Inquiries
Baskets of cotton and birthday cakes: Teaching slavery in social studies classrooms.....p. 1
LaGarrett King, University of Missouri;
Ashley Woodson, University of Pittsburgh
In the eye of the beholder:
Student assessments of “heroes” and historical thinking with local history research projects*.....p. 19
Katherine Assante Perrotta, Georgia State University

Technology for Its Own Sake:
Teachers’ Purpose and Practice with Desktop Documentary Making.....p. 43
James E. Schul, Winona State University

Feature
What social studies can do: Bringing critical civic learning to U.S. social studies classrooms.....p. 63
Beth C. Rubin, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
2016 Mary Hepburn Lecture

Tools
MapIt! Creating Meaningful Learning Experiences in Social Studies with IHMC CmapTools.....p. 78
Erica M. Southworth, St. Norbert College

Lessons for Historical Thinking: Who was Henry Wirz?.....p. 93
Amy Orr

Notes
So, Why Bother?.....p. 103
Dr. Eddie Bennett, GCSS Executive Director
We are thrilled to welcome you to the NEW Social Studies Education Review! This journal, sponsored by the Georgia Council for Social Studies and hosted by the University of Georgia, began in 1969 as the Georgia Social Science Journal, and served Georgia's social studies teachers by providing practical applications and research. Along with the Journal of Social Science Research, which focused primarily on research in social studies education, the Georgia Social Science Journal was a product of the Georgia Council for the Social Studies and edited by faculty at the University of Georgia until 1993.

In 2011, the journal was resurrected under new editorship and renamed the Georgia Social Studies Journal. As such, it sought to honor the tradition of the original journal by engaging social studies teachers and teacher educators in the best classroom practices and research available. At the same time, the journal shifted from print to an electronic format in order to provide social studies educators with the best tools available in an interactive fashion.

In January, 2017, the executive board of the Georgia Council for Social Studies voted to rename the journal once again in order to reflect (and hopefully attract) a wider readership and authorship. While still deeply committed to providing timely, relevant and useful articles for teachers and teacher educators in Georgia, we recognize the wider contexts in which the work of local educators takes place and the importance of engaging in critical scholarly conversations with colleagues across political and institutional boundaries.

The sections of the journal now include “Inquiries,” which we describe as systematic, intentional and empirical research into a question of interest to social studies teachers and teacher educators. “Reflections” are thoughtful narratives about one’s experience and understanding of current issues in social studies education research, practice and policy. “Tools” are reviews of specific tools for research and practice, including lesson plans, texts, online sources, museum sites, etc. We encourage and invite educators (PK-16) to submit pieces for review.

In this inaugural issue of Social Studies Education Review (SSER), you will find engaging and relevant articles written by PK-12 teachers as well as by university faculty, including reports of research on teaching slavery, heroes, and desktop documentary making software, reflections on the use of concept mapping software and a lesson on Henry Wirz and the Andersonville Prison. We are also excited to include the 2016
Mary Hepburn Lecture, given by Dr. Beth Rubin of Rutgers, and a few words from the executive director of GCSS, Dr. Eddie Bennett. We’re off to a wonderful start, indeed! We trust you will find much that is insightful and informative in the pages that follow.

The spring issue is already coming together, but we are always looking for additional pieces. So consider reaching out to us even if only with an idea for a paper. We’re committed to timely editor feedback and reviews, to helping authors move their work from idea to published article, and—foremost—to reigniting lively and relevant conversation among our readers (new and old).

Looking forward to working with and for you.
Jenn Hauver, Editor
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Learn more about your editorial team:

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Baskets of Cotton and Birthday Cakes: Teaching Slavery in Social Studies Classrooms

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Abstract

In this paper, we explain that educative-psychic violence can be used as a tool for developing and evaluating lessons about slavery. Educative-psychic violence is a concept that helps to explain the types of harm that students experience when we teach about slavery in superficial or reductive ways. The “violence” in educative-psychic violence does not refer to physical actions that injure, harm, or damage persons or property. Instead, it is a type of psychological violence, one that keeps students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds from developing a full sense of their racial, historical, and political identities. We use educative-psychic violence to examine two provocative moments involving lessons about slavery – the use of word problems involving slavery in a mathematics classroom, and the 2016 children’s book *A Birthday Cake for George Washington*. We offer recommendations to individual teachers and teacher educators for using educative-psychic violence as a tool to assess their own practice.

While working to complete the first draft of this article in late summer 2016, we took a break on July 25 to watch First Lady Michelle Obama serve as keynote on the opening night of the Democratic National Convention. Near the end of her speech, she shared some of the historical symbolism that she associated with raising a Black family in the White House. She stated in part,

…that is the story of this country, the story that has brought me to this stage tonight, the story of generations of people who felt the lash of bondage, the shame of servitude, the sting of segregation, but who kept on striving and
hoping and doing what needed to be done so that today, I wake up every morning in a house that was built by slaves. (Obama, 2016)

First Lady Obama’s speech in its entirety was met with widespread acclaim. However, the response to her decision to invoke the violent legacy of chattel slavery during her remarks was mixed. Some found the First Lady’s reference to be an appropriate and emotional reminder of the Black community’s struggle for political recognition in the United States. Actress and women’s health advocate Gabrielle Union tweeted, “YES! @MichelleObama delivered the truth while cloaked in grace and beautiful strength.”

Others did not embrace the reference to slavery. When singer Kelly Clarkson tweeted, “… Just saw Michelle Obama’s speech at DNC tonight! That was amazing! Love her,” one of her followers replied, “I’m not sure I liked the part where she said the White House was built by slaves” (Clarkson tweeted in response, “Pretty certain the slaves that built it didn’t like it either”). Debates ensued on Twitter and other social media platforms, with several high profile commentators weighing in. For example, television personality Bill O’Reilly seemed concerned with the factual basis of the claim that the White House was built by slaves. In a segment of his program The O’Reilly Factor entitled Tip of the Day, he stated,

…slaves that worked [on the White House] were well fed and had decent lodgings provided by the government, which stopped hiring slave labor in 1802… However, the feds did not forbid subcontractors from using slave labor. So Michelle Obama is essentially correct in citing slaves as builders of the White House, but there were others working as well. (O’Reilly, 2016)

O’Reilly’s fact-checking proved controversial as well. Celebrities including television producer Shonda Rhimes and talk show host James Corden voiced disdain for O’Reilly’s apparent sense that being well fed or decently lodged moderated the severity of slavery, or lessened the culpability of the United States government in using the labor of the enslaved to construct federal buildings. Though this particular controversy will likely fade from the headlines before the final draft of this article is complete, for many it was a poignant reminder of how divisive the issue of slavery continues to be.

Few would dispute that chattel slavery was a brutal economic system that deprived Africans and African descended people of dignity, wealth, and political power (Baptist, 2015). Despite broad consensus on the violent and inhuman nature of slavery, its mention prompts a range of emotional reactions, including pride, anger, defensiveness, discomfort, embarrassment, and sadness. It is understandable, then, that many teachers express concern as they prepare to facilitate conversations about slavery. To avoid the potential emotional fallout, teachers often mention slavery and other race related issues uncritically and in passing, or not at all (Epstein, 2010; Ladson Billings, 2003; Loewen, 2010). After years of reading and reflection, we have come to believe that many of these emotions are unavoidable
when the issue of slavery is raised in classrooms. However, we can still teach about slavery in ways that honor the humanity of the enslaved, that respect our students’ emotional needs, and that support our students’ ability to use the lessons of slavery to make sense of contemporary race relations and human rights debates.

In this paper, we explain the concept of educative-psychic violence as a tool that can be used for developing and evaluating lessons about slavery. Educative-psychic violence is a concept that helps to explain the types of harm that students experience when we teach about slavery in superficial or reductive ways. The “violence” in educative-psychic violence does not refer to physical actions that injure, harm, or damage persons or property. Instead, it is a type of psychological violence, one that keeps students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds from developing a full sense of their racial, historical, and political identities. To begin, we review some of the controversies surrounding how slavery has been taught in K-12 classrooms. Next, we highlight the work of education researchers who argue that curriculum that mistreats slavery can cause harm to students. Then, we define educative-psychic violence and use it to examine two provocative moments involving lessons about slavery – the use of word problems involving slavery in a mathematics classroom, and the 2016 children’s book A Birthday Cake for George Washington. To conclude, we offer recommendations to individual teachers and teacher educators for using educative-psychic violence as a tool to assess their own practice.

**Slavery in the Curriculum: A Brief Review**

Slavery is often highly visible in contemporary curriculum (Anderson & Metzger, 2011; Journell, 2008) and is probably the first narrative students learn regarding the African American experience in the United States. However, Washburn (1997) classified the coverage of slavery in the official social studies curriculum as conservative. Slavery has been alternately portrayed as nonexistent, as a controversial but necessary economic measure, and as a Christian missionary effort to convert African heathens (Elson, 1964; Foster, 1999; King, Davis, & Brown, 2012; Washburn, 1997). These portrayals continue to be debated among educators, parents, students, and activists. For example, in 1925 the Union veteran bulletin Grand Army Record published an article expressing concern that many textbooks did not adequately examine arguments over slavery as a cause of the Civil War (Gallagher, 2000). In the 1950s, the popular textbook Growth of the American Republic was criticized for describing the enslaved as “Sambos” who were “adequately fed, well cared for, and apparently happy” (Zimmerman, 2004, p. 55). In 2015, McGraw-Hill Education was subject to similar criticism for releasing a textbook in Texas that described the Transatlantic Slave Trade as the
immigration of “millions of workers from Africa to the southern United States to work on agricultural plantations” (Fernandez & Hauser, 2015, para 9).

Brown & Brown (2010) informed us that “textbook narratives do not position slavery as a fully institutionalized system that afforded a foundation of economic stability and wealth that can trace to contemporary institutions and families” (p. 46). Instead, slavery, as represented in the social studies curriculum, is seen as a southern problem that was facilitated by “bad men doing bad things” (Brown & Brown, 2010, p. 61). Northern interests, the U.S. government and its capitalistic intent, are largely absolved of blame for slavery and the continued oppression of African Americans, although institutional policies allowed the institution to prosper and develop the country into an economic power (Baptists, 2015; King & Finley, 2015; Takaki, 2008). In telling the story of slavery, enslaved people’s experiences are largely treated secondarily. The curriculum’s narrative is largely top down, meaning that slave policies, slave masters, and enslaved persons who are considered heroic are the foci of the story. The multitude of the enslaved persons’ experiences are typically not covered. Seldom do we learn about enslaved families, children, or the explicitness of Black women’s socio-sexual experiences. Colorism and its implications are often ignored. The curriculum examines slavery through the eyes of the oppressor and lacks an exploration of slave life through the eyes of the enslaved. The narratives depicting slavery are narrow, typically focusing on the subjection of Black bodies while ignoring Black agency. Instead, narratives situate “nice” White people including Abraham Lincoln and northern abolitionist as salient actors who are largely given credit for fighting on the side of African Americans. When Black agency is displayed, the story mostly privileges slave rebellions or insurrections, which on the surface is fine, but when left as the only pervasive action, students are left with an idea that African Americans physicality defined their emancipation efforts and not their intellectual agency and mental capabilities to achieve and influence freedom (King, 2014).

Research has also noted how individual teacher practices can result in representations of the enslaved that undermine students’ full comprehension of the chattel slavery system. Several studies indicate that many Black students, particularly those who are racially conscious, have contentious relationships (Woodson, 2015) with slavery teaching because they are frustrated with history teachers who teach White Social Studies (Chandler & Branscombe, 2015) and are unwilling, unknowledgeable, or not empathic enough to teach the subject critically (Singer, 2008; Thornhill, 2014). Singer (2008) chronicled how Black students resented slavery teachings based on how instruction always centered on “how their people were oppressed” (p. 15). Cotton (2001), reflecting on her learning, remembered teachers being insensitive regarding slavery. She said, “they made it seem, at least to us, that slavery was proof that Black people were inferior… it sounded like we would have remained as slaves forever if not for sympathetic
Whites who secured our freedom” (p. 12). Williams (2001) noted that students preferred to talk about how people struggled against oppression. This study also found that many teachers neglected the realities of slave life and struggled to teach the broad economic impact of slavery. Similarly, Epstein (2010) described that teachers would oftentimes ignore or silence Black student viewpoints concerning slavery. A classroom teacher in her study taught her students that “white slave owners beat or whipped blacks who disobeyed orders” (p. 58) but when Black students attempted to provide additional anecdotes of slave amputation, sexual assault, and the aftermath of slavery after emancipation, the teacher ignored their inquiries.

**Educative-Psychic Violence**

The research on teaching slavery motivated us to search for a concept that could help to explain how students experience curriculum that mistreats slavery. The term *educative-psychic violence* was first used by educational researchers Leonardo and Porter (2010), who employ the concept to describe the negative effects of conversations about race that minimize or ignore the significance of racism. Social studies curriculum and the instructional strategies that accompany it are understood as educative-psychic violence when they:

1) make the values and practices that are often associated with European cultures the standard through which all other cultures are evaluated;
2) exclusively represent people of color in oppressed or subordinate positions;
3) suggest that all people of color think, behave and act in the same ways, ignoring complexity and diversity; and
4) offer simplistic or superficial accounts of Non-White persons’ history that relegates them to exceptional representatives of the race and within certain fixed historical time periods.

Drawing on literature in social studies education, we suggest a fifth dimension of educative-psychic violence in classrooms:

5) stories about history or society that make the exploitation and abuse of people of color seem accidental, or that fail to attribute this exploitation and abuse to individuals (Brown & Brown, 2010).

Educative-psychic violence is grounded in antiblackness (Dumas, 2016), the societal imagination that to be Black is to be considered a slave and less than human, and we argue is ingrained with social studies curriculum thought and practice (Brown & Au, 2014; King, Davis, & Brown, 2012). It is no secret that the Social Studies have been implicit in designing curriculum that reflects notions of educative-psychic violence (Chandler & Branscombe, 2015; Elson, 1964; Foster, 1999; King, Davis, & Brown, 2012) and the results of this teaching sustain students
from becoming racially conscious about power structures. As a consequence, the curriculum and instruction indirectly elevates, validates, and normalizes histories considered to favor those who are White. Those who do not identify as White see their history and culture devalued and conceived as inherently deficient. Therefore, a level of racial common sense is developed that begins to insinuate that Black people, as well as other non-White people, are not only insignificant to the growth and development to the United States but represent a drain on resources and to ideas of democracy (Ladson-Billings, 2003).

In what follows, we examine two provocative moments involving slavery using the principles of educative-psychic violence. Provocative moments are instances that support us in thinking deeply about how theory can be used to inform practice (Williams, Woodson, & Wallace, 2016). The first moment is about word problems involving slavery in a mathematics classroom. While this provocative moment did not take place in a social studies classroom, it reflects the need for social studies teacher leadership in other disciplines to work to integrate topics related to race relations and human rights into the curriculum. The second moment is the publication of the 2016 historical fiction children’s book A Birthday Cake for George Washington, which tell the story of enslaved individuals who worked in President George Washington’s kitchen. The text was released on January 5, 2016 and pulled from distribution on January 17, 2016 following public criticism.

**Slavery Math Problems**

While the slavery math problem controversy involved elementary schools in Georgia and New York, we are specifically concerned about the January 2012 slavery math problem assignment at Beaver Creek Elementary in Norcross, Georgia. Norcross is part of the largest school district in the state. It was reported that a parent became upset over a 3rd grade homework assignment given to his son that featured learning about history through mathematics. The homework included numerous history/math questions including three questions featuring slavery. These questions caught our attention:

1). Frederick had 6 baskets filled with cotton. If each basket held 5 pounds, how many pounds did he have all together?
2). If Frederick got two beatings per day, how many beatings did he get in one week? Two weeks?
3). Each tree had 56 oranges. If eight slaves pick them equally, then how much would each slave pick?

The name Frederick is important because the questions were referring to Frederick Douglass (named in the state standards), the former Black abolitionist, orator, and U.S. statesman. The assignment was given to over 100 students in four of the nine
3rd grade classrooms at the school. It was reported that the third grade team typically plans lessons together but it was one teacher, Luis Rivera, who designed the questions and shared them with other teachers on his grade level team. Rivera eventually resigned. What follows is our analysis of the slavery math problem activities distributed in Georgia.

**Oppressed and Subordinate Positions**

We begin with the question, *If Frederick got two beatings per day, how many beatings did he get in one week? Two weeks?*, to illustrate one way the slavery math problems committed acts of educative-psychic violence. The centrality of the Black body as a site of racial violence without contextualization reinforces the notion that “to be a slave is to be under the brutal power and authority of another” (Hartman, 1997, p. 3). This is not to say that we should ignore racial violence in classrooms. Instead, physical violence against Black bodies should be contextualized in relationship to the interests and actions of those who committed the violence. These people(s) are ambiguous and invisible, so the major focus and frame of view is on the forms of domination, the beatings, rather than the perpetrator of the violence. Further, the repetitive use of beatings, situates the Black body as a spectacle, an inanimate object that continuously reinforces Black bodies as dehumanized subjects.

The way physical violence is presented in the question not only disconnects suffering and agony from the Black subject’s body, but also stunts how students see humanity. The routine nature of physical violence onto the Black body does not explain why the violence occurred leaving a message to students that the violence is justified and not questionable. In this (dis)context, the enslaved people are not “only the other but other than human” (Dumas, 2016). They are solely property, who are controlled through violent means. The humanity of the enslaved person is lost and their pain is silenced. Enslaved individuals are without agency, passive, and mute, giving the impression they accepted physical violence as part of their existence and did not rebel.

**Ignoring White Supremacy**

The second theme to emerge through the slavery math problems was how the slavery math problems rendered White supremacy both invisible and visible. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the slavery math problems were silent on the identity of the owners of the enslaved people. The only identity we see is the name of the Black character (Frederick Douglass) as the receiver of seemly justified and normalized forms of violence and pain. The invisibility of the slave
owner(s)/trader(s) (the perpetrators of the violence) presumes or normalizes White supremacy and constructs them as default citizens who have the rights to inflict bodily harm; meanwhile, the Black actor is dehumanized and subjected to violence.

By choosing to avoid identifying the presumably White owners of enslaved peoples, it protects Whites from responsibilities associated with developing and maintaining the system of U.S. slavery and the racialized power structures. That is, these mathematics problems are instances of glossing over unpalatable aspects of White culture and White History in the interest of maintaining the centrality and false neutrality of Whiteness as the cultural standard (Leonardo & Porter, 2010). Yet, while White supremacy is not named, making the concept invisible, the invisibility of the concept also renders White supremacy present. White supremacy is visible though the mechanism that inflicts domination, hegemony, and power. The math problems focus on violence and the subjugation of labor onto enslaved people, imply a hegemonic force applied to Blackness. In addition, none of the slavery math problems attempted to critique the institution of slavery or the ideological beliefs and practices that began and maintained systems of oppression including White privilege.

Simplistic and Superficial Representatives

The third way the slavery math problems elicit educative-psychic violence is through essentializing the main Black historical character presented within the problems. Centering Frederick Douglas as solely a slave is reductionist and presents his complex characteristics as one-dimensional. Historians have noted Douglass was one of, if not the, most prominent African Americans in the 19th century. Douglass, who fought and won a physical confrontation over his former master Edward Convey, was enslaved in Maryland, escaped to the north in his early 20s and became one of the foremost and sought after speakers on abolition of Black people. He lived overseas touring Ireland and Britain, was a dynamic speaker and writer, and was even appointed by former President William Harrison as Minister Resident and Consul General to Haiti, and Chargé d’Affaires for Santo Domingo.

In choosing to omit/ignore the multiple and nuanced experiences, replete with agency, that Frederick Douglass created for himself, the slavery math problems are representative of how many Black historical actors are positioned in curriculum and pedagogy. Students’ understandings of Black people during the colonial period as only slaves omit the understanding of free black persons and their contributions to society or the abolitionist of slavery (King, 2014). By maintaining a one-dimensional view of people of color, these mathematical problems participate in limiting students’ ability to envision and understand people of color in more complex and diverse ways (Leonardo & Porter, 2010). That is, the choice to continue to reinforce only one particular perspective of enslaved peoples (or of
Douglass specifically) represents a block in students’ paths to multidimensional understandings of complex histories.

Birthday Cake Case Study

_A Birthday Cake for George Washington_, authored by Ramin Ganeshram and illustrated by Vanessa Brantley Newton, was released by Scholastic on January 5, 2016. Set in 19th century North America, the book provides a fictionalized day-in-the-life account of the historical figure Hercules, an enslaved chef at President George Washington’s Philadelphia estate. The story is narrated by Hercules’ young daughter Delia, who works alongside her father in Washington’s kitchen. The text begins on the morning of Washington’s birthday, as the kitchen staff works to prepare the meal for that evening’s celebration. Core themes include the importance of hard work, cooperation and ingenuity and the illustrations offer attractive, approachable depictions of Hercules, Delia, and other characters in the story. The book provides an opportunity to discuss issues that are often omitted from social studies classrooms, including possible work roles for enslaved children, father-daughter relationships in the Black community and multiracial work spaces during the antebellum period. It also presents an enslaved man in a position of relative authority as Hercules is the lead chef in the kitchen due to his skill.

Despite these important contributions, the book was met with significant criticism. In an advance review, the School Library Journal argued that:

> Young readers without sufficient background knowledge about the larger context of American slavery may come away with a dangerously rosy impression of the relationship between slaves and slave owners…and those with a deeper understanding are likely to find this depiction offensive.

The publisher and editor argued in response that the book was historically accurate, and reflected the complexity of life, work, and emotion for the enslaved. Scholastic seemed to agree. However, after initially defending the decision to publish _A Birthday Cake for George Washington_ and stating that the book “has generated an important discussion about the depiction of slavery in children’s books,” Scholastic decided to withdraw it from distribution about two weeks after the book’s release.

The publisher stated that “the book may give a false impression of the reality of the lives of slaves and therefore should be withdrawn.” Below, we examine some of the limitations and omissions that might have contributed to critiques of the book using the principles of educative-psychic violence.
Monocultural Standards

Through Delia’s storytelling, Hercules is positioned as the protagonist of the narrative. His skill as a chef is celebrated throughout the book, and serves as the basis for the resolution of the story’s major conflict – completing a dessert recipe without granulated white sugar. Delia seems to take great pride in her father’s skill and widespread recognition. Two pages are devoted to listing the “important people” who have positively evaluated Hercules’ ability. Unfortunately, none of these important people are noted as people of color. (Delia lists a French ambassador, the senator from Connecticut, the wife of the governor of Pennsylvania, and the president himself as fans of her father’s cooking.) Hercules’ role as a provider and cook for his own family or for other members of the Black community are not mentioned or explored. This decision eliminates the opportunity to understand how other Black people might have viewed Hercules’ cooking or character. Further, outside of Delia’s reference to hoecakes that she helps make at home, the rich and creative culinary traditions of the African descended enslaved are not referenced. Hercules and the rest of the kitchen staff do not taste the cake that is central to the story’s development, and the only Black person who attempts to touch the birthday cake, a young kitchen boy, is slapped “hard” on the hand by Hercules. In this way, Hercules’ accomplishments are evaluated exclusively by standards often associated with European cultures. Other standards and perspectives are silenced, even though the narrator happens to be Black.

Ignoring Complexity and Diversity

This story is about Hercules, an enslaved man whose experiences are in many ways exceptional. The privileges that Washington allows Hercules provides access to a social, cultural, and political world from which many of the enslaved were prohibited. However, historically, members of Hercules’ immediate family are not allowed such privileges. For example, there is no record that Hercules’ daughter Delia ever worked alongside her father. According to the author’s note, Delia was legally owned by Martha Washington and presumably remained enslaved until the time of her death. As a story about enslaved individuals who find an element of fulfillment in their work, *A Birthday Cake for George Washington* offers a humanizing and complex perspective on the spectrum of Black experience that fit under the rubric of slavery. However, the story is much more complex than Ganeshram’s narrative implies. Hercules eventually escaped slavery on February 22, 1797, George Washington’s 65th birthday (LaBan, 2010). Later that year, future king of France Louis-Philippe visited Mount Vernon and encountered one of Hercules’ daughters – possibly Delia (Lee, 2006). He reflected:
The general’s cook ran away, being now in Philadelphia, and left a little daughter of six at Mount Vernon. [A member of the French delegate] ventured that the little girl must be deeply upset that she would never see her father again; she answered, “Oh! Sir, I am very glad, because he is free now.” (p. 68)

Undoubtedly, a children’s text cannot account for all relevant historical facts. However, this particular sentiment offers important insight into what Hercules taught his daughters about slavery. It also reminds the reader that no matter how many privileges an enslaved individual might be allowed that near-freedom is in no way comparable to being free.

**Ignoring White Supremacy**

Throughout *A Birthday Cake for George Washington*, the violence of slavery is notably ignored or minimized. Also ignored are the roles of President Washington and Lady Washington in contributing to that violence. This is most apparent in the author’s approach to the major conflict of the text. Any chef would likely feel pressure if asked to prepare a meal in absence of crucial ingredients. However, this pressure is undoubtedly different in nature for a free chef than for an enslaved chef. Given what we know about the institution of slavery and of Hercules’ biography, it is not unreasonable that Hercules might have feared for his safety, familial stability, and social status if Washington’s birthday menu failed to meet guests’ expectations. Hercules and Delia never voice these concerns, however. Though elements of Hercules’ biography are shared in an author’s note at the end of the text, the narrative itself could lead readers to believe that Hercules was somehow exempt from the often dire consequence of perceived underperformance. By ignoring these pressures and presenting Hercules’ experiences as if his primary concern were pleasing Washington for vocational reasons, an important element of Hercules’ and Delia’s daily experiences is also ignored.

**Implications for Practice**

We recognize that no curricular moment occurs in isolation. Students’ schooling experiences are filled with practices, policies, and artifacts that work together to communicate messages about history and human rights. In a school environment where diverse, accurate, and complex representations of slavery are presented to students, the slavery math problem noted above and *A Birthday Cake for George Washington* might not have caused significant controversy. However, the literature on the subject, our past experiences as teachers, and our current work as teacher educators suggest that such school environments are few and far between. It might seem that we selected exemplar instances to make our case for...
using educative-psychic violence to evaluate lessons about slavery; however, examples of other troubling provocative moments abound. We were compelled by a national series of events that raise concerns about how well teachers are prepared to grapple with educative-psychic violence in relation to lessons about slavery. These include two Black female students being tied under a desk to resemble the Middle passage, slave auction activities where students pretended to be the slaves and potential buyers, journal and video activities where students had to keep track of their experiences as slaves, a poster assignment for runaway slaves where students acted as slave owners trying to find runaway slaves, slavery recess games, and activities calling for students to create fun songs about slavery.

We also recognize that hindsight is 20/20! The teachers who led the lessons and activities described above might have modified them if given the opportunity to engage the perspectives of their colleagues, communities, and education researchers. Most of us do not teach in a context that provides easy access to these perspectives, however. This is what motivated us to frame educative-psychic violence as a tool for rethinking curricular decision-making in relation to slavery and other race related issues. Though continued reading, enhanced resources, professional development, and mentorship are crucial elements of improving how we teach about slavery, individual teachers can use the principles of educative-psychic violence to critically evaluate and improve their practice.

Slavery remains a complicated historical symbol for many. As curriculum gatekeepers, many social studies educators have attempted to move past the limitation of the K-12 slavery curriculum and provide innovative ways to teach the topic in a critical fashion. For example, the use of primary sources and the historical inquiry approach to slavery is seen as a way to help students critically engage various voices and multiple perspectives, including enslaved persons (Malczewski, 2010). Through a program called WATCH (Workshop for Actively Thinking Computationally and Historically), King, McCune, and Vargas (2014) developed an innovative pedagogical approach to combine learning about the enslaved experience on southern plantations and having students take that knowledge and develop mobile applications based on their interpretations. In addition, Joseph McGill’s Slave Dwelling Project is an effort at galvanizing persons, including school aged children to sleep or spend considerable amounts of time in neglected enslaved quarters to not only situate students within geographic understandings of slavery but provide them with skills for advocating for the historical preservation of said dwelling and the democratic process (Slave Dwelling Project, 2016). Other slavery pedagogical approaches of note include slavery site field trips, the use of drama instruction, museum pedagogy, and Socratic teaching (Blum, 2012; Husband, 2014; Singer, 2008; Woodson, in press).
After utilizing educative-psychic violence as a tool in our own practice and helping our students do the same, these guiding questions on depth, diversity, and complexity of representation have emerged:

1) Do I offer diverse cultural perspectives that students can use to make sense of slavery and its legacy? Do I provide connection between various slavery societies around the globe? Do I examine northern transgressions as explicit in the system of slavery or do I blame the institution of slavery on the southern region?

2) Do I represent African and African descended people in a variety of social positions? Do I portray African and African descended people demonstrating agency in response to oppressive conditions? When I present agency, do I only represent physical agency such as slave revolts or do I also represent African American’s critical intellectual agency as well (King, 2014)?

3) Do I provide diverse representations of African and African descended people, and the different ways that they think, behave, and act? In other words, do I question who is left out in my teaching. Do I consider African American’s gender, age, class, sexuality, and disability in my teaching? Do I provide primary sources to give voice to the diversity of African American condition during slavery?

4) Do I offer simplistic or superficial Non-White person’s history that relegates them to exceptional representatives of the race and within certain fixed historical time periods. Do I offer students to see these historical characters as human, who were complex and multidimensional?

5) Do I expose White supremacy within the institution of slavery? Do I simply introduce the oppressed without providing context of who the oppressor is?

6) Do I provide a connection with slavery (history) to the present? Do I help students understand the afterlife of slavery (Hartman, 2007), “the skewed life chances, limited access to health, and education, premature death, incarceration, and impoverishment” (p.6) that continued and was sustained as a result of the institution of slavery and other racist policy implications throughout history?

In this article, we interpreted two provocative moments using educative-psychic violence as a tool to identify how imprecision and inaccuracy can pose a threat to students’ understanding of slavery, and ultimately, their historical position in relation to slavery. To conclude, we return to our opening case study, which recounted Bill O’Reilly’s response to First Lady Michelle Obama’s claim that she lived in a house “built by slaves”. What O’Reilly said was accurate – the enslaved owned by the contractors for the original White House were quite likely among the
best fed and housed. Similarly, the events invoked in the slavery math problem were portrayed accurately: enslaved Black people worked in fields picking cotton, there was a man named Frederick Douglass, and racial violence occurred. Educative-psychic violence pushes us to think beyond the factual basis of a particular lesson’s portrayal of slavery. It encourages us to strive for pedagogical approaches that challenge objectifying, reductive, and dehumanizing narratives about the enslaved to understand Black people as historical as well as contemporary human beings.

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In the eye of the beholder: Student assessments of “heroes” and historical thinking with local history research projects*1

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Abstract

Conceptions of who is considered a “hero” impacts how students engage in historical thinking. A case study was conducted in order to gain insights about how a local history research project impacts student perspectives about who is considered a “hero” in historical narratives. Key findings show using primary documents, secondary sources, and reflective writing prompts can promote critical thinking skills about the inclusion and portrayal of “heroes” in secondary and undergraduate history courses.

Introduction

Thomas Carlyle (1840) stated, “The history of the world is but the biography of great men.” There have been struggles over who is considered a “hero” in United States history. Traditionally, the mainstream narratives of United States history have focused on white, male, Eurocentric “heroes” in United States history (Loewen, 1995; Kincheloe, 2001). These narratives are problematic, as many cumbersome textbooks present underrepresented groups, such as racial and ethnic minorities and women, as “add-ons” in order to pass a test or become “culturally literate” (Loewen, 1995; Kincheloe, 2001; Clarke & Lee, 2004). As a result, many students may have “a ubiquitous lack of awareness of how ordinary citizens and minority groups” made contributions to local and national history (Perrotta & Bohan, 2013, p. 14).

Conceptions of who is considered a “hero” impacts how students engage in historical thinking. Historical thinking tends to be an “unnatural” act for students due to sparse knowledge of historical content, as well as traditional methods of teaching history through teacher-centered pedagogies (VanSledright, Kelly, Meuwissen, 2006; Wineburg, 2001). According to Wineburg and Monte Sano (2008), children and adults’ ideas about “heroes” are impacted by “traditional canon” of a “pantheon of heroes” as presented in mainstream textbooks, as well as

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1 This article was accepted under the editorship of Dr. Brandon Butler.
“popular consciousness,” of famous and underrepresented historical figures (p. 1188). Therefore, the purpose of this research is to examine whether a local history research project conducted in two undergraduate Survey of United States History classes impacts students’ historical thinking, as well as attitudes and efficacy towards who is considered a “hero” in United States history.

Local History Defined

There are several definitions of local history. I define local histories as micro-studies of historical problems, struggles, and achievements of individuals or groups in a community in context of broader historical factors. A community can be comprised of neighborhoods, regions, counties or states that impact the development of individuals, organizations, and societies. My definition is grounded in the scholarship of American and British researchers. Brown and Woodcock (2009) state that local history “enquiry that pupils engage with [has]…immediate relevance to their own lives, their own families, their own street, and their own communities…and informs pupils’ own identity” (p. 134). Moreover, Stephens (1977) contends that teaching local history attempts to “embrace the spatial nearness of the child’s environment” by serving as “an ancillary to the teaching of general history” (p. 3, 7).

Kincheloe’s definition of local history is grounded in the rejection of Cartesian teaching in which certain “facts,” often from a Eurocentric perspective, are taught through lecture, rote memorization, and recitation. Kincheloe (2001) presents teaching local history curricula as being rooted in historiography. Historians commonly refer to historiography as “the study of the study of history,” which “forces one to compare perspectives taken by different historians” (p. 593). When teaching a local history curriculum in the context of historiography, students are encouraged to use historical methods to reflect and re-conceptualize past people and events and “locate [their] own place in the stream of time and solidify [their] identity in the present” (Wineberg, 2001, p. 5). Therefore, students who conduct this type of research engage in deep historical thinking with regard to analyzing trends in historiography and using community resources to construct local history investigations connected to general historical topics.

Considerations for Developing a Local History Research Project

There are several factors instructors must take into considerations with regard to developing and teaching a local history research project. Although local history tends to be treated as supplemental to elementary and secondary state curricular and content standards, local history “provides especially fertile ground for improving students’ ability to contextualize their historical thinking” (Clarke &
Lee, 2004, p. 84). Key elements of historical thinking include engagement in source analysis, formulation of theses, deliberation of issues, and making connections to prior knowledge and life experiences. Therefore, history and social studies teachers must consider how a local history research project aligns with standards, incorporates community resources, and includes underrepresented historical figures and events in historical narratives in order to engage students in active historical thinking.

**Communities as Sources**

Communities are the foundational source to build and implement a local history research project. Communities are important to local history research because they impact how historical objectivities are decided upon through making “agreement[s] on values, goals, and perceptions of reality” (Nelson, 1991, p. 332). Moreover, Marino (2012) states that communities serve as “historical documents to be read and interpreted” (p. 107). Using community resources such as streets, parks, buildings and tombstones, as well as agencies such as schools, libraries, parks, local businesses, law enforcement, museums and residents can aid in “generat[ing] empathy and spark[ing] student interest” in historical thinking and understanding (Marino, 2012, pp. 107-108).

Instructors must be discriminate with regard to choosing appropriate primary and secondary sources for a local history project. The sources chosen must have value to students and not be presented as random extras to the curriculum. A local history project must be presented in a relevant manner for students, not just a body of empirical facts that is “significant at best only to the teacher” (Stephens, 1977, p. 17). Because children are novice historians, teachers must use a “varied teaching structure” in order to facilitate “explanation and instruction” that creates relevancy between students’ prior knowledge to new content learned that connects to local history and general United States history (Stephens, 1977; VanSledright et al., 2006).

Farris (2015) suggests that early-adolescent and middle school students engage in local history research by examining socio-economic and political relationships through analysis of local architecture, oral histories, newspaper articles, and photographs (pp. 37-38). For instance, Nix and Bohan (2013) highlight how to use written correspondence between *Gone with the Wind* author Margaret Mitchell and Morehouse College President Benjamin E. Mays in Atlanta during the 1940s for a middle school social studies local history investigation. Although Mitchell “did not have a favorable image among African Americans” due to her “glorification of slavery” in her novel, she worked closely with Mays and other prominent leaders in community affairs affecting African Americans, particularly healthcare, in Atlanta (Nix & Bohan, 2013, p. 128). Morehouse
College is still a prominent historically black college in Atlanta, and the Margaret Mitchell House is part of the Atlanta History Center that is open for research and tourist visits in Midtown Atlanta. The example of the Mitchell-Mays relationship is an example of how a local history investigation can highlight how “individuals…reached across a line of hatred and mistrust to bridge a gap between black and white citizens” (Nix & Bohan, 2013, p. 131).

Official versus Unofficial Histories

Local history research projects can raise and challenge “the question of narrative” (Green & Troupe, 1999) with regard to which histories are considered the “official” narrative of a society. Often, content that is considered “official” United States history emphasize the “historical significance…[of] white men and their decisions and activities” (Seixas, 1997, p. 22). However, over one-third of Americans “do not trace their origins to Europe” (Takaki, 1993, p. 2). As a result, the growing number of ethnic minorities in the United States since the late 20th century “is altering the way we think of ourselves;” hence altering who is considered significant historical “heroes” in the social studies curriculum and mainstream United States history narratives (Takaki, 1993, p. 3).

Recent revisions to the Advanced Placement United States History (APUSH) exam have highlighted controversies over what content is considered “official” United States history. The College Board, which designs the Advanced Placement exams, announced that the focus of AP exams “would decrease the breadth of facts covered in order to spend more time on developing critical thinking skills” (Herscher, 2013). Legislatures in states such as Colorado, Texas, Oklahoma and Georgia are deliberating banning APUSH due to the exam’s perceived emphasis on negative aspects of American history (Howard, 2015).

Proponents of APUSH argue that the exam promotes critical and historical thinking. The AHA (2014) issued a statement in support of the revised APUSH, stating that it “will help teachers achieve these goals without introducing partisanship, dictating content, or ignoring important aspects of US history.” American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten (2015) states that supporters of a “conservative ideology” of United States history would prefer that “people would rather forget the lessons from events like American slavery.” The controversies over APUSH indicate how determining official knowledge in the social studies curriculum depends upon “the group that wins the battle over definitions [and] gains power for itself and silences the voices of others” (Smith, Miller-Kahn, Heinecke, & Jarvis, 2004, p. 210). In other words, those in positions of power in certain communities have great input with regard to who and what is considered the facts and “correct” history students should learn.
Heroes and Heroification

Local history research projects that promote student analysis of official and “vernacular,” or “unofficial,” histories of underrepresented groups and individuals can counter heroification myths often depicted in many social studies and history curricula (Tyson, 2006). According to Loewen (1995), “heroification” myths have been used to “excuse questionable actions and policies” of American “heroes,” insisting that their “noble intentions” were for the greater good of “the people” (p. 12). Teaching certain myths, such as that Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white man because she was tired, can be tools to unite and rally citizens around a common national heritage. Wineburg and Monte Sano (2008) assert that “myths fill the national consciousness the way excited gas molecules fill a vacuum” (p. 1202). Rosa Parks was in fact an active member of the NAACP who was chosen to participate in civil disobedience to protest segregation in Montgomery (Theoharis, 2013). The problem with myths is that they can sanitize, romanticize and distort the events and contributions of people and groups throughout history.

Although the story of Rosa Parks is common in the lexicon of the mid-20th century Civil Rights Movement, there were other ordinary citizens who engaged in acts of protest to address inequalities in their communities throughout United States history. For example, Elizabeth Jennings was an African-American schoolteacher who was removed from a streetcar in New York City in 1854 due to her race. Her father, who was a prominent abolitionist, and other activists in the free community hired attorney Chester A. Arthur to sue the Third Avenue Railway Company in New York Supreme Court for violations of common carrier laws. The judge instructed the jury to find in Jennings’ favor. Despite her favorable verdict, her actions, as well as the role of slavery and racial segregation in Antebellum New York, is an underrepresented aspect of United States history (Perrotta & Bohan, 2013). Jennings’ moniker as a “nineteenth-century Rosa Parks” (Singer, 2005) in the growing scholarship of her life and resistance still places her and countless others who made significant contributions to their communities and country on the fringes of mainstream narratives of “heroes” and famous people in United States history.

Conceptions of myths with regard to who is regarded a hero in United States history are fluid. Wineburg and Monte Sano’s (2008) research found that individuals and groups who are considered historical heroes depend upon generational factors. These factors include what mainstream narratives are at a particular time, the latest historiographies, and collective memory. For example, the popular narrative of the “discovery” of America involves crediting Christopher Columbus for first encountering the native peoples of Hispaniola in 1492. For instance, my third-grade school picture was taken at a New York City public
elementary school on the backdrop of a fifteenth-century ship to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Columbus’ arrival to the “New World.”

Figure 1. Researcher’s Third Grade School Photograph, 1992

The veracity of Columbus Day commemorations in public schools has changed since 1992. The Minneapolis city council designated the second Monday of October, which is the federal holiday Columbus Day, as “Indigenous People’s Day” in April 2014. The city council responded to protests by Native American activists who state Columbus’ discovery of America is “one of the first lies we’re told in public education” (Chappell, 2014). Fernández (2013) states, “the first encounters between Amerindians and Europeans…provide ample opportunities for creative and stimulating pedagogical approaches that go beyond stale memorization of dates, places, and names (p. 7). The growing celebration of “Indigenous People’s Day” in several cities and states highlights how the concept and definitions of local historical figures changes with the context of the times.

Active Citizenship, Political Engagement, and Democratic Enlightenment

Local history research projects have the potential for fostering active citizenship, political engagement, and democratic enlightenment in history and social studies classes. According to Parker (2001), political engagement “refers to the action or participatory domain of citizenship, from voting and contacting public officials to deliberating public problems, campaigning, and engaging in civil disobedience, boycotts, strikes, rebellions, and other forms of direct action.” Democratic enlightenment “refers to the moral-cognitive knowledge, norms, and commitments that shape this political engagement: knowledge of the ideals of democratic living, the commitment to freedom and justice, and so forth” (Parker, 2001).

An example of conducting local history to foster political engagement and democratic enlightenment are the actions of New York City teacher Miriam
Sicherman and her students. In 2007, they successfully petitioned the New York City Council to erect a street sign in honor of Elizabeth Jennings near the site of her streetcar ejection (Alexander, 2012; see Figure 2). According to Buras (2015), “any attempt...[to memorialize historically significant places] would be left to teachers, students, community members, and ancestors- a reminder of unequal dynamics of race and how they define struggles over urban space” (Buras, 2015, p. 1).

Figure 2. “Elizabeth Jennings Place.”

Photo Credit: Katherine A. Perrotta, March, 2013

Therefore, teachers who facilitate local history projects can engage students in historical thinking, as well as the democratic process, to recognize the contributions of citizens in the shaping of local communities and national history.

Methodology

Case study methodology was employed for this study. A case study involves “a detailed examination of one setting, or a single subject, a single depository of documents, or one particular event” to glean new understandings about real-world situations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2011, p. 59; Yin, 2012). I chose this research methodology in order to analyze how a local history research project impacted undergraduate students’ perspectives about who can be considered a “hero” in United States historical narratives.

Study Participants

This project was assigned to two three-credit undergraduate United States history classes at a two-year college located in a metropolitan region of the Southeast. One class focused on early United States history from the colonial period to the Civil War. The other participating class was a course on United States history since the Civil War. The classes were comprised of traditional students who were recent high school graduates, dual-enrolled students who were in high school...
receiving college credits, and non-traditional students who returned to college after several years in the workforce (Munro, 2011). Fifty-seven students participated in this study. I served as the instructor of the participating classes in this study.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

I engaged in several data collection and analysis procedures for this study. I collected students’ research abstracts and final drafts as evidence of student perspectives on “heroes” from conducting local history research. Additionally, I kept a field journal in which I took jot notes from student presentations about their projects. I asked questions to clarify points about their research, and documented student insights about their peers’ work. Student participation in this study was voluntary and anonymous.

Upon collecting the projects and observational notes, I categorized the data according to recurring themes that emerged in students’ writing samples. These themes were based on how students used primary and secondary sources to respond to the questions in Appendix A and Steps 3 and 4 in the Project Design and Procedures section of this study. Students’ grades on this project were also used as a measurement to determine whether a local history research project impacted their perspectives of which individuals could be considered “heroes” in United States history.

**Project Design and Procedures**

Marino’s (2012) case study of local history and urban renewal research in New York City was used as a model for this project. Marino (2012) states local history projects “can help students understand that history is not merely a series of remote events read in textbooks. Rather, it is something that has shaped their communities and lives in tangible ways” (p. 113). In order to achieve these goals, I designed a four-step process for implementing the local history research project with the study participants.

**Step 1: Choosing a Local History Research Topic**

In order to prepare students to conduct the research project, I had to gauge students’ experiences and prior knowledge about local history. First, I asked students at the beginning of the semester to think about how they interacted with history on a daily basis. Among the responses students gave included street signs; the names of counties, cities, and towns; placards outside of buildings, and the names of local sport teams and mascots. (Instructor Field Notes, January 14, 2014).
Next, I provided students with a list of suggested local history research topics. The recommended topics for the early United States history course included figures from Ancient America, the American Revolution, Manifest Destiny, the Antebellum Period, and the Civil War. The suggested topics for the modern United States history course included people from the Reconstruction Era, Gilded Age and Progressive Era, the Roaring Twenties and Great Depression, the World Wars, the 20th century Civil Rights movements, and the post-Cold War and post-9/11 periods. Although the majority of students chose their local history figure from the suggested lists, some students chose topics that were not on the list and were approved by the instructor. The students investigated local historical figures associated with issues of citizenship, suffrage, lynching, civil rights, athletics, and entrepreneurship.

**Step 2: Abstracts and Working Annotated Bibliographies**

Once the students chose a local history figure, I assigned the second step of the project. Students wrote a 200-word abstract for instructor feedback. Students were required to discuss their thesis, explain the person’s historical significance to local and national history, whether this person is a “hero,” and what they expected to learn. Students also submitted a working annotated bibliography with primary and secondary sources. The sources that students were required to use included one scholarly journal article, a book other than the course textbook, and a primary source from a the digital archive of the state in which this local history project was implemented. Upon receiving instructor feedback, students were encouraged to synthesize their sources to discuss the historical significance and “hero” assessment of their local history figure.

**Step 3: Synthesizing Information and Writing the Paper**

After the students submitted their abstracts and bibliographies, the instructor provided critical thinking questions to guide students through using source evidence to support their theses. The critical thinking questions were as follows:

1. Who is the local history research about?
2. Why did you choose this person to research?
3. Where is this person from? Describe his/her early life.
4. What did this person do that is of historical significance?
5. What challenges did he/she face? How did he/she overcome these challenges?
6. When and why did this person rise to local historical prominence?
7. Are there any controversies over this person’s legacy? Explain.
8. How does this local history connect to topics in U.S. history?
9. What is a hero?
10. Who is considered a hero?
11. Is your person a hero? Why or why not?
12. Is it important to study or include "heroes" in history? Explain.

The students’ papers were expected to be at least four double-spaced pages that included a cover page; abstract; the body of the paper with a thesis statement, responses to the critical thinking questions with Chicago footnote citations, a conclusion; and a Chicago-formatted bibliography.

**Step 4: Presenting Research Findings**

The final step of the local history research project was student delivery of an in-class presentation. Students presented their research findings by organizing a presentation in groups arranged by the instructor. I created the groups by placing students who researched similar local history topics to present their findings to the class. Students were required to create a Power Point or Prezi presentation in which each group member presented relevant text and visuals pertaining to his/her local history research. Audience members were given rubrics to record information from the student presentations and to ask questions.

Marino’s (2012) research on local history in New York City and Spafford’s (2012) use of community resources as historical documents for interpretation in middle-school classes served as curricular models for the four-step local history project the researcher developed for her undergraduate history classes. For example, when the I took the group of students to a university archive, I pointed out several placards, monuments, and a 19th-century streetlamp with a cannon ball hole through the middle commemorating local Civil War history as they walked to our destination as seen in Figures 3 and 4:

**Figure 3. Civil War Placard**

![Civil War Placard](Photo Credit, Katherine Perrotta, April 2014)
Students remarked that they “couldn’t believe history [was] all around [them]” (Student Writing Samples, April 18, 2014). However, Loewen (1999) cautions teachers, students, researchers, and tourists to be wary of the accuracy of placards and other markers at historical sites, stating that overemphasis, omission, and misrepresentation of historical sites “almost always avoid negative or controversial facts…[that] might taint the heroes they commemorate, making them larger and less interesting than life” (p. 3). For example, Figure 3 indicates that the building that stands in the downtown of this metropolitan region was “destroyed” when “Federal troops” burned the city. The placard uses the word “Federal” instead of “Union” to describe the soldiers who burned the city. Moreover, the placard does not mention why the Union occupied and burned the city or the liberation of slaves during the Civil War. Although students were interested and engaged in examining local history in their city, “the thoughtful visitor can learn to read between the lines of historical markers…and deconstruct the imagery on historic monuments” (Loewen, 1999, p. 6), particularly with regard to the context in which historical sites and figures gained significance.

Additional Information

I arranged an optional research tutorial at the campus library for students. The librarians conducted the seminar on how to conduct primary and secondary source research using the digital databases, as well as citing sources in Chicago footnote format. Ten students from the participating courses attended the library tutorial. Moreover, I scheduled an optional visit to a four-year research university.
in a metropolitan region of the Southeast in order to show students how to conduct archival research for local history investigations. Twelve students attended the trip where archivists showed students the stacks, how to retrieve archival material on digital databases, and how primary source materials are preserved.

**Student Insights**

The participating students’ local history research and reflections (see Appendix A) provided insights about how a local history research project impacted historical thinking with regard to who is considered a “hero” in United States history.

**Defining a Hero**

The students identified several criteria for the definition of a hero. Among the criteria included someone who “helps others,” “stands up for what is right,” is “humble” and “admired for their courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities,” “displays courage,” and “does not have to be famous” (Instructor Field Notes, April 26, 2014; April 29, 2014). In essence, the students identified a hero as someone who performs good deeds to enact positive changes in society.

The students reflected on the importance of local history research on their communities. A student wrote that local histories are important “in order to preserve not only communities, but also the nation as a whole” by “understanding the sacrifices made for the greater good” (Student Writing Sample, April 26, 2014). Another student stated that the project “helped [him or her] be a lot more informed about the historical significance” of the state this project was conducted, particularly with regard to “discrimination, unfair trials, assumptions, and…civil rights” (Student Writing Sample, April 25, 2014). One student stated that this local history research project has caused him or her to “pay attention” to “names and places…as we drive around town” (Instructor Field Notes, May 1, 2014). This local history research project seems to have contributed to raising students’ historical consciousness to how and why the names of places were determined and how the present-day interacts with the past.

**Heroes We Never Heard Of**

Students were asked to reflect upon whether they heard of their local history figure before in previous studies of United States history in their research papers. Students in the early United States history class identified local figures they were familiar with who had parks, counties, and towns names after them. The students in the modern United States history course identified figures they were familiar
with from the names of schools, historical sites, and statues that are in the metropolitan area. Few students stated that they knew of these figures from reading primary and secondary sources in school.

Students discussed why they had never heard of their local figures before, or knew very little about them. One student acknowledged that the lack of primary sources and historical documents cause local history figures to become “just stories…and myths” (Instructor Field Notes, May 1, 2014). Another student attributed the unfamiliarity of local history to topics in general history to recent educational policies in public schools. He/she stated:

I am glad that through the higher education of college state some professors actually care about the unmentioned names throughout history. It is understandable that sure, in high school everything is on an extreme time crunch with the whole thing about make sure students have the necessary information for standardized testing, but once some students realized what they had missed, they would have wanted to have learned about them anyways. (Student Work Sample, April 29, 2014)

The sentiments expressed by this student reflect the concerns many scholars and educators have about the unintended consequences of policies such as No Child Left Behind on social studies and history instruction. According to Darling-Hammond (2010), the neglect of “untested subjects” has caused “nearly half of all elementary schools…[reducing] time for science, social studies, arts, music, and physical education in response to the emphasis on reading and mathematics tests under No Child Left Behind” (p. 71). Former Education Secretary Arne Duncan acknowledged that social studies teachers “live with the unintended consequences of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act every day” as the law “created flawed incentives for states and school districts to narrow their curricula…[which] leaves out core disciplines that are essential to a well-rounded curriculum, including social studies” (p. 124). As a result, there is a major concern that some college and university students lack literacy skills; such as source analysis, citing evidence to formulate thesis statements, and determining historical significance; that are crucial to engaging in historical thinking (Perrotta & Bohan, 2013).

**Disappointment in Flawed Individuals**

Because this project was conducted in the Southeast, some students chose white local history figures from the post-Reconstruction Era. The racial identity of these figures is important, as many of these figures students researched supported female suffrage, industry, and technological innovation after the Civil War, but also
were in favor of segregation and lynching. Some students expressed disappointment that they did not consider their local history figure a hero.

For example, a student in the modern United States history course who researched the first female Senator of this state where this project was conducted stated, “I admire her strength and intelligence, however, I don’t agree with some of her views, such as lynching and the sterilization of women who commit crimes” (Student Writing Sample, April 26, 2014). Two students who researched the case of a Jewish man who was lynched due to accusations of rape did not identify this man as a hero, but acknowledged how “this case is more of an example of the many problems…with our justice system” during a time when lynching was a common way to kill people” (Student Work Sample, April 29, 2014). Consequently, the students’ disappointment that their local history figures were flawed individuals may indicate the influence of myths and heroification on their learning about historical figures and “heroes” in grade school and undergraduate studies.

Interpretations of “Heroes”

Students’ perspectives about whether their local history figures were heroes varied. One student indicated, “The issue of considering someone a hero is very relative” (Student Work Sample, April 25, 2014). Another student noted that “it depends of [sic] the perspectives of the people to determine if someone is a hero or not” (Student Work Sample, April 29, 2014). The subjective nature of defining a hero was particularly evident with the case of a Confederate figure from the Civil War and Reconstruction that one student from the early and modern United States History classes, respectively, researched.

The student from the modern United States history course stated that he/she believed this person was a hero, though not because of his ideas on slavery but “simply his outlook on life” (Instructor Field Notes, April 25, 2014). This student seemed to be impressed about how this person was born poor, worked hard, and gained notoriety in the state and Confederate government. However, this student did not critically assess this figure’s affiliation with racism and slavery in the South. The student stated that the Confederate official “supported slavery and defended the Confederacy… but…considering the times [that] was acceptable back then.” (Student Work Sample, April 25, 2014). The student seemed to attempt to contextualize the times in which Confederate official lived in order to understand why he would be in favor of slavery when he faced hardships in his life.

The student who researched the same Confederate official from the early United States history course initially did not identify this figure as a hero in his/her abstract. However, when this student submitted his/her paper, he/she stated that this figure “might have been a slaveholder, but he was also a hero. He was a supporter of slavery based on his political and economic views. He did not harm
slaves, nor was unfair to them” (Student Work Sample, May 1, 2014). When I asked how and why this student changed his/her mind about assessing whether this figure was a hero, the student said that this person “stood up for what he believed” (Instructor Field Notes, May 1, 2014). This student was not alone with this sentiment, as several students believed that their local history figure as a “hero” because he or she stood up for something they believed in.

The students’ attitudes towards a hero standing up for a cause, good or bad, may indicate the influence of heroification on learning people supported bad things with noble intentions at particular times in history. The concern I had with these assessments was whether students condoned adverse behavior, such as slavery, or that students were trying to understand why certain sentiments, such as being pro-slavery or pro-segregation, were acceptable in the past. A focus group or follow-up interview to students’ insights would provide clearer explanation of how students determined their local history figure was a hero or not.

**Historical Context**

The students experienced difficulty with citing evidence from primary and secondary sources that situated their local history research topic in a context of United States history. One reason why some students might not have provided strong connections between the significance of their local history figure to United States history was due to the fact that several students were not native to the state in which this project was assigned or to the United States. One student stated, “everything I learned so far as local history was…new to me, as I spent the majority of my younger years focused on historical figures in [the Southwest]” (Instructor Field Notes, April 29, 2014). Another student noted that connecting the local history research to general topics in United States history was “difficult” because he or she was not born in the United States and “learn[ed] more about [her] native country” (Instructor Field Notes, April 26, 2014). I recommend incorporating, if necessary, comparative studies of local history to studies of other communities in the United States or other countries in order to assist non-native students’ historical contextualizations of a local history investigation.

**Measurement**

The students’ grades on their projects served as empirical data to measure whether the local history research project contributed to students’ historical thinking. The students’ grades on the local history research project were based upon three major criteria that were outlined in the instructor-created rubric (see Appendix B). The average grade on the assignment in the modern United States history course was a 74.95%. The average grade on the early United States history
course was 78.78%. Areas in which students seemed to struggle were errors in Chicago footnote citation, stating thesis statements, and effectively using evidence from primary and secondary sources to examine the significance of local history research data as connected to general themes in United States history.

I assigned several activities and assignments throughout the semester to support historical thinking and conducting local history research. I facilitated five online discussion boards in which students were required to use primary and secondary source evidence to explain how topics of study connected to their local history projects. The grades on the local history research projects suggest that the supporting activities did not have a major impact on students’ historical thinking and comprehension with regard to conducting local history research. Therefore, the researcher recommends incorporating more instructional materials about local history topics and research skills into classroom lessons, as well as collecting and grading a mandatory draft of papers, to support student development of historical thinking and research skills.

Conclusions

Local history research projects can provide students with the opportunity to engage in historical inquiry of who is considered “significant” and a “hero” in narratives of United States history. Local history research projects that focus on primary source investigation of “official” histories can promote historical thinking through analysis of the accomplishments and flaws of individuals who made an impact on their community and general United States history. Students who conduct local history research engage in identity-formation, critical thinking, historical literacy, and critique those who are considered “heroes” in history. Ultimately, students who conduct local history research may gain an overall appreciation of the importance of preserving the history of their community, “doing history” (Barton & Leavitt, 2004), and become active participants in this democratic society.

There were limitations to this work on designing and implementing a local history research project in undergraduate history courses. First, I did not disaggregate the data with regard to students’ demographic information. Empirical studies of the impact of how a local history research project impacts students’ attitudes toward who is considered a historical “hero” must consider students’ social identities, which includes race, gender, and religious affiliation (Epstein & Shiller, 2005). A survey with a Likert scale for student demographic information and feedback on the impact of the local history research project on assessment of heroes would be an effective instrument to ascertain whether local history research impacts different undergraduate students’ historical thinking. Second, although this research was implemented in undergraduate history classes, the structure of the
project can be adaptable for elementary and secondary social studies students. The National Council for Social Studies College, Career, and Civics C3 Framework Inquiry Arc (2013) highlights how questioning, evaluating sources, applying interdisciplinary skills, and creating conclusions to take informed action can be related to local history research in all levels of social studies and historical inquiry (p. 17). In alignment with state content and curricular standards, a local history research project, such as the one I implemented this study, could be adapted to address the interdisciplinary nature of historical and social studies research through geographic analysis and civic engagement in local history investigation.

References


Appendix A

Local History Research Project Reflection

Directions: You can include these responses in your paper, or answer these questions and print to turn in with your paper.

1. Who do you consider heroes in US history?
2. What do you think is the criteria for determining who’s a hero in US history?
3. Is everyone you learn about in history a hero? Why or why not?
4. Why do you think some people are included in mainstream narratives and others are not?
5. Who did you research for this project? Why?
6. What was this person’s significance to local history?
7. What was this person’s significance to US history?
8. What did you learn about local history from this research project?
9. What did you learn about US history from this research project?
10. What did you learn about whom or what makes a “hero” in history?

Additional Comments/Feedback:
## Grading Rubric: Local History Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Indicators</th>
<th>Cover Page and Abstract</th>
<th>Paper Format &amp; Quality</th>
<th>Chicago Style-Bibliography and Footnotes</th>
<th>Presentation and Public Speaking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A: 90-100 points, Excellent</strong></td>
<td>All elements present including original title, relevant picture, name, course and section #, due date, and 100-word abstract</td>
<td>Adheres to proper grammar/spelling; proper essay format answering essential questions with introduction, body paragraphs, conclusion; proper footnotes in Chicago format; clearly identifies and explains thesis statement with various primary and secondary sources, at least 5 pages</td>
<td>Properly cited footnotes in Chicago style of all direct quotes and paraphrased materials in written responses; bibliography is in alphabetical order, includes correct annotations, and is in proper Chicago style</td>
<td>Usage of several visuals and multimedia with presentation; makes eye contact, excellent articulation, clear delegation of group speaking and answering questions; creative and informative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B: 80-89 points, Very Good</strong></td>
<td>Missing 1 item from above from cover page; includes 100-word abstract</td>
<td>Minor errors in grammar/spelling; proper essay format; answering essential questions; thesis statement needs more clarification and/or primary and secondary sources, at least 5 pages</td>
<td>Cited footnotes and bibliography in Chicago format with few minor errors with annotations or format style</td>
<td>Adequate usage of visuals and multimedia sources in presentation, makes eye contact, good articulation and delegation of group speaking and answering questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Points Range</td>
<td>Comments</td>
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<td>Several errors in footnote format, grammar/spelling; essay format has some errors or does not clearly answer essential questions; thesis statement lacks clarification and/or primary and secondary sources, at least 4-5 pages</td>
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<td>Cited footnotes and bibliography in Chicago format with several errors with annotations or format style</td>
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<td>Some usage of visuals and multimedia with text in presentation, poor eye contact, unclear articulation, unclear delegation of group speaking and answering questions</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>60-69</td>
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<td>Many errors in footnote citations, annotations and/or style of bibliography</td>
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<td>Little usage of some visuals or multimedia in presentation, poor eye contact, unclear articulation, unclear delegation of group speaking and answering questions; unprepared</td>
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<td>F</td>
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<td>Does not follow directions and/or is incomplete</td>
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<td>Many errors in footnote citations, annotations and/or style of bibliography citation or citations are completely missing=plagiarism</td>
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<td>Totally unprepared, lacking of visuals and multimedia with presentation; lacking in group responsibilities, unable or unprepared to answer questions; incomplete or not done</td>
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About the Author

Katherine Assante Perrotta is a part-time history instructor at Kennesaw State University. She received her Ph.D. in Teaching and Learning with a concentration in Social Studies Education from Georgia State University. She can be reached at Kperrot1@kennesaw.edu.
Technology for Its Own Sake: Teachers’ Purpose and Practice with Desktop Documentary Making

James E. Schul
Winona State University

Abstract

This study explored how a group of pre-service and in-service middle and secondary social studies teachers, who together participated in a professional development workshop, planned to integrate desktop documentary making into their own classroom once it was introduced to them as an instructional tool. The results from this study reveal that the teachers differed in how they would integrate desktop documentary making and that these differences were linked to their experience level in the teaching profession. The results also revealed that many of the history teachers would assign documentary making as a means to provide students with a technological experience rather than enhancing students’ encounters with the past. Implications of these results are discussed in this paper.

History teachers’ use of desktop documentary making (DDM) as a learning tool continues to increase (Fehn & Schul, 2011). As digital software, such as Moviemaker and iMovie, became more commonplace in American culture, middle and secondary teachers can easily position their students to create and share historical documentaries. As its use has been on the rise, research on DDM in history classrooms also continues to grow. Research on the practices of students as they compose historical documentaries reveals that students craft historical narratives using primary and secondary sources in a similar fashion as with writing histories (Coventry, et al., 2006; Fehn, 2011; Schul, 2012a; Swan, Hofer, & Swan,

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2 For further understanding of desktop documentary making (i.e., what it is and how to do it in a history classroom), please refer to: Schul, J. E. (2014). Film pedagogy in the history classroom: Desktop documentary-making skills for history teachers and students. The Social Studies, 105(1), 15-22.
However, DDM also positions students to craft histories that use practices closely associated with filmmaking, such as emotional evokement, as a means to deliver meaningful narratives to their classmates who later view the documentaries in class (Schul, 2014a; Schul, 2014b). Alongside understanding students’ practices during DDM, research on teachers’ practices with assigning DDM also continues to emerge. For instance, research suggests that technological instruction by teachers who assign DDM should occur in multiple stages in order to foster successful documentary making projects for students (Hofer & Owings-Swan, 2005). Recent research (e.g., Schul 2012b) also reveals that history teachers experienced with integrating DDM into their classroom actually differ in their purposes and approaches with why and how they include DDM into their curricula and may selectively appropriate (Fehn & Schul, 2014) the tool to fit their pedagogical purposes. However, the research on DDM in history classrooms has yet to examine multiple teachers’ approaches to integrating DDM into their curricula. Such investigations would move the body of research on DDM closer toward understanding why and how teachers are integrating it into their classrooms. This study intends to shed some light on how some experienced and pre-service history teachers foresee DDM fitting into their particular curricula by reporting on the findings that emerged from a questionnaire posed to participants in a history teaching and learning workshop funded by the Library of Congress’ Teaching with Primary Sources program. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to investigate why and how the participants of the workshop (teachers and pre-service teachers) may integrate DDM into their own classroom curricula.

### Theoretical Framework

Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) (Koehler & Mishra, 2008; Mishra & Koehler, 2006; Niess, 2011) was used as a framework in this study to analyze the participants’ instructional rationales and practices in relation to DDM. TPACK is a modern framework based largely on Shulman’s (1986) conception of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) that asserts that teachers transform content through a unique pedagogical lens that constitutes the professional knowledge of the teacher. Recognizing that technological introduction profoundly shifted both knowledge-generating and pedagogical practice, Mishra and Koehler (2006) formulated TPACK, based on Shulman’s earlier PCK formulation, as a workable framework to study how technology affected teachers’ knowledge-generating and pedagogical practices.

History teachers’ pedagogical practices are influenced by historical inquiry. Recent research on history education (e.g., Barton & Levstik, 2004; Seixas, 1993; VanSledright, 2002; Yeager & Davis, 1996; and Wineburg, 2001) focuses upon a student’s ability to scrutinize and interpret primary and secondary sources in an
attempt to either contest or validate common historical interpretation. The teacher’s role in historical inquiry, according to Seixas (1993), is to serve as an arbiter between the discourse community of professional historians and the discourse community of secondary school students where the teacher transforms the content for the students while also positioning them to create histories of their own using primary and secondary sources from the past. The historian Tom Holt (1990) emphasized the necessity of empowering students of history to compose their own narratives:

By learning to construct their own narratives, students will learn to critique others’ narratives. History, then, becomes an ongoing conversation and debate rather than a compilation of “facts” and dates, a closed catechism, or a set of questions already answered. There is within it a place to invent. (p. 16)

Holt’s conception of history as a process of inquiry is a personification of what scholars Michael Coventry, Peter Felton, David Jaffee, Cecilia O’Leary, and Tracey Weis (2006) call the “pedagogical turn” in history instruction. They also assert that imagery and digital video have further enhanced history instruction by creating a “pictorial turn” and later a “digital turn” that allows students to extend their historical discourse beyond the use of prose. At the front and center of this “digital turn” is the advent of desktop documentary making. Since DDM enables students to compose digital narratives, it is a technology that many history teachers find to be useful in nurturing historical inquiry among their students by engaging them in the analysis, interpretation, and synthesis of primary visual and written sources (Fehn & Schul, 2011).

In addition to the ability to broadly analyze teacher’s PCK and TPACK when assigning a DDM project, a feature of TPACK that was particularly helpful in this study is its flexibility to interpret multiple components of teacher knowledge (See Figure 1).
For instance, TPACK enables study of a teacher’s pedagogical knowledge (PK), which entails all forms of teaching, particularly concerned with “knowledge and the processes and practices or methods of teaching and learning” (Mishra & Koehler, 2006, p. 1026). In light of history education, PK mostly refers to the skills related with historical thinking, namely analysis and interpretation of primary sources. TPACK also allows for an analysis of a teacher’s technological knowledge (TK), which includes a teacher’s knowledge about and ability to use “standard technologies, such as books, chalk, and blackboard, and more advanced technologies, such as the Internet and digital video” (Mishra & Koehler, 2006, p. 1027). A teacher’s technological content knowledge (TCK), or how a teacher knows the manner in which the subject matter might be changed by students’ application of technology to content, can also be analyzed using the TPACK model. So too can the teacher’s technological pedagogical knowledge (TPK) be understood, which includes a teacher’s knowledge of the potentiality and problems
which may arise when integrating the technologies into classroom instruction (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). For instance, an appealing feature about DDM is that, in contrast to conventional academic written historical research usually assigned in history courses, students who create desktop documentaries use means that are already interesting to them. Teachers generally find that their students thoroughly enjoy documentary making and this may be due to the fact that they already possess an endearment to movies (Fehn, Johnson, & Smith, 2010). While students are having fun composing their documentaries, they are also creating serious history (Fehn, 2011). Desktop documentary making, for example, requires students to select images and audio and fit them together to tell a story about the past much like what professional historians practice with written documents. It is also common for individuals who compose desktop documentaries to revisit sources on their storyboard as they compose their historical narrative. This process of revisiting sources is known as recursive iteration (O’Leary, 2006) and it correlates with an individual’s desire to provide an accurate description of the past as well as tell a story that is attractive to the viewing audience. Theoretically, DDM is well suited to demonstrate how digital technology may enable teachers to engage their students in such practices of historical inquiry. This study sought to determine how, some teachers, on a practical level, aim to actually employ DDM in their classrooms.

**Data Collection and Methods**

This study took place in the Fall of 2011 in a professional development workshop entitled “Unleashing Alternative Representations of the Past into Middle and Secondary History Classrooms.” This workshop was funded by a grant award from the Library of Congress’ Teaching with Primary Sources Midwest Region program. Seven (7) middle and secondary teachers and twelve (12) middle and secondary teacher candidates participated in the workshops that focused on the use of images, political cartoons, and sound recordings housed in the Library of Congress’ Teaching with Primary Sources website. The seven teachers were from a rural-suburban public high school in the American Midwest that will be called Landmark to protect anonymity. These teachers consisted of three high school social studies teachers, one being female and the other two being male, and four middle school social studies teachers, all of whom were male. Each teacher was Caucasian with a minimum of five years of teaching experience at Landmark. The high school resides in a small local school district with primarily Caucasian students from a mostly lower to middle class background. As a result of state funding, the high school is supplied with technological resources such as Smartboards® in each classroom, each teacher is provided a laptop computer, and students have access to several computer labs and there are a few instances where
laptop computers for students are available in classrooms. The twelve secondary candidates were enrolled in a private comprehensive university in the American Midwest nearby Landmark, and were enrolled in a social studies methods course where they learned about desktop documentary making and were required in the course to create a historical documentary and reflect on how they foresee integrating desktop documentary making into their own pedagogical repertoire.

The workshop met on three separate days to focus on the integration of particular alternative historical sources (i.e., non-written sources such as images or sound recordings) into history instruction. These alternative (other than written prose) sources were the feature of the first two workshop days. In the third and final day of the workshop, participants were introduced to DDM as a TPACK teaching tool that can be a technology (T) that transforms the process of history teaching and learning (PCK). While they were not positioned to actually create a desktop documentary, this researcher (who served as the facilitator of the workshop) did display several documentaries to the participants and explained the process of making a historical documentary. Once I familiarized the participants with DDM, I provided a questionnaire provided (See Appendix) that asked each participant the following two questions: (1) In this section of the workshop, declare your purpose for integrating desktop documentary making into your classroom. In other words, what do you want your students to get from the experience? (2) How do you foresee yourself integrating desktop documentary making into your classroom? Please provide a narrative that describes how you foresee desktop documentary making “fitting” into your class curriculum (i.e., how often and at what time(s) in the school year. The questionnaire was the primary data source for this study and was distributed to participants after this researcher gained IRB clearance to do so. The participants were free to declare that they had no purpose with integrating DDM into their own classroom and the questionnaire results did show that some participants were more willing to use DDM than others.

I was interested in trends across the participants’ purpose and intentions regarding the role that DDM may play in their particular history classroom. While this study possessed features of a case study approach since I wanted to make a judgment concerning each participant, as well as across the participants, it was not in a bounded setting. Thus, defining it as “basic qualitative research” (Merriam, 2009) is more appropriate. Data were analyzed to shed light on the following two research questions: What were participants’ purposes with integrating DDM into their classroom? How did the participants plan to integrate DDM into their classroom? These research questions were used as a means to garner an understanding of the participants’ TPACK as it related with DDM in their particular history classrooms. The analytical procedures of this study consisted of analysis, synthesis, and illumination (Shank, 2002). Analysis required the dissection of data into manageable forms for the sake of interpretation and understanding (LeCompte
This involved coding the questionnaire results into various themes based on the nature of the participants’ responses. For instance, if a teacher shared that they sought to use DDM for the purpose of “doing something different”, this comment was categorized under “differentiating instruction.” Synthesis required a reassembly of the data so that it “takes on a more anecdotal, more personalized, more interpretive character” (Shank, 2002, p. 138). Illumination consists of finding emergent patterns and trends that cut across data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This process was conducted through organizing the data onto Tables (see Tables 1 and 2) where the data could be categorized by the trends within it.

There are several limitations to this study. First and foremost, this study includes a very small sample size of participants. As a result of this sample size, the results of the study cannot be generalized to other settings. However, the intent of this study was more qualitative in nature as it sought to garner a more complex, detailed understanding of an issue, namely why some teachers may employ DDM into their classroom repertoire and how prevalent of a role would it play in their curriculum? This more closely fits Creswell’s (2007) description of a qualitative research study as intending to “inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 37) than might a larger quantitative study. In sum, generalizability was not the aim whereas a further understanding of the issue was. A second limitation is that the study was unconventional in its design as the questionnaire’s questions were open-ended, leading to the research results relying heavily upon the researcher’s inferences of the participants’ responses. However, the inferences were grounded in conceptual literature rather than the sole personal inclination of the researcher. The questionnaire was used in the design of the study for convenience since this researcher also served as the facilitator of the workshop. Future research on history teacher’s employment of DDM should involve interviews of the participants as a means to garner more complete and clear results.

Results and Discussion

Two themes emerged from this study: (a) teachers intended to use DDM for multiple reasons, but most cited technology integration as a primary reason; (b) pre-service teachers were more likely to consider integrating DDM multiple times in their courses than experienced teachers. This section elaborates on these findings as they address this study’s research questions. These findings are explained in light of their connections to the various features of the TPACK framework employed in this study.

The first research question asked: What were participants’ purposes with integrating DDM into their classroom? The participants’ five most cited reasons for
integrating DDM were: (1) to teach with technology; (2) as a summative assessment of learning; (3) to engage in active learning; (4) to foster collaborative learning; and (5) to differentiate instruction. It should be noted that teachers were allowed to provide multiple reasons on the questionnaire. Refer to Table 1 for a complete listing of participants’ reasons for integrating DDM. In this section, I report on the participants’ most cited reasons for integrating DDM by discussing the possibilities surrounding why teachers may choose to assign DDM projects for these particular reasons. Inferences will be drawn from these findings in relation to the literature on technology education and historical thinking. Since no known research exists on teachers’ use of DDM, the findings from this study may begin to uncover how teachers are using DDM once they are first introduced to it as a teaching tool. In so doing, light will be shed on the participants’ TPACK and it is my hope that teachers and teacher educators might better understand the various reasons that a teacher may, and perhaps should, integrate DDM as a result of the interpretation of these findings.

Table 1. Participants’ Reasons for Integrating DDM.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for Using DDM (most participants had multiple reasons)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-Service Teachers (N=12)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Active Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop Research Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaborative Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Differentiate Instruction</td>
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<td>Novelty</td>
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<td>Creative Expression</td>
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<td>Media Literacy</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Analysis and Synthesis</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of Learning</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Historical Understanding</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent Presentation</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent Thinking</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teach with Technology

The most cited reason that the participants gave for integrating DDM into their classrooms was to teach with technology (N = 10). This reason gravitated most heavily toward the practicing teachers as five of the seven of them (71%) cited this reason, while only five of the twelve (42%) pre-service teachers did so. Mike, a middle school social studies teacher, listed “comfort with technology” as a primary purpose for integrating DDM. David, also a middle school social studies teacher, listed “to introduce and improve technological skills to my students” as the first reason for integrating DDM. While this reason is broad in scope, it does signify that DDM is a tool that some teachers currently view as being on the cusp of a digital revolution in how students learn. Documentary making software programs indeed possess all the classic features of digital technologies in that they have multiple uses and are rapidly changing (Koehler & Mishra, 2008). However, this finding reveals that many of this study’s teachers first conceive DDM as a means to improve students’ technological knowledge (TK), separate from any pedagogical benefits it may possess with enhancing the teaching and learning of history.

Summative Assessment of Student Learning

Another key reason that the participants stated they would integrate DDM into their respective classrooms was to summatively assess student learning (N= 8). The practicing teachers favored this reason much more heavily (71%) than did the pre-service teachers (25%). These teachers sought to use DDM as a means for students to create a summative narrative after research on a particular topic was completed. “Taking what you have,” Mike explained about the research skills he sought to develop with DDM, “and making it say what you need it to.” This type of summative narrative focuses on student understanding of content rather than historical investigation using primary sources, as is typified by historical thinking. These teachers viewed DDM for its worth as a pedagogical tool (TPK), devoid of using any potential it may have with actually teaching history. In fact, another middle school teacher, David, frankly said he would use DDM “as a summative assessment of student learning.” Desktop documentary making, like most technologies that foster narrative development, may be used for either a summative narrative or historical inquiry. Many of the participants in this study preferred the former notion of a summative narrative.
Active Learning

Another reason that the participants gave for integrating DDM into their classrooms was to provide an “active” learning experience (N= 8). Many history courses bore students with text, worksheet, and test driven curriculum (Paxton, 1999). As such, some teachers foster the illusion for their students that history comes down from “on high” in the form of a textbook or lecture. As a result of this fact-based, textbook dominant approach to history instruction, many students are confused about history as a subject. History teachers, therefore, need to be prepared and subsequently enact drastically different instructional approaches. Ross, a middle school teacher, desired to use DDM as a means to enable his students to “grasp concepts in the curriculum through a format that speaks more personally to many of them.” Amy, a teacher candidate, foresaw DDM as a tool that would effectively position students to “provoke and feel emotions” rather than passively “give/receive information.” Students who compose desktop documentaries are actively engaged in the learning process, as the very nature of documentary making is one that engages students in the learning process since they are positioned to create histories of their own. These statements resemble features of DDM that may enhance student learning (PK) regardless of the nature of the subject matter being taught at the moment.

Collaboration

Participants also noted that they would like to assign DDM to nurture collaborative learning among their students (N =6) with the pre-service teachers favoring this reason more heavily (42%) than did the practicing teachers (14%). In fact, five of these six participants were teacher candidates. The comments from the participants revealed a complexity in the type of collaboration DDM may privilege. Melanie, for instance, shared she wanted to use DDM in her own classroom because “I’d want students to be able to teach each other.” Depending upon the nature of how students were positioned to teach one another, DDM could conceivably be a tool that fosters historical inquiry amongst students (TPACK) as they examine and question one another’s narratives. Kristie, on the other hand, envisioned DDM as a tool that enabled her students to recognize in their work with one another and public sharing of their documentaries “that different people have different points of view.” This could also be a way that DDM is used by teachers to foster historical inquiry amongst students (TPACK) in that it may position students to be engaged in historiography as they examine their classmate historians’ differing perspectives and interpretations of the past. Teachers who require students to create desktop documentaries provide students the “space” to create histories for and with one another. During the documentary compositional process, the subject matter
becomes personal for students since they are enabled to transform it, through image and sound juxtaposition, in a manner meant for the eyes and ears of their peers. Because documentaries are usually short (3-5 minutes in length) and can be easily displayed to the class, students get to easily share with each other what they have learned and possibly critique classmates’ historical interpretation, thus leading toward the formation of a learning community where students’ ideas and opinions have value (Schul, 2012b), as Kristie hoped when she used DDM in her own classroom. If a teacher aims to foster a student-centered classroom, DDM is a well situated teaching tool for promoting student inquiry with work created by and for other students.

Differentiated Instruction

A final reason participants gave as to why they would assign DDM is that it would differentiate instruction in their class (N=5). The responses from both pre-service practicing teachers were similar in how DDM would be a welcomed instructional tool in their classroom that differed from their conventional practices of history teaching and learning. “I think this is a great way to mix things up in the classroom,” Nick, a middle school teacher, shared about DDM. Betty, a teacher candidate, also liked how DDM had the potential to diversify the educational experiences in her prospective classroom: “I want my students to get from this experience that learning can be incorporated into the classroom outside a typical lecture or text.” Desktop documentary making clearly attracts a wide array of learning styles and predilections. Kadjer (2004), for instance, noted that the addition of digital technology into classroom instruction “tapped into students’ existing visual and technological literacies” (p. 65). Kadjer’s assertion suggests that DDM could potentially enable a new level of student engagement where more students are willing to share and discuss their constructions of the past. Perhaps more student engagement would occur because more students’ skills and predilections (Gardner, 1983) are privileged in DDM than in the readings and writing assignments that usually dominate students’ experiences with history.

FINDINGS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION #2

The second research question asked: How did the participants plan to integrate DDM into their classroom? To answer this question, I focused on the participants’ responses to the questionnaire that asked them this same research question. As a means to find emergent patterns and trends within the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), I organized these responses first by those made by practicing teachers and second by those made by pre-service teachers. A significant trend was evident using this strategy.
The survey of the participants revealed that a difference existed between the pre-service and practicing teachers. The primary finding that emerged from this research question is that pre-service teachers were more likely to envision DDM as an activity that they integrated in a particular course throughout a school year. The practicing teachers, however, mostly approached DDM as an activity that they would attempt once, usually near the end of a school year. Table 2 reveals the results of participants’ answer to how often they would integrate DDM. In this section, I discuss these findings as related to the experience level of teachers and their willingness to integrate DDM into their classroom settings.

**Singular v. Multiple Integration of DDM**

As you have seen, there were differences between pre-service and practicing teachers in relation to why they would integrate DDM into their instruction. However, the differences between the pre-service teachers and practicing teachers were most stark in relation to their plan for integrating DDM. While ten of the twelve pre-service teachers (83.3%) envisioned integrating DDM on multiple occasions in their classrooms, the practicing teachers were much more varied in their responses (See Table 2).

**Table 2. Participants’ Stated Frequency for Integrating Desktop Documentary Making.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency for Integrating DDM</th>
<th>Pre-Service Teachers N=12</th>
<th>Practicing Teachers N=7</th>
<th>Overall Results N=19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Singular Integration</strong></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Multiple Integrations</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four of the seven practicing teachers (57.1%) responded that they would integrate DDM on a singular instance, while the other three (42.9%) chose to integrate it multiple occasions. What caused this disparity in DDM integration amongst these two participant groups? One cause for this disparity in responses between student teachers and practicing teachers may be the varying level of technological knowledge between the two groups. Of the seven practicing teachers questioned, five (71%) envisioned that they would integrate DDM for the purpose, among other things, of immersing students in technology. Of those five, only one planned to integrate DDM on more than one occasion in their classroom curriculum. The
student teachers, who are younger than the practicing teachers and likely better familiarized with digital technologies than the older practicing teachers (Prensky, 2005), responded with more varied reasons to integrate DDM with only five of them (42%) citing teaching technology among their reasons. This pattern illuminates the possibility that some teachers who seek to teach technology with DDM may actually seldom expose their students to digital technologies as a general practice in their classroom. Teachers who are weary of integrating DDM into their classroom may actually have a low technological knowledge, and subsequently minimally use digital technology in their particular classrooms (Hofer & Swan, 2008).

While it can only be assumed, and not confirmed with evidence, that the student teacher participants had more experience with digital technologies than their older peers in the workshop, it is a known fact that the practicing teachers had more experience teaching in a classroom than their young participants who had yet to begin their teaching careers. The practicing teachers addressed certain realities of the classroom experience that they foresaw as a possible obstacle with integrating DDM into their classroom on multiple occasions. Two of the four practicing teachers who planned to integrate DDM into their curriculum only once during the school year listed “time” as an obstacle. “As it gets close to state testing, my social studies classes are cut down and I am asked to teach math instead, so timing and priority would be an issue,” Derek, a middle school social studies teacher, explained. David, another middle school social studies teacher, asserted that “this process can become problematic because of the time issue,” saying that he would likely integrate DDM “after all of our state tests are completed.”

**Implications**

The findings from this study bear some significance in furthering how history teachers may envision the role that DDM may play in the classroom. First they re-enforce an earlier finding (Schul, 2012) that history teachers may integrate DDM for a myriad of reasons other than eliciting historical thinking skills such as inquiry with primary sources (e.g., Barton & Levstik, 2004; Seixas, 1993; VanSledright, 2002; Yeager & Davis, 1996; and Wineburg, 2001). These results provide an initial step in understanding why teachers actually choose to appropriate DDM into their own classroom instruction. For this reason, this study departs from some recent research on DDM (i.e., Swan & Hofer, 2013) that prescribes how and why DDM should be appropriated by history teachers. Teachers, as this study suggests, think about employing DDM for a number of reasons. It is paramount that researchers acknowledge this fact and seek to understand teachers’ intentions, and subsequently students’ practices resulting from their particular use of DDM. Desktop documentary making is like any other instructional tool in that it fits in
some parts of a teacher’s curriculum better than others. The charge for researchers of DDM is to seek out an understanding of this fit. This study is a step forward in this process because it is a first attempt to understand what some teachers are considering doing with DDM. As such, it empowers teacher educators to precipitate uses of DDM that may not align with an intended goal of nurturing historical inquiry.

Specifically, while this study did reveal that teachers have a myriad of reasons for integrating DDM, it does raise a significant level of concern for those who hope DDM may be used to improve students’ history experience. This study’s findings revealed that many of the teachers did not see documentary making first and foremost as a tool for enhancing history teaching in such a way that fostered historical inquiry. Rather, many appeared most attracted to DDM as means to offer students a technological experience. The use of digital technology for merely the sake of its use is a tell-tale sign of a deep problem with the teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). In other words, these findings suggested to me that history as a discipline for understanding the past was disappointingly far from many of the teachers’ minds or behavior. Like any tool, DDM in a history classroom should be pre-eminently about historical analysis and interpretation, not about experience with technology. Documentary making empowers teachers and students to experience the past as a narrative making enterprise, requiring the disciplined use of traces from the past - images, namely, in the case of documentary making. The concern is that because five of the seven practicing teachers sought to use DDM for its technological nature and none spoke of anything related to historical understanding suggests that many of the teacher-participants in this study may not know very much about the “signature pedagogy” of history (Calder, 2006) as a set of professional practices involving disciplined research, analysis, and synthesis. This cannot be known for sure because the methods in this study relied so heavily on written responses by the participants rather than interviews. Future research should seek to examine whether or not these findings are insular to the participants of this study and so better inform how to help teacher education programs to improve candidates’ pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) as it relates to history teaching and learning.

While this study revealed that the teachers’ PCK was in need of improvement, the technological pedagogical knowledge (TPK) was also weak. Future research should further explore the nature of teachers’ TPK as it relates to their integration of DDM. Most of the history teachers in this study could not recognize that documentary making provides a unique and efficient opportunity to help students understand history as a construction but instead are more impressed with documentary making’s technological glitz than its power for deepening historical understanding. So, this study reveals that DDM must be taught to teachers in tandem with how it enhances history teaching and learning. Experienced teachers
who integrate DDM for the first time are likely to undergo a conceptual change in their overall perceptions of teaching since digital technologies require both a higher level of technological knowledge as well as a more inquiry-based practice of teaching that will position students to learn through the primary and secondary written, visual, and aural sources they will encounter through DDM (Molebash, Capps, & Glassett, 2009). These points raise an important future research question: Was this disparity in the possibility for DDM to engage students in historical inquiry with the teachers’ purposes with DDM the result of teacher education program deficiencies, such as the compartmentalization of instructional technology coursework or actually a lack of knowledge among teacher educators about meaningful integration of technology?

Also, future research should examine the effect of the current educational policy climate upon teacher instructional practices. What effect, if any, does high-stakes standardized testing have upon students’ integration of DDM to nurture historical inquiry? Current research (e.g., Barton & Levstik, 2003) already confirms that high-stakes testing often prohibits teachers from engaging students in innovative, inquiry-based learning activities. There are many factors in addition to teacher preparation that may constrain a teacher’s use of digital technologies, such as instructional time and administrative support. This is especially true within the contemporary high-stakes testing climate that encircles the American public school. This study indeed revealed that DDM is among the innovative strategies that are stifled by the high-stakes testing environment. Experienced teachers in this study cited a concern for the available time in lieu of state standardized tests as an obstacle with integrating DDM into their classrooms. Research suggests (i.e., Molebash, 2004; Wenglinsky, 2005; Swan, Hofer, & Swan, 2011) that teachers with a strong constructivist bent (i.e., they seek to position students to construct knowledge rather than rely on direct instruction) in their instructional approach are more likely to welcome new digital technologies into their repertoire. Again, this point runs parallel with those previously made, teachers must be trained to teach the discipline of history (PCK) and then DDM may be introduced as something that enhances this inquiry-based approach (TPACK). Moreover, teachers who are committed to inquiry-based instruction are more likely to resist forces such as high-stakes testing from inhibiting constructivist practices in their classroom (Barton & Levstik, 2003; Swan, Hofer, & Swan, 2011). While this research is an initial step toward understanding history teachers’ attitudes and behaviors in relation to their integration of DDM, further research that involves teacher and student interviews, as well as classroom observations as DDM is assigned, is needed to more thoroughly examine why and how history teachers are using DDM. Technologies change and so do teachers’ predilections toward using those technologies. It would be interesting to compare the results of this study with a larger, more comprehensive examination of current teachers’ use of documentary making. It is
the hope of this researcher that this small study may propel this important research forward.

References


Appendix

Desktop Documentary Making Workshop Questionnaire
Unleashing Alternative Representations of the Past into Middle & Secondary History Classrooms

Desktop Documentary Making BluePrint Assignment
Name: ________________________

Directions: You are to create a “blueprint” for integrating desktop documentary making into YOUR classroom(s). Please complete this assignment. If you do not see yourself integrating desktop documentary making into your classroom in the future, please share that in the space below as well. Thank you.

Purpose
In this section, declare your purpose for integrating desktop documentary making into your classroom. In other words, what do you want your students to get from the experience?

Plan
How do you foresee yourself integrating desktop documentary making into your classroom? Please provide a narrative here that describes how you foresee desktop documentary “fitting” into your class curriculum (i.e., how often and at what time(s) in the school year).

About the Author
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It was the day after the Ferguson grand jury declined to indict police officer Darren Wilson in the shooting death of Michael Brown. “My students came into the classroom asking me about it, before I even got a chance to say anything,” said Nicole Cooper, social studies teacher at an urban high school in New Jersey. That same day, Cienai Wright-Wilkins’s students at her urban Virginia high school contacted her through social media before school began, asking if they could talk about the verdict in her social studies class. Coming to their teachers with the desire to discuss and begin to make sense of events that had touched them deeply, these African American and Latino students expected their social studies classrooms to provide this space.

In response to her students’ requests, Ms. Cooper reshaped her day’s lesson. In the middle of a unit on the Constitution, she decided to dedicate the class period to student consideration of whether Michael Brown and the protesters’ constitutional rights had been violated. Ms. Wright-Wilkins asked her students to write in their journals and share their feelings about law enforcement. “They are supposed to be there for protection,” a student shared, “but I have never felt protected by the police.” When asked by her students to express her own feelings on the subject, Ms. Wright-Wilkins demurred, later explaining, “I want them to find their own opinions.”

These students came to their social studies teachers anticipating that they would be able to use their classrooms to share feelings and discuss events of direct and personal importance. Their teachers, both African American, built on these desires, creating discussion, writing, and analytical activities that allowed the

students to contextualize their own feelings and experiences and connect them to larger historical, social, and political themes. Perhaps these seem like obvious maneuvers. However, we could also imagine teachers responding that there was not time to discuss these events, that the day’s lesson on the Bill of Rights needed to be completed, or that opening up a discussion of students’ feelings about law enforcement was too risky. There is a curriculum to get through; there are standards to meet; there are student growth objectives that must be attained. The norms and conventions of classrooms are not neutral - they shape learning in particular ways, reflecting the structures and perspectives of particular people and places (Nasir & Hand, 2006).

In this article, I will describe how young peoples’ civic identities take shape in the nexus of their schools, their social studies classrooms, and their daily experiences within their communities and amid the structures of civic life in the United States. I will then explore social studies teaching practices that build on this new understanding of youth civic identity and engagement.

**Youth Civic Identity and Engagement:**
**Challenging Traditional Understandings**

Fifteen years ago, at an urban middle school, students engaged in a lively discussion of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Amber: *We are the one nation, under God. One nation.*

Jessica: When the Pledge of Allegiance says “under God,” it can’t actually say that and expect people to pledge allegiance to the flag. Because there’s other races that really don’t believe in God. So if you don’t believe in God why would you pledge allegiance to the flag that states “under God?” You won’t…it’s…

Angelica: Well, me and her [points] were discussing. She said that it’s not one nation because of segregation, all this stuff; all this hate. But you’re not pledging to the people in America, you’re pledging to America itself.

This brief snippet of classroom conversation shows these students’ interest in and engagement with complex civic questions. Who is the “one nation” invoked in the Pledge? Does our nation’s history of segregation and “all this hate” provide a challenge to this notion? Can all Americans be expected to agree to a pledge that invokes belief in a deity? What about those “other races” who don’t believe in God; can they be expected to make the same pledge?

Although quantitative measures of civic attainment consistently rank low income students of color behind their White and more affluent peers, Amber, Jessica, Angelica, and their classmates, African American and Latino eighth
grade students at a middle school in a low income urban area, energetically pursued such questions for over two hours, leaving the room reluctantly and still talking.

Students’ civic knowledge and engagement are frequent subjects of inquiry for researchers from political science, education, developmental psychology, and other disciplines. Measures of civic learning have been administered to large cohorts of students, some repeatedly over the course of several decades. The result is a wealth of data and analysis, an impressive body of research that documents students’ civic achievement – or lack thereof - over time.

- That students lack civic knowledge (Lutkus, Weiss, Campbell, Mazzeo & Lazer, 1999; Patterson, 2002).
- That youth do not engage with civic issues (National Election Studies, 2000; Jennings & Stoker, 2001).

With few exceptions, this body of literature is rooted in the idea that civic knowledge is a set of content and skills that can be given by teachers to students in a classroom setting, and civic engagement is measured by whether students say they intend to vote once they are 18, or if they read the newspaper or watch the news on TV. Using these measures, young people come up lacking. But, as the discussion between Amber, Jessica, and Angelica, such measures do not capture the depth and complexity of young people’s feelings about and analyses of civic life.

Investigating Youth Civic Identity Across Settings

With the limitations of traditional approaches to understanding youth civic identity and engagement in mind, I set out to see if I could learn more about what young people actually thought about citizenship and how the communities in which they lived, their daily experiences with school and other civic institutions, and the types of teaching they encountered in their social studies classrooms impacted how they felt about citizenship. I wanted to understand the perspectives of a varied group of students, so I found four distinct public schools with social studies teachers who were interested in participating:

- Green Middle School, a small middle school in a low-income urban area, serving predominantly African American (70%) and Latino (25%) students from poor and lower-income backgrounds (all on free lunch).
- Somerset Middle School, a large middle school located in a lower- to middle-income suburb serving a racially diverse population of students, white (43%), Asian American (32%), Latino (14%), African American (11%), 37% speaking a language other than English at home, 22% free/reduced lunch - many of whom come from families that have recently immigrated to the United States.
Burnside High School, a large high school in an upper middle- to high-income suburban area serving predominantly White (84%) and Asian American students (13%) from upper middle- to high-income backgrounds (no free lunch participants).

Willow High School, a large high school in a racially and socioeconomically integrated suburban area serving a diverse group of students, principally African American and White. (47% African American, 43% White, 5% Latino, 5% Asian American; 16% free/reduced lunch).

Although all of these schools were located in the same northeastern state, they were situated in communities that differed sharply in terms of income level and racial and ethnic demographics.

I collected data in each school in two different ways. We created two “lessons” – two text based seminars, one on the Pledge of Allegiance, and the other on the 1st and 4th amendments of the Bill of Rights. We worked with the teachers at each site, to help them learn to lead these text-based, student-centered discussions. In the first seminar, on the Pledge, students read and discussed the meaning of the daily Pledge. Teachers were given a slate of open-ended questions to use, if necessary, to catalyze discussion. In the second seminar, students read short case studies based on real court cases involving potential violations of 1st and 4th amendment rights, discussed these with a partner, then, again discussed them in large seminar format. The second stage of data collection was one-on-one interviews with five students at each site. In these interviews, we talked with students about the Pledge and Bill of Rights, followed up on opinions expressed in the seminar, and asked them about personal experiences.

What we found was that larger social forces and students’ day-to-day experiences in school framed and shaped young peoples’ civic identities - their sense of connection to and participation in a civic community (Nasir & Kirshner, 2003) The students participating in the study expressed a range of experiences and attitudes, from what I called congruity between kids’ day to day civic experiences and what they saw in civic texts to a disjuncture between what they had experienced in their lives and these ideas. I also saw a range from active to passive in how they saw their role in civic life. These different stances are described below.

**Congruity and Disjuncture in Young Peoples’ Civic Experiences**

In interviews and classroom discussions about the Pledge of Allegiance and the Bill of Rights, some students expressed a high degree of correspondence between the ideals of the United States and their own experiences. For some, this was expressed in relation to the safety and prosperity they experienced in their lives. As Frank, a Burnside 11th grader, said:

[The Pledge is] a way to show your appreciation and dedication to the country who’s provided so much for us, because I mean, if I look at my
Frank, as well as other students from the affluent Burnside and Willow communities, connected a sense of being a loyal American to the feelings of security and privilege that filled their daily lives.

Others students compared the United States favorably with other countries. Shante, an eighth grader at Green Middle School, felt strongly about rights and security in the United States in comparison with Iraq, saying,

"You live in America under the First Amendment, which is freedom of religion, freedom of speech. What I want to say is that the Pledge of Allegiance, to me it means that you’re honoring the freedom of America. You’re honoring that you live in such a country, that you’re not in, you know, war in Iraq. . . . You don’t have to walk down the street and think that you’re going to be bombed, or that you’re going to be hijacked, or whatever.

Some students, immigrants themselves or children of immigrants, felt strongly about the rights and opportunities of the U.S. in contrast with their home country. Lizzie, an eleventh grader at Burnside whose family had emigrated from Moldova, spoke about the Pledge, saying,

"Every day it has meaning to me especially since I’m not, I wasn’t born in America. . . . And also my parents came here with no money and then, like a few months, my parents were able to afford their own place. We were out on our own living, me and my sister and both my parents, and then after that we got another house, and we were renting that, and then after that now my father owns his own home. . . . It’s just incredible what this country has to offer, and it’s upsetting that there are Americans who don’t value it.

These students saw and experienced in their daily lives the rights and opportunities that they had learned, in school and elsewhere, were typically American.

On the other hand, other students spoke of the disjuncture they saw between what they had learned were the ideals of the U.S. and their personal, family, or community experiences. Jalisa, a Green Middle School student, spoke passionately during the Pledge seminar, saying, “I think we shouldn’t pledge to the flag because, like, we were in Africa! And they brought us over here. So there is no reason why I should pledge for a flag,” citing the historical injustice suffered by her community to explain her opposition to the Pledge.

Many Green Middle School students spoke of violence in their communities, and some expressed disappointment that the government would allow it to continue unchecked. Students had personal experiences with violations of Fourth Amendment rights, which many urban students recounted during the Bill of
Rights seminar. In the words of Elizabeth, an African American eighth grade student at Green Middle School,

> You know how you are supposed to have the right to privacy? Well one time, me and my brother were at home and the cops bust in through the window and through the front door and all these cops started coming in and they were looking for my cousin. They went in the bedroom, in the basement, everywhere. I don’t think they had a search warrant. I had to call my father and they looked through my purse. And that went against the Fourth Amendment rights, search and seizure at your house.

At Green Middle School, out of a class of 18, 15 students shared stories of Fourth Amendment violations. Students’ use of such stories indicated their deep seated sense that they had been mistreated by those who were supposed to protect them. It is notable that even the most shocking of these stories did not cause visible surprise among the students taking part in the Pledge seminar.

Even students who had not personally experienced or seen discrimination or economic injustice still pointed to these issues as a source of disjuncture between American ideals and realities. Jenny, a white eleventh grader at Willow High School, told the interviewer,

> There is NOT liberty and justice for all. I mean . . . there are so many examples. Like more African American people are on death row than white people and like half of those people won’t even be proven guilty. That kind of thing. There are so many people who live in poverty and who don’t get equal benefits as like someone who works as a lawyer as opposed to someone who makes shoes.

When students, such as Jenny, had been exposed to issues of injustice in their social studies classrooms, they voiced an awareness of how commitments to rights and justice were not fully realized within U.S. civic institutions. What young people brought to the table to make sense of their classroom civic experiences was complex and variable.

**Active and Passive Attitudes Toward Civic Participation**

During seminars and interviews, students also explained what civic participation meant to them, with some viewing it as an *active* undertaking and others viewing it more *passively*. These orientations toward civic participation varied within school settings.

Students, mainly at Green Middle School and Willow High School, but a few at the other schools as well, spoke of progress in America’s commitment to “liberty and justice for all.” They cited examples from American history, ranging from Martin Luther King’s civil rights work to recent anti-war demonstrations, as proof that America’s ideals were worth fighting for and were attainable through
Many students expressed appreciation for their right to make their voices heard and saw it as a key element of American civic identity. Whether speaking out against war, discrimination, or a principal censoring a school newspaper, these students cherished their right to have their opinions count.

Brandy, a Latina eighth grader from Green Middle School, felt strongly about making her voice heard, saying,

As an adult, I see myself not trying to be a violent person, but trying to protest against the war situation; I see myself protesting against something like that, or if something’s happening on the Supreme Court that I don’t like, or in any case that I don’t like, I see myself trying to protest and standing up for what I believe in.

Jessica, a white seventh grader at Somerset Middle School, also saw the right to speak out as critical to her identity as an American, saying “The fact that we have this freedom of speech or assembly, able to let our voices be heard, it’s very important or we wouldn’t have a society like this today, you know?”

Other students displayed a more passive stance toward their role as citizens, explaining that their own goals came first, and often pushed civic action to the back burner. Dan, a white 11th grader at Burnside, told me,

I don’t know if this is a problem with where we live but I don’t think many people feel motivation to fight these things [racism and segregation] because where we are I think the goal is to get good grades and then to go to college and then to get a job. The goal is not to go …and protest you know you can’t go down and protest if you have an AP exam and it doesn’t really jive with what you’re trying to do with the goals that you’re supposed to be trying to accomplish.

Some students felt that those who spoke out on civic issues were making “a big deal out of nothing.” Frank, a twelfth grade student at Burnside, said, “I feel like a lot of people, or some people, instead of asking themselves, you know, what’s right with the country… they automatically ask what’s wrong.”

Finally, some students, particularly at Green Middle School, felt resigned to inequalities and injustices they had experienced in life. As Zaria said,

I feel I could do things, but I don’t feel it would make a difference because people are down on children, like we can’t really do anything. Like I would like to march or whatever, but looking at what Martin Luther King did, it just caused a riot. He did a right thing, but other people who were against it did wrong and I think it’s going to happen all over again.

Students expressed a range of attitudes toward civic participation, from highly active to resignedly passive.

Civic identity is complex for young people - they can be aware, feeling like they have benefited from the system but aware of inequalities and interesting in being part of positive social change. They can be complacent - feeling that their
comfortable positions are enough. They can feel a disjuncture between their experiences and the ideals of the country which leaves them discouraged, feeling that change is not possible and the country is fundamentally and permanently unfair, and they can feel a sense of agency and ability to act that helps them transform these feelings of disjuncture to empowerment. Figure 1 depicts this range of civic identities.

**Figure 1: Typology of Civic Identity (Rubin, 2007).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ attitudes toward civic participation</th>
<th>Students’ experiences in relation to the learned ideals of the United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td><strong>Congruence</strong>&lt;br&gt;Aware&lt;br&gt;Change is needed for equity and fairness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive</td>
<td><strong>Disjuncture</strong>&lt;br&gt;Empowered&lt;br&gt;Change is a personal and community necessity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive</td>
<td><strong>Complacent</strong>&lt;br&gt;No change is necessary; all is well in the U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive</td>
<td><strong>Discouraged</strong>&lt;br&gt;No change is possible; life in the U.S. is unfair.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social studies learners, then, come to the classroom with a complex range of experiences and attitudes, feelings, and stances about rights, justice, citizenship, and their role within the nation. Our social studies classrooms, I contend, should be organized to work with and build upon rather than ignore the “history in person” (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998) that young people bring with them to make sense of the both curriculum and civic life.

**Rooting Social Studies Teaching in New Understandings of Civic Identity**

How then can we as social studies teachers move students to the aware and empowered ends of the spectrum of civic identity and participation? Throughout the study described above, we noticed that when kids had direct discussions about injustice and talked about their experiences they were more hopeful and engaged. This was in line with work by other researchers indicating that when young people have opportunities to investigate and analyze civic problems that impact them directly, they may develop more active and empowered identities as citizens (Ginwright & James, 2002; Kahne & Westheimer, 2003; Morrell, 2004; Kirshner, 2003; Rubin, 2007).
Traditional approaches to social studies are not up to the challenge of teaching for “active citizenship” (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006; Kahne, Rodriguez, Smith, & Thiede, 2000). Moreover, research shows that schools serving low income youth and youth of color provide the least innovative and most ineffective forms of civic education, and that youth in these settings frequently experience classroom-based civic education as alienating and irrelevant (Kahne & Middaugh, 2010). Young people placed in lower tracks also have less access to approaches we know are effective, such as discussion critical current issues, learning about topics that are of personal concern, and service learning (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008).

New social studies teachers are not necessarily being educated to meet the challenge of creating civic learning experiences that meaningfully engage with students’ own emerging civic identities. In 2011, the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools declared that preservice programs “seldom help aspiring teachers learn to foster students’ civic learning.” These programs “rarely demonstrate interactive teaching strategies that encourage students’ participation, although these dynamic approaches are known to engage students’ interest, and few programs provide strategies to help teachers manage classroom conversations about important civic matters” (p. 9).

In the rest of the paper, I will describe several approaches to civic education that hold promise for engaging students in meaningful civic learning that helps them to make sense of their own civic experiences and envision themselves as active, critical citizens.

**Youth Participatory Action Research**

Building on the emancipatory educational theory of Paulo Freire, participatory action research aims to empower and liberate through the process of participant-led inquiry. Youth participatory action research (YPAR) projects engage students in analyses of social inequalities and teach valuable research and analytical skills, inviting young people to explore issues that impact their lives through the pursuit of critical inquiry projects. These projects have traditionally taken place outside of the constraints of the classroom as part of after-school or community programs.

Over the past decade, I have been involved in a number of projects attempting to integrate YPAR into mainstream social studies classrooms, and to take up leading such projects as part of preparing social studies (and other) teachers to be critical civic educators, particularly in urban settings. In many of these classroom-based projects, students worked together as a class to identify a problem (or problems) that they saw in their school or community. Young people selected a wide range of topics, including, but not limited to, school uniforms, school lunches, theft and stealing at school, Islamophobia, lack of playground space, bullying, sex
education, and gangs. Young people working on these projects gained research skills, saw that they could work directly on issues of concern to them, and were empowered by being knowledge generators and knowledge holders. They made presentations to their peers, to their teachers, on college campuses, and sometimes saw the direct fruit of their efforts in changes in school policy, opening up of discussion on critical issues and the realization of community events.

An elementary school group, for example, investigated theft and stealing at their school, discussed their concerns, created a research question and research tools, collected data, and analyzed their data. High school students in an English as a Second Language, now in its 4th year of running youth action research class investigated issues of race, ethnicity, and friendship at their high school, issues that were of deep concern to them.

Sometimes these projects result in change, other times they only spark learning and conversation. Last year, a middle school group presented their research on their outdoor space - all concrete, with nowhere to relax and play - to an audience at Rutgers University, where it was seen by a coordinator at Rutgers Cooperative Extension program who knew of grant resources that could help to make the students’ dream of a green space at their school a reality. A year later, the school broke ground on the project, and the kids’ research and findings came to life. The results are not usually so dramatic, but we have documented learning by both students and teachers no matter the final outcome of the projects (Rubin, Abu El-Haj, Graham, & Clay, 2016; Rubin, 2012; Rubin & Hayes, 2010; Rubin, Hayes, & Benson, 2009).

**Social Studies Teaching to Foster Civil Civic Discourse**

Social studies teachers are responsible for creating a space within which interesting and informative conversations can happen that help young people learn to exchange ideas across all kinds of difference, and for connecting the curriculum to our students’ lives. This is a particularly divisive time for civic discourse in the United States. In 2016, the Pew Research Center reported that partisans’ views of the opposing party are more negative now than they have been at any point in the last 25 years, with majorities in both parties saying that they have, not just “unfavorable,” but “VERY unfavorable views” of the other party. The study reported that half of the members of each party said that the members of the other party stirred feelings of fear, anger, and frustration in them, and even more among those who are highly engaged politically. Members of both parties reported feeling that a significant number of Americans of the opposing party were closed-minded, dishonest, immoral, unintelligent, and lazy.

Thus, the stage is not set for civil conversation and a free exchange of views, or learning from each other’s experiences. The role of social studies teachers is
more important than ever, as we seek to model civic discourse and prepare young people to engage with each other about issues of importance. Fortunately, we have a good deal of knowledge and unprecedented resources for creating classrooms in which this type of learning and engagement can take place. A guide to fostering civil discourse in the classroom recently published by Facing History and Ourselves is one of many excellent resources that can help teachers create safe, productive spaces for kids to talk about critical issues, including descriptions of how to lead various forms of discussion and guides to reflecting on one’s own positions, in preparation for leading students in challenging conversation.⁴

One such form of discussion is the “Socratic seminar,” a text-based discussion in which students, sitting in a circle, raise issues, build on each other’s ideas, ask questions and generally enlarge their understandings of a text or an issue. In the research I have conducted, students spoke enthusiastically about the authenticity of these discussions. One student explained,

…the whole class [would sit in a big circle], and then we would take turns and most of the time we wouldn’t even raise our hands…She didn’t want us to sit there and be like “OK, can I go,” because then that’s not how it is. In real life you’re not going to sit there, raise your hand to talk to someone…it was kind of like experiencing how life is itself like besides history.

Students found hearing each other’s opinions to be highly engaging. One student told explained,

…it was just really cool seeing what other people, what other people thought about the same things you thought about. And like who agree and how a conversation would start, and sometimes an argument would start just by a simple question. And those things kind of chain off, like one person will say something, and it will touch on another topic, and another person will compare, and it will get into that.

For young people, the excitement of an authentic discussion on important civic topics both models and provides experience with the type of civil civic discourse that is essential to our diverse democracy.

These conversations can be deep and honest, personal and political. Students discussing the Pledge of Allegiance at Green Middle School considered the meaning of citizenship, the difference between ideals and reality, and the historical memories shaping their views on American life.

Keisha: What if I get up every day, and you lived in a country and you don’t have nothing to pledge to. And like it says it’s like a free country, right. And then you don’t have nothing to pledge to. You just get up every morning and pledge, and think about nothing, and pledge to nothing. And you ask yourself why you’re living in this country.

Chiara: Freedom of religion, speech. That way we tell them what we stand for if we don’t have the flag. We can tell them what our country stands for. Freedom of religion, freedom of press, speech.

Keisha: The flag represents the stuff of America, though. It represents the amendments. It represents the Constitution. It represents everything.

Sapphire: I think, personally, that we shouldn’t pledge to the flag because me as African American, we’re saying “one nation under god, with liberty and justice for all” [reading from pledge sheet]. And that’s like a lie, because there’s not liberty and justice for all.

In this two hour-long seminar, these 13- and 14-year old participants delved into issues such as the separation of church and state, the difference between a country’s ideals and reality, U.S. intervention, and the nature and role of patriotism, engaging directly in critical questions at the heart of civic life in a diverse democracy.

Rather than avoiding the topics of justice and inequality that so mark students’ lives and painful events and differences of opinion that tend to divide us, I am suggesting that, carefully and thoughtfully, we engage our students deliberately in those conversations. These are not easy discussions that lead to neat resolutions. As a veteran social studies teacher told me, “It’s not clean, it’s messy. There are no answers.” Making the space for students to discuss, analyze, and contextualize these painful events, however, is critical to moving them toward more empowered and aware civic identities. And, as another experienced teacher pointed out, “Social studies seems like the only place where they are going to learn it.”

Our schools are the key civic institution in the lives of our youth. They are the “laboratories of democracy,” as John Dewey put it, in which it is possible for people to come together to engage with difficult, relevant, and meaningful issues; and social studies classrooms are the places where this can happen. We can, using our tools of curriculum and pedagogy, begin to move students away from discouragement and apathy toward more aware and empowered civic identities. As social studies teachers we have the opportunity and challenge of creating classrooms in which young people can learn, interact, and express themselves about the deep divides and concerns facing this country.
References


About the Author

Beth C. Rubin, Ph.D. is Associate Professor of Education at Rutgers University Graduate School of Education. In her work, she uses a critical, sociocultural approach to investigate how young people develop, both as learners and as citizens, amid the interwoven contexts of classroom, school, and community, with particular attention to the ways that these settings are shaped by historical and structural inequalities. Her work appears in a variety of journals, including the American Educational Research Journal, Teachers College Record, the Harvard Educational Review, Curriculum Inquiry, Equity and Excellence in Education, the Urban Review, and others. Her most recent book is Citizens: Transforming Civic Learning for Diverse Social Studies Classrooms (Routledge, 2012). Dr. Rubin can be contacted at beth.rubin@gse.rutgers.edu.
Map It! Creating Meaningful Learning Experiences in Social Studies with IHMC CmapTools

Erica M. Southworth  
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Abstract

As a free software tool, IHMC CmapTools redefines the concept mapping learning strategy with an infusion of technology to provide students with meaningful and non-rote learning experiences. The following review discusses what IHMC CmapTools is, the literature-supported academic benefits of student-employed concept mapping, and how my secondary social studies colleague and I introduced this software to his students to create meaningful learning opportunities with social studies content. After working with IHMC CmapTools for over four years in both social studies and non-social studies classes, I would strongly encourage social studies educators in grades 5-12 to consider implementing this tool in their instruction as a means of enriching both their students’ engagement with social studies material and their students’ understanding of their own metacognitive processes.

As a twenty-first century educator, I am continually searching for promising analytical and exponential learning tools for social studies students that will help them be successful in their academic achievements as well as provide them with meaningful, lasting, non-rote learning experiences. After working with IHMC CmapTools for over four years and in various classrooms, I believe this software is an excellent example of such a tool. The following review discusses what the Florida Institute for Human and Machine Cognition Concept Maps software, or IHMC CmapTools, is and how I and my social studies colleague incorporated it into secondary social studies classes to create meaningful learning opportunities for students.
Concept Mapping with IHMC CmapTools

IHMC CmapTools, a free and easy-to-download software created by the Institute for Human and Machine Cognition, fuses the learning strategy of traditional concept mapping with technology (Institute for Human and Machine Cognition, 2014). Concept mapping, or the construction of conceptual thoughts in a connective diagram format, serves as a method which, when implemented properly, optimizes the potential for meaningful learning experiences to happen (Novak & Caños, 2006/2008; Novak & Gowin, 1984). Meaningful learning occurs when students integrate new information (concepts) about a topic into their existing knowledge base and are then able to successfully explain and/or exemplify connections between the existing and new information (Novak & Caños, 2006/2008). To illustrate this connectivity, literature on concept mapping documents academic benefits of this learning strategy in secondary classrooms, specifically in students’ academic achievement. This includes seven studies which indicated positive trends in students’ academic achievement, with half of these studies noting a significant statistical difference (Barenholz & Pinchas, 1992; BouJaoude & Attieh, 2008; Brandt, Elen, Hellemans, Heerman, Couwenberg, Volekaert, & Morisse, 2001; Liu, 2004; Okebukola, 1992; Okoye & Okechukwu, 2010; Pankratius, 1990; Royer & Royer, 2004; Trifone, 2006; van Boxel, van der Linden, Roelofs, & Erkens, 2002). Four additional studies reported concept mapping as a beneficial learning and/or study strategy for secondary students as well as a beneficial resource for increasing students’ metacognitive skills (Kostova & Radoynovska, 2010; Liu, 2004; Okoye & Okechukwu, 2010; Royer & Royer, 2004; van Boxel et al., 2002).

Traditionally, concept mapping is employed via paper and pencil in which students would use keywords or concepts to create a hierarchal web of information related to the original concept (Lui, 2004; Royer & Royer, 2004). For twenty-first century learners, IHMC CmapTools software allows the learner to construct digital concept maps, or Cmaps, via a technological vein as learners digitally map out their knowledge integration process of concepts and use prepositional words to link the concepts (Novak & Caños, 2006/2008). Figure 1 exemplifies one type of this conceptual construction in a hierarchal format using IHMC CmapTools where the topic “Executive Branch” of the United States’ government and its components are portrayed as concepts (nodes) and the phrases “includes,” “definition of,” “comprised of,” “enacts,” “such as,” and “i.e.” serve as cross-linking propositions in the map.
Figure 1. The Executive Branch.

Through the digital connectivity of conceptual nodes, the Cmap author implements creativity while simultaneously producing knowledge (Novak & Caños, 2006/2008). This tangible method of cognitive construction via IHMC CmapTools also exemplifies how students’ thought processes and patterns can work together to create and organize memory rather than regarding memory as a singular storage-house entity (Novak & Caños). In addition, the technological ease of using IHMC CmapTools facilitates more opportunities for the Cmap author to delve into and examine their own metacognitive processes since the Cmap serves as a visual representation of how the author codes, categorizes, and organizes information.

Both the literature and my personal experiences with introducing IHMC CmapTools to students supports the idea that technology-based concept mapping tools are preferred by students over the traditional paper and pencil method (Lui, 2004; Royer & Royer, 2004). In social studies classrooms, this software allowed our students to create tangible evidence of their understanding of historical content based upon their personal thought patterns and afforded them the opportunity to easily expand upon their knowledge base by incorporating new historical information into their pre-existing Cmap. As a result, some students choose to expand and reference their original Cmap repeatedly via the software. Cmaps may also be saved and/or submitted via cyberspace channels, although the student populations I worked with opted not to do this because the classroom teacher did not require it.
IHMC CmapTools: Promoting Student Engagement in Social Studies

Content

To illustrate the implementation of IHMC CmapTools as a means for promoting meaningful, non-rote learning experiences for social studies students, this section details the implementation process and procedures that my social studies colleague and I used in his classes upon introducing the Executive Branch of the United States government to students. We felt that the introduction of the CmapTools software with this concept was opportune because students could first create Executive Branch Cmaps and then expand upon the Cmaps with content from the Legislative and Judicial Branches discussed later in the unit. The following also serves as a malleable template for any educator, specifically those teaching grades 5-12, to consider when deciding on how to best introduce the software to students.

Preparing to Use IHMC CmapTools

At this point, some educators might be dismissive of using IHMC CmapTools because of the lack of technology in their classroom. Before disregarding this technological approach to learning, however, it is important to note that my social studies colleague also faced this concern. As a solution, we gained administrative and media center specialist permission for the software to be installed on all library computers, on computers in one of the school’s computer labs, and on the two computers my social studies colleague housed in his classroom. This solution allowed us the flexibility to reserve enough computers for class time use which was imperative to the success of introducing IHMC CmapTools to the students. It also gave students ample access to the software during their free periods if they lacked computer or internet access at home.

Introducing IHMC CmapTools: Class Concept Map & Program Exploration

To prepare students for working with IHMC CmapTools, my social studies colleague and I first provided a general instruction guide that I created entitled “IHMC CmapTools Quick Start Smart Tips” on how to use the software (see Appendix A). We then engaged students in an introductory activity utilizing IHMC CmapTools which consisted of the classroom teacher asking for student input to create a Cmap on a topic students already had knowledge of, such as “Things we find on a farm” or “Things we find in school” (see Figure 2).
This foundational Cmap activity allowed us to illustrate the basics of the software and communicate how concept mapping represents thought patterns, it also gave us the opportunity to emphasize how no single “right way” to map exists. We then had the students reproduce the class map on their own computers as my social studies colleague and I circulated amongst the students to address concerns and questions for the benefit of all, as well as assist in troubleshooting situations when they arose. For educators wishing to introduce the software to their students in the near future, I would also recommend directing students to the recently updated IHMC CmapTools website where “how to” video tutorials are available (Institute for Human and Machine Cognition, 2014).

My social studies colleague and I then gave his students a brief IHMC CmapTools in-class assignment using a specific social studies concept (i.e., the Executive Branch) for students to map out individually so they could further acquaint themselves with the software. This portion of the implementation process was only mildly successful in comparison to the implementation process a former University of Milwaukee (UWM) colleague and I instituted in non-social studies classes where we provided a scaffolding map for students to complete rather than asking them to immediately construct their own maps. In a scaffolding map,
students receive a partially created map with (or without) a list of the missing concepts and are asked to complete the map (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3. The Executive Branch.**

The CmapTools study my UWM colleague and I implemented in two non-social studies classes involved one class receiving a scaffolding map during the introduction process and one class that did not. The majority of the students in the class with a scaffolding map completed all of their assignments while the majority of students in the class who were introduced to Cmaps without a scaffolding map did not. Additionally, students in the class with the scaffolding map verbally affirmed to my UWM colleague and I via informal classroom dialog how they found the scaffolding map to be a great visual aid in understanding what a completed Cmap might look like. These students also verbally relayed to us how they referenced their scaffolding map during their initial work days with the software and during construction of their individual Cmaps. Based on this student feedback, I would strongly recommend educators consider providing either a paper or digital scaffolding map to their social studies students for the first IHMC CmapTools in-class assignment to assist in a smooth transition with students’ use and understanding of the software.

In my social studies colleague’s classes, the IHMC CmapTools in-class assignment we gave to students was accompanied with a task summary sheet and a check-off list which we marked off after reviewing each student’s Cmap (see Appendix B). This served as an immediate check for understanding and allowed us to remedy content concerns as needed. The summary sheet listed the conceptual content theme(s) targeted and information that we wanted students to expand on in their Cmaps. This allowed us as the educators to reinforce the notion that each
student’s Cmap represented *their* thought process and that their map wasn’t “wrong” as long as the content was being incorporated correctly (e.g., historical facts or event sequence were not misconstrued). The check-off list ensured students’ practice with specific IHMC CmapTools features (e.g., use of the styles function to color code nodes, bold face vocabulary words) which assisted students in creating unique and personalized Cmaps to enhance both their learning experience with the social studies content and with the software.

We found that our students were very successful in the above introductory procedure when we gave students two consecutive class periods to complete it. These two initial, consecutive class periods affirmed students’ grasp of the tool and enhanced their ability to organize and understand social studies content before delving into more advanced, individual work which followed in first weekly and then biweekly IHMC CmapTools lab days.

**Crafting an Interactive Social Studies Cmap with Media Options**

Once our students grasped how to utilize IHMC CmapTools, we introduced the multimedia options of the software as a means for students to further enhance their Cmaps and their understanding of social studies. The multimedia options available include the ability to insert web links, resources (e.g., pictures, images, charts), and individual concept annotations (e.g., vocabulary definitions, students’ personal content notes) into Cmaps. Once again, to assist our students I created and distributed a “Quick Reference Multimedia” handout (Appendix C), however, as previously noted, the IHMC CmapTools website now includes “how to” video tutorials for consideration. The social studies student populations who interacted with the multimedia options expressed great enthusiasm for the inclusion of these in their Cmap creation experiences and many students related how they felt these options enhanced their conceptual understanding of content material. More specifically, the informal verbal student feedback collected was a direct result of students initiating conversations with me prior to the start of our second class in introducing and working with CmapTools. Valuable student insights expressed included caveats such as this from one female student: “I even showed this to my mom last night. She thought it was really cool too and she might even use it!” and this from a male student: “I didn’t want to do this [Cmap] yesterday...but I woke up today and actually remembered stuff about the Executive Branch and the pictures I put in my map.” Such student feedback reaffirms the technological savoy and “techie” interest of the Millennial Generation, attributes which we as social studies educators should incorporate into our classes and positively nurture in our students’ academic experiences. However, the most significant verbal commentary and tribute to Cmaps as a valuable learning tool in this experience came from a
male student who asked my social studies colleague: “Can we do this [Cmaps] for all our stuff? Like from now on? I really get what we’re talking about now.”

To Cmap or Not? Go for it!

Based on my theory-to-practice experience with IHMC CmapTools both in social studies classes and non-social studies classes, I have found this software to be an extremely beneficial, non-rote learning tool that provides students with meaningful learning experiences and appeals to their technological proclivities. The software requires students to ponder and grapple with their own metacognition which therefore presents them with the opportunity to increase their academic achievement and recollection of social studies concepts to enhance learning, as was the case of the student I worked with who found he was able to recall Executive Branch concepts more readily. At its minimum capacity, CmapTools offers social studies students the ability to break free of the traditional note-taking style of copying vocabulary terms from a textbook or PowerPoint presentation and instead physically organize content material in a way that corresponds to their own learning style. In this enhanced learning process, the student retains ownership of their own learning and the amount of social studies content the student could mentally digest and recollect could be much more significant than content presented to the student via the traditional banking system (Freire, 2010). As a final recommendation, I would strongly encourage social studies educators, especially those servicing students in grades 5 and up, to take advantage of the free IHMC CmapTools software and author-generated handouts located in Appendices A-C to see what kind of meaningful learning experiences your students can become engaged in with this technology.

References


Appendix A

IHMC CmapTools Quick Start Tips Student Handout

Start IHMC Cmaps:

Tip #1 – Before starting your Cmap, format your settings in order to save to your flash drive:
- Insert your flash drive (thumb drive) into the computer
- On the main Cmap screen, click on “Edit” then on “Preferences”
- In your “Edit Preferences” box, you must change the “Root folder for My Cmaps” from the C Drive (C:\) to your flash drive (typically referred to as E Drive or E:\) by:
  o Clicking on the “Browse” button
  o Click on “My Computer” icon in the next box
  o Double click on your flash drive icon when it appears (or highlight it & click “OK”)
- The (E:\) drive should now show up in the “Edit Preferences” box
- Click “OK” & begin your Cmap!

Tip #2 – Creating your Cmap is like mapping how you think:
- Concept bubbles & linking phrases help you map so that a topic makes more sense to you & shows how topics interconnect to each other
- Click once on a concept bubble to show the connecting arrows (use to create map & link concepts)
- Double clicking on a concept bubble will allow you to add or change the text

Tip #3: Saving your Cmap (save after you’ve completed Tip #1):
- Go to “File” & click on “Save Cmap As” (if “Error” box appears, just click “OK”)
- Type in the name (title) of your Cmap in the “Save Cmap As” box & click “Save”
Using the Tool Box to Style Your Cmap

Tip #4: Press down the Control (ctrl) button & hit the “T” button to quickly bring up your Tool Box

Tip #5: Click once on a concept bubble & use the “Object” Tab on the Tool Box to change the color schemes, shapes, etc. *(Double click on text in concept bubble & click on “Font” tab to change text).*

Tip #6: Click on a linking arrow & use the “Line” Tab on the Tool Box to change the shape, arrowheads, etc.

Tip #7: To change the color for more than one bubble, click on a concept bubble then hold down the Control (ctrl) button & click on other bubbles *(see Tip #5 for color selection).*

Exiting Cmaps

Tip #8: Save your Cmap one last time! Double check to make sure it saved to your flash drive by:

- Go to the Desktop (computer’s main screen) & double click on “My Computer” icon
- Double click on your flash drive (E Drive)
- If your Cmap is saved, right click on the flash drive icon & select “Eject” *(if it is not saved, close out this box & follow Tip #3)*
- Wait for the E Drive icon to disappear (or give you a “You may now remove your drive” message) & take your flash drive out of the computer

Tip #9: Remember to save to your flash drive if you work on your Cmaps at home too!

Tip #10: Forgot your flash drive? Email your Cmap to yourself by:

- Save your Cmap to the C drive (C:/) or under “My Documents” in My Computer
- Open up your personal email online
- Click on “new” or “compose” to send a new email & put your email address in the “To” line
- Put “Cmap” or something of that nature in the “Subject” line so you don’t accidentally delete it
- Click on the “Attach Files” button (or the paperclip icon)
- Click on “Browse” & find your Cmap in the C Drive (or My Documents)
- Double click on your Cmap to attach it, then click “Attach Files” button *(if necessary – some emails may not have this)*
- Check to make sure your file is now an email attachment
- Hit “Send”
Appendix B

In-Class Assignment Summary Sheet & Check-off List

**Task 1:** Use IHMC CmapTools to construct a concept map of the attributes which compose culture as previously discussed in our history class. Include specific examples for each attribute. 
*Note: Remember, there is no “correct way” to map because you are mapping out how you think and process information. Be mindful, however, that you are mapping the correct information!*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Content Accuracy</strong></th>
<th><strong>Student Initials</strong></th>
<th><strong>Teacher Initials</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All of the information used in concept map nodes is accurate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept nodes linked appropriately and accurately with other concept nodes in the map</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Task 2:** After creating your Cmap, complete each item on the list below to practice using IHMC CmapTools features and to add your personal creative touches to your map. Both you and the teacher should initial on the appropriate lines for each feature to ensure maximum points for this assignment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Feature to Practice</strong></th>
<th><strong>Student Initials</strong></th>
<th><strong>Teacher Initials</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boldface the term “Executive Branch” &amp; increase it to 14 point font (or larger)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italicize the examples for each attribute &amp; change at least one attribute name to a different font</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color-coded at least one concept and corresponding examples</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

IHMC CmapTools Quick Reference Multimedia Options Student Handout

Inserting Web Links
1. Find a web resource & right click on the web address to “copy” it (make sure the whole address – “http” – is included).
2. Right click on the concept bubble you wish to insert the web link to; select “Add Web Address”
3. Name the web resource in the dialog box that appears, place cursor in “Web Address” text box, & hit “Ctrl+V” to paste in web address
4. Click “OK”
5. An icon should appear on that concept bubble; click on it & then on the text that appears below the icon to view your website

Dragging in Resource (i.e.: picture)
1. Save your picture as a JPEG file on the computer Desktop or copy & paste the picture into your “Views –CmapTools” window.
2. Click on the picture & drag it over to the concept bubble on your Cmap where you want it inserted
3. Release the mouse, name your picture in the dialog box that appears & click “OK”
4. An icon should appear on that concept bubble; click on it & then on the text that appears below the icon to view your picture
“Mouse Over” Insertions
1. Right click on the concept bubble you wish to insert info; select “Add Info”
2. Type in your info within the “Mouse Over Info” text box & click “OK”
3. Place mouse arrow over concept bubble & wait 2 seconds – info will appear in a yellow box (then disappear when mouse leaves concept)
   Note: “Mouse Over Info” does not print out

Moving Sections
1. Right click, hold & drag mouse until all concepts you wish to move are highlighted (i.e.: blue borders); release mouse.
2. Place cursor on any highlight concept & click & drag to move entire highlighted section
3. Release & click in white space to un-highlight concepts

Nested Nodes (Compacting Info)
1. Right click, hold & drag mouse until all concepts you wish to nest are highlighted (i.e.: blue borders); release mouse.
2. Place cursor on any highlight concept & right click; select “Nested Node,” then “Create”
3. Nested area will be grayed; use double arrows (<<) to expand or contract your node
4. When contracted, you may wish to use the “parent concept bubble” as a reminder of what info in nested underneath it (i.e.: parent bubble might be named “Congress” is nested information is about Congress).
5. To un-nest, right click in grayed area of node; select “Nested Node,” then “Detach Children”

Spell Check
1. “Tools” on top menu bar; select “Spelling”
2. Spelling on entire Cmap will be checked

Printing Cmap
Option A:
1. “Control + Print Screen” (takes a “picture” of your Cmap)
2. Open up Word Doc & right click “paste”
3. Adjust paper settings (i.e.: horizontal page layout, margins, etc.)
4. Adjust print settings (i.e.: print in grayscale at school, review via “Print Preview”)

Option B (if using a computer without full keyboard):
1. Open up “Snipping Tool” (go to “All Programs” then “Accessories”)
2. Click “New” & use Snipping Tool to take a ‘snapshot’ of your Cmap
3. On Snipped snapshot, right click & select “copy”
4. Open up Word Doc & right click “paste”
5. Adjust paper settings (i.e.: horizontal page layout, margins, etc.)
6. Adjust print settings (i.e.: print in grayscale at school, review via
   “Print Preview”)

About the Author

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Lessons for Historical Thinking: Who was Henry Wirz?

Amy Orr
University of Georgia

I created a lesson plan intended to enhance students’ historical thinking skills. Such skills require students to think contextually about history, thus sharpening their ability to think critically, problem-solve, and make claims using evidence. This lesson is designed for 8th grade students in a Georgia History/Georgia Studies class. Aligned with the Georgia Performance Standards, the lesson addressed the topic of Andersonville prison and required students to answer the following questions by synthesizing historical research and evidence-based arguments: Why was Henry Wirz the only person convicted of war crimes after the Civil War? Should he have been convicted? Why or why not?

This lesson was created for a course called “Teaching History,” and is included in its entirety, along with appendices, at the end of this article. Theoretically, this lesson would be used in a broader unit addressing the historical inquiry questions above, but I have not yet created all the lessons that would be a part of it. Therefore, in creating this lesson, I had to determine how it would be situated within the broader context.

Before determining the direction the lesson would take, I first had to define what the culminating task would be. Since the question specifically addresses Wirz’s criminal conviction, a good summative assessment would be a re-imagining of his trial. Working backward, it made the most sense that each lesson in the unit would focus on a specific skill related to historical investigation (e.g., considering audience, sourcing a text, etc.). Backward planning ensured that students would have a unit assessment in which a sufficient amount of historical thinking skills could be employed. It allowed me to recognize which skills would ultimately be needed; thus, each lesson could be planned around a specific historical thinking skill. Likewise, each lesson would address a particular piece of the trial (e.g., conditions of Andersonville prison, interpretation of the Lieber Code, etc.). As I narrowed down these ideas, I finally decided that I wanted to teach the skill of corroboration as well as have students compare and contrast Andersonville and Elmira prison camps. This lesson allows students to argue on either side during the trial by understanding that both Andersonville and Elmira prison camps were in poor condition.
I have not implemented this lesson yet as I am not currently teaching 8th grade social studies. Additionally, this lesson (as previously mentioned) would be implemented as part of a larger unit, which has not fully been created. However, I would recommend that, prior to using this lesson/unit, educators take time to teach students about historical thinking and practice using these skills in smaller chunks. A lesson such as this would require some prior work with such skills, but is intended to refine those skills. It is likely that students will struggle with corroborating sources and using historical thinking skills in general, and that is probably appropriate during this lesson. It allows for teachers to scaffold these skills so that more intensive work with historical thinking can take place later.

At the point in the unit when I would teach this lesson, the students will have already had a lesson on the conditions of Andersonville prison. To activate students’ prior knowledge about this topic, the hook activity consists of students describing the conditions in an expression of their choosing (such as writing a paragraph, drawing a picture, or making a list). Afterward, the class would share their ideas and note commonalities, as well as what sources they could recall where they gleaned their information. Ideally, this would lead into a discussion of the skill of corroborating sources. Specifically, the teacher would ensure that students understand the purpose of corroboration and its relevance to the PAIR protocol (VanSledright, 2004). The PAIR protocol allows historians to think historically by assessing sources with respect to Perspective (considering an author’s positions), Attribution (recognizing the purpose of the source), Identification (understanding what the source is), and Reliability (corroborating multiple historical accounts).

The primary learning activities would follow this discussion and include reviewing different sources pertaining to the Elmira prison. Students would work in groups of ideally four students each, and each individual would have a unique source to review. Essentially, there are three rounds of this activity. As students read through their sources, they are to fill in the first section of the corresponding graphic organizer (see Appendix C). This section is intended to have students think about the information included in their source.

Once students have completed the first section of the graphic organizer, students will work with one other student in their group to compare and contrast sources. As they do so, they will fill in the second part of the graphic organizer. This second round is a critical step in teaching students to corroborate sources as it requires students to point out specific ways that two sources on a given topic may or may not align. In creating this section of the graphic organizer, I wanted students to focus on information that was similar in both texts and then acknowledge any conflicting information. I intentionally chose to have this step be a two-person task rather than the all four students in the group so that it was more streamlined and scaffolded. Although it consists of three seemingly simple tasks (a Venn diagram and two questions), they are intentional and right to the point.
The final round of corroboration skill-building essentially is a repetition of round two; however, this time all group members compare and contrast their sources while paying particular attention to what information is consistent across all sources as well what information conflicts. The final two questions of the graphic organizer lead students into thinking about whether or not there are major inconsistencies or contradictions in the sources as well as how the corroboration process helps us to think contextually.

At the end of the lesson, the students will refer to their hook activity and add the conditions of Elmira prison camp to their list, paragraph, or illustration. Additionally, students will complete an exit slip which the teacher will use to assess students’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions from the lesson. As students complete this lesson, informal assessment would include listening for students discussing specific details of the prison camps (such as overcrowding, lack of resources, etc.) and ensuring that students use multiple sources to support factual evidence.

**Lesson Plan**

**Lesson Designer:** Amy Orr  
**Lesson Topic:** Andersonville Prison & Henry Wirz  
**Relevant Standard(s):**  
SS8H6 The student will analyze the impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction on Georgia.  
  b. State the importance of key events of the Civil War; include Antietam, the Emancipation Proclamation, Gettysburg, Chickamauga, the Union blockade of Georgia’s coast, Sherman’s Atlanta Campaign, Sherman’s March to the Sea, and Andersonville  
**Grade Level:** 8th Grade (Georgia Studies)  
**Historical Inquiry Questions:** Why was Henry Wirz the only person convicted of war crimes after the Civil War? Should he have been convicted? Why or why not?  
**Lesson Goals:** At this point in the unit, students will have spent some time reviewing sources for the trial, such as Felix de la Baume’s testimony, lack of Confederate resources, the Lieber Code, prisoner exchange mandates, conditions of Andersonville prison, etc. This lesson’s focus is on the condition of other prison camps, specifically Elmira Prison in the Union, during the Civil War.  
  - **Knowledge:** Students will compare and contrast the conditions of Andersonville and Elmira prison camps.  
  - **Skills:** Students will learn how to corroborate sources in order to build a strong evidence-based argument  
  - **Dispositions:** Students will learn that history is a process of investigation, debate, and using evidence to reach a judgment.
Instructional Plan Format:

Prior Knowledge: Students have already read some information regarding the conditions of Andersonville prison, so this lesson is specifically designed to get students to corroborate sources with information about Elmira prison.

Intro/Hook: Based on prior knowledge, students will describe the conditions of Andersonville prison. Students can choose how to express this information (e.g., writing a paragraph, making a list, drawing a picture, etc.). The teacher will informally assess students’ descriptions as they work, and the class will discuss their descriptions afterward. Either the teacher or a student will write pertinent descriptions on the board for students to refer to throughout the lesson. The teacher will then ask whether students think this was the only prison camp that had such conditions and, if not, why would we need to consider this information given our culminating task (see Appendix A for assessment criteria).

Learning Opportunities:

1. **Debrief Intro Activity** – Discuss how the class was able to reach common descriptions (What sources were used when we learned this information? How could we discern which information was most accurate?).

2. **Review “Corroboration”** – At this point in the year, students should have some experience with historical inquiry, so we will briefly review what it means to corroborate sources (What are we looking for? What’s the point of corroborating sources? How does this pertain to the PAIR protocol?).

3. **Elmira Sources** – Students will work in groups of four or five. Each student in the group will get a document pertaining to the Elmira prison camp (see Appendix B). They will read the document and fill out part one of the graphic organizer to summarize the main points of the document (see Appendix C).

4. **Collaborate** – After working individually, students will work with one other person in their group to compare and contrast their readings. They will look for similar facts and conflicting information, and fill out part two of the graphic organizer.

5. **Corroborate** – Finally, students will discuss their article with their entire group, again noting similar facts and conflicting information. They will fill out part three of the graphic organizer.

Closure:

As a class, students will debrief the learning activities. The teacher will ask about the process of corroborating the sources, the purpose in doing so, and what information we are left with as a result. Students will refer to the conditions of Andersonville from the intro activity and will create a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the conditions of both prison
camps to make sure students understand generally the conditions of confederate and union prison camps during the Civil War.

**Assessment:**
Exit Slip – Students will complete a 3-2-1 exit slip that asks for the following information: 3 questions that could be answered using any of the documents (e.g., each document should be able to provide this information – skill: corroboration), 2 statements about the conditions of Andersonville and Elmira prison camps (one similarity and one difference – content), and 1 sentence synthesizing how this information can be used in the summative assessment (see Appendix D/E for exit slip and assessment criteria).

**Differentiation:**
Remediation – Students could be offered sources that have been highlighted or interpreted by the teacher to understand the content more easily. The incorporation of multiple learning modalities (e.g., drawing, listing, etc.) in the intro and closure activities is a way of differentiating the process for students as well.

Extension/Enrichment – Students could look up additional sources pertaining to the Elmira prison camp and/or other union camps and go through the corroboration process with these sources as well. Likewise, students could do further source work with the four documents (or additional resources they find), by utilizing all aspects of the PAIR protocol, as opposed to just “reliability” (corroboration).

**Reference**

Appendix A

Assessment Criteria for Intro Activity

As students are doing the intro activity, the teacher will listen for the information below. This will be an informal assessment purely for the purposes of guiding instruction and ensuring that students have sufficient prior knowledge for the day’s lesson.

- Overcrowding
  - No prisoner exchange
- Deplorable conditions
  - Unsanitary water
  - Shanties/not enough shelter
  - Limited food supply
  - Dead line/pigeon roosts
  - Lack of resources
- Causes of death
  - Dysentery
  - Diarrhea
  - Scurvy
  - Poor nutrition
  - Exposure

Appendix B

Elmira Documents

A) http://kidnappingmurderandmayhem.blogspot.com/2012/04/nightmare-at-elmira.html
C) http://www.chemunghistory.com/prisoncamp.html
D) http://ihr.org/jhr/v02/v02p137_Weber.html?highlight=WyJoZW5yeSB3aXJ6Il0=
E) http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showpdf.php?id=8549
F) http://www.civil-war-journeys.org/elmira_prison.htm
Appendix C

Graphic Organizer

Name_________________________ Date_____________________

Part One: As you read the document about the Elmira prison camp in New York, fill out the information below on your own.

1) Write 4-5 significant ideas from this document.
   a.
   b.
   c.
   d.

2) What information is presented as factual? Be specific.
3) When was this document written? Who is the author? Is it a primary or secondary source? What does this information tell us?
4) Create a timeline of events presented in the document. Include the date and details about the event.
5) What information does the author really want the reader to know? What do they leave out?
6) Describe your reaction to this document. How does it make you feel? Are you left with questions? What images come to mind as you read? Does anything seem “off” to you? Be thorough in your response.

Part Two: With a partner, compare and contrast the documents you each read. Pay specific attention to similar information and information that is contradictory. Use the Venn diagram to organize your thoughts.

Title of the article YOU read:______________________________________

Title of the article YOUR PARTNER read:___________________________
7) What information is the same? Specifically, what factual evidence is similar?
8) Is there any conflicting information? Describe the contradictions. Be specific.

**Part Three: After comparing and contrasting your document with a partner, compare and contrast these articles with the group. As you compare, answer the questions below.**

9) What information is presented the same throughout all of the documents? Does any information stick out as extremely contradictory? How and why?
10) What does this process of corroboration tell us about the sources? Does the author/source type have anything to do with the information presented? Explain.
Appendix D/Appendix E

Exit Slip/Exit Slip Assessment Criteria

Name_________________________ Date_________________________

A. Write three questions that can be answered by each document. In other words, what are three pieces of information that are the same in all of the documents? For each question, students receive 1 point if the it asks something that can be corroborated across all of the Elmira sources. For example, “what percentage of prisoners died at Elmira” would earn 1 point because all articles include this fact (25%).

1. 
2. 
3. 

B. Write two statements (one similarity and one difference) comparing and contrasting the Andersonville and Elmira prison camps. Cite evidence from the documents. For each statement, students receive 1 point if the statement is accurate and evidence-based. An exemplary statement could be “Both camps were overcrowded since they contained more prisoners than they had room for according to...”.

1. (similarity)
2. (difference)

C. How might this information be helpful or hurtful during Henry Wirz’s trial? Explain. Students are able to receive up to 2 points for this response. By clearly stating whether it would be either helpful or hurtful, they will receive one point. They will receive an additional point if they can give a clear explanation of how it would be helpful or hurtful. A statement earning two points could be something like “This information would be helpful in Henry Wirz’s trial because it demonstrates that he was doing what other prison commanders did.”
About the Author

Amy Orr is a Spanish teacher at Morgan County Elementary School in Madison, Georgia. She is currently pursuing her Education Specialist in early childhood education. She earned her Master of Education in middle school education from UGA and her Bachelor of Arts in foreign language education from Valdosta State University. Her research interests include multicultural and interdisciplinary curriculum, culturally responsive teaching, and school reform.
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Dr. Eddie Bennett
GCSS Executive Director

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