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Integrating Student-Centered Learning to Promote Critical Thinking in High School Social Studies Classrooms

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INTEGRATING STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING TO PROMOTE
CRITICAL THINKING IN HIGH SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSROOMS

by

ELAINE SAYRE

A thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors in the Major Program in Social Science Education
in the College of Education
at the University of Central Florida
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Thesis Chair: Dr. William B. Russell III

ABSTRACT

Traditional teacher-centered methods of lectures and PowerPoint presentations are commonly used when teaching secondary social studies, yet these methods continually prove to be boring for most high school students and neglect to teach critical thinking skills. Student-centered methods are different than teacher-centered methods because these methods incorporate several learning styles, cooperative activities, and even technology in order to engage the student and promote critical thinking skills. Critical thinking is important for students to master because it gives them the skills to move past the obvious and make individual connections with the text.

The intent of this thesis was to explore the effectiveness of integrating student-centered methods in high school social studies classrooms as a means of promoting critical thinking skills. All students were given the same pretest and posttests. Students were divided into three groups: one was taught using student-centered methods, one was taught using teacher-centered methods, and one was the control group and was not directly taught by anyone. Based on analyzing students' posttest scores compared to their pre-test scores, student-centered teaching produced a higher average score increase, though all methods had students who scored higher, and students whose scores remained constant. Evidence and student feedback showed that continued future research should be conducted to see if student-centered methods should be used throughout all secondary social studies classrooms to promote critical thinking.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	6
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS.....	16
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS	26
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS	32
APPENDIX A: PRETEST WITH BLOOM’S TAXONOMY LABELS	37
APPENDIX B: IRB APPROVAL	39
APPENDIX C: PRINCIPAL’S CONSENT	41
APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORMS FOR STUDENTS.....	43
REFERENCES	47

List of Tables

Table 1: Research on Student-Centered teaching methods.....	13
Table 2: Student Demographics for population that participated in study	20
Table 3: Frequency of student scores for student-centered group	26
Table 4: Frequency of student scores for teacher-centered group	27
Table 5: Frequency of student scores for control group	27

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In his book *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything History Textbooks Got Wrong* James Loewen (2007) asserts that social studies classrooms, specifically history classes, are seen as boring and irrelevant. History is the most disliked subject by both teachers and students (DiCamillo, 2010; Loewen, 2007; McKay & Gibson, 2004; National Focus Group, 2006; Russell, 2011). When one looks back to their experiences in social studies classes, this generalization is not that farfetched. These classes are very dry and no fun at all mainly because teacher lectures and textbooks are the primary methods of teaching the social studies classes (DiCamillo, 2010). These teacher-centered approaches of teaching with lectures, textbooks, PowerPoint, worksheets, end-of-chapter-review questions, and multiple-choice tests do very little to promote critical thinking skills, motivation or the love of the social studies (DiCamillo, 2010; Nowicki & Meehan, 1996; Schell & Fisher, 2007; Young, 1994). Teacher-centered teaching and learning adheres to the sentiment that learning should be the responsibility of the students, and they need opportunities to take control of their learning and develop critical thinking skills. Student-centered methods of teaching, which can incorporate several learning styles, cooperative activities, simulations, technology and so much more, can promote critical thinking skills (Copeland, 2005; Evertson & Neal, 2006; Fisher, Coleman & Neuhauser, 2005; Forte & Schurr,

1996; Hess, 1999; Hickman, 2007; Kagan, 1989; McCombs & Miller, 2007; McCombs & Whisler, 1997; McKay & Gibson, 2004; Nowicki & Meehan, 1996; Russell, 2011; Salam & Hew, 2010; Schell & Fisher, 2007; Schmidt, 2007; Skolnick, Dulberg, & Maestre, 2004; Young, 1994). Additionally, since these student-centered methods are more engaging to students and take into account their different learning styles, they should naturally be more motivating for students (Hickman, 2007; McCombs & Miller, 2007; McKay & Gibson, 2004).

Critical thinking is important for students to master because it gives them the skills to “move past the obvious and make individual connections with the text” (Karcl, 2012, p.58). With their own personal background knowledge and the ability to think critically, they can evaluate new information presented to them (Morrison & Free, 2001). Students need critical thinking skills in order to analyze and evaluate the world around them and make important decisions. In social studies classrooms, this means students can analyze different sources of information and facts concerning political and social issues (Salam & Hew, 2010). Surely, all teachers want their students to have the ability to think critically, and some teachers may even think their current methods of teaching are achieving this. For those teaching with traditional, teacher-centered methods, what they believe they are achieving, and what they are actually achieving may not correspond. It is imperative for students to know how to think critically in order for them to be successful in their lives, especially in this globalizing world we live in (Gallavan & Kottler, 2012; Morrison & Walsh, 2001; Kagan, 2005). Being able to make reasoned decisions and valued judgments can be the difference between success and failure in the work world.

The purpose of this research study is to determine if student-centered learning produces a better outcome than teacher centered in promoting critical thinking skills in a secondary social studies setting. After using some traditional student-centered methods and teacher-centered methods, results will be compared to see if using student-centered methods increasing critical thinking skills in students.

In my high school experience, in which I took four social studies classes in high school and in my internship experiences in eight social studies classes in a middle school and a high school in different school districts, I saw no use of student-centered learning or involvement of critical thinking skills. Sadly, I witnessed no engagement, inquiry, self-discovery, or any self-reflection. Students were merely passive learners, only listening to lectures in class, and reading textbooks at home. Assessments were based on lower-ordered thinking skills like recalling facts or labeling maps. These boring social studies classrooms left students unmotivated. I believe teaching higher-order, critical thinking skills and using a student-centered approach can be integrated together in one secondary social studies curriculum. This will allow students to be responsible for their learning while challenging them to think critically and make reasoned decisions in problem-solving and evaluating history. With the use of thinking critically and student-centered based learning, studies have shown that students will be able to retain information better and are able to apply it to real life situations (McCombs & Miller, 2007; McCombs & Whisler, 1997; McKay & Gibson, 2004; Yilmaz, 2008; Young, 1994). In the social studies classroom, this means students will be able to connect to history and in turn make meaningful connections to their lives (McKay & Gibson, 2004; McCombs & Whisler, 1997; Yilmaz, 2008).

In this ideal classroom, students will be active learners tackling activities in which they will be motivated to participate and learn. These activities in turn will improve information retention and develop a climate that invites learning. This method also encompasses different learning styles and student uniqueness which will serve the student population better and thus also improve motivation and academic success (DiCamillo, 2010; Evertson & Neal, 2006; Hawker, 2000; McCombs & Miller, 2007). Many engaging strategies exist for teaching social studies and critical-thinking skills; these strategies are not just for math and science classrooms. In this technological age, realistically, teachers are no longer the sole source of knowledge (Hawker, 2000); students are producing knowledge in social studies classes where they can become true historians. Teachers can facilitate students finding ways to connect to history and to truly see how meaningful social studies can be to their lives. As we speak states across the nation are adopting Common Core English Language Arts Standards for History/Social studies. Kathy Swan who has worked with Social Studies Assessment, Curriculum, and Instruction Collaborative (SSACI) at the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) on the common state standards for social studies project, believes that it is the content and ideas that come from learning social studies that promotes a democratic life including the skills a person needs for civic action and the attitudes that committee a person to the democratic values of justice, freedom, and the common good (Swan, n.d). The Common Core Standards that involve social studies expects to use primary and secondary sources on their own in order to be used as evidence. Teachers cannot be the source of knowledge; students will need to be interacting with multiple sources of information in order to fulfill these standards. For example, students will need to be able to “cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary

sources (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1),” “Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources (CCSS.EL-Literacy.RH.9-10.9),” and “Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them (CCSS.EL-Literacy.RH.9-10.3),” (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). These new standards are requiring students to use primary and secondary sources well as use the highest levels of critical thinking skills.

The following chapter will provide a review of research related to the current study. Chapter Three will reveal the methodology used including a detailed description of the students’ demographics and procedures involved in completing this study. Chapter Four will discuss the results of the study and provide a description of the limitations involved, while Chapter Five is a conclusion of the study and the implications of this study on my learning.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this research study is to determine if student-centered learning produces a better outcome than teacher centered in promoting critical thinking skills in a secondary social studies setting. Therefore, the topic under study for this literature review is the question of whether student-centered methods might provide a more effective way of teaching social studies versus traditionally taught teacher-centered methods. This question is based on the framework for student-centered teaching that allows the diversity of students to be considered, the diversity of multiple perspectives and tools to be considered, and the opportunity for students to become active learners which has the potential to foster autonomy, motivation, critical thinking skills, self-reflection skills, and historical misconceptions to be challenged.

For this thesis, the definition of social studies will be based off the National Council for the Social Studies' definition as defined as the "systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology (NCSS, 2010)." The purpose of having social studies as part of the curriculum is to "help young people make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world (NCSS, 2010)." The ultimate goal for incorporating social studies is to promote civic competence so

student can be active participates in public life as members of a global community (NCSS, 2010).

Traditionally, in teacher-centered social studies classrooms, the teacher is seen as the sole source of knowledge and relied primary on lectures and textbooks to transmit knowledge to students (DiCamillo, 2010; Hawker, 2000; Hess, 1999; McKay & Gibson, 2004; National Focus Group, 200; Russell, 2011). In this form of learning, the student is merely a passive learner, with no control of the teaching or learning process (Hawker, 2000). In this kind of environment, teachers are held accountable to teaching a class that examines an enormous historical timeframe to be learned in a single year (Hawker, 2000; Nowicki & Meehan, 1996). For most teachers, in order to complete the course in the time allotted, they must rely on a fact-based curriculum that centers on student memorization of facts from the textbook and teacher lectures (Nowicki & Meehan, 1996; Schmidt, 2007). With little student engagement or time reserved for thought-provoking questions or wrestling with social issues or controversies, making a connection to history and understanding its importance is hard for students. Teaching social studies concepts and facts by teacher-centered methods is often dull, boring and uninviting for participates (Loewen, 2007). No doubt, this explains why many teachers and students complain that learning social studies is boring and almost meaningless (DiCamillo, 2010; Loewen, 2007; McKay & Gibson, 2004; National Focus Group, 2006; Russell, 2011). In creating a class that is based primarily on memorizing facts, little critical thinking is involved. Teacher-centered social studies classes too often incorporate only the lowest levels of Bloom's Taxonomy in which students are only asked to recognized or remember facts during lecture questioning, filling out worksheets and completing multiple choice exams (Nowicki & Meehan, 1996; Schell & Fisher,

2007; Young, 1994). One of the goals in teaching social studies, as can be seen in the Common Core Standards, is the promotion of building critical thinking skills in students, but social studies classes are being criticized for not achieving such goals because of how these classes are traditionally taught (DiCamillo, 2010; McKay & Gibson, 2004, Wright, 2002).

When learning is shifted from teacher-centered to student-centered, the individual students are being considered for their diversity, and their learning styles are being brought into the learning process. In a teacher-centered classroom, teachers develop lesson objectives with teaching outcomes in mind, which means objectives are teacher centered, not learner centered (Hawker, 2000). Moving towards student-centered practices increases the control students have in their learning because learning is active, uses primary sources, higher order thinking skills, and allows students to have a hand in developing learning goals, making decisions in the pacing to achieve such goals, and how it will be determined that learning has taken place (DiCamillo, 2010; Evertson & Neal, 2006; Hawker, 2000; McCombs & Miller, 2007). As learning goals are developed with students as the center of focus, their diversity is being taken into account. This includes the diversity in the students' demographics, prior knowledge, ways of thinking, experiences, learning attitudes and skills, needs, and interests (Evertson & Neal, 2006; Hawker, 2000; Kagan, 2009; McCombs & Miller, 2007; Mowicki & Meehan, 1996; Yilmaz, 2008).

Moving away from traditional roles of the teacher as the main source of knowledge and offering only perspectives from the lecturer and the textbook, allows multiple and diverse perspectives to be introduced. Students learn that there are numerous sources from which to acquire information (Evertson & Neal, 2006). One method of easily incorporating multiple perspectives is by using primary sources (Schmidt, 2007; Skolnick et al., 2004; Wyman, 2005).

Primary sources allow students to investigate the past as if they were detectives and relive the event or time period closer to reality than textbooks could, while at the same time creating excitement and curiosity (Fresch, 2004; Schmidt, 2007; Wyman, 2005). Using primary sources enables students to make connections to history that memorizing facts cannot do. Inquiring about various primary sources requires critical thinking skills: extracting information, interpreting, analyzing and making inferences, compiling and organizing information, evaluating information, and drawing conclusions (Fresch, 2004; Marshall & Klein, 2009; Monte-Sano, 2008; Russell, 2011; Schmidt, 2007; Skolnick et al., 2004; Williams, 2009; Wyman, 2005).

Simulations are reenactment of a specific event in which the students' environment (classroom) is constructed as if they were in the real life environment of the event. The students move, speak, and make decisions as if they were living the event themselves. Simulations are a useful method of using cooperative learning to engage students, connect to history and promote critical thinking by having students take on the role of individuals or groups from history, and make decisions that those people would have had to make in a particular historical time period. Students become emotionally invested as they take on these roles that they otherwise would never experience and defend the decisions they make on behalf of who they are representing (Hess, 1999; Johannessen, 2000; Russell, 2011; Sanchez, 2006; Schell & Fisher, 2007; Skolnick et al., 2004).

Other tools to promote critical thinking that depart from the traditional teacher-centered approaches are debates, role-playing, Socratic or higher-order questioning, project based learning, and incorporating various interactive technologies. Endless numbers of ways exist to incorporate critical thinking; it just takes planning and knowing the diversity of your students.

As long as the students have some control of their thinking, they can begin to build critical thinking skills. Students may need to be scaffolded in the beginning, but continually using these different tools will ensure the growth of such skills (Copeland, 2005; DiCamillo, 2010; Fisher et al., 2005; Hickman, 2007; Marshall & Klein, 2009; McCombs & Miller, 2007; McKay & Gibson, 2004; National Focus Group, 2006; Nowicki & Meehan, 1996; Salam & Hew, 2010; Schell & Fisher, 2007; Skolnick et al., 2004; Wright, 2002; Young, 1994).

As stated earlier, student-centered learning puts the focus on the learner, and the teacher acts as a facilitator assisting students on their path to gaining knowledge (Hawker, 2000; Huber-Brown, 1993; Kagan, 2009; McCombs & Miller, 2007; McCombs & Whisler, 1997). When students' diversity is taken into account in the learning process and supported by an inclusive environment, their learning becomes relevant to them and holds more meaning, which may cause students to be more motivated and engaged (McCombs & Miller, 2007; McCombs & Whisler, 1997; Yilmaz, 2008). Teachers can make lessons authentic and connect them to students' real life experiences which gives students the opportunity to actively construct knowledge as they connect their prior experiences with the new information they learned (McKay & Gibson, 2004; McCombs & Whisler, 1997; Yilmaz, 2008). Relevant learning makes students interested and want to expand their learning into other subjects. They become self-directed and can start asking their own questions, which furthers their motivation to continue seeking answers. Their motivation will help improve their research and help them retain much more than they would have in traditionally taught classes. Students' own self-directed inquiry gives them the opportunity to form their own questions, focus, investigate, and test their theories and prior assumptions (Schmidt, 2007). Now students have a foundation to discuss their discoveries and

reactions, reject previous beliefs, or maybe strengthen their beliefs (McKay & Gibson, 2004; Nowicki & Meehan, 1996; Salam & Hew, 2010; Schmidt, 2007; Wright, 2009; Yilmaz, 2008). In the social studies classroom, this means that students can dispose of misconceptions, learn new outlooks, and have a deeper understanding of historical questions, concepts and topics (DiCamillo, 2010; Hess 1999; National Focus Group, 2006; Russell, 2011). Overtime as students gain ownership of what they are learning, students develop autonomy and grow into independent learners (Evertson & Neal, 2006; Hawker, 2000; McCombs & Miller, 2007). As students learn to think critically on their own and master the process of decision—making, they will be able to use those skills outside the classroom and in the world (Kagan, 2005; Yilmaz, 2008).

In addition, cooperative learning can be a major part of student-centered learning (Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Kagan, 1989). What makes it different from other traditional forms of group work is that students are interdependent on each other through the learning process, have to participate in group discussions, solving problems, making decisions, ensuring the assignment is complete, and each is individually held accountable (Copeland, 2005; Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Kagan, 2009; Forte & Schurr, 1996; Schmidt, 2007). Cooperative learning is an effective method to teach a diverse class because it incorporates heterogeneous grouping, and fosters communication, interdependence, and other social skills (Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Kagan, 2009; Schmidt, 2007). Since students must work with a diverse population to achieve a common good, they learn to collaborate with their classmates; skills that will carry out of the classroom into the global world (Evertson & Neal, 2006; Nowicki & Meehan, 1996). This supportive environment stimulates students to become more involved and responsible for their

learning, they begin to understand the material more in-depth, and start to synthesis, analyze, and evaluate the material, which helps them retain what they learn (Kagan, 2009; McCombs & Miller, 2007; McCombs & Whisler, 1997; McKay & Gibson, 2004; Young, 1994).

As the scholarly literature illustrates, student-centered teaching focuses on the student as the learner, and it is the student who benefits more as they make connections to what they are learning, develop critical thinking skills, decision making skills, social skills, curiosity, motivation and better retention. The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 2010) provides National Curriculum Standards that state what a student is expected to learn and what product a student can make to demonstrate learning. Examining learning expectations for high school social studies students, one will see words like interpret, construct, analyze, and compare under what learners will be able to do, and words like presenting, implementing, researching, creating, drafting, and collaborating under products that demonstrate understanding (National Council for the Social Studies, 2010). These higher-order expectations can be incorporated into the classroom by using a student-centered approach.

Table 1: Research on student-centered teaching methods

Student-centered Activity	What the research reveals	Supporting sources
Primary Sources	Using one or set of primary sources offers students additional sources of knowledge outside of the teacher in which they can learn about the experiences.	Evertson & Neal, 2006; Russell, 2011; Wyman, 2005
	Primary sources allow students to gain multiple perspectives on a subject.	Schmidt, 2007; Skolnick et al, 2004; Wyman, 2005
	By allowing students to learn about a subject through someone's words or photos who lived during that historical moment it creates curiosity and allows students to investigate the past more so than a textbook could allow.	Fresch, 2004; Schmidt, 2007; Wyman, 2005
	Having students inquiring what a person's words or the context of a photo is students have to use critical thinking information like extracting information, making inferences, and drawing conclusions.	Fresch, 2004; Marshall & Klein, 2000,; Monte-Sano, 2008; Russell,2011; Schmidt, 2007; Skolnick, 2004' Williams, 2009; Wyman, 2005
Simulations	By using a whole-class simulation, you are using cooperative learning to engage students and connect to history	Hess, 1999; Russell, 2011; Skolnick et al, 2004
	Simulations promote critical thinking as students have to think, act, and make decisions like the role of individuals or groups they are portraying from history	Russell, 2011; Schell & Fisher, 2007; Skolnick et al, 2004
	Simulations can be used to teach a variety of subjects from economics to specific topics like the Vietnam War	Hess, 1999; Johannessen, 2000; Sanchez, 2006
Cooperative Learning	Cooperative learning, as opposed to group work, holds students accountable, and therefore interdependent on each other	Copeland, 2005; Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Kagan, 2009; Forte & Schurr, 1996; Schmidt, 2007
	Cooperative learning takes into account diversity since it incorporates	Forte & Schurr, 1996; Hickman, 2007;

Cooperative Learning	heterogeneous groups and this fosters communication and other social skills	Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Kagan, 2009; McCombs & Miller, 2007; McKay & Gibson, 2004; Schmidt, 2007
	Collaboration is foster since students must work with a diverse population in order to achieve a common good, a skill that can be taken out of the classroom into a global world	Evertson & Neal, 2006; Johnson & Johnson; Nowicki & Meehan, 1996
	Since students are working among their peers and have to be involved and responsible for their learning, they begin to understand the material more in-depth as they are working together to synthesis, analyze, and evaluate material	Copeland, 2005; Kagan, 2009; McCombs & Miller, 2007; McCombs & Whisler, 1997; McKay & Gibson, 2004; Young, 1994
Debates	Debates with open-ended questions promote critical thinking skills as students acquire knowledge and defend their arguments and inferences based on evidence they have analyzed, synthesized, and evaluated.	Fisher et al., 2005; Marshall & Klein, 2009; McKay & Gibson, 2004; National Focus Group, 2006; Nowicki & Meehan, 1996
Socratic or higher-order questioning	Asking the right questions can build the foundation for students to think critically. Using higher-order thinking or Socratic methods promotes students to question evidence, be reflective, and be more critical of their answers.	Copeland, 2005; DiCamillo, 2010; National Focus Group, 2006; Salam & Hew, 2010; Schell & Fisher, 2007; Wright, 2002
Projects	Projects allow thought-demanding tasks to build over time and can better demonstrate a student's understanding of the material as it allows them to use critical thinking skills in answering complex open-ended questions	DiCamillo, 2010; Hickman, 2007; Young, 1994
Interactive technologies	Interactive technologies like blogcasts, Wikis, and student-response clickers involve every student to participate in the learning process and use critical thinking skills	Fisher et al., 2005; McCombs & Miller, 2007; McKay & Gibson, 2004; Salam & Hew, 2010

The following chapter will provide information pertaining to the methodology of the current study exploring the use of student-centered teaching methods versus teacher-centered methods with secondary social studies students. Chapter Four outlines the results of the study and limitations that effect the interpretation of the study results. The final chapter, Chapter Five, has concluding remarks on the future use of student-centered teaching and educational implications of this study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

This chapter outlines the procedure and methodology for this research project, including background information on the school's and students' demographics. In designing the methodology a certain way, we can help determine if student-centered learning produces a better outcome than teacher centered in promoting critical thinking skills in a secondary social studies setting.

PARTICIPANTS

The population included students from my internship class in a local high school in Central Florida. The classes were composed of students enrolled in the same American History course, but taking it during different periods (i.e. 1st period American History and 3rd period American History). All the students involved were eleventh graders. Three classes were used for this study. Each class received a different method of instruction. One class was taught a lesson using teacher-centered practices by me. The second class was taught about the same topic and events, but with student-centered practices by me. The third class received no direct instruction by me. The students' teacher, who's teaching experiences ranges from seventeen years, was no present in the room during the entire study. I on the other hand, am a pre-service teacher and have interned with these exact classes two days a week since the beginning of the

school year. My students were familiar with me though this was one of the first times I was fully alone with the students and proving their instruction.

The school serves about 2,556 students from a primarily suburban single family residential community. The community serves as a prime location for young families and professionals, as well as corporate office relocations and light manufacturing operations. The city has a population of less than 14,000 people, despite a daytime population of over 35,000 people.

In the school, 58% of students identify themselves as white, 14% as Black, 22% as Hispanic, 3% as Asian, 3% as Other or Multiracial, and 7 students out of the student population, which is less than .3% of student population, identify themselves as Native American or Alaskan Indians. There are 1284 male students and 1272 female students. Within the school, 977 students qualify for free or reduced price lunch. In the school, 67 students or 3% of students are identified as ESOL students, and 325 students or 13% of students receive ESE services for a disability. There are currently 333 students who are classified as At-Risk for Graduation. This is determined by the county when the students are in eighth grade. Once classified as At-Risk, students cannot lose that label, but it does not mean they cannot be successful in high school and in fact graduate with their class. Additionally 44 students or 2% of students are in F.I.T. F.I.T. stands for Families in Transition, which is a program to help serve the educational needs of the county's public school students who are considered homeless. The county's definition of homeless is any student who, "lack a fixed, regular and adequate resident; or have a primary nighttime residence that is temporary in nature."

The students that are part of this research are all in Honors United States History. There are 72 total students within three sections of this class. The classes are un-proportional to the school's demographics. There is a considerably larger proportion of female students and students who identified themselves as white. In all the rest of the categories, it's below proportional percentages. According to the data recorded in the county's Internet based website, Skyward, out of 74 students, 61% students are females and 39% students are male. Of these students, 68% identified themselves as White, 10% as Black, 18% as Hispanic, 3% as Asian, 1% as Native American, and 0% as Other or Multiracial. Eight students receive ESE services, and zero students are identified as ELLs currently receiving ESOL services. Eight students have been labeled as At-Risk for Graduation. One student, who is in the F.I.T. program, is one of the eight students considered At-Risk. Another students who is in the group for At-Risk, is one of our students who receives ESE services

Seven out of the eight students who receive ESE services, are classified as having a Specific Learning Disability. The seventh student is classified as having Autism Spectrum Disorder. Five of these students have IEPs that have extended time on test, quizzes, and assignments. All of the students' IEPs included instruction and assessment accommodations that included variation in instructional methods and using multiple learning styles at once (for example using "Oral and visual presentation of material when possible"). One student is allowed to use their cell phone to take a picture of the board for notes and assignments. These students can have a harder time processing material than their non-ESE peers and it can take them a longer time to process information, and that is why it is important to plan these accommodations within daily lessons. Three students have preferential seating in which they

need to be seated in front of the teacher or with their left ear facing the teacher, in order to help them hear and focus on the teacher. This needs to be remembered when changing seating charts and arranging cooperative or partner work.

My supervising teacher's classroom has a teacher-centered layout. The desks are arranged in non-touching rows facing the front of the classroom towards the board. My teacher's desk is in the back corner and her podium is in the front opposite corner. There is one large whiteboard on the front wall. The technology in the room is a ceiling projector, an Elmo, a VHS/DVD player, a TV, and a wireless Internet connection box. There are no computers or printers in the classroom for student use. There are computer labs and portable laptop carts that a teacher can request to use in advance. Stored on the side wall is a pile of white boards and dry erase markers for individual use. The back bookcase also houses the Honors textbooks, though there is not a full class set.

Students were divided into groups based on the class periods they belonged to. Out of the 72 students within the 3 classes, I had 50 who brought in consent forms. To have 70% of my students turn in a signed consent form was a great turn out. Students were not given incentives to bring in the consents forms. I simply gave them out ahead of time and everyday asked the students individually where their consent forms were up until the day of the study. I think asking them individually why they had not brought in the consent form is what motivated the students to bring it in. For each student I would tell them it's important to bring it in and they need to write it down, be in their agenda, on their hands, or in their smart phones. Of the 50 students who had consent forms by the day of the research study, 46 of the students attended class and so 46 students participated in the study.

Student Demographics									
Method	# of Participants	Race: White	Race: Black	Race: Hispanic	Race: Asian	Female	Male	Classified as ESE	At-Risk for Graduation
Student-Centered	18	14	2	2	0	12	6	2	5
Teacher-Centered	17	12	3	2	0	13	4	2	2
Control	11	7	1	2	1	5	6	2	0

Table 2: Student demographics for population that participated in study

Of these students, 30 (65%) were female and 16 (35%) were male. Of the 30 females, 20 were white, 4 were black, 5 were Hispanic, and 1 was Asian. Of the 16 males, 13 were white, 2 were black, 1 was Hispanic and there were no male Asians. Four out of the six students classified as ESE were male and two out of the seven labeled as At-Risk for Graduation were male.

PROCEDURES

Student data were collected from pre and post assessments. I created a teacher-made critical thinking pretest and posttest to determine if students gained critical thinking skills after being taught either a teacher-centered or student-centered lesson on the same topic (see Appendix A: Pretest with Bloom's Taxonomy Labels). In creating this test, I considered the main learning objectives when creating specific questions. I was not concerned with very many small details but more on the bigger picture of the information the students were learning. The tests was created with ten items that were multiple choices. For future studies, short and long response essays could be used to further understanding the thinking process of students and how far their critical thinking goes, but this method was not practical for this study given the short time to conduct the entire study and changes that had to be made to the lesson plan days before

the study date. Multiple choice test hold a degree in validity in that each question holds one correct answer and this makes it easier for the grader to assess the students objectively, but written student responses tell more into the students' thinking process and how they apply, analyze, and evaluate information. I refrained from using true and false and matching questions because it is harder to assess the students' critical thinking skills when there is a greater ability for the student to guess the answer. Within the test, it was written using lower-order (20% of the questions) and higher-order (80% of the questions) thinking questions according to Bloom's Taxonomy. To see the Bloom's level of each question, see Appendix A for reference.

After becoming Institutional Review Board (IRB) certified and submitting my proposal for this study, permission to conduct this study and all research materials were approved by the Institutional Review Board (see Appendix B: IRB Approval). Permission was also received by the principal of the high school before starting any step of the study (see Appendix C: Principal's Consent). All 50 students involved had signed consents from their parents (see Appendix D: Consent Forms for Students). All lesson plans and tests were reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board, my thesis chair, and internship teacher before administering. Students have block periods two days a week: Tuesday students attend their odd period classes for 90 minutes and on Wednesday students attend their even period classes for 90 minutes. Monday, Thursday, and Friday students attend all seven classes for 50 minutes. All students from the three groups participated in the study in their U.S. History classroom according to the normal class schedule they had. So if students normally went to their U.S. History class for 3rd period, I would see them Tuesday for their 3rd period block class. At the end of two days I saw each class, during their normally scheduled history time, in their normal classroom. This

allowed me to conduct the study in a classroom the students were already familiar with and could utilize the sources within the classroom, including the class textbook for the control group. This was a comfortable setting for the students that provided no additional anxieties for the students. This also allowed me to divide the students objectively; it was based on their class period and nothing more. During the students' block period, I distributed the pretest to the students who had returned the signed consent forms, and moved the students who did not have consent forms to the seats in the back of the class to work on an alternative assignment. After all students had handed me their pretest, I started the lessons.

The unit of study was on the presidencies of Warren G. Harding and Calvin Coolidge. Previously all three groups of students had learned about the causes and effects of World War I on the American public, and this unit of study explains how the presidents tried to return their nation to normalcy, which meant a return to isolation and a focus on domestic issues and prosperity. A big focus of this learning is on the governmental support of big businesses and scandals and corruptions that filled the administrations. The time period of this unit is on the first decade after the war, from 1920 to 1928, a time of economic prosperity for the United States before the stock market crash and the Great Depression. What students learned in this study would be considered one day out of a four day study plan as they learn about new technologies and economic policies that led to economic prosperity that created the Roaring Twenties. Modified from the Florida Sunshine State Standards, the learning objective for this study were, explain and justify Harding's and Coolidge's political economic decisions (SS.912.A.3.10 and SS.912.A.5.4), evaluate the U.S. efforts to avoid future world wars (SS.912.A.5.5), and explain the impact at home and abroad of U.S. foreign economic policy (SS.912.A.5.3).

For the student-centered class period, I had them sit in pairs according to my assigned seats. I then gave each pair a packet of reading material on the administration of Harding and Coolidge to work together on. I wrote our Goals and Objectives on the board: Explain and justify Harding's and Coolidge's political economic decisions, evaluate the U.S. efforts to avoid future world wars, and explain the impact at home and abroad of U.S. foreign economic policy. Students were overly excited that they could easily answer this question by telling me that efforts to avoid a world war were a failure as they knew World War II would happen in the same century. I asked students to make a graph somewhere in their reading packet with these questions in each column and look for the answers as they read the packet I handed them. Students then started reading. Many pairs took turns reading out loud and most made notes in the margins, highlighted portions, and underlined information they deemed important. Next we had a short discussion about what the students wrote in each section of the graph in their reading packets they were told to use in answering the questions posed by the learning objectives for the day. As time was running short, I asked students to draw a political cartoon with their partners to represent some aspect of what they read. The students had seen a couple of political cartoons before, so I encouraged them to employ some of the techniques they had seen previous artists use, like using only a few words and letting the picture speak for the issue or event at the end. They were also allowed to use Uncle Sam as a character as they had seen him before in other political cartoons. As soon as students were finishing with their collaborative political cartoons, I had them start the posttest.

Students in the teacher-centered group were given the same pretest at the beginning of the class and were told to take out a sheet of paper after completion of the pre-assessment. For most

of the class, students then took notes from my PowerPoint as I gave a lecture on the same information the student-centered group collaboratively explored within the packet of reading with a buddy. With about 15 minutes left, I gave the same posttest as the other groups and students finished it with time to spare.

The students in the control group were given the same pretest and then were assigned some traditional bookwork to do for the day. Daily the students are assigned a section from their textbook to read for homework and have to answer a series of questions listed at the end of the section. They are told to read the section first and answer all assigned questions with complete sentences. The section students read corresponded to the material I taught the other two groups. They read from Chapter 21 Section 1 Normalcy and Good Times. They received no direct instruction from me. With about 15 minutes left, I gave them the same posttest that was administered to the other groups.

These tests were administrated just as any test would have been in this classroom. The tests were closed book: students had to take the pre and posttest without the textbook, notes, cell phones, or other study aids. They could not work with anybody else but had to complete the test independently in silence. They could take as long as they needed to complete the test and had to add it in to me when they finished answering every question. I asked the students to try and answer every question to the best of their abilities and encouraged that there was no need to leave any question unanswered for fear that they would be marked incorrect because it would not hurt them and it would never be recorded in their grades.

Chapter Four explains in more detail the results after the three groups completed their activities and took their posttest. It will be illustrated which group made the highest increases

on their posttest compared to the other groups. Each group made increases, but the student-centered group had higher increases on their posttest from their pretest, supporting my hypothesis that student-centered teaching does promote critical thinking skills in a high school social studies classroom. The results though are not without their limitations. The limitations, including the validity of the results and diversity of the students, are discussed at the end of the chapter. Chapter Five has concluding remarks on the results of the study and the educational implications this study has contributed to.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The intent of this thesis was to explore the effectiveness of integrating student-centered methods in high school social studies classrooms as a means of promoting critical thinking skills. Through the analysis of student posttest scores compared to their pretest scores, I was able to determine which teaching method for this brief intervention produced higher increases in scores. Evidence shows that student-centered teaching produced a higher average score increase, though all methods had students who scored lower, and students whose scores remained constant.

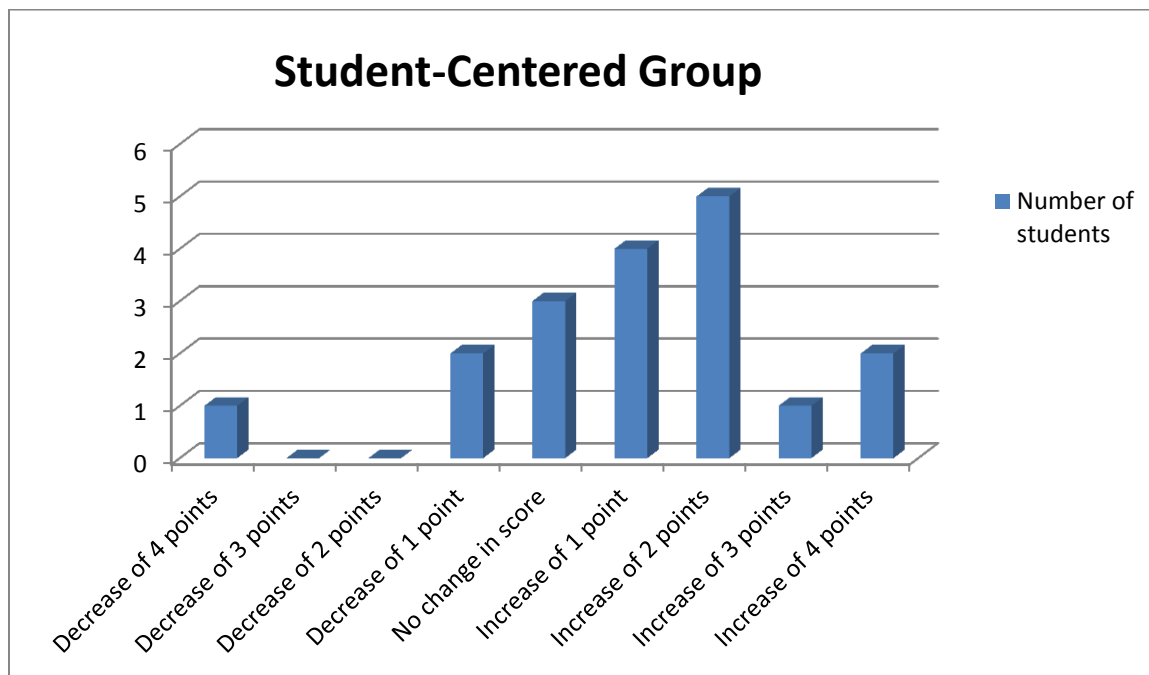


Table 3: Frequency of student scores for student-centered group

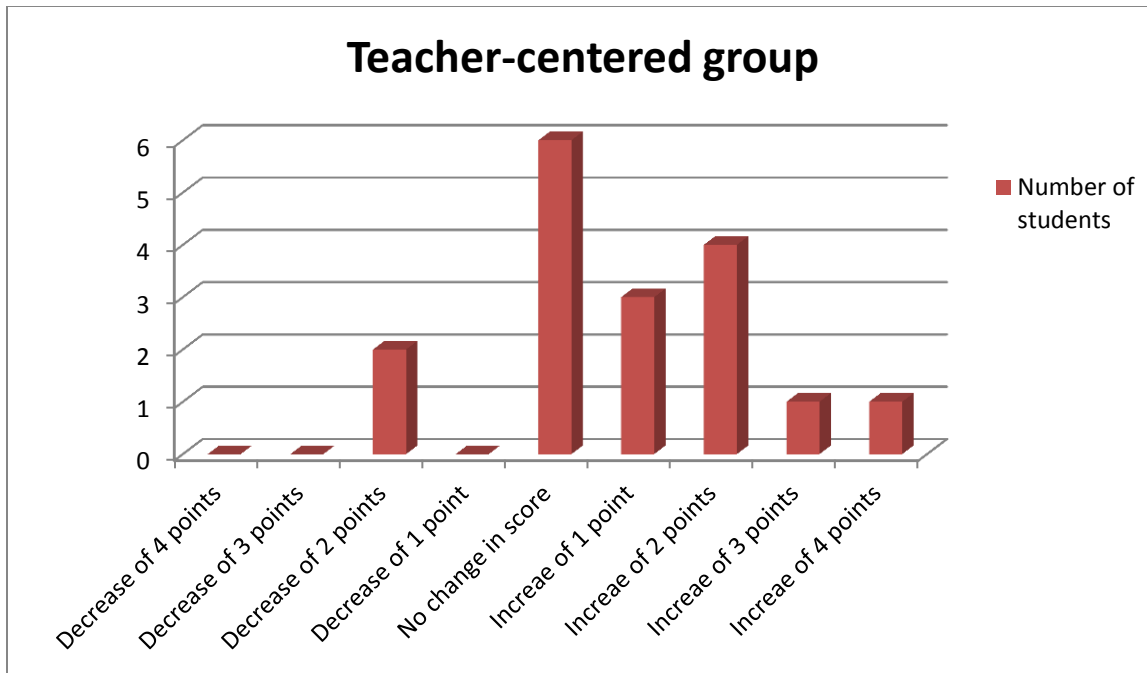


Table 4: Frequency of student scores for teacher-centered group

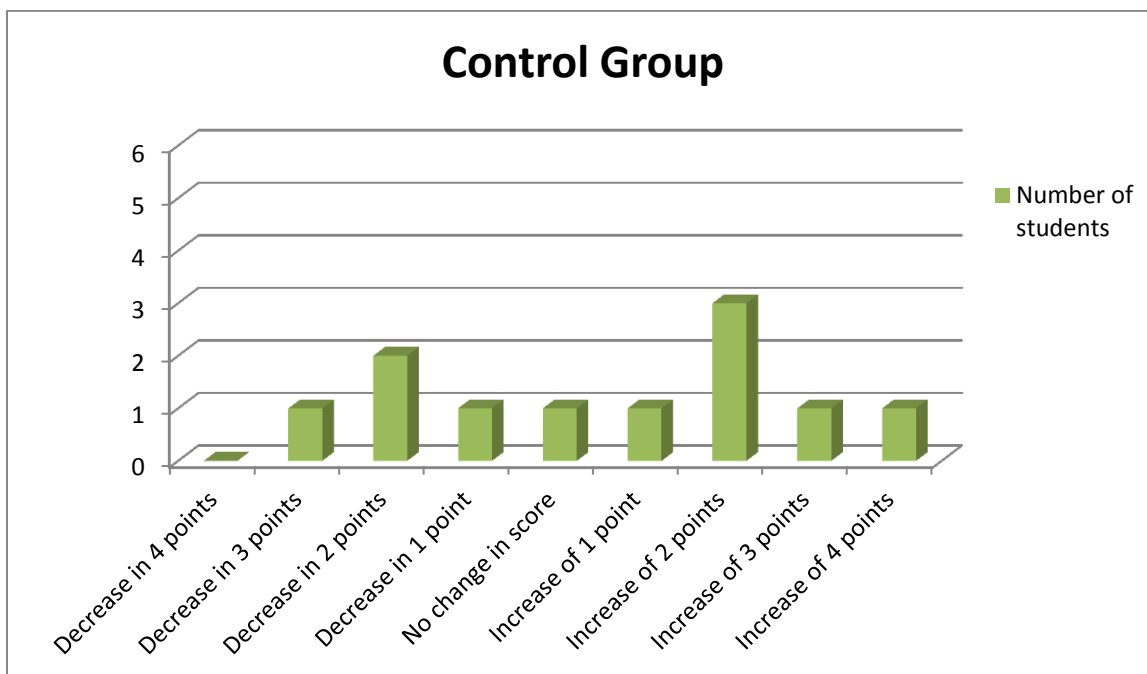


Table 5: Frequency of student scores for control group

As illustrated by the graphs, within the student-centered group, twelve students had made increases, while three students' scores remained constant and three students' scores decreased. The average change for this group was +1.10. Among the teacher-centered group, nine students made increases on their posttest, while six students had scores that remained the same, and two students had scores that decreased. The average change was +0.82. With the control group, six students made score increases, one student had a score that remained constant, and four students had scores that decreased on their posttest from their pretest. The average change for the control group was +0.55. All groups made some degree of increases from their pretest to their posttest, but the average change for the student-centered group was more than the teacher-centered group, and double that of the control group. What these scores are showing is that student-centered teaching did promote changes in a test that was composed of mostly higher-order thinking questions. The fact that the average change of the student-centered group was more than that of the other two groups proves my hypothesis that student-centered teaching can promote critical thinking in the high school social studies classroom. It should also be pointed out that five of my seven students who are At-Risk who participated in this study were in the student-centered group, and out of those five, three made increases (one remained constant and one decreased). The other two students were in the teacher-centered group and only one student made gains. Though this subpopulation is very small, it does show potential that student-centered teaching can have a positive effect on their learning and critical thinking skills.

LIMITATIONS

This study is limited, and the results must be cautiously interpreted. The experiment was only performed once for a brief class period and produced a small amount of data with which to work with. If the study was replicated several more times over an extended period, the results from the study would better support if student-centered teaching improves critical thinking skills in students or not. Data collected over an extended period could also allow the data to be interpreted more accurately and represent what is actually happening within the classroom. Repeating the experiment would allow a variety of student-centered techniques (i.e. using simulations, student-response clickers, primary sources, etc.) to be used and data can show if one technique increased critical thinking skills more than another technique. Data then could also be analyzed to show if a particular population responded better to specific student-centered techniques. To decrease the changes that the teacher had an effect on the scores (i.e. teaching the student-centered lesson better to increase scores and teaching the teacher-centered lesson ineffectively to decrease test scores), an outside neutral person could teach the three groups as opposed to the teacher, or all three classes could learn the same methods for one lesson, unit, or quarter, then all three classes could learn under the other method for the same time period and the data can be interpreted to show what changes took place under the different methods.

Additionally, my results are coming from a population that is not that diverse compared to their school and even surrounding schools. Among the population that participated in this study, 65% were female and among the whole population, 69% were white. This doesn't allow the freedom to express the changes in score to subpopulations. This study cannot accurately say if one subgroup benefited more from teacher or student-centered teaching. It does not show if

students with disabilities, English Language Learners, or At-Risk students benefit more or less from a student-centered environment that takes into account different learning styles and backgrounds. This study would have to be repeated with a group with more diversity or a group composed of only African Americans, or only At-Risk students (for example) in order to more accurately see if student-centered learning benefits them. Also, repeating the experiment would allow a variety of student-centered techniques to be used to see if a subpopulation response better to one technique to increased critical thinking skills more than an another technique.

My students were very overwhelmed with the amount of work that had to be completed in one-90 minute block period. Originally, they were told that they would be completing the pre-test and posttest on two completely different days during the time that they would normally do their Question-of-the-Day. My supervising teacher changed my plans and I had to ask the students to do the pretest, lesson plan, and posttest all in one 90 minute block period. Several students expressed concern over finishing everything in time, others were nervous about their scores, and if they would pass. I assured them that the scores I collected were not part of their school grade, and would never make it into their grade book, and their teacher wouldn't even see their scores, but students were still emotional about the workload. This time restraint most likely also affected the process time for my students: they had little instructional time to interact with the material, digest the information, and apply it the higher order questions I was asking in the posttest. The students in the control group did not seem as worried as the other two groups but more relaxed as they read from their textbooks independently. After the pretest, I told the students they would be working on their own with the textbooks so they probably did have a feeling of a heavy workload as compared to the other two classes who had to complete my lesson

plans. They displayed no emotional anxiety of completely everything I asked them in a timely manner.

The final and following chapter finishes this thesis with concluding remarks based on the results of this research study. The chapter also explores the educational implications that this research has contributed to and the personal experiences I have gain completing this program. The purpose of this study was to determine if student-centered teaching promotes critical thinking in secondary social studies classroom. My results supported that student-centered teaching does promote critical thinking but I would like to continue using student-centered teaching in my own classroom to see what effect it can have a larger population, over a longer period of time, and with different student-centered methods. I would especially like to see what results could be achieved using different interactive technologies in a student-centered classroom.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

At the heart of this research study was to see if student-centered learning can produce a better outcome in promoting critical thinking skills than teacher-centered learning can. The students I worked with only received instruction by teacher-centered methods but it is important that all students experience different teaching styles and have opportunities to use critical thinking skills. This chapter provides details into the limitations encountered in this study and what actions can be taken if this study was to be recreated in the future to result in more valid results. Despite the limitations, this was a rewarding and educational experience and has not hindered my desire to teach using student-centered methods.

Students in each of these class periods have no opportunities to work together in pairs or in groups. Every day they sat in rows and had to write notes from outlines or from the textbook publisher's PowerPoints. At the end of each chapter they were taught, students were then given a test where the test questions and answers were made by the publisher of their textbook. The Professional Learning Community (including their teacher) that modified these tests only used multiple-choice and matching questions that asked lower-level Knowledge and Comprehension questions from Bloom's Taxonomy. For 21st century learning demands, students will still need to learn how to communicate and cooperate with one another to problem solve in the real world and student-centered teaching encourages this.

I encourage student-centered learning activities to be used to promote the skills that are not fostered in teacher-centered teaching. Another point needed to be made is that this study shows how important interactive learning experiences are in terms of critical thinking questions and activities. When my brightest student exclaimed that the questions on the tests were difficult, I knew that that meant the questions would have been difficult for all my students, especially for my students who were At-Risk, accounting for seven of my students who turned in consent forms. These students had not passed FCAT and already struggled with the reading level of their U.S. History textbook. These students had difficulties with questions that asked them to recall and comprehend material, and my study was asking them to infer and analyze material. These students were familiar with questions that asked them to recall facts. This study provides some initial evidence that these secondary students were not familiar with having to derive the meaning by using higher-order thinking skills. For example, one question students struggle with was, “What would happen if Treasurer Mellon had taken the economy in a different direction?” Students would first have to know who Treasurer Mellon is and how he ran the treasury. Next students would have to differentiate how his policies were different than the treasuries before him. Students would have to analyze how the treasury and the economy is normally carried out in times of prosperity and war and then use that information to see how Treasurer Mellon carried out his policies and had unique effects. Students who answered that “Eventually the Senate would have decreased their spending as it usually happens in a time of peace,” would be displaying a lack of using critical thinking skills. This answer reveals that students didn’t differentiate that it was Mellon who actually set a policy of decreasing government spending and it was his policies that successfully led to a surplus. Students also

didn't analyze how the Senate and federal government carried out their spending, if so they would have seen a pattern in history that Senate spending does not result in surplus but a history of deficit spending. Analyzing the Senate's spending policy would have revealed that there are very few times in history of the nation being in the green.

Despite the limitations, this study showed that with this one class on this one day using student-centered methods were found to increase students' critical thinking skills. If promoting critical thinking skills in students is an important goal for the secondary social studies teacher, they need to incorporate student-centered activities using a variety of tools that can accommodate student learning needs and that fits the school environment in which they work. If a teacher's goal is just to have their students pass standardized tests and move on to the next grade level, then teacher-centered learning may get their goal accomplished.

This experience has really opened my eyes to the benefits of teaching outside the traditional mode of teaching, which in the case of teaching social studies at the secondary level is through teacher-centered methods. I went through secondary school experiencing lectures and PowerPoints, and even witness it being used in the classroom as I did observations and field experience as a undergraduate student. Student-centered teaching is normally mentioned in most of the textbooks I read for in my undergraduate education classes, yet it was rarely expanded enough in a way that teachers knew exactly how to integrate into the classroom. With this experience I wanted to further my knowledge on the implementation and benefits of using student-centered teaching in social studies classroom and test to see if I could prove in real life it provided more benefits than traditional teacher-centered teaching.

When I first started writing my Literature Review, I read about the success and positive attitudes social studies teachers had in using student-centered methods from the articles of Yilmaz (2008) and Salam and Hew (2010). Reading actual teachers' positive comments I was encouraged to explore this topic further and see how many different ways student-centered teaching could be explored. Reading about the numerous methods I wanted to try some out within my internship class and I succeeded in at least having my students walking around and talking to each during the time I taught their lessons, even after this study was completed.

This hands-on learning experience has really instilled in me a desire to see what type of student-centered classroom I can procedure and achievements in students' scores that could come from using interactive lesson plans that truly take into account the students' diversity. After seeing how the class was conducted in my supervising teacher's class and many more classes I observed through college and high school, I want to set up a classroom where working cooperatively and using technology is the norm. There will be no straight rows of desks facing the front every single day. In my future classroom, students will take accountability of their learning, and learn that success comes with cooperation and hard work. I want my students to expect that I will be expecting them to participate in each and every activity and they will be using their brains for more than just recalling facts. As a class, we will connect how the history of the past is in fact connected to them in this present time. My personal teacher goal is to successfully implement Common Core standards and 21st Century Skills despite the burden that can come with teaching a saturated social studies curriculum. I will find a way to teach all my students the information they need for state and national standards and tests, while having them engaged and enjoying history, and making a personal connection to history. My goal at the end

of the school year for my students would be for students to have increased their critical thinking skills and understand that the world around them demands they know how to put to use inference skills, evaluating skills, synthesizing and analyzing skills, making judgments that can be backed up with evidence, and over all problem solving skills. Life's dilemmas are not going to be solved by looking in the pages of a textbook.

APPENDIX A: PRETEST WITH BLOOM'S TAXONOMY LABELS

Elaine Sayre
University of Central Florida
Pre-Test

1. Analyze the hidden motive behind the Dawes Plan.

(Bloom's Level—Analysis)

- A. If Germany was able to pay back Britain and France a second world war wouldn't start.
- B. If Britain and France were able to pay back their loans, the European economy would recover, similar to under the Marshall Plan.
- C. United States would benefit twice from the interest rates on Germany's loans and having their loans paid back by Britain and France.
- D. It was designed to make the U.S. a world power since they didn't incur a debt from involvement in WWI.

2. "Isolationism characterized U.S. foreign policy in the 1920s." Which of the following might be used to refute the above claim? (Bloom's Level—Evaluation)

- A. Harding's championing of the League of Nations
- B. U.S. leadership in calling the Washington Conference
- C. U.S. military and naval buildup
- D. Increased U.S. military intervention in Latin America.

3. Which actions did the U.S. agree with and take part in?

(Bloom's Level—Application)

- I. Washington Naval Conference II. World Court
- III. Kellogg-Briand Pact IV. League of Nations
- A. II, IV C. I, II, III
- B. I, III D. I, II, IV

4. Infer how one reason for the failure of the League of Nations was influenced by the United States involvement.

(Bloom's Level—Analysis)

- A. The United States and Britain had a lot of money invested in each other and without one, the other's economy would be damaged.
- B. The United States was one of the few countries that had global power that could enforce the League's rules.
- C. The United States was a role model country for other countries.
- D. The United States was becoming a world power and had a lot of economic and political influence.

5. Which of the following was the LEAST important consideration in U.S. foreign policy during the 1920s?

(Bloom's Level—Evaluation)

- A. repayment of debts by European nations
- B. negotiating disarmament treaties
- C. promoting worldwide peace efforts
- D. promoting U.S. business

6. How did the United States tariff impact foreign economic policy? (Bloom's Level—Application)

- A. The low tariff opened up new countries the opportunity to trade with the US.
- B. The tariff was seen as an insult message and countries limited their trading with the US.
- C. The high tariff caused many countries to be unable to trade with the US.
- D. The high tariff made it easier for Americans to sell their goods at home.

7. What would happen if Treasurer Mellon had taken the economy in a different direction? (Bloom's Level—Synthesis)

- A. The Senate would have mostly likely increased their spending and increased taxes as they had done before.
- B. The economy would not have been as strong as under Mellon and would have most likely been hit harder during the Great Depression.
- C. Eventually the Senate would have decrease their spending as it usually happens in a time of peace.
- D. President Harding would have done it himself and the spending would have shrunk and the Treasury would have showed a surplus.

8. How would you have justified Silent Cal's lack of social change in the legislation? (Bloom's Level—Evaluation)

- A. Coolidge had allowed businesses to grow without government control which created the economic boom, so no social change was needed.
- B. Coolidge was worried that the economic boom would have been hindered by social legislation.
- C. Harding had passed enough social legislation to be effective for social change.
- D. The people didn't need Coolidge to create social change as they were enjoying the economic boom.

9. During the 1920s the group who generally did NOT prosper were? (Bloom's Level—Knowledge)

- A. owners of small businesses B. farmers
- C. Wall Street brokers D. residents of western cities

10. Harding's program that he wanted Laissez-Faire, where the government could help the economy by keeping its hands off was (Bloom's Level—Knowledge)

- A. Socialism
- B. Laissez-Faire Government
- C. Divergence
- D. Normalcy

APPENDIX B: IRB APPROVAL



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**
FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: **William B. Russell and Co-PI: Elaine Sayre**

Date: **December 18, 2012**

Dear Researcher:

On 12/18/2012, the IRB approved the following human participant research until 12/17/2013 inclusive:

Type of Review: UCF Initial Review Submission Form
Project Title: Integrating Student-Centered Learning to Promote Critical Thinking in High School Social Studies Classrooms
Investigator: William B. Russell
IRB Number: SBE-12-08910
Funding Agency:
Grant Title:
Research ID: N/A

The Continuing Review Application must be submitted 30 days prior to the expiration date for studies that were previously expedited, and 60 days prior to the expiration date for research that was previously reviewed at a convened meeting. Do not make changes to the study (i.e., protocol, methodology, consent form, personnel, site, etc.) before obtaining IRB approval. A Modification Form cannot be used to extend the approval period of a study. All forms may be completed and submitted online at <https://iris.research.ucf.edu>.

If continuing review approval is not granted before the expiration date of 12/17/2013, approval of this research expires on that date. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

Use of the approved, stamped consent document(s) is required. The new form supersedes all previous versions, which are now invalid for further use. Only approved investigators (or other approved key study personnel) may solicit consent for research participation. Participants or their representatives must receive a copy of the consent form(s).

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 12/18/2012 01:57:13 PM EST

IRB Coordinator

APPENDIX C: PRINCIPAL'S CONSENT

**Instructional Review Board
Principal Consent Form
University of Central Florida
Elaine Sayre**

Title of Study: Integrating Student-Centered Learning to Promote Critical Thinking in High School Social Studies Classrooms

Principal Investigator: Dr. William B. Russell III **Email:** russell@ucf.edu

Objectives: The objective of this research is to test the hypothesis that integrating student-centered methods in high school social studies classrooms will promote critical thinking skills.

Resources available to conduct the Human Research

- Elaine Sayre, co-investigator, will be administering the pretests, posttests, and instructional activities at Lake Mary High School. All research will be conducted in the classroom of Deborah Casillo.
- We expect this research study to last no more than five class periods. This study will be conducted during the Fall 2012 semester.

Procedures involved in the Human Research: During one school day, all students (approximately seventy-five students) will be given the same pre-test to complete. The next part of the study will be given during a separate school day. Group One, with approximately twenty-five students, will be taught a lesson plan using student-centered approaches. Group Two, with approximately twenty-five students, will be taught a lesson plan using teacher-centered approaches. Both lesson plans will teach the same concepts and vocabulary; just the mode of instruction will be different. Group Three, approximately twenty-five students, will be the control group and will not be taught a lesson on the selected concepts and vocabulary used in group one and two. On a separate day after Group One and Two have been taught using the specified lesson plans, all three groups will be administered the same post-test to complete. Whether students decide to participate in the study or not, they will be required to follow all classroom and school rules to minimize safety risks. The pre and posttest will be composed of multiple-choice questions to reduce risk of subjectivity. Both lesson plans will have an opener, in the form of an essential question, the main activity, and a closer, in the form of a review session. The results of the pre and posttest will be collected, compared, and analyzed.

I, MIKE KOTLIN, give Elaine Sayre permission to conduct her study upon IRB approval as described in the procedure described above.


Signature

10/8/12
Date

MIKE KOTLIN@SCS.K12.FL.US
Email

407-320-2503
Phone Number

APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORMS FOR STUDENTS



***Integrating Student-Centered Learning to Promote Critical Thinking in High School
Social Studies Classrooms***

Informed Consent

Principal Investigator(s): Dr. William B. Russell III

Sub-Investigator(s): Elaine Sayre

Investigational Site(s): Lake Mary High School

How to return this consent form: Parents, please return one copy of this form signed to Mrs. Casillo in room 1-207 and keep one for your records. Please do this as soon as possible.

Introduction: Because the University of Central Florida is a researched based university, researchers study many different topics. To do this we need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study. You are being asked permission on behalf of your child to take part in a research study which will include students at Lake Mary High School. Your child is being invited to take part in this research study because he or she is a student in Mrs. Casillo's class at Lake Mary High School. The person doing this research is William B. Russell, Ph.D. of the School of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership within the College of Education at the University of Central Florida and sub-investigator, Elaine Sayre, an undergraduate student at the University of Central Florida

What you should know about a research study:

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- A research study is something you volunteer for.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You should allow your child to take part in this study only because you want to.
- You can choose not to take part in the research study.
- You can agree to take part now and later change your mind.
- Whatever you decide it will not be held against you or your child.
- Feel free to ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of this study is to determine if the use of student-centered instruction can promote critical thinking in social studies classrooms.

What your child will be asked to do in the study: The first part of the study will include students taking a pretest. It will be multiple-choice and take less than one class period to complete. The next part of the study will include your child participating in an activity just as they would in any other class. This activity will take one class period to complete. The last part of the study will include students taking a posttest



Permission to Take Part in a Human Research Study

that is similar to the pretest and it will be multiple-choice. It should take less than one class period to complete as well.

Location: Lake Mary High School

Time required: We expect that your child will be in this research study for no more than five class periods.

Risks: There are no expected risks for taking part in this study. There are no reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts involved in taking part in this study. There is no penalty for not taking place in research activity.

Benefits: We cannot promise any benefits to you, your child, or others from your child taking part in this research. However, as a research participant, possible benefits include learning more about how research is conducted, about how students perform in student-centered activities, and how students perform in teacher-centered activities.

Compensation or payment: There is no compensation, payment, or extra credit for your child's part in this study. If your child chooses not to participate, you or your child may notify his or her instructor and ask for an alternative assignment of equal effort for equal credit. There will be no penalty.

Confidentiality: We will limit your personal data collected in this study. Efforts will be made to limit your child's personal information to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the IRB and other representatives of UCF. Test information will be locked in a cabinet off campus. The only individuals that will be exposed to the test results will be Russell William III, Ph.D. and Elaine Sayre.

Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem: If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt your child talk to:

William B. Russell, Ph.D.
College of Education
University of Central Florida
4000 Central Florida Boulevard
Orlando, Florida 32816
russell@ucf.edu
407-823-4345

IRB contact about you and your child's rights in the study or to report a complaint: Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901. You may also talk to them for any of the following:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.

UCF IRB Version Date: 01/2010



University of Central Florida IRB
IRB NUMBER: SBE-12-08910
IRB APPROVAL DATE: 12/18/2012
IRB EXPIRATION DATE: 12/17/2013

Permission to Take Part in a Human Research Study

- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Your signature below indicates your permission for the child named below to take part in this research.

DO NOT SIGN THIS FORM AFTER THE IRB EXPIRATION DATE BELOW

Name of participant

Signature of parent or guardian

Date

Printed name of parent or guardian

Assent

☐ Obtained

Note on permission by guardians: An individual may provide permission for a child only if that individual can provide a written document indicating that he or she is legally authorized to consent to the child's general medical care. Attach the documentation to the signed document.

UCF IRB Version Date: 01/2010



University of Central Florida IRB
IRB NUMBER: SBE-12-08910
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