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The Iowa Journal for the Social Studies

Note from the Editor

Jason Harshman

After a short hiatus, the Iowa Council for the Social Studies is proud to once again sponsor a journal focused on teaching and learning in the social studies. The *Iowa Journal for the Social Studies (IJSS)* is a peer-reviewed, electronic journal that provides an outlet for research, best practices, curriculum work, and media reviews in social studies education. We invite research, work in curriculum and conceptual pieces, as well as classroom-tested learning activities from teachers, undergraduate and graduate students, faculty in higher education, and social studies professionals at all levels. Although this journal will be published out of Iowa, we welcome manuscripts from across the United States and from our colleagues in other countries.

This return issue features work from scholars in and beyond Iowa on international and citizenship education within K-16 education. The open call solicited a number of responses from early career scholars, which is a population this publication intends to promote. Early career scholars in higher education, those pursuing a terminal degree in education, and those who have completed advanced degrees do research, teach, and provide insight into compelling issues within and related to social studies education. Likewise, classroom teachers, aspiring teachers, and social studies professionals make meaningful, creative, and forward-looking contributions to the teaching and learning of social studies that deserve recognition and that improve the work done by educators across all grades and areas. If you are doing research, teaching, constructing curriculum, developing programming, or working in some other facet related to social studies education, the *IJSS* is a place to feature your work.

Citizenship education is at the core of social studies education, no matter where one is teaching. Danielle Linowes' comparative study on students in Washington, D.C. and Beijing, China examines how citizenship education is taught in two major metropolitan areas and the local-international connections students make regarding their sense of citizenship. Her mixed methods study includes interviews with teachers in the United States and findings drawn from a survey of teachers in Beijing. Among other issues related to citizenship education, teachers in Linowes' study explore the question: What constitutes "high functioning" within the ongoing discussion of how "good" citizenship is conceptualized?

Stephen Henderson's piece on the use of literature circles in a college-level Western Civilization course centers on the benefits of student-voice in teaching and learning. Giving space to students to discuss course content and provide feedback on the effectiveness of the pedagogical approaches engaged throughout the course are essential components of a democratic learning space. Hendersons' decision to de-center the role of the instructor in favor of discourse and reflection demonstrates how social science courses help students develop skills applicable as citizens who live, learn, and interact with and from others beyond the classroom.

Wendy Yan's work on the extent to which culture affects teaching and learning and how international students negotiate the differences between their home country and the United States brings together international perspectives, cultural competence, and classroom pedagogy. While not specific to social studies pedagogy, per se, this study illustrates the importance of going

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beyond the surface when teaching and learning about culture in the social studies—and all content areas—to develop a deeper and more meaningful understandings of culture in the classroom.

When teaching about international perspectives, it is beneficial for students and instructors to interact with people in places and from backgrounds different from them. Since travel is not an option for everyone and technology is more readily accessible in most institutions of higher education, online learning environments offer an opportunity to narrow the distance between learning environments. Ellen Yeh and Guofang Wan examine how students use social networking sites to develop their English language skills. Within this study on language development, issues of culture, perspective, and interconnectedness emerge to inform reflections on citizenship and the importance of incorporating international perspectives in all subject areas, particularly the social studies.

Based on her work as a classroom teacher in Georgia, Nefertari Yancie's article describes methods used to facilitate learning activities that incorporate teaching about and for empathy in a world history course. Through the use of primary sources, students in Yancie's classroom consider perspectives and motives for actions in history. The lessons, resources, and supporting organizers will be of great interest to K-8 teachers looking to develop a greater appreciation by social studies students for decisions made by people in history.

This journal would not be possible without the support and commitment of many people. Thank you to the Executive Board of the Iowa Council for the Social Studies for supporting the revival of this publication. Of course, the *IJSS* is indebted to the late Dr. Lynn Nielsen, former Professor of Social Studies Education at the University of Northern Iowa and Editor of the *Iowa Council for the Social Studies Journal*, a publication he oversaw from 1994-2012. Thank you to the authors featured in this issue for your commitment to this publication and your work in the social studies. Thank you to the manuscript reviewers for volunteering your time and for providing feedback to authors. Lastly, thank you, the reader, for your interest in the *IJSS*. We hope that you will share this return issue of the *IJSS* with your colleagues and submit your work to a forthcoming issue.

For more information on the Review Board and the next CFP, visit the *IJSS* homepage at <https://iowajournalsocialstudies.wordpress.com/>.

**The Role of Schools in Washington, D.C. and Beijing in Producing
High-Functioning Citizens of the Local Community**

Danielle Linowes, Miami University

This study explores how primary teachers in Beijing and Washington, D.C. prepare students to become active citizens of their local communities. I sent a questionnaire to twenty English teachers in Beijing that contained sixteen questions on the purposes for teaching, the morals or values they hope their students develop, the incorporation of the local community of Beijing in the curriculum, and their perspectives on the ideal citizen. I interviewed thirteen educators in the Washington, D.C. area using similar questions. The framework is based upon the three typologies of citizenship, as well as a local, geographical definition of community. The results of this study suggest the promotion of personally responsible citizens in Beijing and in the Washington, D.C. area, and that more time and energy can be devoted to citizenship education as it relates to engagement in the local community.

Introduction

In the current education system, schools do not fully meet the aims of effective citizenship education (Castro, 2013; Knight-Abowitz & Harnish, 2006). Instead, among youth, there is a lack of political participation and engagement in the community (Wade & Saxe, 1996). In order to foster active citizens, schools need to focus more time and energy on citizenship education as it relates to engagement in the local community. The concept of citizenship, however, is very ambiguous and can be defined in a number of ways within the context of a democratic society (VanSledright & Grant, 1994; Nam, 2012). To explore these problems, I focused on the existing studies on citizenship and citizenship education, communities, and community engagement in schools in the contexts of the United States and China and employed a heuristic discussion of those topics using Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) three conceptions of citizenship: personally responsible, participatory, and justice-oriented.

Community

There are multiple ways to define community, including: (1) a group of people in one place; (2) a group of people who share a common religion, race, or profession; (3) the condition of sharing certain attitudes or interests; and (4) a group of interdependent plants and/or animals

growing or living together (O'Mahoney, 2012). Geography plays a role in what defines a community and many definitions of community involve an aspect of spatial boundaries in addition to other requirements (Costandius, Rosochacki & Le Roux, 2014; Ghosh, 2015; Zhong-Lin et al., 1996; Zhong-Lin et al., 1996). It is important to note that membership of the local community leads to recognition of membership in the larger society (Montero, 2009). Therefore, community identity does not only refer to local communities, but to national and global communities as well. Citizenship and citizenship education is inextricably linked to engagement in all of those communities.

Personally Responsible Citizenship

The personally responsible citizen stresses good character and volunteers within their local community (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). They abide by the laws and possess knowledge of the principles of democracy (Patterson, Doppin & Misco, 2012). Personally responsible citizens are also nice and caring community members (Douglas, Fry, Wilhelm & Housley, 2015). This is comparable to the conservative-values-based citizen, who maintains patriotism and loyalty to the nation and aims to preserve the community over transforming it (Castro, 2013). Therefore, the personally responsible citizen is not integral in maintaining a democratic society.

In the promotion of personally responsible citizens, schools utilize the illusory form of citizenship education. In this form of citizenship education, students maintain a passive role and there is a limited range of political content in learning activities (VanSledright & Grant, 1994). Teachers stress proper behavior, which conveys the idea that a good citizen is defined by kindness and good character (VanSledright & Grant, 1994; Silva & Langhout, 2011). This approach also stresses the discourses of nationalism, which convey a sense of American exceptionalism (Camicia & Zhu, 2011).

Learning is not an individual effort, so using the social context of the community is necessary to promote the development of citizenship in schools (Ghosh, 2015). In a personally responsible citizenship education, there is a charity paradigm in service learning with a focus on altruism (Costandius, Rosochacki & Le Roux, 2014; Wade & Saxe, 1996). These experiences center around making the people doing the charity work feel good rather than enacting effective solutions for institutional change. The purpose of the volunteer activities under this conception of citizenship education is to keep the community safe and allow for a peaceful society (Patterson, Doppen & Misco, 2012).

Citizenship and citizenship education in China. As the conception of the personally responsible citizen is “not inherently about democracy,” the concept of citizenship in China most closely mirrors that framework (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 243). However, it differs in that it is based in socialism and is more connected to a legal status prescribed by the government (Law, 2013). Within this framework, there are different conceptions of citizenship, but they are based upon the ideology of the state.

Citizenship in China is largely equated with national identity, which inhabits “the collective belief in an agreed-upon historic homeland; shared myths and histories; a common public culture; shared legal rights and duties; and a common economy with territorial mobility for members” (Smith, 1991, p. 14). The top priority of a citizen is national interest over self-interest and there is a strong emphasis on patriotism (Kwan-Choi Tse, 2014). In addition, self-oriented values dominate aspects of good citizenship, therefore making citizenship education in China about moral education with an emphasis on socialist values and traditional Chinese culture (Law, 2013; Chen, 2013). Like the rest of the world, China’s approach to citizenship education has been impacted by citizenship, with the country trying to both meet the needs of a market economy while preserving cultural traditions and one-party rule (Camicia & Zhu, 2011; Kwan-Choi Tse,

2014). Through moral education, the Chinese government promotes the production of citizens who possess specific characteristics and values in order to create and maintain a harmonious society (People's Daily, 2005). The features of this society include "democracy and rule of law, justice and fairness, sincerity and amity, vitality, stability and order, and harmonious co-existence between man and nature" (Camicia & Zhu, 2011, p. 607).

Participatory Citizenship

Participatory citizens "actively participate in the civic affairs and the social life of the community at the local, state, or national level" and organize within existing structures (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 241). Participatory citizens possess civic-mindedness, which is the "inclination or disposition to be knowledgeable of and involved in the community, and to have a commitment to act upon a sense of responsibility as a member of that community" (Bringle & Steinberg, 2010). Another important characteristic of a participatory citizen is the ability to listen to and understand other perspectives and achieve compromise in order to solve problems (Bringle & Steinberg, 2010).

In order to create participatory citizens, the technical form of citizenship education is put in place, which includes activities that focus on political concepts and yield measurable outcomes, but do not promote questioning the status quo (VanSledright & Grant, 1994). The goal of this type of citizenship education is to ensure the development of civic competence, so students are able to investigate issues in order to promote a more fair society (Castro, 2013). In this approach, students develop an awareness and understanding of issues and diverse perspectives, but there is no immediate call to action (Patterson, Doppen & Misco, 2012).

An awareness of rights and duties as a citizen and the limitations to those fosters action in the community (Montero, 2009). Service learning "purposefully connects academic curriculum with community service and student reflection, is an apt vehicle to encourage global thinking and

empower students to take action” (Christie, Montgomery & Staudt, 2012). It allows for both those giving and those receiving the service to experience gains. It is not just about “serving to learn” but also about “learning to serve” in order to foster future civic engagement (Bringle & Steinberg, 2010).

Justice-Oriented Citizenship

Justice-oriented citizens take a more critical and evaluative stance about the current state of democracy (Patterson, Doppen & Misco, 2012). They analyze and understand the root causes of issues and take transformative action (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). This type of citizenship includes the “desire and ability to investigate diverse, problematic, and controversial issues in pursuit of a more inclusive, just, and equitable society” and “applying what is learned through authentic self-motivated, and social justice-oriented acts” (Silva & Landhout, 2011). This view of citizenship aligns well with the idea of critical citizenship, which entails the ability to “question and challenge social, political, and institutional deterrents to democracy” (Castro, 2013, p. 223). Justice oriented citizens are integral to furthering and bettering a democratic society.

Schools enact the constructive form of citizenship education to achieve justice-oriented citizenship, in which students have an active role and are encouraged to think critically, engage in different learning activities, and examine and evaluate political issues (VanSledright & Grant, 1994). Reflective inquiry is utilized to examine multiple perspectives and multiple solutions to problems and consequently, take action (Douglas, Fry, Wilhelm & Housley, 2015; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Justice-oriented citizenship education is framed by social justice outcomes, which include “allegiance to universal human values, democratic ideals, and human rights and dignity of all people in the world” (Ahmad & Szpara, 2005, p. 10).

In justice-oriented citizenship education, communities are partners in the development of a critical consciousness and fight for justice (Bhattacharyya, 2004). This critical consciousness

allows people “lacking the resources controlled by the [people in power], to define the cause and locus of the necessity, and organize its own resources and strategies for negotiation” (Montero, 2009, p. 150). Students who take part in justice-oriented citizenship education examine the root causes of issues and promote awareness and education of those causes while taking action to produce change (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004; Nam, 2012).

Research Methodology

This study focused on primary teachers from Beijing and the Washington, D.C. area. I obtained data from teachers in Beijing as a result of access to expert sampling. In Beijing, I obtained data from 20 English teachers in primary schools who were highlighted as expert teachers and served as mentors to other English teachers in their schools. All of the Chinese teachers surveyed had at least 11 years of experience. Among the teachers surveyed, 60% had 21-25 years of experience. Female teachers (95%) outnumbered male teachers (5%), and 60% fell in the age range of 41-45 years old, 35% of teachers fell in the age range of 36-40 years old, and 5% of teachers fell in the age range of 46-50 years old. Most teachers studied English at their university (65%).

In the Washington, D.C. area, I was not able to obtain data through expert sampling, as I was able to in Beijing, so I utilized convenience sampling, reaching out to teachers through email and interviewing those who were available. I interviewed 13 teachers in elementary schools. Most of the teachers I interviewed had between one and ten years of experience (62%), with two veteran teachers having more than 25 years of experience (15%). Female teachers (69%) outnumbered male teachers (31%), and most teachers (46%) were 26-30 years old, with three, more experienced teachers, being between the ages of 51 and 65 years old. Most teachers had a Master’s degree (85%) and most teachers had a degree in Education (77%).

Table One. Participant Demographics

Washington, D.C.			Beijing, China		
Category	Number of teachers	Approximate % of teachers	Category	Number of teachers	Approximate % of teachers
Gender			Gender		
Female	9	69%	Female	19	95%
Male	4	31%	Male	1	5%
Years of Experience			Years of Experience		
1-5	6	46%	1-5	0	0%
6-10	2	15%	6-10	0	0%
11-15	1	8%	11-15	3	15%
16-20	2	15%	16-20	5	25%
21-25	0	0%	21-25	12	60%
25+	2	15%	25+		
Age			Age		
20-25	1	8%	20-25	0	0%
26-30	6	46%	26-30	0	0%
31-35	1	8%	31-35	0	0%
36-40	0	0%	36-40	7	35%
41-45	1	8%	41-45	12	60%
46-50	1	8%	46-50	1	5%
50+	3	23%	50+	0	0%
Degree			Degree		
Education	10	77%	English Education	4	20%
Other	3	23%	English	13	65%
Master's	11	85%	Other	3	15%
Bachelor's	2	15%			

Data Collection

I used a questionnaire to collect data from the primary school English teachers in China, which was made up of sixteen questions containing rating scales, multiple choice, and free

responses (See Appendix A). The questions were created deliberately based on a previous study of teacher conceptualizations of citizenship education (Patterson, Doppen, & Misco, 2012). I used semi-structured interviewing to collect data from the teachers in Washington, D.C. by creating a guiding set of questions that allowed for flexible answers (Garner & Scott, 2013). The interview questions were similar to the questions contained in the questionnaire (See Appendix B). As I was able to interview the D.C. area teachers, as opposed to administer a questionnaire, I obtained much more data from them than from the Beijing teachers. Therefore, the majority of my analysis centered on data collected from the Washington, D.C. teachers.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed through a combination of descriptive and analytical coding (Richards, 2009). Descriptive coding was used to generate a list of key words that appeared throughout many of the responses. Analytical coding was employed to extract meaning from those keywords and to create “categories that express new ideas about the data” (Richards, 2009, p. 102). After coding and categorizing the data, word counts were tallied to gain quantitative information on the number of teachers who mentioned specific phrases or words relating to the emerging themes (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). This process of abductive reasoning was informed by knowledge from literature, as well as information gained from questionnaire and interview responses to make inferences about and categorize the behavior of teachers in regards to citizenship education beliefs and implementation as well as classroom engagement with the community (Lipscomb, 2012). This abductive approach allowed me to sustain the teachers’ narratives, while making sense of and condensing the data.

Table Two. Washington, D.C. Area Teacher Pseudonyms and Descriptions

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Grade taught	Years of Experience	Income Level of School
Alex	54	Male	5 th	11	High income
Barbara	52	Female	Pre-Kindergarten	18	High income
Ben	30	Male	3 rd	2	Low income
Catherine	27	Female	2 nd	5	High income
Christine	23	Female	4 th	1	Low income
Jane	61	Female	Kindergarten	38	High income
Jill	28	Female	4 th	5	High income
Laura	33	Female	1 st	10	High income
Mary	48	Female	3 rd	26	High income
Marcus	29	Male	Instructional Coach (all grades)	7	Low income
Rachel	29	Female	2 nd	4	Low income

Ideal Citizenship in Theory

Interviews with D.C. area teachers about their conceptions of an ideal citizen revealed a few themes. Many of the teachers noted specific characteristics that they believed an ideal citizen should possess, while also noting specific actions that an ideal citizen would take. While there were many qualities and dispositions that teachers shared in their interviews, the following six were mentioned most frequently: respect, responsibility, the common good, care and empathy, listen to different perspectives, and voice and support opinions.

Respect. Five teachers mentioned respect when discussing an ideal citizen. Christine, a first-year 4th grade teacher, noted the importance of “respect for things and others” because the learning space is sacred and “if [the students] disrespect it, it will crumble.” Jane, a 38-year teacher currently working in a Kindergarten classroom, echoed the importance of respect, sharing that she explains the importance of keeping their hands to themselves to her students. According to Barbara, a Pre-Kindergarten teacher with 18 years of teaching experience, in order for citizens

to exhibit respect, they must “understand that other people’s rights matter as much as [their] own rights.” Similarly, Ben, a second-year 3rd grade teacher, said that respect is displayed by learning “how to state your needs in a way that’s polite and learning to be grateful with the things that you have and you share.”

Responsibility. Possessing a sense of responsibility was an underlying theme throughout many of the teachers’ statements. Marcus, an Instructional Coach in his seventh year of teaching, felt that citizens should demonstrate a “sense of responsibility to the continuation of the work that has been put in by people before them.” Ben conveyed a citizen’s responsibility to utilize a mastered skill and help others also master that skill in a productive manner. In both of these cases, responsibility is not solely a quality, but implies a need for action. In contrast, Rachel, a 4th grade teacher with two years of classroom experience, stated that ideal citizens would hold themselves and others accountable to show the values of respect, kindness, and curiosity.

The Common Good. The common good ties into possessing responsibility, as it emphasizes the responsibility that citizens have to others over their individual needs and wants. Alex, a 5th grade teacher with eleven years of teaching experience, explained that citizens must grapple with the question, “Do you want the more selfish thing or what is better for everybody?” In addition, Ben believed ideal citizens should also be able to manifest the concept of the common good into action by sharing resources. The common good expands beyond citizens solely considering those immediately around them, and also includes caring “about the world, about justice” and finding “how they can make a difference with their life,” as stated by Barbara.

Care and Empathy Another aspect of ideal citizenship that encompasses the common good is the ability to show care and empathy. Jill, a 4th grade teacher in her fifth year as an educator, saw empathy as a way for citizens to “identify themselves as part of a larger community” and recognize people who are less fortunate than themselves. Jane explained that

good citizens in her classroom would invite a child who is alone at recess to play with them and comfort a child who is upset. Citizens emulate care and empathy first by acknowledging others' feelings and circumstances and then taking action in order to help those who may need it.

Listen to Different Perspectives. Three teachers noted the ability to listen to different perspectives as a quality of an ideal citizen. By listening to viewpoints that are different from their own, citizens gain new knowledge, as Barbara pointed out. Barbara expanded on this by explaining that in order to consider other perspectives, one must overcome their own attitude and frustrations. Laura, a 1st grade teacher with ten years of experience, highlighted that an ideal citizen will change sides or modify their viewpoints after hearing other people's perspectives. In this way, according to Barbara, "helping citizens listen to each other as well as assert themselves is equally valuable."

Voice and Support Opinions. Five teachers believed that ideal citizens should be able to proclaim their thoughts and opinions and support them with solid reasoning. Catherine, a 2nd grade teacher in her fifth year as an educator, added that citizens should be able to do so "in a responsible and respectful manner." Jane explained that an ideal citizen in her classroom would be able to effectively communicate when something is not going their way and be able to express their feelings with words. An ideal citizen would not only be able to state their opinion, but also explain why they think that way, according to Laura. For Ben and Marcus, who shared that they taught mainly marginalized students, the focus was on creating citizens who would be able to stand up for what they believe in, "in a world where a lot of people are going to be telling them they cannot."

Citizenship Education in Beijing

When asked to define an ideal citizen in the community, 13 teachers included "friendly," 11 teachers included "love country," seven teachers mentioned "professional ethics," seven

teachers mentioned “harmony,” and six teachers mentioned “equality.” Many of these traits are consistent with the personally responsible conception of citizenship, as they involve what the teachers defined as good character that allow students to maintain a peaceful society rather than take action or apply critical thinking. There was a sense of nationalism that teachers aimed to promote, which also hindered students from obtaining the ability to actively improve society (a trait of participatory citizens), as well as the ability to question societal norms (a trait of justice-oriented citizens). In addition, in their purposes for teaching, there were eight mentions of emphasis on good behavior and manners. There was a lot of focus on obtaining specific skills, manners, and/or qualities, which also suggested that the teacher’s aimed to foster personally responsible citizens.

Out of the 20 teachers from Beijing, 19 stated that they strongly disagreed or were neutral about the statement that their purpose for teaching was to become actively involved in the political process. This is not surprising, as a study by Xia (2011) found that Chinese citizens possess a sense of political apathy overall. This is also consistent with the overall trend of promoting personally responsible citizens. Political participation is more relevant for participatory citizenship. This is similar to the results from the teachers in Washington, D.C. Despite being in a politically charged environment, most teachers were neutral or strongly disagreed with the task of preparing their students to be actively involved in the political process. In Beijing, this seemed to be a result of the cultural and historical context, but in Washington, D.C., teachers attributed this to their belief that politics are irrelevant to young students.

Ideal Citizenship in Practice

In the previous section, I highlighted six qualities and characteristics that D.C. area teachers believed to make up an ideal citizen. I also highlighted five qualities and characteristics that Beijing teachers believed to make up an ideal citizen. These teachers did not give descriptive

responses on how they teach their students to become ideal citizens, so, therefore, I do not have Beijing data on their teaching practices to analyze. In this section, I will explain how the D.C. area teachers utilized their classrooms and the community to prepare students to become the active citizens they described. Data revealed that teachers prepare students to be active citizens by using both an implicit and explicit curriculum. Within the implicit curriculum, teachers utilized classroom management as a way to shape their students into ideal citizens, and conducted formal and informal activities surrounding school and classroom issues. Within the explicit curriculum, teachers utilized reading and writing to teach citizenship.

Classroom Management

Of the 13 teachers interviewed, 11 of mentioned classroom or behavior management as a means of developing ideal citizens. The most often mentioned program for classroom management was Responsive Classroom, a program developed specifically for elementary school teachers by the Center for Responsive Schools, that promotes strategies related to social, behavioral, and academic growth among students (<https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/about/>). Four of the teachers interviewed made explicit references to Responsive Classroom and five teachers mentioned elements of the Responsive Classroom approach. According to Jill, citizenship education is an explicit part of Responsive Classroom, as it provides terminology associated with being a good citizen and foster the students' thinking about how their choices affect the classroom community.

One way in which teachers incorporated Responsive Classroom was through the collaborative creation of the classroom rules. By giving students the power to create their own rules, teachers allowed them to develop an understanding of how to create a positive community and allowed them to actively participate in their own moral development.

Another aspect of Responsive Classroom is holding class meetings. The dialogue that occurred during these class meetings, according to Catherine, helped students to develop a sense of “various social cues and being respectful while listening and sharing information, asking questions, and learning to be a decent conversationalist.” Rachel’s students ask questions during morning meeting and described it as a time to share agreement and disagreement and as “a safe space for [students] to engage with each other.” Mary and Ben included a segment in their meeting that allowed students to give a shout out, thank you, or complement to another student. Mary and Barbara both used closing circle as an opportunity for students to discuss what they can improve on and how to do better the next day. Like collaborative creation of the rules, these class meetings allowed students to be actively involved in their education and experience respectful discussion.

Classroom and School Issues

This study found that within elementary school classrooms, teachers focus on specific issues that students have firsthand experience with in the classroom and the school. These classroom and school issues often transferred to issues seen in the larger community, so the classroom became a microcosm of society. As Catherine, Rachel, and Barbara stated, by relating the larger issues, such as branches of government, to the issues that students encountered in their daily lives, it was easy to “make the connections between being a citizen within the classroom and being a citizen within the community.” The topics that teachers most frequently address in their classrooms are voting, fairness, and problem solving.

In Laura’s classroom, voting was as simple as finding out students’ favorite animals or favorite seasons. While this type of voting was not influential, Barbara saw it as “an opportunity [for students] to express themselves and be heard,” acknowledging that their viewpoints mattered. Laura also allowed students to vote and make decisions on issues that affected the classroom. For instance, they voted on which classroom field trips they should take first and discussed why, thus

giving them opportunity to take a side and justify their arguments in order to form a consensus.

The intent is that by practicing the skills that students learn when voting and debating about issues that they relate to and experience every day as primary school children will transfer to when they vote and debate about larger issues in the future.

When managing students' behavior, Ben noted that he must be fair and in order to ensure this, he encouraged his students to politely voice their disagreements with his decisions. This way, students learn that when they see something they do not believe is fair, they have the power to say something. In contrast, Barbara believed that her students needed to understand that life isn't always fair. She explained to them that different people have different needs, so being fair does not always mean getting the same treatment. These two teachers illustrated the importance for students to not only recognize fairness, but also recognize situations that are unfair and be able to articulate their beliefs.

Four teachers explained their process of involving students in solving classroom and school-level problems. When a problem arose, Barbara stopped and helped the students brainstorm how they could move forward. Ben spoke specifically of an instance when the students were having difficulty lining up and utilized a class meeting to ask the students how to solve the problem. By allowing the students to have input on finding solutions to common classroom issues, this teacher empowered them to feel as though they had contributions to make to the classroom. When there were issues on a school-wide level, Jill explained to her students how to petition the principal or the school board. When students were able to solve problems on a smaller scale, Catherine noticed that it was easier and more efficient to independently solve other problems that arise.

In the Explicit Curriculum

While citizenship education was prevalent in the informal actions teachers took to manage their classrooms, it was also formally stated in the curriculum. Depending on the district and the grade, citizenship education appeared in the social studies standards. Since time for social studies is reduced or eliminated in elementary grade levels in favor of tested subjects such as reading, seven teachers shared that they teach citizenship through literature and writing.

While social studies textbooks are prevalent in schools throughout the country, Alex believed that “when literature is good, it moves [the students] in a way that nonfiction cannot.” Ben realized that “behind every text there’s a message,” so it’s important to help the students extract that message and make the story meaningful. Some values and messages Mary focused on when choosing literature for her classroom were acceptance, friendship, and honesty. Barbara read Todd Parr books about making mistakes and the Golden Rule. She extended on these books by asking her students questions such as, “Is it okay to make the same mistake over and over again?” and discussing how implementing the Golden Rule can be difficult. Ben began to read books with messages about social issues, such as *The Great Kapok Tree* and *Two Days in May*, which discuss deforestation and overpopulation. Like this teacher, Alex saw value in helping the students make text-to-world connections so that students learn about world issues at the same time they are developing reading skills.

Like reading, writing is often valued over social studies. Three teachers discussed how they integrate citizenship education into writing activities. After reading books about the environment, Ben had his students write essays and make activist posters to put around the school to educate others on the issues discussed in the books. Alex had his students write essays centered on “people of peace” who were largely unknown, but made an impact on the expansion of civil rights. In order to connect to the community, Catherine planned for her students to write letters to

veterans and valentines to individuals in a nursing home. Purposeful writing is a very empowering way for students to express how they have developed as citizens.

Operationalization with the Community

Two ways D.C. area teachers allowed their classes to get out into the community was through volunteering and field trips to museums and monuments. Seven teachers gave their students opportunities to volunteer. Out of those seven teachers, five of them had their students volunteer in nursing homes. In addition, a few schools held fundraisers such as food drives, toy drives, and diaper drives. In order to bring the community into the classroom, some teachers brought in guest speakers and community volunteers. The majority of the guest speakers came in for “career day” and were parents or community members, such as the mayor, a council member, a librarian, and a local business owner. In addition, both Catherine and Jane brought in Veterans to speak at assemblies for Veteran’s Day and Memorial Day.

Out of the 20 teachers from Beijing, six stated that they incorporated community service into their classrooms. These teachers stated that they spent less than 30 minutes per week on community service activities, and although they did not explain specific activities, most cited specific concepts such as “care for the environment” and “education of safety” as part of their regular teaching. One teacher stated, “Students designed signs for elderly people in the community.” This teacher allowed for direct interaction with the community, but it was more closely related to volunteering. Another teacher stated that she “invites community services to come into the class and teach the students about community.” While students did not go out into the community, they were learning about their community directly from community organizations and were gaining knowledge of available resources.

Beliefs vs. Action

Eleven of the thirteen D.C. area teachers did not present community engagement efforts that matched their conceptions of citizenship. There was a discrepancy between what teachers believed and hoped to accomplish and what they allowed their students to accomplish in the community. Most of the volunteering was not connected to class content and was a one-time experience. The fundraisers and drives created an emphasis on donations and altruism as opposed to effective action. In addition, the field trips were informative, but did not give students the chance to connect with people or get to know the issues in the community. The guest speakers gave the students a new perspective, but did not put the students out into the community.

While in the Washington, D.C. area, their conceptions of citizenship did not correspond with their community engagement efforts, the opposite occurred for teachers in Beijing. The teachers' conceptions of personally responsible citizenship greatly affected their engagement with the community, or lack thereof. Knowledge and basic skills were valued over action. In addition, if there was any engagement with the community, it was surface-level and most did not address societal issues. The one issue that was discussed most frequently was the environment and the education to help students develop care for the environment. However, there was no apparent action towards positive change for environmental conservation or an examination of root causes of environmental issues.

Implications and Conclusion

This study ultimately answers the research questions: "What do teachers believe about citizenship and the ideal citizen?" and "How do these beliefs affect their instruction?" My findings support China's effort to maintain a socialist and harmonious society, as teachers did not aim for students to question or think critically and citizenship education was restrictive (People's Daily, 2005). As a result, there was little interaction with the community. In the Washington, D.C. area,

teachers varied on their conceptions of citizenship, but many agreed on a few characteristics that an ideal citizen should possess. Some of these characteristics fell under personally responsible, such as care and empathy, abiding by the laws, and patriotism and loyalty to the nation (Douglas, Fry, Wilhelm & Housley, 2015; Patterson, Doppen & Misco, 2012; Castro, 2013). Others fell under participatory, such as listening to different perspectives and obtaining a sense of responsibility to the community (Bringle & Steinberg, 2010).

Even among those teachers who named qualities of personally responsible citizens, none of them truly utilized the illusory form of citizenship education that is associated with personally responsible citizenship (VanSledright & Grant, 1994). Teachers did stress character development, but students maintained active roles in the classroom and were not passive recipients of knowledge (VanSledright & Grant, 1994; Ghosh, 2015). Aside from Marcus and Ben who most closely embodied justice-oriented citizenship, the majority of techniques used in the classrooms were based on participatory citizenship. However, as was discussed above, politics was left out of most of the teachers' instruction, which is a part of participatory citizenship education. The absence of politics within these primary school classrooms adds to the trend of a lack of political participation among youth (Wade & Saxe, 1996).

While many of the teachers acknowledged that they discuss skills related to citizenship, they did not necessarily provide opportunities for their students to utilize the skills for impact on community issues. Part of this trend relied on the teachers' definitions of community. Although I prefaced this study with a geographical definition of community and focused on the schools' surrounding communities, many teachers took community to mean "the condition of sharing certain attitudes or interests" and focused mainly on the classroom community (O'Mahoney, 2012). The young age of the students caused the majority of teachers to focus on the micro-level of the classroom and the values and norms promoted in the classroom community, as opposed to

the local community. Many teachers assumed that the qualities and values learned in the classroom would apply to the larger community when the students moved on to subsequent grades.

There is an overall lack of purposeful community engagement across the majority of the teachers' conceptions and beliefs of citizenship education. While behavior management systems, such as Responsive Classroom, and discussion of classroom issues are effective ways to promote democratic behaviors, they do not fulfill the breadth of citizenship education alone. There is a need for content-based activities and community engagement opportunities that allow students to apply the behaviors and skills they currently develop in the classroom.

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Appendix A

For each of the following items, circle or write the answer that best describes you.

1. What is your gender?
 - a. male
 - b. female

2. What is your age?
 - a. 20-25
 - b. 26-30
 - c. 31-35
 - d. 36-40
 - e. 41-45
 - f. 46-50
 - g. 50 or older

3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
 - a. Primary school
 - b. General or vocational junior secondary school
 - c. General or vocational senior secondary school
 - d. Vocational post-secondary school
 - e. University
 - f. Master's degree
 - g. Doctorate degree

4. If you attended a Higher Education Institution, which institution did you attend?

5. If you attended a Higher Education Institution, what discipline did you study?

6. What type of school do you teach at?
 - a. Primary school
 - b. General junior secondary school
 - c. Vocational junior secondary school
 - d. General senior secondary school
 - e. Vocational senior secondary school
 - f. Vocational post-secondary school
 - g. University

7. How many total years have you been teaching?
 - a. 1-5
 - b. 6-10
 - c. 11-15
 - d. 16-20

- e. 21-25
- f. more than 25

8. What subject or subjects do you teach?

Please rank the following statements in order of how much you agree (1- strongly agree, 5-neutral, 10- strongly disagree).

9. My purpose for teaching is to help students

- _____ prepare for a profession.
- _____ learn their obligations as members of Chinese society.
- _____ learn to respect authority.
- _____ become productive members of society.
- _____ develop a national identity.
- _____ become actively involved in the political process.
- _____ become effective participants of the local community.
- _____ develop a global perspective.
- _____ make decisions based on good morals.
- _____ learn their rights as members of Chinese society.
- _____ take action when they feel they are treated unfairly.
- _____ make the world more just.
- _____ develop critical thinking skills.

10. Aside from those listed, what do you believe your main purpose for teaching to be?

11. What morals or values do you aim to help your students develop?

12. How does being in Beijing, as opposed to another area of China, affect your instruction and/or curriculum?

For each of the following items, circle the answer from the answer choices or write the answer in the lines below.

13. Do you incorporate community service in your class? Yes/No

- a. If you answered yes, how much time per week do you spend on community service?
 - a. less than 30 minutes
 - b. between 30 minutes and 1 hour
 - c. between 1 and 3 hours
 - d. between 3 and 5 hours

- e. more than 5 hours
 - b. If you answered yes, what types of community service do you incorporate in your class?
14. Do you include subject matter directly related to Beijing in your class? Yes/No
- a. If you answered yes, how much time per week discussing subject matter directly related to Beijing?
 - a. less than 30 minutes
 - b. between 30 minutes and 1 hour
 - c. between 1 and 3 hours
 - d. between 3 and 5 hours
 - e. more than 5 hours
 - b. If you answered yes, what specific subject matter directly related to Beijing do you incorporate into your class?
15. What is the ideal citizen in your community? What attributes do they have? What are they able to do and what dispositions do they have?
16. What does it mean to you to prepare students to become ideal citizens? How important is this and how do you accomplish this task? What challenges or successes do you experience with this charge?

Appendix B

1. What is your gender?
2. What is your age?
3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
4. If you attended a college or university, what was your degree in?
5. What grade do you teach?
6. How many total years have you been teaching for?
7. If you teach a specific subject or subjects, which one(s)?

Please rank the following by how much you agree with the statement. 1-strongly disagree, 5-neutral, 10-strongly agree. My purpose for teaching is to help students:

- _____ prepare for a profession.
- _____ learn their obligations as members of society.
- _____ learn to respect authority.
- _____ become productive members of society.
- _____ develop a national identity.
- _____ become actively involved in the political process.
- _____ become effective participants of the local community.
- _____ develop a global perspective.
- _____ make decisions based on good morals.
- _____ learn their rights as members of society.
- _____ take action when they feel they are treated unfairly.
- _____ make the world more just.
- _____ develop critical thinking skills.

8. What do you believe your main purpose for teaching to be?
9. To what extent do you believe that purpose is enacted in your classroom? How do you ensure that purpose is enacted? What specific actions do you take?
10. What is the ideal citizen in your community? Community can be defined as both the classroom community, as well as the larger, local community surrounding the school. What attributes do they have? What are they able to do and what dispositions do they have?
11. What does it mean to you to prepare students to become ideal citizens? How important is this and how do you accomplish this task?
12. What challenges or successes do you experience with this charge?
13. Is citizenship education explicitly stated in the curriculum?
 - a. If so, in what ways? Which aspects do you incorporate and how do you incorporate them?
 - b. If not, do you incorporate any aspects of citizenship education in your classroom? Which aspects do you incorporate and how do you incorporate them?

14. How do you consider the local community in preparing your students to be ideal citizens?
15. Does being in Washington, D.C., as opposed to another area of the United States affect your instruction and/or curriculum? If so, how?
16. Do you do any work with your class within the local community? If so, what type of work?
 - a. Do you use it as a supplement to the curriculum or as the curriculum itself?
 - b. What challenges do you face? What benefits do you find?
 - c. How do your students react to this type of work?

Choice Comes to College: An Action Research on the Implementation of Literature Circles in a Western Civilization History Course

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In a traditional college history course, students purchase an academic textbook, are assigned specific chapters to read, and listen each class to a professor march chronologically through history via lectures. This paper documents an attempt to raise student interest and engagement in a Western Civilization course through the implementation of literature circles utilizing works of historical fiction. Furthermore, the paper also seeks to determine whether or not the use of historical fiction increases students' motivation and engagement with the course readings. The study suggests that the use of literature circles, a method generally reserved for upper-elementary and secondary education, offers professors a new and highly effective pedagogical practice that is easily adaptable to the college classroom and increases students' interest and engagement with historical content. Moreover, the implementation of literature circles brings choice to the college classroom, which, in turn, motivates students to actively engage with their readings.

Introduction

Enrollment in remedial courses has increased at my institution over the past few years. Many first-year students are required to complete pre-college courses now labeled "90" courses before enrolling in standard introductory or 100-level courses. Attendance in these courses is due in large part to underdeveloped reading comprehension skills and a consequence of these areas of need continues to be a disengaged student body. As a result, I often find myself drowning in an ocean of silence, peering across the room at row after row of college students hunched over their smartphones, hungrily devouring their next Tweet, Snapchat, text, or Facebook post. "How does one engage this type of student?" became the question that continually entered my mind. This scene has been replicated over and over from the community college courses I have taught to my current University-level history courses. Of course there are policies related to cellphones that can help combat the issue, but I wanted to move beyond course policies which demand specific behaviors to pedagogy that promotes intrinsic motivation, especially pedagogy that motivates students to engage with the content.

Newman, Wehlage and Lamborn (1992) define engagement as "the student's psychological investment in and effort directed toward learning, understanding, or mastering the knowledge,

skills, or crafts that [the] academic work is intended to promote” (p. 12). To target the issue of disengagement in the topic of history, I decided to implement a new teaching strategy into my Western Civilization class: literature circles organized around historical fiction novels. Nearly all of the research involves using literature circles at the elementary or middle school level (Beers, 2002; Daniels, 2004; Routman, 1994), with limited research on their use at the collegiate level, let alone in an introductory history course (Levy, 2011; O’Brian, 2004). The question I sought to answer was whether or not implementing literature circles would boost class engagement with the historical content and ultimately motivate my students to more readily engage with their selected text.

Review of Related Literature

There is a growing body of research that forebodes an ominous problem on the horizon for teachers, a problem which spills over into the college classroom. The NEA report *To Read or Not to Read* (2007) highlighted three major problems with our current population: (1) children through adulthood are spending less time reading; (2) reading comprehension skills are eroding; and (3) these declines have serious civic, social, cultural, and economic implications (p. 5). These findings are supported by research on classroom practice that found, in general, “speaking [and] reading is not taught beyond the third grade in most schools. If a student has not mastered reading comprehension skills by fourth grade, chances are that s/he will struggle with learning in grades four through twelve” (Forget et. al., 2003, p.3). Very few, if any, college professors take the time to ensure their students have the foundational skills to engage with the course texts. It is assumed that they possess these skills because, after all, they are in college. But should these assumptions be made? In my earlier course work it was assumed that the students had the capacity to engage in scholarly historical literature. However, when holding class discussions I found that students were

struggling to engage in the text and therefore many had simply opted not to read the text. Thus, I went searching for a method to reengage my students in historical literature.

In *Teaching Tools and Techniques*, Mary O'Brian (2004) notes that many college students "can be classified as 'reluctant readers,' a term often applied to certain K-12 students (Burns, 1998) as those students who do not engage in reading as a chosen activity" (p. 218). Kylene Beers (2002) echoes this term in her widely acclaimed text *When Kids Can't Read: What Teachers Can Do: A Guide for Teachers 6-12*. Though again, both Burns (1998) and Beers (2002) are referring to K-12 students. Martinez-Roldan and Lopez-Robertson (1999) note that students should engage with texts that are high interaction and promote high levels of engagement through vivid stories. It was the concept of choice and engagement that led me to pursue the use of historical fiction novels in my college history courses. I found that my students did not want to engage in traditional history texts; clearly they could be labeled "reluctant readers" (Beers, 2002; Burns, 1998; Martinez-Roldan, Lopez-Robertson, 1999). My desire to use novels in classroom, combined with my experience using literature circles, led to my interest in learning how to successfully integrate both into my Western Civilization history course for college students.

Daniels (1994) defines literature circles as "small, peer-led discussion groups whose members have chosen to read the same book and talk about it with each other" (p. 2). The allure of literature circles is that it enables individual students to select novels that interest them rather than the traditional model of teachers selecting books for the entire class to read. Just as one cannot discuss literature circles without citing Daniels (1994), discussions of student interest in their own learning cannot be noted without citing the influential work of John Dewey.

Dewey (1913) argued that teachers could build student interest by providing an array of educational opportunities utilizing a variety of materials. The notion that students will learn better if they are interested in the material is one that is seemingly obvious to today's teachers, though

we must remember that it was not always so. Nearly 70 years later, Kintsch (1980) was one of the first educational researchers to propose a link between interest and learning, though his research emphasized a distinction in the different *types* of interest rather than student interest in general. Alfie Kohn (1993) furthered this research thread and has written extensively on the positive effects of offering students choices. In his article *Choices for Children: Why and How to Let Students Decide* (1993), Kohn notes that schooling has “traditionally been about doing things *to* children, not working *with* them.” Kohn (1993) goes on to discuss in great detail the countless studies that confirm the positive correlation between motivation, engagement, and student achievement when students are given choices. The implementation of choice and historical novels offers a step in this direction, and addresses a gap in the research that heretofore has been limited with regard to higher education, let alone a college-level history class.

O’Brian (2004) and Levy (2011) document their use of literature circles in higher education, with O’Brian (2004) focusing on the utilization of six non-fiction novels in a course on collaboration with parents of students with disabilities, taught within the special education department. She states, “Within the context of higher education, there is little empirical research” to support the use of literature circles. Levy (2011) examined the use of literature circles in an introductory writing course, which became the vehicle through which she offered college students “an inventory of reading strategies for entering and navigating a text, initiating textual discussions, deepening comprehension of and connection to reading, and expanding the experience of writing” (Levy, 2011, p. 53).

Levy (2011) concludes that literature circles produced positive results in her college course. She noted improved student discussions, engagement and achievement on her final exam (p. 72). If student engagement and motivation is related to interest in the material, and there is a correlation between interest, choice and student achievement, what then is the implication for the

use of literature circles in higher education, particularly in a history course? It was my initial questions coupled with these findings that led me to employ literature circles in a college western civilization history course.

Literature Circle Procedures

While the employment of literature circles offers a wide range of flexibility (Routman, 1994; Spiegel, 1998, Daniels, 2004) there is general consensus on basic strategies to employ when introducing literature circles for the first time. Prior to launching the literature circles, I previewed a wide variety of texts that clarified or reinforced the concepts, or content, I wanted students to learn (Daniels, 2004). Next, I allowed for a time of previewing in which students are either allowed to read small selected portions of the text or I gave a brief “book talk” during which time I introduced the text and built interest in the book (Daniels, 2004; O’Brian, 2004).

Students are then allowed to select the book of their choice, thus forming groups by whoever has selected the same text. Daniels (2004) states that it “is important to note that the grouping is done by text choice, not by ‘ability’ or other tracking” (p. 3). Next, group members got together and created a meeting and reading schedule that they all agreed upon. As groups regularly meet, discussion questions come from the students, not the instructor. To assist students I led mini-lessons that “served as bookends, before and after meetings” (Daniels, 2004, p. 4). During these mini-lessons students were introduced to different types of reading, note-taking, and discussion strategies.

Daniels (2004) argues that students, particularly reluctant readers, do not automatically know how to discuss a text or how to take effective notes. Therefore, I had to explicitly teach these strategies to the students through mini-lessons before groups got together to discuss their reading, and after to reinforce the conversations that took place. Finally, after the books are finished, groups share highlights with their peers through some sort of presentation. Again,

students get to choose how they wish to present their texts. At this point students can form new groups and another cycle of literature circles could begin (Daniels, 2004). The methodology described by Daniels operates very differently from a typical college course.

In a traditional history course, as is the case in many college courses, a professor usually opts to select either a single textbook or several trade books that reinforce the key components of the class. However, this traditional approach does not support what research has noted regarding student choice, motivation, and engagement (Dewey, 1913; Kintsch, 1980, Kohn, 1993). Furthermore, in-class surveys and informal discussions have revealed, at least in the author's experience, that very few students enjoy reading out of an academic textbook. The question then became what type of text should be used for literature circles in Western Civilization course?

Academic history books abound, covering every facet of human history. But again, many of these texts would most likely not appeal to reluctant readers taking a college history class due to the writing style and jargon. To combat the overwhelmingly negative attitudes towards history and history texts, the genre of historical fiction was selected to be the mode through which history content would be expressed.

History Classroom Implementation

The history course was structured to follow three eras: The Beginning (3,000 B.C.E to 400 C.E.), The Shift (400 C.E. to 1300 C.E.), and The Transformation (1300 to 1648 C.E.). To reinforce content from these various eras, authors and books were selected that spanned all of the time periods. I deemed it prudent to select works of historical fiction due to the likelihood of these texts to have stories that are high engagement and tell historical events rather vividly instead of factually (Martinez-Roldan, Lopez-Robertson, 1999).

I desired for a range of books spanning the years covered in the course but also the major civilizations that we were going to discuss throughout the semester. Wilbur Smith's (2008) *River*

God and Nick Drake's (2011) *Tutankhamun: The Books of Secrets* covered the ancient Egyptians. From the ancient Greek time period, Steven Pressfield's (2005) *Gates of Fire: An Epic Novel of the Battle of Thermopylae* was selected. Conn Iggulden's (2009) *Emperor: Gods of War, A Novel of Julius Caesar* allowed students to step into ancient Rome. Finally, to immerse students in the Middle Ages, Bernard Cornwell's (2013) novel *1356: A Novel*, Robin LaFevers' (2014) *Dark Triumph: His Fair Assassins* and Emma Champion's (2014) *A Triple Knot* were selected.

Following the suggestions of Daniels (2004), one of the first sessions was used to explain what literature circles are and what students would be expected to do, while the other portion of the class was used to introduce students to the various texts. In a typical K-12 setting the teacher would have multiple copies of each text (Daniels, 1994; Daniels & Steinke, 2004). However, due to the nature of a college course students were required to purchase the text of their choice. The class started with a total of thirty students, though by midterm two students had dropped. Of the twenty-eight remaining students, there were nineteen men and nine women. One student identified as Hispanic, eight identified as Black, eighteen students identified as White, and there was one international student from Rwanda.

The next class session began with groups creating the "Group Ground Rules" (Figure 1) and creating their readings schedules (Figure 2). During the group ground rules students come up with three to five rules that all members agree to follow. These range from agreeing to show up to class to promising to complete the assigned reading. The key is that these "requirements" come from the students, not the teacher, and are different for each group.

Methods of Data Collection

The class was given a preliminary survey that polled their general interest in history and reading (Figure 3). The difficulty in issuing random surveys was the inconsistency with which students would come to class. On the day of the preliminary survey, of the twenty-eight enrolled

students, only twenty were present. Questions ranged from opinions on reading alone, in groups, or as a whole class. When asked if students enjoyed reading alone, 5% of the polled students selected “never” while 15% marked rarely, 35% marked sometimes, with the remaining 45% selecting always.

Again, the data only presents twenty student responses; however, it was encouraging to see that a large percentage of students found reading at least tolerable with a wider margin actually enjoying reading. This was noteworthy considering the NAE’s (2007) report on the interest in reading. Interestingly, according to the survey students would rather read independently compared to in small groups or as a whole class. To what extent then would this impact their willingness to read and discuss within their literature circles? This question would not be answerable until later in the semester.

Survey question three asked whether or not the students perceived reading to be fun. Five percent marked never, 36.8% of students marked rarely while 42.1% marked sometimes, with the remaining 15.8% marking always. Question six asked if students liked the teacher selecting their books. Of the twenty students 42.1% marked never while 31.6% marked rarely. Question seven asked if *students* preferred to select their own books. Slightly more than twenty-six percent marked sometimes with 68.4% marking always. These two questions validate the aforementioned research on choice due to interest and its impact on motivation (Dewey, 1913; Kintsch, 1980, Kohn, 1993).

The following weeks were laid out in a predictable routine. Tuesdays were traditional class days in which the students would practice historical skills such as analyzing primary and secondary sources, comparing and contrasting different viewpoints through video clips and in-class readings, class discussions and mini-lectures. Thursdays were designated as literature circle

days. The first two Thursdays began with mini-lessons on effective note-taking and discussion strategies followed by group discussions per the recommendations of Daniels (2004).

During group discussions I would listen to students discuss their books. Initially, groups seemed unsure of what to do and how to carry a discussion without the guidance of a teacher. Periodically it was necessary to interject a question to generate conversation.

After the first two weeks it became apparent through class observations that groups were working more smoothly. To hold students accountable to their reading, students were required to take notes utilizing a strategy of their choice or using one of the taught strategies during the first mini-lessons (Figure 5). This entire process was repeated until students completed their books over span of six weeks.

At the halfway point of the literature circle cycle another survey was given. While attendance was down that day, the results do give a small insight into how students viewed literature circles at that point in the semester. Students were given a three-question survey that required short answer responses to three different phrases. The three statements were: (1) What I like most about literature circles; (2) What I like least about literature circles; and (3) My favorite thing(s) about history class is. A common response to statement one was the ability to hear what their peers were thinking about the book. One student noted that they found it interesting “how everyone interprets the same thing differently.” Another noted, “If you don’t understand something, you have others there to help explain it.” One of the most common frustrations that students described in statement 2 was the irritation of group members coming to class unprepared. A student wrote, “Sometimes people in the group don’t read.” Another repeated idea was group members not showing up to class. The data appeared to validate students enjoying literature circles as a whole, with the common frustration of unprepared peers or lack of attendance by group members.

At the end of the six weeks, groups presented on their texts and held class discussions about their books. Once all presentations were complete, a final survey was given to the students. Of the twenty-eight students in the class, all twenty-eight responded to the survey (Figure 6).

Results

Students understood that all results would remain anonymous, which was achieved through the use of a Google Form. First, students were asked how much of their book they honestly read. Students were given the option to select 100%, 90-100%, 50-75%, or less than 50%. Of the twenty-eight students, 25% marked that they had read 100% of their novel, 57.1% marked they had read 90-100%, 17.9% marked 50-75% with only 3.6% admitting to having read less than 50%.

When polled on how much they enjoyed their book, students were given five response options. Of the five responses 21.4% responded that they “loved it” while 35.7% marked “it was good.” The same number responded that “it was ok” while only 7.1% “really did not like it.” The poll also asked students to reflect on whether or not literature circles motivated them to come to class more so than regular class days. Data revealed that 35.7% of the students “strongly agreed” while 39.3% “agreed.” The remaining 25% “disagreed” with only 3.6% “strongly disagreeing.”

Furthermore, the survey also sought to discern whether or not reading historical fiction improved their overall opinion and knowledge of history. Students were given four options: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. Results revealed that 10.7% strongly agreed while 75% agreed that reading historical fiction *improved* their opinion of history. Only 10.7% disagreed with 3.6% strongly disagreeing. Thus, data revealed a positive correlation between using historical fiction and student motivation to engage in the reading. When asked whether or not “I was more motivated to read a novel than I am to do the course readings” 32.1% strongly agreed with 39.3% agreeing. Responding in the negative 21.4% disagreed with 7.1% strongly disagreeing. Likewise, students also responded to a question that sought to discern their

engagement with their readings. When asked, “Reading my novel was more engaging than the assigned course readings” 25% of students strongly agreed while 60.7% agreed. Only 14.3% disagreed.

Despite overwhelming positive results, both in the class discussions and data gathered from surveys, the process was not without some difficulties. One of the early frustrations was getting the texts to the students. Due to the nature of a college course, I could not provide a student with the desired texts; they had to purchase it on their own. As I did not know how many students I would have in the course, it was difficult for the bookstore to know how many copies of each book to purchase. As it turned out, the bookstore ran out of copies and so had to back order texts. Furthermore, some students purchased their texts online. This led to several students not receiving their books in a timely manner.

By far the greatest frustration was student attendance. Survey data shows that students were in fact more motivated to come to class on discussion days but nonetheless group attendance was irregular. Groups also noted these frustrations in their evaluations. Students pointed out that in several instances their peers came to class unprepared having either not completed the reading or failed to complete their reading notes.

Conclusion

These results undeniably validate the claim that giving students choice increases their motivation to take charge of their learning (Dewey, 1913; Kintsch, 1980, Kohn, 1993; Daniels, 2004). Data revealed 57.1% of students responded positively to enjoying their text. Over 85% of students agreed that reading historical fiction improved their opinion of history with over 71% of students stating they were more motivated to read historical fiction than the course readings. Furthermore, the survey results validate the claim that literature circles increase class engagement with historical content and motivate students to more readily engage in their selected texts.

Recommendations

Should further research be conducted, several recommendations should be noted. First, introduction to literature circles should begin early on in the course, preferably the first week. Second, students should be introduced to the potential texts within the first two classes in order for texts to arrive in a timely fashion. This problem could ideally be alleviated should the teacher/instructor have the texts pre-purchased. This could be accomplished through the collection of student texts should they wish to donate them for future use by other students. Thirdly, in order to obtain adequate survey data surveys should be created electronically in order for students to access them on their own time. The most data was collected when survey links were electronically emailed to students on a regular basis so as to ensure the best possible number of participants. This research affirms the use of traditionally used K-12 pedagogy in higher education. Unmistakably, college students desire to have a voice in their learning. Literature circles in a western civilization course offer the vehicle through which this desire can become a reality.

Figure 1: Group Ground Rules

Group Ground Rules

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

Figure 2: Literature Circle Reading Schedule

Date	To Read for Class	Topics	Assignments Due
Week 3 09-08-15		Lit Cir. Skills cont.	
09-10-15		Groups meet to complete assignments to right.	Lit Circle Rules, create reading schedule, Defining Discussion skills, notes(in class) Start reading Lit Circle text
Week 4 09-15-15		Rome: Republic to Empire	
09-17-15		<i>Lit Circle Discussion begins (1st meeting of Lit circles)</i>	Lit Circle notes
Week 5 09-22-15		The Roman Empire Roman Emperor Simulation	
09-24-15		<i>2nd meeting of Lit Circle</i>	Quiz 4 due Lit Circle Notes
Middle Ages Week 6 09-29-15		Early Middle Ages	
10-01-15		<i>3rd meeting of Lit Circle</i>	Quiz 5 due Lit Circle Notes
Week 7 10-06-15		High Middle Ages The Crusades	
10-08-15		Final Lit Circle Mtg. Finish Book, debrief	Lit Circle Notes Midterm/Week 7 Test
Week 8 10-13-15		Group Book Talks (presentations) Lit Circle Discussion	Group Book Talks
10-15-15	No class-enjoy your time off	NO CLASSES – FALL BREAK	Quiz 6 due (10/14) Lit Circle Reflection (10/14) This is a Wednesday!!!

Figure 3: Reading Interest Inventory

Name: _____ Date: _____

Reading Interest Inventory

Circle the number that most closely fits your feeling:

1=never 2=rarely 3=sometimes 4=always

1. I enjoy reading alone.	1 2 3 4
2. I prefer reading in a small group.	1 2 3 4
3. Reading is fun.	1 2 3 4
4. I like reading aloud in front of the class.	1 2 3 4
5. I enjoy being read to.	1 2 3 4
6. I like the teacher choosing my books.	1 2 3 4
7. I prefer to choose my own books.	1 2 3 4
8. I like reading fiction best.	1 2 3 4
9. I prefer non-fiction reading.	1 2 3 4
10. I understand what I read.	1 2 3 4
11. I can read as well as most students my age.	1 2 3 4
12. I enjoy reading with the whole class.	1 2 3 4

Figure 4: Results from Reading Interest Inventory

Reading Interest Inventory

	1- never	2- rarely	3- sometimes	4- always
1. I enjoy reading alone.	1 / 5%	3 / 15%	7 / 35%	9 / 45%
2. I prefer reading in a small group.	5 / 25%	8 / 40%	7 / 35%	0 / 0%
3. Reading is fun.	1 / 5.3%	7 / 36.8%	8 / 42.1%	3 / 15.8%
4. I like reading aloud in front of the class.	11 / 55%	7 / 35%	0 / 0%	2 / 10%
5. I enjoy being read to.	4 / 21.1%	3 / 15.8%	9 / 47.4%	3 / 15.8%
6. I like the teacher choosing my books.	8 / 42.1%	6 / 31.6%	4 / 21.1%	1 / 5.3%
7. I prefer to choose my own books.	0 / 0%	1 / 5.3%	5 / 26.3%	13 / 68.4%
8. I like reading fiction best.	1 / 5%	1 / 5%	13 / 65%	5 / 25%
9. I prefer non-fiction reading.	1 / 5.6%	5 / 27.8%	9 / 50%	3 / 16.7%
10. I understand what I read.	0 / 0%	2 / 10%	9 / 45%	9 / 45%
11. I can read as well as most students my age.	0 / 0%	3 / 15.8%	2 / 10.5%	14 / 73.7%
12. I enjoy reading with the whole class.	3 / 15.8%	9 / 47.4%	5 / 26.3%	2 / 10.5%

Figure 5: Note taking example

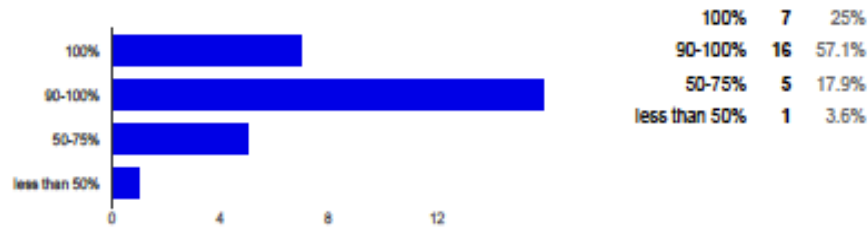
Bookmarks

Response	Question
Important Passage	Important Quote

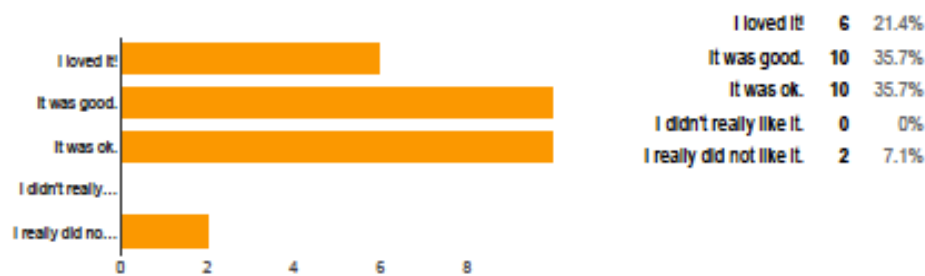
Figure 6: Course Survey Results

Summary

How much of your book did you honestly read?



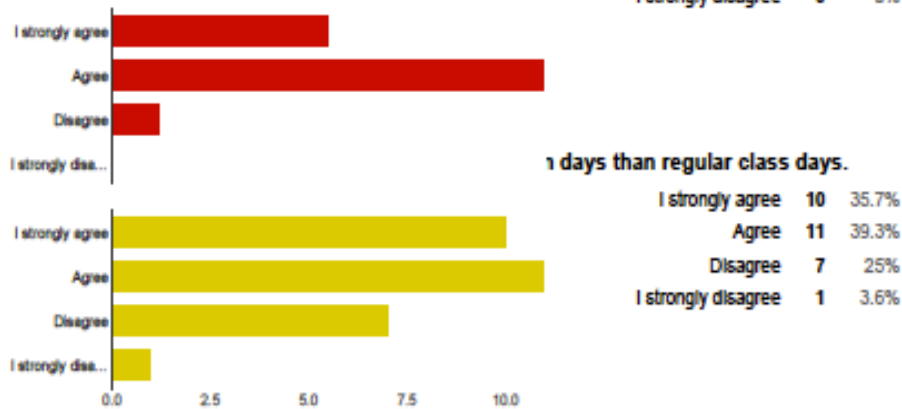
How much did you enjoy your book?



My group discussions helped me understand my book better.

I strongly agree	9	32.1%
Agree	18	64.3%
Disagree	2	7.1%

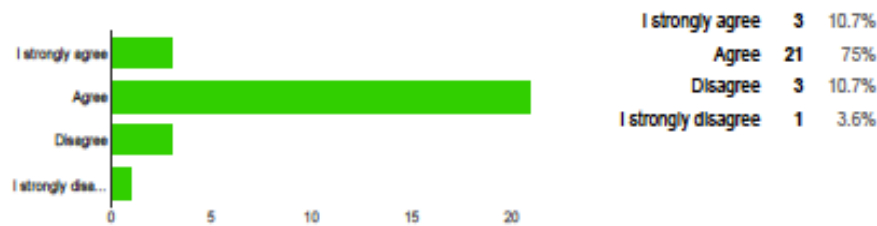
I strongly disagree 0 0%



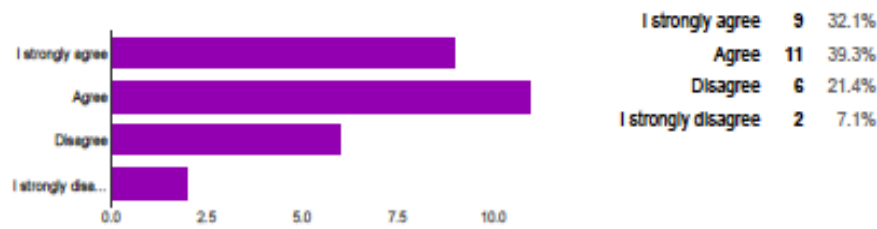
1 days than regular class days.

I strongly agree	10	35.7%
Agree	11	39.3%
Disagree	7	25%
I strongly disagree	1	3.6%

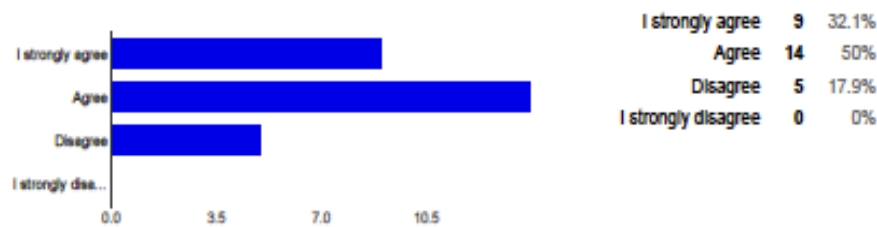
Reading my novel improved my opinion of history.



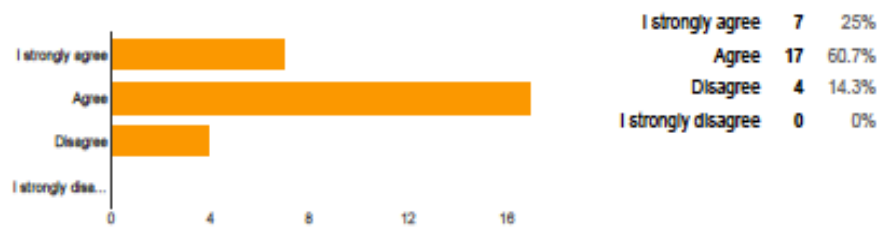
I was more motivated to read a novel than I am to do the course readings.



Reading a novel instead of a textbook increased my level of interest in history.



Reading my novel was more engaging than the assigned course readings.

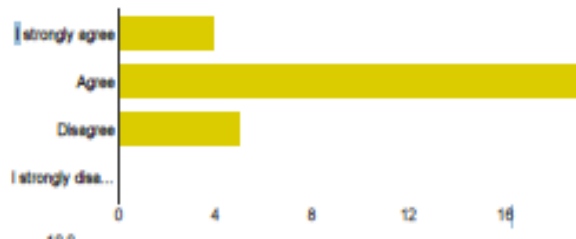


Reading my novel showed me that books can be engaging.



Reading my novel increased my interest in history.

I strongly agree	4	14.3%
Agree	19	67.9%
Disagree	5	17.9%
I strongly disagree	0	0%



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**Critical Thinking in American Higher Education:
The Perceptions of International Chinese Female Students**

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This qualitative study illustrates how five Chinese female college students have been challenged by the expectation to use critical thinking in their American classrooms. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five freshmen at a large Midwestern university and analyzed using the interpretative phenomenological approach (IPA; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). The participants discussed their academic experience and expressed their misunderstanding and confusion about using critical thinking in their classrooms, which was not expected in their home country. The results include a description of the participants' discussion of this issue. Literature related to the critical thinking disposition and skills tests of other Chinese students was also reviewed. Implications for cross-cultural communication, cultural competence, and perspective building within a humanities and social science classroom are discussed.

It is voluntarily thinking. – Lamia, personal communication, 2014

Is it serious thinking?! –Luna, personal communication, 2014

It is stay calm and be rational...I won't say it out loud though. I will criticize it quietly in my mind but not in front of people or on my papers...because it is useless to say it out loud. It may hurt somebody's feelings.

–Holiday, personal communication, 2014

With 304,040 Chinese international students enrolled in U.S. universities and colleges as of the 2014-2015 academic year (*Open Doors Data*, 2015), a body of research literature on their academic difficulties and adjustment issues has emerged. Findings show that most of these students have trouble understanding lectures and adapting to the competitive atmosphere of the American classroom (Andrade, 2006; Ramsay et al. 1999; Zhao et al. 2005); possess poor academic writing skills (Robertson et al., 2000), and habitually expect teachers to lecture instead of using unfamiliar teaching styles (Abel, 2002; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Tran 2008). On the other hand, faculty also find that teaching, working with, and advising these Chinese students is particularly challenging (Trice, 2003; 2005). One academic difficulty that has received little

attention in regard to these students, however, is how they understand and use critical thinking in the American classroom. Holiday, Lamia and Luna (personal communications, 2014) understood it as “voluntary thinking,” “serious thinking,” and being “calm and rational.”

Critical thinking is understood as “the art of analyzing and evaluating thinking with a view to improving it” (Paul & Elder, 2006, p. 4) and involves a complex yet rigorous process of evaluating and accessing information. Scriven and Paul (1987) suggested that critical thinking has two components: (a) a set of information and belief generating and processing skills and (b) the habit, based on intellectual commitment, of using those skills to guide behavior, or “critical spirit” as Siegel (1988, p. 39) called it. That is, a well-cultivated critical thinker is believed to have a particular set of skills/abilities and the disposition to engaging in critical thinking. Such is the expectation of Chinese college students.

As suggested by Facione (1990; 2010), Jones et al. (1995), and Scriven and Paul (1987), critical thinking skills generally include the following:

- Interpretation
- Analysis
- Evaluation
- Inference
- Reflection or self-reflection
- Synthesis
- Explanation

In regard to disposition and willingness, Ennis (2011) said that ideal critical thinkers:

- Care that their beliefs be true, and that their decisions be justified; that is, care to “get it right” to the extent possible;
- Care to understand and present a position honestly and clearly, theirs as well as others’;

- Care about every person. (pp.1-2)

Critical thinking is regarded as an essential component and endorsed by faculty as the most important goal of undergraduate education (DeAngelo et al., 2009). Nevertheless, some research has implied that Chinese students lack this skill in general. For example, Chinese medical and pre-service teacher students, and Hong Kong Chinese nursing and education students scored lower than their peers from Western countries on disposition scales in critical thinking tests (Huang et al. 2015; Zhou et al. 2012; Tiwari et al, 2003). On the other hand, however, researchers have argued that Chinese students do not lack critical thinking per se, but are unfamiliar with Western-style critical thinking skills and the English language (Cheng, 2000; Durkin, 2008), and that Chinese Confucius culture has key elements of critical thought, reflective thinking, inquiring, and deep thinking (Ma, 2004; Patton, as cited in Jiang, 2014).

Despite these findings on Chinese students' performance critical thinking, it is not clear how they themselves think and respond to this demand. Thus, the purpose of this study is to take a deep look at how a sample of five Chinese female freshmen at a large Midwest university have understood and reacted to the demand for critical thinking in relation to their academic and cultural adjustment in the U.S. I asked the following exploratory research questions: What were the main characteristics of your K-12 education in China? What have been the major academic difficulties you have encountered in American college classrooms so far? What did you do when your professors asked you to think and write critically?

Method

The following sections describe my research methods for the study, including the research design, participants, and data collection and analysis.

Research Design and Participants

The study was conducted in Spring 2014 after Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Unlike previous research that had focused on investigating students' performance on critical thinking tests (e.g., Ku & Ho, 2010; Ip et al., 2000; Hau, Ho, & Ku, 2006; Luo & Yang, 2001), I delimited the scope of my study to understanding and exploring the students' comprehension of critical thinking, instead of predicting and/or generalizing the results.

For this purpose, I chose the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009) approach. Phenomenology is a method to gain understanding about "how our words, concepts, and theories always shape (distort) and give structure to our experiences as we live them" (van Manen & Adams, 2010, p. 450). Within the framework of phenomenology, an IPA is an idiographic approach to understand particular phenomena in particular contexts (Smith et al., 2009, p. 49), which fit my research purpose well.

Homogeneous and purposive participants are typically used in an IPA approach (Smith et al., 2009). For the current study, participants were chosen because they were "already immersed in a linguistic, relational, cultural and physical world" (Larkin & Thompson, 2012, p. 102) that was very different from their educational and cultural origins.

Asian women are outsiders in academe and not encouraged to do well in higher education because instructors tend to view this group as submissive, passive, less competitive and less flexible (Hune, as cited in Bowen, Yu, Hwang, & Scherer, 2007; Green & Kim, 2005; Wallis, 2006). Thus, female participants were chosen to examine whether they were reluctant to raise questions and offer different opinions, and to think and write critically, when asked by their instructors.

In addition, freshmen participants were purposefully chosen in this study. Colucciello's (1997) study suggested that higher academic level students, for example senior college students

compared to sophomore students, had higher overall mean scores on critical thinking disposition tests. Research by Bers, McGowan, and Rubin (1996) and Lehman and Dressel (1963) had also suggested that senior students performed better on tests of critical thinking skills than freshmen. This study explored five freshman-level students' current understanding and response to the expectation to use critical thinking in their American classrooms.

The participants were five female Chinese freshmen in their second semester at the university. None had any K-12 education in an English speaking country before arriving in the U.S. in fall 2013. They were all full-time international students representing various academic majors. Two of the freshmen were recommended by a person familiar with the proposed study, they in turn recruited three more Chinese freshman women. Pseudonyms chosen by the participants themselves were used to protect their identity. Their pseudonyms, ages, and majors are listed in Table 1.

Table One. Characteristics of the Study Participants

Name	Age	First time in the U.S.	Major
Luna	18	Yes	Business
Lamia	21	Yes	Biology
Holiday	21	Yes	Environmental engineering
Amanda	21	Yes	Hospitality management
Alice	20	Yes	Chemical engineering

Note: All names are pseudonyms.

Data Collection

Using a typical data collection method for an IPA (Smith et al., 2009), one-on-one, semi-structured, and audio-recorded interviews were conducted, with the students' permission. As a native Chinese person, I interviewed them in Chinese, hoping that letting them speak in their native language would enable me to gain authentic answers that could exhibit more subtle nuances than having them speak in their second language, English, as suggested by Welch and Piekkari (2006). Later, recordings were translated into English and transcribed.

At beginning of each interview, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, that field notes would be recorded during the interview, and that an iPod would be used as an audio recorder, but would be turned off anytime they did not want something recorded. Since this was the first time participants had ever been interviewed for the purpose of research, how the interview mechanics worked were explained in order to demystify the process for them and create a more equitable relationship with them (Saldana, 2011).

Following suggestions from Hays and Singh on different types of interview questions and topics, open-ended questions were asked about their education background (e.g., in China and the U.S.), behavior or experience (e.g., classes taken, difficulties they had encountered, their personalities' descriptions, and everyday experiences with critical thinking), opinion or value (e.g., decision to study abroad, reactions to types of assignments and what they thought teachers in an American university wanted from them—homework-wise), and knowledge (e.g., their understanding of certain assignment requirements and strategies to finish the assignments [as cited in Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2013, p. 136]).

Data Analysis

For the analysis, audio-recorded interviews were translated into Chinese and then read line by line while listening to the interviews again to check transcription accuracy. Member checks

were conducted over the phone with three students to clarify several vague responses they had given in the interviews.

After being satisfied with the accuracy of the Chinese transcriptions, interviews were translated into English. In addition, a PhD candidate from the Applied Linguistics Department, who is also a Chinese native, read and checked the translations, and made some suggestions and modifications, which were incorporated into the final data.

Following the IPA approach (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006; Smith et al., 2009), an initial phenomenological coding was created in the left-hand column, and interpreted and connected the coding more explicitly in the right-hand column in Word processing documents (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). After the data were analyzed and organized from each interview with this method, all five interviews cross-analyzed and examined to identify, systemize, and document the emerging themes across all the interviews. Sample validation to ensure the analysis' credibility was also employed (Larkin & Thompson, 2012): several students from the same university, who were eligible for my study but did not participate, checked my interpretation and analysis and offered their insights.

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended four criteria for the soundness of qualitative research in general: *credibility*, *dependability*, *conformability* and *transferability*. I used these to establish the trustworthiness of my study.

To ensure the credibility of the study on the matter of methodology, IPA fits the research purpose (Smith et al., 2009): to understand a particular phenomenon (a sample of five female Chinese freshmen college students' understanding and handling of the need to use critical thinking) in a particular context (their classes in a large Midwestern university in the U.S.).

Regarding triangulation, the data analysis included peer debriefing and sample validation to increase research credibility (Larkin & Thompson, 2012).

Reflexivity

Despite the possible limitations of a researcher/translator in a qualitative study, my stance as a native Chinese speaker and female Chinese international student offered “significant opportunities for close attention to cross cultural meanings and interpretations” (Temple & Young, 2004, p 168), and relative ease in reconstructing the value and meaning of some Chinese words in English (Simon, 1996) contained in the data.

Results

The purpose of this study is to examine five Chinese female freshmen’s understandings and perceptions of critical thinking in relation to their academic and cultural adjustment in the U.S. The themes that emerged from my data analysis are discussed below.

Different Education Experience

All five students in my study said that their high school classes and homework kept them very busy in China. Although only one took the National College Entrance Exam (Gao Kao), they all chose to prepare for it. Holiday worked hard for the Gao Kao during high school, saying,

Besides the homework my teachers assigned to us that [was] already a lot, my classmates also did a lot of extra work and preparations. Even if I have finished my assigned homework, I was not happy at all. I still needed to catch up by doing a lot of extra work as well [...]. I think at that stage (in 12th grade) before [taking the] Gao Kao, everybody was like a machine. No time to think and nobody is thinking, let alone thinking critically. It’s more like a habit. You do the homework the way you did many times before. So we didn’t think enough.

Holiday mentioned the peer pressure of doing extra homework to be more competitive for the Gao Kao, but not necessarily to think critically. Not only did she think she studied like a machine, but also had repetitive and countless homework assignments that discouraged her interest and engagement in thinking critically. When I asked Luna if thinking critically was common in her high school, she giggled and said, “We [Chinese students] are not good at thinking.” In addition, Luna and Lamia both commented on the importance of memorization for getting better grades in their high schools.

When I asked their thoughts about their American college education so far, Alice said, I have to come to my classes every day, listen to my professor carefully and do teamwork with my classmates, all in English. Our parents are no longer taking care of us like they used to do when we were in China. I am responsible for what I do now.

As these students revealed, this new freedom has forced them to be more accountable for their own education and life in general in this foreign environment, as well as to make decisions by themselves based on their own judgment.

Being Quiet in Classes

All five participants were talkative and seemed outgoing from the beginning of our individual interviews. Therefore, it was not surprising that they all described themselves as sociable and extroverts in everyday life. For example, Luna in particular giggled all through the interview, although it was our first time to meet and talk.

On the contrary, they all thought that they had become very quiet in their classrooms in this university. Amanda said that she was a quiet student, especially in group discussions, and thought her group members felt they had to take care of her because she was a weak one. Amanda said she felt guilty about being quiet in her group discussions in class. Similarly, Holiday commented, “I think I’m not a good student because I am quiet and don’t like answering questions

in my classes.” Alice indicated she would not want to be the first person in class to answer a question even if she knew the answer. Lamia said she felt shy to speak English in front of her American classmates.

Conversely, being quiet is understood to be a great virtue in Chinese classes. However, my participants understood that this behavior was not appreciated in their American classes. They were expected to participate, that is, speak aloud in class discussions.

English Language Proficiency: Speaking

All the participants thought that their English language proficiency was the biggest obstacle in their American college education so far. As Amanda explained,

I don’t have enough vocabulary and I don’t know how to think and organize [in English]...I have ideas in my head but I can’t write them out in English...and I can’t communicate with Americans freely and fluently in English.

Luna mentioned the difficulty of understanding lectures and exams in English:

In big lectures, the professor speaks [in English] too fast. When they are speaking my second language, especially in which I do not have confidence, I wouldn’t understand them at all if they spoke too fast. Also, if questions [in the exams] were written in Chinese, I would get a full grade, but they are in English and so a lot of times I do not even understand the questions, let alone answer them correctly.

Luna also commented on her difficulties with answering any open-ended questions. In order to understand and prepare for lectures better, Lamia used an old-fashioned way: looking up all the English words she did not know before every big lecture. However, she mentioned how frustrating and exhausting it was for her to do so.

These Chinese students' desire to have better English is no surprise, but their frustration with the challenges of studying in an English-speaking country, especially the expectation of using critical thinking, is more than common.

English Language Proficiency: Writing

Not only were my participants frustrated with having to speak English in their classrooms, they also worried about their proficiency in writing English. To better understand their concerns about writing in their second language, I asked them to share a writing assignment with me.

In Amanda's assignment, she was asked to read an article on a specific topic from her major, hospitality management, and write about either two strengths or two weaknesses or both in the article. She chose to write about only two strengths and explained that

In any published articles including online articles, there is no weakness at all. Even if there were any weaknesses, its strengths are more obvious and important...especially the ones assigned from our teachers... They [teachers] want us to look for strengths, not weaknesses.

Alice had the same opinion on writing about strengths rather than on the weaknesses of an article/research study, because she thought "they [teachers] want us to look for and learn good things from the author/article and then use them in our own writings."

Except for expressing only positive or neutral positions in their writings, they also mentioned English writing modules that they had been using for their papers. Figure 1 is an example (retrieved on April 11, 2014 from

<http://wenku.baidu.com/view/1f11d881e53a580216fcfe08.html>):

Image One. English Writing Module

Topic: Choose a position from A or B and elaborate your opinion:

Depending on personal experience, personality type and emotional concern, we find that some people hold the idea of A, meanwhile others prefer B; from my point of view, it is more advisable to choose A rather than B. My arguments for this point are listed as follows:

The main reason for my propensity for A is that _____
(fill in your explanation). For instance, _____ (fill in your examples).

Another reason can be seen by every one is that _____ (fill in your explanation). For example, _____ (fill in your examples).

The argument I support in the first paragraph is also in a position of advantage because _____ (fill in your own reasons).

Although I agree that there may be a couple of advantages of B, I feel that the disadvantages are more obvious. Such as _____ (fill in your own examples).

In a word, _____. So, it is sagacious to support the statement that B is better than A.

The above writing module was also used in their high school English classes in China. It shows how students are taught or trained to utilize types of writing excerpts as a basic structure to form their opinions with little thinking and then elaborate on them in their own papers. Therefore, my study participants felt less nervous writing in English in their American college classes if they had a writing module in hand. However, as Alice indicated, it was still a struggle to put their own words and ideas in the blanks. Further, Alice mentioned her frustration about her class writing assignments:

Sometimes my professors want us to have two or three questions about an article and write them out in the paper. I get really confused and frustrated. Why do I have to come up with questions? What if I do not have any questions? Can't I just learn what the articles teach us? To be honest, I come here [America] to learn [but not raise questions].

It is clear that there is a gap in expectations between the university professors and these students regarding their written assignments in English. For example, American professors often encourage students to consider a topic and have their own opinions, which are neither right nor wrong. Raising questions is important to indicate what the students need to improve; however, my participants assumed their professors were looking for the good things in the articles that the students had learned about, as revealed in their own written papers.

Critical Thinking: “Is it serious thinking?”

Critical thinking is rarely mentioned or taught in China, and so in order to initiate the conversation on this concept, I first asked the participants if they had any assignments that contained the words “analyze,” “evaluate” or “critique,” since they are associated with characteristics of critical thinking.

Amanda did not understand these three words and had to use her dictionary first. After she understood the meanings, she said she had never paid any attention to these words in particular. Holiday and Alice answered similarly. Lamia did not think she had any assignments that contained these words. After the interview, however, when she asked me to look at her writing assignment and explain the topic to her, I saw the question had both “analyze” and “evaluate” in it. Lamia then explained that she never thought those words were important.

When I asked each of them what they would do if they were asked to “analyze,” “evaluate,” or write a “critique” of an opinion, they all seemed lost and confused. However, Luna commented, “Chinese [students] usually don't have their own ideas and positions. Like in our

business major, many of us chose this major because our parents decided so. This is an example of us lacking our own voice and ideas...we can't even decide our own majors...where do we learn the skills to evaluate or even criticize others' articles? We are not good at critiques."

However, Holiday mentioned that she would criticize something if she disagreed with other people's opinions or behaviors. "I won't say it out loud though. I will criticize it quietly in my mind but not in front of people or on my papers...because it is useless to say it out loud. It may hurt somebody's feelings." This is her way of analyzing and evaluating other people's opinions.

Last, I asked each of them directly about their understanding of the term "critical thinking." Holiday answered, "Stay calm and be rational." Lamia replied that it is "voluntarily thinking." Luna answered my question with a question: "Is it serious thinking?!"

Discussion

The current study aimed to explore in-depth understandings of five young Chinese first year students' perspectives and reactions to the demand of critical thinking in their American classroom. The results showed their confusion, frustration and reluctance towards understanding and using critical thinking. Discussions about the results are discussed in the following.

Some research has shown that the Chinese "spoon-fed" method of education has discouraged students' critical thinking development. Moreover, it is believed that this passive learning environment has put too much emphasis on examinations and rote memorization, rather than on teaching and encouraging students to be creative and to think critically and independently (Tiwari et al., 2006; Scollon & Scollon, 1995). Echoing the research literature, my participants understood memorization as important for getting better grades and repeatedly used phrases such as "a lot of homework" and "busy preparing for Gao Kao" to describe their high school life in

China that precluded their development of critical thinking that could have prepared them for American schools.

Confucian culture is also blamed as having had a negative impact on Chinese students' critical thinking ability (Ku & Ho, 2010). The Confucian view maintains that "the teacher is the knower, having the knowledge that all students have come for, [and] he is always right and students should never doubt the teacher's knowledge and argue with the teacher" (Zhao, 2007, p. 135). The Confucian approach teaches Chinese students to be quiet in class (Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006; Sit, 2013) from a very young age to show their respect for their teachers. Therefore, Chinese students, including my study participants, tend to remain quiet and not show their true personality and thinking in class (Hwang, Ang, & Francesco, 2002). Sociable and extroverted students became quiet and shy in their classrooms. For example, Amanda stayed quiet in her group discussions, and Lamia was nervous in front of her American peers. Although being quiet in class does not mean they do not actively engage in thinking (Sit, 2013), it is unavoidable that this long-formed habit of staying silent in class does not help them challenge or even raise questions with their teachers and other authorities.

Conversely, Western cultures believe that questioning is an imperative path to knowledge and the truth. Critical thinking, as it originated from ancient Greek philosophers such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle who believed that knowledge and insight should be based on sound evidence through a method of critical and logical probing questioning, is regarded as an essential component of American higher education. Historically, Dewey (1916; 1933) proposed "good habits of thinking" as a basic principle for schools to organize curriculum (p. 163). The 1991 National Education Goals Report emphasized the importance of critical thinking by mandating college graduates to demonstrate an advanced ability to think critically. The Association of American Colleges and Universities also promotes critical thinking development in liberal arts

studies, online classes, cultural studies, STEM courses, medical education, and science majors (retrieved from <https://www.aacu.org/>). In other words, the role of teachers in American higher education is to lead students to the truth by means of questioning (Scollon, 1999, p.19). They encourage students to reason and question in order to clarify and understand knowledge, and expect students to present their critical thinking through classroom activities and homework. Discussion, as one form of active learning, can motivate students in further study and develop their thinking and problem-solving skills (Bligh, 2000; Bonwell & Eison, 1991). Although being silent in classroom discussions does not mean that my study participants cannot think critically, it is apparent that they are missing out on the benefits of speaking aloud and discussing questions and concepts with their peers and professors in terms of exercising and improving their thinking skills.

When Chinese students encounter a very different educational tradition and culture from their own, they get confused and have a difficult time adjusting to their new academic culture, especially being reticent to question their professors and engage in thinking critically. For example, my participants understood that being quiet was not a virtue but rather a burden and weakness in their American university classrooms, but they were not sure exactly why. If they do not know why being quiet is not a virtue anymore, how can they truly improve their classroom participation and engage in thinking critically? It seems that they had no immediate source of help to solve this problem on this campus.

Writing assignments require students to display how they critically think and respond to the topics (Keeley, Browne, & Kreutzer, 1982; Tsui, 2002). However, my participants' unfamiliarity with English academic writing seems to have restrained their critical thinking development as well. They equated the content of published articles as having "always correct opinions" and respectable and always-knowledgeable authors. Therefore, they remained positive

or at least took neutral standpoints in their papers as if to keep “a sense of loyalty to the texts and [are] reticent to isolate themselves from any arguments in the texts as given course materials” (Alagozlu, 2007, p.119). Writing modules that they feel comfortable using for writing assignments are not enhancing their critical thinking either, but more simply exercising their English vocabulary and grammar. Moreover, thinking and writing in a second language (L2) is a complicated process. In fact, L2 learners have apparent cognitive limitations on processing information that will affect their critical thinking performance (Mackee, Rispoli, McDanie, & Garret, as cited in Floyd, 2011). Because study participants are at a disadvantage both in not knowing enough of the English language and in having cognitive limitations for processing L2 information, their critical thinking skills suffer even more.

Although the term “critical thinking” has been defined in the literature, it was astonishing to see that all of my participants were completely confused about the concept. As part of the core notion of critical thinking, evaluation and analysis usually appear in homework requiring students to engage and exercise their critical thinking. However, participants did not remember seeing those words in their assignments, and did not think they mattered, or even understand them at all. They thought that critical thinking was “voluntary thinking,” “serious thinking” and being “rational.” Such a response shows either unfamiliarity with the need to think critically in general, or low internal motivation to engage in critical thinking (Yang, Chuang, Li, & Tseng, 2013). That is, these Chinese college freshmen were not aware of the need to evaluate information and not willing to test their opinions, which are two important components in critical thinking disposition (Beyer, 1985). Having a low critical thinking disposition may have affected their critical thinking in general.

Besides their direct misunderstanding of the concept of critical thinking, some of their decision-making behaviors also suggested their low engagement in it, culturally. Namely,

decision-making has been described as a mental process that uses one's knowledge and intellectual capacities to achieve certain goals (Smith, 2003, p. 25). Critical thinking is believed to improve/enhance decision-making processes and outcomes by exercising one's cognitive abilities such as analysis, inference, and evaluation (Facione, Facione, & Sanchez, 1994; Hicks, Merritt & Elstein, 2003). This thinking and option-choosing process promotes goal achievement in both academia and in our personal lives. Yet, five study participants had come to study in the U.S. and chosen their major based on their parents' expectations. As Luna said in her interview, "We can't even decide our own majors...where do we learn the skills to evaluate or even criticize others' articles?"

Conclusion

The gap between the participants' expectations of U.S. higher education, based on their Chinese culture and educational practices, and the reality they encountered once arriving at an American university emerged in this study. The participants' very different background has restrained their academic achievements and performance in the U.S., especially in regard to thinking critically. The study participants were not aware of the demand for using critical thinking in their college course homework, and more willing to isolate themselves from any arguments, either in class discussions or in their writings. Meanwhile, lack of understanding and support from their university for bridging their very different cultural/educational experience in China and the expectations of critical thinking and conduct in their American classrooms may also be problematic.

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**Social Network Sites: A Study of an Online Learning Environment
for College-level ESL Learners**

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Social network sites (SNSs) such as Facebook and YouTube have attracted millions of users, and become some of the most popular online communication platforms for 21st century young adults. This study investigates whether learners of English as a Second Language (ESL) consider SNSs as meaningful learning environments that could support their English language learning (ELL); explores the impact of SNSs on ESL learners' attitudes, confidences and motivations towards ELL, their exposures to the target language culture via SNSs, and their opinions about integrating SNSs into the ELL curriculum. Two hundred and three ESL learners from three universities in Midwest states responded to the survey. This study has shown that SNSs can create a positive learning environment that engages ESL learners in authentic and meaningful language-based tasks and practices. The study also provides teachers with practical ideas and strategies to integrate SNSs into their curriculum.

Introduction

Social network sites (SNSs) such as Facebook and YouTube have attracted millions of users, and become some of the most popular online communication platforms for 21st century young adults. According to the Statista (2016), an online statistics portal, approximately two billion internet users have social networking accounts and the number is growing as mobile device and mobile social networks gain traction worldwide. Among all the social networking sites, Facebook was the first social network that had over one billion registered accounts and currently has 1.59 billion monthly active account users (Statista, 2016). Young adults have been actively using these social network sites to retrieve information and build relationships with the globe. Therefore, how these social networking sites could enhance young adults' motivation and confidence in academic learning has become an important topic for research. This study investigates whether English as Second Language (ESL) learners consider SNSs as a meaningful learning environment that could support their English language learning (ELL); explores the impact of SNSs on ESL learners' attitudes, confidences and motivations towards ELL, their exposures to the target language culture via SNSs, and their opinions about integrating SNSs into

the ELL curriculum. With the hope to make ESL curriculum and methods of teaching more relevant to today's learners, the study also provides teachers with practical ideas and strategies to integrate SNSs into their curriculum and to develop 21st century skills among ESL learners through the use of SNSs.

SNSs refer to web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public profile in a bounded system, (2) develop a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and edit the list of contacts and those made by others within the system (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Various types of SNSs meet the needs of different groups of users based on their interests. For instance, socially-organized SNSs such as Facebook, Twitter, My Space, and Google Plus+ solicit broad audiences. Professional SNSs such as LinkedIn, focus on business people. Furthermore, websites focused on media sharing have implemented SNS features and become SNSs themselves; namely, Last.fm (a music sharing site), and YouTube (a video sharing site).

The research questions posed in this study are:

1. What are the general uses of Social Network Sites (SNSs) by college-level ESL students?
2. How do these students consider SNSs as an online environment that facilitates their English language learning? (i.e., students' attitudes, confidence and motivation towards English learning, and students' perceived learning through SNSs.)
3. How do SNSs help these students learn the culture of the target language?
4. What is the perception of these students on learning with SNSs in their school curriculum?

Theoretical Framework

Language Learning Perspectives

A number of studies that examine the use of multimedia tools or online applications for teaching and learning apply theories of incidental learning (Krashen, 1989), communicative language teaching (CLT) (Larsen-Freeman, 2007), and sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1987) to explain the nature of language acquisition, and discuss how ESL learners develop 21st century skills through the use of SNSs. According to Trilling and Fadel (2009), 21st century skills refer to collaboration and communication, building social networks, media literacy, information technology literacy, and cross-cultural interaction.

In the field of incidental learning, researchers (Kabilan, Ahmad & Abidin, 2010) examine the use of SNSs, particularly for reading and learning vocabulary, applying ideas from incidental learning (Krashen, 1989) to explain the nature of language acquisition. The Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1989) holds that competence in vocabulary and spelling is acquired by comprehension input in the form of reading. Moreover, through the Language Acquisition Device (LAD), language is subconsciously acquired. While acquiring it, learners are not aware of the fact that they are acquiring it; their conscious focus is on the message, not form. That is what is called “incidental learning.” As Krashen (1989) mentioned, vocabulary acquisition through reading is beneficial since learners encounter many words and learn their subtle or complex meanings in contexts that cannot be adequately represented by synonyms or definitions from a dictionary.

Incidental learning is especially effective when using computers (Pennington, 1989), or in an online environment through observation, repetition, social interaction, and problem solving. Incidental learning in Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) occurs when learning from mistakes, by doing, through networking, and from a series of interpersonal experiences (Holzinger, Pichler, Almer & Maurer, 2001).

According to Larsen-Freeman (2007), “Communicative language teaching (CLT) aims broadly on the theoretical perspectives of the Communicative Approach by making communicative competence the goal of the language teaching and by acknowledging the interdependence of the language and communication” (p. 126). Activities in CLT involve learners in authentic or real world communication, where the successful achievement of the communication task is as essential as the accuracy of their language use. Thus, participations in SNSs such as discussion in online forums, searching for information online, and telecommunicating may provide students with the opportunity to acquire communicative skills, turn learners into active agents in the interactive world of digital pedagogy (Northcote & Kendle, 2001). Through CLT on SNSs, language learners demonstrate their understanding of appropriate uses of register, turn-taking, differences between literal versus rhetorical meanings, and content of messages.

Vygotsky’s sociocultural learning theory (1987) also supports the understanding of the English language learning on SNSs. Since online learning community allows learners to interact and communicate with others, it is essential to pay attention to the notion of community building, collaborating, social networking and interpersonal relationships for learning, practicing and experiences that may have transpired in SNSs community (Nagel & Kotzé, 2010).

The notion of Vygotsky’s learning theory (1987), where learning takes place when students interact with each other and work collaboratively in the process of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), is very much relevant to the way SNSs are utilized by users. Vygotsky (1987) argued that all the learning, including language learning, is mediated by social interactions. Vygotsky (1987) believed that learning results from interpersonal activity which embodies the social nature of learning and emphasizes the importance of the collaborative learning as it shapes what is learned (Gass & Selinker, 2008). Therefore, Vygotsky’s theory (1987) would well support

the various peer interactions on SNSs as an essential part of language learning (Lang, 2012). A peer-learning resource on SNSs (1) provide a learning environment in which the learners can interact regardless of geographical or temporal distances (Hamilton & Feenburg, 2007; Lang, 2012), and (2) provides learners with more interactive learning models and relationships rather than limited and linear models. The interactive learning environment draws on the knowledge of learners who may have more relevant, and more authentic experience of how to learn English and how to adjust to American culture than academic staff. This peer-learning input is appreciated by not only the learners (Moust & Schmidt, 1994), but also by the tutors and teachers as it helps to reduce their load. More experienced learners with higher level of English create a Zone of Proximal Development for the less experienced learners with lower level of English in SNSs environment.

Intercultural Perspectives

Recent studies suggest that contemporary school curricula may be drawing comparatively higher boundaries between students' local knowledge and what counts as knowledge in school subjects (Brass, 2008; Sleeter & Stillman, 2005). Local knowledge refers to cultural backgrounds, personal experiences, and intercultural competence. Intercultural competence refers to the issue of how people from diverse backgrounds and cultures communicate and interact with others and become competent in acquiring a foreign language (Kramsch, 1995). This issue appears to be the case in many ESL classrooms, where exams and standardized testing have narrowed curricula to formulaic learning devoid of communicative purposes, critical thinking skills, and merely focusing on conventions for grammar usage. If this curricular trend continues, ESL learners may fare worse in school than they would if school curricula did not systematically exclude their cultural knowledge and instead sought to bridge their literacies in and out of school. Sleeter and Stillman (2005) support the notion that learners from multicultural backgrounds do not need to learn

exactly the same contents. Teachers and administrators should ask whose knowledge, language, and points of view are the most worth for ESL students, rather than asking how well learners score in standardized achievement tests. Thus, it is essential to recruit teachers with culture-awareness and integrate SNSs into the ESL curriculum in order to bridge learners' literacies and local knowledge in and out of school.

The present research strives to reveal how SNSs help the ESL students learn the culture of the target language, and to explore if SNSs enhances the ESL students' intercultural competence. Therefore, Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence introduces five objectives that ESL students should achieve to become intercultural competent in communicating in the target language. The five objectives are: "(1) knowledge of the cultures of self and the target language; (2) attitudes of openness and curiosity; (3) skills of interpreting and relating; (4) skills of discovery and interaction; (5) critical cultural awareness" (Schenker, 2012, p.4.)

Literature Review

Studies on SNSs are emerging from diverse disciplinary as well as using various methodologies, and emphasizing on other aspects than effects of SNSs on English language learning (ELL), on ESL curriculum, and on whether SNSs would assist closing the achievement gap between ESL learners and mainstream students.

Large numbers of the United States diverse population have not learned sufficient English to perform regular classroom work successfully in English. ELLs need English language supports from parents, teachers and school environment to reach academic goals, prepare for colleges, and adjust to college life. As to family supports, many parents are ill-equipped to help their ESL children to navigate a complex, foreign, and sometimes hostile educational system (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Suárez-Orozco, Pimentel, & Martin, 2009; Kanno & Harklau, 2012). As a result,

ESL learners are at the greatest risk for academic failure (Consentino de Cohen, Deterding, & Clewell, 2005; Slama, 2012; Kanno & Harklau, 2012).

Studies have revealed both positive and negative influences from the use of SNSs for English learning. As for positive influence, research has shown powerful connections among the use of SNSs, the effectiveness of academic performance and adjustment of educational environment. Research results indicate that SNSs, as both communication and educational environments, have powerful effects on language and intercultural teaching and learning (Aydin, 2012; Denny, 2010; DePew, 2011; Kabilan, Ahmad, & Abiding, 2010; Kathleen, 2009; Kitsis, 2008; Pascopella and Richardson, 2009; Skerrett, 2010; Waters, 2009). Studies have also revealed positive impacts of SNSs on supporting students in first-year to adjust to university culture and on encouraging social and academic interactions among peers (McCarthy, 2010). Therefore, the ever-growing popularity of SNSs among young people and its positive roles in ELLs' learning have led educators to seriously consider integrating SNSs into classroom instruction (Aydin, 2012). Although research has shown pedagogical potential of integrating SNSs into curriculum, limited studies have investigated ESL learners' perspectives and attitudes toward integrating SNSs into their curriculum. In addition, the lack of instructional materials and knowledgeable educators for using SNSs in instruction impede integrating SNSs into the curriculum. If this integration is to be widely adopted, more professional developments are needed to produce highly qualified teachers who can integrate SNSs into ESL curriculum.

Negative influences encompass overspending of time (Fodeman & Monroe, 2009), and encouraging negative attitudes such as deceiving (Queirolo, 2009). This mixed feeling of the impact of SNSs has been an on-going debate among researchers. It is essential to research further to determine whether SNSs should be taken seriously as a language learning tool or a learning environment, especially at a university level.

In the field of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), Warschauer (1996) claims that computer-mediated communication (CMC) is one of the most traditional but most effective tool of network-based language teaching and learning. It provides learners with opportunities to use a target language for authentic communications. Warschauer discussed CMC, blogs, and wikis as examples of how to use media to promote global literacy. However, the discussion did not include the leading SNSs (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, My Spaces, Google Plus+ and YouTube). These leading SNSs offer many elements of CMC tools. Therefore, our study will focus on the above six leading SNSs.

Macaro, Handley, and Walter (2012) conducted a systematic literature review of CALL in ESL and explained the importance of the use of technology in second language (L2) teaching. This systematic review presents a map of 117 research studies of technology in L2 from 1990 to 2010. More studies of CALL in ESL were conducted with secondary and primary school ELL. Less research was found investigating ESL learners at university levels. Furthermore, Macaro et al. (2012) claimed that the largest number of studies focused on vocabulary (24%), writing (24%), and reading (22%) aspects of learning. Less speaking (11%), listening (10%) and pronunciation (3%) aspects of learning have been investigated. Therefore, our study will focus on ESL university undergraduate and graduate students and investigate overall seven aspects of language learning in terms of vocabulary, writing, reading, speaking, listening and pronunciation aspects, as well as culture.

Method

Participants

The survey was designed to explore ESL students' general practices or uses of SNSs, and their views on SNSs as an educational environment. Two hundred and three voluntary undergraduate and graduate ESL students from three universities in Midwest states in the U.S.

participated in the survey using convenience sampling. Participants were ESL learners who (1) take classes in English Language Improvement Program (ELIP) and Program of Intensive English (OPIE) in one university, (2) were taking classes in the English Language Institute (ELI) in two universities, (3) were the members in International Student Associations in all three universities. International students who studied in ELIP program were degree-seeking students who have already been accepted to the university. These courses aim at strengthening their academic language proficiency. Students who studied in OPIE and ELI program were conditional acceptance from the university. Students are required to take these remedial courses before they register for regular college courses. Voluntary participants were given an online questionnaire or paper based questionnaire, which was immediately collected upon completion.

Instrument and Data Analysis

The present research used survey method for data collection. The survey consisted of three parts with twenty questions. Part one solicited demographic information about the students and their language usage; part two enquires information on students' uses of SNSs, and their learning of English in SNSs environment; and part three consisted of three open-ended questions.

The data for the first two sections were analyzed and interpreted with descriptive statistic measures such as frequencies and averages. The study applied a Likert-scale questionnaire to investigate students' motivation, attitudes, and confidence about their ELL through the use of SNSs. In the third section, the open-ended questions focusing on personal experience of using SNSs collected qualitative information from students by asking them for examples and rationales for their answers. In regards to the qualitative information, students' views were categorized into emerging themes and analyzed using situation and activity coding strategies (Kabilan & Abidin, 2010). The situation codes were assigned to units of data that described how students defined and

perceived the use of SNSs. The researchers conducted coding separately and then compared and contrasted the themes.

Results

The findings were presented in the three sections: first, the demographic data; second, students' general practices and uses of SNSs; third, SNSs as an online environment facilitates English language learning in terms of (1) Improvement of language skills; (2) Confidence; (3) Motivation; (4) Attitude and (5) Intercultural perspectives. Further, the study conducted exploratory analyses and found some interesting relationships among variables.

Demographic Data

The study was carried out with 147 undergraduate and 56 graduate students. Researchers sent out 209 surveys, and received 203 responses. Six surveys were not completed. Two of the participants only complete the first two sections, and four of the participants did not answer the open-ended section. There were 122 male (60%) and 81 female (40%) learners who participated in this study. Students' ages range from 18 to 41. The student body included 79.3% students from Asia or Pacific Islands, 14.8% from Middle East, North Africa, and Greater Arabia, and another 5.9% are from North America, South America and Europe.

Students' General Practices or Uses of SNSs

Among the 203 students who participated in the survey, Facebook (67%) is the most frequently used SNS, followed by YouTube (59%). Students in this study were active users or members of SNSs, with 79% of the students logging into their SNSs accounts at least once a day. Regarding their language uses on SNSs, students reported using native language only, English only, and a mixed of English and their native languages. See Table 1 below.

Table 1

Language Used for SNSs Learning Environment.

Question	Not at all	Occasionally	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
	(1)%	(2)%	(3)%	(4)%	(5)%
Native language only	4.4	8.4	35.5	36.5	15.3
English only	6.4	21.7	45.3	17.2	9.4
A mix of English and native language	7.9	12.3	39.9	25.1	14.8

SNSs Facilitate English Language and Culture Learning

The findings indicated that students agreed that SNSs facilitate their English language learning. The students agreed that the use of SNSs would enhance their language skills (86.08%), become more confident in using English (86.10%), enhanced motivation to practice English (88.33%), and increased positive attitudes towards English learning (96.63%).

Improvement of language skills. The total percentage of students who slightly agree, agree and strongly agree exceeds 76% regarding the positive impact on their language skills (See Table 2). To provide a better understanding of students' perspectives towards SNSs as an online learning environment, the study presented quantitative result along with qualitative data.

Table 2

Students' Perspectives of SNSs As An On-Line English Language Learning Environment.

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
	(1)%	(2)%	(3)%	(4)%	(5)%
Overall proficiency in English has	0	15.3	33.5	48.3	3.0

increased					
Use English more often in daily life	2.0	13.8	29.1	44.3	10.8
Learn more English words	1.0	2.5	16.7	66	13.8
English pronunciation has improved	6.4	14.8	31	37.4	10.3
More confidence in English writing	1.0	18.7	30	41.4	8.9
More confidence in English reading	1.5	10.8	28.6	51.2	7.9
More confidence in English speaking	2.0	14.8	32	39.9	11.3
More confidence in English listening	4.4	11.3	29.6	43.3	11.3
More motivation in English writing	1.5	12.3	30	51.2	4.9
More motivation in English reading	1.0	7.9	26.6	58.6	5.9
More motivation to learn new words	.5	5.9	21.7	61.6	10.3
More motivation in real world					
communication	1.0	10.8	26.1	49.3	12.8
More motivation to practice English					
pronunciation	2.0	16.7	29.7	42.4	9.9
More motivation to communication					
English on SNSs	.5	8.4	28.6	52.7	9.9
Not worried about making English					
mistakes	3.5	19.7	30.5	37.4	8.9
Makes learning English more authentic	.5	9.4	37.9	45.8	6.4
Makes learning English easier	1.0	10.3	31	49.3	8.4
Makes learning English more interesting					
and enjoyable	1.0	3.4	24.1	56.2	15.3

Tolerates language mistakes	2.0	6.4	38.9	45.3	7.4
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Eighty-four point seven percent of the students in this study agreed that SNSs could become an online environment that improves their overall proficiency in English. Eighty-four point two percent of the students used English more often in their lives than before, while 96.60% of the students had learned more English vocabulary, and 78.80% of the students found their English pronunciation had been improved.

The findings indicated that Facebook and YouTube helped the students improve their English skills the most. In regard with writing, reading and oral communication, students also believed Facebook and YouTube helped the most. As for their English pronunciation, students claimed that YouTube helped the most, followed by Facebook (See Table 3).

Table 3

Students' Perspectives of SNSs That Help Improve English Language Skills.

	Facebook	Google	My	Last.				
English language skills	k	YouTube	Plus+	Twitter	Space	LinkIn	FM	Other
SNSs that help writing in								
English the most	77.3%	60.6%	37.9%	31.5%	8.9%	8.9%	2.5%	21.1%
SNSs that help reading in								
English the most	79.8%	57.1%	37.4%	34%	10.3%	9.4%	2.0%	16.3%
SNSs that help oral								
communication in English the								
most	74.4%	59.6%	30.5%	34.5%	6.4%	4.9%	4.4%	17.7%
SNSs that help improve								
pronunciation in English the								

most 52.7% 77.3% 25.6% 23.6% 7.4% 4.9% 11.3%18.2%

Confidence. In terms of enhancing their confidence in English learning, 76% of the students held the opinion that SNSs could enhance their confidence in using English. Eighty-one point three percent of the students reported becoming more confident in writing in English after using English on SNSs. In terms of reading in English, 89.25% of the students revealed that by participating in SNSs, their confidence in reading has improved. Regarding their confidence in English speaking and communication skills, 85.20% of students claimed that their confidence has enhanced. Regarding their listening comprehension, 88.70% of the students believed that their confidence level has been increased.

Motivation. Over 74% of the students agreed that SNSs could become an environment for enhancing students' motivation in learning English. Eighty-seven point seven percent of the students have become more motivated to writing in English after using English on SNSs. Regarding reading, 92.10% of the students revealed that they have become more motivated to read in English. Similarly, 94.10% of the students claimed that they have become more motivated to learn new vocabulary while 89% of the students believed they have become more motivated to communicate with people in the real world using English. Likewise, 91% of the students showed that they become more motivated to practice their pronunciation in English. Eighty-three percent of the students claimed that they have become more motivated to communicate with people on SNSs in English. Eighty point three percent of the students were not worried about making language mistakes on SNSs, which is a low-stake environment for them to practice English.

Attitude. Ninety-one point five percent of the students concurred that their participation in SNSs has inculcated a more positive attitude towards learning English. Students revealed that SNSs created a more favorable learning environment than traditional language learning. Over 90%

of the students revealed that SNSs makes learning English more authentic and easier. Regarding students' interest, 96.60% of the students believed SNSs make learning English more interesting and enjoyable.

As for linguistic aspects, many students discussed in the open-ended questions the benefits of participating in SNSs in terms of learning vocabulary, slangs, idioms, internet terms, and casual greetings, which all have deep cultural roots. The following are some examples of students' perspectives:

Intercultural competence. To answer the third question, the findings revealed that SNSs helped students learn the culture of the target language, and allowed them to exhibit their intercultural competence through the use of SNSs. Three main themes identified are presented in Table 4: linguistic aspects, customs aspects, and socio-cultural aspects. Regarding linguistics, many students expressed in the open-ended questions that SNSs allowed them to benefit from learning vocabulary, slangs, idioms, internet vocabulary, and informal greetings, which all have deep cultural roots (See Table 4). Regarding customs, students claimed that SNSs provide them with information and knowledge about different lifestyles, festivals, and holidays across cultures. As for learning in socio-culture, students expressed that they learn English through building community, collaborating, and communicating with American friends. **(Please insert Table 4 below).**

SNSs in school curriculum settings. To answer the fourth question, the findings revealed that SNSs helped students learn the target language through the use of SNSs in the academic settings and social life. Many students discussed in the open-ended questions the benefits of searching for information, communicating in authentic environment through SNSs, learning vocabulary, and enhancing motivation in class (See Table 5). **(Please insert Table 5 below)**

Discussion

Improvement of Language Skills

There are three potential explanations for why SNSs have been perceived to improve English language learners' language skills. First, students are able to learn English through the friendly and familiar sociocultural environment and SNSs communities. Second, students gain knowledge and skills from English native speakers (NS) through the CLT approach (Larsen-Freeman, 2007). Third, students engage in authentic written dialogue and communications with English NS. Since learning in SNSs communities provides lots of opportunities to interact and communicate with NS of English, students learn not only the target language, but develop their sociocultural skills while collaborating and building social networks. Further, the findings indicated that Facebook and YouTube help the most in improving student English skills, which could be attributed to the popularity of these two SNSs.

Confidence

Students revealed that their confidence levels have increased as a result of their practices of English language skills in the virtual world of SNSs (Kabilan et al., 2010). This also directly enhances their confidence to communicate in English in the real world. While sharing opinions, exchanging messages, and commenting on profiles and pictures on SNSs, the students must have developed confidence in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. SNSs can become a helpful computer-mediated communicative (CMC) tool for shy and introverted students to interact with NS. According to the notion of CLT, if students are involved in meaning-focused communicative activities, language learning will take place (Harmer, 2007). Thus, it can be implied that the students in this study are somewhat successful in learning language in the SNS environment which allows them to focus more on meaning making rather than language forms. The friendly, relaxed and low-stake nature of learning on SNSs may have contributed to students' confidence towards

learning English as Krashen's (1988) input hypotheses indicate that the lower the affective filters are the more learning takes place .

Motivation

Participants report that their motivation in learning English has been increased through the use of SNSs. This finding supports the notion of Gass and Selinker (2008) that affective learning results in students' motivation as a "strong predictor of success in language learning (p.426)." A previous study indicates that students' primary purposes and motivation to become SNSs members are building social networks and relationships rather than learning English (Kabilan et al., 2010). This correlates with the students in this study who report having motivation to learn English vocabulary through the use of SNSs, but that is not the primary purpose of using SNSs. These results support Krashen's (1989) incidental learning, students are acquiring new vocabulary in a CMC incidental learning environment.

Attitude

The majority of students are positive about learning on SNSs because SNSs make learning more authentic, interesting and enjoyable, and less stressful. Furthermore, in the informal and low-stake SNS environment, students have all the freedom to use the target language without worrying about making language mistakes. The ESL students' positive response to learning on SNSs could be due to the fact that SNSs are familiar and relevant environments to the students, the digital natives for whom SNS have become one of the most popular media in their lives.

Integrating SNSs into an ESL curriculum could benefit learners in acquiring the target language and intercultural competency in the following ways: first, students are able to relate their language learning to their daily lives, and connect what they have learned with their personal experiences and the global community through SNSs; second, SNSs enrich the curriculum with various opportunities for students to learn English in authentic situations within an environment

that they are familiar with and enjoy using; third, students acquire different genres of writing in English through SNSs which help them understand proper register, style, grammar, length and content of messages, and how to use critical thinking skills to comment on issues and respond to posts online.

Intercultural competence

Understanding of the culture of a target language, an important aspect of language learning, allows students to learn the language and its people. It helps to avoid any potential intercultural misunderstandings during communications. According to Byram's (1997) intercultural communicative competence learning objectives, SNSs may help students learn the culture of the target language and improve their intercultural competence which may occur in these areas: (1) Linguistic aspects (i.e. slangs, idioms, internet terms, casual greetings); (2) Customs aspects (i.e. lifestyle, festivals, holidays); (3) Sociocultural aspects (i.e. community building, collaborating, communication).

The studies by Byram (1997) and Schenker (2012) support the findings of the current study. Linguistically, students indicated that the SNSs help them learn how to interpret and relate documents or events across cultures, and to explain the differences of the target language culture from students' own cultures (Schenker, 2012). ESL students said that the use of SNSs encourages them to adopt positive, open and curious attitudes to other cultures; they also showed readiness to accept different cultures and compare them with their own. Furthermore, ESL students asserted that SNSs help them develop critical cultural awareness, and they are able to evaluate critically and express different perspectives on their own cultures and the target language culture.

Regarding sociocultural aspects, students claimed that SNSs help them not only develop the knowledge of their own cultures and the target language culture, but also the general processes

of social and individual interactions. Furthermore, SNSs help students learn the skills of discovery and interaction through authentic communication and interaction with American friends.

Conclusion

Implications and Limitations

Supported by the perspectives of incidental learning (Krashen, 1989), CLT (Larsen-Freeman, 2007), sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1987), and intercultural competence (Byram, 1997), this study has shown that SNmethoSs have the potential to become a positive learning environment for ESL learners and contribute to their learning. SNSs are able to engage learners in authentic meaningful language-based tasks, and allow them to learn at their own pace within a familiar 21st century learning environment. Therefore, if integrated well into ESL curriculum, SNSs may create an effective learning community that assists and promotes meaningful ELL for ESL learners.

Among the many strategies that teachers may use to implement SNSs in their classrooms are (1) create class SNSs communities (e.g. Facebook groups or Google Plus+ groups) for ESL learners to interact with native English speakers who are learning foreign languages that may need help from ESL learners; (2) assign bilingual or cultural projects on SNSs for ESL and native English speakers/foreign language students to work together (e.g. create digital stories on their own or their cultures); (3) post discussion forums on social issues to draw authentic and critical responses from both ESL learners and their native speaker friends (e.g. Facebook news feed or comments).

A majority of the participants claimed in the open-ended items that SNSs have contributed positively to their learning of English, and to the improvement and practice of their language skills. Further, students preferred learning English from SNSs to textbooks mainly because SNSs are more interesting and authentic. Therefore, the study suggests that SNSs should be integrated

into ESL curriculum with better organization of activities from classroom teachers, and by teachers who purposefully integrate SNSs in their teaching. Integrating SNSs into ESL curriculum does not mean replacing the existing curriculum contents. Rather, the integration of SNSs plays an essential role of scaffolding ESL students in adjusting to the challenging academic learning and assisting them to engage in higher-level academic activities via collaboration with peers and teachers in a more comfortable and motivated environment like SNSs.

One limitation of the study is that a large number of participants are first year ESL students from China where some SNSs are not available. They are used to the Chinese version of the SNSs such as Qzone (QQ) or Ren Ren. This might have skewed and led to the result that less than 10% of the students use LinkIn, My Space and Last.fm. Therefore, future research should try to include more participants who are from a variety of regions and countries in the world. The international students who participated in this survey study have full access to social networking sites; however, researchers and educators should be aware that ESL students who are not familiar with the U.S. academic language and culture may need additional scaffolding and workshop training to appropriately utilize these social networking sites. For instance, many students from China might not be familiar with Facebook and Instagram because they use WeChat and QQ in their home country. Also if teachers plan to use SNSs as an instructional tool, they may need to take into consideration that some ESL students may not have access to SNSs.

As this study shows the emerging potential of SNSs in ESL teaching and learning, future studies are needed to find out about teachers' perspectives, to explore effective ways of integrating SNSs into the curriculum, and to study the impact of using SNSs on the teaching and learning of ESL and on the development of ESL curriculum in general.

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Changing the Lens through which Students View the Past by Using Historical Empathy

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Many students enter middle school social studies classrooms with the belief that the past has little relevance to the present. When teachers use activities that foster historical empathy, students walk in the footsteps of people from the past. The exploration of history in this manner allows students to see the relevancy of the past to contemporary society. In this article, the author provides three activities for how the teacher can strengthen students' ability to empathize with people from the past by analyzing primary sources. These activities are designed to enable students to see connections from the past to present and articulate historical figures' differing perspectives. The author includes an example of possible student work for each activity. An appendix is also included that contains additional websites for obtaining primary sources in world history that may be utilized to foster students' historical empathy skills.

Introduction

It is important for educators to consider historical empathy as a tool to use in the middle school social studies classroom. During middle school, students begin to go through physical, social, emotional, and intellectual changes (NCSS, 1991). Activities with historical empathy engage our middle school students in meaningful ways. Historical empathy is defined as the “ability to describe the past through the eyes and experiences of those who were there...” (Yilmaz, 2007). Activities related to historical empathy can be tools that are used to understand people’s actions during a time period (Foster & Yeager, 2001). Students can better relate with historical figures, even those that lived thousands of years ago. Many social studies teachers face the challenge of divesting students of an apathetic attitude towards the people and events of the past. Yet, for this to happen, today’s social studies teacher should understand that effective instruction requires more than supplying textbook pages to read and closed questions to answer at the end of the chapter. The National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) recognizes that students must be engaged in the classroom, needing to understand how what is being taught in the classroom is relevant to their lives. Activities that foster historical empathy allow students to apply meaning to historical content.

The NCSS' National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies provides a framework from which teachers can plan instruction that includes inquiry-based learning. Students think critically as they interact with primary sources. They learn to question the text, looking for societal, religious, or political influences. Analyzing primary and secondary sources allows students to be exposed to different cultures and civilizations. They see that cultures may have divergent beliefs, biases, and attitudes from their own.

The article begins with a section that discusses the benefits of fostering historical empathy in students. Three activities are introduced and described that utilizes primary sources to strengthen students' historical empathy skills. The first activity details how to analyze a primary source using a word web as a graphic organizer. This exercise allows students to examine a historical figure's point of view. The second activity focuses on students scrutinizing a text for the author's bias and writing their opinions about a document's bias using evidence. The third activity involves students creating a faux primary source using a visual primary source and criteria analysis form. These activities foster historical empathy and align with NCSS' push for social studies teachers to integrate literacy and social studies instruction (NCSS, n.d.). As students analyze primary sources, they are also paraphrasing text, identifying bias, citing evidence, and supporting main ideas. The activities included in this article incorporate these literacy skills while at the same time teach students how to analyze primary sources using historical empathy.

Benefits of Historical Empathy

Historical empathy allows students to actively interact with the content material as they explore the people, events, and issues of the past (Endacott & Pelekanos, 2014). Too often students enter into the social studies classroom and begrudge the time they have to spend reading about people who lived hundreds, even thousands, of years ago. They often wonder, "What does this have to do with me?" Activities that foster historical empathy with primary sources enable

students to make connections between the past and present. When using source evidence, many students tend to make an affective connection with historical figures (Endacott, 2012). Primary sources offer a glimpse into the mind and experiences of historical figures. Students tend to connect to personal words, often using their own personal experiences to empathize with people from the past. They may come to understand that similar economic, cultural, racial, and religious concerns that exist today were also prevalent also in another time period (Blatner, 2009). For instance, when analyzing primary sources from 1215 that detail the signing of the Magna Carta, students may discover how this event impacts them today. Imagine how well students could relate to the English barons, who were feeling oppressed by King John. Reading from the English barons' perspective can ultimately result in students making the connection that this document, which established rule of law, had on influencing Thomas Jefferson's contributions to the Declaration of Independence. Students contextualize the past, while also seeing its relevance to contemporary society.

Another benefit to fostering historical empathy in students is they begin to see the value in different perspectives. Historical figures are no longer shadows from the past, but real people who held biases, argued, and fought for what they believed. In this way, history becomes rich and individuals from the past become three-dimensional (Lazarakou, 2008). The analysis of primary and secondary sources through activities that foster historical empathy enable students to make connections between people's values and their actions (Ashby & Lee, 2001; Brooks, 2008). Students may therefore come to realize that people's life experiences, beliefs, and ideals influence their points of view. As students try to put themselves in the shoes of a historical figure from long ago, they may come to understand why historical figures held certain beliefs, even when those views differ with their own.

These benefits of changing how students view history by using historical empathy are reflected in the activities included in this article. They will help to answer students when they ask “What does this have to do with me?” The activities use primary sources and highlight opportunities for students to explore the past through the eyes of those who lived it. In this manner they are able to engage and interact with historical figures and events from long ago, bringing meaning into what had at one time been meaningless and irrelevant facts, dates, and people.

Using Historical Empathy to Analyze Primary Sources

Primary sources are the “windows” into the past (Austin & Thompson, 2015). They are the first-person accounts of events that happened through the words of people from a time period. Therefore, a careful examination of these sources is needed to analyze the authors’ biases and values. Students need to be able to draw conclusions about the author’s perspective based on evidence. For this to happen, they must possess the ability to put themselves in the shoes of the creator of the primary source. In other words, it is important for students to empathize with a historical figure’s values, biases, and beliefs. One way to foster students’ historical empathy skills is for them to complete writing assignments using primary sources. Students need multiple opportunities to practice these skills.

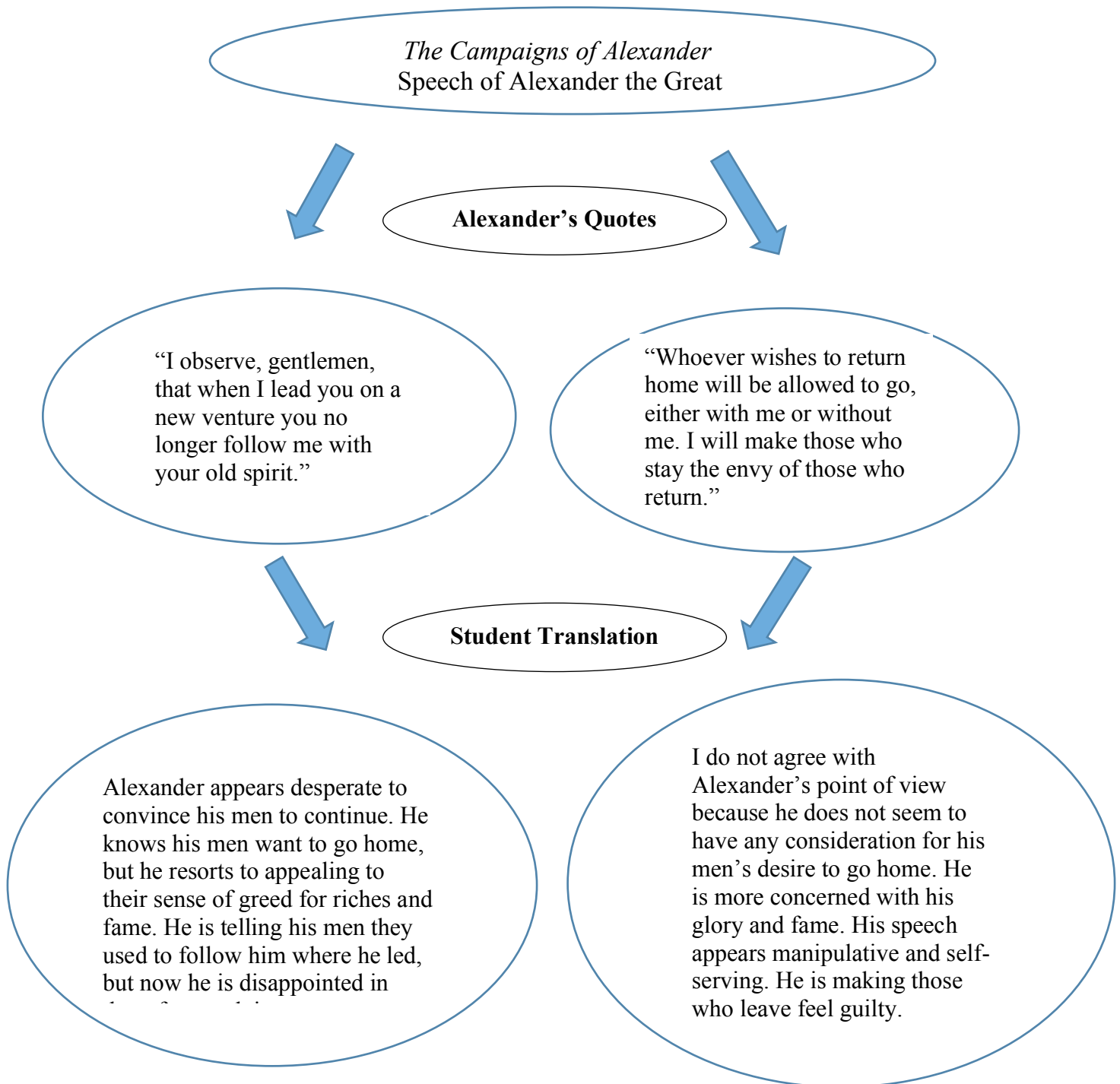
The speech of Alexander the Great from *The Campaigns of Alexander*, <http://legacy.fordham.edu/Halsall/ancient/arrian-alexander1.asp>, can be used to help students examine primary sources. This speech has a readability level that should be appropriate for middle school students. It is also rife with loaded language, words or phrases that attempt to inspire emotion. This particular speech is ideal for a lesson that is introducing students to using historical empathy to analyze primary sources. The teacher needs to start by dividing students into pairs, and the students will then be given the instructions on how to annotate the text. Students will underline

and define any words they do not know, writing the definitions in the margins of the text. At the end of each paragraph, the pairs will work together to briefly summarize Alexander's speech.

Students will then be given a word web to analyze the text. This word web has three levels. The first level provides the title of the text. There are two bubbles in the second level for students to either write a sentence or phrase from the text that shows Alexander the Great's perspective. The third level of the word web has two bubbles. In each bubble, students explain what their selected phrase or sentence from their second level means in their own words. Before students start working on this word web, the teacher should model the first bubble on the second level for them. This allows students to see and hear the teacher's thinking process as she decides which textual evidence best shows Alexander's point of view. Examples of questions that best show the teacher's thinking are as follows: "Which part of the text best shows Alexander's purpose?" "Is there a specific line that has loaded language? For what purpose?" "Do you see any lines of text where Alexander uses emotion to further his purpose?" Students can then follow this line of questioning when completing this word web on their own. In the next section, the author provides the graphic organizer (Figure One) with some sample answers to Alexander the Great's speech.

Figure One. The Campaigns of Alexander the Great

Using a Word Web to Analyze Alexander's Speech



Using a Word Web to Analyze Alexander's Speech

Working with primary sources in this activity builds students' analytical thinking skills (Cairn, 2012). These skills are necessary for students to critically question the text and draw reasonable conclusions based on evidence in the source. The examination of the past in this manner has the potential to change how students perceive historical figures and events. Students can begin to see historical figures as three-dimensional. Primary sources are valuable tools to help bring history alive to students, and the interpretation of these sources can make events and people from the past meaningful to the students (Blatner, 2009). Through the analysis and translation of text, they can delve into the mind of historical figures and connect with the past by applying their own meaning. This activity helps to give students the needed foundation to be able to empathize with historical figures' perspectives expressed in primary sources.

Identifying Bias in a Primary Source

An important part of working with primary sources is being able to identify bias. Just as teachers should not assume students can analyze primary sources, they should also not assume students know how to recognize an author's point of view. It is important for students to know that many authors of primary sources are influenced by cultural, religious, political, regional, and economic factors (Clabough, Turner, Russell, & Waters, 2016). These factors influence how historical figures view and respond to certain situations and events.

Many primary sources contain emotional arguments and statements; therefore, they tend to avoid certain facts, especially if those facts do not support the author's perspective (Clabough & Turner, 2015). Authors of primary sources use loaded language, words or phrases that attempt to evoke emotional responses in the readers, or that appeal to existing stereotypes. Students need to be able to analyze the author's purpose for writing the document along with his or her intended

audience. As critical thinkers, they need to have the skills to be able to discern opinion from fact, subjectivity from objectivity. These skills allow students to make informed decisions about the content of a primary source.

To discuss how to identify bias within primary sources, the author will use the primary source *A Hostile View of the Crusade* by Annales Herbipolenses (<http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1147critic.asp>). This text takes a definite stance on an issued that historians still debate today: were the Crusades a just war? The language in this text is rich with imagery, which will hopefully aid middle school students in pointing out the text that best shows bias. Each student needs to be given a copy of the text and asked to annotate it. It is recommended the text be annotated in the following manner: the main points are underlined in green, loaded language is circled in red, and evidence of the author's point of view is circled in yellow. Students will notate examples of where loaded language is being used to evoke emotion. All words that students do not know should be defined in the margins of the text, and the students should briefly summarize the author's main points in their own words in the margins.

In pairs, students will discuss the main points in the document, note evidence of loaded language, and articulate examples of the author's perspective. The teacher then needs to facilitate a class discussion on what the students read and discussed in their pairs. Before giving students directions on the writing assignment, she should make sure that they understood the author's purpose and intent. It would also be beneficial to ask students to think about the author's audience and ways that may influence the manner in which the letter was written. Students should be encouraged to question the text. What is the author's intent in writing this letter? Are there key words in the text that point to the author's opinion on the Crusades? How is the author using religion to emphasize his point?

Following the debriefing, the teacher gives the class instructions regarding writing a paragraph on identifying bias in *A Hostile View of the Crusade, Annales Herbipolenses*. The paragraph needs to contain six to ten sentences. The writing piece should state the author's point of view and cite three examples from the text. After each example from the text, the students will write a sentence that explains why this example supports the author's point of view. Each paragraph should also have a conclusion sentence. As the teacher provides students more opportunities to write using evidence, they become more adept writing with primary sources. Below, the author provides a possible example of a student paragraph.

Possible Student Paragraph

The author of the text, *Annales Herbipolenses*, condemned the Crusades and saw them as anything but religious. He begins his letter with "God allowed the Western church on account of its sins, to be cast down." This sentence shows that *Herbipolenses* believes God is not supporting the church and allowed it to be taken by the enemy. Next, the text says that "there arose certain pseudo prophets, sons of Belial...who seduce the Christians with empty words." *Herbipolenses* clearly believes the Christians were duped by the devil (Belial), and the Crusades were, therefore, of the devil's making, not God's. The author knows his audience is religious, and he is appealing to the people's fear of God. The text also states, "The intentions of the various men were different." He goes on to describe how some men went on the Crusades in search of riches, to see new lands, to escape poverty, and only a few believed they were led by God. The author's disdain for the Crusaders and their true motives can clearly be seen in these passages. He wants his audience to feel disgust for the Crusade as well. These examples support the fact that *Annales Herbipolenses* did not believe the Crusades were a holy and just war.

This writing activity is beneficial to students because it encourages them to thoroughly examine the evidence, question the text, and search for bias and hidden meanings (Wineburg, Martin, & Monte-Sano, 2013). It is important for students to be able to identify different perspectives and place them in historical context. Primary sources that show bias are valuable in the social studies classroom. They show students how pivotal conflicts in history were often viewed through different lenses. In such conflicts the participants tended to passionately defend their argument. Primary sources allow students to analyze these arguments and weigh its validity.

While the author's bias does not automatically invalidate the point of view, the students are able to use evidence to make an informed decision regarding its value. They can do this by creating a writing piece that is supported by evidence from the text.

Creating Faux Primary Sources

When teaching how to work with and analyze primary sources, it is important for teachers to introduce students to a number of visual primary sources. These sources can take the form of photos, artifacts, propaganda posters, political cartoons, and paintings. Just as with written text, visual primary sources need to be placed in historical context. It is also necessary for students to critically question them for the creator's purposes, beliefs, biases, and cultural influences. Visual materials add a piece to the puzzle of history that, sometimes, words cannot accomplish (Waters & Russell, 2013). For instance, many reporters of the 1930s told of economic devastation suffered by many Americans during the Great Depression. However, would the world really have the complete story without iconic photos, such as *The Migrant Mother* (http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/roadshow/fts/kansascity_201307F03.html)? Words could not describe her despair and hopelessness, but the world clearly saw her plight because of the famous photo. The photo evoked empathy from viewers all over the world. Students are capable of developing historical empathy through the analysis of photos and paintings from different time periods. This is the power of visual primary sources.

To extend learning and develop students' historical empathy skills, they should be given the opportunity to create faux primary sources. This activity requires students to apply their understanding of the content and express it through art or some other visual medium (Bickford, 2010). By participating in this activity, students are affectively engaging with history. They are invested and immersed in the issues, people, and events of the time period. To create a faux primary source, students must connect with the content and the people of the time period on an

emotional level. The product should not only mirror understanding of the historical content. It should also reflect students' capability to emotionally connect with the people of the past.

To discuss how to analyze and critique visual primary sources, the author will use *Saint Sebastian Interceding for the Plague Stricken* by Josse Lieferinxe

(<http://art.thewalters.org/detail/6193/saint-sebastian-interceding-for-the-plague-stricken>). This painting has religious overtones and shows the grief experienced by the people losing loved ones to the Black Death. Middle school students should be able to place the painting in historical context while at the same time critically question why certain imagery was used. The teacher needs to give students a criteria analysis form with a copy of the painting and several text boxes that contain questions regarding the painting. Each text box contains the questions as well as room for the students' responses. Students then complete this activity individually.

The first question on the criteria analysis form asks students to describe the people and images in the picture. They must examine the images in the forefront and background of the painting. The next box requires students to choose two images that resonate with them and explain why. In order to answer this question, students must use evidence from the painting and explain what emotions it evoked. The next box requires students to explain how the symbolism in the painting connects to the Black Death by using at least two examples from the painting. The last questions asks what the students think is the artist's message. They will also reflect on how the artist uses imagery to convey his message as well as what was his purpose in drawing the painting. The students' answers must be supported by details from the painting, as evidenced in the criteria for analysis form and an example of possible student responses provided below.

Figure Two. The Black Plague

Saint Sebastian Interceding for the Plague Stricken by Josse Lieferinxe

Describe the people and images in the picture. What do you see in the forefront and the background?

I see people who are grieving the loss of their loved ones because of the Black Death. Bodies are wrapped up and the priest is praying over the bodies. In the background, I see a demon and an angel going to battle and a man with a cross who looks like he is blessing a man with arrows through his body.

What two images resonate with you the most? Why?

One image that resonates with me is the man who seems to be falling down in grief. This resonates with me because it makes me think his family member just died. The other image is the man with the arrows through him. This stands out to me because I wonder if this man is paying for a sin or if he praying on behalf of the people.

How does symbolism in the painting connect to the Black Death? Give at least two examples from the painting.

There are many bodies in the painting. This tells me that people are dying daily, and the people do not know what to do. Their grief is plain to see. Also, the fight between the angel and the demon reflects the religious battle the people believed was taking place

What do you think is the artist's message? How is the artist using images to convey that message? What is the artist's purpose in drawing this painting? Support your answers with details from the painting.

I think the artist's message is while the people are fighting the plague on Earth that a heavenly battle is being fought at the same time for their souls. The message is also that the people in this time period were suffering as their loved ones died. The artist conveys this message through the angel and the demon fighting above the people. He also shows Saint Sebastian praying to God on behalf of the people. I think the artist's purpose in drawing this painting was to show how important the role of religion was to the people during the Black Death. They looked to God for their salvation, which is why he is seen ruling from above in the painting. Even though they are grieving and in pain, they still look to God. However, the artist wants to show how this plague is not a physical war. It is a heavenly one and man is caught in the middle.

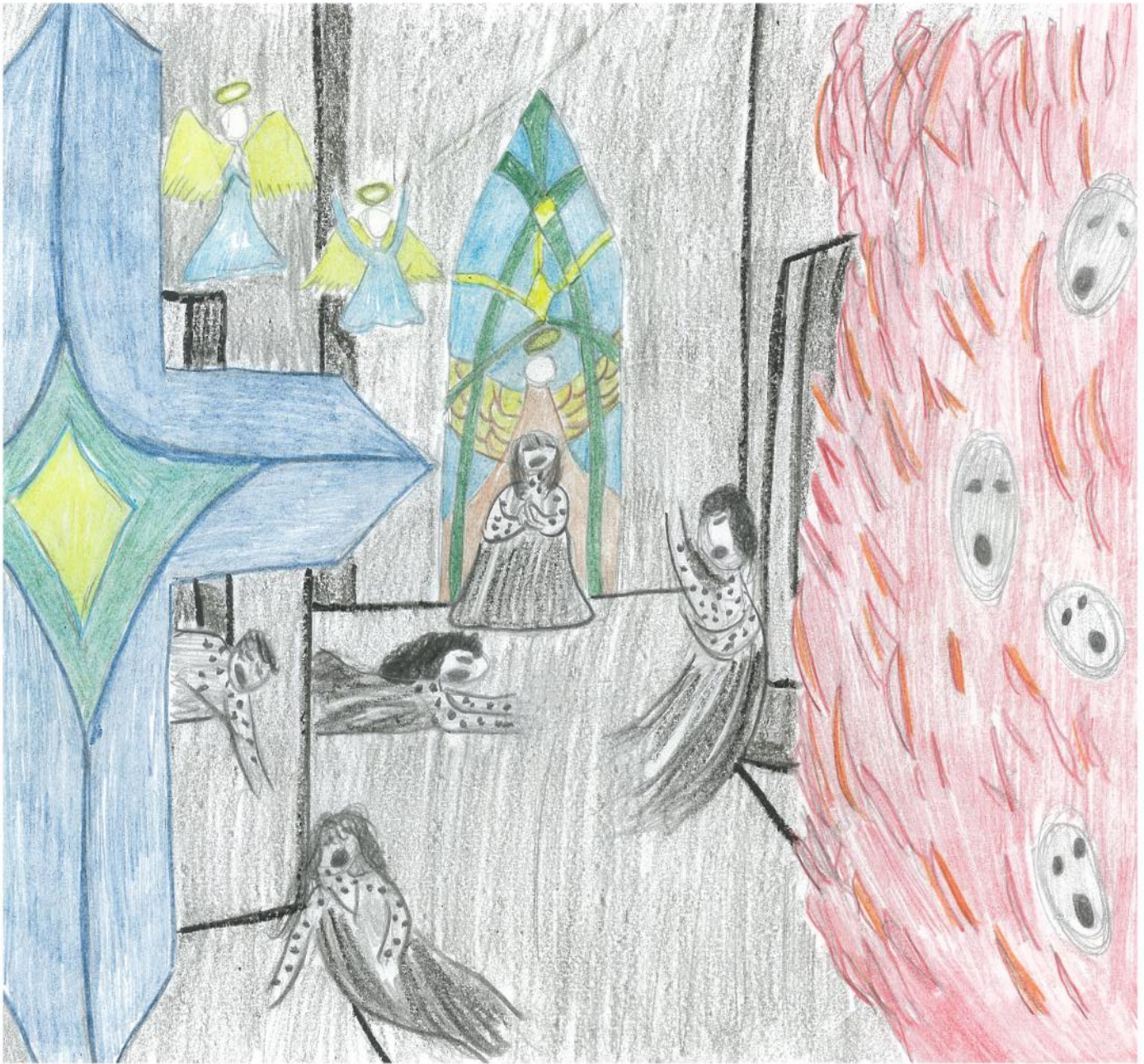
Once the criteria analysis form is completed, the teacher will give students instructions on how to create their own Black Death painting. Taking on the persona of 14th century European painters, students create their own paintings that illustrate what society was like for people experiencing the Black Death. The paintings can show societal, religious, or cultural issues of the

time period. When drawing their own paintings, students should use the criteria analysis form to focus attention on the purpose of the painting and use symbolism and imagery to evoke emotion. The teacher will instruct them to keep several questions in mind as they create their faux primary sources: “When people look at the painting what do students want their audience to know about society during the Black Death?” “What emotion will your painting evoke?” “What will the audience be able to tell about how the artist (student) views the Black Death?” A sample painting is provided in Figure Three below.

This activity is beneficial to students because it allows them to use words and images to construct meaning in an event. When creating faux primary sources, students apply historical concepts being taught in order to create a product that reflects their understanding of a topic (Clabough & Turner, 2015). This allows students to reflect and engage on a higher level of thinking with social studies concepts and ideas. Students are challenged to illustrate their understanding of the content in a manner other than writing (Bickford, 2010). This is especially beneficial for struggling readers and non-English speakers. The activity is an opportunity for these students to be successful in the classroom. These students often struggle with written text and, therefore, may find visual primary sources less intimidating to interpret (Stein, 2000).

Another benefit of this activity is the use of the criteria analysis form. Students use the form to interpret a painting, which provides them the opportunity to analyze art by attaching meaning to the images. This form also allows them to examine the artist’s intentions when he or she was drawing specific images in the painting. Students can ask themselves questions like, “What was the artist’s purpose by inserting a particular image?” Using this form to critique their own faux primary sources lets students illustrate their own understanding of the use of symbolism and imagery. It starts students on the journey of metacognition, being aware of their own thinking.

Figure Three. Black Death--Student painting



They are empathizing with historical figures' experiences and internalizing those same experiences in order to create a product that reflects their own understanding of an event.

Conclusion

In the West African culture, there are tales of a mythical creature called the Sankofa bird. This bird flies forward while forever facing backward, carrying an egg in its beak. This symbolizes the importance of never taking one's eyes off of the past while flying forward into the future, which is represented by the egg. Today, many students are the opposite of the Sankofa bird, they face forward, seeing no need to look to the past. They do not see the relevance of history or understand how it holds any meaning to their lives today. Activities that foster historical empathy allow students the opportunity see how the past connects to the present. When teachers use activities that utilize historical empathy, students go beyond the textbook and actively engage with the past. Activities such as those discussed in this article allow students to see history through the eyes, words, and feelings of those who lived it (Lazarakou, 2008). They learn how to value perspectives and beliefs of historical figures, even if they do not agree with them. The word "sankofa" literally translates to "return and collect it." This reflects what we want students to do by collecting information from primary sources. They will then discover history's relevance and why it is important we continue to look to the past, bringing the relevance of history to the future, just like the Sankofa bird. Appendix A, provided below, includes resources for teachers and students to use in a World History course to build empathy skills.

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Appendix A

1. Ancient Egypt: Old, Middle, and New Kingdom texts, literature, and art-Fordham University (<http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/asbook04.asp>)
2. Ancient world history: Recommended links to ancient history primary sources-Noreen Reale Falcone Library
(<http://resources.library.lemoyne.edu/content.php?pid=210266&sid=1764556>)
3. Medieval History: Byzantine Empire, Crusades, theology, Islam, late Middle Ages, and feudalism-Fordham University (<https://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook1old.html#byz-just2>)
4. Middle Ages and Renaissance: First person accounts detailing daily life in the Middle Ages (585 A.C.E.), Vikings, Columbus, and the Tudors (1597 A.C.E.)-Eyewitness to History (<http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/mefrm.htm>)
5. Reformation: Selected works of Martin Luther, John Calvin, English/Scottish Reformation-Religion, Society, and Culture in Newfoundland and Labrador
(<http://www.mun.ca/rels/reform/>)
6. Rome: Selected texts from the early Roman foundations, Republic, and Empire-Fordham University (<http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/asbook09.asp>)
7. Tudor History: Letters Written by the Six Wives of Henry VIII-English History
(<http://englishhistory.net/tudor/letter/>)
8. Women in World History: More than 200 primary sources written by women throughout history-Center for History and New Media (<http://chnm.gmu.edu/wwh/sources.php>)
9. World History Art and Artifacts: Art from the Neolithic through the contemporary era-Art History Resources (<http://arthistoryresources.net/ARTHLinks.html>)
10. World History Art and Artifacts: Works of art from 8000 B.C.E. through the contemporary era-The Metropolitan Museum of Art (<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works/>)
11. World History: Recommended links to ancient world history primary and secondary sources-Library of Congress
(<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/additionalresources/relatedresources/world/primary.html>)
12. World History: Recommended sites for primary source documents in world history-Peter Pappas' Best Sites for Primary Documents in World History

(<http://www.peterpappas.com/2013/09/best-sites-primary-documents-world-history-dbq.html>)

13. World History: Recommended websites for ancient and modern world history-Ed Tech Teacher: Best of History Websites (<http://besthistorysites.net/>)

