

ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study documents the implementation of student journaling in a secondary social studies classroom in a correctional setting. The purpose of the qualitative research study is to study the effects student journaling has on the development of historical thinking and historical empathy.

The population in this study is young adult offenders in a state correctional facility. The majority of them have not completed their high school education. Many of them, in fact, have only a 10th grade education. The students come from very low socioeconomic backgrounds. They are pre-dominantly African-American and Hispanic with very few Caucasian students. The range in age is from seventeen to twenty-two. Many of the students come from the inner cities and either dropped out of school or were expelled for various reasons.

The students were given primary and secondary source documents, photographs and hand-drawn pictures/paintings, maps, and received direct instruction during classes as the background information needed to develop their sense of historical empathy and to think historically through the use of student journaling. Throughout the study, the students analyzed the materials and synthesized their own thoughts and opinions based on their analyses. Historical thinking as defined for this qualitative research study is defined as the ability to think in terms of the past and to make decisions and form opinions of historical

events based on the information and resources available during a specific historical era. Historical empathy is defined as the ability to perceive the impact of historical events on the people and region during the time period the events occurred. Therefore historical empathy is not the ability to sympathize with the people these events affected but rather to understand to some degree what they have endured during the specific historical era. Furthermore, with the development of the students' ability to think historically and to empathize, they can make a relevant connection between past events and their lives as well as the modern world.