between typical ELA practices and youth civics practices, and how do the teachers conceptualize and respond to those tensions?*

*What challenges and opportunities arise as the English teachers try to integrate civics with reading literature in their case study classrooms?*

*What do ELA teachers discover about how their Civics English activity expands their ELA teaching and shifts their students' ELA learning experience?*

In Chapter 2, I outline the methods through which I examined these questions of Civics English in practice.

## Chapter 2: Methods, Context, and Participants

This research project utilized a design-based approach (Gutiérrez & Jurow, 2017; Fishman, Penuel, Allen, Cheng, & Sabelli, 2013; Cobb, Confrey, diSessa, Lehrer, Schauble, 2003) to experiment with and learn about integrating civics into English Language Arts. As stated in Chapter 1's research questions, I was interested in learning (i) how English teachers could shift their ELA practice to plan and implement civic engagement in their classes, and what contradictions might arise from these shifts. I also wanted to observe (ii) how these civic objectives interacted with the core ELA activity of reading literature, and (iii) how a civic action event reconfigured the reading, writing, listening, and speaking activity that students experienced.

To answer my research questions, I pursued a co-design and inquiry process with a team of English teachers, as we planned, evaluated, and re-designed their ELA teaching towards civics integration. In this chapter, I describe the project's iterative co-design process, in which I spent a year partnering with these four middle school ELA teachers in a professional learning community (PLC) that agreed to try experiments in Civics English with me as a coach and researcher. In the course of our co-design project, I studied the PLC as its own distinct English teaching activity system, trying to integrate the cultural historical activity systems of youth civic action, identifying any contradictions that arose as these activity systems were brought together, and looking for the shifts in practice that resulted from their innovation and iterative design (Penuel, Fishman, Cheng, & Sabelli, 2011; diSessa & Cobb, 2009; Engeström, 2001).

Throughout the course of the project, I collected qualitative data that would allow me to use ethnographic and discourse analytic methods (Rymes, 2015; Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto, Shuart-Faris, 2004; Cazden & Beck, 2003) to examine the three research questions across three units of observation, and to apply appropriate analytical frameworks to their units of analysis. I summarize these in the Civics English study matrix (Table 2.1)

To study the teacher PLC and the teachers' expansive learning for all three research questions, I collected evidence from their collaboration and co-planning meetings, as well as their learning through teacher inquiry methods (e.g. Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Freedman, Simons, Kalnin, & Casareno, 1999). For the first research question particularly, I analyzed the teacher team as an activity system using 3<sup>rd</sup>-generation cultural historical activity theory and theoretical articulations of expansive learning at work (Engeström, 2001, Cole & Engeström, 2007) to examine how and why Civics English might find resonance and produce tensions in concrete practice.

To study the challenges and opportunities in implementing civics learning in literature-centered ELA classes, I compared the teacher co-planning data with four months of observations in two case study classrooms, including discourse study of artifacts and interactions from ten case study students, analyzing the classes as collective cultural communities of students, teachers, and classroom texts and artifacts. I analyzed the unfolding and intersecting trajectories of learning and activity of the classes over that period of four months through participant observation and study of social interaction in audio and video data to create data displays of emerging classroom phenomena (Erickson, 2012, 1985). These analyses allowed me to see how literature study resonated with civic learning and how it presented problems for Civics English practice.

Finally, I examined the culminating civic action of the case study classrooms, the *Bat-6 Town Hall*, looking at students' literacy and language activity in preparation for and during the

event. By studying students’ formation of position statements on civic issues related to allyship/bullying and youth athletics, I learned how the context of a civic action event infused their language activity with new resonances and learning opportunities.

In Table 2.1, I summarize the units of observation and data I collected, and the units of analysis and analytical frames I applied to them.

**Table 2.1 Matrix of the Civics English Study**

<b>Research Question</b>	<i>In the PLC meetings, what tensions surface between typical ELA practices and youth civics practices, and how do the teachers conceptualize and respond to those tensions?</i>	<i>What challenges and opportunities arise as the English teachers try to integrate civics with reading literature in their case study classrooms?</i>	<i>What do ELA teachers discover about how their Civics English activity expands their ELA teaching and shifts their students’ ELA learning experience?</i>
<b>Conjectures</b>	ELA learning will be powerful when contextualized by civics, but contradictions in conceptions of youth, discourses and genres, and objectives and time will limit extent of civic action.	Reading diverse, contemporary young adult literature will provide opportunities for students to connect empathically with civic themes and ideas, but reading challenges may exclude some students.	Civics English activity will make expectations of academic language in reading, writing, and speech more tangible and meaningful to students when personalized by civic action and audiences.
<b>Unit of Observation</b>	Teacher Professional Learning Community (PLC)	Case Study Classrooms	Town Hall Event in Context
<b>Evidence Collected</b>	PLC meetings and interviews with teachers throughout the school year  (12 meetings, approx. 40 hours total)  Artifacts of student work and classroom activities  4 interviews with each of four PLC teachers (16 interviews, ~45 min each)	2 case study classes observations, recordings March to June, 2016 (46 school days, 2 class periods, approx. 90 hrs)  Case study students (5 each class, 10 total) 3 interviews each; artifacts  Co-planning w/ 2 teachers notes and recordings (12 meetings, 7 hours)	Town Hall civic activity observations and recordings from June 1, 2016  Artifacts and observation/recordings of 10 students planning and preparation and 24 groups’ statements and writing for Town Hall event
<b>Unit of Analysis</b>	Joint Activity & Teacher’s Talk in Meetings	Classroom Discourse & Activity around Literature	Town Hall Event in Context
<b>Analytical Frame &amp; Method</b>	Discourse analysis of expansive learning-- Sought evidence of contradictions and critical tension emerging as cultural-historical activity of ELA teaching joined with activity systems of youth civic action. Examined teacher’s concepts of their teaching and expansive learning seen from shifts in practice.	Data displays of interactional classroom learning over 4-month time period of observation, analyzing trajectories of: a) Teacher co-planning b) Students experience of literary narrative c) Student deliberation and thought about civic issues  to see patterns in classroom cultural activity w/ literature	Discourse analysis of written language, discussion and planning, and interaction and activity for the Town Hall, examining how student engagement and teaching practice shifted as a result of new context of civic action text, occasion, audiences, and event in performance.
<b>Findings Explored in</b>	Chapter 3: English Language Arts in Public	Chapter 4: Literature in Classroom Cultures of Civic Deliberation	Chapter 5: The Town Hall and Civics English in Action

## Social Design-based Iterations of Civics English Experimentation

Before returning to these data collection and analyses procedures, I first describe the co-design process and the context and participants of the study.

In Chapter 1's theoretical framework, I rooted this study in design-based research (Fishman, et al, 2013; Cobb, et al, 2003) and the multiple streams of praxis flowing into Social Design Experiments (Gutiérrez & Jurow, 2016), arguing that these approaches supported the experimentation and qualitative study of Civics English. I utilized social design approaches because of their coherence and fit with this study's questions about Civics English: experimenting collaboratively with new teaching arrangements to investigate learning within the contexts of the living laboratories of actual classrooms; understanding and developing the mediational tools and practices of English Language Arts that are part of new arrangements; and aiming beyond the objectives of transmitting school's knowledge and culture, to the creation of practices and artifacts with potential for larger social change. These techniques further allowed me to explore the coming together of two different disciplinary frameworks with their own activity systems, providing a template for a way to understand what is involved for teachers and students as they engage in interdisciplinary work.

In the practice of initiating such a co-designed project, however, an inherent challenge is putting these different commitments into practice with participants and partners who may not share the same starting points or expectations. For example, the teachers with whom I collaborated had different histories and practices of teaching English, different notions of what youth civic engagement might look like, and different expectations about how working in a co-design with a researcher and coach might play out. These contradictions led me as a researcher to honor the diversity of the teachers, students, and classrooms that this project hopes to embrace, as well as to account for the work of common practice-building and knowledge-making that constituted the co-designed, collaborative intervention. We embarked on a project together, and though we might have approached it somewhat differently and experienced it somewhat differently, the task of this research is to identify what became co-constructed, shared, jointly produced knowledge and understanding in the work. Throughout the findings and in the conclusion, I make note of these differences.

The bulk of my findings, however, are based on a conception of the common ground these diverse teachers found in our collaborative project. I refer to *polyphonic resonances* throughout this study as a way of describing what is shared and meaningful to a collective unit, a cultural system, while always marking the contingent nature of those shared meanings. I use *polyphonic* from Mikhail Bakhtin's theorizations of the multiple and incommensurate voices and subjectivities in Dostoevsky's novels, in opposition to the single-voiced, *monological* view of the world (Bakhtin & Emerson, 1993). The four teachers who conducted this Social Design Experiment all worked from unique distillations of various cultural-historical communities, discourses, and practices, and therefore implemented and evaluated Civics English uniquely in their classes. Yet a *polyphonic* conception of different subjectivities does not preclude the various regularities and coherences that make up socially constructed, shared experience and enable communication. In fact, the very notions of learning and democracy depend on the possibility of some forms of intersubjectivity or mutual constitution—which I term *resonances*, to continue to sound-and-speech metaphors Bakhtin employs.

I extend the same conception of difference and co-construction to Civics English itself, how the variegated and complex objective that is *English Language Arts* pursued by our team of



teachers encounters the variegated and complex objective that is *Civics*. As I made clear to my participants/partners from the outset, we undertook this project with the assumption that certain aspects of English practice will run at cross purposes and conflict with youth civics, while in other respects, the harmonics will line up in ways we might or might not anticipate. These polyphonic resonances were what I sought to understand and document in this study.

### *The Teacher Co-Design Process*

Before detailing the setting, participants, and data collection methods, I summarize here what the open-ended design process entailed within the year of the study, as the teacher PLC and I iterated designs of ELA teaching integrating civics in phases. This detail will be useful for understanding how through my data collection and analysis, I sought to understand the polyphonic resonances of Civics English among the teachers' existing past practice and how iterative experimentation evolved in their classes. I summarize the co-design process here and elaborate on the learning and shifts in practice that resulted from these phases throughout the dissertation's findings. My goal was not to enforce fidelity to a particular curriculum or intervention, but to support and chronicle varied and situated implementations of the same core idea, the integration of civic participation into English classes. Though some aspects of these phases were planned from the outset of the study, including the data collection steps, the boundary-lines and specific directions of these phases of iteration could not be anticipated, as they emerged from the contradictions and affordances that we found as innovated and implemented Civics English.

### *First Phase: Inquiry into Social and Civic Aspects of English Pedagogy*

The first phase of the design study involved developing a partnership with the teacher professional learning community. During this first phase, which lasted throughout the first semester of the school year, I supported the teachers in my role as a district coach tasked with supporting English teacher's inquiries about Common Core teaching, including the teachers' experiments with teaching novel-based units and blending together the three Common Core writing types in more authentic, task-oriented writing. Along with these ELA objectives, we added introductions to civic issues into the English curriculum. I also conducted initial interviews with teachers to understand their professional backgrounds, classroom communities, ELA approaches, and conceptions of youth civic engagement.

From this first phase, I gained a picture of how the teachers thought about teaching English, how those ideas related to their experiences and ideas about civics, and how they imagined civic engagement playing out in their English classes. We also began collaborative planning as a team, and we identified what we would rely on instructionally and where we would take risks to try new things, especially in how lessons about vocabulary, grammar, literature, writing, and classroom discourse could be relevant to civic contexts. The major developments of this phase of the project consisted of recognizing how real-world texts blended the Common Core writing types (narrative, explanatory, and argumentative) and teaching them as blended, fostering discussions about the civic issues embedded in the literary fiction the classes read, building class community around Socratic discussion of civic issues, and recognizing multiple aspects of academic language, from vocabulary to syntactic structures, as pieces of social language and discourse.

### *Second Phase: Initial Experimentation and Redesign*

In the second phase of the design study, taking place in the start of the second semester of the school year, the PLC teachers started explicitly trying to teach civics- or justice-based units in their ELA classes. In this phase, the teachers agreed to develop their own separate units, but their teaching and inquiries were bound together by some common objectives resulting from the polyphonic resonances in their initial observations about Civics English. The teachers agreed to tie civic action to their reading of novels, finding themes in literature that spoke to civic issues germane to the lives of youth, such as the juvenile justice system and inclusion or bullying of marginalized or minoritized groups in the community or in schools. The teachers also agreed to try writing assignments that blended the three writing types and could be addressed to real-life audiences for civic purposes, whether as pieces of writing, multimodal texts, or forms of spoken engagement.

As teachers planned and implemented these units, I conducted interviews with the teachers and recorded collaboration and coaching sessions to document their curriculum development and reflections. Additionally, in this phase, I began observing the two focal classrooms and interviewing ten focal students to learn about their backgrounds. I explain more about my selection and data collection processes in sections below.

### *Third Phase: Justice Week Plans and Culmination*

During the third phase, spanning from March to June, the teachers agreed on a co-planned Justice Week activity, where two of the teachers would develop their own curricular units and projects (Mr. Ocampo's class's "This I Believe" essays and Ms. Denver's "Civic Storybooks" projects), and the two teachers in the case study classrooms would collaboratively plan a unit and project around the novel *Bat-6* by Virginia Euwer Wolff (2000), all culminating during the same week and engaging each other's classes and the whole campus in social justice issues. In addition to continuing to study the teacher team, I spent the four months during this phase recording video and audio of each day of the two case study classes, ascertaining the cultures of the classrooms and the kinds of civic thinking and language learning occurring in them.

The major developments of this phase involved recognizing many of the contradictions and challenges of integrating civics into ELA practices, which I discuss in the findings chapters of this dissertation. These arose as the teachers prepared for their respective projects, including uncertainties in planning for the audiences, writing and speaking genres, and self-identifications in their Civics English projects, as well as challenges in moving beyond their habitual ELA activities of reading and writing for the classroom into concrete civic action.

Iterations of co-designed shifts for the PLC's ELA practice emerged from these periods of contradiction. During this phase, I recorded the various ways all four teachers' classes participated civically through class activities, especially in the activities of the culminating "Justice Week," which took place in late May/early June of 2016. These activities will be described more fully in the findings chapters, but in summary, students participated in a civic issues Town Hall for the two focal classrooms, a series of advocacy statements published online with Mr. Ocampo's students, and a children's book-making project to promote awareness of various social issues with Ms. Denver's students. The PLC's Justice Week activities represented a measure of fulfillment of their Civics English objectives and learning, though it also embedded

the various constraints and challenges they found in their attempts at integration.

#### *Fourth Phase: Reflection and Re-Design*

The project's last phase involved examining student learning, summarizing what was gained and lost in the project, and planning for future re-design of the instructional interventions. This phase included assessment and evaluation of the results of Justice Week projects, reflection as a team on their experimentation and the shifts in practice that represented their learning for the year, and planning for future iterations of the PLC's work together and implementation of Civics English. The teachers presented these reflections in a Staff Meeting where PLCs explained their teacher inquiry processes for the year. From there, Ms. Denver carried over her learning into a summer school teaching experience centered on Civics English, and all four teachers planned to continue re-designing their English curricula and co-planning with Social Science teachers to continue experimenting with civic action.

### **Settings, Participants, and Histories**

#### *School Site and Community*

In the year of this study, Molina Middle School was one of East Bay Unified School District's five middle schools, serving roughly 600 students in the 7th and 8th grades. I selected Molina Middle because of its cultural diversity, linguistic diversity, and high-functioning teacher collaboration. Besides its roughly 20% English Language Learner (ELL) population, Molina Middle had an additional 31% of students who were reclassified ELLs (previously reached English proficiency)—more than half of its students had been ELLs at some point in their US schooling. With 55% of students registered for free/reduced lunch, Molina was also a Title I school. The students were 52% Hispanic/Latino, 13% African American, 12% Filipino, 10% Asian, 6% White, and 5% Pacific Islander, close to the demographics of the district as a whole. Molina had improved its Academic Performance Index scores continually for the past three years, credited by many in the staff to a consistent implementation of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).

In many ways, East Bay Unified's population was representative of California's schools and communities. Demographically, of the district's roughly 20,000 students, 57% of them identified as Latino, 26% African American, 8% White, 8% Asian, 7% Filipino, 4% Pacific Islander, and 1% Native American. This stood in notable contrast with the general population of the city, which was only 40.7% Latino and 11.9% African American, while 34.2% of the city was White. These statistics reflected the city's historical trends of an aging White segment and younger African American, Latino, and Pacific Islander generations, and a divestment of the White families that remained from EBUSD's public schools. East Bay City could be described as an "inner ring suburb," a city mixed with longstanding residents of decades and more recent influxes from immigration and gentrification of neighboring Oakland and nearby San Francisco. One easily ascertains the general demographic landscape when walking into the city's schools: among the younger generations, a mixture of recent Latino/a immigrant and longtime Hispanic-American families; established and upwardly-mobile, as well as working class, African Americans; and a growing Asian and Pacific Islander population, including Indians, Filipinos, Tongans, Samoans, Afghans, and others.

On online parent forums and real estate websites, commenters bemoaned EBUSD's low Academic Performance Index scores (most schools in the 1-3 range) and shared horror stories of low expectation and unsafe environments. Yet the district maintained graduation rates (66%) and four-year university eligibility rates (26%) close to state averages (65%, 25% respectively). On one hand, those figures may have obscured higher push-out/drop-out numbers and transient student figures that are difficult to keep track of. On the other, those state averages themselves masked the deeply divided outcome gaps between wealthy and poor districts in California. In many ways, EBUSD had the markings of many urban California districts. 69% of students in the district qualified for Free or Reduced-Cost Lunch. 32% of EBUSD students were designated English Learners and 19% were Reclassified Fluent-English-Proficient, meaning that at one point they were designated as English Learners.

### *Teacher Team and Case Study Classroom Participants and Selection*

Molina Middle School worked well as a research site for a design study because the administration and faculty were seven years deep into implementing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), a process and focus that the entire district had also adopted as its professional development approach. The study's participants included a PLC of middle school English and Social Studies teachers who met bi-weekly to collaborate on team inquiry questions, framing questions stemming from their practice, conducting inquiry with instructional approaches, and gathering and analyzing student data to draw conclusions. Teachers in Molina's PLCs routinely choose diverse focus students as part of their analyses. This particular group of teachers described below, calling themselves "The Justice League PLC," volunteered to include civic action projects as a framework for their language and literacy lessons. I selected this group of teachers because of their experience collaborating and conducting inquiry together. I also chose this particular team because the teachers were willing to experiment with civic engagement. They were like many ELA teachers, interested in justice-oriented civics but not necessarily self-identified practitioners of critical pedagogy or social justice education.

The Justice League PLC consisted of two Filipino-American male teachers (14 and 22 years of teaching experience) and two white female teachers (25 and 5 years of experience), all of whom taught English at 7th or 8th grade, each with at least one other class in their schedules (History, Leadership, Computers, or Puente, a program with Latino/a-centered English curriculum and college-going acceleration). All four teachers had received training and support in Common Core English pedagogy, but had a span of civic education backgrounds and perspectives. One of the Filipino-American male teachers, Emmanuel Bautista, also taught Social Studies and addressed civics standards, and he volunteered his class as one of the case study classrooms. The other case study classroom teacher was Antonia Ferro, who also taught Computers and considered digital literacy and gaming communities as new forms of social participation. Besides the two case study classroom teachers, the other Filipino-American male teacher, Donaldo Ocampo, taught English and Social Studies and introduced the Puente program to Molina with a cohort of 7th graders that year. And the other White female teacher, Caroline Denver, taught English and Social Studies, as well as the Leadership class.

Two English classes, one taught by Ferro and the other by Bautista, served as the case study classrooms, which I determined after the first phases of the study allowed me to get to know the teachers and their ways of working. These two teachers' classes were selected as case

studies for three reasons. First, the teachers shared the same preparation period and collaboratively co-planned together each day, making their thinking and planning visible for my observation and involvement as a coach/co-designer and researcher. Second, for similar reasons that the team itself was chosen, Ferro and Bautista were open to civic engagement but relatively undecided about what that might involve. Their conceptions of civics and civic action represented the liberal-leaning but generally centrist perspectives and habits of many in their Bay Area surroundings. Third, their classes being jointly planned in nearly day-by-day lockstep allowed for comparison and contrast of classroom phenomena and cultures, with some opportunity to distinguish whether aspects of their class communities came from the teacher's idiosyncratic style or from the teaching practices themselves.

These classes' participant students were seventh graders in an English-Language Arts 7 class at Molina Middle School who volunteered as participants in the research. The classes had demographic compositions representative of the school in terms of race/ethnicity, gender, academic achievement, and proportion of Special Education and English Language Learners (see above data). In addition, five students from each case study class (ten total) who represented a range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds volunteered to be studied more closely by sharing their written work, agreeing to be audio and video recorded during data collection, and being interviewed three times throughout the course of the study.

### *Introductions to the Participating PLC Teachers*

*Emmanuel Bautista.* Mr. Bautista taught one of the case study classrooms, which was a "Core" class where the students were with Mr. Bautista for two periods, English Language Arts and History (7th grade is World Civilizations). With 14 years of teaching experience, all at Molina Middle, he had established his classroom practices and management style in a flavor much like a sports coach, with orderliness- and responsibility-oriented values. But Bautista continued to experiment and adjust his teaching style. Bautista had been actively involved in the district-wide middle school English teachers curriculum and assessment designing team for several years, and in the year of the study, committed himself and his PLC to experimenting with a Common Core-based instructional plan with two goals: first, to swing the pendulum back to centering ELA instruction on longer reading (such as novels) to counterbalance the emphasis on informational and argumentative texts that had drastically altered the curriculum in the last three years, and second, to introduce the writing types of the Common Core (narrative, informative/explanatory, and argument) as the blended modes that the CCSS marked them as rather than as discrete genres that much CCSS-based teaching and assessments had constructed them to be. This demonstrated Bautista's continual experimentation and tinkering with instruction.

Despite how established Bautista had become in his classroom practice, he also sought collaboration as a means of continual growth. He and Antonia Ferro, the teacher of the other focal classroom described next, requested common preparation periods so that they could plan together, and met daily to assess, create plans and tools, and make instructional decisions. Within the Justice League PLC, he was often the most insistent advocate for the Common Core-aligned instructional practices he saw as important, primarily gained from his involvement in the district-wide English team.

Bautista's family immigrated to the US when he was a young child, but his father had worked in East Bay Unified for thirty years before retirement and Bautista wound up at Molina

right after college, quickly developing roots as a teacher, assistant basketball coach, and ELA and History teacher. He described himself as politically and civically informed, participating as a voter and through discourse on social media, but not as an especially “political” or ideologically partisan. What Bautista did staunchly argue for, exemplified by his efforts to reintroduce novels into the ELA curriculum, was the compelling dramatic impact of a good story. If his persona as a teacher was like a coach, his students like competing athletes, then the sport they played was composing and presenting a forceful narrative, even if dressed in the garb of information or argumentation. This drive towards narrative characterized much of Bautista’s approach to English Language Arts, which conceived language as subservient to the goal of clarity and creativity in storytelling.

*Antonia Ferro.* Ms. Ferro collaborated with Mr. Bautista daily, though she had fewer years of teaching under her belt. In both their collaboration and the PLC, this meant she at times deferred out of respect to her colleagues, but in her classroom, she had developed an assertive and performative personality, often using humor, displayed good-naturedness, and playful histrionics to foster a classroom community that could sometimes be heard laughing collectively at jokes from teacher and students, though not routinely out of control. Besides a penchant for directing and starring on the classroom stage, Ferro described herself as a “geek” in the contemporary popular usage: she also taught Molina’s Computers class, served as the Teacher Technology consultant, and proudly traded on her knowledge of video games and superheroes.

A child of Portuguese immigrants, Ferro had previously taught intervention classes for English Language Learners with highly scaffolded language instruction practices. Ferro was a fast adopter of a set of academic vocabulary teaching practices that I had introduced in my role as a coach two years prior involving cooperative and playful observation of Greek and Latin roots to develop etymological awareness. Like Bautista, she was open to experimentation in her classroom practices, but recognized the need for these practices to be worked out and assessed in the cauldron of collaboration.

Also like Bautista, Ferro considered herself civically informed but not especially politically active. Though unlikely to take strongly partisan stances in collegial conversation nor in front of her class, Ferro nonetheless recognized the value of classroom activities that challenged students to formulate arguments and advocate for positions with evidence, where her own neutrality or playing devil’s advocate was the role of the teacher. However, her way of thinking about civics at school often ran along the lines of starting and supporting student groups that built bonds across groups or advocated for causes, efforts that would contribute to campus civility and understanding.

*Caroline Denver.* Though she had been a close colleague of the others for many years, Ms. Denver had not been part of this PLC in the years leading to the study and requested to join them despite teaching a different grade level (8th grade) because of the quality and extent of these teachers’ collaboration. The first to graduate college in her family, a scholar-athlete in college and now a mother of three in her 19th year in the district, Denver leveraged her outspoken, tough-yet-nurturing teacher persona to maintain an energetic and engaging classroom and a vocal presence as advocate for realism and solutions among the staff. She had taught English, History, Leadership, and a specially formed class for Black and Latino male students called “LEAD Academy,” which administrators had invited her to teach as a White woman because of her pedagogical and cultural competence with all students, including “at risk” kids.

This she accomplished by dint of her candor, ability to build rapport with different kinds of students, optimism and concern, and direct and transparent expressiveness. Within the PLC, Denver was also often the first to affirm a good idea, but also the first to challenge a vague notion or irrelevant theorizing, grounding her thoughts and words in concrete classroom activity (which she managed with distinctive confidence and clarity) and the actual students she maintained a close pulse on.

Ms. Denver displayed comfort and confidence integrating civic goals in her curriculum because they were consonant with what she always believed and did. But this enthusiasm and readiness also extended to her openness to be surprised, challenged, and even disrupted by the civic attitudes and ideas of her students, which she listened to with attention and perspicacity. She saw the civic task of teaching as preparing students with knowledge and skills for critical thinking, democratic deliberation, and public expression and action about civic matters.

*Donaldo Ocampo.* Mr. Ocampo's career mirrored Denver's in longevity but, although they shared the most history and common ground among the four PLC members, he was also often a mirror contrast in style and background to Ms. Denver. Ocampo taught the same classes, expressed the same ideals, and adopted many of the same pedagogical frameworks as Denver. But Ms. Denver's classroom style was often more informal and negotiated, and on her walls, one was more likely to find posters with varied handwriting showing the verbal thought processes of groups of interacting critical thinkers. On the other hand, on Mr. Ocampo's walls one was more likely to find polished productions adorned with photographs and proofread text. Both teachers banked on strong stage presences and interpersonal rapport to cultivate welcoming and productive class environments and communities. But whereas Denver tended to bridge toward literacy with oral language (e.g. discussion, debates, oral performances like "Living Museums"), Ocampo tended to build towards public performance through careful, individual cultivation of ideas and language (e.g. web-based wikis for literary discussion, scripted presentations delivered with PowerPoint). Denver often keenly orchestrated contrasting voices and relationship dynamics in teachable moments, while Ocampo tended to utilize and curate technological tools, visual arts and aesthetics, and prepared oral performance. In meetings, Denver kept the group on task with pointed questions, while Ocampo documented the group's development of ideas and agreements with intricately drawn diagrams.

Ocampo was ten years old when he moved to the US from the Philippines, and he remembers well a couple teachers who were either stern but understanding or soft-spoken but demanding, both of whom helped him overcome the shell of fear to begin speaking up and participating in English as a student. For many years, Ocampo had taught English and History classes "sheltered" for English Learners, familiar as he was with the experience of accessing academic language and discourse by relying on contextual clues and individual preparation rather than linguistic spontaneity or the flow of conversation.

Mr. Ocampo was unsure of what it looked like or what it meant to include civic development in his teaching. Yet he could articulate clear principles and beliefs about what students should learn about responsibility, leadership, knowledge of society and institutions, and also the ways he had learned to impart those on his students.

### *My Researcher-Coach History and Roles*

I had worked with this group of teachers for four years preceding the study as an East

Bay Unified English Language Arts Coach. As colleagues, they also knew me as a doctoral student conducting this research project, but at Molina Middle School, my professional role involved supporting and facilitating teacher collaboration on East Bay's implementation of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and English Language Development. This entailed individual coaching, facilitating PLC and other collaborative inquiry groups, leading teacher teams to produce curriculum guides and assessments, and conducting trainings on academic language and literacy instruction.

My dual role as researcher and participant carried with it attendant ambiguities and risks, but the social design nature of the research re-positioned me so that many of those potential difficulties turned out to be advantages for the subjects and the project. As a coach working with these teachers for over four years, I had established professional relationships with them whereby teachers knew that we coaches played no role in evaluating them, with agreements spelled out in certificated staff contracts, and that the coach's role was not to direct but facilitate teachers' own development of thinking and evidence-based practice. That is why the school and district had committed to PLCs where teachers framed their own inquiries. Likewise, as a design research partner, my epistemological stance was to transparently articulate my own research questions, methodology, and analysis, but also to center the teacher's inquiry processes and our iterative re-design according to teachers' practical methodologies as my data.

### Units of Observation and Data Collection

This study's research questions each call for data collection of three distinguishable units of observation, though the data collected for them overlapped: I studied a teacher team, two classes of students, and a Civics English event (see excerpt of Table 2.1 below).

Table 2.2: Units of Observation and Evidence Collected

<b>Research Question</b>	<i>In the PLC meetings, what tensions surface between typical ELA practices and youth civics practices, and how do the teachers conceptualize and respond to those tensions?</i>	<i>What challenges and opportunities arise as the English teachers try to integrate civics with reading literature in their case study classrooms?</i>	<i>What do ELA teachers discover about how their Civics English activity expands their ELA teaching and shifts their students' ELA learning experience?</i>
<b>Unit of Observation</b>	Teacher Professional Learning Community (PLC)	Case Study Classrooms	Town Hall Event in Context
<b>Evidence Collected</b>	PLC meetings and interviews with teachers throughout the school year  (12 meetings, approx. 40 hours total)  Artifacts of student work and classroom activities  4 interviews with each of four PLC teachers (16 interviews, ~45 min each)	2 case study classes observations, recordings March to June, 2016 (46 school days, 2 class periods, approx. 90 hrs)  Case study students (5 each class, 10 total) 3 interviews each; artifacts  Co-planning w/ 2 teachers notes and recordings (12 meetings, 7 hours)	Town Hall civic activity observations and recordings from June 1, 2016  Artifacts and observation/recordings of 10 students planning and preparation and 24 groups' statements and writing for Town Hall event

For my first question, concerned with the kinds of tensions surfaced in the PLC as they



attempted to integrate civics, I studied the progression of the Justice League PLC over the course of the school year, from September to June of 2016. For the second research question, I combined that teacher-centered data with the case study classroom data, including the two case study teachers' co-planning meetings, the data from classroom observations and recordings, and the ten students I studied. My unit of observation for the second question was the cultural communities of these two case study classrooms themselves. The third research question, which asks about what teachers discover in the course of a Civics English activity, centers on a specific event, the Town Hall, the materials and discourse used within it, and the preparation leading up to it. As such, to study this event, I combine various parts of the teacher data, the case study classroom data, and the ten students, in addition to recordings and observations of the Town Hall event itself.

The overlapping data collection came from two main sources of evidence in this study's original conception: (1) the design inquiry of the PLC teachers in their PLC meetings and collaboration, and (2) the two case study classrooms, including four months of their daily class sessions, planning meetings of the two teachers, and interviews and observations of five students from each class. The first data set, the PLC teacher inquiry, focuses the investigation on teacher learning with Civics English, as it captures teachers' thinking, plans, decisions to shift practice, and reflections on their experimentation. Then, the classroom and case study data served to confirm, sometimes contradict, and always add complexity to the teacher inquiry data in this dissertation's findings. The second category also led to collecting data from the case study classes in preparation for the Town Hall, as well as from the Town Hall event itself. For each category, over the period of the study, I attempted to gather rich ethnographic data on the cultural, linguistic, and civic development of each unit of observation, as well as how the different data sources interconnected with each other.

### *Data Collection on the Design Inquiry of the PLC Teachers*

The first part of this study focused on the research question, *In the PLC meetings, what tensions surface between typical ELA practices and youth civics practices, and how do the teachers conceptualize and respond to those tensions?* The data I collected for this research question included four sources to capture the challenges and possibilities as the teachers conducted their PLC inquiry: (1) PLC Meetings (recordings, transcription, field notes), (2) Teacher Interviews, (3) Artifacts and Student Work from the PLC Inquiry, and (4) Reports of Findings from the PLC Design Inquiry.

(1) *PLC meetings.* The school scheduled twice-a-month teacher PLC Meetings for the duration of the school year, from which I collected field notes, audio recordings of the teachers' talk, written summaries of each meeting, and transcriptions of conversations where teachers discussed challenges or possibilities they encountered in designing, teaching, and assessing English or civics. I audio recorded all of the Justice League PLC meetings and kept field notes, capturing topics, agendas, and observations of participants. After meetings, I produced written summaries from the audio recordings and field notes. Then, I selected, outlined, and transcribed conversations between teachers when making curricular decisions, designing English or civics curricula, discussing implementation or modifications to the curricula, or assessing their curricula and students' learning, as well as discussing civic issues, student participation, language and academic content, or students as a group or as individuals. In total, the 12 PLC meetings throughout the year totaled approximately 40 hours of data.

(2) *Teacher interviews.* I interviewed each of the four PLC teachers for roughly 45 minutes apiece four times at various points in the data collection period, asking them about their backgrounds and teaching approaches, discussing their design implementation and what they learned from the PLC's inquiry, and soliciting reflections and examples about what possibilities and challenges they encountered in teaching English and civics. The interviews were semi-structured according to a set of topics and were recorded and transcribed. The first interview tried to ascertain each teacher's prior approaches and practices pertaining to English instruction, civic learning in the classroom, and teaching diverse youth. Interviews in-between and after the PLC's phases of co-design asked what reflections teachers had about their instruction during the civic action projects, what challenges and possibilities of the design they could describe at the moment with anecdotes or classroom data, and what they saw from their students' language and civic participation as a result of their teaching practices. Interviews at the end of the school year or beginning of the following year asked how teachers would summarize their individual and collective learning from the inquiry, what continuing influence the inquiry had since, and how they would project any future or long-term difference resulting from the inquiry. These interviews attempted to capture how teachers' thinking and practices developed and changed over the course of the design implementation.

(3) *Meeting artifacts and student work.* PLC meetings at the school often revolved around samples of teaching materials either created by the teachers or drawn from other resources, student work and data to be analyzed, and teaching plans generated in the course of the meeting. Removing identifying information for the students, I also collected these artifacts of the teachers' instructional design process and learning.

(4) *Report of inquiry process.* Based on a final reflective discussion in the last PLC meeting, the PLC team members ultimately presented a brief Report of Inquiry Process to their colleagues that I created with them, which summarized the inquiry questions, instructional interventions, and their assessment and learning from the project.

### *Case Study Classrooms and Students' Data Collection*

Although I also drew on the aforementioned teacher evidence sources when applicable to the second question, the case study classroom evidence sources were key to this research question: *What challenges and opportunities arise as the English teachers try to integrate civics with reading literature in their case study classrooms?* Classroom data collection included (1) video and audio recordings of the teacher and student research participants in the two classes, (2) field notes and observation notes of whole class activities and events, (3) student work artifacts, and (4) notes and recordings from co-planning sessions with the two case study classroom teachers. It also included three individual interviews of about 30-40 minutes with each of the ten case study students, five from each class, and observation notes about their class activity, and collection of their classwork and homework.

(1) *Video and audio recordings of the classroom.* For the four months of the case study research, I used two video recorders and three audio recorders to capture the video and audio of the fourteen students in Mr. Bautista's class and the twenty-five students in Ms. Ferro's class from whom I received family consent and student assent to collect recorded data. In each class, there were students who I did not receive consent and assent to record, half of Mr. Bautista's class and a third of Ms. Ferro's class, who were not recorded. These recordings captured the teacher's instruction and the subject students' group work and whole class interactions.

(2) *Field notes and observation notes.* As I was present daily in the two classes, I took field notes and observation notes of the classes. Field notes were ethnographic-style jottings of the class activities, events, rituals, and interactions that were later composed into organized anecdotes or summaries of the whole class. Observation notes were specific pieces of dialogue or descriptions of actions for case study students and subject students that I noticed or that seemed significant in relation to the research questions during the class session.

(3) *Student work artifacts.* For students for whom I received family consent and student assent, I collected photographs and physical examples when possible of their complete classwork and work in progress, including drafts of their writing, notes from their reading, academic vocabulary notes and quizzes, pieces prepared for discussion or activities, and handouts and assignments that students completed for the class. Whenever possible, I collected these for all significant class assignments for all of the student subjects.

(4) *Teacher co-planning sessions.* Because Mr. Bautista and Ms. Ferro met almost every morning during their shared preparation periods to assess and plan for the day and the weeks ahead, I occasionally attended these planning sessions as both an observer and as a coach. I recorded audio and written notes from twelve of these meetings, gathering evidence of the thinking and planning process behind the case study classrooms' instruction.

(5) *Case study student interviews.* I conducted three interviews with each of the ten case study students, one at the start of their curricular units, one midway through the data collection period, and one at the end of the year. The procedure of these interviews was to ask students to describe and narrate their own sense of belonging and participation in school and community, their comfort and interest in language and literacy, and any changes along the course of the instruction in those two arenas. I also used class content, events, and artifacts to elicit students' narratives of their own experiences and learning.

(6) *Student work and artifacts.* While I collected student work from all of the research subjects for most major assignments, I additionally gathered in-progress photographs of the case study students' work in the process of drafting, as well as reading notes and work samples, ensuring that whatever was produced or turned in by these students in class wound up in the data collection for the student.

For the third research question, *What do ELA teachers discover about how their Civics English activity expands their ELA teaching and shifts their students' ELA learning experience?* I relied on both previously described data collection sets, but organized according to their relevance to the Town Hall event that Mr. Bautista and Ms. Ferro's classes engaged in.

## **Data Analysis Frameworks**

With this data collected, my process of reducing, analyzing, and deriving findings from this data was guided by this study's theoretical frameworks applied to my research questions. Therefore, I organized and analyzed sets of data corresponding to each research question.

Table 2.3: Data Analysis

<b>Research Question</b>	<i>In the PLC meetings, what tensions surface between typical ELA practices and youth civics practices, and how do the teachers conceptualize and respond to those tensions?</i>	<i>What challenges and opportunities arise as the English teachers try to integrate civics with reading literature in their case study classrooms?</i>	<i>What do ELA teachers discover about how their Civics English activity expands their ELA teaching and shifts their students' ELA learning experience?</i>
<b>Unit of Observation</b>	Teacher Professional Learning Community (PLC)	Case Study Classrooms	Town Hall Event in Context
<b>Evidence Collected</b>	PLC meetings and interviews with teachers throughout the school year  (12 meetings, approx. 40 hours total)  Artifacts of student work and classroom activities	2 case study classes observations, recordings March to June, 2016 (46 school days, 2 class periods, approx. 90 hrs)  Case study students (5 each class, 10 total) 3 interviews each; artifacts  Co-planning w/ 2 teachers notes and recordings (12 meetings, 7 hours)	Town Hall civic activity observations and recordings from June 1, 2016  Artifacts and observation/recordings of 10 students planning and preparation and 24 groups' statements and writing for Town Hall event
<b>Unit of Analysis</b>	Joint Activity & Teacher's Talk in Meetings	Classroom Discourse & Activity around Literature	Town Hall Event in Context
<b>Analytical Frame &amp; Method</b>	Discourse analysis of expansive learning-- Sought evidence of contradictions and critical tension emerging as cultural-historical activity of ELA teaching joined with activity systems of youth civic action. Examined teacher's concepts of their teaching and expansive learning seen from shifts in practice.	Data displays of interactional classroom learning over 4-month time period of observation, analyzing trajectories of: d) Teacher co-planning e) Students experience of literary narrative f) Student deliberation and thought about civic issues  to see patterns in classroom cultural activity w/ literature	Discourse analysis of written language, discussion and planning, and interaction and activity for the Town Hall, examining how student engagement and teaching practice shifted as a result of new context of civic action text, occasion, audiences, and event in performance.

For the first research question, I applied ethnographic and discourse analytic methods to studying the teacher PLC as a cultural historical activity system, identifying patterned talk about their conceptions of teaching and learning activity, noting discussions and deliberations about challenges or tensions that arose in their implementation, and tracing decisions made by team members about shifts in their ELA practices. Following Engeström (2001), in analyzing and coding this teacher data, I sought indications of polyphonic resonances in this thinking, reflecting, and planning discourse of how they envisioned and executed civics and literacy/language activities in their ELA classrooms, how they perceived the results of their experiments, what difficulties arose and what contradictions those represented, and what plans and adjustments they made prospectively or retrospectively in their practice. These analyses steps led to a series of analytic memos that together produced an account of the teachers' expansive learning through the project's several phases, which came from the various critical tensions in integrating civics and ELA that teachers discovered. These tensions, shifts, and

conceptions of ELA practice became my findings in response to the first research question, *In the PLC meetings, what tensions surface between typical ELA practices and youth civics practices, and how do the teachers conceptualize and respond to those tensions?* I detail these in Chapter 3, with additional teaching learning about literature elaborated in Chapter 4.

To understand the use of literature in Civics English practice for the second research question, *What challenges and opportunities arise as the English teachers try to integrate civics with reading literature in their case study classrooms?* I also utilized analysis of the teacher team's learning, but only the portion of that data applying to the ethnographic account of the two case study classrooms over the four months of my study of their classes. For this second question's focus on literature and civics in classroom practice, I analyzed Mr. Bautista and Ms. Ferro's classes as they finished reading one novel, *Seven Daughters and Seven Sons*, and read another, *Bat-6*, leading to their Justice Week activity. While observing their classes, I recognized that analysis of how civic learning intersected with literature study in the cultural activity of these classes would require attending to the interdependent trajectories of the two teachers' plans and objectives, the literature's narrative world and its unfolding progression over time, and the students' experiences and visible learning, whatever I could ascertain of it from their talk and written activity.

To account for these multiple trajectories, I created data displays on scrolls that consolidated several pieces of data analysis. For the duration of the classroom study, I tracked the themes and movements of the literary texts as the classes read them. I coded and sequenced the progression of the two teachers' co-planning and stated objectives, matching these with their actual lesson delivery and teaching activity. And I tracked the visible evidence of the ten case study students' engagement with literacy, language, and civics through the texts and in class discussion and writing, reading through the novels and leading up to the Town Hall. These synchronized trajectories led to an ethnographic understanding of the polyphonic resonances within an interactive, shared experience of reading literature, and how that classroom experience produced its own kind of *imaginative local*, a concept I explore in Chapter 4's findings about this research question.

*What do ELA teachers discover about how their Civics English activity expands their ELA teaching and shifts their students' ELA learning experience?* required selecting and examining parts of the aforementioned data and analysis specifically reoriented toward a multi-layered and ecological understanding of the teaching shifts involved in a particular event, the *Bat-6* Town Hall about the civics of youth athletics and allyship that the case study classes participated in. To analyze how ELA classroom practices shifted in preparation for and as a result of the Town Hall civic activity, I selected and studied the artifactual, observational, and transcribed recording data of teacher decision-making and implementation, classroom activity centered on the ten case study students and their groups' preparation for the Town Hall, the actual Town Hall event's interactions and activities, and the completed statements and writing students submitted after the event. In analyzing these sources centered on the event, I noted where the teachers described shifts, adjustments, and revisions in their teaching, looking for explanations of how the civic activity reframed or re-contextualized ELA practices. I analyzed the 10 case study students' evidence of the collaborative production of their Town Hall statements, based on their classroom engagement with readings and videos, preparation for the event itself, and participation in the Town Hall's civic interactions, compared against the 24 total Town Hall statements the teachers collected for confirmation of effects of their teaching practices embedded in civic action. These analyses of teacher activity and shifts in practice,

together with analyses of students’ processes and engagement, form the findings of Chapter 5, summarizing the ways the ELA teachers experienced civic action changing their ELA teaching.

### Conjectures

I entered this study with a number of conjectures about the research questions I had posed. These conjectures came about through a combination of the intent of the design and my ongoing work with this group of ELA teachers and their colleagues. Yet the research questions were framed to entail a readiness to see and recognize surprises in the findings, surprises that may contradict the objectives of the design projects, lead to flaws or failures in the experiments, or otherwise run counter to these conjectures.

*Table 2.4 Conjectures*

<b>Research Question</b>	<i>In the PLC meetings, what tensions surface between typical ELA practices and youth civics practices, and how do the teachers conceptualize and respond to those tensions?</i>	<i>What challenges and opportunities arise as the English teachers try to integrate civics with reading literature in their case study classrooms?</i>	<i>What do ELA teachers discover about how their Civics English activity expands their ELA teaching and shifts their students’ ELA learning experience?</i>
<b>Conjectures</b>	ELA learning will be powerful when contextualized by civics, but contradictions in conceptions of youth, discourses and genres, and objectives and time will limit extent of civic action.	Reading diverse, contemporary young adult literature will provide opportunities for students to connect empathically with civic themes and ideas, but reading challenges may exclude some students.	Civics English activity will make expectations of academic language in reading, writing, and speech more tangible and meaningful to students when personalized by civic action and audiences.

Initially, for the first research question, I sought the challenges and possibilities that teachers would find in Civics English experiments, expecting that both would arise. As I recognized the cultural historical activity of English teaching, I followed Engeström’s (2001) theorizing of contradictions that surface as tensions in the integration of activity systems. I imagined that youth civic action would alter the teachers’ conceptions of the objectives, mediational tools, and quite possibly students themselves as subjects, and that the teachers themselves would find the nature of their teaching activity changed as well. I anticipated that civic action would be challenging for these teachers to conceptualize logistically, with all the curricular and instructional goals they had, and that the teachers would also encounter difficulties with the politics and ethical questions they might encounter as they led their students into civic action.

For the second question, knowing that the teachers were committed to literature instruction, I expected that the opportunities for Civics English in a literature-based class would come from the process of reading diverse young adult literature, as the teachers had in their libraries, and in students finding connections to civic issues from their texts. I guessed that the difficulties some students had relating and staying engaged with novels might also alienate them from the civic issues those novels were meant to convey as well. A result I wondered if I would see is if literature-based introductions to civics would wind up isolating students less inclined to read from the civic projects of the class.

Finally, as to what shifts in instruction we might see when the teachers engaged their classes in civic action, I had conjectures related to the dominant and counterhegemonic

discourses that I reviewed in Chapter 1's literature review, expecting that the teachers would have to make shifts in their practice to decide how to navigate the kinds of language and discourse that students felt would make a difference in a civic engagement space in contrast to what they might wish to teach or feel the need to teach to cater students' expression to formal civic settings. As a co-designer, I felt prepared to support how the teachers interpreted and imagined the civic task, but I also anticipated that I might need to be ready to suggest how civic engagement might call for varying discourses at particular times and places, and the ELA teachers would need examples of youth activists using a variety of discourses to accomplish their purposes.

Some of these conjectures resembled the outcomes of the study I exposit in the following findings chapters, while others did not materialize in the way I anticipated. As a whole, the framing of the questions attempted to apprehend the patterns and polyphonic resonances among the teachers in their experiences of experimenting, shifting, and learning, so I prepared to encounter with them whatever joining together civic action and ELA might bring, guided above all by the commitment to pursue justice-oriented Civics English collaboratively and democratically with these teachers.

## Chapter 3: English Language Arts in Public

This chapter seeks to answer the research question, *In the PLC meetings, what tensions surface between typical ELA practices and youth civics practices, and how do the teachers conceptualize and respond to those tensions?*

I address this question primarily through analysis of the Teacher PLC Meeting data, as described in chapter 2. I also rely on secondary data of their meeting discussions and planning, the artifacts of their implementation brought to the meetings, and their reflections and interviews during and after the co-design. Through that evidence, I observed the teachers' shift in teaching practices over the school year. Analyzing these data led me to understand the challenges for these ELA teachers, embedded in their school-oriented cultural activity system, in planning for youth civic action, which is part of a public-oriented cultural activity system.

I describe tensions that surfaced when the ELA teachers implemented these Civics English plans. My coding of the meeting talk revealed that during their PLC meetings, the teachers centered their discussions on three central tensions. The tensions took the form of contradictions between:

1. schooling-oriented versus public-oriented objectives,
2. students as individual actors versus collective agents, and
3. writing personally versus writing politically and professionally as instruments of power.

I show how these tensions arose in the teacher PLC's attempts to shift their ELA practices toward civics goals, providing examples from the three civic action projects the teachers designed. These projects demonstrated Civic English's positive possibilities to the team, but also exemplified these contradictions. I discuss how the teachers understood and addressed these contradictions. Finally, I discuss how the teachers expanded their practice from this process of experimentation. The PLC members envisioned various ways they would further experiment with civics integration. Finally, I share the team's reflections on the sources of these tensions and how they anticipated expanding their practice.

### Schooling-oriented vs. Public-oriented Objectives

The first tension that arose for the ELA teachers attempting to integrate civic action emerged from some unanticipated risks when students wrote for public audiences and civic purposes. ELA teaching practices tend to work with purposes and audiences for student language that I call *schooling-oriented*, focused on the individual development of students within the confines of the school. The orientation of these purposes and audiences (what I will call *objectives*) primarily towards students' development for the sake of their schooling leads to what Engeström (1991) calls "encapsulated" learning. In contrast, youth civic action has a broader social horizon, *public-oriented objectives*. Youth civic action has the purpose of social or civic change, and the audiences for civic action language tends to be the broader public, community stakeholders, or people of influence.

This tension first appeared when Ms. Denver worried aloud to the PLC about her students' outward behavior ("How will they act, carry themselves?") as part of her Storybook Project civic action. For this project, they went to read their Storybooks to younger children (PLC Meeting, March 23, 2016). The tension appeared again in May when the team discussed



Mr. Bautista and Ms. Ferro's Town Hall event, in which students presented their proposals about civic issues to local adult leaders. At this time, the teachers voiced their concerns about whether the adult leaders coming to listen to them would make them feel heard:

Denver: It'll be interesting afterwards to hear what your kids think about those adults listening to them... if your panel of kids talking to [the Safe and Inclusive Schools Director] feel like what they're saying to her, she's hearing, or if she's just talking. Same with [Athletics Director]. Because at some point, kids are smart enough where they're just done talking to adults, because adults are not really hearing them anyways.

Ferro: I didn't even think about that perspective.  
(PLC Meeting, May 25, 2016).

The risk of a public representative reinforcing youths' feelings of not being heard was a new consideration for these teachers. The teachers tended to carefully structure the activities where students shared their writing with audiences outside the school, such as when Mr. Ocampo's students presented digital stories from their families in the library, and Ocampo and the Puente counselor set up a hospitable environment to honored the families and the students' work (Ocampo Interview, December 10, 2015).

The PLC's longest discussion about the unanticipated risks of public audiences and civic purposes came from some concerning essays that Mr. Ocampo's students wrote for their "This I Believe" Project. Mr. Ocampo worried for the students' well-being, but also for the risks of disclosing such personal details in a multimedia project where students were publicly identifying themselves and intending to share with the wider public on the internet.

How the teachers and I understood the contradiction of schooling-oriented and public-oriented objectives is clearest in our reactions to reading these essays in the PLC Meeting. For that reason, I will provide an extended analysis of this conversation in which this tension was central. I also explain how Mr. Ocampo's project served as civic integration in ELA practices, based on both his descriptions of his practice in PLC Meetings and from interview and artifact data with Mr. Ocampo.

### *The Risks of Private Narratives as Public Advocacy*

During the group's discussion of Mr. Ocampo's "This I Believe" essays, the teacher PLC turned the tension between schooling-oriented and public-oriented objectives into tangible questions that the team negotiated. These questions touched on the expected purposes of narratives in English teaching in school, as well as the shifts in audience that youth civics practices inspired the teachers to try out as their students composed versions of themselves in public on social media for purposes of public advocacy.

At the May 25<sup>th</sup> PLC Meeting, Mr. Ocampo had brought a few of his students' "This I Believe" essays that he thought contained alarming content to the attention of his colleagues. He was seeking their advice about how to handle what he saw as a problem in moving these essays about student beliefs toward public, civic-oriented discourse in which they would move from their personal beliefs to thinking about civic action related to those beliefs. The first essay of concern contained a story of the student-writer witnessing the suicide of two twin younger sisters, dramatically narrated within a larger piece advocating mental health and depression

resources. A second student-writer's essay spoke openly about a family member's alcoholism and possible abusive violence, this one in the context of a piece arguing for alcoholism awareness and treatment. While these were more extreme examples, they represented lingering uncertainties for Mr. Ocampo about the appropriateness of sharing these personal essays as he had planned, in a series of advocacy pieces posted online and publicized via social media for peers and the broader public. The activity system of school writing for English class was coming into question when he considered taking this writing outside of more protected and private school boundaries as was necessary to influence the civic space.

Ocampo presented the papers to his colleagues without much introduction, and soon after reading them, his colleagues had identified with his problem and noted that they too were facing similar problems. Ms. Denver summarized what she thought were his implied concerns by giving an example from her class. She worried about the essay writer's well-being, the story's veracity, and whether or not the student would want those details shared publicly:

Denver: Well, I have a suicide story that my student wrote about suicide, but we have had a conversation about that. Like I said, are you okay?... I mean, this is obviously *concerning to you*, because you brought it to our attention. So maybe just to say to her, I heard what you said. Do you need any support? Can I support you in any way?

You may not need to tell her if it's a lie or not.

But I would sit down with her and I would say, I have some *concerns* about your story. Are you okay? Is everything going okay? And how are things going at this point with your family? You know. I'm, I think this is *such a personal topic that I think we should reserve it just for your hearing and my hearing, and maybe we just keep it private*, although I don't want to-- you know, something where she's hearing that you have heard and her piece is valid, but...

(Emphases added, PLC Meeting, May 25, 2016)

Following Ms. Denver's response, the other members of the PLC chimed in for the following twenty minutes of the meeting, offering suggestions for Mr. Ocampo's next steps. By the end of that time, Ocampo remained unsure of his next steps regarding his original plans for the publication of these pieces on the internet.

On the other hand, the purpose of writing powerful stories from the students' experiences was both an ingrained part of the usual activity system of these English teachers, and part and parcel of the kind of public advocacy project that the "This I Believe" essays were intended to be. Mr. Ocampo had assigned writing about difficult personal and social issues before. He had also had students produce works shared online before as well. But the shift from Ocampo's business-as-usual was the prospect of these vulnerable personal stories going to the unpredictable public audiences online, a risk he had not encountered in past assignments. As I said towards the end of this conversation, naming for the group what I was seeing as something like what Engeström after Bateson (1962) calls a "double bind":

Coach/Researcher: the models that you [Ocampo] showed them were people bringing their deepest and hardest things. And that was the power of the writing. It was also the risk... So all of them, the same thing that makes them powerful, is what also makes them vulnerable. And I think that is both concerning for all these reasons that we share, and

also the thing that makes it so effecting for most of these cases.  
(PLC Meeting, May 25, 2016).

Indeed, Ocampo sought that same potency in powerful and personal stories. As he said in the same meeting, “[This writer] would be one of three that I flagged. But everybody else, in fact a lot of them I was just going, ‘Oh this kid just stayed above the surface on this one.’” Though he described reading these essays as “heavy” (PLC Meeting, May 18, 2015), their stirring seriousness is also what gave these essays their rhetorical force as advocacy essays. But the idea of their public presentation introduced new risks, as I described when I summarized the double bind we appeared to be facing:

Coach/Researcher: [You] can say to her [the writer], this is a very powerful and personal thing. That's also the reason why I want you to have the freedom and the right to...decide whether or not you want this out there. And then also to not have your twelve year-old decision to be your public decision in perpetuity. Right? Because that's the other problem with what we're doing. Is we're asking them to go public in a certain sense. And they're too young to make that decision, right? We're trying to structure a safe version of that, right? Of making the risks acceptable and still having them feel the effect of having the power of being able to tell their story and say something to the world about it.  
(PLC Meeting, May 25, 2016).

The teachers responded affirmatively to my framing of the dilemma, which captured what truly seemed to be a tension. The PLC's discourse showed that teachers remained committed to the possibilities that came with “the power of being able to tell their story and say something to the world about it.” The question was how to address the attendant risks involved in asking students to “go public.”

### *“This I Believe” Essays and Public-Oriented Objectives*

Those concerning essays showed the risks the teachers grappled with, but at this point, I further explain how this tension of *schooling-oriented objectives* and *public-oriented objectives* surfaced as the teachers shifted their ELA practices to integrate civic action. Mr. Ocampo's decision to assign the “This I Believe” essays as online displays of personal belief and identity came from a shift in certain ELA practices that were resonant to him, which also seemed to resonate with youth civic action. These led him to expand his use of multimodal technologies and social media as tools of ELA teaching and learning, but to shift the audiences and purposes of those tools to serve civic engagement objectives.

The idea of creating civic advocacy pieces and sharing them online resonated with several aspects of Mr. Ocampo's approach to ELA and to youth civics. In my first interview with him (Ocampo Interview, December 10, 2015), Mr. Ocampo described himself as a teacher who tied his proficiency with technology to his teaching practice and identity:

Ocampo: Who I am as a teacher? I know technology. I was just having a thought thirty minutes ago... something pops up on NPR, deals with “stereotype threat,” a theme in a novel [points to a novel the class is reading]. I get to my classroom, go to my phone, [playing it for the class] I go, “Remember I brought that up?”... So technology, I really

dig that part, the whole audio, video, and um, the stuff I put on the board, [points to visual diagram of writing types as a three-headed dragon, drawn on the board] once I put stuff up it doesn't get erased for a while, so I can just keep referring to it, referring to it, look at the board, look at the board. (Ocampo Interview, December 10, 2015)

For Ocampo, his strength as a teacher was utilizing technology and media tools like his class Wiki (the first thing he referred to when asked about how he thinks about “civics” in the classroom), high quality photography and audio recordings, and powerful language to match. He thought of those tools as ways of creating lasting artifacts, like the visual diagrams he created as he taught, which became lasting memories and reference points for his students. In Mr. Ocampo's practice of ELA teaching, those technology and media tools allowed for Mr. Ocampo and his students to carefully craft their public voices and personas in memorable ways.

The “This I Believe” Essays bore the marks of Mr. Ocampo's approach of using multimodal visual, audio, and language-based projects to get students' voices out in public. “This I Believe” ([thisibelieve.org](http://thisibelieve.org)) originated from a 1951 program launched by Edward R. Murrow, who asked Americans to discuss core beliefs that guided their lives. Statements of “This I Believe” from celebrities and everyday people were written as essays and read, recorded, and broadcast on public radio. In recent years, the local public radio station still featured these essays, including some produced in conjunction with Youth Radio, in which adolescents developed and produced these broadcasts alongside adults with as an alternative form of collaborative youth democratic engagement (Chavez & Soep, 2005).

Mr. Ocampo's version of “This I Believe” involved a few specific tweaks to the general idea. First, students' essays had to cover a social justice issue that was personally meaningful to students but had larger civic implications. Second, the students had to write blended texts that incorporated narrative, informative-expository, and argumentative modes in their compositions, in keeping with the Common Core writing types (CCSS Appendix A, National Governor's Association, 2013). Third, in addition to writing the essays and producing sound recordings of their readings of the essays, Mr. Ocampo would take a professional-quality photograph of each student's face to accompany the printed essays and audio tracks, making all three components (essay, photograph, audio) into a piece shared on the class's website (see Image 3.1.1 for an example). Students would then share their essays through social media as a persuasive kind of activism, offering these personal declarations of their beliefs to advocate for larger social change.

Image 3.1.1

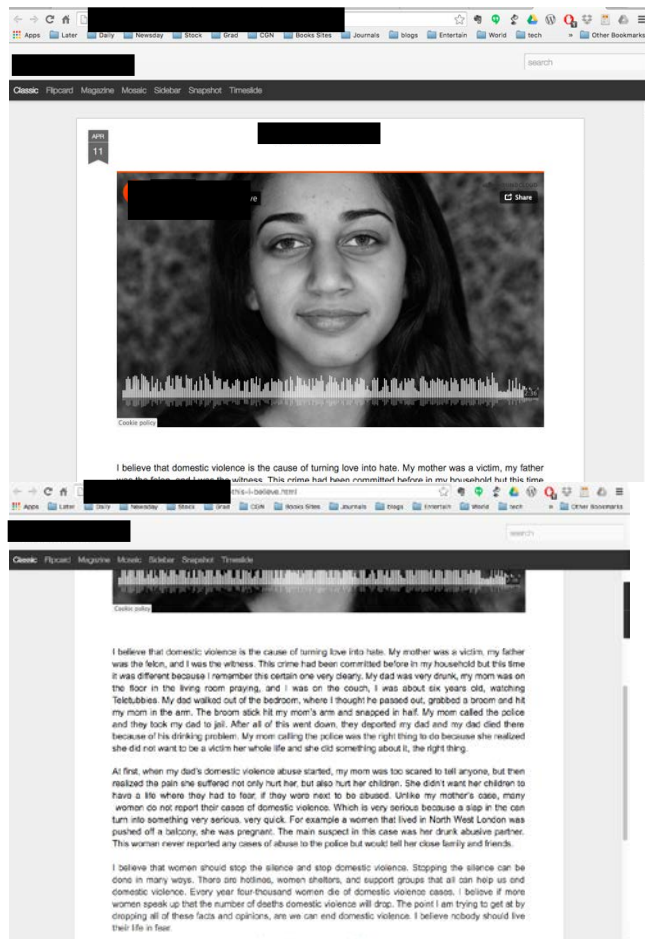
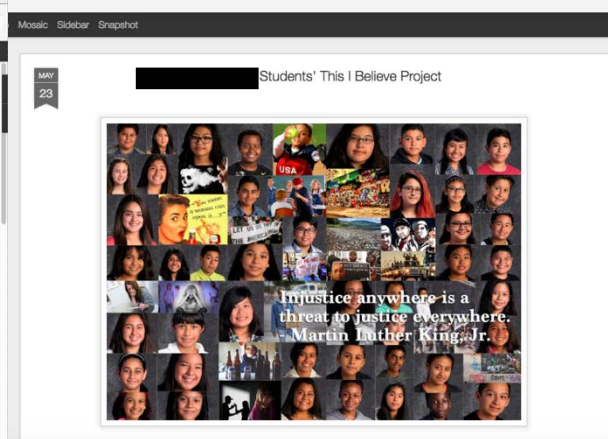


Image 3.1.2



This idea combined many of Donaldo Ocampo's ideals for civic engagement, particularly using the power of multimodal representations of belief and identity as persuasive civic modeling. Ocampo noted an influence on his civics was his grandfather, who was a long-serving, prominent Senator in the Philippines and a leading critic of US imperialist presence and the Marcos regime. Ocampo's grandfather had parlayed a public identity as a Filipino national team football player into a career of civic advocacy for democratic, nationalist reform during the country's period of Martial Law (Ocampo Interview, December 10, 2015.) Thus, Ocampo's Civics English project reflected his value for young people being able to craft public personas to advocate for social justice issues.

Ocampo's civic ideals were accompanied by a related approach to teaching ELA: cultivating students' best expressions of self and their hopes for the world, and then teaching students the mastery of symbolic tools, including language, art, and other media, that would make those expressions convincing to others. Rather than multimedia production for its own sake, Ocampo sought to embed these projects in literacy learning and social impact, guiding students to their potential as persuasive storytellers and communicators for the common good (Morrell, 2011).

These ideals explained why Mr. Ocampo's students would write such personally revealing essays in an assignment that was intended to be shared publicly. Indeed, many of the "This I Believe" examples pulled from the radio and the outstanding student drafts that Ocampo shared with his classes included the author's disclosure about the effects of problems like racial profiling or drug abuse on themselves and loved ones, similarly personal and powerful details.

Yet the project exemplified our theory of action for the Civics English projects, an experiment in *public-oriented objectives*. "This I Believe" essays would seek to make a public impact, where students' stories and personal statements of advocacy would set an example for others. The multimodal essays would be presented together as a set, represented by a collage and a listing of the recorded essay's authors and topics (Image 3.1.2). From Mr. Ocampo's accounts and my observations of student artifacts in the course of the project, the public audiences and civic purposes of these projects added a strong impetus towards quality written and spoken language, a productive self-awareness for students about their presentations of selves as a public-oriented objective.

In the end, Mr. Ocampo decided to allow almost all of his students to share their "This I Believe" Essays with other students in the school during the Justice Week activities. He spoke with the three students with concerning essays, finding out that their narratives contained some embellishment but were rooted in real hardships. He gave them the choice of how to modify their essays. One opted to remove her photograph and identifying information from piece online, but to post the essay publicly because she felt her story was important for others to know (Ocampo Interview, June 12, 2016).

From Mr. Ocampo's reflective evaluation, the Project successfully accomplished his goal of motivating students with an engaging opportunity to practice writing that blended the text types. (Ocampo Interview, June 12, 2016). Asked whether making the writing public online remained a concern, he approached it as a technical problem. He had restricted access to the posts because of his own lingering questions about students' privacy and their identities online. But he continued to try to find or create the kind of online social media forum where students could be influential but not run into these risks.

One route for avoiding those particular risks of public-oriented identities remained unconvincing to Mr. Ocampo, though others in the group explored it: rather than individual statements of advocacy (and identity), the teachers discussed collective, group action as an alternative way of engaging. As I turn to that shift and the tensions inherent to it, I will return later to Mr. Ocampo's reflections on his "This I Believe" project and how he ultimately determined that it had shifted his practice.

### **Individual Agency vs Collective Action**

The second contradiction for the ELA teachers integrating civics emerged from how they thought about individual agency and collective action in Civics English projects. The ELA teachers were used to giving individual assignments, evaluations, and responsibilities for each student, as their rationales in the PLC Meetings revealed. But the models of youth civic action that we examined usually involved students studying, engaging with, and negotiating language about issues collectively, whether in groups or as a class. This tension arose between the norms of the ELA activity system, which most often treated students as individual actors, and the tendency of youth civic action to involve students finding their agency in collective action and speech.

The PLC teachers' models and reference points for youth civic engagement usually engaged whole groups or classes in collaborative civic learning and action. Examples of youth civic action we looked at included examples from the Constitutional Rights Foundation's Civic Action Projects ([www.crfcap.org](http://www.crfcap.org)), the Council of Youth Research, (Mirra et al, 2013), the Social Justice Education Project (Romero, Cammarota, Dominguez, Valdez, Ramirez, & Hernandez, 2008), and the Southern Poverty Law Center's Teaching Tolerance Curriculum (SPLC, 2004). These examples generally involved groups of youth organizing together on a common issue, often composing advocacy and taking action as collectives. It was unclear in many of those cases if the choice of issues to address came from the youth themselves, through the guidance of adults, or directly from adults.

However, the teachers followed a certain logic of English teaching that privileged student choice and reverted them to assigning individual choices and responsibilities for their project. For Mr. Ocampo and Ms. Denver's Justice Week projects, each student created their own piece for the "This I Believe" essays in Mr. Ocampo's class and Storybook projects in Ms. Denver's. With Ms. Ferro and Mr. Bautista's Town Hall project, the two teachers assigned collective work but wrestled with how they would assign individual grades and responsibilities to this mixed group activity.

In interviews and PLC meetings, the teachers demonstrated their negotiations of this tension, returning to three reasons that their ELA practice tended towards students making individual choices for civic action rather than organizing collectively: the *motivation of choice*, *the power of narratives of individual action*, and *individualized accountability*. Nonetheless, initially the teachers planned a shift towards the kind of collective action that the youth civics activity system implied.

### *Collaborative Projects and Engaging All Students*

The larger pattern of planning and decision-making for the ELA PLC showed how and why these tendencies toward individual action prevailed over collective agency to a large extent. A PLC meeting in January became a pivotal point in whether the Civics English projects would result in a collective project for the students of all four of the PLC's teachers, or whether each teacher, and from there most of the students, would come to choose their own individual projects.

Initially, the co-design project envisioned some sort of collective Civics English project, but rather than reach a consensus between four teachers with different conceptions of what one project could engage *all* students, the PLC developed a priority for the motivation for engagement that came with individual choice and the opportunity to display those individual choices. In the PLC meeting roughly mid-way through the year (PLC Meeting, January 27, 2016), after initial experiments with deliberating about civic themes in their ELA classes, the teachers discussed what kind of civic action their classes could engage in together. The four teachers recognized that they individually had divergent proposals among the four of them at that point, which all exhibited different conceptions of civic action. Ocampo wanted to tie *The Giver* to students doing social analysis of their own community. Bautista planned to connect notions of justice and societal gender roles to *Seven Daughters and Seven Sons*, while Ferro felt inclined to address name-calling and bullying. Denver's students read the novel *Monster* and had a straight-from-the-headlines interest in the criminal justice system.

At that moment of divergent possibilities, the team momentarily expressed enthusiasm

for collective action's power to change the school's culture. In my coaching and co-design role, I tried to assemble a consensus between various proposals:

Coach/Co-designer: So there's a couple directions we could go as far as figuring out how to do this as a team. One is that, as you guys were talking, it was beautiful in that you all brought in different components. We could look at all those components... But maybe we come together to decide on some actions, some projects kids could do, with some similar standards, where we could look at writing objectives.

(PLC Meeting, January 27, 2016)

Six minutes later, after a detour into literary themes, Denver reiterated the promise of a collective project, setting off a series of enthusiastic affirmations from her team mates. While they built on the idea, they also noted how this kind of project would be a change from business-as-usual, in their English classes *and* in their school's culture.

Denver: I love the idea of-- do you feel more comfortable with...combining all of us in one overarching thing? So like, a project, and we all participate in it somehow? Or like a theme, and we all participate in our projects with that theme.

Bautista: I can see the value in us doing something together in the sense that, when something is weird, we can actually talk about it, work out. But I also understand how we're going separate directions, we can do things more catered to how we do it--

Denver: Maybe if we do an activity together, it can be more grand scale. Outreach for the school, outreach for the community.

| Bautista: Yeah, that makes sense.

| Ferro: Definitely...

| Denver: ...Versus if we do something individual, it could be a smaller kind of a thing.

Bautista: And maybe that's like the... end game, as a thing for our PLC to do it for the school. Our little--whatever we do in the class is hopefully building up to get us something bigger.

(PLC Meeting, January 27, 2016)

In this exchange, all three teachers could be seen advocating for a collective "something bigger," yet leaving open the possibility for smaller or more individualized or independent projects. The group members seemed to want to respect the possibility that the others might want to retain their independence. For example, Denver reintroduced the idea of pursuing an "overarching thing," and later advocates for "a grand scale" "outreach for the school" and "community." Though she initiated this proposal, she also left open a door for teachers' independent projects when she nodded towards "doing something individual" in a conciliatory tone. But that turn overlapped with Ferro's and Denver's, who were already enthusiastically affirming the proposal of a "grand project."

This agreement from the teachers towards collective action then led them to imagine more outright political action in the school, which Denver was more emboldened to propose, and



which Bautista and Ferro affirmed would be a powerful shift:

Denver: And that's where we kind of talked before about possibly of having an assembly, because we don't really ever have assemblies that are about, like, you know, POLITICAL ACTIVISM of--

...Or like a poetry reading or something. But maybe if we were to do something where we're talking about justice, then maybe we have people come in and talk about alternatives for justice, or have people come in and talk about Black Lives Matter because that's a form of justice in itself. ...

Ferro: I do think whatever we do. If they can hear it coming from more than one side. If they just hear us talking about it...

Bautista: It's just more powerful. Not just Mr. [Bautista] being a weirdo again...

Ferro: Yeah, but if they hear it in the assembly, they hear it going down the hallway, they see posters. Like our entire hallway is talking about it... it would be more powerful.

(PLC Meeting, January 27, 2016)

This notion of working together in collective action overcame two of the teachers' hesitations about being able to lead civic action. For the second time, Bautista made reference to being "weird," as in the prior interaction when he suggested that a collective action which allow them to problem-solve together if something is weird. Those remarks from Bautista, as well as Ferro's comments about the students "hear[ing] it coming from more than one side" rather than "just hear[ing] us talk about it," reflected what they both said in their beginning interviews, that they did not have much knowledge and experience doing civic and political action, but they were eager to learn to engage students in that way (Bautista Interview, December 3, 2015; Ferro Interview, January 14, 2016).

After this agreement, how did this enthusiasm for a collective project in January become individualized, distinct projects for most of their students by April? The aforementioned regard for each other's autonomy and different plans, stemming from the varying texts, teaching styles, and classroom relationships of each teacher, eventually led the team to agree to all work towards the "Justice Week" idea where they would find common, resonant themes in their separate curricula, culminating in a schoolwide engagement with a few justice themes that would invite the broader community to a public dialogue on the school campus (PLC Meeting, January 27, 2016).

However, despite this agreement, the very next PLC meeting demonstrated how schooling practices bent the teachers back towards the assumptions of the individualized agency they usually assumed of students. In the February 25<sup>th</sup> PLC meeting, the original agenda of elaborating on Civics English plans was pushed back by reaction to data the teachers had been given about the school's difficulties meeting English Language Learner reclassification goals. At the same time, the teachers verbalized frustrations about various encounters with school personnel that bureaucratically dealt with failing students but failed to address root issues of the students' disinvestment from academic work and culture, as Bautista suggested. Denver attributed this to disconnection from caring adults and a sense of belonging, and Ocampo chimed in with a reminder about a program that used to be in place to connect caring staff members to

struggling students.

Ocampo: But it makes me think about previous years, the Guardian Angel program.

Denver: That's exactly what I was thinking of.

(PLC Meeting, February 17, 2016.)

Wishing to honor the teachers' discovery and decision-making, I tabled our discussion of the Justice Week plans as the team developed a plan for identifying students in their classes who seemed to lack adult connections on campus, matching them with other members of the PLC team, and organizing meet-ups and luncheons together.

Though this focus on connecting with disconnected students became a diversion from the Civics English planning for a few meetings, it was also a pivot point where the teachers' reasons for their concern for individual choice, motivation, responsibility, and connection returned to the team's planning discourse. In the meetings that followed, in addition to reporting on the Guardian Angel relationships, the team often focused on how their Justice Week projects were reaching or not reaching those students they had identified as "disengaged" from school (PLC Meeting, March 23, 2016.) This included some concern that the research-based components of these Justice Week projects were pushing the "disengaged" students away from the curriculum and learning, rather than towards it. As Bautista replied in sympathy to Ocampo's disappointed assessment of one student's "informational piece...their little research":

Ocampo: No... I don't want to... enough to deal with without citing...

E: This is just the data that some... some brain, some egghead talking.

(PLC Meeting, March 23, 2016.)

As the four teachers pursued Civics English in their classrooms, their team's discourse turned towards this concern about the individual engagement of students, especially those less engaged in school. This led the teachers, Mr. Ocampo and Ms. Denver especially, to shape their Justice Week projects towards the motivating power of choice, the connection students made with individual narratives of civic heroism, and the individualized accountability that made individual agency feel like a more appropriate and powerful lever for student learning and participation.

### *Collective Action, Individual Agency, and Speaking Out on the Day of Silence*

Allowing students to individually choose civic topics or issues so that they would be motivated to engage, individually responsible, and individually accountable proved to be a set of durable principles for these ELA teachers, rooted in their beliefs about how students needed to develop their individual civic agency and voice. Mr. Ocampo's "This I Believe" essays exemplified these effects of individual choice within a collective project, as the team discussed in the May 25 PLC Meeting. Meanwhile, Ms. Denver's reflections on her Civics English teaching in interviews showed how she arrived at individualized projects seeming to serve a larger educative purpose for what her students needed.

Even as Ms. Denver's classes engaged in collective action, she underscored the power of individual agency. While teaching the novel *Bronx Masquerade* (Grimes, 2003), a novel of urban youth's diverse and individual poetic self-expression, and integrating materials from *Teaching*

*Tolerance*, Ms. Denver’s students collectively experienced several interconnected and “powerful” learning moments culminating in the Day of Silence, a Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network-supported awareness campaign for LGBTQ harassment and bullying, where many students wore stickers to indicate their participation and did not speak for the entire school day (Denver Interview, April 8, 2016).

Even while the Day of Silence represented a kind of collective civic action within the school, Ms. Denver was careful to leave room for students to make different choices about their participation, while emphasizing narratives of the power of the choice to participate. As she facilitated a discussion about the day’s events, she invited students’ varied comfort levels with the action. But she also underscored to the class her view of the power of these actions through narrating an incident with two particular students in the class. As she recounted saying to her class:

Denver: [At the end of the Day of Silence, I said] We're going to *speak* now because I want to reflect on how today went. I *really want your personal opinion*. Because I know there's 70% of kids on campus that just did it “just because.”  
... But these two boys, and I'll show you their response, but it was like, “this is *why* I teach.”

(Emphases added. Denver Interview, April 8, 2016)

Those two boys had averted a fight after defending a harassed Day of Silence participant, soon after the class had learned about bystanders and “upstanders” via *Facing History and Ourselves* curriculum. Denver’s class then held an emotional discussion about the Day of Silence, where one student spoke up about his participation because of a transgender aunt. Ms. Denver discussed what she described as “[my] journey with my own family,” relating her family’s experiences when her sons stood up to an adult questioning her trans daughter’s gender. While her description of the collective action left open the spaces for students who declined to participate or only participated “just because,” she built on both the collective agency of Silence participants and the individual stories of these two students as well as other examples to reinforce the lesson they learned together about allyship and tolerance.

In her account of that day of class, Denver repeatedly used the word “powerful,” and she offered the stories as examples of how integrating civic themes and civic action into her English classes led to meaningful collective action. She used the word “powerful” to explain what happened when some unlikely male participants shared stories about why they participated in the Day of Silence and what happened when they did:

Denver: He was just like, *Wow*, and he says, *The best that we can, in the future, we will always now step up, and be an ally*. You know? *We get it. And we might not be able to say anything, but we will stand by*. The fight happened because of their stickers, the fight happened exactly for the reason we were having the day.

(Denver Interview, April 8, 2016).

This example demonstrates how Denver orchestrated and witnessed collective action with her students, leaving open the choice for students to participate but highlighting the persuasive examples of individuals who chose to act.

Ocampo’s teaching experienced a similar manifestation of this tension. Ocampo

described enjoying teaching the Hero's Journey archetype since his first years teaching, but this year, he described feeling compelled by seeing Brene Brown's TED Talk about vulnerability to consider trust and courageous honesty more important than individual heroism (Ocampo Interview, December 10, 2015), which motivated him to emphasize themes of community rather than themes of individual heroism. These themes played into the "This I Believe" essay's goals of building justice-oriented communities. On one hand, Ocampo felt a deeper sense of community and collectivity in his classes than he had ever before thanks to the Puente program. On the other hand, he remained convinced of the importance of motivating students by contextualizing their own lives in a narrative of a heroic, individual struggle toward achievement (Ocampo Interview, May 18, 2016).

Despite her class's collective experiences of learning and action, Denver's narrative of students' developing civic activity hinged on the motivating power of choices and making them as individuals. Choosing to participate in the Day of Silence was what made those "upstander" students examples of civic leadership to her. In the same interview, explaining her rationale and preparation for the Storybook project, Denver described another recent assignment she called "Wish for a World." She framed the assignment around the question, "if you could wish for anything for the world, what would it be?" Students chose to write, create projects, and conduct research about a topic of personal concern for them. Students chose a variety, including breast cancer awareness, immigration, Black Lives Matter, and a host of other issues (Denver Interview, April 8, 2016). Their writing and research would eventually lead to the Children's Storybook project that culminated Ms. Denver's Civics English. The sense of personal identification with a chosen topic for their "wish for the world" that could be served as a powerful motivator, especially important to the PLC teachers at a time of worrying about the disengagement of students marginalized from academic culture.

Although the impact individual students could make on those issues remained very limited, even at the very local level of the school, Ms Denver's priority as an ELA teacher was the sense of individual fulfillment and identification with a larger narrative of exceptional, heroic justice that kept them invested in schooling and civic purpose. At the end of the project, on reflection, Ms. Denver underscored the importance of that choice for students' motivation and engagement.

Denver: So I think that [writing their Storybooks] was really good with the Justice piece, because I think it was something that was important *to them*. And it wasn't like everybody was assigned the same Justice piece, everybody got to pick and choose what they wanted to do. So I thought that was really great. That really tied in nicely to what we were doing in History, you know, Civil War and Slavery. And we were just watching *Twelve Years a Slave*, and there's a whole speech in there where [Solomon Northrup] is talking about justice and injustice in slavery...and that was really good, just like, immersing them more into it.

(Denver Interview, May 19, 2016)

By connecting students' self-chosen Justice Week projects with their History lessons, Denver alluded to her feeling that choosing their own civic issues to study and write about, at the same time as learning about Solomon Northrup as a heroic historical actor who relied on powerful rhetoric, worked to "immerse" students in a sense of their agency for social and political change through language.

In addition to the motivating power of choice and the heroic narratives of individualism, Denver's decision to emphasize individual agency over collective action also came from school's demands for individual accountability. As she went on to say in her interview, their individual responsibility for their topics became especially important when students had to conduct research to find statistical or factual evidence to integrate into their projects. The tension between collective and individual organization of action appeared again as she struggled to teach the requisite research skills with students who had such a variety of topics:

Denver: The one group was like, we want to have an outline, we want to have a graphic organizer [for finding research], we want to be able to formulate our ideas individually and then put it all together. The other group was like... *WE* want to write this story, and then *WE* want to piece it together.

(Emphasis in original. Denver Interview, May 19, 2016)

In the same way, Ferro and Bautista grappled with the tension of collective civic action and individual accountability in their Civics English projects. However, the Town Hall project they conducted, discussed further in Chapter 5, did become an example of collective action rather than individual agency, as Ferro and Bautista's students convened with local leaders on common topics.

### **Power in Personal or Political/Professional Discourse**

A third tension observed in PLC Meetings as this ELA activity system integrated civic action involved a nuanced shift in how teachers considered where power lay in different discourse genres. Moving students towards civic discourse as action shifted more importance onto argumentative and expository modes of writing and speech as authoritative to the broader public for certain purposes. The teachers recognized that in their past ELA practice, that authority had felt largely abstract to their students' perceptions, so they emphasized and relied primarily on the power of narratives, personal and anecdotal, for students to communicate convincingly. As part of Civics English integration, they attempted to shift towards complementing the youths' personal and anecdotal narratives with research-based facts and evidence-based arguments that they believed professional (i.e. legal or administrative) or political (i.e. governmental, electoral, or civic) valued. These shifts resulted in tensions between ELA practices built on co-constructing understandings of what discourse is powerful and persuasive and civic action learning to adopt the language of the "culture of power" (Delpit, 1988).

The linguistic demands of Civics English (Chapter 1) that the PLC teachers experimented with throughout the year included the notion of using language in real-world action, which was compatible with learning to produce blended language for real-world genres. The first extended PLC meeting of the year, an all-day collaboration day for the team in September, revolved around the teachers planning a road map (see image 3.3) for teaching "blended" writing in authentic genres throughout the year. We discussed how concepts of *genre* were distinct from the three Common Core "writing types" (narrative, informational/explanatory, and argumentative) that the CCSS itself noted were usually "blended" in real-world texts (Appendix A, National Governor's Board, 2013). In the teachers' understanding, the concept of *genres*, such as the "multi-genre essays" that some teachers at the local high school taught, were distinct from the three *types* or *modes* in the Common Core, because genres came with particular contexts, expected audiences, and relatively typical language, while the CCSS "types" appeared in all



combinations of narrative, informative, and argumentative modes within blended genres based in real-world discourse and action.

### *Blended Genres on Trial*

As the year progressed with civic learning experiments, the teachers encountered the challenge that their school-based activities made it difficult to incorporate those social contexts, the professional and political contexts, where students could see these blended genres as authentic and meaningful. In the January 27<sup>th</sup> PLC Meeting, Denver speculated about how her students' interest in criminal justice might lead to a Mock Supreme Court situation that would call for a blended writing task:

Denver: So going back to the writing: That would be one of the activities they could do for this week... I was trying to wrap my brain around the areas that we were supposed to be covering in the three writing styles. So if we did something, I was thinking something like, "if you were elected to [Molina's] Supreme Court, and you had to make a decision about students smoking pot in the bathroom." Umm... [Thinking out loud.]

Ferro: That's so real.

Denver: Decide what you would do... or write about... but have them have the sentence, the prompt, be a prompt in which they could either explain how they would do things, or evaluate what the students have done, and how they are going to give discipline. Or they could write a completely add-on, conjunctive story to what the... so that would cover those areas. (PLC Meeting, January 30, 2016.)

The Molina Supreme Court idea that Denver formulated would involve students making arguments of policy and judgment (Hillocks, 2010), which would call for the processes of selecting evidence and making claims that Common Core argument writing called for. Ferro's response praised the quality of "real" in Ms. Denver's plans that the teachers sought in these tasks and prompts.

Once Denver tried to turn her promising idea into reality, however, she was caught by surprise with how removed argumentative and informative genres and contexts were to students. In the following PLC meeting, still planning a mock trial scenario based on *Monster*, Denver admitted to struggling to imagine the three types all appearing in a courtroom scene with mock jurors, judges, witnesses, and attorneys, particularly "narration. I mean, there's no storytelling" in a professional context built on arguments and facts (PLC Meeting, February 25, 2016). Bautista suggested several places for narrative:

Bautista: If your goal is to have them go through the trial, you'll have the lawyer, the defendant and prosecutor. So then, those guys are telling stories. When they're making the case to the jury, they have to have narrative skill. (PLC Meeting, February 25, 2016).

Satisfied with this and other ideas for where narrative might be part of courtroom discourse, Denver left the meeting planning to hold these mock trials, perhaps to have students rehearse and perform them as their part of Justice Week activities, inviting a dialogue on campus about policing with local activists like East Bay native Oscar Grant's mother. But as she tried to

implement these plans, she soon found that students had no difficulty extracting and composing narratives from the novel and their lives. Instead, she discovered students seemed “completely lost” when it came to how to speak and present arguments and facts in a courtroom setting. Denver realized she needed to change courses to a project where students could conduct research and study models for the language of argumentation and information in other real-world contexts, which felt so foreign to her students as they lacked the models for it (Denver Interview, April 18, 2016.)

The other PLC teachers encountered the same challenges with political and professional language. Mr. Bautista read student essays after they conducted and tried to include research, and bemoaned the unfamiliar voice their writing betrayed:

Bautista: [Responding to reading a student’s informative writing] I think that’s where it’s tough. It’s like, man, how much of this is her? How much of it is what was there [in her source]? Because to me, if this was her, it sounds like she’s getting it. Right? But then, without knowing how [she handles] the sourcing thing, it’s like, aww crap. I’d be nervous like knowing, is it her? Is it another brain who came up with that same idea?

(PLC Meeting, March 23, 2016.)

For Mr. Bautista and Ms. Ferro’s students, narratives and personal anecdotes remained the convincing and familiar types and genres of discourse, while the invitation to writing and speaking in professional and political genres felt unfamiliar and removed from students’ authentic voices and contexts.

### *The Power of Personal Narratives and the Bricks and Mortars of Persuasive Discourse*

This distance from contexts of political and professional discourse for the students, where the type of academic language that Common Core prescribed predominated, presented a challenge to the PLC’s attempts to shift students to civic discourses. At the same time, the importance of narratives to civic action, especially personal narratives and anecdotes of the familiar, attracted students and felt natural, as with Ms. Denver’s mock courtroom. But while the teachers wanted to build from students’ belief and investment in personal narratives as persuasive power, they also wanted to shift their teaching towards a balance with the toolkit of having the authority and the language to speak abstractly, objectively, informatively, or rhetorically about an issue. These discourses represented an alternative set of linguistic resources for persuasion, impact, and communicative power for students.

This dilemma between genres of power for youth and genres of power in political and professional contexts also surfaced during discussions about Mr. Ocampo’s concerning essays in the May 25 PLC meeting. The team acknowledged that much of the persuasive power of Ocampo’s sixty-three “This I Believe” Essays rested on the personal nature of students’ narrated experiences. Aside from the concerning content, rhetorically, all of Ocampo’s students’ essays had successfully accomplished the assignment’s demands of narrating, informing, and arguing about their respective topics. All three used facts, whether adroitly or awkwardly, to paint a picture of the extent of the problems beyond their own anecdotes. All three made arguments resting on statistical data, expert opinions, or proposed solutions for how stakeholders and authorities might improve conditions for sufferers. But all three stories, as troubling as they were, might have been so troubling exactly because they took advantage of the narrative tools



that had been taught and modeled to them, such as colorful characterization, pathos, internal monologue, and precise description. As Ocampo's colleagues commented while they re-read one of the concerning essay:

Bautista: Yeah, like does she have a line in there that is only just about suicide, but doesn't actually refer back to her personal... umm...

Ocampo: Like an informative explanatory piece?

Bautista: Yeah this little piece right that there that acts like her little... blurb.

Denver: She says something about suicide, something about families, right?

Ocampo: Yeah there was a little bit.

Bautista: So that could be her blurb for her. But then it keeps out anything that could be... because it's like her passion, it's her voice, right?

(PLC Meeting, May 25, 2016.)

The weight of expectation for these youth to tell powerful, personal stories raised questions about whether they had access to alternative social and linguistic contexts for civic power, what legitimacy their voices could have, and how those corresponded to genres of power.

Shifting towards those rhetorical changes in genres of power did not only result in uncomfortable tensions, though. In fact, by the end of the year, the teachers felt success in having taught blended writing and brought students into more meaningful usage and engagement with political discourses (PLC Meeting, May 25, 2016).

In fact, during the year, the teachers became excited about a practice for teaching these genres as civic action, analyzing texts for their “bricks and mortars” to teach students to imitate and adapt. In the February PLC meeting, Ocampo suggested that they could use the existing archive of “This I Believe” essays, which Bautista celebrated as being written from people of different classes and cultures, as “mentor texts” from which the students could do “brick and mortar” analyses for argumentative and informative language (PLC Meeting, February 25, 2016.) Ocampo used these “mentor texts” as a practice of studying exemplary texts of genres from particular contexts to refine students’ own evaluative rubrics (e.g. “Does this text work persuasively for its audience? Why and how?”) and to derive the linguistic structures for effective communication in those contexts together. Rather than handing students a pre-baked structure or outline, the teachers used authentic models of, for instance, newspaper editorials or “This I Believe” essays to derive how real-life authors utilized structures rhetorically.

The teachers also experimented with using mentor texts as resources for appropriate syntactic and lexical models for a given purpose. Bautista and Ferro shared with their colleagues about professional development with another ELA coach they had participated in the previous school year, where ELA teachers in East Bay Unified middle schools had adopted the idea of “bricks and mortar” language (Dutro & Moran, 2003) to distinguish between lexical tokens and syntactic, rhetorical structures (PLC Meeting, February 25, 2016). For instance, Mr. Ocampo’s students studied a narrative segment of a short memoir that established a setting and mood, drawing boxes around the “bricks” of adjectives and nouns specific to the place (e.g. “worn out

orange couch”) and underlining the “mortar” of the surrounding sentence structures (e.g. “We lived with, but never quite got used to, the \_\_\_\_\_”). Students then experimented with imitating (neither copying nor whole-cloth originating) their own versions with analogous bricks and similar mortars (e.g. “We lived daily life with the crooked windows that did not fully shut”) to expand their repertoires for the appropriate purposes and audiences. These kinds of strategies fit within a paradigm of deriving and designing language for purposeful uses with real audiences instead of the canned rules and exercises of other grammar approaches.

The rhetorical moves of their students’ writing bore evidence of the PLC teacher’s use of the “bricks and mortars” idea. Kaycee’s “This I Believe” essay opened with a statement presenting the abstract and concrete topics that would unfold in the rest of her essay, embedded in a series of direct statements that introducing themes and actors. She began her essay:

I believe domestic violence is the cause of turning love into hate. My mother was the victim, my father was the felon, and I was the witness. The crime had been committed before in my household, but this time it was different because I remember this certain one very clearly. (Kaycee’s “This I Believe” Essay, June 2, 2016)

Such an opening would fly in the face of some prescriptions for “good” writing that Ocampo had heard elsewhere, such as the use of passive voice, “weak” verbs in simple variations of “to be,” and abstract generalities. But Kaycee’s opening showed the fruits of a creative utilization of several features in the “This I Believe” mentor texts that Ocampo’s students had analyzed for their “bricks” and “mortars.” The mentor texts frequently made use of the simple structure of creedal statements (“I believe...”) as assertive openings, almost as a staple of the genre. These statements often introduced abstract or generalized elements (“domestic violence,” “love,” “hate,” “victim,” “felon,” “witness,” etc.), nominalizations that we discussed as marking thematic portions of the “This I Believe” essays, as well as academic language more generally. And simple statements of identity with tense variations of the “be” copula also characterized many of these types of sentences, which were after all meant to be read over the radio, where lexical density has to be balanced with clarity, and sentences with grand themes like “love” and “hate” are often held together with terser structures. Read aloud, with confidence and the tiniest quiver of affect, the recording of Kaycee’s opening achieved its intended rhetorical impact on student and teacher listeners.

For the PLC teachers, their growing understanding of the social and civic dimensions of genres stood as their most lasting learning from the Civics English projects. Their initial experiment blending writing types evolved into a growing awareness on the teachers’ part and within their teaching to students of the different forms of rhetorical power, authority, and significance that different genres played among particular contexts and audiences. This sensitivity to genre was demonstrated in their recognition of practices like the “bricks and mortar” analysis of mentor texts, but also permeated their discussions of literacy and language throughout the year. They read articles and novels with the perspective of genres, publics, audiences, and layers of significance. Their novel-centered units wound up centering on ways to connect to and introduce the writing types, especially in Mr. Ocampo’s and Ms. Denver’s curricula going forward. And they saw the greatest benefit from Civics English in the social contexts and discourse communities that give shape to particular genres to be the most significant learning of the experience, as they related in their final interviews.

## Chapter 4: Literature in Classroom Cultures of Civic Deliberation

This chapter addresses the second research question: *What opportunities and challenges arise as the English teachers try to integrate civics with reading literature in their case study classrooms?*

To address this question of practice, I analyzed two sources of evidence that informed how ELA teachers found civics resonating with and contradicting their literature-centered teaching. First, I examined the data of the two case study classrooms, including observations and recordings along with interviews of students, tracing trajectories of classroom activity and learning to see how studying literature integrated with civics resulted in opportunities and challenges for civic learning. Second, I analyzed evidence of the two teachers' co-planning and their collaboration with the rest of the PLC, including their joint planning meetings and interviews with me throughout the project, to see how they experienced contradictions or resonances in Civics English experimentation.

The primary opportunity that the case study classroom teachers found as they integrated civics in their traditional ELA practices had to do with how the literary texts they studied fostered civic learning in a surprising way. As they read novels with their case study classes, Ms. Ferro and Mr. Bautista discovered that literature study could become organized as a unique kind of civic learning when students collectively experienced the narrative elements of the text together in reading and discussion, and when their class community discussed, negotiated, and deliberated the civic questions raised by the narrative. This civic learning experience was embedded in how teachers read aloud and discussed literature with students, using read-aloud practices common to US classrooms (Fisher, Flood, Lapp, & Frey, 2011). Going beyond the empathy-building personal experience of reading literature (Kidd & Castano, 2013), the teachers found that classroom interactions while reading literature could be socially organized to foster what I call an *imaginative local*, an embodied and figured interactional space for dialogue and deliberation about the textual storyworld in a way that engaged their civic thinking (cf. Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). Through evidence from the case study classroom, in the first part of this chapter I show how the teachers discovered that through reading and discussing literature together, students could participate in civic deliberation that tackled ethical complexity in their interactions within the imagined worlds explored through literature, which they then applied to their civic thinking about their own lived experiences and perspectives about their own local contexts.

Then, the second half of this chapter discusses the central challenge that led to iterative change (diSessa & Cobb, 2009) that was key to our design project. The challenge that the teachers discovered as they observed and cultivated civic learning through literature, however, was how these disciplinary reading practices contributed to the encapsulation of learning (Engeström, 1991) within the classroom that hindered the classes from organizing and benefiting from concrete civic action. This challenge became apparent as Mr. Bautista and Ms. Ferro's co-planning became a location of both the discovery of literature's civic possibilities *and* the habituation into literature-based activity that edged out civic action. From the evidence of our co-design team's challenges in moving the case study classrooms beyond familiar practices of literature study into the unusual activity of planning civic action, I show how the team innovated within its iterative design to overcome this encapsulation and to bridge the class from just the imaginative local to concrete local action.

## Designing Civic Deliberation through Classroom Cultures of Literature Study

In this section, I detail the primary opportunity for civic learning that teachers discovered in literary study, the way reading literature collectively nourished students' civic imaginations, not only globally as windows to the wider world, not only to students personally as readers, but also as part of classroom communities in negotiation and interactional learning with one another. I show that the case study classrooms developed cultural practices of reading together as whole classes and fostered civic deliberation about characters, conflicts, and ethical questions, a kind of deliberation that evinced the development of critical thinking about civic issues. This was new and unexpected because, although Ferro and Baustista knew, like most English teachers know, that literature can foster personal connections from readers to the global and universal themes of novels, they had not recognized the opportunities provided by the interaction of the fictional "local" communities within literary texts and the students' collective, interactionally-based experience of these figured worlds as they responded to each other during read-alouds. These figured spaces of interacting stakes (conflicts), persons (characters), values (morals), and norms (settings) formed a complex ecology that students entered collectively. The teachers found that the critical thinking that emerged when students read literature together fostered a deliberative space that extended beyond students making personal connections to the global themes of the text. Instead, they could observe students' developing civic thinking on the plane of an in-between, imaginative version of the "local" produced by their shared reading of novels.

During my observation, I noted that this kind of *imaginative local* emerged in these classes not only because of the read-aloud practices of the two teachers, but because of the particular interactional cultural activity of the two case study classes. Though Mr. Bautista and Ferro taught their co-planned curriculum with their own distinctive styles, their classroom cultures shared the commonality that both rested on practices of *educative interaction*. In a constructivist manner, they created room for students' sense-making through paired dialogue, responsive verbal commenting, group- and whole-class discussion, and written interpretation. Such sense-making participation in a collective community experience of reading led to literary engagement that made discussion about the actions, decisions, and conditions of characters and their communities into an imaginative learning space about civic questions and values.

The *imaginative local* also became a needed conceptual bridge to fathom how concrete civic action could arise from these ELA classes' practices. Building from that recognition, Mr. Bautista and Ms. Ferro connected the *Bat 6* text to the two social issues of relevance to the students, the role of youth athletics in community identity and division, and allyship and bullying among youth as issues of inclusion and punishment. Deliberation on these issues led to the Town Hall civic action projects that will be described more fully in Chapter 5. But the roots of that action are here in this exploration of the imaginative civic space of literature, where these questions subtly altered how the teachers and students entered the imagined, figured world of the text.

### *Tracking Teacher, Text, and Student Thinking in Forming the Imaginative Local*

In what follows, I draw on evidence from Mr. Bautista's 2<sup>nd</sup> period class to exemplify *educative interactions* towards an *imaginative local* in literature study while he and his students read the novel *Bat-6* from April through June of the school year. Reading together in the class led to deliberative discussions with the teacher, among students, and with the text that led

students to reconsider and think critically about civic questions, in this example about the role of youth sports in communities (a topic whose civic significance I expand upon later in this section). These interactions did not just occur as students individually responded to the texts, but as they collectively discussed, took positions, debated, and shifted their ideas about the communities within the text, leading to shifts in thinking about their own communities and the role of sports.

To illustrate these complex phenomena, I focus in this section on just one representative example, on one series of educative interactions around the civics topic of “Youth Athletics” in Mr. Bautista’s class with two focal students, Myesha and Victor. This representative moment for these focal students exemplifies of the kinds of emergent civic thinking that I observed throughout my analysis of the case study teachers’ classrooms over the period of this study, around both topics of “Youth Athletics” and “Allyship” in Mr. Bautista’s class, and around both topics in Ms. Ferro’s class as well. The complexity of this description necessitates limiting this explanation to one representative example, though this type of interactional reading and deliberation came to dominate the activity of both classrooms through the school year.

Describing even a single example of the cultural activity in collective reading is a complex task because what occurs in the *imaginative local* requires accounting for the intersection of

- (a) the teacher’s objectives and guidance,
- (b) the storyworld of the novel at different points in its shifting narrative, and
- (c) evidence of the students’ thinking articulated through writing and interaction.

My analysis tracked all three of these trajectories (the teacher plans, the novel’s plot, and student’s interactions), not just as isolated moments but as mutually influential elements in the formation of the imaginative local, throughout the classroom data that I analyzed. I summarize these trajectories in Table 4.1 before detailing relevant background to describe the civic deliberation in the example focal interactions in Bautista’s 2<sup>nd</sup> period ELA class.

Table 4.1 Trajectories of Text, Teacher, and Focal Students Leading to April 19<sup>th</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Period Case Study Classroom Civic Deliberations with Focal Students

	<b>Text <i>Bat-6</i> by Virginia Euwer Wolff</b>	<b>Focal Students Discussion and Activity</b>	<b>Teachers (Bautista &amp; Ferro) Co-Planned Objectives</b>
Prior to April 15-20 class sessions	Two prior novels presented opportunities for civic themes and thinking.  <i>Bat-6</i> set in post-WWII adjacent small towns with inter- and intra-community conflicts because of positions on war and veterans return, Japanese-American internment, and economic hardships  Two towns focused on tradition of cross-town girls softball game ( <i>Bat-6</i> )  Introduced Shazam, new kid in town, talented athlete recruited for <i>Bat-6</i> , traumatized by Pearl	High engagement in issues around sports and allyship/bullying  Habituated practice of interacting verbally in whole-class and small-group discussion, as well as in writing through “Evidence & Inference Logs,” with literary and civic questions from texts  Myesha is student-athlete, high verbal participation in class  Victor moderate verbal participation, often asking questions about ethics during discussions	Discovering civic dimensions of literary novels in the middle school ELA texts they read.  Tried to cultivate and maintain interactions in class that were educative, leading to further exploration and critical thinking, including around novels.  Invested in whole-class read-aloud activities to deeply explore texts  Teaching historical context of novel and familiarizing students with setting and characters

	Harbor, with anti-Japanese anger		
April 15 and 18 class sessions	<p>Various fictional youth narrators of Bat-6 establish a sense of a local communities within the novel's setting, two towns rivalling in Bat-6 game.</p> <p>Narrators introduce Shazam and Aki, Japanese-American player on opposite team, and foreshadow future conflict between them.</p> <p>Themes of global, local, and personal differences manifest in narrator's discussion of the towns and their softball teams</p>	<p>Students (including Myesha and Victor) drawing maps of characters introduced in the novel, forming judgments about the characters aloud and in writing based on the narrative</p> <p>Also using discussion and logs to form text-based judgments and compare/contrast setting of post-WWII Western US towns to own local communities. Also civic/ethical questions i.e. perspectives about war, sports, responsibilities in friendship, etc.</p>	<p>Reading through the text aloud, stopping for whole-class, small-group, and written interactions to make sense of the text's plot, conflicts, settings, characters, historical contexts, and themes.</p> <p>Initiating questions to students about perceptions of characters, including Shazam and Aki as well as various narrators, and surrounding towns. Also initiating questions to make connections to students' local context.</p>
April 19 <sup>th</sup> class session (focal moment)	<p>Chapter 2, multiple narrators (including Shazam herself) introduce new elements of Shazam's background, including clearest indications of her erratic behavior and anti-Japanese sentiments, and suggestions of witnessing attack at Pearl Harbor as reason for bullying.</p> <p>Also introducing elements of town's local tensions, including treatment of veterans and abstainers/objectors to military service and of Japanese-Americans.</p>	<p>While reading, students (including Myesha and Victor) deliberate degree of responsibility/empathy for the town, teammates, and Shazam herself for emphasis on sports, response to intolerance, and consequences of past trauma, as different dimensions of Shazam's background and conduct are revealed along with aspects of the town's relationships</p> <p>Students shift perceptions and judgments in their talk and notes as different dimensions are revealed and in response to teacher initiated questions</p>	<p>While reading aloud, stop to allow students' interaction with each other, with reading logs, with whole-class about themes and events in story.</p> <p>Observing and responding to students' emerging grasp of multiple perspectives and complicating factors behind Shazam's behavior and eventual action, town's various feelings about war and social inclusion, different stakes in Bat-6 game and in friendships and accountability in community.</p>
After April 19 <sup>th</sup> class session	<p>Text culminates in town members narrating—and distributing responsibility for—eventual attack by Shazam of Aki during Bat-6 game between two towns.</p>	<p>Students continue study of the text and evolve in their perspectives, show in their Town Hall civic action activity (June 1, see Chapter 5) how textual deliberations of civic questions lead to layered and complex perspectives about current and local versions of these issues.</p>	<p>Teachers connect deliberations in the imaginative local of the classroom reading about two towns to the concrete local community around Molina and local concerns about sports and allyship.</p>

First, the teachers had read literature all year that showed them the potential for civic conversations to develop when they read through the entirety of texts together using real-aloud strategies and planned for thematic discussion as the novels' plots unfolded. Throughout the year, Ferro and Bautista noticed the civic threads throughout the literature they studied, starting even before *Bat-6* with *The Misfits* and *Seven Daughters and Seven Sons*. As Bautista attested in

his end-of-year PLC reflection, this result was unexpected, a “surprise... We didn’t plan it that way, it’s just the books we had” (PLC Meeting, May 25, 2016). The novels were not chosen for their relevance to civics topics, but somehow, with the questions posed by the Civics English project and during a Presidential election year, the many civics dimensions of these novels suddenly struck the teachers as ubiquitous.

Literature’s tools of character development, intersecting conflicts and moral dilemmas, complex settings and layered contexts, and empathy-building through narrative all served to nourish and complicate civic thinking. The teachers had discussed a *New York Times* summary of recent research about the connections between reading literature and empathy (Belluck, 2013; Kidd & Castano, 2013; PLC Planning Meeting, September 30, 2015). But beyond literacy and empathy, these novels’ themes illustrated many standards in civic learning, as found in the National Standards for Civics and Government (Center for Civic Education, 2014). While reading *The Misfits* by James Howe, students discussed civic and public values at school, campaigning in school elections, social equality, and ideals of tolerance and inclusion. As they read *Seven Daughters and Seven Sons* by Barbara Cohen, students discussed individual rights and collective responsibility, as well as meanings of justice, property, and equality.

Extending beyond just touching on these global themes, however, our experimentation with Civics English had shown the teachers the role that the classroom community played in this process of reading civically, and that students not only took on the perspectives of others, they considered them in the context of a community’s civic and ethical considerations. The *educative interactions* that Ferro and Bautista fostered were seen throughout my classroom observation data in the frequent and overlapping ways that students read, listened, wrote, and spoke, with the teacher and with one another, as meaning-making processes throughout their joint reading of the texts. To take just one example, on the second day of reading *Bat-6* in Ms. Ferro, interactions between students allowed them to enter the storyworld and make meaning of it collectively, so they could recognize and negotiate the civic stakes of the *imaginative local*, about which they sometimes noted their awareness:

Jayden: What does it mean, he was in “conscientious objector camp”?

Ms. Ferro: What do you think “conscientious objector” means?

Daquan: Conscientious is like conscious, thinking of something. And objector is... says no? People who say no to the war?

Jayden: They got sent to a camp?

| Janine: Just because Lorelei’s dad said he didn’t want to fight...

| Ms. Ferro: ...special camp.

Jayden: It’s not like the other camp where the Japanese people went, it’s for Americans?

Daquan: They WERE Americans!

Jayden: Right, right. That’s what I meant.

Janine: That’s funny. He [Daquan] is objecting.

(Ferro’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Period Class Transcript, 4/18/2016)

Grappling with the significance of the *Bat-6* local community’s response to a conscientious objector, Daquan and Jayden’s interaction in front of the class played out these negotiations of who counted as Americans in the wake of wartime exclusions.

At other times, this sense-making together occurred even in the underlife of the classroom, outside the teacher’s recognition, as in this example when two students connected

their experience of food rationing in the book to their knowledge of food stamps, which their teacher did not know about.

Ms. Ferro: Ellen's telling her side of the story. And she mentions these "ration books," which are these stamps, you use them to pay for food... "I'm glad to never see a ration book again in my life" [from *Bat-6*]

Juan: Isn't that like WIC? ["Women, Infants, and Children" food stamps.]

Ms. Ferro: What?

Mark: Yeah. Like WIC. But in a war.

(Ferro's 3<sup>rd</sup> Period Class Transcript, 4/18/2016)\

For Bautista and Ferro, the act of reading or performing the story together, synchronously, ensured that these kinds of conversations could emerge from experiencing the author's presentation of different narrative elements, the twists and turns of characters, the vagaries of plot, the variations of language, at the same time and in the same space (Bautista and Ferro Co-Planning Session, 3/30/2016). This practice of reading together kept the drama of the text lively for students, who clamored for reading days (Ferro 3<sup>rd</sup> Transcript, 4/26/2016; Bautista 2<sup>nd</sup> Transcript, 3/15/2016), and also gave the teachers the chance to intervene in the students' developing conceptualizations and understandings of the texts.

The practice was also a considerable investment of time, with read-aloud and discussion time consuming roughly one-third of total class hours during my four months of observations. Besides reading aloud to the class, Bautista and Ferro also framed various questions through their reading, sometimes emphasizing and asking the same points co-planned in their collaboration time (e.g. Bautista 2<sup>nd</sup> Transcript, 4/14/2016; Ferro 3<sup>rd</sup> Transcript, 4/14/2016), sometimes diverging in depth, pace, or topic when they lacked time to confer or chose different directions (Ferro & Bautista Co-Planning, 4/28/2016). Their common goal at this early point of reading in late April, before the Town Hall idea had been fully developed, was to orient students to the panoply of characters and the neighboring towns and time period of the novel, leading students through discussion while assigning them to take notes through an "Evidence and Inference Log" T-Chart (see Image 4.3 below).

In addition to the trajectory of teachers' plans, the classes' civic deliberation through literature was rooted in the trajectory of the text establishing a *local* level in its setting and narration. In this case, *Bat-6* represented how our working definitions of *civics* and *civic deliberation* centered on intersections of adult institutions and young people's lives in ways connected to the inclusion and participation of people groups in local communities—according to which, *Bat-6*'s discussion of sports and bullying certainly applied (Bautista and Ferro Co-Planning Session, 3/30/2016). At this point in the *Bat-6* novel, the book's rotating narrators had painted a picture of post-World War II life in fictional, neighboring towns of Bear Creek Ridge and Barlow that concentrated on the "Bat-6" softball game, an event the economically depressed towns also concentrated themselves on as an expression of town identity and competitiveness. Key characters included central protagonist Aki's Japanese-American family returning from years at the internment camp; a pacifist conscientious objector shunned by his community; one of the baseball coaches, a wounded, one-armed WWII veteran; and a new girl in town, Shazam, a gifted baseball player on the team opposite from Aki, whose academic difficulties and unusual, erratic behavior befuddled her new teammates until they learn of her trauma from witnessing her father's death in the bombing at Pearl Harbor. The novel featured the teammates as a series of



shifting narrators, giving testimony to the story behind a foreshadowed, terrible occurrence on the day of the big Bat 6 game. That climactic occurrence later turned out to be Shazam's seemingly unprompted assault on Aki in the middle of the game, for which Shazam's teammates realized they should have seen warning signs all along (Wolff, 2015 [1998]).

The particular way that sports played a role in this historical fiction novel lent itself to deliberation of the role of sports as a civic topic among youth. At first, the teachers and I questioned whether "youth sports" was a civic topic at all, but the text's discussion of the Bat-6's important role in the local civic life of the narrative's towns, and that corresponding role for youth sports in the students' lives as a mediating arena for questions of inclusion, participation, and power made it clearly a civics-relevant topic. Because of many students' high engagement and investment in sports, the topic was already germane for youth, who often discussed and debated participation and achievement in sports as a reflection of larger academic and societal goals playing out in communities and cities. *Bat-6* related directly to these issues of the symbolic meaning of sports, how athletic competition fed identification with local pride and sense of community, and how social problematics of race, politics, difference, and opportunity cropped up in local sports-related activity. Contemporaneous to the study, the local NBA basketball team, the Golden State Warriors, were in pursuit of a second straight championship and a season record for wins, their meteoric rise an almost daily topic of conversation in the school. Bautista and Ferro recognized this interest and included articles discussing the impact of this increased engagement in sports on the local community, youth, and civic pride in the Warriors' hometown (e.g. Pennington, 2016; Sauer, 2015) into the *Bat-6* unit. Though media coverage of the time only touched on what would soon explode in prominence in the news (within a few months, WNBA players' Black Lives Matter protests and Colin Kaepernick's protest during NFL national anthems would dominate headlines, not just in Sports sections), athletics as the intersection of community engagement and civic debate already brewed in the popular consciousness, including at Molina.

The text set up these kinds of conflicts of community divisions and local politics manifesting in youth sports, as in this passage from *Bat-6* which both classes read on April 18<sup>th</sup>:

It was so strange about both our fathers, both believing their beliefs so hard they made it into their life. Others had softer beliefs. Like the election. People got angry for Truman or Dewey, but Democrats went right along with the Republicans in everyday things. Being neighbors, selling eggs and goats to each other. It was not such a serious ordeal is what I mean. But Daisy's dad [draft-avoider] and mine [conscientious objector], they would not give an inch.

It was because of my dad I had to miss practices to pick fruit. It was because pickers would hear that my dad didn't fight in the war and they wouldn't come to our place to work.... I missed so many practices.

(Wolff, 2015 [1998], p. 10)

This passage, told by a daughter of the town's ostracized conscientious objector, links the community's reaction to the father's civic stances to the daughter's participation in the Bat-6 game. As Mr. Bautista's class discussed this passage, their discussions organized initial impressions and beliefs about the appropriate role of sports in society.

Bautista: "Both believing their beliefs so hard..." Because they get so obsessed, it makes them act DIFFERENT.

Hassan: You see that a lot with adults who care about sports. People getting obsessed about sports. How people can make the whole [thing] their life.

Bautista: That's why she had to work, because no one wanted to work with her dad.

Though Hassan interprets the “beliefs” in the quotation to be about sports, in context the narrator refers to her father’s strong political beliefs. But the conflation follows from how students developed their understandings of the issues as the texts presented them, making sense of historical and broader global issues to the personal concerns of characters through the town’s local activity and interactions, and tracing these thematic threads to students’ own realities.

Completing the triangle with teachers’ objectives of reading together and the text’s creation of local communities in its storyworld, the classroom community’s joint reading and interactive discourse formed the *imaginative local* by enabling students to take and switch positions vis-à-vis different characters, conflicts, ethical choices and circumstances, and community-level responsibilities in the course of literary engagement. In the next section, I show how these deliberations played out in one day of class and led to shifts in student thinking.

### *Sport’s Pressures, Shazam’s Trauma, and Civic Deliberation*

One civic question the class deliberated during the reading of *Bat-6* surrounded whether Shazam should have been allowed to play in the Bat-6 game at all, given the warning signs and worrisome behavior she exhibited leading up to the game, which the class discussion tied to adults prioritizing sports over children and the responsibilities of athletes to value higher moral conduct over winning. In a “Philosophical Chairs” activity at the start of the unit, students had been asked to take a stand on whether they agreed with the statement, “Adults give the right amount of pressure and support for students playing sports,” which a small majority of Mr. Bautista’s students agreed with (Bautista Observation Notes, 4/12/2016). As they deliberated these questions through the characters in *Bat-6*, their stances shifted in ways that materialized in their culminating civic activity, the Town Hall.

Those deliberations took place in the *imaginative local* as the classes collectively read and discussed the text. On April 19 (Bautista 3<sup>rd</sup> Transcript, 4/19/2016) Mr. Bautista’s class finished reading the second chapter of *Bat 6* (pages 16-25 out of 233), two segments of narration from two members of Shazam’s team, each followed by very brief interpolations from Shazam herself, in which the novel begins to reveal Shazam’s history of trauma that eventually explains her erratic behavior, anti-Japanese attitudes, and violence against Aki. (See Image 4.1) Mr. Bautista’s objective on this day, beside reading the passages together, was for students to take notes in their “Evidence & Inference Logs,” to make conjecturing or predicting inferences from unreliable or ambiguous narration based on analyses of multiple character interactions.

## Image 4.1 From *Bat-6* by Virginia Euwer Wolff (2010 [1998])

BAT 6

ful Hair who was catcher that day. Kayo Riley and Jimmy with the birthmark on his next time up were those boys. They was both a little what you might call mad, but it was plain as the nose on their face they was out fair and square.

Then the boys switched onto the field and we got to be the batters. Beautiful Hair and Wink were our best hitters. Well, Ila Mae too. Darlene and me were our best long-ball hitters till Shazam come to Barlow. Shazam got one between center and right, and the boys couldn't agree on who would get it, so she went all the way to second base. Next time up, she got one right over the head of the short-stop. She said she knew he wouldn't be able to catch it. She got to third on that one because the boys in the outfield was talking and not paying attention.

At first the boys all wanted to be our volunteer opposing team, but they dwindled. They were mixed in their feelings about playing against girls. And, well, you could tell if you looked at them halfway straight they did not like a girl being so good like Shazam was.

There was a odd thing about Shazam's eyes. When it was people she was looking at, they shifted around. But when it was a ball, she kept her eyes on it with full concentration.

The whole first week of school we didn't hardly know much more about her than the first day, but then we started to know some, on account of Ila Mae asked and got a answer of very small information from her mom.

### Shazam, center field

The fire dream come nobody can get out all fire all around.

### Ila Mae, pitcher

I got home from the first day of 6th grade and changed into old clothes to do the chickenhouse chores and throw a ball at the fence. While I was changing into my slacks I told my mom about the odd new girl. Where's she live, my mom wants to know. I say she lives with her grandmother out by the gravel pit.

"No kidding?" my mom says. "I'm suprised that child is here. She's 11 years old already? Time flies, that's for sure." But she didn't really explain me this girl.

"That would by Floy's girl. Poor little thing, Floy never did have good luck."

I ask her what she means.

She tells me it is not for my ears.

This made me want to know all the more.

I said to the other girls to go ask their moms, but nobody's mom told anything clear. They just said like my mom, That must by Floy's girl, poor little thing, she's 11 already? Like that. Brita Marie's mom said Shazam's mother needed to get on her feet and she must of sent Shazam here to live. She would not say no more about it.

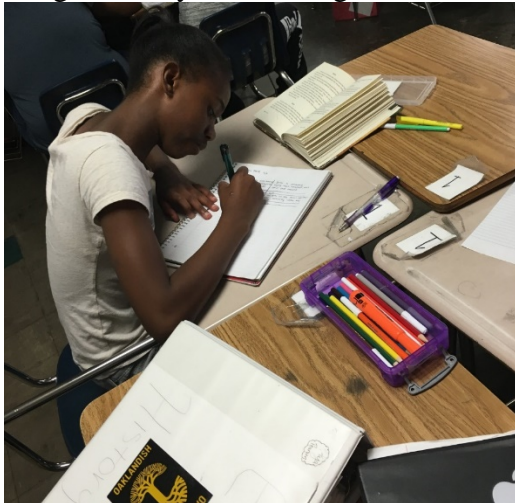
Mrs. Winters, which was our teacher, was the only one wouldn't call her Shazam. She said, "I will call you Shirley and you will answer to your proper name. Shirley is a very

Learning reading speed

10%

Beyond the teacher and the text, the community of students animated the discourse and interaction between them that transcended students' own personal responses or comprehension of global themes, and brought the reading activity into a space of shared, collective experience of the literature that constituted the *imaginative local*. The twenty-eight students in Bautista's 2<sup>nd</sup> period, in all their various interrelationships, would be impossible to track, but one of the case study students and her immediate surrounding students serve to demonstrate the imaginative local for April 19<sup>th</sup>. Myesha (Image 4.2), an outspoken student often on the receiving end of Mr. Bautista's disciplinary words but quite often the fastest and sharpest responder to his questions, demonstrated a process of deliberation about different perspectives of notions of *right* that played out through her interactions with the text, her classmates, and the teacher, which also seemed to influence the thinking of students around her.

Image 4.2. Myesha writing in her Evidence-Inference Log, April 18, 2016



From the lesson's opening, the class discussion centered on questions of what was "right" in the context of youth sports, teammates' obligations to each other, and adults' involvement with children. Bautista opened the lesson by summarizing memorable points from the previous day's (Monday's) reading of the first half of the chapter. Fittingly, the class discussion underscored the moment where one narrator, Audrey, recalled Coach Rayfield teaching the players the difference between "making the right play versus playing to look good," a theme that would re-emerge later in students' preparation for the Town Hall, including among Myesha's group (Bautista's 2<sup>nd</sup> Video B, 5/31/2016). The "right play versus looking good" advice foregrounded this global theme of ethical choices versus advantageous ones, which class discussions connected to youth sports dilemmas of focusing on rules of fair play and participation versus achievement and excellence, especially in response to the video of Mr. Ferreira describing these dilemmas locally (Bautista's 2<sup>nd</sup> Transcript, 5/23/2016). The moral dilemma faced by these narrators, Shazam's teammates, involved whether to voice their concerns about Shazam's mental well-being or to quiet them to make sure she could play in the Bat 6 game. In this chapter, Bautista's class would come alongside the narrators as they learned more about Shazam's family situation, living with her poor and ostracized grandmother after being sent from her troubled mother (Wolff, 2010; p.15-28). And through brief and linguistically fragmented pieces of narration from Shazam, the students would get their first clues about her nightmare recollections of witnessing her father's death on a naval vessel at Pearl Harbor.

Throughout the course of reading and discussing the text, Myesha's shifts in her verbalized civic deliberations moved with how Shazam's teammates, her coach, and the town's community should address Shazam's readily apparent issues, including her animosity towards Japanese-Americans and her erratic off-the-field behavior (Bautista 3<sup>rd</sup> Transcript, 4/19/2016). At the start of the reading, as the novel's narrators Audrey and then Ila Mae describe their growing understanding of Shazam, Myesha appears from the evidence to recognize the high stakes of the game for the players' surrounding community, and therefore the responsibility or obligation of the players to do "right" or "good." Bautista prompted students to consider how the girls thought about the baseball game and how they were seeing Shazam; students wrote in their "Evidence and Inference" charts what they initially thought and understood about these two questions. (Not coincidentally, both questions would eventually tie into the Town Hall topics of sports and allyship.) Myesha's impressions at this point in the reading included the following, taken from her "Evidence and Inference Log" (see Image 4.1), which show her noting comments from her classmates as well as her own judgments.

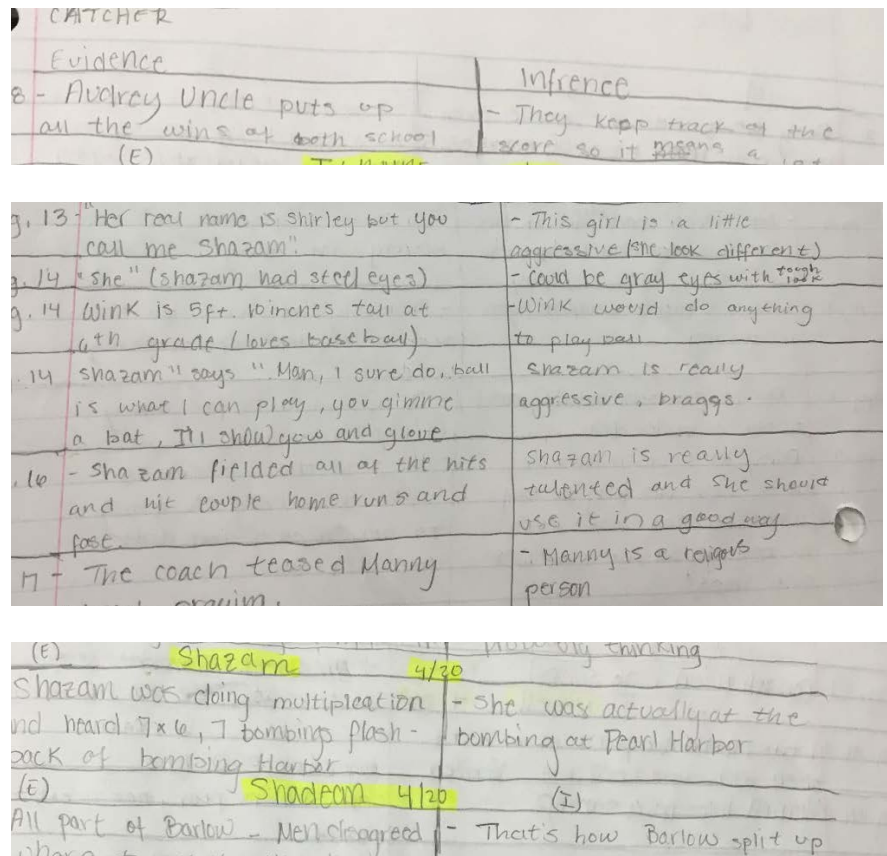
From Myesha's "Evidence and Inference Log" from Chapter 2:

"[Audrey's Uncle] keeps track of the score so it [the Bat 6 game] means a lot."

"[Shazam] is a little aggressive, brags."

"Shazam is really talented and she should use it in a good way"

Image 4.3 From Myesha's "Evidence and Inference Log"



Various students responded to Mr. Bautista's question inferring that Audrey's Uncle's record keeping of years of Bat-6 scores suggested the game had great significance for the two towns, which Myesha noted in her log.

Myesha prided herself as a leading player on Girls Basketball at Molina, which she would go on to discuss in the Town Hall. But she revealed in one of our interviews that basketball experiences had left a bad taste in her mouth about parents' over-involvement, though she also believed strongly in playing and acting "the right way" as role models on the team (Myesha Interview, May 26, 2016). This sense is reflected in her unique response to passages describing Shazam, where Myesha judges her as "aggressive." During the lesson, Mr. Bautista asked how students perceived Shazam after different parts of narrator Audrey's characterization of her. Verbally to students around her, Myesha remarked that her "steely eyes" (Wolff, p.17) indicated that she was "tough, focused," and made note of the contrast between those "steely eyes" when playing baseball and how Shazam's eyes darted and diverted during human interactions, indicating that "something wrong with her." Meanwhile, as these revelations about Shazam's character throughout the chapter unfolded, Myesha continually voiced her changing perceptions about the character in class discussion. Students could be seen in analysis of the classroom video, sitting upright and turning to face Myesha as she verbalized these shifting sentiments during pauses in reading for interpretation and discussion (Bautista 3<sup>rd</sup> Transcript, 4/19/2016).

Initially, Myesha and her classmates sympathized with the novel's narrators' ambivalence about Shazam as an unstable wild card for this high-stakes baseball game that the town had vested so much interest in. But after reading of Audrey and other players' attempts to cajole her to play "right" and to help tutor her so she could do well enough in school to participate in the Bat 6, Myesha wrote the characterization of Shazam that "she should use it in a good way," threading in the opening discussion about "playing the right way" versus "looking good." (The next day's Kickoff prompt would be about sportsmanship and its importance in broader society.) While composing this inference, Myesha and two other students began disputing in front of the class whether the team should have to tolerate Shazam's unusual behavior and extra needs for the sake of her baseball gifts, or if they should remove dangerous players from the team culture. Or if, in fact, they should behave like a team and lend Myesha whatever supports (academic, friendship) she needed, a perspective she expressed a few minutes later aloud to the class:

Mr. Bautista: What'd you say about her [Shazam], Shania?

Shania: She needs to make her life better.

Myesha: 'Cause you have to get up, get on your own feet again.

Hassan: Wait, was she involved in the war?

Myesha: Maybe someone died.

Mr. Bautista: I like that one.

Myesha: Maybe she [Shazam's mother]'s some kind of addict.

Mr. Bautista: We can put here "widow" [writes on Evidence-Inference example]. Could all these possibilities make sense for this "bad luck" [of Shazam's]? In 2016, do we see a lot of examples of some sort of addiction, and that would be like bad luck?

Myesha: She needs some help to get back on her feet.  
(Bautista 3<sup>rd</sup> Transcript, 4/19/2016).

Here, in interaction with her classmates and Mr. Bautista about Shazam's relationships vis-a-vis the team, Myesha's perspective could be seen to shift, and with her verbalizing those shifts, several members of the class seem to shift perspective as well. Though not explicitly referenced by her classmates in the short, subtle arguments about the team's tolerance of Shazam, in the background the students share knowledge that Myesha was herself a multi-sport athlete who was both an effervescent and talented leader on her teams *and* under scrutiny by the school's staff and her grandmother for her conduct and grades (Bautista 2<sup>nd</sup> Field Notes, 6/3/2016).

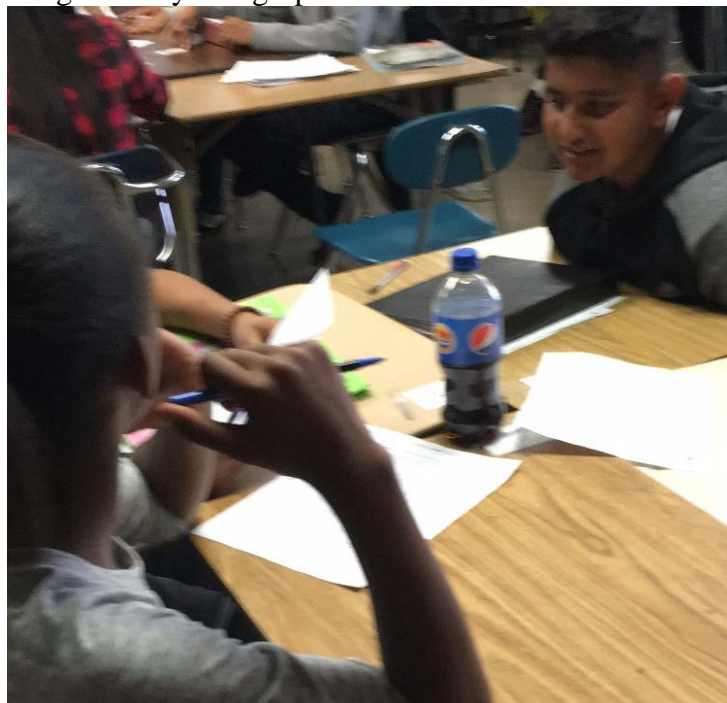
Finally, when Shazam's second dream sequence ended the chapter, Myesha audibly gasped with her own realization of the hinted-at history, the background that Shazam was a traumatized witness at Pearl Harbor. In the class recording, she can be seen gasping and putting hand to mouth, and then blurting out the same realization, upon which Mr. Bautista gave her a

stern shush as her classmates can be seen observing her response (see Image 4.5). Then she can be seen writing in her “Evidence and Interpretation Log”:

From Myesha’s “Evidence and Inference Log” from Chapter 2:

She was actually at the bombing at Pearl Harbor

Image 4.5 Myesha gasps at the realization of Shazam at Pearl Harbor.



This reaction was a pivot point of Myesha’s deliberations throughout the text—along with others in the class—that Shazam’s eventual violent actions, while inexcusable, may not have been irrational, a point that groups deliberating allyship, bullying, and zero tolerance policies in school discipline for minor acts of violence would return to often (Bautista 2<sup>nd</sup> Field Notes, 5/26/2016; Bautista 2<sup>nd</sup> Field Notes, 5/31/2016).

Most relevant, as the class’s most verbal interpreter during the course of reading, Myesha not only vocalized the collective reaction to the realization of Shazam’s history, she also voiced disgust when Audrey described Shazam using anti-Japanese epithets, at one point responding, “Uh-uh, I would have been like,” followed by a mimed gesture of slapping an imagined Shazam on the back of her head for the offense (Bautista 2<sup>nd</sup> Field Notes, 5/24/2016). In my interviews with her, Myesha admitted to struggling to sympathize with Shazam because of the character’s anti-Japanese impulses. Myesha understood that Shazam’s racial animosity stemmed from her traumatic experiences, but it could not be justifiable given the context of Japanese-Americans’ treatment during the war. Myesha held Shazam’s teammates culpable for not doing more to intervene (Myesha Interview, 6/3/2016).

Myesha’s considerations of Shazam and her teammates’ responsibility evolved throughout the reading of the book, and in the end, Myesha’s Town Hall argument included mention that parents paid more attention to the game’s score than their children’s grades in



school, and that students should focus less on winning or looking good and more on learning fundamentals to play “the right way.” She would also show in her Town Hall statement drafts a verbalized attempt to balance the competitive interests of athletes and fans, and the larger sense of social responsibility that should govern how parents, players, and community engage in youth sports. Similar themes also appeared in the statements of her classmates in other groups as well. These complex, multiple-perspective arguments could be traceable to nuanced understandings that unfolded as Myesha and the deliberative community around her experienced the various turns of the novel’s story.

To provide an additional example, Victor, another case study student, engaged with Myesha’s and others’ comments as they formed judgments about Shazam, and his responses would ultimately influence his ideas about “allyship” in the Town Hall statement he would go on to write. Just as Myesha generalized from the multiple vantage points pushed by the text to her Town Hall statement, Victor’s “Evidence and Inference Log” offers hints of how an empathic deliberation of Shazam’s teammates’ internal conflict could complicate civic thinking. Victor’s log reflects a growing apprehension and empathy towards Shazam during the course of reading the chapter, corresponding with a sequence of classroom participation showing his changing perceptions.

From Victor’s “Evidence and Inference Log” from Chapter 2:

Shazam could field very, very well. As well as she could hit a ball. Shazam is a good long-ball hitter.

Shazam has a reoccurring dream about fire all around her.

Ila’s mother knows Shazam. Shazam is eleven years old, according to Ila’s mom.

Floy [Shazam’s grandmother] seems to be a parent of Shazam. Shazam was sent here to live.

Shazam seems to never had proper schooling before. However, when it comes to arithmetic, Shazam hated the numbers 6 and 7 for some odd reason.

Shazam got good grades because the girls on the team helped her study for quizzes.

Perhaps the reason why Shazam doesn’t like Japanese people because her father might have been bombed during the Pearl Harbor bombing.

Shazam has a reoccurring dream about the bombing of Pearl Harbor, which she was bombed.

When the class read Shazam’s first frenetic and unconventional sentence, Victor’s groupmate raised his hand to say, “It doesn’t have anything to do with the story,” to which Victor chimed in with, “She’s not very smart.” Later, when Ila Mae’s mother describes Shazam’s history as one of “bad luck” and “not for your [Ila Mae’s] ears,” Victor became visibly animated along with his classmates, guessing the exact nature of Shazam’s family’s hardships (“Death,” “War,”



“Addiction,” and “Widow” were classmate responses). At that point, Victor wrote the entries above about Shazam’s grandmother and “the reason why Shazam doesn’t like Japanese people,” one of the first in the class to identify the connection to Pearl Harbor. Later, Victor answered Mr. Bautista’s question about when an Author’s Note mentions the date of the attack on Pearl Harbor (April 7), which Victor pointed out might explain Shazam’s strange aversion to the numbers 6 and 7. When Mr. Bautista asked what we could be learning about Shazam from this chapter, Victor offered the most extended answer, saying, “This doesn’t justify it, but Shazam hates Japanese people because maybe she was bombed at Pearl Harbor.” His multiple-clause antithesis sentence reflected his need to reconcile an empathetic reading of Shazam’s history with a moral stance against her actions.

By the end of reading the chapter, Victor had landed on a point that he would reiterate later in his Town Hall contributions, most notably a point that he championed and his classmates would remember and attach to him. As one classmate wrote they learned from Victor’s Town Hall statement, “I learned the word ‘bully’ was a label. You should use ‘people who bully’ instead because people can change.” Here, during Bautista’s class reading of Chapter 2, Victor began to deliberate how he and society should judge perpetrators of physical aggression with restorative, not only punitive, eyes.

These examples offer a glimpse of what Bautista and Ferro discovered as they read with students, a complex deliberation process about civic questions that played out in the class community’s interactions with the narrative’s storyworld. The influence of those deliberations would often appear later in their Town Hall projects and assignments. But before that could happen, students showed in classroom deliberations like Myesha’s and Victor’s how they moved from their personal identifications with novel’s global themes of community, responsibility, tolerance, violence, and reconciliation, into concrete and tangible ways that the novel’s and their own local contexts mediated multiple perspectives and moral demands. Throughout my analyses of the case study classrooms’ reading activity, authentic connection between ELA’s literary studies and local civic action hinged on the way that Bautista and Ferro taught literature *civically*, in ways that engaged their classrooms in an *imaginative local* that read novels as if the readers existed within their storyworlds, making possible a deliberative interactional community that fostered civic reflection.

It was exactly the discovery of this meaningful civic reflection in reading literature that contributed to the challenge teachers found in implementing civic action with literature study, the challenge of moving from civic thought to civic action.

## **Challenges of Civics Implementation in Encapsulated ELA Study of Literature**

The challenges that the case study classroom teachers faced while integrating Civics English stemmed from the merging of two separate activity systems, ELA teaching and youth civic engagement, each with distinctive, if resonant, objectives. Recall from Chapter 2 that after the first phase of the study, I selected Mr. Bautista and Ms. Ferro as case study teachers because they planned together and made their thinking visible, and also because they were more undecided about how they would implement civic engagement, though not reluctant to experiment. Their indeterminacy about how to plan and carry out youth civic action turned out to

persist through most of the year, in many ways exacerbated by what the teachers discovered in reading literature.

As they articulated at the end of the year's PLC final reflection (PLC Meeting, May 25, 2016), Ferro and Bautista were eager to hold true to the ELA teaching practices they had developed over many years such as teaching literature, yet they also opened themselves to the shifts in their practice that experimenting with civic action might bring about. I prompted this reflection by recalling that our Civics English experimentation that year had involved four connected tasks: collaborating closely as a PLC with a coach/co-designer, teaching blended texts in real-world genres, reading novel-based units with civic issues, and planning civic engagement projects. Bautista and Ferro summed up their feelings that the year's experimentation was a worthwhile attempt to try something new that could be transformative for them as teachers. Bautista began with a metaphor for their initial uncertainty and eventual sense of their growth:

Bautista: As we went, we kept building our boat while we were in the water, right? And eventually, our [paddle] is actually duct taped, but the boat's not leaking, and we can put more people into it... So our whole inquiry, our whole year was OUR try-it-out phase. As we continue with the same team, we do this again, then we make the tweaks. That's our "Cycle 2" [the next cycle of our inquiry]... and we have [Ocampo's] "This I Believe" essays and [gestures towards other student artifacts from Justice Week], that's our data.

Ferro: But our thing hasn't necessarily been about our students, it's been about our teaching... So every time we met, we were talking about what we did, and what we didn't do, and adjusted to try to improve. Beginning of the year, it felt like we wasted a lot of our time. That was because we did our first cycle and it kind of bombed. But that was because we were just starting out. Now, as we get to the end, we HAVE gotten better. But the work we have been looking at has been our own work instead of student work.  
(PLC Meeting, May 25, 2016)

Bautista and Ferro both made reference to initial challenges of the year's Civics English integration, as Bautista said that they "[built] the boat while...in the water" and Ferro acknowledged that the "first cycle" "kind of bombed." On the other hand, both felt convinced that the fruit of the process was the change in their teaching practices, which they planned to continue.

Many of these challenges that ultimately changed the teachers came from their attempt to fulfill their objectives and hopes as English teachers at the same time they embarked on civic action experiments. Before Bautista gave his boat metaphor, Ferro expressed appreciation to the PLC that their year's experiments and collaboration allowed her to fulfill her "desires of the last couple of years" to teach units based in novels that developed students' writing and speaking in the real world, that the PLC was "willing to take risks with me" (PLC Meeting, May 25, 2016). The Civics English collaboration fulfilled Ferro's vision of the potential for English class to give students a sense of purpose and belonging in school, which was key to her conception of civics in English class (Ferro Interview, January 18, 2016). By the end of the year, doing civic action had not displaced, but rather had achieved, Ms. Ferro's ideals as an English teacher, despite the missteps and difficulties of the year.

## *The Tensions as Reading Literature Edged Out Civic Action*

Notwithstanding their growth in accomplishing ELA objectives, the part of Civics English the case study teachers struggled with was integrating civic action into their already very full curricula. More specifically, the teachers' decision to organize the school year around reading three novels had committed them to a substantial investment of time and attention. As a researcher and co-designer, studying their classes repeatedly demonstrated to me the possibilities of literature for critical thinking, civic deliberation, empathy, and complex conceptualization. But the hours and effort disappeared into those narrative worlds of novels, however much illumination they granted to analogous situations for the youth, left little space and time for tangible civic action. The case study teachers' classrooms especially became a test case of how much the reading and writing activity of traditional English classes could become a form of civic engagement, and how much they might become an evasion of it.

Part of the reason the case study classrooms felt this tension more was that Ms. Ferro and Mr. Bautista taught literature to read closely with students, which both facilitated civic thinking and deferred civic action plans. As Caroline Denver commented in one of the meetings, "But MY GOD the time just SUCKS AWAY when you're reading a novel!" (PLC Meeting, January 26, 2016). When Denver complained of this in the PLC meeting, her colleagues asked and discussed how she read the novels with students.

| Bautista: You have to be really good with your time management

| Denver: "Forget about History [class] today!"

Ocampo: How are you reading it with them?

Bautista: Because she's doing like literature circles, right?

Denver: Well, the first core [ELA and History classes] with *Monster*, I'm going to have to do a lot more teacher directed stuff.

(PLC Meeting, January 26, 2016)

Just as Denver anticipated, she wound up using more teacher-directed activities, "literature circles" where students read with each other, and independent reading assignments to get through the novels expeditiously. Mr. Ocampo assigned reading in a similar fashion, gradually handing over reading responsibilities to his students as the novels progressed. But Bautista and Denver jointly opted to read the entire novels aloud and discuss them with their classes, committing even more time to their literature reading. As Bautista opined:

Bautista: You HAVE to read it with them. To know the ins and outs of the story.

(Bautista and Ferro Co-Planning Session, March 30, 2016).

Because they had committed to this whole-class way of reading novels, their dedication to these ELA practices consumed much of the available time and attention from the possibility of organizing civic action.

The PLC team's planning conversations showed these ELA teachers' aptitude for English pedagogy, but also their unfamiliarity with planning for civic action. My analysis of the discourse patterns in the PLC meetings showed that while Ms. Denver's input and my coaching turns of conversation often suggested or asked about possible collaborative civic action, the other three teachers would respond by redirecting the conversation to themes and details of the novels

their classes were reading. In one example of this pattern, in the January PLC meeting when the team brainstormed ideas for civic action, I summed up some common threads from each teacher reporting about their current ideas for civic engagement, moving toward a proposal for a joint project. Then, Bautista turned the conversation towards connecting the story points of *The Giver* to themes of justice and judgment, and then the conversation continued to explore these thematic, abstract connections, rather than pivoting towards planning “actions” and “projects” as I suggested.

Coach/Co-designer: But maybe we come together to decide on some actions, some projects kids could do, with some similar standards, where we could look at writing objectives... I don't know what you guys think...?

Denver: Cool. I think that's great.

Bautista: Yeah, I could also see that too. Because [Denver] is really into the criminal justice, kind of like...how things work there. And like with [Ocampo's novel] *The Giver*, you could almost feel that that's what happened. Where [some]body says, this is how it's going to be. This is how it runs, so our society's that way. So then you could almost take it from that stance that this was a judgment passed down by someone, you know, a sentence. And then the Giver, and what Jonas goes through is fighting against that judgment...

(PLC Meeting, January 26, 2016.)

These conversational turns that led into literary connections often rehearsed civic ideas, such as Bautista's discussion of criminal justice in Denver's novels or social structures in Ocampo's. But instead of moving our planning towards actionable steps of local civic action that students could take, the discussion returned to abstract notions and universal themes from these novels. In this way, the team often struggled to return to the discourse of planning action, often redirected toward literary discussion of the novels and themes.

### *Connecting to Civics and Bridging to Action*

At first, the central challenge for the ELA teachers integrating civics was finding room among their disciplinary ELA commitments to plan for action. Along the way, Ferro and Bautista felt that they were discovering ways that reading literature really *was* allowing them to think and discuss many civic themes. In time, I recognized that the gap between the civic deliberation that might happen in an English class and concrete civic action lay in bridging the way students read their novels beyond the personal connections and global themes typical of ELA to the place where local engagement could mediate the personal and the global. First, we had to recognize how a sense of the *local* bridged the connection between literature and civic action.

As the second semester progressed towards April, while Mr. Ocampo and Ms. Denver had almost finished Civics English projects, Bautista and Ferro were still unsure how their civic action would materialize in their classes. I wrote in my field notes, after the meeting with Ferro and Bautista where I proposed the Town Hall idea:

I think in all of this, I am reflective about my role in relation to the PLC. I have not wanted to push and micromanage, to demand too much so that they would have the room to make the project their own and dictate the turns of the project. But I realize also what I have been asking them to do runs so counter to the tendency of the English class to bury heads in a book, to maintain instructional independence, and to keep the momentum and control of the class communities and cultures, that it's a jarring set of changes to introduce. And just as students awkwardly and independently appropriate the voice of the academic, the literary scholar, or whatever we're trying to teach them, these teachers have to take on positions and practices that are unusual and uncomfortable for them in many senses, for which no one could fault some hesitation or reluctance.

(Researcher Field Notes, May 2, 2016)

This tension of introducing the unfamiliar activity of civic action clearly appeared in evidence of the PLC planning, Ferro and Bautista's own planning and collaboration, and even my reflexive field notes as a researcher. But the Town Hall idea capitalized on a bridge to authentic and organic ways that literature study and disciplinary writing could resonate meaningfully with civic action.

A surprising finding for my study was that this resonance came through literature, through observing and discussing the effects of literature discussion in their classes. But this shift was not initially obvious to the teachers, who were habituated in ELA practices that were schooling-oriented and stayed in their classrooms, in the manner of "encapsulated" learning Engeström (1991) describes. Ferro and Bautista consistently referenced and tried to envision civic action from their classes, but their planning returned habitually to ELA exercises of reading and writing. In the March PLC meeting, still casting about for how to organize civic action, the two case study teachers devised a possible Justice Week activity involving a *Judge Judy*-like scenario that would move students through several phases of writing argument, informative, and narrative writings. Mr. Ocampo had shared a lesson he did in his class about race and policing, where students contrasted the police report from the controversial arrest of African-American scholar Henry Louis Gates as he tried to enter his own home with media articles about the subsequent "Beer Summit" between Gates, President Obama, Vice President Biden, and arresting officer James Crowley (Washington Post, April 22, 2016). Bautista and Ferro's reaction to these ideas showed them brainstorming towards a civics project, but still returning to imagined scenarios and school-oriented writing:

Bautista: Because we don't know what our [Justice Project] is yet, right? Not really. But we have all these narratives of justice, right? What if we did something similar to our "Cruise Ship" [assignment last year]? But we have it more like this. So we set up a scenario where we do that. And then that [Justice Week], we set up a scenario...

Ocampo: "Cruise Ship," you said?

Bautista and Ferro explained that last year, after the district required ELA teachers to teach a writing performance task, they created a "Cruise Ship" scenario where students created "different information materials" such as pamphlets and schedules, and then composed narratives and arguments related to the trip. The two teachers continued to brainstorm a Justice Week project with a similar imagined scenario and assignments, but related to the Gates controversy:

Bautista: So what if we do something like that, but prior to that Justice Week, set up a scenario where the kids have to do something similar...And then at the end, we just decide which one of those pieces you would want to share out, or maybe... like--

Ferro: Do a “Judge Judy”

Bautista: Maybe it'll be like a thing where, “what do you think about justice now?” after going through the process of [studying Henry Louis Gates’] case. And maybe that's what they share within the Justice Week? Right? They write this speech statement of what they feel about justice now, after going through a scenario.

Ferro: You and I need to sit down, come up with a bunch of documents.

(PLC Meeting, March 23, 2016)

Their ideas about justice-related classroom action imagined touching on present day and, in some ways, “global” civic issues, and responding to them in personal ways with different academic discourses in their writing. But they still returned to the schooled English practices of staged or artificial hypothetical “scenarios” to prompt these writing demands rather than conceptualizing and implementing actual civic contexts, audiences, and communications. Such an assignment required them to “come up with a bunch of documents” to construct the scenario instead of drawing from actual, locally relevant texts, and would lead to “a speech statement” about “what [students] feel now” about justice rather than an actual discursive intervention in a civic issue.

What ultimately pulled the teachers out of these habitual tracks of English practice was bridging the kinds of discussions students were having in class around their novel, *Bat 6*, with students’ own grappling with the same issues in their local context, so that discourse and action that went beyond the classroom became resonant with the discourse within the classroom. Building this bridge sometimes involved my mediation as a coach and co-designer to move the conversation from the personal or global, classroom-based, thematic discussion of the novel to the proximate and resonant activity of our planned local civic action. In the May 18<sup>th</sup> co-planning meeting with the teachers, for instance, I tried to clarify with Bautista and Ferro what the Town Hall plans would look like. As the discussion veered again towards the novel, I tried to connect their English planning discourse to our civic action planning. At first, Ferro directed the question towards the class’s global, thematic explorations and her own personal associations about ideas on bullying. (The following four pieces of transcriptions from Co-Planning Meeting, May 18, 2016):

Coach/Co-designer: I'm kind of interested in how you're going to talk about [the bullying topic]. I'm just curious how... even with our text email back and forth, like, that [Town Hall allyship] topic's a little fuzzy for us right now. I'm not too sure exactly how it [plays out].

Ferro: I just kept relating it to Shazam [from *Bat-6*].

Coach/Co-designer: We just have an overlapping sense of what the topic is.

Ferro: I figure it's just karma. I was a bully in elementary school. [Laughs]

Coach/Co-designer: Mm. It's coming back on you. [Laughs]

Bautista then turned the conversation back to elaborating on the novel's imagined world of characters, which I attempted to parlay into how the students might discuss the civic themes that they had been exploring in the Town Hall:

Bautista: Which is not a good way to see it. Just validates the meanness... just validates the idea of self-worth. You [Ferro] feel like you should be punished. It's like the Shazam situation. Shazam had a horrible life so she treats the Japanese poorly. So does she feel like she deserves that? Or she has a right to it or something? Or it's like, you shouldn't. Because Aki and Shazam are so similar in that sense. Because Aki probably feels she deserves the way she's treated because she's Japanese.... [continues elaborating about the characters for 47 more seconds]

Coach/Co-designer: Well, it's a hard thing, because with... it's also them being kids, right? When we're kids, there's almost two steps in the moral development idea. There's like, you always think of yourself and your own perspective, right? So there's first the ability to see someone else's perspective, and there's the ability to see from someone else's perspective yourself, you know what I mean? That's almost too hard for any kid to make. You have to sort of feel the way you feel, and then see someone else reflected, and then if that perspective is about you, you have to see that that is their perspective about me... I can't even do that with my wife.

This ethical complexity I mention, being able to take on someone else's perspective, was a way we had been discussing the role of the Town Hall activity in pushing students to complex civic deliberation. Ferro responded to my nudge towards the challenges of the Town Hall, imagining that the novel's author returned to the characters and setting of the novel, which I again tried to segue into planning for the Town Hall.

Ferro: It's really hard. It'd be so interesting if she [*Bat-6's* author, Virginia Euwer Wolff] had decided to write a second book with them as adults going back. Because you know they're in the town and it's such a tradition. You know, what if the BAT 6 continues, and hearing from their point of view, now, what if Shazam and Aki are now best friends because they went through this traumatic experience? She learned from Shig over summer, like what if after that they actually become close, because it brings the two towns together to these two groups of kids. Could they actually have had positive outcomes? And that would be cool thing to write, where you see that change.

Coach/Co-Designer: I mean, wondering about that would be a nice thing that, timing-wise, matches even with, okay, what do you arguing for in your [Town Hall] essay? Ultimately? Are you trying to suggest something that moves us closer towards peace or towards community or understanding? I guess in either topic, [allyship or athletics]. And I like that. Because this is... doing the literary thing... like doing the novel... gives the

whole [Justice Week] thing kind of an arc, and then we have this project going along, and in a way--

Bautista: Yeah, they both kind of work that way. It slides in, yeah.

Bautista saw the connection I made: Ferro's suggestion that it would be interesting to see the novel continue in a sequel was an imaginative way of contemplating the literature's civic questions. I tried to tie that possibility to how the students might also extend or elaborate on the novel's thematic questions, not through writing a sequel, but through the Town Hall discussion. I called it an "arc," and Bautista noted how the topics as we designed them in the Town Hall "slides in" with their discussion of the novels. At that point, the realization seemed to occur to Bautista that the civic themes in all of their novels could lead logically into the Town Hall's kind of local, connected civic action:

Coach/Co-designer: Hopefully it kind of feels together at the same time.

Bautista: And it was funny how we didn't choose the books initially to hit that. But every book hit it in some way.

Coach/Co-Designer: Totally. *Misfits. Seven Daughters.*

Bautista: And if we had even done, if we were able to do *Outsiders*, it totally would've fit. Totally would've fit just as well.

Ferro: Yeah, and we chose all of our books *last* year, except this most recent one.

Bautista: And it just fell into place. Which is good. But I guess if you think about it, why are those books in the middle school library? Because these are issues we want kids to battle with and think about... and... hopefully, have a say on that, because they're the ones who have to deal with it.

(Co-Planning Meeting, May 18, 2016)

Bautista's last turn, drawing the threads from the novels' issues to what the students "battle with and think about," and then to what they "hopefully...have a say on," summed up the conceptual bridge from ELA's literature study practices to concrete youth civic action that this project hoped to leverage.

It is obvious from my account that my role as a co-designer and coach played a hand in overcoming the impasses to action that challenged these teachers. As my previously-quoted field notes from May 2 mentioned, I tried to be circumspect about supporting their decision-making and development as teachers over my agenda. Various evidence from the study suggests that the teachers appreciated and respected my efforts to mitigate my influence, especially with Bautista and Ferro in their daily co-planning. The simplest example was the nickname that Bautista coined for me, repeated by Ferro and Ocampo in PLC meetings. Alluding to the way that I managed to "mastermind" our collaboration so that, as Bautista explained to Ocampo, "we think we're doing what we want but somehow it ends up we're doing what [the coach] wanted us to do all along" while "working in the background," he nicknamed me "El Chapo," the Sinaloan Cartel



leader that recent headlines reported arrested (PLC Meeting, March 23, 2016). Less facetiously, in his end of year reflection, Bautista remarked:

Bautista: Adding the civic part, which made it even ten times more daunting...gave the whole course the year a direction, when we finally realized we're all moving towards justice. It was like, shoot, that's awesome! And then somehow everything just innately could be connected to justice.

(PLC Meeting, May 25, 2016)

Considering the significant shifts in practice that the team spent the year integrating and implementing, the seamlessness with which Bautista felt their curricula flowed into justice projects resulted, I would argue, from authentically bridging their ELA practices with local civic action.

That bridging from the imaginative local of literature reading in the class community to the actual local engagement of the Town Hall brought with it a set of challenges and opportunities for ELA instruction that the teachers would discover, as civic action reshaped typical ELA practices.

## Chapter 5: The Town Hall and Civics English in Action

This chapter answers the third research question, *what do ELA teachers discover about how their Civics English activity expands their ELA teaching and shifts their students' ELA learning experience?*

To answer this question, I analyzed evidence of the execution, preparation, and reflections of the Town Hall activity implemented with Mr. Bautista and Ms. Ferro's case study classes, including field notes, recordings, and transcripts from the classrooms and actual Town Hall event, which took place June 1, 2016 in Molina's multi-purpose room. I also relied on interviews with the two teachers and ten case study students before and after the event. This data allowed me to study how the teachers and students saw the Town Hall shifting the reading and writing activities they had done throughout the year, enabling new forms of ELA activity that made civic action resonant with English teaching.

In this chapter, I group the findings of the teachers' discoveries and the students' experiences into two categories, first centered on language and second centered on civic learning. First, the authentic context of civic engagement *shifted the significance* of familiar components of ELA academic language production in terms of

- (a) orientation to audiences,
- (b) collective authorship, and
- (c) discursive apprenticeship.

I exemplify each of these shifted components by focusing on one exemplar Town Hall statement produced by Giovanni's Youth Sports issues group, detailing the academic language features of that statement, the steps of preparation unique to this project that led to those features, and the outcomes achieved by teachers' experimentation. Together, these show how Civics English reframed the objects, subjects, and mediational tools of English activity to provide students with social learning in English discourse.

In this chapter's second half, I show how the Town Hall's civic participation bridged from Ms. Ferro and Mr. Bautista's literature-furnished *imaginative local* to engage students in activity at the levels of the personal, the global, and the local. I demonstrate this engagement through the example of Cristina's Allyship Group's statement, showing how the students joined personal connections to global issues to craft an argument for local action.

Finally, I close the chapter with a set of mixed evaluations of the Town Hall's outcomes. On one hand, the Town Hall realized many of the ideals and ideas that drove this study, leading to lasting shifts that the teachers prepared to carry forward into future experimentation after the year's end. On the other hand, the challenges, limitations, and shortcomings of the experiment were also evident in the Town Hall and our assessment of it afterwards. These critiques created problem spaces for future design of Civics English practices, now that many of its possibilities had been proven.

### *Setting Up the Town Hall*

Recall from Chapter 2's description of the Town Hall, which took place on June 1, 2016, that the event's logistics were organized to foster interactive discourse with local leaders about the civic dimensions of their issues. Image 5.1 provides one vantage point of the Town Hall, showing the inner square of Ms. Ferro and Mr. Bautista's students (about half of each class occupied each square) and surrounded by an audience from Mr. Ocampo and Ms. Denver's

classes, who took notes on the civic discussions. Over the course of around forty-five minutes of the period for three periods that day, classes of Ferro's and Bautista's seventh graders, formally attired, with speeches and notes on clipboards, stood up and described problems, told stories, pointed out facts, cited experts and commentators, and suggested policy changes for youth athletics or allyship support and school discipline.

Image 5.1 The Town Hall, from one vantage point.



Altogether approximately 150 total students from Bautista and Ferro's classes participated in the Town Hall, not counting the classes that Ocampo and Denver brought as audiences. Athletic Director Mr. Ferreira and Safe and Inclusive Schools Director Ms. Trueheart proved to be lively conversation partners, listening actively to the students, repeating their points and acknowledging the value of their perspectives, and by turns agreeing, extending, counterbalancing, and enthusiastically echoing their sentiments. The variety and quality of responses from the two community leaders constituted their own lesson in energetic, adaptive civic engagement. Ms. Ferro and Mr. Bautista each sat with one of the groups, acting as hosts and facilitators, alternating throughout the day. The students had crafted their statements, chosen their spokespersons, and rehearsed their readings. After some introductions, one group at a time, one spokesperson at a time, they read their statements to the assembled squares, this group describing the pressures of overactive parents in youth sports, that group expressing concerns about zero tolerance disciplinary policies, this group arguing that Title IX did not guarantee girls sports got equal cheering sections and community support, that group admitting to the risks of being an "upstander" online amid the specters of bullying on social media.

To exemplify phenomena I saw in the twenty-four Town Hall statements from which I collected data (including four which I also analyzed in the context of the ten case study students' trajectories of class activity), I narrow to two representative Town Hall statements and the class preparation activity that led up to them. I selected these two groups as representative exemplars

(rather than outstanding exemplars) of language learning transformed in action (Giovanni's group) and multi-leveled civic action (Cristina's group) because my data of their case study student members allowed me to narrate how shifts in classroom activity could correspond with parts of their Town Hall statement discourse. But these features of their statements in these two examples could also be readily found in the other statements, and the other groups underwent the same preparation steps. What the two exemplars to follow in this chapter illustrate also aligns with what the teachers said they learned in our interviews, and how they said their practice expanded as a result of this activity.

### **Language Transformed in Action**

The teachers and I found that civic action provided an authentic context that shifted the significance of ELA language production practices. The crucial difference that civic action made was to turn the tasks and assignments, ways of writing and representing themselves, and relationships to norms and models that students usually experienced in ELA class, and to place them in the context of authentic usage towards purposeful action in the world with a real audience. The teachers recognized that this shift resulted from integrating civic action into their familiar ELA teaching practices to lead to unfamiliar engagement and outcomes.

An incident that made this shift meaningful to the teachers was a moment of tension in our preparation leading up to the Town Hall. In a co-planning session on April 26<sup>th</sup>, soon after Ferro, Bautista, and I had settled on the Town Hall idea, the teachers raised a concern that California state standardized testing would soon begin, starting the first week of May. Not only would this slow their reading and preparation for the Town Hall, but the teachers worried they would need to devote time to special practice for the standardized tests, as they noted Mr. Ocampo was doing. I pointed out that the Town Hall plan we devised could serve as a fitting preparation for the most consequential part of the state tests, the ELA Performance Tasks, which the test development consortium argued improved on "traditional, large-scale accountability tests in terms of authenticity" (Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, 2012; p.1). I made a case for a truer authenticity in our project's design:

Coach/Co-Designer: Because think about it. It's [about reading] multiple sources, and you're supposed to write from the prompt but it sets up a hypothetical situation, and you have to take these sources and synthesize them into a piece of argument or blended text, right?

Bautista: Basically what we're doing [in the Town Hall].

Coach/Co-Designer: Yeah, that's the idea, that's how we designed it. But real.  
(Bautista and Ferro Co-Planning Meeting, 4/16/2016)

This became a key distinction for our understanding of the Town Hall activity's function in shifting student language production, the fact that we instituted many elements of an ELA writing task, "but real." Ferro and Bautista decided to forego test preparation because the Town Hall "would already be preparing them for it," as Ferro said in the meeting. But in contrast to the "authenticity" of those standardized tests, whose scenarios and audiences were only imagined in the prompt, we were structuring an activity with the actual situation, audience, relevant sources,

and purpose that would call for those reading and writing proficiencies they needed to demonstrate on the test. The Town Hall would contain those many of those same elements as the ELA Performance Task, “but real.”

Those language production practices demanded by the ELA Performance Task, which these teachers had taught repeatedly the past years (cf. Chapter 4’s discussion of the “Cruise Ship” assignment), altered in significance when embedded in civic activity with truly authentic audiences and purposes. A small example of these shifts was a moment when a student in Mr. Bautista’s class asked, three school days before the Town Hall and the day before a rehearsal run, “What happens if you don’t finish on time?” Bautista responded, “You want to finish so you feel satisfied you’ve given enough effort. Being successful...being prepared...Get as close as you can. You WILL be prepared for tomorrow” (Bautista 2<sup>nd</sup> Period Field Notes, 5/26/2018). Instead of the usual appeal to late work consequences or due dates responsibilities, Bautista appealed to the student’s sense of satisfaction and identity as a performer and to the approaching reality of the event itself. This small example illustrates the shift that the larger example of Giovanni’s group’s statement demonstrates more profoundly, about the way language production is transformed in action.

### *Authentic Action Shifts Audiences, Authorship, and Discursive Apprenticeship*

Rather than a theoretical rubric or set of assignment guidelines, the contours of the civic action task dictated the discourse that students strove to produce. As a result, shifts in significance could be seen throughout the language production activities of the Town Hall context, including in the student language’s orientation to audiences, processes of collective authorship, and apprenticeship under models of civic engagement discourses. In each of these aspects of ELA activity, I provide evidence of how the Town Hall’s authentic context of action materialized in the language product, as seen in Giovanni’s group’s statement. Then I trace back to classroom data to show how this altered the teacher and students’ preparation process. After that I show evidence of how the two ELA teachers felt their own practice had expanded.

Giovanni was the spokesperson for one of the Youth Sports groups in Mr. Bautista’s class, a group consisting of three male students. In the Town Hall for 2<sup>nd</sup> period, Giovanni read his group’s handwritten statement (reproduced as written, leaving non-conventional writing intact):

Hi my name is [Giovanni], I am here to discuss with you the issues that are asosated with sports and youth.

What my Group and I see as an issue is that sports are no longer entartaning because parents cause it to be too competative and stressful. —Sports are also no longer as fun because coaches expect more older players. —When coaches mistake maturity For skill, they dont take into accont that each player has their own flaws despite their age.

Having parents or guardians bic-er with the referees, Attempting to Argue that their chid or team deserved - that point or was or wasn’t a foul, makes the game less engaging for the students.

Although parents have vast intentions, takes the fun out of game.

Its not just that, a flaw that coaches often make is confuse maturity with talent. — coaches generally identify older children as having more dexterity, in wich they focus more of their time on the older players.

As a group we bealive that coaches, adults and society should mitigate their generalizations and news on players based on Age rather than skill or lack there of. Like wise, Parents should get less involved so that sporting events would be more enjoyable for the players as well as the Audience.

In conclusion we as a Group bealive that in order to aleivate stress and conpation [competition] from youth and sporting events, parents, and guardians should be less involved in youth and sports.

(Giovanni’s Group Town Hall Statement, June 1, 2016)

As Giovanni delivered the speech, Mr. Ferreira took notes and acknowledged the piece appreciatively, and then a subsequent group delivered their statement before Ferreira responded to a batch of three of the groups. In his response, Mr. Ferreira illustrated Giovanni’s group’s points with an anecdote about parents whose pressure on their student fueled inappropriate language directed at coaches and referees, but he balanced those stories with other examples where sports provided an arena for student leadership and maturity, surprising their parents and teachers with new identities that served as positive influences for their academic or family lives. With candor as a coach and parent, Ferreira said “Sometimes parents are the ones who have to mature” (Town Hall Transcript 2<sup>nd</sup> Period Sports, 6/1/2016).

*a. Orientation to Audiences*

Civic action compelled the speakers/writers to interweave acknowledgements, concessions, and appeals to their various audiences in ways that textured the writing. Those audiences actual existed as interlocutors and not just hypothetical addressees, which shifting the degree of intention with which these young writers crafted their statements for them. And beyond other situations where their writing reached real-life audiences, the civic action context meant also navigating and negotiating conflicting points of view in high-stakes disagreement, which required a different rhetorical toolbelt and audience awareness than other ELA projects. Giovanni’s statement contained examples of what I coded throughout many Town Hall statements as *Audience Consciousness*, explicit references to multiple potential audiences and stakeholders: Mr. Ferreira foremost, but also Giovanni’s group of co-authors, coaches, parents and guardians, adults, society, “Audiences” (fans watching games), and the Town Hall audience. In other statements, the groups started with a more direct address to Mr. Ferreira or Ms. Trueheart, and then touched on various constituencies throughout. While Giovanni’s group’s statement did not open this way, instead it contained examples of another linguistic marker of addressing these multiple audiences at once. To show anticipation of different possible perspectives, these students tended to offer multiple options rather than merely imply them. As a way of covering or airing all possibilities, they used phrases like, “was and wasn’t a foul,” “skill or lack thereof,” and “for the players as well as the Audience.” Such language choices, though they strained the rules of artful concision, served at least as a feint of precision, and signaled the

speaker considering all options— that perhaps the irate parent may be complaining about something that indeed “was or wasn’t a foul.”

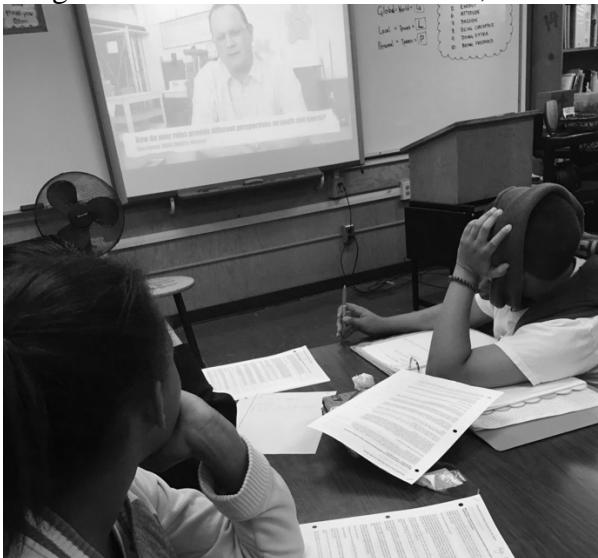
One of the essential preparatory experiences we designed in the Town Hall was to record a video interview with Mr. Ferreira and Ms. Trueheart, who each spoke at length about their respective topics, guided by a few key questions. I recorded and edited these videos into fourteen-minute discussions from each speaker that the teachers showed twice in the classes to the students who had chosen their topic (see Image 5.2). During the video, in Mr. Ferreira’s case, he offered his perspective on the civic and community dimensions of youth sports from the vantage point of an Athletics Director (“eighteen sports, twenty eight teams...”), but he also spoke of occupying multiple roles, as a parent of a student athlete at the high school and Molina, as a coach, as a Science teacher, and as the school’s Activities Director. In addition to these multiple roles, Mr. Ferreira served as such a fitting civic representative for youth sports because of his constant interaction in multiple settings with various stakeholders. In his recorded presentation, Mr. Ferreira pivoted between these different perspectives and the obligations each entailed, establishing that each vantage point required consideration of other stakeholders.

As a parent, I think high school athletics can be pretty daunting. Looking from the perspective of my wife, even though she’s my wife, she gets kind of blindsided. Especially if the parent is an English language learner... I think there’s a lot of fear and anxiety a parent, with their son or daughter being involved in athletics. Typical practice is... fourteen hours a week? After school? That’s a lot of time. It’s a big-time commitment that I think is troubling for parents.

As a coach and [Athletic Director]... I would hope that all my coaches are looking out for a child socially, athletically, academically. But I can’t always say that that happens... but that’s the goal. At the Varsity level...and I don’t think it’s the coaches as much as society... there’s a HIGH expectation to compete at a high level. And the kids feel it. And the school feels it. And the coaches feel that burden.

(Ferreira Video, 5/18/2016)

Image 5.2. Mr. Ferreira’s Video Talk, viewed by Myesha and classmate.



With Giovanni's group as well as other groups, Mr. Bautista repeatedly emphasized that however they crafted their position statements, they had to keep in mind that Mr. Ferreira was not just the Athletic Director, but that he answered to all of these different roles. To be convincing to Mr. Ferreira, the students understood, their arguments could not fail to address the perspectives of various constituencies, including the schools, parents, coaches, or broader society that were part of their indirect audience (Bautista's 2<sup>nd</sup> Period, 5/18/2016; 5/23/2016; 5/31/2016).

The way authentic audiences in the Town Hall influenced students' spoken and written language and the writing/composing process was the most significant shift that Bautista noted in our end-of-year interview. In his reflection, that shift adhered from the videos of Ferreira and Trueheart, through the groups' composing process and their audience-orientation, and into the language of the statements that had to fold in these rhetorical acknowledgements.

Them being able to hear their voice and see them, like know who they were talking to. It wasn't like, "write this because you're just supposed to, how you're supposed to—like this and like this." And you could see in what they wrote, and in their final drafts after, it was like, "okay I can say this, but I have to see it that way too. I have to take into consideration all these other perspectives because we're talking to them." And you're not going to change anyone's mind if you don't show them that... you mention it in your piece, "I see your perspective." I think that was the biggest positive [impact of the Town Hall.]

(Bautista Interview, 6/7/2016)

Bautista's reflections centered more on the effect of authentic audiences than on the motivating lever of social transformation or civic participation. But he felt his task as an English teacher, and also as a civic educator, was to give students the know-how and the resourcefulness to navigate the variety of social and political institutions that govern their worlds (Bautista Interview, 1/7/2016). The project served as a proof-of-concept that such navigations would be brought home to students when authentic contexts and purposes beyond the classroom shift the significance of language and audience.

#### *b. Collective Authorship*

Giovanni's group's statement exemplified the ways the Town Hall assignment resulted in dialogically-generated pieces of written and spoken rhetoric that used academic language to anticipate counterarguments, recognize contingencies and offer qualifications, and propose more palatable solutions. These features reflected a shift from in how these ELA teachers approached *authorship*, as they resulted from a process of a collective group of students proposing and weighing ideas for their feasibility given the interests of different stakeholders, rather than an individual student composing their own idiosyncratic policy recommendations. This shift from a typical English individually-authored assignment to a collectively authored piece came from the necessities and constraints of an oral interactional event like the Town Hall, which after all could only include so many voices to somehow represent the whole. But the process nonetheless resulted in statements that bore the marks of dialogical negotiation of multiple points of view.

The statement from Giovanni's group joined together pieces from each group member's statements, stitched together from a process of nominating, selecting, and revising



individual contributions. Their statement was of shorter-than-average length, and though Giovanni volunteered as spokesperson, his group (“What my Group and I see as an issue”) of three students had each composed some amount of individual narrative, expository, and argumentative pre-writing pieces about the issue before distilling and consolidating into this Town Hall statement. Video recordings of the group’s preparations show that all three students discussed their ideas, another group member composed a bullet list of main points, a third student wrote up a rough draft of the statement, and all three read and offered verbal input on the draft that Giovanni ultimately read (Bautista 2<sup>nd</sup> Period Video A, 5/26/2016; 5/31/2016). The point about parents and guardians “[bickering] with referees” could be sourced to one group member, and the idea of confusing maturity with talent attributable to another. Also, these students had more elaborate examples and anecdotes that accompanied these points in their original drafts, which had to be reduced for the three-minute statements (Giovanni’s Group Written Drafts).

The group composition process as Mr. Bautista framed it in class demanded not only participation and input from all of the students, but redaction and revision that came from a process of agreeing and qualifying their statements. The group’s statement contains extensive use of qualifiers, which I also saw across the corpus of statements from Mr. Bautista’s class more than Ms. Ferro’s, corresponding with Mr. Bautista’s attention to them in his teaching. In a PLC meeting, we had discussed how academic language was often characterized by these qualifiers and hedges, so that statements were appropriately moderated, avoiding extreme, over-simplistic, or easily disproven claims (PLC Meeting, January 20, 2016). Bautista conveyed this characteristic to his students, visible in various qualifiers or hedges throughout this statement (with emphases added): “too competitive and stressful,” “no longer as fun,” “attempting to argue,” “makes the game less engaging for the students,” “coaches generally identify older children as having more dexterity,” “focus more of their time,” “parents should get less involved so... more enjoyable for the player.” The most notable example is itself an (imperfectly executed) label for the feature: “...should mitigate their generalizations.” The use of language that mitigates generalizations was prominent in Bautista’s students’ statements, as it is a prominent characteristic of academic language in general (Biber, 2007).

Collective authorship shifted the academic language of the product, and it also shifted elements of the ELA preparation for civic action towards a different onus of responsibility for the effects and results of the language production. Group projects were common in Mr. Bautista’s and Ms. Ferro’s classes, but this group composition process included steps like the rehearsal and coaching sessions that Bautista held in his class the two school days preceding the Town Hall, on May 27<sup>th</sup> and May 31<sup>st</sup>. While the rest of the class continued working in their groups, Bautista called groups one by one to the front, where he had arranged chairs as they would be in the Town Hall, with one seat in front for the spokesperson and three seats behind for their group members to listen, take notes, and pass notes and questions to the spokesperson for their exchange with Mr. Ferreira or Ms. Trueheart (See Image 5.3).

Image 5.3. Rehearsal and Coaching for Giovanni's Town Hall Statement



These kinds of rehearsals for group presentations were also not unusual in ELA, but the distinctive practice shifts of this Town Hall assignment were revealed in how shared authorship became shared responsibility for the implications of the statement. Mr. Bautista coached the spokesperson on their public speaking skills, but he also specified that non-spokespersons needed to take responsibility for the statement and to be ready to defend their claims, pose questions, or offer rejoinders in the ensuing discussions. As I wrote in my field notes for May 31:

[Giovanni's] group got an earful from Tchr [teacher] about, "he's speaking for you, so make sure you're ready to back up what's he's saying." He pointed out they were throwing out a lot of arguments, which is good, which is what you want to do, but drove home that they should make sure the statement represented them. [Jordan, Giovanni's groupmate] defended them, saying that they all played a part in putting it together.... Tchr responded that [Jordan] had better be able to back up what they're saying about coaches, even if it didn't come from him, because they were talking to a coach. [Jordan] nodded. The group sat down and resumed working on the statement.

(Bautista 2<sup>nd</sup> Period Field Notes, 5/31/2016)

Their collective authorship reframed the part they played in what needed to be a negotiated, agreed-upon document of their knowledge and beliefs. Rather than less ownership or identification with the language produced, the civic action context seemed to create a different kind of ownership, tied to the relationships within the groups forming their positions on the issues and in reference to the positions of other speakers and the local leaders they addressed.

The collective authorship process seems to have made for more negotiated and consensus-based language, with more qualifiers and hedges. It also may have contributed to attempts to adopt a more formal and official tone. It is important to note that, even with a group-based composing and editing process, language constructions that might be considered erroneous still counted in my analysis as positive attempts at using academic language. In this statement, as in virtually all of them, the register of language was unusual for students, the result of several lessons of calibrating their language to considerations of the audience and formal context of the Town Hall, so that students were taking risks with language they were still mastering. Thus,

throughout the statement, several pieces of language that might draw attention as a misuse or malapropism (“vast intentions,” “in wich they focus more of their time,” “mitigate their generalizations”), should also be seen as attempts to utilize unfamiliar academic language tokens and structures. I could not ascertain from the data if students felt more emboldened, or perhaps obligated, to adopt that academic register because of the Town Hall’s collective authorship component. But these examples of these ambitious, if imperfectly accomplished, attempts at formal, academic language indicated that a certain expectation for discourse had been established.

On reflection, although Ferro and Bautista both felt the Town Hall activity made academic language and discourse more meaningful to students, neither attributed those benefits to the group composition process. Instead, they credited the role of the context of the event, the local leaders and opportunity to influence change, and the connection to their literary study of *Bat-6* themes (Ferro Interview, 6/7/2016; Bautista Interview, 6/7/2016). However, when asked whether and how they would repeat or improve upon the Town Hall event in the future, Ferro imagined other possible civic activities that similarly took advantage of collective authorship:

Maybe we do it earlier in the year, and we do campaigns for No-Naming-Calling Week, like when we read *Misfits*, but other ones too, so trying to get the kids to orchestrate something, a campaign for people who are unfairly treated, immigrants or Muslim-Americas. And like groups of kids write letters together to say they stand together, if you’re part of the group or not, and we put it out to the school and to newspapers or something.

(Ferro Interview, 6/7/2016)

Ferro’s notions of collective authorship, reflected here, are more oriented toward its civic potential. The examination of Cristina’s group’s statement in the second part of this chapter will return to these dimensions of collective authorship and action.

### c. *Discursive Apprenticeship*

In addition to shifts in audience and authorship, the Town Hall civic action also led to shifts in the way that “mentor texts,” or models of discourse, took on significance in the class.

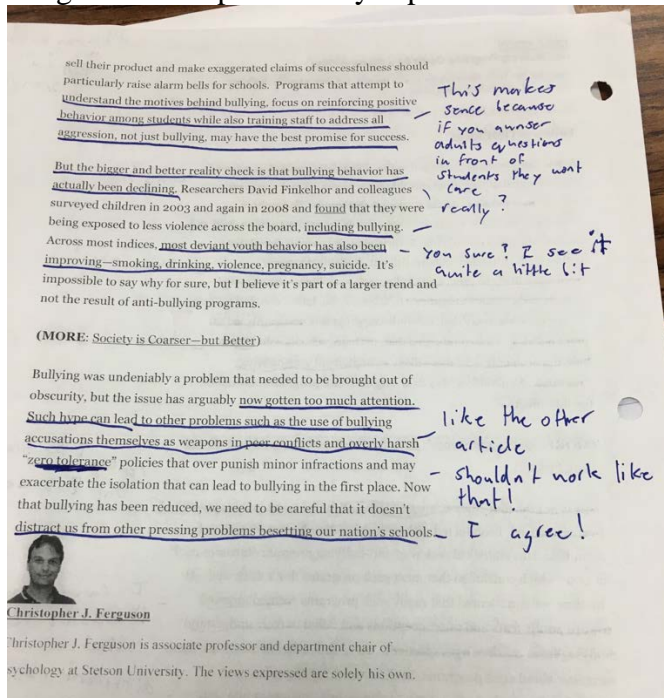
Evident throughout Giovanni’s group’s statement were examples of what I coded as *Academic Constructions*, pieces of rhetorical language that were traceable to academic language lessons Mr. Bautista introduced in the process, such as structural analyses of language models that the teachers called “brick and mortar” analyses. Four such that corresponded with the “brick and mortar” teaching activities appeared in this statement. First, the header that introduced the “issues that are [associated] with sports and youth” was a way of topicalizing the issues discussed as a class. Second, “Although parents have vast intentions, takes the fun out of the game” was an antithesis, using a subordinating conjunction with *although* that acknowledged a contrary perspective but asserted its claim in the main clause. Third, “As a group we [believe that] coaches, adults and society should...” contained a structure modeled in a mentor text that expressed a collective opinion. And the final sentence, “In conclusion... should...” was a concluding call to action that was also part of the model.

Civic action became a living context where rhetoric and discourse from others civically engaged became tools to apprentice students in academic language. Teaching with mentor texts became a well-established practice among the PLC teachers, as in Chapter 3’s discussion of the

“This I Believe” essay examples that Mr. Ocampo used. Certain ELA teaching resources that the teachers referred to in interviews and PLC meetings, such as Gallagher (2011), emphasized using real-world texts as models for students to study and imitate to produce original texts. In the September 30<sup>th</sup> PLC planning day and in the March PLC meeting, Bautista had encouraged Denver and Ocampo to use the “brick and mortar” analysis strategy to cull the language structures that students could imitate from those mentor texts, identifying the rhetorical function of those structures. The “bricks” in this premise were the specific vocabulary or tokens of language that might be particular to that piece of discourse’s topic, while the “mortar” was the sentence, clause, and syntax structures, transition words or conjunctions, and rhetorical devices that held the discourse together, and could perhaps be replicated with different “bricks” when carried over to another topic or domain (PLC Meeting, September 30, 2015; PLC Meeting, March 23, 2016).

Teachers found ways to present texts as “mentor texts” to apprentice students in civic discourse, analyzing their “bricks and mortars” to accomplish purposes in a way that was a point of departure from their past ELA practice. Bautista, Ferro, and I gathered a variety of texts on their topics that the students chose and analyzed for their arguments, evidence, and points of view, such as an article on the impact of the NBA Champion Golden State Warriors on the civic sensibilities of nearby Oaklanders, or how zero tolerance discipline policies for perceived bullying contributed to disproportionate suspension rates by race. Students interacted with these texts in the ways they had learned to with other texts, responding to the ideas, quoting them to use as evidence, and sometimes making use of the domain-specific language borrowed from these texts after reading and analyzing them (see Image 5.4)

Image 5.4 Example of “Allyship” article with student interactions

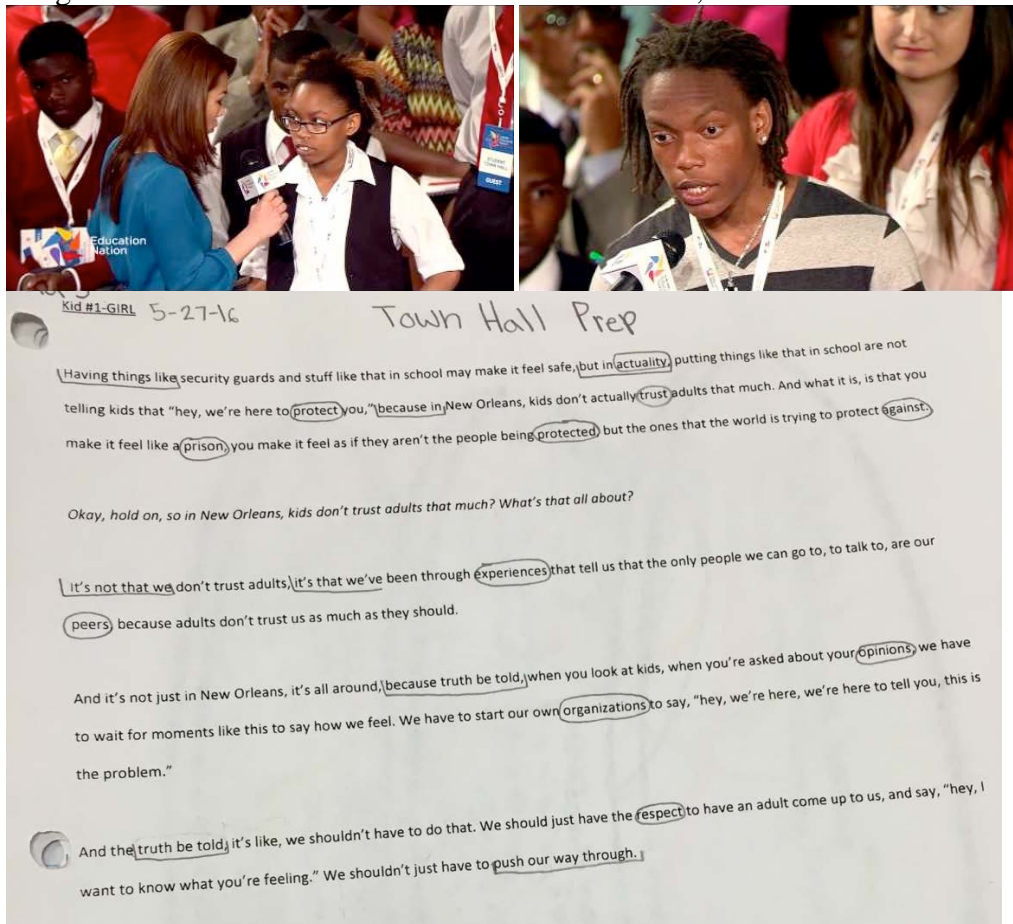


This sample shows how students responded to these texts as they had learned from ELA by finding points of agreement, questioning, making connections to other texts, and clarifying. However, once the Town Hall activity became solidified as an interactional event, after the

students had seen Trueheart and Ferreira on video and formed their groups and begun drafting their statements, the teachers began to recognize that students needed models of the kind of discourse they would produce, not just the issues, ideas, and information they would discuss (Bautista and Ferro Co-Planning, 5/17/2016).

As a result, the teachers showed students three clips from a PBS “Education Nation” series that held a Town Hall with educational leaders (including Secretary of Education Arne Duncan) about school reform, in which three New Orleans student activists spoke up about the needs in post-Hurricane rebuilt schools (see image 5.5). The clips were short but effective, as the teachers presented them as models of powerful speech from civically engaged youth who made arguments, presented narratives, and provided information convincingly.

Image 5.5 “Education Nation” Town Hall mentor text, student “brick and mortar” analysis



The teachers had students annotate the transcriptions of these videos, but this time, the teachers and students were motivated to study the “bricks and mortar” of these statements to extract examples of the kinds of rhetorical language they might use in their own Town Hall statements. In the Table below, the moves and “mortars” of academic and rhetorical language displayed in Giovanni’s group are matched to the examples from the New Orleans student speaker mentor texts they studied.

Table 5.1 Town Hall Moves from the Education Nation Mentor Text  
(From “Education Nation” PBS Town Hall, 2013)

<b>Education Nation Mentor Text</b>	<b>Rhetorical, academic, discursive move discussed</b>	<b>Giovanni’s Group Statement</b>
What I see is an issue is the fact that schools are, yes, helping students academically on certain levels to a certain extent...	Naming the problem and cause (with acknowledgement of other side)	What my Group and I see as an issue is that sports are no longer entartaning because parents cause it to be too competative and stressful...
It’s not that we don’t trust adults, it’s that we’ve been through experiences that tell us...	Antithesis: contrasting one side to the presenting of your main claim	Although parents have vast intentions, takes the fun out of the game
We have the organization VELA here, we have ReThink here, we have several schools here. We are the ones that could change our schools.	Enrolling audience, stakeholders, responsible parties by name	As a group we bealive that coaches, adults and society should...
And the truth be told, it’s like, we shouldn’t have to do that. We should just have the respect to have an adult come up to us, a	Recommending action with modal “should”	Parents should get less involved so that sporting events would be more enjoyable for the players as well as the Audience.

Appropriating these and other pieces of rhetorical and academic language became visible to students as an apprenticeship into the linguistic and social capital that had power and made impacts in this kind of social action, and as students revised their group statement, they worked towards the adoption of those languages of power. These features of explicit audience address, qualification, precision, embedded and hierarchical syntax, and abstract nominalizations (“issues,” “maturity,” “talent,” “dexterity,” “generalizations”) distinguished the language of the statement from the draft pieces that the students wrote. The revision and group composition process tended to produce this more elevated diction and compressed syntax, resulting from Mr. Bautista’s lessons about academic language, his urging them to respect the Town Hall’s formal context, students’ recognition of these characteristics in the mentor texts, and the social expectations of the activity. Across the board, the final statements had denser sentences, fewer colloquialisms, and more frequent uses (and misuses) of more “precise” academic vocabulary than the students’ usual writing.

In addition to this sense of a cultivated need for academic English, Giovanni’s statement also demonstrated another characteristic of student writing Bautista and Ferro valued: authors’ originality infused into borrowed or imitated language. This emphasis of the teachers seemed to go beyond the rules of crediting and citations, to something more like an ethic of language and literacy acquisition: the very purpose of all this activity was their learning and mastery, so wholesale copying or too-close imitation showed that students had failed to incorporate the language into their own repertoires and for their own purposes. While fragments of the ideas in

Giovanni's statement were certainly in the ether of this project, echoed by other groups' statements, introduced through the articles they read, Mr. Ferreira's video, or the students' brainstorming, the content and composition of this statement (as with all of them) was unique to this group and their composing process, not "cookie cutter" in structure or organization. These teachers understood that this originality could not be taken for granted with seventh graders uneasily learning the ropes of academic and professional discourse. Bautista's students' variety and uniqueness of writing was easily correlated with his emphatic insistence on this originality, which was attributable to his often-stated philosophy that students should not become over-reliant on templates or formulas, but models and influences that they then were tasked to creatively remaster.

### **Think Globally, Act Locally, Speak Personally**

In this section, I explore the nature of the civic discourse with another representative example Town Hall participant, Cristina's Allyship group, to demonstrate how the ELA teachers expanded their teaching to integrate civics and the ways students responded as civic actors. I show from the group's performance in the Town Hall how the students brought personal and global themes into local action, bridging from the *imaginative local* that came from reading *Bat-6* together, as they attempted multiple modes of discursive civic action. Then, I describe the expansive learning of the ELA teachers that led to this mode of civic activity.

#### *Allyship and the Arrangement of Local Action*

Students took advantage of the situation of speaking to a local person of influence on their issues to engage in discursive activity that showed emerging understandings of civic action. The other representative statement came from "Allyship" square with Ms. Trueheart and a group of students from Ms. Ferro's class. The artifact below (Image 5.6) is only a fragment of Cristina's group's entire Town Hall speech, but the process it shows offers some insight into the planning and revision of their academic and rhetorical language, similar to Giovanni's group. This artifact also points to the coordination of the planned performance of this group's Town Hall participation, where Cristina served as spokesperson but intended to cue another member of her team, Azra, to share a relevant personal story. First, Cristina gave this opening question, and then Azra followed with a narrative (not reproduced or collected in written form). Their notes read:

Our question for you Ms. [Trueheart], is that

1) How do you think cultural dressing, beliefs, and spaces affect a person's life because ppl in my group with other people talk negative about a muslim student cause she wore a hijab everyday.

(info)

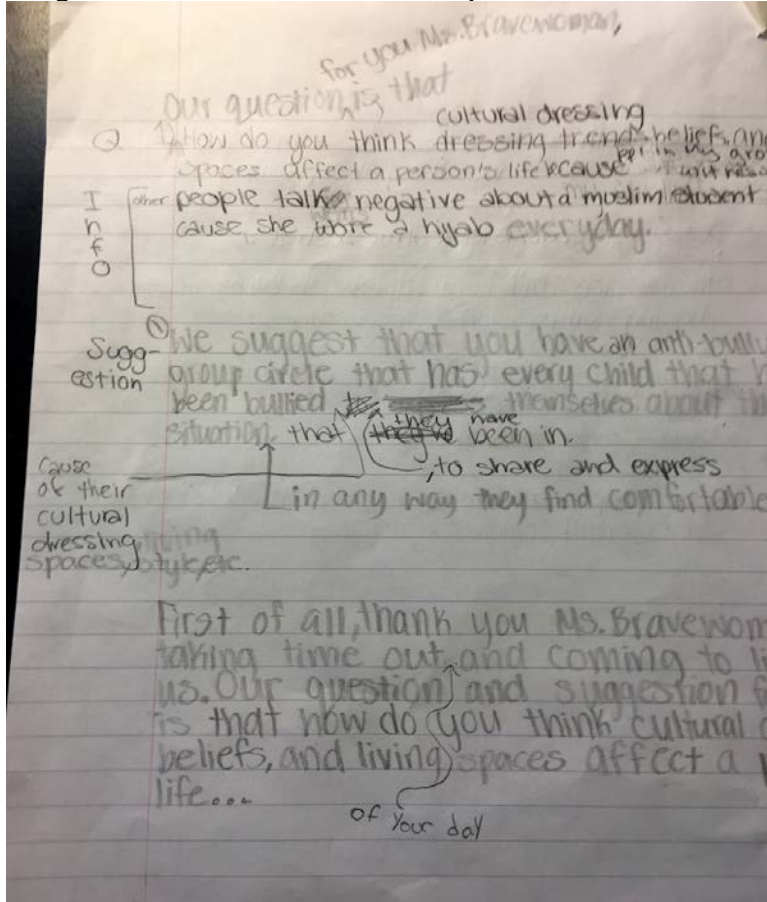
2) We suggest that you have an anti-bullying group circle that has every child that has been bullied [inserted: cause of their cultural dressing, living spaces, style, etc. Inserted: to share and express] themselves about the situation [inserted: in any way they find comfortable] that they have been in.



First of all, thank you Ms. Trueheart for taking time out [inserted: of your day] and coming to listen to us. Our question and suggestion for you is that how do you think cultural dressing, beliefs, and living spaces affect a person's life...

(Cristina's Group Town Hall Statement text, June 1, 2016)

Image 5.6 Notes for Cristina's Group Town Hall Statement



Cristina stood as spokesperson for the group and offered this introduction, setting the stage for a response from Ms. Trueheart and then for her groupmate Azra to stand and deliver an account of her experiences as a Muslim student who had witnessed ridiculing and harassment of other Muslim students at East Bay schools and therefore feared for herself and community. In setting up what became a dialogically-formed discourse of empathy and advocacy between Ms. Trueheart—who, of course, weighed in to reaffirm the rights of students of all faiths and cultures to dress, inhabit, and practice in the public space of schools—and two group members, the group took advantage of the Town Hall's living, interactive context to create a joint performance.

Analysis of the notes of Cristina's opening segment (Image 5.6) demonstrated again how the civic discourse situation of the Town Hall became baked into the students' collectively crafted language, as we say with Giovanni's group's statement. However, Cristina's statement contrasts with Giovanni's to show the range of ways students prepared for their Town Hall participation. In Bautista's class, Giovanni's group underwent a revision process that happened



on the page, leading to a consensus about a shared, pre-drafted collective statement. In Ferro's class, Cristina's group capitalized on multiple, individual voices, their written statement also a product of a negotiated process, but one ultimately retaining the distinctiveness of Azra's narrative as her own. Initially, the group posed a question in "1)" specifying "a muslim student cause she wore a hijab everyday." But in the process of group planning, Cristina and Azra's group decided that they should broaded to a more generalized and global version of their issue, which becomes in the final rendition an opening question about "cultural dressing, beliefs, and living spaces..." more universally. Then, the group decided, they would employ their tactic of having Azra's account particularize these questions of tolerance. The initial draft of the question contains the seed of this idea, with a smaller superscript note saying, "ppl in my group with other people," an allusion to Azra's experiences. The last paragraph on the page, which is what Cristina read as an opening invitation to dialogue, set up the subject of "cultural dressing, beliefs, and living spaces" as the inroads to the general topic of tolerant and accepting spaces in students' development. And the students' addition of the language of "question and suggestion" along with various politeness markers ("thank you Ms. [Trueheart] for taking time out of your day and coming to listen to us") demonstrated students' attention to the linguistic functions of appropriateness, their discourse again influenced by the audience, collective authorship, and apprenticeship from mentor texts.

The artifact of their planned statement also includes how Cristina's group conceived of a proposed solution in the local context to issues in allyship and bullying. In between these drafts of the opening question, the group listed as number "2)", their suggestion of "an anti-bullying group circle," an idea inspired by an article they read about Restorative Justice practices in schools ("Homeroom: US DoE Blog," 2016), which underwent a few revisions that rhetorically developed the idea. First, the original verb "to express themselves" was replaced with "to share and express themselves." Second, the specification of those who have been bullied "cause of their cultural dressing, living spaces, style, etc." was added. And finally, "in any way they find comfortable" qualified that sharing and expressing, representing a discussion the group held internally about whether they were actually suggested a Restorative Justice circle that involved confronting perpetrators of bullying behavior, or whether they were arguing for the need for a safe space for students bullied. All three revisions seemed designed to signal the imagined circle as an alternative safe space, perhaps tuning down the confrontational note in the "anti-bullying" notion and turning up the therapeutic or testimonial function of such a space.

Despite their development of this proposed solution for local action, in the actual Town Hall, the group did not get the opportunity to actually present this suggestion fully. Azra's moving personal story ended with a silence into which Ms. Trueheart spoke up, to connect Azra's testimony with others to illustrate the necessity and risks of allyship and solidarity with marginalized groups. The Town Hall structure never took up the concrete possibility or plans for how circles of self-expression might offer spaces of safety for bullied or marginalized students, as this group was prepared to suggest. Though the students did not exhibit disappoint or frustration in their reflections about this neglect, that loss in the flow of the conversation shows how the performance structure of the Town Hall opened up some discourse but could close down others. It seemed possible that the size and number of statements of the Town Hall squares (see Image 5.7), three to five within a 45-minute interaction, prevented elaborated discussions like Cristina and Azra planned.

Image 5.7 Ms. Ferro introduces Ms. Trueheart to a Town Hall square



However, though the group did not have an opportunity to tender their suggestion, they had in a way manifested its intentions there in the Town Hall, turning the task of a monological statement into a dialogical performance that made room for a student to speak personally, “share and express themselves about the situation.” This enactment of the Town Hall as a shared space for expression about experiences of bullying or marginalization was echoed a number of times throughout the day by other student speakers. They served as a meaningful manifestation of the Town Hall’s ideal, where performances of personal narration, arguments for local action, and connection to global issues could co-exist in a concrete experience for students.

#### *From the Personal, Global, and Local of the Text to the Town Hall*

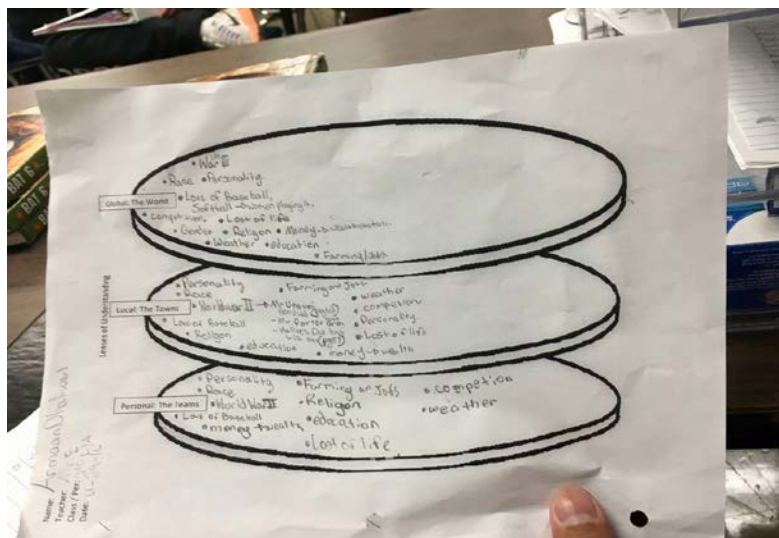
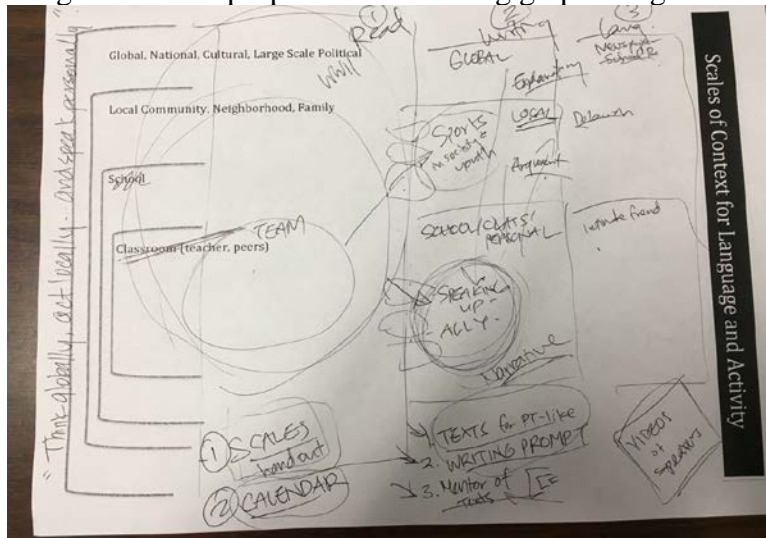
The Town Hall’s modes of discursive civic action, represented here by Cristina’s group but demonstrated by all the groups organically, grew from the literature discussions in Ms. Ferro’s and Mr. Bautista’s classes as they read *Bat-6*. The possibility of this and the means of making that bridge constituted the teachers’ most apparent expansive learning from their Civics English experimentation. The key shift in our co-design came about when we connected the personal and global levels of reading and exploring the text to the local context within the text that mediated those levels of action, and then applied that conceptual mediation to our own classroom and civic action.

While discovering Chapter 4’s affordances of reading literature in these classroom communities as a civic imaginative local, I shifted my approach as a co-designing coach and researcher. Rather than treating the discovery of these imaginative civics as a distraction from concrete action, I proposed a way to reimagine the literary and discursive practices of English class as gateways to civic engagement. I theorized that the imaginative local space created by the classes reading and experiencing, collectively, the towns of Barlow and Bear Creek in *Bat 6* could move across domains thematically, discursively, and conceptually into the concerns of the local East Bay community. Wolff’s novel furnished a gateway into the novel’s particular historical and geographical moment with themes about the courage to speak up, the trauma of

war on families, stratifications of race and class, and sport as community engagement, themes that were germane and timely to our own community and students.

In a co-planning meeting in early May (Co-Planning Meeting, 5/2/2016), I crafted a proposal that I introduced to Ferro and Bautista that linked their reading of *Bat-6*, the proposal for the Town Hall, and the structure of students' civic discourse. The idea came about as I was reading social research (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Tate, 2012) using ecological models with nested layers of individual, family, institutions, and wider community or society. My drawing of three nested layers indicated the importance of the "personal," the immediate or individual or interpersonal; the "global," a grander scale, macro-social and historical context; and between them, a layer of the "local," the known surrounding community (see Image 5.8)

Image 5.8 Initial proposal and resulting graphic organizer for Civic "Scales" or "Lenses"



The order in which I suggested the relevance of this model of Global-Local-Personal layers (which the teachers adapted to "lenses") also became the order in which Bautista and Ferro utilized the note-taking tool of this diagram (Image 5.8) to introduce the concept. I began with *Bat 6*, asking Ferro and Bautista how we could give students the language to connect the historical context (World War II, Japanese American Internment, Pearl Harbor) with the local

situation (the Bat 6 game, the two towns, conflicts within the communities) with the narrative's focus on a set of characters. As Bautista articulated these connections, I noted on my sample the specific items ("Japanese Internment," "Mr. Shimura and Aki's family's treatment," "Aki and her teammates") and the language Bautista used to describe these relationships ("Because of...happening around them, ...") Or "The story shows... about...by giving the example of..."). Those language examples became a way of teaching students literary analysis that connected the interpersonal relationships of characters to the broader community and beyond, and vice versa. The very next day, Bautista and Ferro taught their students the "Lenses of Understanding" and began to teach students to recognize and write theorizations across these layers. It began as a tool to read the novels.

Then, I reminded Ferro and Bautista about the PLC's goal of teaching blended genres, which they had already been doing. I asked which of these layers might employ the informing/explanatory type most often, which fit narrative, and which might supply a reason for argument. Instantly, the teachers saw the appropriateness of connecting the individual, personal, or interpersonal to *narratives*, especially as writing "personal narratives" was such an ingrained English practice.

The critical bridge came about when the teachers and I agreed that the "global" level often required description and explanation, and though rhetorically, writers often propose change on global levels, these often involve forces beyond individuals or even single communities. The *informational/expository* text type seemed appropriate for offering factual and descriptive explanations of definitions, comparisons and contrasts, causes and effects, problems and solutions, and so on, at the global, perhaps universal level. I mentioned the familiar bumper sticker slogan, "Think Globally, Act Locally."

Accordingly, the mode of *argument* made the most sense with the "local." Persuasion through evidence and audience-conscious rhetorics made sense as a discourse that engaged some proximal context, community, or institution, where such arguments had potential to be taken up, responded to, and perhaps effectual. To argue was to act upon the world. Indeed, the core idea at the start of the project was that students' argument essays, encouraged by Common Core, could benefit from actual delivery to an audience for the sake of social change, potentially activating motivation, feedback mechanisms, and social-interpersonal contexts that called forth linguistic resources. The "blended text types" experiment furthered this core idea, giving a role for narratives as personal anecdotes or examples and informative/expository as researched global realities to bear.

Having schematized the writing types with these "layers" or "lenses," I proposed identifying two civics topics related to the novel and mentioned the possibility of Allyship and Sports as topics. I proposed finding non-fiction articles about those topics and analyzing how those articles made personal connections with anecdotes or narratives; filled out factual, global, historical, or other broader context with informative structures; and spoke to specific audiences who represented some version of a "locals" to whom the articles presented arguments. We began to search for articles about the two topics with these criteria in mind, put to the test. Many samples we found, from editorials to advocacy websites, confirmed our breakdown, containing the three text types serving those functions. These became the mentor texts the teachers studied with their students, making note of their "bricks and mortars" (see 3.3) to imitate and appropriate them.

Finally, along with the proposal for the Town Hall and the local leaders as guests, I proposed applying the "lenses of understanding" to students' own blended genre statements of

civic stance. The Town Hall would give them the opportunity to demonstrate and expand their learning of the three text types. They would have the Town Hall context, the representative audience of someone like Ms. Trueheart and Mr. Ferreira, and the feedback chambers of one another to hone their written language and critical thinking, civics serving as English impetus. And they would be organizing for some kind of action, based in the novel but pushing beyond it, into their own localities.

### **Town Hall Outcomes and Teacher Learning**

As for the lasting outcomes, Ms. Trueheart and Mr. Ferreira both attested to being informed and inspired by the Town Hall, impressed by the young adolescents' compositions and comportment, feeling the day to be productive. After the Town Hall, students finalized their individual blended writing with argument, narrative, and informative types about the topic. They sent copies to Ms. Trueheart, who responded that this collection of feedback, in quantity and substance, would be useful as resources for evidence-based decision making for the Safe and Inclusive Schools Program, and to Mr. Ferreira, who felt the discussion productive for shaping Student Athletics policy.

However, with the school year ending and the students moving on to other grades and teachers, my data collection identified no tangible follow-up changes or actions resulting from the Town Hall conversations that made their way back to students.

As for Mr. Bautista and Ms. Ferro, both judged the Town Hall as a stimulating culminating activity that fulfilled its purpose. Ms. Ferro felt particularly proud of how her students were able to shine, while Mr. Bautista's ambivalences stemmed from his high expectations for the mixed results of his students' pieces. Both could see the activity achieving the desired effect of compelling the students to collaborate, prepare for a real audience, and adjust their language accordingly, as well as providing a context where a range of forms of feedback pushed students towards improvement. Planning and setting up the activity, however, seemed a daunting proposition, outside the time and capacities they were comfortable with, and largely a product of our partnership. Absent my participation or some structural shift in their work's schedule and objective, it was hard for them to envision being able to replicate the activity in the future on their own.

Another element of the Town Hall that left some uncertainty for the teachers and for me, where our articulation of its ideals did not quite meet up with our assessment of it in implementation, had to do with its efficacy as a form of civic action. Examples of youth civic action that the teachers and I had looked at together included students organizing for equitable school reform in post-Katrina New Orleans, civics projects about media representations of sexualized and racialized bodies, and of course, the variety of topics in Mr. Ocampo and Ms. Denver's projects. The topics that this Town Hall took on certainly seemed relevant to youth, with aspects that were fought over in the news media and in culture every day. Yet the open-endedness of the discussions under the umbrellas "Youth Sports" and "Allyship and Bullying" left students and adults attacking a general cluster of issues, problems, causes, and effects—and therefore, making distance on none of them in particular. While the Town Hall gave an opportunity for students to air their perspectives about various aspects of the topics, as can be seen in the two representative statements, we did not specify the topics in ways that focused their arguments on a compelling problem or forced a negotiated decision about which causes to tackle or what solutions were feasible. Moreover, such diffuse topic areas also meant that

argumentation and discussion within these issues could fly from one problem area to another without deeper examination or theorization about social issues, political structures, or civic frameworks.

Seen from another vantage point, what felt missing was a compelling civic motivation over the whole event, though certainly individual conviction could be seen in a number of bright spots, such as Azra's story. But certainly much of this lack of motivating power as might compel, for example, a social movement, was in fact baked into the activity from the start, and even into the English discourse within which it lived. As Hess (2009) has pointed out, schools want to benefit from the critical thinking of democratic debate but are averse to the third rails that risk inciting controversy, which require a whole other set of mindsets and habits to manage among diverse groups of adolescents.

The training and the received wisdom that Bautista and Ferro adopted and operated with was that students' critical thinking was best developed with issues framed so that there was a real debate with at least two valid sides. During the beginning of teaching *Bat 6*, in preparation for something like the Town Hall, I proposed to Ferro and Bautista the Philosophical Chairs activity where students had to take a side and argue it. As we formulated the statements to which students would agree or disagree, one of the challenges we tried to overcome was framing a statement so that there was a clear debate, a clear fault line, where some students might opt to "agree" while others would "disagree." For instance, in Mr. Bautista's class, one statement that failed to generate much controversy—and therefore, discussion—was framed as, "Schools make us feel safe and promote being an ally." (Only two students stood on the side of agreeing that school made them feel safe.) For his next class, Bautista adjusted the statement to say, "Schools take enough steps to promote being allies and maintaining a safe campus." The latter question prompted more students to take one or the other side, opening the room for justifying their answers, offering evidence as examples or anecdotes, and generating counter-arguments. The language and discourse lessons attached to making those debates "civil" then became the teaching objectives, and the sought-after result was students capable of participating constructively in disagreement.

These honest debates served to produce a tangible context for the kinds of language seen in Giovanni's and Cristina's statements, indeed in all of the students' presentations. They fit a civic ideal of a middle school version of pluralistic discussion, at least intended to welcome multiple perspectives, if a little shallow to be counted as deep democratic deliberation. The issues themselves and the perspectives students expressed were meaningful, but safe, non-urgent, with room for reasonable disagreement.

However, alternative ideals about freedom, justice, and cultural change were also part of the school's environment. Plastered on the hallway walls that students passed on the way to the cafeteria for the Town Hall were photographs and posters of historic heroes including Martin Luther King, Rigoberta Menchu, and Jose Rizal, each on the walls from different student projects. Painted as murals in the school's central quad were images of Wonder Woman and Spider-Man. Emblazoned above the lockers were logos of universities, some of them more known locally for their basketball or football heroics than for the number of East Bay Unified alumni attending them. Juxtaposed with these icons of heroism, the Town Hall might not have appeared the convincing work of justice they saw in history books, in the students they watched speaking up for New Orleans schools, or even the Black Lives Matter protesters current in the evening news. For the sake of notions of civil discourse, safety, and even-handedness, the sociopolitical consciousnesses that might inspire some students were hemmed in. In other words,

the Town Hall was less an organic spectacle of assembled, symbolic action for social change as it was a dress rehearsal in the vagaries of everyday local civic concord. In some ways, inadvertently, it was designed that way.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

To conclude, I review my findings from this study of Civics English in practice and how they addressed the research questions that I posed in Chapter 1. I also summarize the study from a different perspective, differentiating the approaches to Civics English that the four teachers in our co-design team exemplified, in order to indicate the variety of ways this integration might work in practice.

Then, I describe the contributions of this study to the fields of research I reviewed in the first chapter, as well as areas for further research. I also elaborate on the implications of this study's findings for teaching, especially future projects that may pursue an integration of Civics and English as this project did.

### Discussion of Findings

This study's research questions centered on the PLC teachers' learning from the social design inquiry we conducted, asking what tensions surfaced at the attempts to integrate the ELA and youth civics activity systems, how civics might interfere or resonate in literature-based classes, and what shifts ELA teachers made in the context of civic action. Table 6.1 below repeats the research questions from Table 2.1, but I have added summaries of the findings from Chapters 3 through 5.

**Table 6.1 Findings in Summary**

<b>Research Question</b>	<i>In the PLC meetings, what tensions surface between typical ELA practices and youth civics practices, and how do the teachers conceptualize and respond to those tensions?</i>	<i>What challenges and opportunities arise as the English teachers try to integrate civics with reading literature in their case study classrooms?</i>	<i>What do ELA teachers discover about how their Civics English activity expands their ELA teaching and shifts their students' ELA learning experience?</i>
<b>Findings</b>	Chapter 3: English Language Arts in Public	Chapter 4: Literature in Classroom Cultures of Civic Deliberation	Chapter 5: The Town Hall and Civics English in Action
	Tensions between a. school-oriented vs public-oriented objectives  b. students as individual actors vs collective agents  c. writing personally vs writing politically & professionally	Civic deliberation through classroom cultures of literature study and the <i>Imaginative Local</i>  Challenges of civic implementation in encapsulated ELA study of literature	Town Hall event shifted ELA practices in a. orientation to audiences b. collective authorship c. discursive apprenticeship  Bridging to civic action by thinking globally, acting locally, and speaking personally

Chapter 3 revealed that integrating civic engagement challenged some of the core features of the cultural-historical activity of ELA classrooms. These differences in activity can be summarized by the classic Vygotskian activity triangle of subjects, objects, and mediation. In ELA teaching *in general*, the objects or objectives of activity tend to be oriented towards schooling, whether towards the purpose of learning, practice, and development of students'



knowledge and skills, or just part of the ritualized habits of school itself. Civic engagement's object is larger social, political, or cultural change of some kind. This contrast led to tensions between the safe, self-contained classroom, where language and dialogue's purpose was to support students' learning and growth; and the wider public as a "classroom," where the purposes of educating, informing, and changing the public took primacy. Generally in ELA practice, and in schools as well, students must show proficiency and growth through their own individual accomplishment in assignments and assessments. The subject of ELA classroom activity tends to focus on the individual, even if much of the ELA class rests on shared and group activities and classroom interaction. However, youth civic action rests on collective action, where constituents must find common ground or where leveraging mass movements or organized voices is at the crux of democratic power. And while ELA pedagogy does privilege many of the same genres and discourses as are privileged in civic engagement, in practice the teachers found that the connections and proficiencies students formed with personal writing, often based in narratives, were difficult to develop around the politically and professionally valued genres of arguments, evidence, and frameworks of reasoning from civic and political discourses. As the teachers tried to introduce civic engagement projects like the "This I Believe" essay, the Children's Storybooks, and the Town Hall, they found these tensions altering and moderating their ambitions in some ways, supporting significant changes in others.

In Chapter 4, I looked more closely at the case study classrooms and how reading literature produced opportunities and challenges for students' civic learning. As the two teachers and their students experienced a novel together through read-aloud practices, their interactive classroom communities discussed, deliberated, and negotiated the civic questions in the fictional towns in the novel, forming what I called an *imaginative local* space between the novel's narrative, the teacher's guidance, and the students' evolving perspectives and evaluations of the storyworld and syntheses with their own worlds. Although this imaginative local space fostered students' civic thinking through literature study, the space also reinforced ELA habits of encapsulated learning and activity, contributing to the difficulties the case study teachers had with planning concrete civic action.

Ultimately, as I document in Chapter 5, the *imaginative local* in the case study classrooms bridged to an engagement activity with connected, local instances of civic issues which were similar to those in the novel. The classes prepared for a Town Hall activity that shifted typical ELA practices, as revealed by the various statements that students prepared to read to the local leaders they spoke to during the daylong Town Hall. These shifts in ELA practices included orienting students' language performances differently to audiences, organizing pieces of written and spoken language through collective authorship, and adopting and adapting genres of discourse from exemplars of civic engagement. These shifted activities were facilitated by explicitly bridging the multiple layers and discourses of the examples and texts they read, including the *Bat-6* novel, articles and videos, their own reflections and experiences, and video introductions to the local leaders. With these texts, they connected ways to think globally, act locally, and speak personally, finding the civic complexities and possibilities they experienced in their jointly read novels to be true in the civic issues of their own communities. Along the way, they engaged in those ELA practices of reading, listening, writing, and speaking in new ways that made language lessons relevant and civic impacts possible, even as the degree of their civic impact and the limitations on their opportunities to compose messages authentic to themselves remained lingering questions for the teachers.

## Varieties of Civics and ELA Approaches

In the course of describing the polyphonic resonances and common learning between the PLC teachers, I noted the varieties of ELA and civics practices that made each teacher unique, or made them unique combinations of different discourses around and within them. Some of their unique configurations of civics and English demonstrate that Civics English as an inquiry does not allow a one-size-fits-all kind of teaching, and that diverse approaches are necessary to fruitfully pursue the resonances of joining civics with ELA.

Where the PLC team members worked from common objectives, practices and tools, and discourses, those were part of the similarities that drove them as an activity system. But where they had demonstrated differing conceptions, ideas, inclinations, and practices, where they were distinctive in their versions of Civics English during the year of our study, they represented a variety of possibilities for Civics English. The matrix below summarizes something of that variety.

The range in this matrix represents not just idiosyncratic preferences or individual ideas. Rather, each aspect of each teacher represented here is tied as *polyphonic resonances* to larger communities of practice, perspectives, and discourses that I identified throughout the study's interviews, observations, and discussions. Therefore, while the four teachers' pseudonyms, teaching, and classes become emblematic for these different versions of Civics English, they are based in broader discourses, broader than the teachers themselves.

The four teachers' various ways of implementing Civics English of their own design resulted in these thematic approaches in English teaching and in Civics participation, summarized in the table below. I discuss them as Civics English pairings, rather than reviewing the all the civics stances and ELA approaches separately, as they are linked in the teacher's history and practices.

<u>Teacher</u>	<u>Civics Emphasis</u>	<u>ELA Emphasis</u>
Caroline Denver	Public Voice	Communicative Negotiation
Donaldo Ocampo	Persuasive Modeling	Potent Clarity
Emmanuel Bautista	Political Know-How	Practiced Authorship
Antonia Ferro	Civil Community	Appropriate Performance

Ms. Denver's civics emphasis on *public voice* and her ELA emphasis on *communicative negotiation* both tied to her modes of verbal communication and "speaking up" as Civics English. In civic action, she encouraged students to name problems and present solutions in the course of public conversations, engaging through public commentary. The English emphases necessary for that kind of upfront public discourse involved being able to express yourself and convey empathy in fast-moving and high-stakes social worlds, which her language practices often encouraged. Denver's Civics English was most clearly summed up in a passionate and compassionate face-to-face civics debate.

By contrast, Mr. Ocampo's civic emphasis of *persuasive modeling* encouraged students to craft compelling displays and demonstrations of social concern, personal connection, or visionary hope, while his ELA emphasis on *potent clarity* pointed to the intent crafting of language and other modalities of representation to design presentations of self that might influence and move others. Ocampo's Civics English was most clearly summed up in an

artistically formed multimedia presentation of a presenter's firmest and most personal convictions, relayed in a convincing manner.

Like Ms. Denver, Mr. Bautista's way of teaching students civically was negotiated and navigational, with an approach I have termed *political know-how*. Whereas Ms. Denver encouraged students to build on interpersonal relationships and socioemotional knowledge, Bautista conceived of civic learning largely as a process of gaining awareness and savvy about knowledge of institutions and conventions, and ways to bring about change. His ELA emphasis on *practiced authorship* involved a similar approach of coaching students with feedback and a push for their effort towards carefully produced and intelligently refined uses of language. Bautista's ideal Civics English action might be a cannily targeted, well-rehearsed message to the right legislator or councilmember that will produce a beneficial policy outcome.

Ms. Ferro tended to think of civics as *civil community*, as the maintenance of inclusive and mutual relationships of equality and fairness. Ms. Ferro's notions of civics often had to do with how marginalized individuals or groups could find invitation and acceptance in the larger community. She tried to form such welcoming communities in her classroom, and approached ELA as a rehearsal stage for playful and creative performances of language, which could benefit from feedback from the teacher and classmates about its appropriateness. I describe her ELA approach as *appropriate performance*, and her whole approach might be best exemplified with a support ceremonial circle of trust to affirm group membership and belonging for diverse citizens.

These various configurations represent ways that the teachers conceptualized and enacted civics and ELA uniquely out of their experiences, personalities, and past discourses, marking some spaces of possibility for how civic engagement can contextualize ELA and how ELA can become a place for civic learning in the busy business of school. Observing and analyzing the Justice League PLC's meetings, interviewing its members, and studying the results of their teaching throughout the year revealed various around which ELA and civic engagement could find the polyphonic resonances this study's conceptual framework articulated.

## **Contributions to the Literature and Implications for Future Research**

The primary contribution of this study is offer to the growing body of literature about the intersections of civics and language/literacy a theoretically-grounded narrative of the tensions and potentials of English Language Arts teachers attempting disciplinary civics integration. In Chapter 1's conceptual framework, I posited Civics English as *a space of inquiries and practices that begins with the interconnection of civics and English literacy and language as objectives in educational settings; develops through experiments of participatory co-design by teachers in ways situated to particular youth, communities, and contexts; and orients towards learning and innovating with languages and discourses of power towards justice-oriented and socially transformative ends*. I reviewed the emerging set of studies that present projects and address questions within and adjacent to this problem space. Yet at the same time, there have been few studies of disciplinary civics and what it takes to bring together these activities in different disciplines. Because of the complexity of the task, as exemplified in the tensions and challenges these teachers faced, we need more studies like this, studies of how the civic mission of schools is taken seriously in different disciplines. At the same time, English Language Arts as a discipline continues to need the development and articulation of practices that try to put into action its socially transformative potentials and responsibilities, to which this study has offered one example.

On one hand, this problem space at the intersection of schooled language and literacy and civic learning and action continues to be and needs to be developed by more diverse methods of study. In many cases, different methods would require different and perhaps more specific objects of study, units of observation, and analyses. As examples, studies by Jaeger (2016) and Felton ( ) utilizing methods of experimental or quasi-experimental comparison can specify the impacts of key factors at the intersections of civics and English, such as the impacts of civic dialogue in classrooms on argumentative writing ideation and rhetorics. Projects that scale to broader practice and utilize controlled studies can identify the influence of factors in English teaching or civic action that establish the mutual influence of these arenas of activity and learning.

On the other hand, there is also the need for more studies and projects of the sort I have presented in this study, or conducted by examples I have reviewed like Mirra et al (2018). There is still more need for studies that continue to innovate and observe qualitatively the design of Civics English in different local contexts, among different communities, at different levels of schooling or in different configurations in and out of school. Clearly, as diverse as the Justice League PLC teachers' approaches to civics and English were, there are many more possible, and future design work can further develop practice-based knowledge and theory about the problem space.

Studies should also examine how literacy/language and civic development occur for students in multi-sited experiences and development (Vossoughi & Gutiérrez, 2014). While this study has concentrated on teaching and learning in the classroom, the changing sites and different conditions of situatedness for young people's experiences of both language and civics have become dramatically and fundamentally altered by social media, new literacies, and altered political and cultural formations influenced by these technological changes (Kahne, Hull & Stornaiuolo). These radical shifts in discourse and politics and their implications for critical civic literacies have become apparent not only to researchers but to the larger political and media discussion in the US (Tufekci; Devitis, 2011). Thus, research in the problem space of Civics English will come from and attach to the growing study and theorization of digital discourses and human relations in civic engagement (Garcia; Middaugh; more) and in literacy and language learning (Mills, Stornaiuolo, Smith, & Pandya, 2017).

Yet despite the clear need for these multi-sited and digitally mediated contexts of civic and linguistic learning, an implication of this study might be that attention to the Civics English education process in schools and classrooms is still relevant. In fact, they might be all the more important in the context of such rapid changes in social arrangements resulting from technologically mediated literacies, since schools still represent the expected location of institutionalized social space for co-present, organized learning for youth.

### **Implications for English Practice**

From this study's findings, I draw out several implications for teaching and schooling practices related to Civics English, summarized here as a series of shifts that align with this research's findings.

*Civics English Teaching: Combining Private Individualized Literacy Development with Public Collectivized Social Discourse*

We can recognize the place for and importance of English Language Arts practices as they have formed and evolved to educate and prepare students in their language and literacy development, especially as they evolve toward greater inclusiveness, access, and equity. However, the introduction (or as I argue, re-introduction) of civic objectives into English Language Arts, whether through the initiative of English teachers or cross-disciplinary collaborations in Humanities or with other disciplines, can be informed by the tensions and shifts experienced by the teachers in this study.

(1) *Publics and Audiences.* Civic activity in English classes reimagines the publics within which students develop their social selves and their linguistic and literate voices. English classes have traditionally focused on fostering communities within the classroom where teachers and peers could provide the feedback chamber in which students could cultivate their voices. Denver and Ocampo accomplished this through activities like Philosophical Chairs, inspiring dialogical exchange whether through verbal-interactional channels or through written technologically-mediated channels, or classroom performances or displays of their work within the classroom. But the imperative of Civics English to engage larger publics outside the classroom adjusted the zone of audience, and with it, the zones of knowledges, languages, models, and potential impacts.

Teachers can see this expansion of publics as reframing motivations for students' language engagement, offering new models for language and altered relationships to these models, and preparing students to navigate civic spaces in preparation for futures as political actors. Envisioning a wider audience than the teacher and the enclosed classroom can add new resonances to reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities, resonances that echo the heroes, historical figures, and culture shapers of popular history and their own communities. This allows teachers to connect the language study and production of the classroom explicitly to discourses of social change and justice. This wider public, and the bigger purposes of social progress and reparations, also give texts and pieces of media new meanings in the classroom. Rather than studying an essay with an assumed one-way transfer of knowledge from expert to student, along the lines of Freire's "banking" concept of education, teachers present texts as models of the kinds of rhetoric and argument that students could themselves utilize in their own participation and action in the public sphere. And the broadened social horizons of Civics English projects also urge teachers to think of their students not only as future citizens, but as present-day change agents whose language and activity can be influential, and therefore, need the classroom to be an active and equipped system of guidance, feedback, and support around them.

(2) *Collective Activity with Personal Stakes.* The personal investment that comes from choosing a civic issue that matters to each student can be a crucial leveraging point for Civics English activity. Denver and Ocampo remained committed to this individual choice, despite the challenges it posed. However, envisioning civic action as collective activity, either when students can be allied with similar causes and strategies, or because students actually organize and participate as collectives, may prove to be essential to sustainability and deep learning for Civics English projects.

Collective activity has potential to amass the learning and voices of youth in groups, which pushes back against easy dismissal of youth's opinions and perspectives as immature or inadequate. The variable results of the Justice League PLC projects as civic engagement attest to the difficulty with relying on students' individual voices or action to register public impact.

Some “This I Believe” Essays and Storybooks wound up shared with the social media platforms or elementary-aged children that were their intended audiences, and contained mature discussion of problems and solutions, accurate information about the scope and nature of issues, and/or stirring narratives that humanized and complicated the abstractions. But many others were judged by the teachers as “works-in-progress” in civic engagement, adequate for these 12- and 13-year-olds’ progress and learning, if not quite ready to be front-page editorials or classroom tools for children’s moral education. For Denver and Ocampo especially, the nature of the civic issues and actions their students took on remained largely constrained by what the students could tackle as individuals. Many of the problems students identified, researched, and wrote about were of a confessional or personal nature, at the scale of either their own families or a generic public response, rather than implicating particular institutions, actors, and policies or practices. Systemic critiques were rare, a kind of rarefied vocabulary that the students grappled with and attempted, but found difficult to own. Transformation remained largely at the level of personal and interpersonal responsibility and vague pleas for action from community and government.

These results may also be understandable given the approach of the teacher inquiry, where as codesigner/coach and researcher, I treated my role as primarily an observing, understanding, and enhancing their civic action proposals, rather than pushing or articulating a particular vision, or calling us together to a collective problem posing method.

Indeed, from the later iteration of Civics English that Ms. Denver experienced that summer, she found that collective civic action around the same or similar issues furnished more opportunities for the kinds of discussion central to Ms. Denver’s *communicative negotiation* emphases in ELA while giving students opportunity to develop the *public voice* important to Denver’s civic ideals. However, individual choice and personal relevance remained high priorities for Ms. Denver, and she was not prepared to shed that dimension in different assignments and projects through the year.

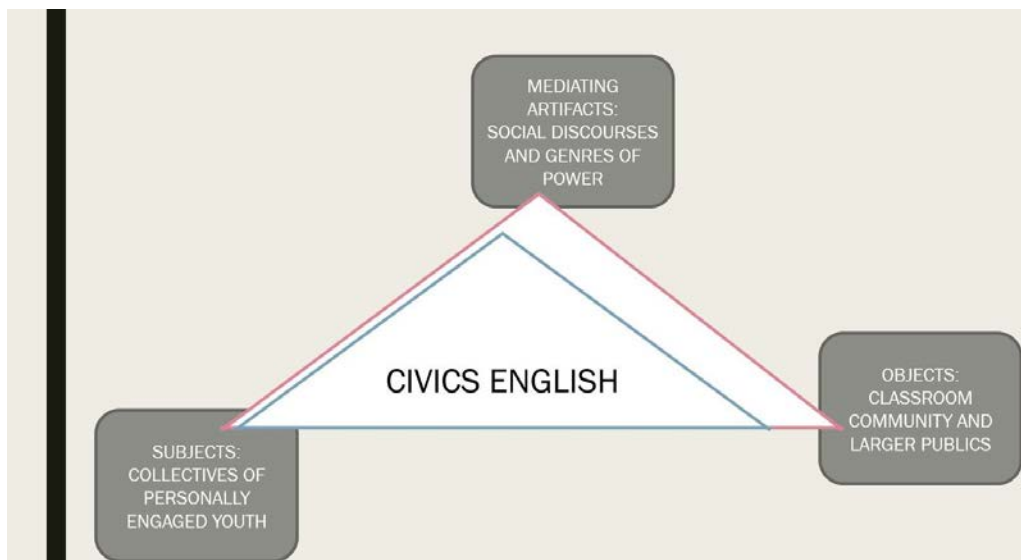
The implication for Civics English is to somehow take on the challenge of maintaining both the benefits of collective focus on common problems and of individual choice of personally relevant issues, to balance opportunities for students to pursue projects of personal importance and to develop critical consciousness together as groups of common cause.

(3) *English as Social Discourse in Genres of Power*. For all of the PLC teachers, their growing understanding of the social and civic dimensions of genres stood as their most lasting learning from the Civics English projects. Their initial experiment blending writing types evolved into a growing awareness on the teachers’ part and within their teaching to students of the different forms of rhetorical power, authority, and significance that different genres played among particular contexts and audiences. This sensitivity to genre was demonstrated in their recognition of practices like the “bricks and mortar” analysis of mentor texts, but also permeated their discussions of literacy and language throughout the year. They read articles and novels with the perspective of genres, publics, audiences, and layers of significance. Their novel-centered units wound up centering on ways to connect to and introduce the writing types going forward. And they saw the greatest benefit from Civics English in the social contexts and discourse communities that give shape to particular genres to be the most significant learning of the experience.

These areas of learning came from the resonances of the four teachers’ experiences implementing Civics English. Recognizing these polyphonic resonances returns us to the framing of Civics English an experiment in integrating the cultural-historical activity system of ELA

teaching with the various cultural activities of civic engagement (see Image 6.1). The tension and challenge raised by these experiments reflects contradictions in school as a safe place for the private development of individual student language and literacy, and the invitation of youth civic engagement to involve collective organizing over issues of the commons. These contradictions were not easily resolved by the PLC teachers, who ended the year with lingering questions about how they would resolve those contradictions in future situations. However, in their interviews at the end of the year, the teachers reflected that their Civics English projects brought about new resonances in civic purposes and civic publics that they would continue building upon. Though they were likely to revise their plans, the essence of the co-design experiment would continue to iterate in their ongoing and future teaching.

Image 6.1 Civics English as Activity Triangle



*From Diverse Literature to Deliberative Classrooms and Imaginative Local Engagement*

The PLC teachers recognized that the literature available to them had been shaped by generations of struggle within English education to bring more diverse and culturally relevant texts into the classroom, connected to efforts in the broader public to amplify underrepresented voices in literature, especially young adult literature. As they noted, the novels were not necessarily chosen for their civics connections but were replete with them: *Bronx Masquerade* by Nikki Grimes on urban life, poverty, race, and youth; *The Giver* by Lois Lowry about autonomy, social conformity, difference, and governmental order; *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers about criminalization, the justice system, and dehumanization; and *The Circuit* by Francisco Jimenez on family, unauthorized migration, immigrant labor, and education. Discussing these connections in the PLC meeting, we realized that we should not have been surprised that the rich literature we read should revolve around so many themes that were part of the civic education standards.

This became an immediate discovery of the project, that simply posing the question of how ELA teaching overlapped with civic education and action made the civic dimensions of not only the literature they read, but the variety of information and argumentative texts they read in

class apparent to teachers. Taken expansively, the civic development of students seems a natural alignment to the “what” that English teachers are often searching for as they emphasize the “how” of language learning and activity.

But along with consideration of what literature English classes study and what other texts have civic dimensions, this study’s findings imply a significant “how” question revolving around the classroom interactions and participation structures that can form an *imaginative local* as the two case study classrooms discovered. What practices and environments can educators create to foster that kind of deliberation, so that students do not merely find windows and mirrors for themselves in the texts they read, but also in their collective communities and local cultures?

In addition, the challenges of moving to civic action when teachers are wrapped up in language study suggests that local civic engagement is a challenging prospect that, if taken on in schools, might be best served by cross-disciplinary collaborations like the one I described at the beginning of this conclusion. The Justice League PLC teachers’ unique civic orientations were partly shaped by the other classes they taught: Leadership, Puente, Social Studies, and Computers. Although our PLC and project involved their expertise in these other areas, the team could not organize the time and resources to collaborate so that their Civics English plans spanned both disciplines they taught, justifying more time and resources devoted to these projects. Designing Civics English as a multi-disciplinary endeavor could alleviate those pressures, while capitalizing on the power of reinforced activity across the curriculum.

#### *From Practicing for Authentic Assessments to Assessing Authenticity of Practices*

The year of the study happened to be the second year of California’s full implementation of the CAASPP test developed by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) for the Common Core State Standards. SBAC’s intention with the “Performance Task” was to fabricate authenticity by: (a) Presenting test-takers with three or four sources that offered different perspectives or insights on a single issue, most often in the form of text excerpts or articles, but possibly including videos or other media sources; (b) prompting a piece of argumentative, informative/explanatory, narrative, or blended writing that would draw upon these sources but present an original synthesis in response to (c) scenario or situation drawn from real life, with a given audience and purpose, such as composing an editorial for a school newspaper to convince faculty and peers of a policy, or a museum exhibit’s text for visitors to appreciate a phenomenon. After studying these multiple sources provided on the computer-based test interface, students were to type an essay following academic writing conventions, synthesizing and citing the multiple sources while offering an original thesis or claim, and to address the task, purpose, and audience established in the prompt.

In my original proposal to the Justice League PLC members at the start of the project, the pitch included imagining that these Performance Tasks, rather than simulated situations of “authenticity,” were in fact genuinely and authentically purposeful. The multiple sources of texts we cited would be texts that had bearing on students’ lives and communities. The piece of argumentative, informative, narrative, or blended writing would actually be sent out into the world, aiming to argue, inform, and narrate to accomplish purpose in the world. And the actual audiences, constituencies, and contexts that would inform and shape such a piece of rhetoric would materialize to students as actual people, organizations, and institutions that they would interact with. The ultimate purpose, as I proposed, was to not only meet but to transcend the



Common Core's objective of college and career (and civic) readiness with authentic literacy tasks.

In the Preface, I described a situation where English teachers evaluated students on a writing assessment that went to the heart of civics issues. These "authentic" assessments in the Common Core era ask students to write in situations resembling a reality with which our democracy needs them to actually engage. This design project and dissertation proposes that such an engagement will involve contexts that powerfully shift ELA practices, and they can result in authentic and careful instruction in academic English, argument writing, and the other valued components of schooling's demands for literate and proficient language users. Rather than limiting English teacher professional development to meetings sitting at tables scoring essays and planning teaching based on writing assessments, breaking through schooling's encapsulation would invite those same English teachers, like the Justice League PLC in this study, to come to the table with literacy and language practices for their classrooms that push them out to the streets, the halls of power, and the media channels of public engagement. As they bring their connected and deeper learning ideas to the table, English teachers' proposed Civics English practices will surely be imperfect and riddled with risks, but they will also be equipped with the potential to transform students' language and literacy as students' language and literacy transforms the world.

In the end, the teachers' Civics English showed them possibilities for how teaching language and literacy as a means of social action, as tools of transformation, managed to encompass the demands and objectives tested by these Performance Tasks in ELA, but under the more purposeful, authentic, and responsive conditions of speaking to and hearing from the actual communities surrounding youth.

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