

Exploring Race Issues at Turn of the 20th Century: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Social studies teachers have to create an environment where students are empowered to discuss contemporary issues, such as racism and social injustices. This means students are provided activities that allow them to develop historical empathy skills: perspective recognition, contextualization, and using evidence to make informed decisions. In this article, the researcher discusses a qualitative study in an 11th grade U. S. history class in an urban high school. As a part of the study, an eight-day unit was implemented about the experiences of African Americans in the United States at the turn of the 20th century. Students analyzed primary sources that described these experiences in order to understand how racist policies and attitudes of the early 20th century impacted African Americans and how certain enduring issues, such as racism, have roots in the past. Data were collected from coding students' completed document analysis sheets, first-person perspective narratives, and historical dialogues. Findings indicated that students benefitted from activities that foster students' historical empathy skills, as they were able to connect affectively and cognitively with historical figures. This study presents the importance of including culturally responsive curriculum and counter-narratives in the 21st century social studies classroom.

Keywords: historical empathy, perspective recognition, contextualization, counter-narratives, historical dialogues

Introduction

The 21st century social studies classroom is in the unique position of providing an arena for discussions about contemporary public issues. Recent political and social events, such as the repercussions of Covid-19, the January 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol building, and the murder of George Floyd, may lead students to engage in conversations that question the status quo. They

may want to examine and consider has the United States held true to its democratic ideals? Is there truly equality for people of all races?

Public issues often have their roots in previous eras. While students may grasp how current social and political events impact their lives, they may fail to understand how certain issues are enduring and have developed over time. For example, many students are familiar with the 1960s Civil Rights Movement as the most pivotal course of events in terms of social and political activism regarding racial equality for African Americans, but earlier people and policies laid the groundwork. The Dred Scott Case, *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, and the Harlem Renaissance allow students to make connections between the past and the present in relation to issues of race. They understand how historical figures and events not only impact the present, but students also comprehend how public issues may reoccur throughout history and are still relevant to their lives.

A pedagogical tool that provides students with the skills to make connections with how the past has relevance to the present, is historical empathy (Brooks, 2009, 2011; Davis, 2001; Endacott, 2014). If students see historical figures as three-dimensional, they see them as people that are relatable (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Nokes, 2013). This is especially beneficial when asking students to connect and empathize with groups of people who have been historically marginalized. Traditionally, most history textbooks and social studies curricula have left out or downplayed the role racism and racial injustices have played in shaping U. S. history (King, 2015; Woodson, 2015; Yeager & Doppen, 2001).

In this article, the researcher discusses a unit in a semester long research study in a high school that focused on the experiences of African Americans in the United States at the turn of the 20th century. Students utilized historical perspective writing activities and historical dialogues to foster historical empathy skills. The following research questions drove the study:

- How, if at all, do perspective-writing activities that focus on marginalized and oppressed groups help high school students in urban schools foster historical empathy skills?
- To what degree, if any, do historical dialogues help high school students to develop historical empathy skills?

First, a brief overview of civil rights issues at the turn of the 20th century is provided. Then, the researcher describes the theoretical framework in which this study is grounded after

which there is a brief literature review of historical empathy. The next section describes the steps of the curriculum and is then followed by an examination of the findings from the student work. Finally, a section is provided to discuss what may be interpreted from the findings and possible next steps for future research in historical empathy.

Civil Rights Movement at the Turn of the 20th Century

The end of the U. S. Civil War and the enactment of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the U. S. Constitution should have assured equal rights and protection under the law for African Americans. The Reconstruction era failed to secure voting rights, protect African Americans from lynchings across the country, and stop the rise of Jim Crow segregation laws (Edwards, 2007; Gates, 2019; Woodward, 1971). The Supreme Court's declaration in 1883 that the Civil Rights Act of 1875 was unconstitutional may have sent the message to many people of color in the United States that the fight for equality still lay ahead.

The Supreme Court's decision reflected the argument of the "New South," which was African Americans did not need special treatment or to be shown favoritism under the law. *Atlanta Constitution* editor, Henry W. Grady, pushed for this new image of the South in the 1880s. He was one of the first public figures to bring forth the idea of "separate but equal," which is the idea that there is no need for integration of races as long as there is equal access to accommodations, opportunities, and protection under the law. This idea was embraced throughout the U. S., which resulted in the landmark 1896 Supreme Court decision, *Plessy vs. Ferguson*. This case made the concept of separate but equal constitutional (Inwood, 2011; Kelly, 2010; Logan, 1997).

Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois emerged as leaders of the African American community in the early 20th century. Both men offered two distinctly different approaches to address racial discrimination that African Americans faced in the United States. Washington believed that African Americans would eventually win equality and full citizenry through hard work and economic prosperity. He believed that advocating for political and civil rights would only agitate an already precarious situation (Gates, 2019; Moore, 2003; Norrell, 2009). In contrast, W. E. B. Du Bois understood that full civil and political rights, as well as education were the avenues through which African Americans were going to attain equality. He believed if African Americans did not actively advocate for their rights, they would remain socially and economically oppressed (Gates, 2019; Kendi, 2016; Moore, 2003). These two

different visions for how to advocate for civil rights issues reflect the two men's different backgrounds, values, biases, and beliefs.

Theoretical Framework

This research study was focused on inquiry-based learning. This type of learning is student-centered, where the teacher is the facilitator. Inquiry focuses more on the processes of learning and the accumulation of knowledge (Clabough et al., 2016; Turner & Clabough, 2015). Students are problem solvers who take ownership in their own learning, as they seek to link evidence to conclusions (Clabough, et al., 2016). Analyzing and corroborating evidence that represents multiple perspectives allows students to strengthen their historical empathy skills, develop their own interpretations of the past, and consider how it impacts their daily lives (Buchanan, 2014; Perrotta, 2022). Inquiry requires students to use evidence to evaluate evidence in order to draw and communicate informed and reasoned conclusions (Buchanan, 2014; Perrotta, 2022). Inquiry-based learning is at the center of the C3 Framework (NCSS, 2013a). The C3 Framework stresses that social studies teachers need to strengthen their instruction to become more rigorous, critically conscious, and meaningful through using inquiry-based instruction where students analyze sources and used evidence to take civic action (NCSS, 2013a; Grant, 2013; Swan & Griffin, 2013).

Freire's (1970) theory of education also helped to frame this study. He claimed that education has become a "banking system" where educators mostly deposit information into students, who are receptors. There is no real communication between the students and teacher, or even among the students themselves. In a banking system of education, there are no critical thinkers and no encouragement to investigate, ask questions, or think for oneself. Freire (1970) argued that "problem-posing" education is the optimal system, in which students are empowered to engage in dialogue. This allows the teacher and students to learn from each other. The "problem-posing" method encourages students to ask meaningful questions that challenge the status quo, or the societal and political structures that are in place. Freire's problem-posing method aligns with best practices in historical empathy. In order to question long-held truths about history and accepted realities, students analyze multiple perspectives and examine the whole historical picture. They may come to better understand why some social and political systems are oppressive and why some issues, such as civil rights, are enduring. By reading primary sources that explore the mistreatment and discrimination of others, students ask how it

was allowed to happen, why is it still continuing, and how can they do their part to transform the world around them (King, 2018; Miller et al., 2020).

Brief Literature Review on Historical Empathy

Historical empathy is a cognitive and affective process that tasks students with analyzing primary and secondary sources in order to understand people's actions and decisions (Endacott, 2014; Endacott & Pelekanos, 2015). It is the ability to contextualize the past, and not make judgements based on contemporary standards (Perrotta & Bohan, 2017). Students recognize the multiple perspectives of historical figures and recognize the power emotions have to impact motives, biases, values, and beliefs (Buchanan, 2014; Brooks, 2009; Endacott, 2010; Perrotta, 2022).

For many years, historical empathy was largely seen as a cognitive process that involves inductive and inferential thinking. Many times, students are presented with primary sources that are fragmented. When asked to analyze these sources, students must make connections about the evidence in front of them (Brooks, 2009; Lee & Ashby, 2001; Nokes, 2013; Yeager & Foster, 2001). This requires them to draw conclusions based on the historical context and possibly making inferences about why information is left out (VanSledright, 2004).

Current research maintains that historical empathy is a cognitive and affective process (Colby, 2008; Endacott, 2010; Endacott & Brooks, 2013). Students analyze primary sources and make inferences based on evidence. They examine historical figures' perspectives and place them in the proper historical context. Leading researchers in the field of historical empathy such as Endacott and Brooks (2013) state that students also need to emotionally connect with people from the past. Historical empathy provides students with the skills to understand how factors such as race, economics, culture, religion, and values of an historical era impacted how people from the past viewed the world.

The cognitive-affective process also provides the opportunity for students to develop historical empathy skills that allow for purposeful investigation into the past. These skills are perspective recognition, contextualization, and using evidence to support one's thinking (Endacott & Brooks, 2013). First, perspective recognition is the ability to understand that at any time in history, people may have differing views about an event or person. It is also being able to recognize that people's views are historically situated and are influenced by societal factors (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Lee & Shemilt, 2011). Next, contextualization is the ability to place

and view people and events in the social, political, and cultural conditions that existed at the time. In order to explain, describe, interpret, and analyze the significance of an event, students must be able to grasp the circumstances surrounding it (Huijgen et al., 2019). Last, it is important for students to analyze primary and secondary sources if they are to draw reasoned and informed conclusions and use relevant evidence to support their thinking and interpretations of the past. Mastering historical empathy skills helps students to avoid presentism, which is the tendency to judge historical figures by contemporary standards, values, and societal norms (Brooks, 2014; Colby, 2009; Endacott, 2014; Lee & Ashby, 2001).

Avoiding presentism may seem uncomfortable for students, as it is easier to apply their own logic and values when attempting to understand the thoughts, motives, and decisions of historical figures (Wineburg, 2001). A curriculum that fosters students' historical empathy skills helps students to avoid presentism by tasking them with investigating the authentic thoughts, feelings, and values that were present during a time period. When students place their own judgements and beliefs to the side, and immerse themselves in the realities of the past, they are truly engaging in historical analysis (Nokes, 2013; Wineburg, 2001).

Best practices in historical empathy stress that students need to be provided with the opportunity to analyze primary sources that represent multiple perspectives. Reading multiple perspectives, especially those of oft-marginalized groups, allows students to understand the complexity of an issue. The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has recently put forth a call for a social studies curriculum that is more inclusive (NCSS, 2020). Social studies textbooks prior to the 1960's did not focus on the narratives or contributions of African Americans or other groups that were oppressed in the United States. However, after the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's, historical figures of color began taking their rightful places in history textbooks. Minorities were no longer seen as solely victims of slavery, the Trail of Tears, and poverty. Women were viewed as more than the weaker gender (Wineburg & Monte-Sano, 2008). This changing of the U. S. narrative provides students with the opportunity to analyze the perspectives of oft-marginalized groups who have been historically silenced (Nokes, 2013; Sánchez & Sáenz, 2017).

Students in urban schools, where there tends to be a larger population of students of color, may engage more with historical figures who have been treated unjustly (Brooks, 2014; King, 2014; Stewart, 1991). Many groups in U S. history have been oppressed or discriminated

against due to race. Students of color may relate more to these historical figures because of their own lived experiences or those of their ancestors (Banks, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995a). They connect how social, cultural, and political issues, such as racism and inequality, have their roots in the past (Metro, 2017).

Perspective Writing as a Tool to Foster Historical Empathy

Perspective writing may be utilized as an instructional strategy when developing students' historical empathy skills. Perspective is the vantage point of a certain viewer based on an individual's regional, cultural, social, political, and religious values, biases, and beliefs. When analyzing sources, best teaching practices suggest the analysis of multiple perspectives because everyone does not have the same beliefs, values, and opinions (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Brooks, 2013).

Writing is central to the study of history. It is one of the most visible methods for students to demonstrate their interpretation and understanding of historical concepts, issues, and events (Yancie & Clabough, 2017; Clabough, et al., 2016; Monte-Sano, 2012; NCSS, 2013a). Students are also able to make connections more clearly through writing (Brooks, 2008; Monte-Sano & Harris, 2012). The evidence students uncover through the investigation of primary and secondary sources provides them with the material needed to write. Analyzing multiple perspectives may reveal counter-evidence to accepted versions of history and challenge students to revise their own ideas about the past.

With perspective writing, students take on the persona of a historical figure and metaphorically walk in that person's shoes. Referred to as first-person perspective writing, students write about the past through the eyes of the people who lived it. This process allows them to use creativity to discuss the past through evidence (Brooks, 2008; Clabough, et al., 2017; Monte-Sano, 2012). Dialogues are a form of perspective writing. A dialogue is a written or oral conversation among several people. In a conversation, people may exchange ideas, show feelings, argue, and even resolve conflict. To write a dialogue, students must research and analyze primary and secondary sources to build their content knowledge (Turner & Clabough, 2015). To sound as authentic as possible, students must write in the voice of the historical era, and convey authentic beliefs of a person (Yancie, 2016).

Methods

The researcher conducted a qualitative, bounded case study. Parental consent and student assent were received in order to use students' document analysis sheets and writing assignments. Work samples were utilized to answer the following research questions:

- How, if at all, do perspective-writing activities that focus on marginalized and oppressed groups help high school students in urban schools foster historical empathy skills?
- To what degree, if any, do historical dialogues help high school students to develop historical empathy skills?

These two research questions framed data collection and analysis of an eight-day curriculum unit. The unit was designed to guide students to consider African Americans' perspectives on equality, justice, and activism in the face of racism in the United States at the turn of the 20th century.

Participants

This research study took place in an 11th grade U. S. history classroom in a mid-sized Southern city. The high school is located approximately 21 miles from a Southern metropolitan area. According to the state-mandated 2018-2019 math and reading proficiency report card, this high school ranked within the bottom 50% of the approximately 1,200 schools in the state. The student population was about 70% African American, a little over 20% Caucasian, a little under 10% Hispanic, less than 1% Asian, and less than 1% Other. This school was purposefully selected due to its demographics. It fits the definition for an urban school which, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is defined as a school that is located inside or on the outskirts of a metropolitan area (NCES, n.d). Urban schools tend to have a higher frequency of minority students than suburban and rural schools. Over the last seven years, the school where this study took place has seen a steady increase in enrollment in students of color. The school also faced higher rates of lower achievement scores, absenteeism, and less access to resources, which are prevalent issues in urban schools (NCES, 1996). Less research about the best teaching practices and benefits of historical empathy has been conducted in urban schools. Students may feel a stronger connection to historical figures studied in the curriculum that have experienced oppression or discrimination based on their race, ethnicity, or gender because of their own experiences.

Twenty-five 11th graders were enrolled in the U. S. history class. There were 14 females and 11 males. The demographics reflected those of the overall student body: 22 African Americans, two Caucasians, and one Hispanic. For reasons of confidentiality, the students and the teacher were provided pseudonyms. The teacher, Mr. Cooper (pseudonym), is a Caucasian male who had been teaching at this high school for three years at the time of the study. Altogether, he has 22 years of teaching experience.

Instrumentation

There were 10 artifacts that were created to answer the research questions for this study: primary source excerpts, three document analysis sheets, and four writing prompts. Information about each of these instruments is provided in the following sections.

Activity 1: African American Disenfranchisement in Early 20th Century

Students were provided background knowledge about the social and political injustices and racial inequities that African Americans faced at the turn of the 20th century due to Jim Crow segregation laws. Then, students were given excerpts from the primary source *What a Colored Man Should Do to Vote* (see Appendix A). After reading the excerpts, they completed the questions on the document analysis sheet (see Appendix B-Figure 1). Once students completed the sheet, they used the evidence gained to write a historical tweet (see Appendix B-Figure 2). They pretended to be an African American who was living in Alabama during the early 1900s and had to “tweet” a friend explaining the obstacles they faced attempting to vote.

Activity 2: Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois

The next activity in the unit focused on the differing beliefs of Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois and their conflicting views on how African Americans would and should achieve equality in the United States. They analyzed multiple primary sources (see Appendix A) before completing a document analysis sheet to deconstruct the texts (see Appendix B-Figure 3). Next, the primary sources and document analysis sheet were used to respond to the following writing prompt (Figure 4).

Figure 4 - Students’ Writing Prompt

Pretend you are either Booker T. Washington or W. E. B. Du Bois. You are giving a speech at a convention, and you want to make sure the audience is made aware of your position on issues that are important to you. Tell the audience your ideas regarding racism, integration of the races, and African Americans being active in politics. Make

sure to describe the social, and political obstacles that are faced due to attitudes that are held during the early 20th century. What is your plan to face and overcome these obstacles? Support your writing with details from the text. Try to use the “voice” of Washington or Du Bois and remember to stay in character.

Students wrote the first-person narrative before completing a monologue or dialogue. This provided them the opportunity to practice how to write in first-person and use evidence to support their thinking and writing, a key component of historical empathy.

Activity 3: The Great Migration

The next activity in the unit focused on the Great Migration. Students were provided primary sources (see Appendix A) that led them to consider the societal and environmental factors that drove many African Americans to leave the South and to search for a better way of life in the North. Students analyzed the texts in conjunction with the document analysis sheet (see Appendix B-Figure 5). After finishing the document analysis sheet, the teacher gave instructions regarding how to write a monologue, as well as an example for students to review. The prompt for the monologue is in the following section (Figure 6).

Figure 6 - Great Migration Writing Prompt: Historical Monologue

Pretend you are an African American from the South who has decided to move to the North during the Great Migration. Explain why you have decided to leave the South. Also describe what life is like for you in the North. Do you regret moving? Why or why not? What are your hopes for the future? Use your primary sources and document analysis sheet as evidence to support your writing. Write this as a monologue, in a script format. Remember, in a monologue the person speaks *at* people, not *with* people. Select a name for your character and choose a setting. Where is this story taking place? If your character makes any hand movements, facial expressions, verbal noises (i.e., a sigh), write it in parentheses in the monologue.

Writing the monologue prepared students to write a dialogue between historical figures. The monologue provided practice of historical empathy skills, with each activity being scaffolded. However, they were also introduced to writing in a script format, a skill needed for the dialogue.

Activity 4: Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois Historical Dialogue

The final activity in the unit required students to write a historical dialogue. The dialogue was between Washington and Du Bois. This project was created to allow students to demonstrate their historical empathy skills. The writing prompt (Figure 7) is in the following section.

Figure 7 - Historical Dialogue Writing Prompt

Write a dialogue between W. E. B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington. The dialogue must express each person's perspective, how each person was impacted and constrained by social, racial, and political factors, and what each man believes lies in the future for African Americans in the United States. In addition, discuss whether each person believes if the United States has violated any moral issues by limiting the rights of African Americans.

The unit required eight class periods to complete. On the last activity, students completed their historical dialogues. Mr. Cooper monitored their progress by assisting with questions regarding the content or the writing format.

Data Analysis

Students' document analysis sheets and writing tasks were collected and analyzed for demonstration of historical empathy skills: perspective recognition, contextualization, and using evidence to support one's thinking and writing. Qualitative research was appropriate for this study because while it is scientific, qualitative research is more focused on how people derive meaning from certain events and situations and their understanding of other's behaviors and beliefs (Dinkelman & Cuenca, 2017; Saldaña; 2016). Students' writing samples are an ideal way for students to articulate their emotions about and understanding of the primary sources. It is also a manner for students to demonstrate their historical empathy skills.

The researcher used an inductive coding approach, which means a set of codes were derived from the data as it was analyzed. Descriptive coding was utilized to analyze the students' analysis sheets, first-person perspective narratives, and historical dialogues. This type of coding is ideal when examining work products because it examines the substance of the content and evaluates meaningful growth over time (Cresswell, 2015; Saldaña, 2016; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). As the researcher assessed work products, words or phrases were noted that summarized the content of the students' ideas and interpretation of the content. Emerging themes that were

the same or similar were grouped together and subsequently analyzed to determine if students were able to demonstrate mastery of historical empathy skills as the research progressed.

Findings

The researcher collected and analyzed students' document analysis sheets, first-person perspective narratives, and historical dialogues to answer the two research questions. The findings are provided in the sections below.

Findings for the First Research Question

The first research question was, "How, if at all, do perspective-writing activities that focus on marginalized and oppressed groups help high school students in urban schools foster historical empathy skills?" After analyzing the students' document analysis sheets, multiple themes emerged that were connected to the first research question. They were categorized into three themes: economics, feelings, and race/racism.

Economics

Students analyzed letters written by African Americans leaving the South during the Great Migration. Economics was a recurring topic in many students' document analysis sheets about sources connected to the Great Migration. They grasped that many African Americans were not living as they wanted due to a lack of economic opportunities. They tended to view the disparity in pay or economic opportunity for African Americans as a result of racism and racist policies in the South. Students noted the connections they saw between economic prosperity and racism. Jay wrote that one author "was working hard in the South and could barely even feed his family," and Nan stated that another author was "working but not earning money." Kate demonstrated the same understanding when she expressed that the writer of a letter is "leaving the South for the North trying to find [a] job in [the] North for a better way of life." Daijah wrote that "everyone's dying to get out of the South. They think that the North has better jobs." Chris also explained how "hard it was to...have a family to feed and pay bills. They're working hard just to have them thinking about leaving to give them a better life, good money, and a lot of food." In addition, Tammy explained, the letter writer was "ready to get out the South. It isn't good enough for him and his family." These students conveyed that African Americans were working in the South but could not make enough income to attain a satisfactory quality of life. The economic potential in the North served as a pull factor for many African Americans to relocate.

Students were also able to recognize that life in the North was not what many African Americans anticipated once they moved from the South. Chris wrote, “when they were staying in the North, it was hard to bring good money home.” Ann explained one letter writer believed that “Cleveland has good paying jobs, but the Black community is small and dangerous.” In addition, Conner wrote that it was still hard to find a job because before “you could hardly see a Black person, now they’re all kinds.” Even though life in the South was arduous due to racism and economic disparities, it seems students were able to recognize other perspectives that showed the North was not the utopia many African Americans hoped it would be. Recognizing perspectives is a hallmark of historical empathy.

Feelings

The second theme to emerge from the explanation of the Great Migration document analysis sheet was feelings. Students were able to express their emotions in response to race relations between whites and African Americans during the Jim Crow era. Feelings could possibly include happiness, hope, frustration, or hate. Feelings are a component of the affective domain of historical empathy, articulated by Endacott and Brooks (2013). Students make emotional connections with historical figures by recognizing how people from the past felt about certain issues and why these feelings arose. When writing about the Great Migration, Chris’s comment connects to feelings as a theme because he describes African Americans’ frustration when he writes that the author of a letter is “tired of following laws and he’s gonna take his life to the other states.” Jay wrote a similar comment, stating, “Race relations in the U. S. are bad. Although they are free, they are still bound by unfair laws.” Ann wrote that she believed one author of a letter was “fed up with people who are cruel.” She also noted the following: “the whites are angry now because the Blacks are going North.” She sees that white Southerners had emotions about what was occurring during this time period as well. While the letters were written by African Americans, she is able to understand that there were emotions felt by all parties. Some students did not write as much detail as others about what they believed African Americans were feeling. However, they did provide textual evidence to support their thinking. For instance, Beth wrote that African Americans “felt bad.” She added evidence from one of the letters that stated, “I am fed up with people who lynch and run, who are scared of me, and me of them.” Students used “hate” frequently when attempting to express the feelings of African Americans who were subjected to racism in the South. Hate is a very strong emotion. The

students' uses of the word connect to historical empathy because they are able to recognize that African Americans felt strongly about their living and working experiences in the South. It was an emotion that impacted their actions. There were phrases such as, "hate these laws," "hate being treated unfairly," and "I hate it here in the South." When asked what conclusions he can draw about the author's perspectives on race relations, John simply wrote, "They are trying to out hate each other." John is connecting that the hatred between the African Americans and whites at this time period seemed to be reciprocal.

Race/Racism

The third theme to emerge from analyzing the Great Migration document analysis sheets was race/racism. For purposes of the study, this theme was defined as an understanding of how race affected people and events. Specifically, how prejudice, hostility, and discrimination existed against a group of people because of their membership in a race or ethnicity. For the purposes of this research, the group of people were African Americans. Examples of this were found in the Great Migration document analysis sheets and included topics such as segregation, and unfair wages. Students utilized historical empathy skills to connect that racism played an important role in African Americans' perspectives about the world around them. For example, Tasha wrote, "It was hard to get a job in the South because of your color." Tasha appeared to attach race to African Americans' ability to find work. Students also seemed to understand how race could affect a person's quality of life. John noted, "It is a lot of Blacks that still has to be segregated. The white folks like to be segregated." Kate noted that one letter writer believed he had to be "very secret around white people." She supported this perspective with textual evidence that explained how African Americans had to whisper their plans among themselves in order to keep safe. Comments included, "Blacks had it hard. They fought years and years for freedom, and it's still hard to bring good money home," which reflects the idea that being free does not mean the same as having full rights. Other responses were "It's bad because Black people are people too," and "They should stop being racist to Negroes."

There were students who noted they could not draw any conclusions about race relations after reading the letters or saw something completely different from their classmates. For example, Andy, simply wrote, "none" when asked about race relations. He also was not able to provide any textual evidence to support the idea. In contrast, Jay not only noticed racism between the races, but also stated that one writer was "prejudice against her own kind." He went

on to explain that the letter writer's perspective about African Americans up North was that they were "loafers", "gamblers", and "pocket pickers". Jay is able to grasp that racism is more complex than prejudice of one race against another. Overall, it appeared that students were able to grasp that African Americans' rights and freedoms at the beginning of the 20th century were limited when compared to whites.

Findings for the Second Research Question

The second research question asked, "To what degree, if any, do historical dialogues help high school students to develop historical empathy skills?" The researcher analyzed and coded the historical dialogues to answer the second research question. The one theme that emerged from coding students' historical dialogues about the experiences of African Americans in the early 1900s was feeling. Through their historical dialogues, students were able to express emotions they believed African Americans might have felt due to discrimination. However, expressing these emotions came with challenges. While affective connections were made, the historical dialogues demonstrated that contextualization was a historical empathy skill that students had yet to master. This was especially evident when the issue or topic was about civil rights, racism, and social injustice. The dialogues indicated that students found it difficult to avoid imposing their own beliefs about civil and human rights on historical figures, especially those who had been oppressed or marginalized. The content in the historical dialogues should have reflected the beliefs and values of Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois. Students had access to primary sources as evidence to support their writing, which allowed them to emulate the language and thoughts of each man. While Washington and Du Bois believed in the advancement of African Americans, they differed on how it should be achieved. These ideas should have been reflected in the historical dialogues. As discussed in the next section, even when describing feelings and emotions of Washington and Du Bois, contextualization remained an issue.

Feelings

For the purposes of the study, feelings pertain to emotions that are expressed in response to a person, situation, or experience. When students recognize how feelings may impact how and why historical figures make decisions and act in certain ways, they are thinking with historical empathy.

As previously discussed, students appeared able to affectively connect with historical figures. However, contextualizing beliefs and emotions regarding certain issues was a struggle for many students, which can be seen in Marsha's historical dialogue.

Du Bois: (*looks at the time*) The bus is running a bit late today I suppose.

Washington: I think so. The bus is never on time. I'm Booker T. You going up North?

Du Bois: Yes, I'm going to Chicago.

Washington: Me too, life down here in the South for people like us isn't good enough.

Du Bois: You're not wrong but maybe one day we'll be free of all this.

Washington: Hopefully, as long as we keep our heads high and faith strong.

Du Bois: You're right. Well, this is my bus (*walks away*).

Washington: Nice talking to you. Hopefully we'll meet again in Chicago.

Du Bois: (*while getting on the bus*) You too! Maybe one day.

Marsha exhibited an understanding that many African Americans traveled to the North with a feeling of hope that life would be better. This is seen by the repeated use of the word "hopefully" and the urge to keep faith. Hope may also be inferred from Du Bois' words that "one day we'll be free from all this," referring to racism and the presumably racist policies of the Jim Crow segregation laws. However, Marsha did not place Washington's views in the proper context. She had Washington traveling North to escape the racial injustices in the South. In *The Atlanta Compromise* speech, Washington clearly encouraged African Americans to stay in the South and make themselves economically invaluable to white Southerners.

Jay's dialogue between Washington and Du Bois captured both men's frustration with African Americans' lack of equal rights. His dialogue is in the following section.

Washington: Merry Christmas everyone, we all must embrace this upcoming new year as a change for us colored people.

Du Bois: Yes, I believe so but what happened last new year, they sent everyone who protested straight to jail. If we just stay in school and study, they will have to accept our intelligence.

Washington: Do you know how long that will take? If through all these thousands of years, they haven't noticed our intelligence I'm not sure they will notice it now.

Du Bois: You fight this racism in whatever [way] you want to. In the end, we are all trying to move towards the same thing, equality.

Although contextuality remained a skill yet to be mastered, Jay is attempting to use the language of the time by including the term “colored people.” Jay expressed the frustration he believed must be as a result of continued discrimination and injustice. Jan’s dialogue between Washington and Du Bois reflects the same frustration as Jay’s dialogue. However, there is also a sense of hope that African Americans would receive equal rights under the law. Jan’s dialogue is below.

Du Bois: Good morning, Mr. Washington. How’re things at Tuskegee?

Washington: They’re fine. I’ll make sure to keep teaching, so my students fight for equal rights. I know here in the South Whites do not want us to have it. But we will change that.

Du Bois: I’m glad you’re teaching them to fight. We need to vote and protest to make our lives better. It’s the only way we are going to get equal rights. We should be treated the same.

Washington: I know. We will work together to make sure it happens Mr. Du Bois.

Du Bois: Well, goodbye Mr. Washington and keep up the good work.

Washington: Goodbye Mr. Du Bois.

It is evident that Jan’s historical dialogue is out of context. Washington did not believe in agitating for equal rights or the right to vote. However, the dialogue shows that Jan grasped how the social and political obstacles at the turn of the 20th century impacted the feelings and lived experiences of African Americans. Tasha’s historical dialogue was shorter than her other classmates. However, she did capture the feelings of hope that segregation would end for African Americans. She also struggled with contextualization. The dialogue is below.

Time: 1928

Setting: The South

Washington: (*shakes his hand*) Hello, Mr. Du Bois. We have to work together to stop segregation here in the South.

Du Bois: I want segregation to end. You can use your school. I will keep making speeches. It will get done. We just have to believe.

Washington: It’s 1928, but 10 years from now, I hope our people will be better.

Tasha expressed hope in her dialogue by using phrases such as “we just have to believe” and “I hope our people will be better.” The hope was on the parts of both Washington and Du Bois. However, Washington’s sentiments are out of context. Working to end segregation was not

an actual priority for him. In addition, the student dated her dialogue 1928, and Washington died in 1915. It did appear that students were able to affectively connect with historical figures and their feelings of hope, optimism, and frustration. However, it was a challenge to avoid presentism for some students when required to write from the persona of historical figures whose views on race, equality, and injustice differed from their own. Even though students had textual evidence at hand to support their writing, they still included their own feelings and beliefs about these issues into the dialogues.

Discussion

Using Counter-narratives to Develop Historical Empathy Skills

Students analyzed primary sources that reflected multiple perspectives, including those of people who belong to groups that have been historically marginalized in the United States. They were able to affectively and cognitively connect with people who lived long ago but experienced feelings, discrimination, and injustices that students of color today may also experience. This connection leads to an understanding of how the past impacts the present, especially when discussing public issues, and how the manifestation of certain issues can be seen today. For instance, history teaches that racism is real. While there is an argument that it is a social construct, students can see the very real historical manifestations of it in slavery, Jim Crow segregation laws, the 1960's Civil Rights Movement, and the changes in voting laws today. Allowing students to read and engage with the stories of those who have been impacted by racism, provides them the opportunity to know what racism looked like in the past, what it can do to those who are victims of it, and how to recognize it today. Students who understand the legacies and ramifications of racism encourage and engage in open discussion as a way to counteract it. Projects that examine racial issues and civil rights prepare them for meaningful and contemporary discussions about race.

Current research supports the idea that there should be more deliberate efforts to create and include a curriculum in the social studies classroom that is meaningful and relevant to students' daily lives (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Brooks, 2014; Roberts, 2016). This may be accomplished with the utilization of counter-narratives. Counter-narratives refer to the stories of marginalized groups that often go against the accountings of history that have long been held as the prevailing truth (Camp, 2017; King, 2018). In urban schools, where students of color tend to make up the majority of the population, it is important to include counter-narratives that

introduce students to the voices and stories of oft-marginalized groups. They are able to relate to the experiences of these groups, seeing them as something other than victims of oppression. The incorporation of counter-narratives provides all students with alternate views of an issue, as well as a glimpse into how oft-marginalized groups view themselves and their place in society (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015; Miller et al., 2020; Milner & Howard, 2013). Students of all races and ethnicities, in all education settings, benefit when history is taught authentically and in an inclusive manner (Bickford, 2015). They are better equipped to consider and discuss how certain racist systems exist to oppress others, and how it is possible to work towards change (Muhammad, 2020).

Teachers must create activities that require discourse about issues that impact students' daily lives, such as race and social and political injustices (Brooks, 2014; Hawkman, 2017; Hawley et al., 2017; King, 2015; Woodson, 2016). Perspective writing activities provide students with the opportunity to connect how certain public issues, such as racism and equal rights, are enduring. Students gain insight into the concept that issues, individuals, and events do not exist in a vacuum; history has a sense of continuity and connectiveness that may be seen through engaging in historical empathy (Metro, 2017).

Students Recognized Perspectives and Used Evidence to Support Their Writing

The findings revealed several promising outcomes as it pertains to utilizing perspective writing and historical dialogues to foster students' historical empathy skills. First, the data from the Great Migration document analysis sheets showed that students were successfully able to recognize multiple perspectives as they analyzed the primary sources. They also selected details that accurately supported why authors of the texts felt certain emotions and held differing views. Second, the first-person perspective narratives and historical dialogues reflected the students' grasp on content knowledge and whether they were able to interpret the past using historical evidence. Writing perspective activities required students to use evidence to speak from a historical figure's point of view. This meant conducting an in-depth analysis of texts and asking meaningful questions about the authors' motives and purposes for writing. These outcomes are encouraging because it indicates that students recognize how historical figures are three-dimensional and products of their time.

Limitations

Time Constraints

There were two specific limitations for this research study. One factor that may have influenced the findings was time constraints. The researcher conducted the study in the fall semester of the school year. Mr. Cooper's 11th grade U. S. history class covered the Second U. S. Industrial Revolution to present day, as far as content, in one semester. This may have resulted in students not having enough time and attention dedicated to the activities as needed since the project was completed in eight days. Students may have needed more learning opportunities to analyze primary sources and do writing activities like those in this eight-day research study. The additional practice would more than likely have yielded stronger writing assignments from students.

Inability to Generalize Findings

The sample size for this research study was small, with 25 students in the class. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to a larger population. Urban schools have unique socioeconomic, political, and cultural factors that cannot be generalized across all urban schools. For instance, an urban school in New York City, New York is different from an urban school in Houston, Texas. These schools have different challenges due to geography, politics, culture, and even their historical legacies. Therefore, it is not possible to state that all urban high schools are like the one used in this research study.

Future Areas of Research

Incorporating a Culturally Responsive Curriculum

The findings from this study have several encouraging implications for future research in fostering historical empathy in high school students using perspective writing, especially historical dialogues. Students were given counter-narratives by historically marginalized groups that presented an alternative view of historical events. The counter-narratives focused on the lived experiences of those who have been left out of the master-narrative. Master-narratives are those that tend to focus on the achievements of noted historical icons or those who seek to often maintain the existing status quo in society (Hawkman, 2017; Hawley et al., 2017; Woodson, 2016).

There is a need for future research that measures the effects of pairing culturally responsive teaching with a curriculum that fosters historical empathy for high school students in

urban schools. Ladson-Billings (1995b) argues that a culturally responsive curriculum engages students whose cultures and lived experiences are not traditionally represented in education. It also focuses on academic success, nurtures cultural competence, and endeavors to develop students' social, political, and critical consciousness (Banks, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Willis & Lewis, 1998). Therefore, a possible research question for future research is “To what extent, if any, does a historical empathy curriculum help high school students to develop a critical consciousness?” This research question is important because students should be led to question the structures that were and still are in place that continue to oppress or deprive oft-marginalized groups of participating fully in a democratic society (Freire, 1970).

Activities that guide students to think critically about the past should be used when teaching U. S. history. An example of an activity that is culturally responsive is one where students are tasked with writing a historical dialogue between a Tuskegee Airman and World War II Secretary of War Henry Stimson, who supported segregated military units. This activity guides students to consider the impact of race on African American soldiers who were facing discrimination in the United States military. Students question the cultural and societal norms, as well as social institutions that perpetuated injustice (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). This type of activity connects culturally responsive teaching to historical empathy because not only does it develop students' critical consciousness, but they also learn to appreciate the perspectives, experiences, and values of all groups. This approach may be replicated throughout the whole U. S. history curriculum.

Contextualization

There is a need for a future study on the benefits of a social studies curriculum that focuses on teaching students to master contextualization. Many students in the study found it difficult to avoid presentism when challenged to write from the perspective of a historical figure whose beliefs differed from their own. It was especially difficult when the issue was an enduring one, such as racism. There was not enough time for the students who participated in the eight-day study to master contextualization. In order for them to become competent at this skill, students need time and practice. It is important that the teacher incorporates activities that foster their contextualization skills and does so across the academic year.

Activities that strengthen students' contextualization skills should lead them to ask questions of the text and its author and recognize that people are products of their eras (Reisman

& Wineburg, 2008; Wineburg et al., 2013). Graphic organizers are ideal to help students deconstruct a text to understand the author's motives and purposes in creating the source (Reisman & Wineburg, 2008). Graphic organizers provide a visual of how information connects to form a portrait of an historical era. Five Ways of Contextualization (see Appendix B-Figure 8) is a graphic organizer that may be used to help students contextualize a text in a future research study. The researcher created the graphic organizer that was informed by the work of Levstik and Barton (2015). Levstik and Barton (2015) provided the framework for the creation of the graphic organizer because they stress questioning and looking at history through multiple perspectives. Five Ways of Contextualization may be adapted for any social studies content area. For example, students may use it for the Harlem Renaissance, Bloody Sunday, or the election of Barack Obama. This graphic organizer consists of five squares, each with a question about the text to explore multiple perspectives. In the middle, there is a circle where students draw an image that reflects the message of the text.

Five Ways of Contextualization guides students in questioning what was happening at the time the source was created, the motive of the author, and consider if the author possesses any biases that may have influenced why the text was written along with the way language was employed to convey certain arguments. It is important that students consider these types of factors if they are to gain a complete understanding of what drove historical figures to act and feel in the manners they did. Recognizing such factors also helps them to grasp that history and its players are complex and multi-faceted. Tasking students to answer strategical analysis prompts may guide them to grasp how certain politics, policies, and ideologies shaped a society at any given time (Huijgen et al., 2019; Reisman & Wineburg, 2008). This challenges them to judge the past on its own terms and consider how long-standing issues have their roots in the past and still have the power to impact the present (Endacott, 2011; Kucan et al., 2017).

Five Ways of Contextualization engages students to think critically about the past, but teachers should also provide an opportunity for class discussions in order to debrief on the contents of the graphic organizer. Class discussions are an opportunity for students to reflect and voice their views on the concepts and ideas generated by the graphic organizer (McGriff & Clemons, 2019). They listen to differing perspectives of other students, explain their thoughts, and perhaps even revise their own as a result of the ideas presented (Hess, 2004).

Conclusion

In this article, the researcher discussed an eight-day unit in an 11th grade U. S. history classroom. It is important that teachers provide opportunities for students to engage in inquiry-based activities that allow them to analyze, explain, and argue concepts and issues that are discussed in the social studies classroom (NCSS, 2013a). Many of the issues have their foundations in history and are still relevant to students' daily lives in contemporary U. S. society. The recommendations for future research areas have their foundations in inquiry as well. Establishing an environment where students are able to explore the experiences of other cultures and challenge the status quo prepares them to be critically conscious thinkers (Evans, 1996). This prepares students with the skills and knowledge to be active and productive citizens in their local, national, and global communities (Ochoa-Becker, 1996).

Empowering students with the skills to think critically and with empathy means that they will leave the classroom hopefully being more understanding of multiple perspectives, especially when they are in direct contrast with one's own (Journell, 2016; NCSS, 2013b). However, it is important to impress upon students that some views also devalue and seek to dehumanize others. Throughout much of history, the primary stories told have been that of the oppressors. It is very important that students are able to analyze the narratives and perspectives of all historical players, so they have a more accurate and authentic version of what happened in a time period. In addition, analyzing multiple perspectives, especially those of oft-marginalized groups, allows students to see that even though people were victimized, many advocated for themselves and were responsible for claiming their own place at the proverbial table (King, 2020).

Social studies teachers must take the opportunity to construct projects that allow students to examine the dominant thinking that existed in a time period in order to contextualize the historical era. Students should explore the perspectives that held sway, so they have a complete picture of how and why certain groups were, and continue to be, marginalized in U. S. history. They also must examine how these perspectives led to a system of oppression (Bickford, 2015). For instance, the historical picture would be inaccurate if students were taught that segregation began during the 1960's Civil Rights Movement. During Reconstruction, laws that sought to protect the rights of African Americans, did not fully succeed as policies such as Jim Crow were allowed to thrive and influence politics and society. Although Jim Crow and similar laws are no longer constitutional, its historical legacies are still seen in today's society (Bickford, 2015;

Buchanan, 2014; Gates, 2019; Kendi, 2016). Views that oppress others, while repugnant, need to be explored so students may understand how racist ideologies have the power to control some groups' access to social, political, and economic resources (King, 2016; 2018). For example, an activity that required students to analyze Jim Crow laws regarding voting requirements, segregation ordinances in public places, and marriages would allow them to understand how racist policies infiltrated the lives of African Americans on a personal and public level. Students could then compare laws from states in other parts of the United States in order to understand how geography and historical legacies impacted the enactment and enforcement of such policies. Examining and talking about the past prepares students to discuss modern corollaries of racist systems (Hess, 2011; King, 2018; Krutka & Hlavacik, 2022; Ho et al., 2017).

Developing high school students' historical empathy skills is relevant and meaningful to their daily lives. In the wake of racial attacks and murders that have sparked outrage across the country, such as George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Asian Americans, it is vital that students are equipped with the skills to challenge the policies that perpetuate systemic racism. Engaging in conversations about racial injustices and the ramifications allows students to see that people of color are not the only ones who suffer when groups are stripped of their rights and dignity. Guiding students to engage in these hard conversations prepares them to be advocates for change in a social and political landscape where angry rhetoric is becoming commonplace (Clabough & Percy, 2018; Journell, 2020; Justice & Stanley, 2016). In contemporary U. S. society, it is even more important that students are provided the skills to analyze public issues and make informed decisions based on evidence that leads them to consider what is beneficial for the common good (Keegan, 2021). Citizens who are able to see past the rhetoric and understand that people's worldviews are shaped by lived experiences, race, geography, and culture, know the importance of analyzing the evidence and then making decisions that guide a democratic society to attend to all its citizens' needs (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Hess, 2011; Ochoa-Becker, 1996). A curriculum that fosters students' historical empathy skills provides students with these skills and helps prepare them to be successful as future democratic citizens (Davison, 2017; Keegan, 2021).

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Appendix A

Primary Sources for Activities

Excerpts from *What a Colored Man Should Do to Vote*

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/127LmxVKCUnRUWnhOysQaMBVTIMb6VNQCNXALX3xiFkc/edit>

Full Primary Source *What a Colored Man Should Do to Vote*

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbaapc.33200/?st=gallery>

Excerpts for *Atlanta Compromise*, *Niagara Movement Speech*, *Ballad of Booker T.*, and Letter from Sidney McMechen vanWyck, Jr.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/127LmxVKCUnRUWnhOysQaMBVTIMb6VNQCNXALX3xiFkc/edit>

Primary Source Documents for The Great Migration and *One Way Ticket* by Langston Hughes

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/127LmxVKCUnRUWnhOysQaMBVTIMb6VNQCNXALX3xiFkc/edit>

Appendix B
Graphic Organizers/Handouts for Activities

Figure B1

Document Analysis Sheet: What a Colored Man Should Do to Vote

Why do you think is the purpose of the text? (i.e., why was the text written?)	What evidence from the text supports your answer about the purpose of the text? Give at least two details.	What were the Southern states' perspectives regarding allowing African Americans to vote?	What textual evidence supports the Southern states' perspectives? Give at least two details.

Figure B2

Historical Tweet



Instructions: Pretend you are an African American who is living in Alabama during the early 1900s. You have read the laws that determine if you can vote. Send a “tweet” to a fellow voter (classmate). Tell your fellow voter the obstacles “you” face in attempting to vote. Explain what “you” plan to do in the face of Southern disenfranchisement. You may use “text speak.” Your tweet can be no more than 50 words.



Draw your picture or symbol to represent **you** here

From: _____

To: _____

Voting with all of these restrictions is _____. It is not right that in order to vote I have to

Figure B3

Document Analysis Sheet: Booker T. Washington and W.E. B. Du Bois

<p>Primary Source</p>	<p>What is the author's perspective on how African Americans should gain equal rights?</p>	<p>What textual evidence supports the author's perspective? Give at least two details.</p>	<p>How does the author of the text feel about the treatment of African Americans in the United States?</p>	<p>What textual evidence supports how the author feels about the treatment of African Americans? Give at least two details.</p>
<p><i>Atlanta Compromise Speech</i></p>				
<p><i>Niagara Speech</i></p>				
<p><i>Ballad of Booker T.</i></p>				
<p>Letter from Sidney McMechen vanWyck, Jr. to W.E.B. Du Bois</p>				

Figure B5

Document Analysis Sheet: The Great Migration

<p>Primary Source</p>	<p>What conclusions can you draw about the author’s perspective on leaving the South for the North?</p>	<p>What textual evidence supports the author’s perspective? Give at least two details.</p>	<p>What conclusions can you draw, if any, about the author’s perspective about race or race relations in the U.S.? (Every text may not apply to this question)</p>	<p>What textual evidence supports the author’s perspective about race and race relations in the U.S. Give at least two details.</p>
<p><i>Letters from the Great Migration (NATCHEZ, MISS)</i></p>				
<p><i>Letters from the Great Migration (BESSEMER, ALA)</i></p>				
<p><i>“One Way Ticket” by Langston Hughes</i></p>				
<p>Letters of Black Migrants (CLEVELAND, OH)</p>				

Figure B8

Five Ways of Contextualization

