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First Things First: What Do Students Really Know About the First Amendment?

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First Things First: What Do Students Really Know About the First Amendment?

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of Teacher Education

and the

Faculty of the Graduate College

University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

University of Nebraska at Omaha

by

Joanne Chapuran

February 6, 2007

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First Things First:
What Do Students Really Know About the First Amendment?

Acceptance for the faculty
of the Graduate College
of the University of Nebraska,
in partial fulfillment of the degree
of Master of Arts in Secondary Education,
University of Nebraska at Omaha

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FIRST THINGS FIRST:
WHAT DO STUDENTS REALLY KNOW ABOUT THE FIRST AMENDMENT?

Joanne Chapuran, MA

University of Nebraska, 2007

Advisor: Dr. Melodee Landis

High school students (grades 9-12) lack knowledge of and appreciation for the U.S. Constitution, especially First Amendment rights, according to numerous surveys (First Amendment Center [FAC], 2004, 2005; Knight Foundation, 2005; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 1999). A review of literature about this problem reveals consistently low test scores, attempts to explain the causes of these scores, and current programs meant to raise them. However, very little research relates to specific studies of the reasons why these scores are low. Do students simply not care? Do they not remember details about these rights? The purpose of this study was to begin to identify common causes for these scores, which will help to elicit further studies leading to solutions. Over 50 students were asked about these findings on questionnaires, and 17 students were interviewed in 4 focus groups. The most common explanations for the low national survey scores were a lack of detailed knowledge about the First Amendment and a lack of concern because their rights are not threatened. The findings also indicated that classroom solutions such as simulations that deprive students of their rights and discussion of real-world situations might help spark student interest in First Amendment studies.

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INTRODUCTION

“If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be” (International Information Programs [IIP], 2006). These often-quoted words of Thomas Jefferson apply today, as shown in consistent pushes to improve public education, including the most current No Child Left Behind Act (2001). Although the quest for academic improvement (as shown by test scores) is noble, a state of civilization (civic responsibility) might be overlooked. If the U.S. government is for and by the people, what people will run it in a climate of apathy? Ironically, as the U.S. engages in wars with a rationale of bringing democracy and voting rights to those overseas, the voter pool within America continues to shrink, as it has for the past 40 years (National Public Radio [NPR], 2004). More young people feel disengaged from the political system (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2002; Otten, 2000).

An informed population is essential to the government’s operations, and education about basic underlying concepts of democracy has long been associated with engaged citizenship. As the country becomes ever more diverse, a commitment to core values such as contained in the First Amendment can help unify otherwise divergent groups of people. It can help the U.S. experiment begun over 230 years ago continue to expand, evolve, protect and affect democracies everywhere. This, however, hinges on citizen knowledge, understanding, and concern for these rights.

In the age of a smaller, more interdependent world, citizenship education has begun to move toward the center of a growing spotlight, even in the national arena.

Several national surveys show that students and the population at large lack knowledge of First Amendment rights (FAC, 2004, 2005; Knight Foundation, 2005;

NCES, 1999). The Future of the First Amendment (FOFA) survey, conducted on high school students, teachers, and administrators through questionnaires, showed that students express little appreciation for or knowledge about First Amendment rights (Knight Foundation, 2005). It also revealed differences between student, teacher, and administrator knowledge and perceptions. The annual State of the First Amendment (SOFA) survey (First Amendment Center [FAC], 2005), conducted by phone on adults 18 and over, showed that about four out of ten could not name one First Amendment right.

But why? Are these rights not taught in school, highlighted in the news, used in life? How can a country founded on freedom show such dismal knowledge of First Amendment rights on surveys? And an educated country at that. Over 85 percent of the U.S. adult population has a high school diploma (U.S. Census, 2004). Shouldn't they have learned civics at some point in their education?

Perhaps those more in tune with the education system could provide insight. High school students, still close to the instructional process, might be able to reveal reasons behind these low survey scores. The purpose of this study was to begin to identify common causes for these scores, which will help to form a basis for further studies leading to solutions.

BACKGROUND

The SOFA surveys, conducted via phone interview, led with the following question about First Amendment rights: “As you may know, the First Amendment is part of the U.S. Constitution. Can you name any of the specific rights that are guaranteed by the First Amendment?” (FAC, 2004, 2005). Almost one-third could not name one.

Every public school student in Nebraska has received instruction on First Amendment rights. In Nebraska, state requirements call for the study of the topic in fifth grade, in middle school social studies classes, in a high school U.S. history class, and in a mandatory twelfth-grade civics class (Nebraska Department of Education [NDE], 2003). Nationally, 39 states have highlighted a citizenship course as a graduation requirement, and all 50 states require a foundation in social studies and history (Education Commission of the States [ECS], 2007). In spite of this instruction, not even half of the respondents on the SOFA national survey could identify one of the five First Amendment rights (FAC, 2005).

Most explanations for the respondents' inability to identify First Amendment rights involve one of two options: either they have not been taught these rights or they lack motivation to care about the topic (Chaltain, 2002; Chiodo and Martin, 2005; Tuck, 2005; Vontz and Leming, 2006; Zinn, 2004). Either could be right. The test methodology of the SOFA (FAC, 2005) was certainly above board—they pre-tested drafts of the questions. They trained their surveyors. They followed protocols and monitored calls. Yet is another explanation possible?

If someone deals with First Amendment rights on a consistent basis, for example, a newspaper student concerned with free speech and press issues, naming one of the

rights would likely not be a problem. This same student might not know the contents of the Tenth Amendment on a random survey. Although actually familiar with the State's rights contained in this amendment, recognition might not come merely by mention of the amendment number. If students were instead asked, "One of the rights listed in the First Amendment is the freedom of religion. Can you name one of the other four rights listed?" the results might have been different.

In *The Illusion of Public Opinion*, George F. Bishop (2005) provides examples of the dramatic change in results if question phrasing is changed. This could be an issue in the surveys under study. Rather than pursue phraseology, however, the purpose of this study is to uncover respondent understanding of not only the questions but also the results.

For example, wide variations in perceptions between students and adults were noted on several questions (Knight Foundation, 2005). Could this be a matter of prior learning? Experience? Priorities? Simply rephrasing the question would not help provide an explanation for this result.

Instead, this study begins with the end, with results from the FOFA and SOFA national surveys. Beginning with a list of 10 common questions and/or results on these surveys, respondents were asked to identify the best explanation for the results. Students were consulted using questionnaires and in focus group interviews. Essentially, the thesis study tried to discover what explanations young people give for the apparent lack of awareness about the First Amendment.

Statement of Problem

The national surveys showing a low level of awareness of or knowledge about the First Amendment caused a stir, leading to coverage in news reports and editorials.

From experts to editorialists, concerned individuals have attempted to explain these results. Historian Howard Zinn criticizes the educational process (2004). In “Is Freedom Safe?” Sam Chaltain blames teacher ignorance of First Amendment rights (2002), as do Vontz and Leming (2006). It could be explained by the schools’ focus on test scores (Kelly, 2004). It could be any or all of these. It could be something quite different. Educational research on the reasons behind the scant knowledge of Constitutional rights is scarce.

The purpose of this study was to begin to identify common causes for these national survey scores, which will help to form a basis for further studies leading to solutions.

In this study, high school students were asked to explain the national survey findings showing an apparent lack of knowledge about First Amendment rights. This thesis study used questionnaires and focus group interviews to generate student responses.

Research Questions

This study attempts to uncover specific circumstances or perceptions that might be behind national survey results showing a lack of awareness of First Amendment rights (FAC, 2004, 2005; Knight Foundation, 2005).

The research questions include:

- a) What are some of the some of specific circumstances or perceptions that may explain why students lack an understanding of First Amendment rights shown on recent surveys?
- b) How do belief systems affect students' interest in or understanding of First Amendment rights?
- c) How do students' interests affect understanding of First Amendment rights?
- d) How do students view discrepancies between students and adults on national survey responses?
- e) How might education solutions address the lack of knowledge revealed by survey results?

This largely qualitative study was conducted in the hopes of finding common themes or reasons for the lack of First Amendment awareness. The results of this study could then form the basis for other studies.

Definition of Terms

National survey results: refers to the data gleaned from the FOFA and the SOFA national surveys. Results from these surveys formed a basis for this thesis study Knight Foundation, 2005; FAC, 2004, 2005).

Pilot test, pilot questionnaire: refers to the original thesis study questionnaire reviewed by journalism and social studies teachers.

Pilot group: refers to the students who participated in the pilot testing of the original thesis study questionnaire.

Focus group: refers to the students who participated in the focus groups and the testing of the revised thesis study questionnaire.

Focus group or revised questionnaire: refers to the second version of this thesis study's questionnaire taken by members of the focus groups.

Assumptions

1. This study assumes that the selection of students from journalism and social studies classes will give some indication concerning potential reasons for the low national survey results.

2. This study assumes that, after identifying well-reported findings from the SOFA (FAC, 2004, 2005) and FOFA (Knight Foundation, 2005) national surveys, the preliminary activities in creating the research questionnaire helped ensure a valid survey for the participants.

3. The study assumes that by talking to students during the focus group interviews, more details about the reasons behind the lack of First Amendment awareness will evolve.

Limitations

1. Limitations are found in the selection of representative results from the national surveys as well as the selection of potential reasons listed in this study's survey.

2. Due to the difficulty in gaining access in other school districts, the study was limited to students in one school within one district. Further, the lengthy Institutional Review Board (IRB) process made it difficult to engage other classes within the timeline needed, so the focus groups were comprised solely of students in journalism classes.

3. Eleventh and twelfth grade females were by far the largest percentage (76 percent) of focus group participants. Only two males participated in the focus group. The reason for this was that more girls than boys signed up for this researcher's classes and volunteered for the study.

4. The small sample size and relatively homogeneous pool of respondents due to the demographics of this school district might also be a limitation. The district is 90.7 percent Caucasian, and fewer than 10 percent of students receive free or reduced price lunch. These percentages are markedly different compared to the national public school averages of 60 percent Caucasian (Bergman, 2005) and over 36 percent who are eligible for free or reduced price lunch (National Center for Education Statistics, [NCES], 2004). Due to time and money constraints, the study was confined to this district. Private schools were also not surveyed in this study.

5. The district had requested that the questionnaires be given only in social studies and journalism classes, which might significantly impact the results. However, since the questionnaire asked for reasons rather than knowledge, the impact might be lessened.

6. Finally, any open-ended questionnaires assume respondents are aware of their own deficiencies, which might not be the case.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this literature review is to provide insight into Constitutional studies, past and present. Section 1, Civics Studies, will address historical measures of studies showing student knowledge of citizen rights and responsibilities. Section 2, Survey Reaction, will analyze printed reactions to the surveys used in this study. Section 3, Current Programs, will highlight various methods currently being used to encourage awareness of Constitutional rights and responsibilities.

Civics Studies

The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) has undertaken studies of student achievement in several areas, including civics. The first IEA study of 1971 showed that U.S. student knowledge of government processes was comparable to many countries. Understanding was superficial across the board, though. Students showed an appreciation for work in social causes more than in politics, most planned to vote, and newspapers were listed as the most trusted source of news for U.S. students. Analysis also showed that free expression in classrooms was the best indicator of democratic knowledge and attitudes (Torney-Purta, 2000).

The next IEA Civics study in 1998 showed that, while still on par with students in other nations, understanding was still largely superficial and students were more apt to choose social causes over political causes. However, fewer students planned to vote and television had taken over the top spot as the trusted news source (Hahn, 2001). Other studies such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reveal the extent of students' superficial knowledge—over a third of high school seniors (35

percent) were below basic civics achievement levels (NCES,1999).

Other research shows that U.S. students continue to test at low levels in knowledge of how democracy works and in an appreciation of citizen rights. For example, the First Amendment Center's annual survey of the State of the First Amendment report, begun in 1997, has consistently shown a lack of awareness about constitutional rights (Jackson, 2005; FAC, 2005).

The State of the First Amendment reports also reveal fluctuations in perceptions of First Amendment rights. In the 2000 survey, 10 percent of respondents strongly agreed that the First Amendment goes too far in the rights it guarantees. In 2002, the number rose to 41 percent, likely due to concerns after the 9-11 terrorist attacks. Add "mildly agree" responses, and the years compare at 22 percent in 2000 to 49 percent in 2002. (FAC, 2005).

The largest study specifically about First Amendment rights, The FOFA (Knight Foundation, 2005), reports that U.S. students lack understanding about and concern for basic First Amendment rights (Llewelyn Leach, 2005; Gurski, 2005; Stephens, 2005; Toppo, 2005; AP, 2005).

Survey Reaction

The FOFA, commissioned by the Knight Foundation (2005), was a two-million dollar, two-year survey of over 100,000 students, teachers, and administrators. It brought swift attention from the media to what it characterizes as a "dismal state of First Amendment awareness" (Llewelyn Leach, 2005; Gurski, 2005; Stephens, 2005; Toppo, 2005; Associated Press [AP], 2005).

The Associated Press (AP) report led its story with the support for First Amendment rights. Although 30 percent agreed that the First Amendment rights went too far, that was far less than the 49 percent who had agreed in 2002 (Sharp, 2004).

Media reports on this survey varied in focus and often provided explanations and blame for the situation.

Several articles by Sam Chaltain, the coordinator of the First Amendment Schools project for the First Amendment Center, chastened schools for not providing adequate First Amendment education for students or teachers. In this same article, Chaltain censured U.S. citizens for clinging to the First Amendment to protect their rights but shunning the responsibility to protect others' rights (2002).

Journals likewise had various perceptions of the survey. An *Education Week* article's quotes revolved around reasons for the lack of knowledge, from time crunches due to testing systems to the prison-like environment of schools and advocated modeling and practicing these rights. (Tonn, 2005). "Constitutionally Challenged" in *American Journalism Review* reported that David Yalof, co-principal investigator of the report, advocated more journalism opportunities as a solution (Jackson, 2005).

In the *American Journalism Review*, Rachael Jackson summed up the overall results of the FOFA, focusing on the finding that over one third of high schoolers think First Amendment rights "go too far" (Jackson, 2005).

Some reports provided analysis. According to John Chiodo and Leisa A. Martin (2005), students surveyed showed a disdain for the future citizenship requirements of politics and voting but appreciated social involvement and community service.

An editorial in the San Jose Mercury News [SJMN], (2005) stated that, "The apathy is alarming," but the "ignorance is not kids' fault. Unawareness starts at home." The editorial also found fault with the educational focus on testing. "In school, First-Amendment-rich electives are getting left behind in the race to raise test scores in math and English (SJMN, 2005).

In an opinion piece about the FOFA findings (Tuck, 2005), Craig Dean, a government teacher, said, "Young people today...tend to care about the rights if they pertain directly to them. If there is censorship of their music, they'll have something to say about that. But if it's about government encroachment, they don't care." The article also reported that students who had taken classes on the First Amendment or had been involved in high school newspapers were more likely to appreciate First Amendment freedoms (Tuck, 2005).

Other reports addressed the SOFA survey results.

In an article for the Inter Press Service, a seeming contradiction in responses is explored. Although nearly three-fourths support the right to express unpopular opinions, only about one-fourth approve of public expression for ideas offensive to religious groups (Fisher, 2005).

In an editorial, Haynes noted the "good news" (3rd paragraph) of the lower number of respondents who said First Amendment rights went too far. He contrasted this with the support for government interference he said was shown on the survey, especially in regard to press freedom. He used one question in particular as his evidence: 41 percent believed newspapers should not be allowed to freely criticize the government (Haynes, 2004).

An *American Journalism Review* article promoted on the First Amendment Center's website (Smolkin, 2005) dealt with the public's perception of the news media, specifically that the use of confidential sources is appropriate (69 percent agree), the problem with the media falsifying news stories, such as with Jason Blair at the New York Times (65 percent saw this as an extensive issue that they see too often), and media objectivity (33 percent indicated the news media try to report without bias). This report also included the specific questions and percentages of responses in these categories (Smolkin, 2005).

Occasionally, news reports mixed findings from the FOFA report sponsored by the Knight Foundation (2005) with the SOFA survey sponsored by the First Amendment Center (2004, 2005). A feature story in the *Christian Science Monitor* is an example of this mixing (Llewelyn Leach, 2005). This article linked the adult responses on the SOFA surveys to the lack of instruction conclusion from the FOFA survey. The lead in this article was not backed up by either study—reporter Llewelyn Leach wrote that 99 percent of American adults could not name one of the five First Amendment freedoms (a question that was found only on the SOFA surveys). In the 2005 SOFA report, 29 percent could not identify one of these rights, assuredly a high number but nowhere near 99 percent.

Current Programs

Many agree that an awareness of the U.S. Constitution is vital for citizens, who start out as students. Meanwhile, exactly how to create civic-minded students is a bone of contention.

Historian Howard Zinn maintains in his book *Howard Zinn on Democratic Education* (2004) that both the content and critical skills needed for citizenship are lacking in textbooks and curricula. Vontz and Leming (2006) state that civics education suffers because educators do not know or practice their rights, which they should learn through in-service training to keep current. Education professor Devon Metzger (2002) argues that the traditional one-sided, academic approach to civics education is too uncritical and passive to form a citizen's identity in today's multicultural society. Instead, he argues that a pluralistic education will encourage students with diverse backgrounds to feel pride in their citizenship, while the common ground of First Amendment rights will help establish loyalty and shared values.

To increase public awareness, Senator Robert Byrd of West Virginia sponsored a bill implementing Constitution Day, which requires every educational facility that receives federal funds to implement an educational program on September 17 (the anniversary of the Constitution's ratification) every year (Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2005). Exactly how to educate the students is left up to the school.

Some schools are implementing citizenship programs on a large scale. The Bill of Rights Institute (fall 2005) began a pilot program in Kansas this school year to educate some 250 teachers at eight seminars. Results indicating a growth in knowledge could lead to similar programs in other states (Hanna, 2005).

Nationwide, schools accepted to the First Amendment Project undertook a full-school move toward democratic freedom and responsibility. They received supporting resources or even small grants from the First Amendment Center (First Amendment Schools, 2005).

“We the People” curriculum developed by the Center for Civic Education promotes a civic education relevant to student lives and also offers a national competition. (Frouzesh Bennett, 2005).

Yet what of proven results for these programs? There are few.

Survey results of the “We the People” competitors show more knowledge of the democratic process in every category. Admittedly, though, these participants are a select group of high-achieving students, so the results of the survey comparisons may not be attributed to the program directly (Frouzesh Bennett & Soule, 2005).

Essentially, tests have shown a lack of awareness about First Amendment rights, yet studies explaining these test results are lacking. A look at the reasons behind the answers could help provide direction.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to begin to identify common causes for a lack of awareness about the First Amendment. These reasons will help to form a basis for further studies leading to solutions.

Three sources of data were used in this thesis study: pilot test group questionnaires, focus group questionnaires, and focus group interviews.

Findings from the FOFA (Knight Foundation, 2005) and the State of the First Amendment (SOFA) surveys (FAC, 2004, 2005) formed a starting point for the questionnaires. These national survey results became the questions, with responses that asked for a rationale. Questions centered on well-reported findings of the SOFA and FOFA surveys. These national findings became the stems for questions about the reasons behind the answers; i.e., why did respondents answer in this manner? These potential reasons comprised the options for each question/finding on the pilot questionnaire. Experts in the field (suburban high school social studies and journalism teachers) reviewed these questionnaires.

The original questionnaire was given to over 50 students in two social studies classes and one journalism (not publications) course. The male/female mix was fairly even, although the grades were not—all participants were either eleventh or twelfth graders. The vast majority was also white. The responses from this original questionnaire were used to revise and create the focus group questionnaire, which became a starting point for focus group interviews. (See the pilot questionnaire in Appendix A and the focus group questionnaire in Appendix B.)

During the focus group interviews, four groups of four to five students each were interviewed to gain more insight into the reasons for the national survey results. The focus group members first took the revised questionnaire, and then the researcher interviewed each focus group, asking questions relating to this study's research questions. The student explanations results were analyzed to draw conclusions about the overriding reasons for the national survey results, along with the results from both sets of questionnaires.

The first source, the pilot questionnaires, were reviewed by high school teachers and taken by social studies and journalism students. These questionnaires became the basis for the second source, the focus group questionnaires. The two groups of questionnaires (those taken by the pilot group and those taken by the focus groups) were compared by computing an overall frequency score for each question response in each group.

The four focus group interviews were analyzed using the constant comparison method to elicit common themes.

Four main themes emerged from both sets of questionnaires (pilot and focus) and the focus group interviews taken as a whole. The focus group interviews led to three main implications for education. Finally, there are findings relevant to the research questions from the three sources.

The sections to be covered under methodology include procedures, data collection, data analysis, themes, implications for education, and responses to research questions.

Procedures

A sample from a Midwestern suburban high school (grades 9 through 12 with a student population around 2000) was selected for this study. After receiving permission and support for the study from the school district and the administrators of the test site, the researcher submitted a proposal of methodology to the Internal Review Board at the University of Nebraska Medical Center and obtained approval.

The school district limited the study to volunteer participants in social studies and journalism classes. The pilot questionnaire involved 51 students. Another 17 students volunteered for and consented to the focus group part of the study and obtained parental approval. Both the Parental Consent form and the Student Assent form were signed before the student was randomly assigned to a focus group. (See the Student Assent form in Appendix C and the Parental Consent form in Appendix D.)

The 17 students in four focus groups of four to five were given the revised questionnaire and were then asked interview questions. (See Focus Group Procedures in Appendix E.)

The data from the two sets of questionnaires (the pilot test and the focus test groups) were compared using frequencies of answers for each question. The focus group answers were analyzed using the constant comparison method to reveal patterns in answers. The results of the questionnaire analysis were then compared to the patterns in the focus groups to generate four common themes.

The focus group interviewees also made recommendations for classroom instruction about the First Amendment, which was a finding from the focus groups revealed by the constant comparison analysis.

Finally, common answers from both the questionnaires and the focus group interviews were compiled to answer the individual research questions, including those topics that did not appear in the themes.

Data gathering

Three sources were used for data: the pilot test group questionnaire, the focus test group questionnaire, and the focus group interviews. Each source of data will be addressed in order.

Pilot test group

Common findings from the SOFA and FOFA national surveys were used as questions, with possible reasons for those findings as the answers on a questionnaire. A sample question is as follows:

1. Nearly one-third of students and adults surveyed could not name one of the five rights in the First Amendment. About three-fourths could not name a second. The best explanation is that those who answered this way:
 - a. Are not concerned about these rights
 - b. Do not remember learning about these rights
 - c. Recognize the rights (from the Bill of Rights) individually but not by the amendment number
 - d. do not have an awareness of current events
 - e. other: _____

After a rough draft of the questionnaire was reviewed by three journalism and two social studies teachers, a two-page questionnaire consisting of brief instructions, ten survey questions, and one demographic question was used to collect data on a pilot study. Students were encouraged to write in answers if their best explanation for the results did not appear. This pilot study was conducted on 51 students in one journalism and two

social studies classes. Students were encouraged to write in answers if their best answers did not appear as options. (See Original Questionnaire in Appendix A.)

Focus test group

The 17 students who took part in the focus group interviews also completed a questionnaire similar to that taken by pilot group members. (See the Revised Questionnaire in Appendix B.) The 10-item focus group questionnaire took shape through additional efforts of the researcher and two additional teachers of the First Amendment (social studies teachers), after the pilot test. One question was changed, and other minor changes were made to wording. This questionnaire also left room for students to write in a response rather than choose one that was provided.

Focus group interviews

The focus group method was selected because the resulting discussions could spur additional information about if not consensus on the topic. Although the standard pattern of research involving focus groups entails lengthy interviews of a small number of students, the larger number of students and groups should help to provide a wider base of responses (Cherry, 2000).

Three groups of four students and one group of five students (for a total of four groups) were interviewed in focus groups about students' perceptions of First Amendment rights. The questions were related to the research questions and were modeled after suggestions from practiced interviewers Puchta and Potter in *Focus Group*

Practice (2004). Suggestions from this resource were also used to help structure the actual interview and keep participants involved and focused.

The questions were as follows:

1. “Identify one or more of the First Amendment rights.” (A question asked on the SOFA phone survey) (FAC, 2004, 2005).
2. Looking at the (study) survey, did any of you mark or note that the questions themselves were a problem? (Ex: were they too narrow in scope? Do they ask for too specific of detail? Are the questions confusing?)
3. Do you think there were other problems with the survey instruments? Describe.
4. Judging by these results, do you think students lack knowledge about the First Amendment? Do they simply not know enough information? Can you elaborate?
5. Do you think students know about the First Amendment but do not understand what it entails? For example, do they know we have free speech but don't really understand what free speech means? Explain.
6. Are there certain rights in the First Amendment that students know more about than others? What are they? Why do you think that is?
7. Do you think students are concerned about First Amendment rights? Why?
8. Looking over the survey, do you see any results that might have been affected by a person's belief system? In other words, a person's morals

would dictate how he/she would view the question, rather than a person's knowledge? Explain.

9. Are students more concerned about some First Amendment rights than others? Why? On a scale of 1-10 (10 being highest), rank each right in its importance to students.

10. What do students find more important than First Amendment rights? Why?

11. Do you remember being taught about the First Amendment? Describe some of those memories. (What grade were you in? What activities did you do? What do you remember about the information?)

12. If you were a teacher, how would you teach about the First Amendment? What activities do you think would make it more meaningful to students? Why?

These interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed by the researcher.

Data analysis

The three sources used for data (the pilot test group questionnaire, the focus test group questionnaire, and the focus group interviews) were analyzed and compared to glean common patterns or themes, especially if occurring in more than one source. Dr. Melodee Landis reviewed and approved the data compilation methods.

Each source will be addressed in order.

Pilot test group

The researcher performed an item-by-item analysis computing the frequency of each response for each of the ten questions. Because not all respondents answered all questions in the pilot group, the researcher calculated the results based on percentages. For example, if 50 students answered question 1, only 50 would be used to calculate the percentage of answers (rather than the full 51 questionnaires given in the pilot test). In this scenario, if 25 of these had selected option 'a,' then option 'a' would have received 50 percent of the responses for question 1 (25 divided by 50). (See Appendix F for a frequency chart of percentages for all 10 questions.) An example is below:

1. Nearly one-third of students and adults surveyed could not name one of the five rights in the First Amendment. About three-fourths could not name a second. The best explanation is that those who answered this way:

Option	Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
a.	51	13	25.5
b.	51	9	17.6
c.	51	25	49.0
d.	51	3	5.8
e.	51	1	1.9

Since four answers on each question were probable ('a'-'d' had listed options) and five were possible ('e' was blank, open-ended), a 20 to 25 percent response rate would be the average for each option if all were equal. The researcher considered any one option that received one-third or more of the total responses (33 percent or higher) to be a more valid response, thus a better explanation of the national survey result.

Focus test group

A similar method was used to calculate the popularity of responses for the 17 members of the focus groups who had taken the questionnaires. The researcher

considered any one option that received one-third or more of the total responses (33 percent or higher) to be a more valid response, thus a better explanation.

Then the two groups' responses (the pilot and the focus groups) were compared. If an option received 33 percent or higher for both the pilot and focus group tests, the researcher assumed this consistency indicated that the response was more likely to be a shared view to explain the survey results. (See Appendix F for a frequency chart of percentages for all 10 questions.)

Focus group interviews

Using a method espoused by Miles and Huberman in *Qualitative Data Analysis* (1994), the interviews were transcribed and the researcher looked for common concepts in responses, noting especially similar responses from more than one focus group.

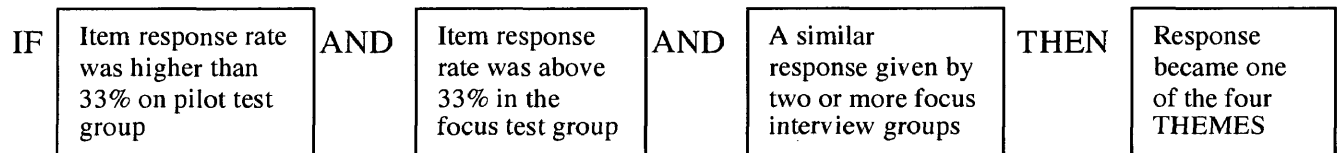
The researcher took each interview question and clustered similar responses from the interview transcripts together, summarizing each comment and noting the group number. The researcher then used the same method to cluster responses under the research questions. Clusters with more than six items or containing similar comments from two or more groups were considered more common explanations for each question.

Data analysis summary

Once the questionnaire frequencies were compared and the clusters of focus group interview comments were done, the researcher added the common questionnaire frequencies to the clusters of focus group answers. In other words, for each interview and

research question, summarized focus group comments and high frequency questionnaire responses were clustered.

The researcher then used these clusters to determine findings. Those with the largest support from all three sources of data became the four major findings of this thesis study. A flowchart summarizing the process is as follows:



Other findings were uncovered in response to the research questions, but these might not have been indicated in all three sources.

FINDINGS

Four main themes

The purpose of this study was to begin to identify common causes for low scores on surveys of First Amendment knowledge, which will help to form a basis for further studies leading to solutions. Specifically, the questionnaires and focus group interviews started to ascertain explanations high school students give for the lack of awareness.

From what the focus group students could tell on the questionnaire, the national survey questions themselves were not a problem; they were clear, not overly detailed, and should measure knowledge. (Note: although the focus group students said questions were not a problem, the questionnaire results did not agree for one question, the one that asks respondents to identify a right of the First Amendment.)

Overall, the student questionnaires and interviews indicate four basic themes or findings. First, the students have general knowledge of the First Amendment, but not details. Second, the students are more knowledgeable about three of the five rights contained in the amendment. Third, students believe that a lack of concern for these rights stems from detachment, from not needing to use them. Fourth, students think more detailed school lessons could make a difference. Each of these areas will be explored separately, and then implications for teaching will be examined. After that, additional findings will be reported in response to this study's research questions before beginning a final discussion.

First Theme: General Knowledge

The students consistently stated during focus group interviews that they have general knowledge of the First Amendment, but not details. A senior female said that students “know about some of the rights, but they might not know what those rights are. Sometimes you have a basic idea but don’t know all the little details about those basics.” The others in this group agreed, and another senior female added that “they have a basic idea of what they are, but they don’t know what you can do with those rights.” A tenth grade male said that although they might know the rights by name, “they don’t necessarily know about the rights or how they fit together.” A senior female said, “They might know that they have free speech, but they don’t know the details, like when it applies and when it doesn’t.”

The questionnaire results reinforce a general, not detailed, knowledge of the First Amendment. On the questionnaire, students attribute the inability to name the First Amendment rights to how the question was asked; results indicate that students know the rights but not the amendment number (almost 50 percent in the pilot test, and over 33 percent in the focus group test explained the results this way). To explain why students don’t know that shouting “Fire!” in a crowded area as a prank is illegal, 50 percent in both the pilot test and focus groups indicated that students are not aware of limits to civil liberties; in other words, students lack knowledge of this detail, a limitation of the right to free speech. Similarly, the results demonstrate that students attribute lack of knowledge about a Supreme Court decision (a detail) to explain why students think flag burning is illegal (36 percent in the pilot test, almost 53 percent in the focus groups explained the results in this way).

Both the focus group comments and questionnaire results suggest that students do know *of* the rights but do not know *about* the rights. Details are lacking.

There was some disagreement, though. A ninth grade male said, “The survey results said that most students don’t know about their First Amendment rights, but I’d say that some students do know them.” On the other end, three students (one female eleventh grader and two female twelfth graders) in one group and one in another group (a senior female) said that the students didn’t know their rights at all.

Overall, though, most focus group members agreed that students do not know details but do know the basic rights (at least the top three).

Second Theme: More Knowledge of Three Rights

During the focus group interviews, the researcher began with a question asked on the SOFA phone surveys: “Identify one or more of the First Amendment rights.” Two of the groups (one with five members, one with four) correctly listed all five rights in the First Amendment. The other two groups (of four members each) identified four of the five rights. The researcher noted the order of the rights listed, as well as any that were missed, for each group. These results led to the following findings.

The rights of speech, religion and press are far more familiar to students than assembly or petition. In terms of the specific rights name on the researcher's initial focus group question, “Identify one or more of the First Amendment rights,” the answers mimicked the national averages, with freedom of speech consistently named first (60 percent on the SOFA 2004 report), followed by freedom of religion and freedom of the press (17 and 15 percent on the SOFA 2004 report, respectively) (FAC, 2004). Of the two

groups that named all five rights, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and freedom of the press were the first three named, and it took longer for the members to name freedom of assembly and freedom to petition. Of the other two focus groups that named four of the five rights, one group missed freedom of assembly (10 percent on the SOFA) and one missed freedom to petition (1 percent on the SOFA) (FAC, 2004). In the focus groups, these top three rights also made a second list; all four groups identified freedom of speech and freedom of religion, and three of the four groups noted freedom of the press. The average level of concern (rounded off to the nearest tenth) the groups assigned for each of these rights on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the highest level of concern) is as follows: speech, 7; religion, 5; and press, 3.5. These figures help confirm freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and freedom of press as the best-known First Amendment rights, as revealed by the focus groups and the SOFA surveys.

Students also noted that these three rights are often talked about in life, not necessarily in school, so this helps in their identification, especially free speech. A tenth grade male said:

I think that most Americans from a young age would know they have free speech cause from a very young age, even elementary school. They'll say, 'Oh, I have free speech so I can say whatever I want.' So the idea is there from a young age, but a lot of people won't learn about the Bill of Rights and the First Amendment as a law until later on, but the idea I think is really learned earlier. Most people know they have some freedoms of speech from early on, but they don't really learn it's a law until later.

This type of comment was particularly common with freedom of speech. A twelfth grade female said the freedom of speech “is very emphasized these days.”

These rights were also highlighted through the news that students either heard or heard of. A senior female said that freedoms of speech and press were more easily recognized because “you see that in the news and stuff a lot.” Religious rights, too, were also in the news. A senior female said “you always hear about other countries hurting people over religion and stuff like that, so it’s important.” Freedom of press reported in the media also brought that right to the forefront. A junior female said, “You see the news every day and you’re supposed to believe what they’re saying,” so she considers speech and press more important, even though she doesn’t use them directly.

An eleventh grade female compared speech to a lesser-known right: “I totally forgot about the right to assemble because you just don’t think about it. You don’t think of it as being as important as freedom of speech. When you think about getting your word out, you have to have people to say it to.” So in this comment, free speech was important because of its usefulness, which brings us to the next major theme.

Third Theme: Concern Related to Need

Third, students believe that any perceived or measured lack of concern for these rights stems from detachment, from not needing to use them. In the words of a tenth grade male, “These amendments don’t really affect their daily lives or their lives on a personal basis; they just assume they’ll never get into a situation where they’ll have to know about the First Amendment.” This view was echoed by at least two members in each of the four focus groups. Several students gave reasons for the perceived lack of

concern. “Right now, it’s just not a big part of their lives. There’s nothing reminding me, ‘Hey, you have rights.’ They’re concerned with relationships and where you’re going to hang out,” said one twelfth grade female. Another twelfth grade female said, “It’s not that we’re not concerned about it, it’s just that we’ve never had to exercise that right. It’s not really high just because we haven’t had to use it, not because we don’t think it’s important.”

Comparisons between student and adult results on the national surveys also hint at peer pressure and lack of experience as causes for student differences—both of these could explain detachment; students do not use these rights and might believe these rights are secondary to a need to get along. For instance, on the national surveys, students were less likely to believe people should be allowed to express unpopular opinions (which has been a mainstay of free speech). To explain the difference, two top answers emerged: the students are more concerned with peer pressure and they haven’t been allowed to express unpopular opinions. Taken together, the percentages of these two answers on the questionnaire for the pilot group were 72.7 and the focus group was 64.7. Even the two students who wrote in responses to this question in the focus group essentially said that students place more value in not offending people than in free speech. (The one student who selected “other” in the pilot group did not write in a response.) This is backed up by the response to those in the national surveys who thought student newspapers should not be allowed to report controversial issues without approval. Both the pilot and the focus group testers attributed this to a desire to prevent parent or community disputes (36 percent in the pilot testing, and over 50 percent in the focus groups).

Students also recognized situations in which their rights could become more

meaningful. An eleventh grade female explained why a particular right might be important for some students and not for others: “I think especially for religious people, they really appreciate that right...There are people who aren’t religious, so it’s not as important to them.” Another junior female in that group added, “Especially in the teenage years, you’re learning who you are and religion might be a part of that, so it could be very important to some, but others not.” As students grow and mature, these rights may shift in significance. A twelfth grade female said, “You start to know more about your rights as a senior because soon you’ll be on a college campus and seeing assemblies and stuff. You’ll learn more about the ones that aren’t common.” Another twelfth grade female pointed out that student interest might be situational: “If it was [sic] an emergency and they needed the freedom, they would care, but since they don’t, it’s not really a big deal.” Of course, freedom comes with responsibility, so even if students were concerned, they would still need to know details.

Fourth Theme: Detailed Education Lacking

Fourth, students think more detailed school lessons could make a difference. The lack of detailed knowledge was noted in the first theme both in focus group interviews and in questionnaire answers, and most students in the focus groups agreed that this was due (at least in part) to their limited First Amendment education.

For background, all but one of the students have been educated in Nebraska since elementary school and therefore have had mandatory instruction in the First Amendment in at least fifth grade and eighth grade, yet no groups noted fifth grade lessons, and only one group acknowledged eighth grade instruction. All groups recalled at least general

instruction in ninth grade American History class, and all seniors who had taken United States Government and Economics indicated detailed teaching on the First Amendment in this class. This recall might have been influenced by the age of the focus group members, overwhelmingly upperclassmen (13 out of the 17 participants were in eleventh or twelfth grade), yet the absence of comments about elementary instruction and the small showing for eighth grade lessons could at least reveal a more generic, less noteworthy mode of instruction, which supports the lack of details in schooling.

A representative sample of the memories follows in this exchange between two senior females in response to the question about prior First Amendment education:

Student 3: “Actually, in American History, I think I do remember that.”

Student 2: “It was just like, history. This is the Constitution, then they had the Bill of Rights on a poster, and it was basically like really general.”

Student 3: “They probably did it but they didn’t explain any of it.”

Student 2: “I don’t really remember it at all until Civics.”

Student 3: “We have these rights and in other countries they can’t. That’s pretty much all I learned before.”

Every group had at least two comments about a lack of detailed education in this area. An eleventh grade female summarized the First Amendment instruction she had received: “People just instantly assume we know about these rights, so we’re not taught in depth. They just assume we know, but most of us don’t.” A tenth grade female added, “It’s like, ‘Well, you know about that,’ and so we just move on. We talked about it briefly last year, but there’s always so much stuff to cram in to each year, so it would probably be more meaningful if they actually did spend more time on it.”

A senior female who has taken United States Government and Economics reflected on the instruction. “I don’t think that as much emphasis of teaching it [sic] can be placed. I’ve only really had one class that has fully taught me the knowledge, and it’s my senior year of high school.”

Every senior in every focus group who had taken United States Government and Economics (formerly Civics, and the students often still call it by that name) agreed that their First Amendment knowledge was lacking before this class. In other words, this instruction had made a difference.

Students also had suggestions about how to improve this needed instruction.

Implications for education

If students were placed in situations in which their rights were taken from them, the concern for these rights would rise, according to respondents. This scenario of taking away rights actually formed the basis for suggested classroom activities in all of the four groups. It topped the list, followed by comparisons with other countries and discussing details as distant seconds, in terms of focus group comments. (Out of the 23 suggestions given, 9 were to simulate taking away rights, 4 were to compare countries, and another 4 were to discuss details. The remaining 6 were either very general or too specific to mesh with another to form a category.)

Please note that since students have not been trained in teaching methods, their suggestions dealt more with the general content than the method of the lesson. To remain true to the intent and context of their comments, these groupings and observations will also involve general content over methodology. These lessons, then, could be taught in a

number of ways. For example, comparison of rights with other countries could take place in small group settings or during research projects. If a student has suggested a particular method, his or her approach is included in the quote.

Teaching Suggestion 1: Take away their rights in class

Several students referred to past lessons in which teachers had tricked them into believing one right or another had been taken away (not necessarily First Amendment rights in the lessons discussed, but the instruction could easily apply to these rights). An example includes this one from a tenth grade female:

I might also do something like one of my teachers did. She just started telling us about all these new rules they came up with, like we had to pay 10 cents to go sharpen our pencil every time. We had to pay \$1 to go to the nurse. We threw a fit. And she played it up to where we believed her. But then at the end, we thought, 'This can't be.' Then at the end when we were all really worked up about it, she told us. It was cool.

This scenario could easily apply to First Amendment freedoms. If students had to pay to express a thought or get fined for expressing the wrong thought (or have points taken off of a writing assignment), they might think more about the value of their rights. Other student memories related directly to First Amendment instruction, like this one from a twelfth grade female:

This one teacher kind of lies to you about something. He'll say the school board is taking away something—'I was going to show you this real cool video but they're not letting me show it,' or 'We were

going to have a discussion on this but they're not letting us do it.'

We kind of discuss it and the students get kind of emotional about it. That's like taking away our rights, and he'll be like, 'See?'

The student comments toward teachers who played tricks like these were positive because these lessons helped them retain the learning. As one twelfth grade female pointed out, lessons that involved her emotions were life lessons. She had a similar experience with a classroom fabrication:

One of the lies he told us was that they were changing the grading scale and next year in the grading scale for AP (Advance Placement courses), a '1' (or 'A,' the highest mark) was only from 95-100 (instead of 93-100). We had a huge debate about it. And then later, I thought I had a '2' in there because I had a 94, but then I was like, 'Wait, that was not the truth.' Whew. I remember the discussion. It sticks in my brain.

Focus group members agreed with a ninth grade male that said students would appreciate their rights more if they were stripped away. He said, "If you did it where students walked in and the teacher said, 'You can't say that because it's not a part of your First Amendment rights,' or 'You can't do this,' they would want to know why they can't do this or that and it's more important to them."

Making the lack of rights hurt was a necessary part of any of the student suggestions in this category. Not letting a minority position speak in a debate or discussion, scenarios in which some students have rights and others do not, actually experiencing deprivation of these rights, were keys in the student comments. A twelfth

grade female summed it up as she said, “If you could set up something in which they just didn’t have these rights whatsoever and let them see how they really do utilize these rights every day but they just don’t realize it.”

This realization could also be gleaned from a comparison with rights of others around the world.

Teaching Suggestion 2: Compare with other countries

Some suggestions in this category were similar to taking away rights, but in the context of truth. An eleventh grade female said, “If you could discuss something but put it in the context of a different country, you know, almost like force them to live by the rights of another country for a class period so they can understand what we really have in this country,” students might think First Amendment rights are more important.

A tenth grade male put it this way, “I think if we learned more about countries that don’t have rights, we would definitely care more about our own rights,” and “would want to learn more.”

All of the comments in this category involved not only an examination of the lack of freedoms in other countries but also a comparison with our own. Student concern would seem to hinge on this comparison in order to make the lesson meaningful. A twelfth grade female summed it up by saying, “Contrasting what’s going on in different countries would help make it more real to them.”

Another suggestion to make the lessons real was by using examples.

Teaching Suggestion 3: Discuss details

Whether using authentic or hypothetical situations, focus group members said that discussing details would help students understand how the First Amendment rights apply to their lives. An eleventh grade female said that teachers have to “show how it affects people individually because people care about themselves.” Making any details personal to students was key.

A twelfth grade female talked of a teacher who “would put us in real-life scenarios and make you think and explain what you would do in that situation. He doesn’t express his opinions, but we discuss it.” Another twelfth grade female proposed role-playing different situations and then asking students if they thought the participants would be protected by the First Amendment and why.

One comment from a tenth grade male revealed not only a teaching method but also the need for instruction. He said, “I think they should also teach that just because you can say anything doesn’t mean you should. Standing on a street corner shouting out racial slurs isn’t good.” Actually, if inciting violence or if done to start a fight, it’s not protected speech. Free speech isn’t license to “say anything.”

This student’s lack of detailed knowledge showed a common finding of this study (as well as the national surveys) and leads us to a discussion of the first research question.

RESPONSES TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To ensure that all original research questions have been addressed, each research question will be discussed in order. Some specifics can be found in the themes or implications for teaching previously discussed; these are pointed out without rehashing them.

Research Question 1

Question: What are some of the specific circumstances or perceptions that may explain the apparent lack of awareness of First Amendment rights shown on recent surveys?

In addition to points previously made about respondents having inadequate detailed knowledge and instruction, and the apparent lack of concern of most students outlined in the themes, students also said that awareness might be limited due to experience or age.

A senior female's comments summed up those from individuals in several groups: "Students don't really have a chance to express themselves in school. Everything could lower the self-esteem of somebody else, so we're limited. But you have to deal with it at some point." She went on to say, "What your rights as a twelfth grader are, are very different from a ninth grader because you're moving on to a different stage in your life. I think that if everybody expressed their different opinions from early on, the First Amendment would be more important to kids."

Utilizing the rights in age-appropriate ways, then, could help foster a greater understanding of these rights.

Research Question 2

Question: How do belief systems affect a person's interest in or understanding of First Amendment rights?

Three groups mentioned the flag burning question, three groups noted obscenity in song lyrics, and two groups included Internet obscenity as ethical issues. Students said that respondents might be likely to reason with their consciences rather than with knowledge in answering these questions.

The first moral question the students identified was flag burning (the question asked why respondents on the FOSA survey thought it was illegal even though it is not). A tenth grade male said that the national survey respondents may have thought flag burning was illegal because of their principles. He said, "Many students would think that it's a bad thing, that it's an unpatriotic thing to do, so if they believe that, they'll think it should be illegal, and then that it is illegal." Others in groups that selected the flag question as an ethical issue said that it was likely a patriotic issue rather than a free speech issue.

On the questionnaire, the test groups indicated that respondents "are not familiar with the Supreme Court decision allowing" flag burning as a form of protest (36 percent of the pilot testers, and 53 percent of the focus group participants selected this response). This could back up the focus group comments in that respondents lacked knowledge and thus used moral reasoning. However, there was a "moral" explanation as a choice on the questionnaire, that respondents "see themselves as patriots." This option was not popular (8 percent of the pilot group and 17.6 percent of the focus group), so the supporting evidence for the focus group comments is inconclusive.

The second question that three focus groups identified as an ethical issue dealt with song lyrics. One eleventh grade female had this to say about the lyrics:

Say you're just using cuss words. It's not like an offensive thing you're saying. A lot of people would say, 'Oh, bad words. You're not supposed to swear.' But it's not like you're using them in an offensive way to anybody. You're using them as a form of expression.

So offensive lyrics, then, are in the ear of the beholder. Several students commented along these lines, saying that different views of music lyrics deal more with morals (what they find offensive) than any specific free speech right.

This view seems to be supported by the questionnaire results. This question only appeared on the focus group's survey, as it was one of the changes between pilot testing and final format. This prompt asked why students were more likely than adults to believe musicians should be allowed to sing offensive lyrics. The answers were largely split between two responses: almost 30 percent indicated that adults believe the lyrics are obscene, and another nearly 30 percent marked that students think the music is rebellious, not offensive. In essence, these are two sides of the same coin, which is a difference in moral perceptions between students and adults rather than a free speech specific.

The final ethical issue dealt with restricting indecent material on the internet. Although two groups mentioned it, only one student (an eleventh grade female) actually commented on it by saying that the responses were not selected based on knowledge but rather that it's "just common sense they're depending on."

On the questionnaire, the students in both the pilot group (50 percent) and the focus group (around 40 percent) indicated that students who incorrectly thought the government can legally restrict indecent (not obscene) material on the internet do not distinguish between illegal actions and an x-rated website.

Research Question 3

Question: How do a person's interests affect understanding of First Amendment rights?

Each of the four groups indicated that students were simply not interested in First Amendment rights, even if they are concerned theoretically. They've not been without them. They do show more regard in a few areas, however, so those will be addressed.

Students are more concerned with entertainment than with events, and one group in particular pointed out its relation to First Amendment concepts. All of those quoted below are twelfth grade females:

Student 1: "I think that sometimes students' priorities are more toward the entertainment. Even I personally, I'm more likely to watch the E! Channel at 6 o'clock for entertainment news than the local news."

Student 3: "The news news is not really what we're involved in."

Student 2: "I trust entertainment news more than I trust the local news, but I would watch it (local news) more just to find out what's going on."

Student 3: “I’m sure people want to know what’s going on, they just watch entertainment more. They want to find out what’s going on in Hollywood more than my local city.”

This concern with entertainment could impact student understanding of First Amendment rights in many ways. At the very least, the lack of interest in news of current events limit chances that students could gather knowledge of some of the First Amendment rights or details in the world, from petitions that influenced the recent elections to proposals to add an amendment banning flag burning.

Student interest in music might impact their understanding of free speech, as indicated previously in research question 2. An eleventh grade female said:

Since it’s one of the arts, I think a lot of people are into expressing themselves in art and they’re expected to do that. Who doesn’t listen to music almost half the day? Just look in the hallways and classrooms at all the students who have earphones in. It’s a very important part of the students’ lives.

Some students are concerned about religion, and this can impact perception, as pointed out in the third theme, that concern is related to need. Discussion of this same theme also revealed that age is another factor in interest level.

Finally, a person’s role can affect understanding of First Amendment rights. The questionnaire asked for insight into why different groups of people would want a student newspaper to be censored. Overall, the pilot test group (36 percent) and the focus group (over 50 percent) indicated that those who wished to censor want to prevent parent or

community disputes. Yet an eleventh grade female pointed out how different roles provide different reasons:

I thought the principal and teacher differences were about different reasons. The principals are the head of the school, so they don't want anything to embarrass their school, while teachers are more concerned about community disputes and keeping order.

A person's position in life can impact interest, which can impact understanding of First Amendment rights.

Research Question 4

Question: How do student and adult differences on national survey responses reflect different priorities, experiences, or knowledge?

As noted in research question 2 above, focus group responses on the questionnaire indicate a moral divide between students and adults in terms of music lyrics.

One of the groups made the following comments (all twelfth grade females):

Student 1: "The lyrics, too, [are seen as obscene] because the people who don't ever listen to rap or wherever there are controversial lyrics."

Student 2: "Yeah, they just say it's bad."

Student 3: "Yeah, just because it's different."

In this cutting, the participants expressed how student experiences differ from adults in terms of song lyrics. In another group, a twelfth grade female said that the

questionnaire's lyrics question "talks about lyrics and lots of lyrics speak to different people in different ways, like how it applies to you really, so I think it's just that adults didn't really grow up with the kind of music we have now. It was more censored, and we have a different style now."

An eleventh grade female explained the difference between adult and student perceptions of this issue in this way: "Adults think the music is obscene, but I also think that students think the music is more like rebellious or whatever." A twelfth grade female said the difference involves age. "Different generations think different things are appropriate."

In addition to the music lyrics, focus group participants said that adults were more knowledgeable about events and cared more about them than students, as noted in research question 3. A twelfth-grade senior summed it up this central issue best when she said: "Wouldn't that be a crazy world, though, if kids cared more about news news than entertainment? Then entertainment would just go down the hole. Wouldn't that be crazy?"

Discussion

Wouldn't that be crazy if students did care more about current events? This might lead to more concern about First Amendment rights, among other issues. The students in the focus groups were sorely unaware of basic news events both within and without the local community. For example, if students had been aware of petition drives in the recent elections (which generated high news coverage locally and nationally) two focus group participants likely wouldn't have asked the researcher what the right to petition means.

The students were aware of other types of events in which they were interested, largely national entertainment coverage or sports. This lack of news knowledge likely contributed to national survey results.

Regardless, the purpose of this study was to uncover reasons behind the results on national First Amendment surveys using student feedback. The most pervasive explanation for the consistently poor showing on these national surveys is a lack of detailed knowledge. Judging by student comments and selections on the questionnaires, in lieu of detailed knowledge, students might use principles and experience as guides in answering national survey questions. Students pointed out how morals impacted three of the questions. They frequently stated that students lacked knowledge of details. They discussed how experience and age could impact both motivation and interest. These, in turn, could affect survey results.

Focus group comments also consistently held that student lack of interest in First Amendment rights stemmed from a perceived lack of necessity; students are not concerned because they do not need to be. Yet this very problem led to a classroom solution in their comments—they suggested that teachers create a need for First Amendment freedoms, at least within the context of the classroom.

This leads to the most promising part of the findings to most any educator. The focus group members overwhelmingly agreed that education could make a difference. Their suggestions for classroom instruction revolved around scenarios to help students place themselves in different circumstances. Having their rights taken away, comparing U.S. freedoms to another country's, or learning details through different situations all involve taking a student through different experiences in the classroom.

The music lyrics were a common thread among the focus groups and (aside from teaching) generated more comment than most other questions during the focus group interviews. Teachers know that teaching to student interest, making a connection to the students' lives, is an effective way to increase student motivation and learning. This interest could lend itself to free speech rights and could generate even more discussion of First Amendment rights as a whole.

First Amendment studies could take place as a vehicle for lessons in a variety of courses, not merely social studies or journalism classes. A teacher could provide a background on the current decisions regarding filtering software in public libraries (a free speech issue) in technology courses. Music classes could use the Holiday Concert as a vehicle for a discussion of freedom of religion issues. When world language students bring newspaper articles on various parts of the world (a common assignment), the teacher could explain how free press allows us to read news that may be suppressed in the country of origin.

Of course, these examples assume that the teachers in other fields are familiar with the First Amendment, which is not necessarily a valid assumption. Additionally, many courses are loaded with curriculum and squeezing in additional information would be difficult. Even so, most any educator in any class can integrate current events in the studies; many do involve First Amendment rights, so some exposure would occur.

Direct teaching on the rights is helpful, according to participants in this study. Classroom discussion of authentic situations or role-playing scenarios could help make First Amendment instruction more meaningful to students, which should translate into

improved learning and, theoretically at least, to better detailed knowledge. This could, in turn, show up on national surveys like the FOFA or SOFA.

Suggestions for further research

As discussed earlier, the themes and results identified in this study will help to form a basis for further studies leading to solutions.

First, the participant answers raised a point that could be investigated. Their responses indicated that students might be unfamiliar with the number of the amendment, although they are familiar with the contents. Varying the structure of the SOFA question that asked participants to identify one of the First Amendment rights and analyzing differences in responses might be revealing, yet this is only one type of investigation that could be based on this study's findings.

An informative line of inquiry would modify the current study, especially varying the population involved. Because this study's participants were largely white, female upperclassmen in journalism or social studies courses within a higher socio-economic area, it would be interesting to discover if results would be different in an inner-city school and/or with a more diverse group in terms of age and course of study. What would kids say in an inner-city school? In a rural area?

Another category of investigation would use the findings identified in this study to implement and evaluate the effectiveness of instructional methods. If teachers utilize student suggestions such as creating classroom scenarios in which students lose rights, does student performance on surveys of First Amendment knowledge increase? If not, what methods are more effective? An additional component of this might be how teacher

knowledge impacts instruction--if teachers do not have a base knowledge of the First Amendment, how can they teach it effectively?

Student thought is only one aspect of the national surveys on which this study is based. Differences between student, teacher, and administrator answers were also addressed in these national surveys. Another line of questioning, then, might concentrate on the impact of age, role, experience, or motivation on a person's understanding of the First Amendment. Why might an administrator's view of these rights contrast with a student's? How does a person's interest impact their views? How can a typical student's interest be linked with the First Amendment?

Finally, the student responses indicating a lack of awareness of current events could be investigated as a cause of poor performance on tests over the First Amendment. This is one factor that could be integrated into most of the other types of studies. Whether inner-city or in the suburbs, do students who know news know more about the First Amendment? Do classroom activities that encourage exploration of local and national issues foster a better understanding of First Amendment concepts? Does a person's role encourage familiarity with current events and if so, how does this impact First Amendment knowledge?

The national surveys on which this study is based formed a solid start for this exploration into potential reasons for these poor showings on tests of the First Amendment. This study will provide groundwork for future solutions.

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APPENDIX A

Original (Pilot) Research Survey

Survey Says: Reasons behind the survey responses

The purpose of this survey is to shape potential reasons (and perhaps solutions) for a reported lack of knowledge and concern for First Amendment rights.

Text of the First Amendment: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”

These questions are not asking whether you agree with the survey findings; rather, they are asking why someone who answered in this way might agree with these findings. Please respond with what you believe is the best explanation based on your experiences. Feel free to write in an explanation for any of the questions. Please choose only one response per question, the BEST response in your view.

Results of national surveys (SOFA 2005, Future of the First Amendment) indicate that:

1. Nearly one-third could not name one of the five rights in the First Amendment. About three-fourths could not name a second. The best explanation is that those who answered this way:

- a. Are not concerned about these rights
- b. Do not remember learning about these rights
- c. Recognize the rights (from the Bill of Rights) individually but not by the amendment number
- d. do not have an awareness of current events
- e. other: _____

2. Almost one-fourth indicate that the First Amendment goes too far in the rights it guarantees. The best explanation is that those who answered this way:

- a. do not possess basic knowledge of their rights
- b. are thinking about legal restrictions on free expression like libel or slander
- c. do not respect the freedom of those who hold beliefs with which they disagree
- d. restrictions on free expression (especially the media) are needed for national security
- e. other: _____

3. One out of five students thought that under current law, a person has the legal right to shout “fire” in a crowded arena as a prank. The best explanation is that those who answered this way:

- a. do not possess basic knowledge of unprotected speech or the law
- b. believe in unrestricted free speech
- c. believe almost any prank is allowable
- d. do not have an awareness that there are limits to all their civil liberties
- e. other: _____

4. Three-fourths of students think burning the U.S. flag as a form of protest is illegal (it’s not). The best explanation is that those who answered this way:

- a. are not familiar with the Supreme Court decision allowing this

- b. are not aware of the attempts to create an amendment banning flag desecration
- c. see themselves as patriots
- d. do not believe this action is symbolic speech
- e. other: _____

5. Almost half of students think the government can legally restrict indecent material on the internet (it can't). The best explanation is that those who answered this way:

- a. want to protect children
- b. know that obscenity is one category of unprotected speech
- c. don't know the Supreme Court's decision in *Reno v. ACLU*
- d. do not distinguish between illegal actions (like a sexual predator's behavior in a chat room) and an x-rated website (like Playboy)
- e. other: _____

6. One out of five surveyed disagreed that it is important for U.S. democracy that the news media act as a watchdog on government. The best explanation is that those who answered this way:

- a. are not concerned about the workings of the government
- b. do not trust media accounts of government activities
- c. do not trust the media
- d. trust the system of checks and balances to provide accountability
- e. other: _____

7. Students are less likely than adults to believe that people should be allowed to express unpopular opinions (83 to 95 percent). The best explanation for the difference between student and adult perceptions is that:

- a. the students are more concerned with peer pressure
- b. the students haven't been allowed to express unpopular opinions
- c. the adults are more concerned with a free exchange of ideas
- d. the adults are better versed in First Amendment rights
- e. other: _____

8. Students are less likely than adults to trust journalists to tell the truth some or all of the time (55 to 83 percent). The best explanation for the difference between student and adult perceptions is that:

- a. the students have been more affected by recent fabricated stories
- b. the adults utilize the media more often
- c. the adults have a history with a more professional, less profit-driven journalism
- d. the students believe the media is too commercialized or entertainment-driven
- e. other: _____

9. Students are less likely than adults to believe that newspapers should be allowed to publish freely without government approval of stories (51 to 70 percent). The best explanation for the difference between student and adult perceptions is that:

- a. the students believe that the government can make sure stories are legal and accurate
- b. the adults prefer a free exchange of ideas
- c. the adults are better versed in First Amendment rights
- d. the students trust the media less than adults
- e. other: _____

10. Three-quarters of principals did not agree that student newspapers should be allowed to report controversial issues without the approval of school authorities, along with 40 percent of students and 60 percent of teachers. The best explanation is that those who answered this way:

- a. want to ensure a safe, secure learning environment
- b. want to prevent parent or community disputes
- c. want to prevent embarrassment to the school
- d. think the administration can make sure stories are legal and accurate
- e. other: _____

Please identify yourself as a:

- a. student
- b. teacher
- c. administrator

If a student, please indicate your grade level:

- a. ninth
- b. tenth
- c. eleventh
- d. twelfth

Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX B

Revised (Focus Group) Research Survey

First Amendment rights: Reasons behind the survey responses

The purpose of this survey is to shape potential reasons (and perhaps solutions) for a reported lack of knowledge and concern for First Amendment rights.

Text of the First Amendment: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”

These questions are not asking whether you agree with the survey findings; rather, they are asking why someone who answered in this way might agree with these findings. Please respond with what you believe is the best explanation based on your experiences. Feel free to write in an explanation for any of the questions. Please choose only one response per question, the BEST response in your view.

Results of national surveys (SOFA 2005, Future of the First Amendment) indicate that:

1. Nearly one-third of students and adults surveyed could not name one of the five rights in the First Amendment. About three-fourths could not name a second. The best explanation is that those who answered this way:

- a. Are not concerned about these rights
- b. Do not remember learning about these rights
- c. Recognize the rights (from the Bill of Rights) individually but not by the amendment number
- d. do not have an awareness of current events
- e. other: _____

2. Forty-five percent of students agree that the First Amendment goes too far in the rights it guarantees. The best explanation is that those who answered this way:

- a. do not possess basic knowledge of their rights
- b. are thinking about legal restrictions on free expression like libel or slander
- c. do not respect the freedom of those who hold beliefs with which they disagree
- d. restrictions on free expression (especially the media) are needed for national security
- e. other: _____

3. One out of five students thought that under current law, a person has the legal right to shout “fire” in a crowded arena as a prank. The best explanation is that those who answered this way:

- a. do not possess basic knowledge of unprotected speech or the law
- b. believe in unrestricted free speech
- c. believe almost any prank is allowable
- d. do not have an awareness that there are limits to all their civil liberties
- e. other: _____

4. Three-fourths of students think burning the U.S. flag as a form of protest is illegal (it’s not). The best explanation is that those who answered this way:

- a. are not familiar with the Supreme Court decision allowing this
- b. are not aware of the attempts to create an amendment banning flag desecration

- c. see themselves as patriots
- d. do not believe this action is symbolic speech
- e. other: _____

5. Almost half of students think the government can legally restrict indecent material on the internet (it can't). The best explanation is that those who answered this way:

- a. want to protect children
- b. know that obscenity is one category of unprotected speech
- c. don't know the Supreme Court's decision in *Reno v. ACLU*
- d. do not distinguish between illegal actions (like a sexual predator's behavior in a chat room) and an x-rated website (like Playboy)
- e. other: _____

6. Students are more likely than adults to believe that musicians should be allowed to sing songs with lyrics others may find offensive (70 to 59 percent). The best explanation for the difference between student and adult perceptions is that:

- a. students want free speech rights in activities that are important to them
- b. adults want to protect children
- c. adults believe these offensive lyrics are obscene
- d. students think music with offensive lyrics is rebellious, not obscene
- e. other: _____

7. Students are less likely than adults to believe that people should be allowed to express unpopular opinions (83 to 95 percent). The best explanation for the difference between student and adult perceptions is that:

- a. the students are more concerned with peer pressure
- b. the students haven't been allowed to express unpopular opinions
- c. the adults are more concerned with a free exchange of ideas
- d. the adults are better versed in First Amendment rights
- e. other: _____

8. Students are less likely than adults to trust journalists to tell the truth some or all of the time (55 to 83 percent). The best explanation for the difference between student and adult perceptions is that:

- a. the students have been more affected by recent fabricated stories
- b. the adults utilize the media more often
- c. the adults have a history with a more professional, less profit-driven journalism
- d. the students believe the media is too commercialized or entertainment-driven
- e. other: _____

9. Students are less likely than adults to believe that newspapers should be allowed to publish freely without government approval of stories (51 to 70 percent). The best explanation for the difference between student and adult perceptions is that:

- a. the students believe that the government can make sure stories are legal and accurate
- b. the adults prefer a free exchange of ideas
- c. the adults are better versed in First Amendment rights
- d. the students trust the media less than adults
- e. other: _____

10. Seventy-five percent of principals, 40 percent of students, and 60 percent of teachers did not agree that student newspapers should be allowed to report controversial issues without the approval of school authorities. The best explanation is that those who answered this way:

- a. want to ensure a safe, secure learning environment
- b. want to prevent parent or community disputes
- c. want to prevent embarrassment to the school
- d. do not trust the student media to report accurately
- e. other: _____

If a student, please indicate your grade level:

- a. ninth
- b. tenth
- c. eleventh
- d. twelfth

Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX C
Parental Consent Letter

PARENTAL INFORMED CONSENT FORM
IRB # 356-06-EP
October 16, 2006

**FIRST THINGS FIRST: WHAT DO STUDENTS
REALLY KNOW ABOUT THE FIRST AMENDMENT?**

You are invited to permit your child to participate in this research study. The following information is provided in order to help you to make an informed decision whether or not to allow your child to participate. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask.

Your son or daughter is being asked to participate in a research interview because he/she is a journalism or social studies student at Millard West High School. This interview is part of a study being conducted by teacher Joanne Chapuran as a requirement of her master's program at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. This study, in preparation for a thesis dissertation, has been approved by the Millard Public School's Department of Research as well as the Millard West administration.

Research has shown a lack of awareness of First Amendment rights, in particular on several well-reported national surveys, the Future of the First Amendment conducted by the Knight Foundation (<http://firstamendment.jideas.org/downloads.php>) and the State of the First Amendment reports (<http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org>) by the First Amendment Center. This study hopes to uncover common reasons for the poor showing on these national surveys.

The first part of this study takes results from these national surveys and asks for reasons. Students will complete 10 questions. A sample question is shown below:

One out of five surveyed disagreed that it is important for U.S. democracy that the news media act as a watchdog on government (uncover the workings of the government). The best explanation is that those who answered this way:

- a. are not concerned about the workings of the government
- b. do not trust media accounts of government activities
- c. trust the system of checks and balances to provide accountability
- d. do not know the shade of meaning for "watchdog" in this question
- e. other: _____

The second part involves the student participating in a focus group of 4-5 students, who will be interviewed to gain more insight into the reasons for the national survey results. The

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of 3

Parent's Initials _____

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interviews will involve three key areas: 1) Were the national survey questions too specific? Were there problems with the test?; 2) Do students lack knowledge of or understanding about the First Amendment?; and 3) Do students not care about these rights? The results will be analyzed to draw conclusions about the overriding reasons for the national survey results. In other words, are the findings that show a lack of knowledge about the First Amendment due to test problems, a lack of knowledge, little student concern, or other factors?

These interviews will be audiotaped, and no names will be used. After transcripts are typed from the audiotapes, the tapes will be erased, and again, no names will be used on the transcript or in the final report. The interview process should take about 30-40 minutes from a 90-minute course. The social studies or journalism teacher will have given permission for these students to miss class activities for this time period, so no make-up work will be needed.

The risks might include stress if members' answers during the focus group interview could place them in a negative light and other members revealed it. If the participant missed an important part of a lesson during the interview, academic stress could arise (although the teachers control when students can be interviewed). All participating members are encouraged to protect each other's privacy. Students who do not to participate in the study will continue with standard class activities. Students who participate can benefit from this study through discussion within the focus group about First Amendment rights and could help improve future instruction.

If common explanations can be generated from this study, it may help modify teaching methods in response. For example, if the study could show that students do not express concern for Constitutional knowledge in reference to newspapers but do show awareness in terms of music, this could provide an instructional point of entry to motivate student learning about the U.S. Constitution.

The confidentiality of all information concerning research participants will be maintained. This information includes all identifying information and research data of individual participants. In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, including the thesis dissertation, no personally identifiable information will be shared because participants' names are in no way linked to responses.

The surveys and interviews will take place during social studies or journalism class during the first or second semester, fall 2006.

Your child's rights as a research subject have been explained to you. If you have

any additional questions about the study, please contact me at (402) 894-6033. If you have any questions about your child's rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the investigator or to report any concerns about the study, you may contact the University of Nebraska-Omaha Institutional Review Board (UNO IRB), telephone (402) 559-6463.

You are free to decide not to enroll your child in this study or to withdraw your child at any time without adversely affecting their or your relationship with the investigator, Millard West High School, or the University of Nebraska-Omaha. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which your child is otherwise entitled.

Parent's Initials _____
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DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT

YOU ARE VOLUNTARILY MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO ALLOW YOUR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE CERTIFIES THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO ALLOW YOUR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE HAVING READ AND UNDERSTOOD THE INFORMATION PRESENTED. YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM TO KEEP.

Child's Name

Signature of Parent

Date

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

PRIMARY INVESTIGATOR

Joanne Chapuran Office: 894-6033

APPENDIX D
Student Assent Letter

STUDENT INFORMED ASSENT FORM
IRB # 356-06-EP
October 16, 2006

**FIRST THINGS FIRST: WHAT DO STUDENTS
REALLY KNOW ABOUT THE FIRST AMENDMENT?**

You are invited to participate in this research study. The following information is provided in order to help you to make an informed decision whether or not to participate. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask.

You are being asked to participate in a research interview because you're a journalism or social studies student at Millard West High School. This interview is part of a study being conducted by teacher Joanne Chapuran as a requirement of her master's program at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. This study, in preparation for a thesis dissertation, has been approved by the Millard Public School's Department of Research as well as the Millard West administration.

Research has shown a lack of awareness of First Amendment rights, in particular on several well-reported national surveys, the Future of the First Amendment conducted by the Knight Foundation (<http://firstamendment.jideas.org/downloads.php>) and the State of the First Amendment reports (<http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org>) by the First Amendment Center. This study hopes to uncover common reasons for the poor showing on these national surveys.

The first part of this study takes results from these national surveys and asks for reasons. You will complete 10 questions. A sample question is shown below:

One out of five surveyed disagreed that it is important for U.S. democracy that the news media act as a watchdog on government (uncover the workings of the government). The best explanation is that those who answered this way:

- a. are not concerned about the workings of the government
- b. do not trust media accounts of government activities
- c. trust the system of checks and balances to provide accountability
- d. do not know the shade of meaning for "watchdog" in this question
- e. other: _____

The second part involves participating in a focus group of 4-5 students. You will be interviewed to gain more insight into the reasons for the national survey results.

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The interviews will involve three key areas: 1) Were the national survey questions too specific? Were there problems with the test?; 2) Do students lack knowledge of or understanding about the First Amendment?; and 3) Do students not care about these rights? The results will be analyzed to draw conclusions about the overriding reasons for the national survey results. In other words, are the findings that show a lack of knowledge about the First Amendment due to test problems, a lack of knowledge, little student concern, or other factors?

These interviews will be audiotaped, and no names will be used. After transcripts are typed from the audiotapes, the tapes will be erased, and again, no names will be used on the transcript or in the final report. The interview process should take about 30-40 minutes from your 90-minute course. The social studies or journalism teacher will have given permission for you to miss class activities for this time period, so no make-up work should be needed.

Your risks might include stress if your answers during the focus group interview could place you in a negative light and other members revealed it. If the you missed an important part of a lesson during the interview, academic stress could arise (although the teachers control when you can be interviewed). You and all participating members are encouraged to protect each other's privacy. If you do not participate in the study, you will continue with standard class activities. If you participate, you can benefit from this study through discussion within the focus group about First Amendment rights, which could help improve future instruction.

If common explanations can be generated from this study, it may help modify teaching methods in response. For example, if the study could show that students do not express concern for Constitutional knowledge in reference to newspapers but do show awareness in terms of music, this could provide an instructional point of entry to motivate student learning about the U.S. Constitution.

The confidentiality of all information concerning each participant will be maintained. This information includes all identifying information and research data of individual participants. In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, including the thesis dissertation, no personally identifiable information will be shared because participants' names are in no way linked to responses.

The surveys and interviews will take place during social studies or journalism class during the first or second semester, fall 2006.

Your rights as a research subject have been explained to you. If you have any additional questions about the study, please contact me at (402) 894-6033. If you have

any questions about your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by me (the investigator) or to report any concerns about the study, you may contact the University of Nebraska-Omaha Institutional Review Board (UNO IRB), telephone (402) 559-6463.

You are free to decide not to enroll in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigator, Millard West High School, or the University of Nebraska-Omaha. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

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YOU ARE FREELY MAKING A DECISION WHETHER TO BE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE MEANS THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM AND YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE. YOU AND YOUR PARENTS WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM.

Student's Name

Signature of Student

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

PRIMARY INVESTIGATOR

Joanne Chapuran Office: 894-6033

APPENDIX E

Focus Group Procedures

The procedures in each of the four focus groups were as follows:

1. The researcher began with a question asked on the SOFA phone survey:
“Identify one or more of the First Amendment rights.”
2. The students individually completed the revised survey that asked for reasons behind the national survey results.
3. The researcher began tape recording and asked the following interview questions, posing follow-up questions as needed, depending on student responses. These follow-up questions were for the purpose of clarification and did not delve into new topics. The questions were as follows:
 - a) Looking at the (study) survey, did any of you mark or note that the questions themselves were a problem? (Ex: were they too narrow in scope? Do they ask for too specific of detail? Are the questions confusing?)
 - b) Do you think there were other problems with the survey instruments? Describe.
 - c) Judging by these results, do you think students lack knowledge about the First Amendment? Do they simply not know enough information? Can you elaborate?
 - d) Do you think students know about the First Amendment but do not understand what it entails? For example, do they know we have

free speech but don't really understand what free speech means?

Explain.

- e) Are there certain rights in the First Amendment that students know more about than others? What are they? Why do you think that is?
- f) Do you think students are concerned about First Amendment rights? Why?
- g) Looking over the survey, do you see any results that might have been affected by a person's belief system? In other words, a person's morals would dictate how he/she would view the question, rather than a person's knowledge? Explain.
- h) Are students more concerned about some First Amendment rights than others? Why? On a scale of 1-10 (10 being highest), rank each right in its importance to students.
- i) What do students find more important than First Amendment rights? Why?
- j) Do you remember being taught about the First Amendment? Describe some of those memories. (What grade were you in? What activities did you do? What do you remember about the information?)
- k) If you were a teacher, how would you teach about the First Amendment? What activities do you think would make it more meaningful to students? Why?

4. The students were asked to keep the interview materials private, so as not to influence the views of later focus groups and to protect the privacy of individual members.

APPENDIX F
Frequency Chart

Question 1	Choice a	Choice b	Choice c	Choice d	Choice e	Results
Pilot test	25.5	17.6	49	5.8	1.9	Choice c
Focus group	23.5	23.5	35.3	11	5.8	common
Question 2	Choice a	Choice b	Choice c	Choice d	Choice e	Results
Pilot test	27	20.8	33.3	16.67	2	
Focus group	35.3	23.5	17.6	23.5	0	
Question 3	Choice a	Choice b	Choice c	Choice d	Choice e	Results
Pilot test	14.6	29	2	50	4.4	Choice d
Focus group	17.6	17.6	5.8	52.9	5.5	common
Question 4	Choice a	Choice b	Choice c	Choice d	Choice e	Results
Pilot test	36	20	8	28	8	Choice a
Focus group	52.9	11	17.6	17.6	0	common
Question 5	Choice a	Choice b	Choice c	Choice d	Choice e	Results
Pilot test	18.8	10.4	12.5	50	8	Choice d
Focus group	11	5.8	35.3	41.1	5.8	common
Question 6	Choice a	Choice b	Choice c	Choice d	Choice e	Results
Pilot test	23.9	28	28	20	0	Qs diff
Focus group	17.6	29.4	29.4	17.6	5.8	
Question 7	Choice a	Choice b	Choice c	Choice d	Choice e	Results
Pilot test	21.7	51	9.7	15.6	2	a + b = 72.7
Focus group	35.3	29.4	17.6	11	5.8	a + b = 64.7
Question 8	Choice a	Choice b	Choice c	Choice d	Choice e	Results
Pilot test	34	29	14	18.1	4.8	
Focus group	23.5	17.6	35.3	17.6	5.8	
Question 9	Choice a	Choice b	Choice c	Choice d	Choice e	Results
Pilot test	23.5	27.5	21.56	21.56	5.9	
Focus group	47	17.6	23.5	11	0	
Question 10	Choice a	Choice b	Choice c	Choice d	Choice e	Results
Pilot test	32.5	36	23	6.4	2	Choice b
Focus group	17.6	52.9	11	5.8	11	common