Touching History:
Evaluating a Birmingham Seminar on Teaching Civics and the Struggle for Civil Rights through Teacher Partnerships

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One cannot sit down and listen to Rev. Shuttlesworth, or to those who marched or walked into the 16th St. Baptist Church without being emotionally connected to the movement. However, the feelings are bittersweet, and I fear greatly that we are returning to a time of segregation in education. This is seen throughout the nation and especially in Kansas City, Missouri, where the percentage of African Americans majority in area schools has risen since the end of court ordered desegregation from 65% to over 80%. We are seeing an ever-increasing resegregation of our schools. I fear that the dream of Brown v. Topeka Board and Martin Luther King may be slipping away.

Introduction

Research over the last forty years has acknowledged the incontrovertible connection between teacher attitudes toward students and subject matter and student achievement and engagement. In a 1968 landmark article, Robert Rosenthal found that teachers' expectations are closely correlated to significant changes in student performance, and that these expectations are reflexively communicated to students.[1] A more recent study done specifically in the field of civic education found that no attitudinal changes occurred in students unless instructors inspired participants in some form, and that, indeed, instructors that comfortably utilized interactive methods were perceived as being more knowledgeable and inspiring.[2] According to Philip Jackson, in his summary in the *Handbook on Research in Curriculum*, "[t]he kind of classroom

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[1] Robert Rosenthal (1968). "Self-Fulfilling Prophecy," *Psychology Today*, II. September 1968: pp.44-52. Much other work of the same time period support Rosenthal's conclusions, especially as it pertains to the attitudes of teachers toward economically and socially disadvantaged students. Cf., Frank Riessman (1962). *The Culturally Deprived Child.* New York: Harper and Row, 1962. Patrick Groff (1963). "Dissatisfaction in Teaching the C.D. Child." *Phi Delta Kappan*, XLV. November 1963: p. 2. Martin Deutsch (1964). Social and Psychological Aspects in the Development of the Disadvantaged Learner." *The Journal of Negro Education*, XXXIII. Summer 1964: 232-244. *R*.L. Green (1967). "Crisis in American Education: A Racial Dilemma," *National Conference on Equal Educational Opportunity in American Cities*. 1967: p.13. R.L. Green (1967). "Some Effects of Deprivation on Intelligence, Achievement, and Cognitive Growth." *Journal of Negro Education*, XXXVI. Winter 1967: pp.5-14. Kenneth Washington (1977).

[2] Finkel, Steven E. (2000). "Can Tolerance be Taught? Adult Civic Education and the Development of Democratic Values." Paper prepared for the conference, "Rethinking Democracy in the New Millennium," University of Houston, February 16-19, 2000. http://www.uh.edu/democracy/finkelp.pdf

environment created by teachers and their attitudes toward the subject appear to influence how their students react to the subject. Diverse teaching strategies and routines, active student participation in the lesson, cooperative learning activities among students, and positive interpersonal relationships between the teacher and the student, have been shown to foster student interest."[3]

In an effort to heed the call for quality professional development which would provide both quality content instruction on the Civil Rights Movement and affect teacher attitudes (i.e., humanize) and engagement with regard to the Movement, the Center for Civic Education (Center), in partnership with the Alabama Center for Law and Civic Education and BCRI, developed a four-day seminar for **We the People** teachers from across the country on the Civil Rights Movement entitled *We the People: A Seminar on Civil Rights*. The seminar was inspired by the mission of the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute (BCRI) to encourage communication and reconciliation of human rights issues worldwide, and to serve as a depository for civil rights archives and documents. The seminar was intended to serve as a primer on the Civil Rights Movement and subsequent civil rights issues, from those who lived through it—a witness testimony[4] approach to professional development. It included lectures and discussions with eminent scholars and foot soldiers involved in the Civil Rights Movement, including Dorothy Cotton, former

[3] Handbook of Research on Curriculum, 1992, Philip W. Jackson, editor. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

[4] "Witness testimony" is here used analogously to its usage in a court of law. "Witness testimony," in this case, denotes a speech or report in front of members of an audience from someone who personally lived through a historical set of circumstances and shares these, through the filter of his/her own experiences and memories. As Shoshana Felman points out in "In an Era of Testimony: Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*", "[t]o testify is always, metaphorically, to take the witness's stand, or to take the position of the witness insofar as the narrative account of the witness is at once engaged in an appeal and bound by an oath. To testify is thus not merely to narrate but to commit oneself, and to commit the narrative, to others: to *take responsibility*—in speech—for history or for the truth of an occurrence, for something which, by definition, goes beyond the personal, in having general (nonpersonal) validity and consequences" (104).

Director of Citizenship Education, Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth of Greater New Light Baptist Church. The seminar incorporated the stories of foot soldiers and teachers who lived through the Movement with cultural artifacts including music and tours of historical sites of key events. In between a series of lectures from notable academics and experts on the Civil Rights Movement[5], participants took a tour of 16th Street Baptist Church, the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, and attended a church service at the Body of Christ Deliverance Ministry—each site designed to humanize the events, the people, and the culture of the Movement. In that spirit, the opening reception of the seminar took place at Chris McNair Studios and Art Gallery, established in 1962 by Chris McNair, a Birmingham political activist and father of Denise McNair, one of the four little girls killed in the bombing of the16th Street Baptist Church on September 15,1963.

The historical site visits and witness testimony components were to serve as dialectical syntheses of the facts, history, and landmark court decisions referenced in the lectures and discussions throughout the four days of the seminar, as a means of reinforcing both the intellectual and emotional relevance of the Movement—a holistic approach to professional development.

Thus, in additional to providing teachers with instruction on and crucial knowledge about the Civil Rights Movement and its legacy in American history, teachers were provided with primary accounts of the Movement, specifically as they played out in

[5] Lectures at the seminar included: "Did the Founding Fathers Create Such a Flawed Document that the Civil War was Inevitable?" by William Collins, Professor of History and Political Science, Samford University; "How did the Foot Soldiers Impact the Civil Rights Movement?" by Janice Kelsey, a Civil Rights activist; "Is Justice Delayed Justice Denied?" by Doug Jones a former United States Attorney; "How Did Religion Shape the Civil Rights Movement?" by Reverend Wilson Fallin Jr., Professor of History, University of Montevallo; and "Music of the Civil Rights Movement" by Donna Porter.

Birmingham, as well as received a practical pedagogical application of the content. The seminar included discussions on ways participants could use primary source documents in their own classrooms, including a demonstration of a lesson on Dr. Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail." Martha Bouyer, the Social Studies Coordinator for Jefferson County School District, led a session on teaching the Civil Rights Movement in the **We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution** Program, emphasizing ways primary documents can be better incorporated into the secondary historical sources of the program. These components were weaved together to create a forum in which participating teachers would acquire the skills to replicate the lesson plans in their own pedagogical practice.

The seminar represents an effort on the part of the Center to create a forum in which teachers would become emotionally engaged with the artifacts, sites and experiences of those that lived through the Civil Rights Movement. The central hypothesis thereby being that such an engagement would transform the ability and willingness of participants to engage their own students with the material they present in their classrooms. This hypothesis is premised on a core constructivist principle and includes elements of holistic learning strategies coming out of the field of cognitive psychology and neurobiology.

A secondary, but equally important, aspect of the program was the establishment of a partnership between teachers from across the country, both to build an element of mutual cooperation between participants and to encourage the possibility of a series of domestic teacher exchanges after the seminar. The partnership relationship was designed with the two-pronged objective of pairing teachers who had extensive experience

teaching the **We the People** program with teachers from Birmingham, who possess intimate knowledge of the Civil Rights Movement. The purpose was to open up a line of communication between individuals with different professional strengths, and to build crosscutting ties between teachers that would be otherwise inaccessible to one another. Time was built in to the agenda to allow for the partnership groups to get to know one another and cooperatively develop plans for teaching about the Civil Rights Movement in their respective classes.

This paper is an evaluation of the unique combination of professional development models employed in the seminar. By evaluating this seminar and the partnerships it established, we will determine whether the approach was constructive, and also whether this model could be viable for other curricular content.

Theoretical Framework

This synthesis of content and experience, knowledge and emotion has become a well-established method of pedagogical practice drawing on research in education, cognitive psychology and neurobiology. The following is a brief intellectual history of some of the theoretical frameworks utilized in the workshop as a means of increasing the retention of knowledge by participants by adding affective and experiential components to the seminar.

Holistic Learning

The groundbreaking split-brain research of the 1960s focused on hemispheric dichotomies and their relation to the acquisition of knowledge, establishing markedly

different ways the different hemispheres of the brain organize and process data.[6] Researchers found that the right hemisphere is predisposed to "perceiving the total rather than the part. By contrast, the left hemisphere is seen to analyze input sequentially, abstracting out the relevant details and associating these with verbal symbols."[7]

Armed with the findings of this body of research, a new generation of educators formulated what has come to be known as holistic educational strategies—drawing upon various educational methodologies as a means of reaching out both to the visual and analytically predisposed students. For example, extensive use of visual aids, which meet the learning style needs of visual students, were used with simultaneous presentation of a linear logical approach by thoroughly explaining each visual aid, thereby meeting the learning needs of analytical students.[8]

The legacy of holistic learning is the emphasis of the multi-method classroom where teachers are encouraged to utilize a mixed bag of learning strategies in an attempt to reach out to all different kinds of learners. The chief shortcoming of holistic learning and the hemispheric approach to teaching was its passive approach to education—specifically, the model views the students as a passive consumer in learning. With increasing policy focus on interactive learning and processes, researchers extended its lessons by encouraging instructional methods emphasizing proactive classroom practices,

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[6] Bogen, J. E., DeZure. R., TenHouten, W. D., a Marsh, J. F. (1972). "The other side of the brain IV: The A/P Ratio." *Bulletin of the Los Angeles Neurological Societies*, Volume 37, Number 2, 49-63.

[7] De. Nebes quoted in Sonnier, I.L., ed. (1989). *Affective Education: Methods and Techniques*. Englewood Cliffs: Educational Technology Publications, pp. 13-18.

[8] Sonnier, ed. (1989), p.22

interactive teaching methods, and opportunities for collaborative learning, which were found to have positive affective results in students.[9]

Constructivism

The primary theoretical principle of social constructivism is that knowledge is constructed in a process of social interaction involving the individual's incorporation of new knowledge within a larger schema of previously constructed/existing knowledge. [10] Learning is, thus, considered to be an active process in which individuals dynamically construct, instead of passively absorb. This body of literature, which is primarily based on the child development research of Piaget[11] and the social constructivism of Vygotsky,[12] greatly influenced pedagogical practice by encouraging thoughtful analyses regarding the viability of what Paulo Freire has called "than banking concept of

[9] Hawkins, D., Doucek, H. J. and Lishner, D. M. 1988. "Changing Teaching Practices in Mainstream Classrooms to Improve Bonding and Behavior of the Low Achiever." *American Research Journal.* Spring. Vol. 25, No. 1 pp. 31-50.

[10] Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Process*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Bruner, J. (1966). *Toward a Theory of* Education. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Ausubel, D. (1968). *Educational Psychology: A Cognitive* View. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston K.J. Gergen (1995). "Social Construction and the Educational Process." In Larochelle, Bednarz, and Garrison (Eds.), *Constructivism and Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 156-172. Richardson, Virginia, ed. (1997). *Constructivist Teacher Education: Building New Understandings*. Washington, D.C.: The Falmer Press, 1997.

[11] Though much of recent constructivist literature (both cognitive and social) has its root in Piaget's child development research emphasizing the centrality of balance in the genetic organization of new knowledge, the central distinction between the cognitive model of Piaget and that of social constructionists is that while the former is almost exclusively interested in the way the brain reacts to information, the latter emphasizes the role of social context in mitigating or otherwise affecting that reaction.

Related discussions of constructivist principles including the ongoing structuring of information processes can be found in philosophical writings of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), and John Dewey (1859-1952), among others.

[12] Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Process*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Bruner, J. (1966).

pedagogy."[13] Under a constructivist model, learners should be encouraged to discover principles by themselves and through a process of engaged dialogue, guided by a knowledgeable instructor skilled at directing the process of information framing and otherwise assist with the factual contextualization of newly acquired information. Students, thus, are maximally served when they can connect with the material and verbally interact with other students and their instructors.

Recent neurological research provides further support for the constructivist theory of learning. A series of human experiments have found changes in the gray matter of human brain generated by learning.[14] According to James E. Zull, "as we interact with the world, the world becomes internalized, or mapped, in our brain. The extensive plasticity of the brain continues throughout life."[15] Explanation is not the best way to engage students' minds because it doesn't fully engage the cerebral cortex. The brain is more likely to be affected if the learner is allowed to gather information, experience the information within an experiential context, make meaningful connections with the information, generate ideas from their meanings, and act on those ideas.[16] The two aspects of learning that have the greatest effect on the brain are practice and emotion: while the former is responsible for increasing synaptic connections, the latter is what allows for the changes to networks of neurons. According to Zull: "When our network

[13] Freire, Paulo (1981). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum, p.58. The "banking concept of pedagogy" is premised on the objectivist ontological assumption that the learner, specifically, the brain, is a thoroughly passive receptacle for new information—that, indeed, information is "banked" into the brain without regard to agency on the part of the learner, and that information is objectively received (i.e., not altered, manipulated, or subjectified by the learner).

[14] Draganski, B., Gaser, C., Busch, V. Schuierer, G., Boghdahn, U., and May, A. (2004). "Neuroplasticity: Changes in Grey Matter Induced By Training." *Nature*. 427(6972): pp. 311-312.

[15] Zull, James E. (2002). "The Art of Changing the Brain." *Educational Leadership*. September 2004: pp.68-72.

[16] Zull 2002

connections are awash with emotion chemicals, synapse strength is modified and the responsiveness of neuron networks can be dramatically changed."[17] Accordingly, the best educational methods are those that engage the student and her emotions with instructional content—lessons that utilize demonstrations, metaphors, and stories.

Using these Frameworks in Professional Development

The principles theoretical lessons to be learned from the foregoing theories are entirely applicable to, and indeed, underlie the formulation of quality professional development opportunities for teachers. It is essential to instruct teacher using the very methods they ought to be availing themselves of in their classrooms to ensure a practiced proficiency. The movement toward a more inclusive approach to student education must also include the limits of teachers' own cognitive propensities. That is precisely why it is imperative for such strategies to be part and parcel of pre-service and in-service training methodologies. School reformers have long been advocating methodological changes in professional development trainings, and some have promoted a social constructivist perspective/framework.[18] Teacher professional development opportunities, which are premised on a fundamentally passive model of learning, both deny teachers the opportunity to adequately grasp and internalize the large bodies of information, and encode in participants the very experience they may wish to suspend in the classroom. The best way to ensure that teacher trainings adequately prepare teachers to utilize

[17] Zull 2002, citing research done by Brembs, B., Lorenzetti, F.D., Reys, F.D., Baxter, D.A., and Byrne, J.H. (2002). "Operant reward learning in aplysdia: Neuronal correlates and mechanisms." *Science*. 296(5573): pp. 1706-1710.

[18] C.f., Stigler, J. and Hiebert, J. (1999). *The Teaching Gap*. New York: The Free Press, cited in Rock, Tracy C. and Cathy Wilson (2005). "Improving Teaching through Lesson Study." *Teacher Education Quarterly*. Winter 2005, pp.77-92.

various teaching methods in their classrooms is to develop that skill by having participating teachers go through a similarly modeled process in professional developments trainings.

Research Methods

The research methods employed in this study are designed to address practical problems of professional development, mainly to discern whether there appear to be value in conducting this type of seminar. All participants were sent a survey questionnaire after they had returned to teach in their classrooms; some participants were interviewed subsequent to completing the questionnaire.

The questionnaire captured background information on teaching experience, but it primarily focused on the value of the seminar and its distinct components. Most of the questions required teachers to respond to specific statements about a particular part or the entirety of the seminar using a Likert Scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree and not applicable. In addition to the numerical rating, participants were asked to elaborate on each of the questions—this way, we were able to get a range of opinions and feedback on each component. The range of questions included whether teachers would recommend the seminar to others, whether they had become better informed and more inspired to teach about the Civil Rights Movement in America, whether they feel greater confidence and ability to facilitate classroom discussions about civil rights, if they feel that they are able to incorporate new ideas gleaned from their experiences in Birmingham directly into their classroom lessons, to whether they have spent or will spend more hours teaching about the Civil Rights Movement.

In addition, because we were also interested in finding out whether the seminar positively affected the way teachers implemented the **We the People** program in their classrooms, and indeed, whether their teaching of the **We the People** program was strengthened by their experience at the seminar, we asked three questions to capture this. Since most of the Birmingham teachers were new to the curriculum, we wanted to know if they had used **We the People**, and if they had held a simulated congressional hearing.

Since the workshop paired teachers from Birmingham with teachers from across the country, we included a section on the questionnaire specifically to elicit feedback on participants' attitudes toward their partnership experience. We were primarily interested in finding out whether the partnership played a role in their educational endeavors, including the use of **We the People**, and whether participants bonded with their partners and stayed in touch after the workshop. Questions included whether participants found the partnership to be a positive experience, whether they believe they can utilize the partnership in their future educational endeavors, whether they believed the partnership will help them either initiate or sustain the **We the People** program in their classrooms, and whether they had kept in touch with their partners after the seminar, or if they planned on doing so. We also sought feedback through extensive, in-depth interviews from two teachers who had the opportunity to conduct exchange visits in one another's classrooms subsequent to their collaboration at the seminar.

Finally, we included two entirely open-ended questions regarding what each of the participating teachers thought to be the strengths of the seminar and why, and feedback on the specific components of the institute s/he found most valuable. Open-ended questions gave teachers opportunities to rate the assigned books and to provide

feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the seminar. Respondents mentioned activities, such as meetings with civil rights foot soldiers, visits to Birmingham sites, a service in church, and other aspects, that were important and moving.

Often there is a gap between research and innovative teacher training. In this instance, results will be used to improve the quality of future professional development institutes as well as to set forth directions for future, systematic research. The need to make research more productive was outlined in a recent essay by Deborah Stipek. In her review of National Academy of Education, the National Research Council reports, Dr. Stipek writes:

> They recommend, for example, research that is embedded in practice and that involves collaborations between researchers and practitioners. Unlike the traditional linear model of "research-into-practice," their view of productive research and development involves moving back and forth between research and practice. Innovations are developed by researchers collaborating with practitioners. They are tried out in classrooms, refined or developed by practitioners in their schools and classrooms, then systematically studied by researchers. The link between research and practice is assumed to be complex, reciprocal, and dynamic.[19]

Findings

Profiles of Seminar Participants

All participants were provided with both an email and a hardcopy of the questionnaire a few months after the seminar. Of the 34 participants that attended the seminar, 26 responded to our questionnaire. Most participants, 65%, were high school teachers, while 15% and 11% taught middle school, and elementary school, respectively. Two respondents (8%) indicated teaching both middle and high school classes. Seminar

[19] Stipek, Deborah (2005). "Scientifically Based Practice Is About More Than Improving the Quality of Research," *Education Weekly*, March 23, 2005.

participants were highly experienced teachers, teaching an average of 16 years. Thirty-four percent of teachers had taught for 20 years or more, while only 8% were new teachers, having taught three years or less. Many of the participating teachers were also quite familiar with the **We the People** program, averaging 7.5 years with the program. Fifty-eight percent of participants had taught the program between four to ten years, and 23% had taught it more than 10 years. Only 19% of participants indicated having taught the **We the People** program for less than three years.

Effectiveness of the Seminar

Most participants found the 2004 *We the People: A Seminar on Civil Rights* thoroughly interesting and rewarding. One hundred percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it was a valuable professional development experience, they found the seminar intellectually stimulating, and would recommend the seminar to other teachers.

All the participants found that the institute was advantageous in terms of increasing their own understanding of the Civil Rights Movement. In fact, one hundred percent of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that the seminar increased their knowledge and inspired their teaching of the Civil Rights Movement, citing the personal connection they were able to forge with the Movement through the "touching history" component of the seminar as the most useful component. Each and every participant agreed or strongly agreed that their participation in the seminar improved his or her emotional connection with the Civil Rights Movement. As one respondent put it, "It was an emotional experience that has had a deep impact on my teaching."

Ninety-six percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the seminar gave them new ideas on how to teach students, improved their ability to facilitate classroom discussions, taught them how to apply the information learned to their classroom lessons, and increased their confidence in teaching their students about the Civil Rights Movement. Ninety percent of respondents indicated that participating in the seminar directly affected the amount of time they spend on the Civil Rights Movement as part of their classroom lessons, indicating an average increase of 4.86 hours spent on teaching the Civil Rights Movement after having attended the seminar. All participants agreed or strongly agreed that the seminar taught them new methods useful to implementing the **We the People** program in their classroom, citing the lesson plans on the *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, the additional background to Units 4 and 5, and the stories of the Movement as the most useful aspects of the seminar in this regard.

Effectiveness of the Partnerships

The partnership relationship was intended to build bridges between teachers from across the country, both to incorporate an element of mutual cooperation between participants and to encourage the possibility of a series of domestic teacher exchanges after the seminar. It was designed with the two-pronged objective of pairing teachers who had extensive familiarity with the **We the People** program with teachers from Birmingham with intimate knowledge of the Civil Rights Movement to open up a line of communication between individuals with different professional strengths, as well as build crosscutting ties between teachers that would be otherwise inaccessible to one another. Time was built in to the agenda to allow for the partnership groups to get to know one

another and cooperatively develop plans for teaching about the Civil Rights Movement in their respective classes, and to have an opportunity to dialectically engage with the experience and content of the workshop.

Though 95% of the twenty participants that responded to a question on their experiences with the partnership agreed or strongly agreed that the partnership was a positive experience, six indicated that their partner was not at the seminar and two said that they were not specifically assigned to one. Many of such participants noted that they joined existing partnerships or paired off with others without partners. Twenty-three percent of participants indicated that they had not kept in touch with their partner(s) after the workshop. A few noted that they had tried to establish ongoing contact, but had unresponsive partners; a few others cited lack of time for the primary reason they had not kept up contact after the workshop. Ninety-five percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they would like to participate in teacher exchanges with their partner(s) in the future.

For those that did have a partnership at the seminar, many commented that the experience at the institute was very positive, though some had not managed to keep in touch afterward. On teacher opined: "Having the Birmingham teachers with us was invaluable in bringing the Civil Rights Movement closer [ ]on a personal level." Some teachers indicated that they enjoyed the camaraderie of the partnership. Quite a few teachers lamented that their Birmingham partner was not in attendance at the seminar. Three teachers commented that their partnership wasn't ideal as they were partnered with teachers teaching at different grade levels, and they found it difficult to collaborate on

lesson plans, share or commiserate about their experiences, or set up a line of communication between their respective students.

Partnership Exchange

Only one set of teachers, Norvin Conway, Indianapolis middle-school teacher, and Charles Sigler, Birmingham high-school instructor, had the opportunity to participate in a classroom exchange subsequent to the seminar. They were interviewed about their partnership and exchange experience, to ascertain whether it was positive, challenging, and/or instructive, and to find out whether it deepened the knowledge they acquired at the seminar, or gave them greater motivation to teach about civil rights and civics. Finally, they were asked to provide recommendations as to whether exchanges ought to be replicated, and what changes might enrich the experience.

Charles and Norvin are both experienced teachers—the former having taught for about ten years, and the latter for fifteen. They teach in rather similar educational institutions—at urban schools with similar demographics (both reported their classes consisted of 85% or more African-American students). They both indicated that they enjoyed their exchange and felt that it greatly enriched the professional development they received at the seminar—mostly by engaging them with one another on a more personal level. Charles indicated that he thoroughly enjoyed spending time with a colleague interested in Birmingham and its role in the Civil Rights Movement, and seeing Norvin's excitement and transformation was utterly inspiring for him. Norvin commented: "As we work together on ideas and plans, Charles gives me a perspective that has not been available to me in the past. I've seen the movement from the perspective of a northern

white male who supported the movement from the 50s on. Charles gives me a true southern perspective on the movement."

This perspective, according to Norvin, was deepened as he undertook the exchange. Nearing the Birmingham school, Norvin observed the inner-city neighborhood and dilapidated housing projects, which, along with the prospect of addressing high school students, increased his anxiety. However, any misgivings, such as whether Charles' students would accept a white northerner teaching on the Civil Rights Movement as it played out in Birmingham, were quickly dispelled by the polite, positive reception he received by Charles's students. Charles indicated that his students were surprised to be lectured on the Birmingham Civil Rights Movement and the Children's March by a white teacher, and were very attentive and found the experience to be a positive one.

In turn, Charles was well received by Indiana middle school students. Both were struck by similarities across student bodies: students shared concerns ranging from poor school lunches, to problems with discipline, gangs, and drug abuse. Their students expressed concern about continuing inequality—principally superior resources being lavished upon suburban schools rather than their inner-city schools, which they felt were much more in need of them. Alabama students were eager to talk about things they wanted to change, having been stimulated by the lecture and conversation.

Until the seminar, and even more after the exchange, Norvin's method of covering of the civil rights was "technical:" it included a legalistic approach based on the 14th Amendment, a cursory account of Martin Luther King Jr., and other key leaders and events. Now Norvin is able to teach from a "human side," drawing on stories, events and

people with emotional emphasis and in more poignant detail. Norvin assigned his students one of the two books assigned at the seminar,[20] Raines' book, *My Soul Is Rested: Movement Days in the Deep the Deep South Remembered,* and implemented new *Teaching Tolerance* materials. He has even enrolled in an African American history course a local university to further strengthen his understanding of the Movement and its cultural artifacts.

Norvin believes that this exchange model should be replicated. He feels the mixing of teachers with similar students (urban-urban) or different (urban-suburban) would both be valuable. He feels that inner-city students are "often hidden from society," and both teachers felt that suburban teachers would learn a lot through teaching inner-city kids. Norvin expressed his gratitude that the exchange showed that the Center for Civic Education cared enough to invest in them and their students. Both Norvin and Charles recommend that classroom exchanges should be extended beyond one day. Day two, for instance, could consist of a follow up with a conversation where the visiting teacher could respond to questions; both would like for further exchange opportunities in the future. Charles suggested greater student involvement at the institutes, suggesting holding similar institutes for students themselves.

We also asked some questions regarding how the partnership and exchange affected each teacher's use of the **We the People** program. While Norvin has extensive experience teaching the **We the People** curriculum, nine years in fact, Charles has used it on a limited basis for the last five years—mostly the chapters on the founding of the

[20] Seminar participants were assigned Howell Raines' *My Soul is Rested: Movement Days in the Deep South,* and Taylor Branch's *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-63*. Two questions at the seminar sought participants' opinions on the quality of the readings: all of the participants positively rated the former book, and all but one participant rated the latter positively.

Constitution. Charles noted that the experience at the seminar combined with his partnership with a **We the People** veteran has influenced him to avail himself more of the program's resources, specifically using it to more effectively teach students about their rights, and to strengthen his instruction on the functions of government—skills necessary to act on their interests and that of their communities. Norvin indicated that the experience has had an effect on how he teaches units 4, 5, and 6—that he will incorporate the stories, lessons, and primary sources of the seminar into his classroom instruction.

Touching History/ Learning Through Affect

By far, the most widely commented aspects of the seminar that participants found helpful was the direct interaction they had with individuals involved with the Civil Rights Movement, and the opportunity to learn about the events of the Movement while in a city bearing so much of its history. In their comments about what participants found to be the strengths of the seminar, most of them specifically cited being in Birmingham, visiting the sites, and interacting with people involved with the Civil Rights Movement as they learned about the history. One teacher wrote, "being in Birmingham and visiting the places where these events took place really brought home the magnitude of what was accomplished. I also feel the inclusion of people who were actually part of the movement or grew up at that time was one of the greatest strengths."

Most of the participants, at some point, commented on the affective component of seminar—the stories, the readings, the use of music, and the emotional expressions by presenters—as the major strength. One teacher noted, "The seminar taught me the power of using the emotive strand while teaching this issue." This empathic involvement

was generated by first hand accounts, through music and singing, by participating in a church service, and by walking through the sites where marchers has walked. One teacher commented, "I valued the time focused upon the music and community within the church. It gave me a perspective I hadn't had on the role of the church in the Civil Rights Movement." Teachers deepened their knowledge of and connection to the Civil Rights Movement by seeing through the lens of those who participated directly; in turn, they reported a transformation in their pedagogical style of presenting this struggle for equality to their students. Teachers wrote new lesson plans, some in concert with their exchange partners, and now spend more time teaching about civil rights. Nearly all of the changes mentioned by teachers were related to their ability to introduce and handle the emotional side of the Civil Rights Movement. For instance, teachers are now able to tell stories, pose hypothetical situations to their students, and recount the role young people had played in the Movement. Two teachers visited one another's classrooms and lectured, asked, and answered questions—a crosspollination seldom experienced by inner-city middle and high school students.

Conclusion

The *We the People: A Seminar on Civil Rights* drew upon the pedagogical models discussed in this paper. Its novel contribution to the field of teacher training was to introduce the element of witness testimony, historical site visits, and teacher partnerships within the context of professional development as a means of encouraging empathic engagement with the facts and history on the part of teachers. There has been limited research and writing on the utility of historical site visits and witness testimony on

learning processes and motivations.[21] The theory behind the use of sites, artifacts, and personal stories is closely aligned to the constructivist principles outlined above: the experiential nature of such activities which utilize the sensory apparatus, interactive techniques and encourage creative enthusiasm allow students greater emotional connection with history and engage multiple parts of the brain.

The experience of the institute was overwhelmingly positive for nearly all of the participants, and by all indications, the historical site visits, witness testimony, and use of historical and cultural artifacts of the era contributed greatly to the seminar's success. Many participants commented that they appreciated the "human interaction" among the participants and the speakers. According to more than three-quarters of the participants, one of the greatest contributions of the seminar was the opportunity to engage with not only experts and scholars about the Civil Rights Movement, but a context to interact and learn from foot soldiers and pioneers of the Movement. One teacher commented, "Reading about and then meeting Fred Shuttlesworth was on of the high-lights of my life." It should be noted that the generation that led the Civil Rights Movement is passing on, and so this seminar represents a unique opportunity to hear their stories firsthand, try to see the Movement through their eyes, and walk the paths they took. However, this should not overshadow the fact that this type of seminar—one utilizing primary accounts, documents and artifacts—can be replicated not only for other types of professional development seminars, but even within the classroom.

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[21] Labor, Peter (1998). "The Living Heritage Museum as an Educational Tool." *Pathways: The Ontario Journal of Outdoor Education*. Volume 10, Number 3. pp. 10-12. Goldfield, David R. (1975). "Living History: The Physical City as Artifact and Teaching Tool." *History Teacher*. August 1975. 8:4, pp.534-56. Reeve, Kay (2000). "Reading, Writing and Walking: Student Projects Linking Primary Documents, Classroom Learning, and Historical Sites." *Teaching History: A Journal of Methods*. Volume 25, Number 1. Spring 2000.

Suggestions for Improving Future Seminars

1. Maintain the emphasis on the emotional aspect of the experience (e.g., having participants attend church, walk around the sites, and interact with "foot soldiers," leaders, or those affected by the historical issues under consideration.)
2. Motivate local teachers, in this instance the Birmingham teachers, to attend by providing incentives. Teachers who were paired up enjoyed the partnership and were able to forge important connections. Some of these teachers have worked together on lesson plans and have had their student collaborate via email subsequent to the seminar. Those who are not a formal partnership relationship are denied an important part of the seminar.
3. Ensure that teachers are paired up with others teaching at the same level.
4. Experiment with setting up diverse groups of teachers in the exchanges (e.g., pairing urban and suburban, etc.).
5. Provide suggestions for ways partners can collaborate after the seminar, or set up follow-up projects that would encourage such collaboration.
6. Ensure that the length of the exchange is longer than one day, or occurs on multiple occasions.
7. If feasible, involve students, or provide suggestions for how students of partners can collaborate on projects post-seminar.
8. Future studies should include students to find out whether they benefit as well.