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**KICKIN' UP AND GETTING' WRITE:
USING STUDENT JOURNALING TO DEVELOP HISTORICAL THINKING
AND HISTORICAL EMPATHY IN CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION**

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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.

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RESEARCHER'S STANCE

“Without an education, you are not going anywhere in this world.” Malcolm X.

When I was in elementary school I was not a very big fan of school. I mean, I always did well but I did not like going to school or doing the work. I would just do what I needed to do to get good grades but that was it. My teachers always told me that I was not working up to my ability. I did not care though. As far as I was concerned, as long as I got good grades my parents would be happy. However, when my parents would read the comments on my report cards they were not happy. Even though my grades were good, my parents stressed that I needed to work to my ability as my teachers had always said and then my grades would be even better. However, I still would only do what was necessary to pass and that was it.

When I reached high school it was more of the same. As long as I did enough to pass and remain eligible to play football, I was happy. My freshman and sophomore years were just like elementary school. I was not working up to my ability but I was still passing. My sophomore English teacher even went as far as to call me a “Harvard cheat.” When I asked her what she meant, she told me that I was cheating Harvard out of a good student because she saw that I had a lot more potential and ability than I was letting on. I do not know what exactly happened, but after that discussion with my teacher something inside of me woke up. It was like someone turned on the light inside my brain. I now realized I

could be better than I was allowing myself to be in the past. From that moment on I promised myself I would always put forth my maximum effort, not only in school, but in everything in life.

Heeding the Call

During my senior year of high school I was trying to decide what I wanted to study in college and what career path I wanted to follow. The idea of becoming a teacher was always in the back of my mind because I wanted to coach football. If I ever did become a teacher my reason to do so would be so I could have a good job and still be around the sport I loved. After the conversation with my English teacher and by the time I was a senior, I realized that teaching was not just a good job but a calling. I now realized I wanted to teach and try to inspire kids the way my teachers always tried to do with me. I was just too stubborn to see it before.

After graduating high school I began attending community college because I did not feel my grades were good enough to go to a four year university [especially Harvard] right away. I then further realized the errors of my past ways. If I had applied myself earlier in my academic career, I more than likely would have had a better work ethic and therefore better grades. While at community college the urge to become a teacher became even stronger. I had some really good professors who always motivated me, but my professor for two Western Civilization history courses was really the icing on the cake. She was

extremely knowledgeable and made the content very interesting and easily understandable. She served as the role model for the type of teacher I wanted to become.

After transferring to a university, I met yet another very inspiring professor. He helped me to look at history from many different perspectives. The most important being how history has a direct connection and effect on our lives today. This was another eye opening experience for me. As is the case with many other people who study history I thought history was simply a series of events, eras, and people totally unrelated to me and my world. I was never so happy to be so wrong! This line of thinking has had a profound effect on the line of inquiry I wanted to pursue for my thesis as well as the way I wanted to teach history.

The Road to “Incarceration”

Upon graduation I was ready to take on any and all challenges as part of the public education system. As is the case with any new teacher I was eager to jump into my teaching career with both feet. I wanted to be the type of teacher kids loved coming to school for. I was ready to show kids just how exciting and relevant history could be to their lives. Little did I realize that my teaching career would lead me down a different road than I had expected. I was constantly looking for any opportunity to begin my teaching career in any school in which I could get a job. Applying for jobs and going on interviews only to find out

schools were not hiring or they were looking for teachers with more experience started to become more frustrating for me. As fate would have it, a family member asked me if I would be averse to teaching in a correctional facility. He was working at a women's correctional facility in New Jersey in a department other than education, and knew that his facility and a young male facility not much farther away were hiring teachers. I looked at this as an opportunity as a way to get my foot in the door and a way to get some teaching experience. My contention was that if I could teach in a correctional setting for a few years with "criminals" then any job in a public school I applied for would be mine for the taking. After all, if I can teach "criminals" than I could teach anyone, right? My thought process was that I would teach at the correctional facility for a few years and then get into the public school system. Once again, I was never so happy to be so wrong!

I have now been teaching within the New Jersey correctional system for over eleven years. I have been teaching history for all eleven years in addition to a second content area. When I first began teaching at the correctional facility my students had absolutely no interest in history. All of my students were high school dropouts who never liked school and did not like the fact that they had to go to school while incarcerated. I was [and still am] constantly barraged with questions from my students as to why they have to learn history. After all, it had nothing to do with them. No matter what topic or area of history we were

studying, my students just could not see the value of learning history. I think part of the reason for this was because they knew so little about history either from not attending school or having bad teachers. I also think the other reason was because they could not see how historical events, eras, and people affected them and their lives. Also, they were so used to looking at history from one perspective that they could not grasp the full range and scope of history. I was shocked at how misinformed my students were about history. An example that will always stick out in my mind was when one of my past students actually argued with me that there were fifty-one states!!

Becoming the Master

Due to my desire and determination to become a better teacher I decided to further my education at the graduate level. I felt as though I needed to learn new and innovative ways to teach my students effectively. During my time in the Moravian program, I have been extremely fortunate to have had a slew of wonderful and knowledgeable professors who have taught me invaluable ways to better teach my students. One of the most important classes I had the pleasure of attending was the course “Making History Live!” with Dr. Mayer. It was in his class that I discovered what my line of inquiry would be for my action research study. He taught us about the theory of developing a sense of historical empathy in our students. Historical empathy suggests that when teaching history, the students look at all possible perspectives of historical events, eras, and people in

order to get a real sense of the significance of each. As a result, the students start to understand how everything in history affects us today, enabling them to make a connection between the past and the present. As an extension of the pilot study I conducted in MEDU 506 [in which I first explored the idea of connecting history with the students' lives], I conducted two mini-action research studies to tie in the theory of historical empathy with my MEDU 506 pilot study. Conducting these pilot studies was what led me to my action research study line of inquiry in which I addressed the question: *What are the observed behaviors and reported experiences of using student journaling to develop historical thinking skills and a sense of historical empathy in order to establish a connection between the past and the present in correctional education?*

I was excited about this line of inquiry since it opened up a realm of possible unexpected dependent variables to explore during my study. Some of the dependent variables that popped up included: how the use of student journaling affected the students' development of their ability to think historically, the development of their sense of historical empathy, student achievement, motivation, understanding, and retention of the content. These dependent variables were sometimes difficult to measure. Through the use of my field log, field notes, observations, interviews, and surveys, this task was made a little easier. Perhaps the most worrisome aspect of following this line of inquiry was how my students responded to journaling. To be quite honest my students hate to

write. I needed to be open to their reluctance in this area and find ways to help them get past this feeling.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to fully explicate the basis of my action research study, I must first give some attention to the state of education in the United States prison system. A case can and will be made that education within this prison system is directly related to the failure of society to address the needs of students of color living in poverty in America. Students who live in these conditions also do not have the same educational advantages as children living in more affluent areas. Tileston and Darling (2009) state that, “Students of poverty who do not achieve in school drain our social services and our health care system and fill our prisons” (p. 17). This statement supports the argument that students living in poorer school districts very often will not be able to find a job and often wind up in prisons.

According to Wald and Losen (2007), 68% of state prison inmates in 1997 had not completed high school. Also, 75% of all the prisoners under the age of eighteen who are currently incarcerated in adult facilities [like mine] have not advanced past the 10th grade. The problem does not only exist for incarcerated males, but females as well. The American Bar Association (2001) states that “the

‘single largest predictor’ of later arrest among adolescent females is having been suspended, expelled, or held back during the middle school years” (p. 33). The experiences these students had very early in school very often lead to their incarceration.

The effects of a student’s past experiences have an enormous impact on his or her present and future. Dewey (1938) argues in great detail that past experience plays a major role in whatever present situation one might be in. The students in my study have all been put in the previously stated situations such as poverty and/or negative school experiences. The need for education in the prison system is mainly due to the fact that the students in my classroom [and many other prison classrooms] have not been given the chance to achieve due to the societal factors such as racism, economics, and lack of a quality education in many poorer school districts (Wald and Losen, 2007; Tileston and Darling, 2009).

Dewey’s (1938) theory of past experience supports the idea that the students in my classroom fail in school and wind up in prison is because they experience nothing but negativity in school. As Dewey states, “I assume that amid all uncertainties there is one permanent frame of reference: namely, the organic connection between education and personal experience...” (p. 25). The students in my study have had [for the most part] nothing but negative experiences not only educationally but also personally. Dewey’s theory of experience helps support the argument that what happens to the students in and

out of school impacts how they will do in school. Many of my students often tell me that when they were in school they did not experience much success. Many times this was due to the fact that they had a bad home life. Discussing these experiences with my students helped me to see what Dewey meant in his assessment of the value of education. According to Dewey, in order to fully understand my students I must first understand their past experiences to fully understand their present.

When I get new students, which I do every week, I always take the time to talk to them in order to find out a little bit about them. I believe this is important because all of my students are adults. Treating them as ordinary adults, as opposed to criminals, helps me in figuring out how to teach them. Due to the fact that my students are adults, I feel that journaling is a good strategy to implement. Using student journaling as a teaching strategy for adult learners, especially in a correctional education setting, is something that can prove to be very effective. Kerka (1996) inquires into the benefits of adult learners keeping a journal. Kerka finds, "Journal writing is closest to natural speech, and writing can flow without self-consciousness or inhibition" (p. 3). Journal writing gives my students the ability to express what they are learning in their own way. The benefits posed by Kerka reflect those that I want my students to have throughout the study.

Many times my students do not want to openly discuss what they are learning and thinking. Kerka (1996) goes on to state that journals are not as

formal as speech and enables the students to “talk” in a way they normally would not in class. This is one of the most beneficial goals of my study. I wanted the students to be able to articulate what they were learning in a way that was going to help them.

Another benefit of student journaling is that it can serve as a very useful and effective tool for rehabilitating the students. Adult learners in a prison setting spend a lot of time reflecting on what they have done and what they hope to do. I wanted to utilize this idea in regard to my history class. By engaging the students in reflection on historical events, eras, and people, they were able to express their thoughts. Kerka (2002) supports this notion by reporting that, “At the heart of learning through journal writing is reflection, the process of exploring events or issues and accompanying thoughts and emotions” (p. 3). When Kerka discusses exploring events or issues along with thought and emotion, this is a reference to historical empathy. According to Foster (1999) historical empathy consists of six key components. They are: “(1) an understanding of why people in the past acted as they did; (2) an appreciation of historical context and chronology of past events; (3) a thorough analysis and evaluation of historical evidence; (4) an appreciation for the consequences of actions perpetuated in the past; (5) an intuitive sense of a bygone era and an implicit recognition that the past is different from the present; (6) a respect for, an appreciation of, and a sensitivity toward the complexity of human action and achievement.” (p. 19). One purpose of my study

was to have the students engage in student journaling in order to develop their sense of historical empathy.

Student journals have a specific purpose in the teaching of history and development of historical empathy. This purpose is for the students to have an outlet so they can privately write about how they feel about the course material, how the course material is impacting them personally, and how the journaling is helping them learn. Colt and Connelly (1981) state that student journaling, as a tool for developing historical empathy, serves as a “graphic and spontaneous visual and verbal procedure for student and teacher to record ongoing encounters with the moral issues that emerge from the course material” (p. 17). The student journals gave my students an excellent reference point to reflect on their connection to the course material. Colt and Connelly go on to state that history is the direct result of human experiences and is directly related to us. Students in history classes very often ask why they have to learn about history. After all, it has nothing to do with them.

I assert that history has everything to do with them. Utilizing student journaling in my classroom enabled my students to record their thoughts and feelings in a student journal that allowed them to tap into their own insights, questions, and memories that are unique and valuable to them. The student journals provided the students with, as Colt and Connelly (1981) state “a vehicle for students to express themselves in a dimension that is most often lacking in a

classroom situation” (p. 18). This was exactly the case of my students. Before student journaling, my students did not [for the most part] have a way to express how history connected to them personally.

Due to the extreme personal nature of student journaling, students very often draw on their own experiences to reflect on the course material they are writing about in their journals. As noted above, Dewey (1938) reminds us that past experiences are quite sensitive to an individual in shaping their present and future experiences. This is even truer for my students. Dewey discusses how past experiences are an important element in education and learning, while Blake (2005) goes a bit further by stating these experiences are what can and do motivate students in not only history classes, but in education as a whole, when used as a basis for journaling. Blake states that student journaling is a valuable tool in making connections between experiences and the classroom. As Dewey stresses the importance of this connection, Blake gives us a way to establish that connection. Blake states “journaling provides a form of educational encounter that renders us human and frees us from moral imagination” (p. 2). Blake’s quote suggests that when students engage in journaling they have a sense of freedom in how they are responding to course material.

My main method of instruction during my study was the use of primary source documents. A function of using primary source documents was to give my students enough resource material to provide a solid foundation for their journals.

The advantage of using primary source documents for my study was that it gave the students a better understanding of historical events, eras, and people from the time these sources were created and at the time they were happening.

Meo (2000) conducted a college action research study with college sophomores and juniors who were the same age as my students. The findings were that students were better able to effectively reflect on the course material, analyze and interpret the documents to find their own meaning, examine historical artifacts from many different perspectives, identify the author's perspective, and effectively reflect on the multiple perspectives presented through the documents and artifacts when writing in the journal. To me, it seems as though the development of historical empathy is a natural result of this type of research. The methods of instruction used by Meo closely reflect what I did in my study.

Yilmaz (2007) defines historical thinking "as the ability to see and judge the past in its own terms by trying to understand the mentality, frames of reference, beliefs, values, intentions, and actions of historical agents using a variety of historical evidence" (p. 331). The key to developing historical thinking is for the students to be able to study the past in its own terms not those of the present. Yilmaz discusses how historical thinking has various dimensions depending on how it is used and for what purpose. The purpose of historical thinking for my study was for my students to reflect on history through multiple perspectives in order to gain a better understanding of the past. I wanted my

students to be able to look at history through the perspectives of those that lived through it. In order to truly think historically, my students needed to look at history through the lens of historical agents rather than their modern lens. I had to be cautious not to let my students look at history through their modern day lens but rather through a past one. Yilmaz provided six valuable guidelines for properly engaging students in historical thinking. They include: “(1) access authentic historical sources, engaging in critical examination of those sources and understanding the nature of historical conclusions; (2) have a balance of imaginative speculation and methodical investigation; (3) relive the thoughts of past individuals through the heuristic of contextualization; (4) examine, appreciate, and understand the perspectives of people in the past and render them intelligible to contemporary minds; (5) make reasoned evidential reconstruction in addition to taking a position to reconstruct a set of beliefs, values, goals, and attendant feelings that historical agents had; (6) engage in sustained effort and thoughtful strategy to suspend their present world views when examining the past in order to avoid a persistent understanding of the past, i.e. understanding the past events on their own terms without judging them through our contemporary criteria” (p. 334).

Wineburg (1999) provides some insight into the difficulty students have when trying to think historically. Wineburg argues historical thinking is not something that comes naturally to students in history classes. Wineburg states,

“Historical thinking, in its deepest forms, is neither a natural process nor something that springs automatically from psychological development” (p. 491).

Wineburg’s quote is an accurate statement in regard to how historical thinking is a skill that students need to develop in order to fully understand the past. Based on previous class discussions, historical thinking is a skill my students needed to develop. They often would think of history in modern terms and from their own modern perspective. Wineburg discusses how students in history classes often fall into the same trap because historical thinking is not something they were used to do doing.

Levstik (1997) provides an excellent way to help students look at history through the multiple perspectives of the past. Levstik uses what is called the apprenticeship metaphor. Levstik’s concept of apprenticeship places the teacher in the role of the expert and the student in the role of the apprentice. Levstik discusses how the teacher needs to guide the student in developing the necessary skills to become a historian in the classroom. The development of historical thinking skills in order to look at history through multiple perspectives is a necessary step in aiding the students to think like historians so they can develop historical empathy and connect the past to the present.

All of the components of historical empathy mentioned by Foster (1999) helped the students in my study gain a better understanding of history as a whole in that each component focuses on an important part of historical analysis. Each

component helped my students by giving them a way to look at the material of the unit in different ways to accurately reflect in their journals. The journals serve as a way for the students to use the components laid out by Foster to analyze the primary sources we examined much like Meo (2000) did for the journal entries. Historical empathy as defined in my study aims for the students to recognize that the past is different than the present but the two are connected, and in order to understand that connection the students need to understand what people did, when, and why.

Another important piece to the development of historical thinking and historical empathy is developing the student's ability to connect the past and the present. Steffens (1992) provides valuable support in regard to connecting the past and the present in a history course. The students in a study conducted by Steffens shared the same attitude as my students when learning about history by stating, "They think that studying history will be dull, meaningless in terms of their own lives and just another requirement on the road to no more history courses-ever!" (p. 107). Thus, the negative experiences of students from past history courses affects their present experiences. Dewey (1938) and Steffens state students need new and more positive experiences in order to change their negative perceptions about education. A common theme in the research literature was that student journaling helps the students become more interested in learning history.

Thus, student journaling helps foster student interest by developing their sense of historical empathy by connecting the past to the present.

The main points I outlined all have a direct correlation to how student journaling enabled my students to develop their abilities to think historically and develop their sense of historical empathy. First it would be remiss to ignore the setting in which my students are learning and why. My students have had negative experiences in the past that are responsible for their present situation. Dewey (1938) relates how the past experiences of students shape their present and future. Wald and Losen (2007) and Tileston and Darling (2009) also look at the students' past experiences in order to help us understand how negative educational experiences lead to prison. Second, Steffens (1992), Kerka (1996), and Meo (2000) relate how effective student journaling can be in adult basic education. Third, the definitions and various dimensions of historical thinking and historical empathy are important pieces of how students learn about history. Colt and Connelly (1981), Foster (1999), and Yilmaz (2007) shared their definitions of historical thinking and historical empathy, and how effective they can be. Finally, Blake (2005) pulls everything together comprehensively in the research on how student journaling can be used to develop historical empathy and increase motivation in a history classroom.

PILOT STUDY

I first got the idea to try and help my students understand the importance of how history affects the world today and [more importantly] my students in a pilot study I conducted in 2009. In this pilot study the line of inquiry I followed was to answer the question: *What are the observed behaviors and reported experiences of the impact on student interest and achievement of new teaching strategies implemented in my social studies class to help the students establish a connection between the past and the present?* The reason I chose this particular line of inquiry was that very often students in most history classes wonder why they need to learn about history. After all, it already happened and it does not have anything to do with them. I wanted my students to understand not only why they needed to learn about history, but how the events of history affect them.

The teaching strategies I implemented during my pilot study included writing, group work, and connecting the past to the present. Admittedly, writing and group work are not new and innovative teaching strategies. However, in my school [at the time] they were not commonly practiced. My students were not used to writing about what they were learning nor have they ever truly participated collaboratively in group work. I felt by implementing these strategies into my classroom my students would begin to build a foundation upon which they could begin to start making a connection between the past and present. This was a new endeavor for my students in that the way they were used to learning

was in a large group participating [if one truly can] in lecture and direct instruction lessons. Assignments and assessments were limited to textbook worksheets and multiple choice and true/false tests. Students had no way of explicating what they were learning, what they thought about the content, or what the content meant to them. How could my students fully appreciate the value of history if they could not find any meaning in it for them? When I conducted this pilot study I helped my students see the connection of historical events, important discoveries/inventions, and historical figures. They began to understand how all of the items listed above affect the present.

As a result, my students began to become more interested in history. They began asking more questions, doing more research, and asking me if I could find more information on certain topics that I could bring from home [we do not have internet access at the facility] so they could learn more. With this new desire and interest in learning about history, my students began doing better and better on class assignments such as: creating and answering research questions, creating short essays that rationalized how a specific event, figure, or discovery/invention had a direct effect on the present, and choosing an aspect of history that pertains to them and how they feel it has impacted them personally. However, something was missing from the lessons and the study. My students could now make the connection between the past and the present. They saw how events, figures, and discoveries/inventions affect the world today. But did they understand *why*

certain events occurred? Did they understand *why* historical figures did what they did in a given era? Did they understand *why* certain discoveries/inventions were made/created or necessary for a given era? I did not feel they did. While I was excited that my students took more of an interest in history and were having more success with their assignments and assessments, I was left with an enormous sense of wonderment at the end of my pilot study.

My attempt to answer the “why” questions above led to my line of inquiry for this qualitative research study. How could I help my students understand why the past is important and how can they demonstrate their understanding? Since my students responded relatively well and experienced some success with the writing exercises during the study I thought that continuing the writing would be a good avenue for my students to demonstrate their understanding. Implementing the student journaling gave the students a real and personal way to express their understanding. Developing my students’ ability to think historically and their sense of historical empathy would enable them, to know why the events of history unfolded the way they did. My pilot study rose the “why” questions in my mind and led me to explore ways to answer them which led me to my line of inquiry for this qualitative research study.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research methods I used in my study included: student interviews/conferences, pre- and post-surveys, fieldnotes with a double entry journal, checklists to measure dependant variables, and student journals. Each of the proposed research methods provided me with the most accurate information in order to effectively analyze the data collected. For my study, I relied heavily on student feedback both orally [fieldnotes with double entry journal and interviews/conferences] and written [student journals, surveys, checklist of dependant variables].

Conducting student interviews/conferences at different intervals throughout the study helped me to gauge the students' attitudes on the effectiveness of using a journal. Over the course of the study as I conducted more interviews/conferences, I analyzed what the students felt at the beginning, middle, and end of the study to see how the use of the student journals helped them develop a sense of historical empathy. The student surveys helped as a supporting research method to the interviews. The surveys gave the students a chance to write freely about how the journals might or might not have helped them. Whereas interviews are student responses to my specific questions, I was able to watch the body language of the students in order to get a sense of how they feel and what they think. Non-verbal communication is just as important as verbal

communication. By using the interviews and surveys in conjunction I was able to get an accurate sense of both types of communication.

My fieldnotes and double entry journal were key research methods in my study in that I had a way to record the interaction and discourse of a particular lesson to collect data. In order to gauge how the students were performing, how much effort they were putting forth, etc., I needed a way to record and analyze what I was observing. This is how fieldnotes and a double entry journal assisted me. Within the double entry journal I kept my checklist to measure the dependant variables. Some dependent variables I anticipated on encountering during my study were: overall achievement, retention of content, student engagement, and the development of historical empathy. Of course many more dependent variables could have emerged during the study, but having a checklist handy to make notations and record observations helped me deal with the variables as they emerged.

The most important research method I used in my study was the student journals. The student journals provided the data that I relied the most heavily on in order to measure the dependent variables listed above. The basis of my study was to use student journaling to develop historical empathy in my students. Analyzing what my students were writing about in regard to the historical content and the connection to it and their lives provided me with the most important sources of data.

Sources of Triangulation

The main sources of triangulation I used in my study were: extended fieldwork, low inference descriptors, and participant feedback. These forms of triangulation were integral pieces of my proposed research methods in that each of the sources of triangulation related to a research method. For example, the extended fieldwork and low inference descriptors helped me align the data collected from my fieldnote double entry journal, student inferences, conferences, and surveys. Also, participant feedback helped in the analysis and alignment of the interviews/conferences, surveys, student journals, with my research methods to the goal of my study. I intended to focus on each of these sources of triangulation to help me present my findings and observations in my study. Finding the best ways to connect what methods I used to what I wanted to study was a good way to ensure the validity of the study. Using proven and effective research methods, in conjunction with the best sources of triangulation for those research methods, ensured the validity of the study. As researchers we want our research to be as accurate as possible when we are ready to present it. This is where research methods and sources of triangulation meet and how, together, can be effective in ensuring the trustworthiness and validity of our research studies.

Ethical Guidelines

The first step in conducting my study was submitting a proposal to the Human Subject Internal Review Board (HSIRB) and gaining approval as well as written consent to conduct my study. After obtaining approval from the HSIRB and then discussed what my study was going to be about with my students and my supervisors. My supervisor (Appendix A) and students (Appendix B) were asked to give their informed consent by reading and signing an informed letter of consent. My students were made aware of any potential risks that may have affected them as a result of participating in the study.

Throughout the implementation of this study I, as the researcher, took every necessary step to protect my students and ensure the validity of the research. The identities of my students were kept anonymous and all were referred to in the study by a pseudonym. I kept all of the data [including the student journals] in a locked file in my classroom when not in use, and were shredded or kept in the locked file after the study was concluded. The only person with access to the data collected was me. The journals were passed out and collected by me during and after each class they were used. Responses to interviews/conferences and surveys were kept private between me and the students and used only as data sources for the study. The students were made fully aware of the study, the research methods used, and the intent of the study prior to its implementation. The students were informed of their right to accept or

decline to be a part of the study. However, all students received the same instruction and assessment regardless of participation. Those who chose to decline did not have their work be a part of the research study data nor were they penalized in any way. The appropriate administrative personnel were notified of the study with a full description of its intent and what was required of the students throughout the study (Appendix A).

RESEARCH NARRATIVE

Jail. Prison. Lock up. The “Joint.” These are words that bring a sense of dread, sadness, fear, and depression to most people. No one wants to go to jail. No one wants to lose his or her freedom. Jail is a place for thugs, thieves, drug dealers, murderers, etc. For me, it is a place of opportunity. An opportunity to help change lives through education, lives that many people have given up on with no chance of redemption. I teach in a jail. The students I teach are thugs, thieves, and drug dealers [there are no murderers at my facility]. I have the difficult yet unique challenge of rehabilitating criminals through education. An education they turned their backs on many years ago for the allure of money, cars, jewelry, and a life of danger and [to them] excitement. In their minds they had no use for an education.

When my students first come into the facility they already have an overall negative attitude. They are angry, depressed, and do not have a positive outlook on life. My students very often feel the need to prove they are not scared or weak in any way to the other inmates. The students will rebel against anything anyone who is not a fellow inmate tells them to do. They will resist the COs [custody officers] and any civilian staff [for example teachers like me] in order to try to prove their “manhood.” They adopt an “us vs. them mentality.” Due to the fact they adopt this mentality, the inmates are missing a very large piece of the puzzle

of their incarceration. We are there to help. This mentality becomes especially difficult in education. When a student has the preconceived notion that no one [except other inmates] cares about them, they feel that everyone else is out to make their lives a living hell.

Correctional Education: Education in My Facility

In order to put all of this in perspective, I must first describe how the education system works at my facility. In the state of New Jersey [where my facility is located] State law mandates that any incarcerated person under the age of twenty-one who has not earned his or her high school diploma or GED must be in school. Anyone twenty-one or older can choose to attend school as well as work. Those young men are mandated to attend school are paid a daily wage for being in school so that they can earn money while they attend school. Upon entering the facility all inmates go through a one week orientation class. During this class, they are taught the rules of the facility, what programs are offered, and what rights they have and do not have.

Also, during this orientation class, our education department gathers information on the students' education history. The students are given a form on which they indicate the last school they attended, last grade completed, if they have earned their high school diploma or GED, and what vocational programs they might be interested in completing. The inmates' personal information is also provided on this form. The key piece of information is their date of birth. When

the forms are collected, the orientation teacher reviews them and the names of anyone who falls into the required age group for school are forwarded to our Supervisor and Assistant Supervisor of Education in order to be placed in classes.

Inmates are placed in a class level based on the results of a diagnostic test they take during the orientation class. The diagnostic assessment is a basic skills test that measures the inmates' ability in the areas of reading comprehension, writing and language skills, spelling, vocabulary, and math. Based on the results of the test, an inmate can be placed in one of four education levels we have. The first education level is our Basic Reading class. Inmates are assigned to this class if they score between 0-3.9 on the diagnostic test. At this level, students [no longer just inmates] are taught basic math and literacy skills. The second level is Basic Education. A score range of 4-6.9 leads to a student being placed at this level. At this level students are taught higher-order thinking skills, different writing styles, and basic algebraic concepts. The third level [my level] is Pre-Secondary Academics. Scores of 7-9.9 are required for placement at this level. At my level, my students are taught how to analyze and synthesize historical documents, demonstrate various writing styles, such as narratives and biographies, and solve higher-order math problems such as algebraic equations, figuring out patterns, and geometry. The fourth level is our Secondary Academics level in which a score of 10-12.9 is required. While in this class, students are taught much in the same way as the Pre-Secondary level. The difference between

the two levels is that students in the Secondary Academics level do more independent studying much like an honors class. The older inmates who choose to attend school are placed in these levels based on the same criteria. Many times these students need to work on their basic skills because they have not been in school for many years. For example, when I first started teaching at the facility and taught at the Basic Reading level, I had a student who was thirty and I was only twenty-six. Unfortunately, he left the facility before he had the opportunity to earn his GED. I do not know if he ever did.

Sometimes, when taking the diagnostic test, many inmates do not take it seriously and will just give any answer to get it done. Again, this goes back to their overall negative attitude toward being in jail and education in general. The problem for the students is when they score very low on the test; they are placed in one of the lower level classes. The problem for the teachers is when the students first report to school and realize the class they are in is too easy, they start to complain and give the teacher a hard time because they feel they should be in a higher-level class. Students will refuse to do class assignments or participate in lessons because they feel that it is “beneath” their intelligence. However, once the student has been in class for three months and have shown he can do the work at the level he was placed in, he can retake the test to improve his scores and be placed in a class more suited to his academic level.

The following vignette from my pilot study provides a better picture of the overall attitude of our students when they first come to school. The vignette is not of just one student. The vignette is the common thinking of the majority of the students when they are first told they have to go to school.

Man, why do I have to come to school? I didn't go to school on the streets so why do I have to go here? I just want to work and earn money to buy up lots of canteen [commissary]. I don't care about school. This is jail, not high school. This isn't even real school. They just want to make money off of us. The only reason I came is so I don't get any charges [disciplinary reports]. Why do I have to learn about fractions or algebra? I'm not ever going to use it. The CO's [custody officers] wake us up at like 6 o'clock in the morning and expect us to go to school all day. I didn't even go to bed until like 2 o'clock in the morning because I was beating down [talking to] with my man from the streets. All I want to do is work to make money and go back to the cottage and play cards or watch TV and smoke cigarettes. If I have to go to school why can't I just take the GED? I know I can pass it. I went to the 10th grade so I know I can pass it. My teacher is making me do fractions because he says I need to review it before I do algebra. I was doing algebra in school on the streets, when I went. I don't remember how to do fractions. My teacher says if I don't know how to do fractions I won't pass the GED. I know I can pass it. My teacher says I can't take it anyway because I'm under 21. It's the law or something. That's not right. I'm not coming to school here anymore. I'll take the charges and maybe they'll ship me out to a real prison instead of this place.

Fortunately, there are some students who come in with a positive attitude toward their education. Sometimes, after our negative students have been in class for awhile and begin to see others have success, they often start to change their tune. They realize that getting their education is not a bad thing. They realize it is worth their time and getting their education will help them once they are released. They understand that by

getting their education while incarcerated, they can go to college or get a good job when released. However, there are some students who do not change their view and will do as little as possible just to get by until they leave.

Students are assigned to our classes on a weekly basis. Every week a new group of inmates arrives at the facility. They all go through the process described previously. One week I might have six students in a class and by the end of the week I could have eleven. Conversely, we can also lose students at anytime. This makes trying to teach a unit very difficult. When new students come into class in the middle of a unit, time is spent trying to catch them up which takes away from the overall teaching of the lesson. Getting new students in my class is always exciting because I never know how I might be able to help them. Whatever their educational goals might be, I know I can help them accomplish these goals. Even if they leave the facility before completing their education, I always tell my students they will learn something. Even if it is just one thing they did not know or could not do before, they will learn *something*.

Now as one can imagine, when teaching in a correctional facility resources are very limited. For starters, my students are prohibited from having internet access. This severely limits any real research my students

can do. I cannot assign a research paper, project, or have them type any assignments in class. Secondly, class materials are limited. I cannot give my students their own textbooks. I have enough for twelve students [the maximum amount allowed in a class for safety and security reasons] but have to keep the texts in my classroom for my students to use. They are not allowed to take the books back to their housing units because it is not permitted. There is no after school tutoring because the facility adheres to a very strict movement schedule. When school is over, it is over. A way I supplement materials I have is by finding resources on the internet at home, printing them out, and taking them to class. There are days where I lose class time due to the facility being locked down because of an unforeseen incident. For example, I lost three days during my study because of a lock down. There are other limitations as well. However, my study is not about those limitations. My story is about my students. My story is about what they did during my action research study. This story is about them.

How Did My Students Get Here?

I often wonder how and why my students wound up in jail and, ultimately, in my classroom. For the most part, they are intelligent young men who over time tend to do very well in school. Many of them go on to earn their high school diploma or GED. There are some who do not earn

their diploma or GED because they are released from the facility before they fulfill the necessary requirements. The circumstances of their incarcerations are varied. In order to accurately share my story about my students, I feel I need to give some attention to these circumstances and the experiences of my students in school prior to their incarceration. Hopefully, this will address the question: How *did* my students get here?

Most of my students come from the inner cities of New Jersey. The areas my students grew up in are some of the worst possible places anyone can grow up in. Their neighborhoods are rampant with crime. Drug dealing, theft, assault, gang-related activity, and even murder dominate the streets. There are extreme levels of poverty surrounding my students everyday in their hometowns. Part of the reason they are in my classroom is that they were the ones committing these crimes. By no means am I condoning such activities for anyone for any reason. However, when faced with a situation like theirs it is easy to see how they can fall into a life of crime. The research of Wald and Losen (2007) and Tileston and Darling (2009), concludes that children living in a state of poverty very often will fall into a life of crime, not complete their education, and eventually wind up in the prison system.

Many of my students, as they get older, are forced to take care of their siblings because their parents are unable or unwilling to. They look

for ways to make a lot of money really fast. I have been told many times by my students over the years that working a real job does not provide enough for them to take care of their families. That is why they turn to illegal means to earn a living. However, it is often not for a lack of trying. For example, many of my students held jobs in the construction, automotive, and restaurant trades. Some of them chose to become involved in criminal activities to earn quick money rather than earning money by legal means. Those that had jobs found this road very difficult because they did not feel they were making enough money for the work they were doing. Also, they saw many of their friends who became involved in criminal activities with a lot of money; they were home when they wanted to be; they did not have to get up early; they had fancy cars; clothes; and jewelry; and they had pretty girls with them constantly. I remember thinking that this must have been very difficult for them. The temptation they faced on a daily basis must have been great. Again, I do not condone any type of criminal activity but understanding how this could happen to them became easier.

The biggest consequence of my students' decision to become involved in criminal activity was that they did not complete their education. Growing up in an area of poverty where the state of education is very poor, my students were already at a disadvantage. This is not to

say that teachers and other education personnel did not try. The issue is of a more socio-economic nature. There is fewer school taxes collected because most of the people live in poverty and, as a result, rely on federal and state assistance. Also, federal and state governments are constantly cutting money from education programs that desperately need funds (Tileston and Darling, 2009). If my students were not given the same educational opportunities as students from areas of affluence where money is not an issue, what chance do they have?

Dewey (1938) states how past experiences have an impact on the present experiences someone may be faced with. This holds especially true for my students. Their past experiences in school basically have formed their overall attitude toward education as illustrated in the previous vignette. My students have all made it to high school but had either been expelled or dropped out at some point. I have students who only made it to the ninth grade and some who were expelled right before graduating. My students have admitted to me in our discussions when they first come into my class that they were at fault for what happened to them during their high school years. They have admitted to skipping school so they could participate in criminal and/or gang activity. They have admitted to selling drugs at school which led to their expulsion [and eventual incarceration]. My students have discussed with me that they just did not

want or feel the need to be in school. They just did not see the point. Fortunately, when they come to my facility they have the opportunity to make amends for their past actions and decisions. What they choose to do with this new found opportunity is up to them.

Another negative past experience my students faced while in school prior to their incarceration was that the resources in the school they were attending were not adequate; especially for students with special needs. Many of my students were previously classified as special education students for reasons varying from behavioral disorders to ADHD to learning disabilities. Through no real fault of their own, the schools my students attended did not have the finances, staff, or resources to help them meet their needs. Their teachers did not have the means or the time to give my students the individual or extra help they needed. For the most part, they were passed along through the system until they were either expelled or dropped out. They had no real chance of completing their education with these factors working against them. These past experiences helped shape my students' present situation Dewey suggested. When figuring out how to best help my students complete their education, I always take into account their past experiences so I do not create the same situation they faced previously. I want them to experience success

and reflect on the past experiences that shaped their present so they do not shape their future.

The Story of My Students through Their journals

As stated earlier, students are assigned to my classes on a weekly basis. Also, students can leave my classes at any given time. Some reasons include a student being paroled, transferred to another facility or our minimum security units, or they drop out. The downside of this constant transition is that students either enter or leave in the middle of a unit of study. The students who enter my class in the middle of a unit can easily be brought up to speed on the material and assignments. The students, who leave, however, seem to get lost. Once they leave my class and/or the facility, I often never know what happens to them. This can be very frustrating at times especially with students who were doing well and had a real chance of obtaining their high school diploma or GED. Unfortunately, there is no way for me to find out what happened to them. They remain lost. However, they can be found in the work they had done. The student journals they kept provided me with a way to find them. I reviewed their journals to look for signs of their ability to think historically and develop their sense of historical empathy. Three of my

students, Bob, Gabe, and John, became lost. The first part of the story is about them. This is the story of “The Lost Boys.”

The Lost Boys

Bob, Gabe, and John were three of my former students who left my class before my study ended. However, they were able to complete a journal entry or two prior to leaving my class. I wanted to share their stories because even though I sometimes lose students in the middle of a unit does not mean they do not learn anything or do good work.

Bob

Bob entered my “A” block class on 10/3/11, three weeks before his 19th birthday. He was an African-American male who only completed school up to the eighth grade. After talking with him about his past educational experiences and if he truly wanted to complete his education during his incarceration, he seemed very serious and determined. I explained to him what subjects he would be learning in my class and what our current unit of study was [WWII]; he was ready to go. However, I wanted to observe him in class before making up my mind if he was being honest with me. After a week my mind was made up. Bob was serious.

I decided to ask for Bob’s consent to be a part of my study and he agreed. With the limited course material he had, Bob really took to the

journaling activity. I reflected on how happy I was to see this in my field

log entry from 10/11/11:

Two new students who were added to my “A” block [Bob and Brian] class last week are really taking the journal activity seriously. Even though they do not have the same information as the rest of the class they are doing it and doing it well. I got their consent to add them to my study. Very refreshing to see new students jump right into the flow of the class. Usually I get the opposite reaction.

Bob was the type of student teachers would love to have. Having a student like Bob in a correctional education setting is a rare treat.

Bob was only able to complete one journal entry during his time in my class. For the first journal entry, I asked my class to reflect on what the ideal of Nationalism meant to them. I wanted the students to either connect Nationalism to some aspect of their life or to reflect on it from the perspective of a German citizen during the Age of Nationalism. Also, I asked the students to compare the increased sense of Nationalism after the Pearl Harbor attack and 9/11. Bob chose to reflect on the ideal of Nationalism from the perspective of a German citizen. Bob displayed his ability to think historically by focusing on the events that occurred in Germany prior to and during WWII including Hitler’s dictatorship. Figure 5.1 is an excerpt from Bob’s journal entry that reflects his ability to think historically.

How does your view compare to the sense of nationalism in Germany leading up to WWII
- My view compares to this topic.
Because Germany stood together as a unit and was loyal to their culture, and their traditional customs by their ancestors. For example: Blonde hair, Blue eyes were considered as a thorough breed German citizen.
During WWII. ~~as should participate~~ AND Hitler ^{wasn't} weren't

Accepting citizens who were German and Jewish descent. IF I was a German citizen and faced with being ^a part of what was going on in WWII. I would participate in the actions that Hitler was talking and dishing out. Because Germany stood together like a brick wall, no matter what obstacle, they were side by side fighting ~~for~~ for what they thought was right for their ^{their} country.

Figure 5.1

Part II of Bob's journal entry demonstrated his ability to connect the past and the present by comparing the reactions of the people involved in a historical event [Pearl Harbor] and a current event [9/11]. Bob discussed how the sense of Nationalism among the American people after both events increased. Bob's entry described what the American people

did for the good of the country after a disastrous event occurred. Figure 5.2 shows the connection Bob was able to make between the two events.

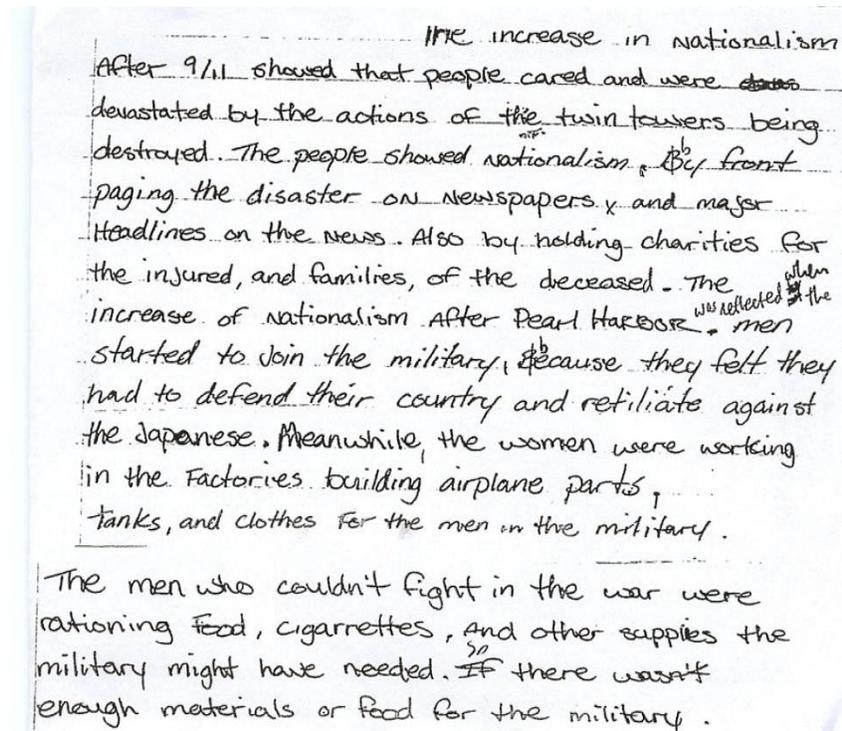


Figure 5.2

Bob left my class on 10/24/11. He was sent to our minimum security units. Even though I only had Bob for a short time in class, he was a model student. The lone journal entry Bob was able to complete exemplified one aspect of Yilmaz's (2007) definition of historical thinking. Part three of Yilmaz's definition, "reliving the thoughts of past individuals through the heuristic of contextualization" (p. 334), was what

Bob accomplished in Part I of his journal entry by following the same thought process as the German people in the context of the time period. I wish I had more time with Bob in class so that I could have seen how his sense of historical empathy would have developed throughout more journal entries. If his one and only journal entry was a sign of his capabilities, I think Bob could have been very successful. Sadly, I will never know.

Gabe

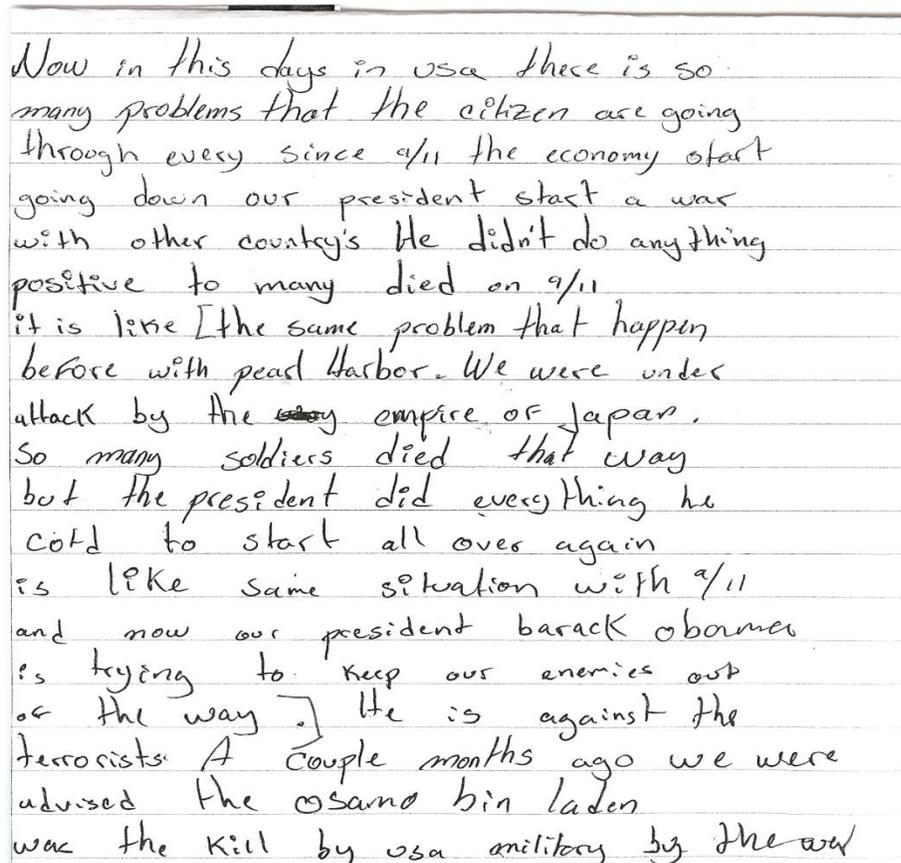
Gabe was a twenty-one year old Hispanic male who came to my “B” block class on 7/2/11. Prior to his incarceration, Gabe only went up to the tenth grade. English was his second language, but he spoke it very well. Like Bob, Gabe was only able to complete one journal before leaving my class for the minimum security units on 10/15/11. Also, like Bob, Gabe’s journal entry did show a connection between the past and the present. What Gabe also was able to accomplish in his limited time in my action research study was the ability to think historically. Figure 5.3 shows how Gabe was able to define Nationalism in historical terms and how Nationalism was a driving force in getting people to believe in and defend their country.

Nationalism means the ideas of having pride in being part of a nation was on the rise in the 1800s the question what is a nation? was on many people's minds books newspapers, and even songs reminded people of their desire to belong to one nation gradually people began to be loyal also to their languages history and culture. Nationalism means a country being independently rather than collectively emphasizing dependence in a country under a foreign domination for international goals devotions to the interest or culture of a nation and all the people are loyal and proud to be from that country.

Figure 5.3

The connection Gabe made between the events of Pearl Harbor and 9/11 demonstrated his ability to connect the past and the present. Like the students in Steffens' (1992) action research study, Gabe did not see the value of learning about history. However, once he started the journal activity, Gabe began to see the value of learning history because he understood then how past events were connected and closely similar to

present events. Figure 5.4 provides a good example of Gabe's ability to connect the past and the present.



Now in this days in usa there is so many problems that the citizen are going through every since 9/11 the economy start going down our president start a war with other country's He didn't do anything positive to many died on 9/11 it is like [the same problem that happen before with pearl harbor. We were under attack by the ~~usa~~ empire of Japan. So many soldiers died that way but the president did everything he could to start all over again is like same situation with 9/11 and now our president barack obama is trying to keep our enemies out of the way.] He is against the terrorists. A couple months ago we were advised the Osama bin Laden was the kill by usa military by the way

Figure 5.4

Gabe's journal entry reflects parts three, four, and five of Yilmaz's (2007) definition of historical thinking. Gabe looked at how Nationalism was defined in the context of past events occurring in Europe leading up to WWII which aligns with part three of Yilmaz's definition of historical thinking. Gabe then demonstrated part four of Yilmaz's definition by taking the perspective of someone living in Europe during the WWII era

and explaining his/her views in modern terms. Part five of Yilmaz's definition was defined in Gabe's journal entry when he explained how the people of Pre-WWII Europe felt about independence vs. foreign rule. He did not write about a specific group of people or country but rather wrote in general terms, yet he was still able to capture the historical meaning of Nationalism as well as present it in a modern way.

John

John was assigned to my "C" block when he was twenty years old and had only completed the 11th grade. He came from one of the worst inner cities in New Jersey where he experienced violent crime and a lot of gang activity. When I received John's face sheet [a printout of a new student's personal information, education history, and diagnostic test scores], next to "Race" there was an "O," for other. Usually when I get an African-American student there is a "B," for black in this spot. So being the curious [nosy?] type I am, I asked him why this was. He said to me, "Because I'm not Black or African-American American. I'm Haitian." He explained to me that his family came to the United States before he was born. When I asked the students for their consent to be a part of my action research study, I was really hoping John would give his consent. He did. I thought he would add to the study because he knew a lot about the

history of Haiti and its people. I thought he could apply this knowledge to our class discussions and course material in a journal.

In his first journal entry, John discussed what the ideal of Nationalism meant to him in an overall sense. He then proceeded to discuss his vision of Nationalism in regard to his Haitian ancestry and how it helped them to fight for their freedom. John tied everything up nicely by writing about how his view of Nationalism, in addition to the sense of Nationalism felt by his ancestors which helped him feel pride and appreciation for what they did to give him the strength to endure the hardships in his life. John's ability to think historically and connect past events to the present, both in general and personally, demonstrated his ability to feel empathy for his Haitian ancestors and their struggles. The best aspect of John's journal entry was when he discussed how Nationalism is not about just one person. It takes the entire population of a country to develop a strong sense of Nationalism. As John described in his journal, a strong sense of Nationalism can lead a country and its people to do great things. The following excerpt from John's journal [Figure 5.5] showed how strongly John felt about what his ancestors did, what it meant to him, and how it aided him in developing his sense of historical empathy.

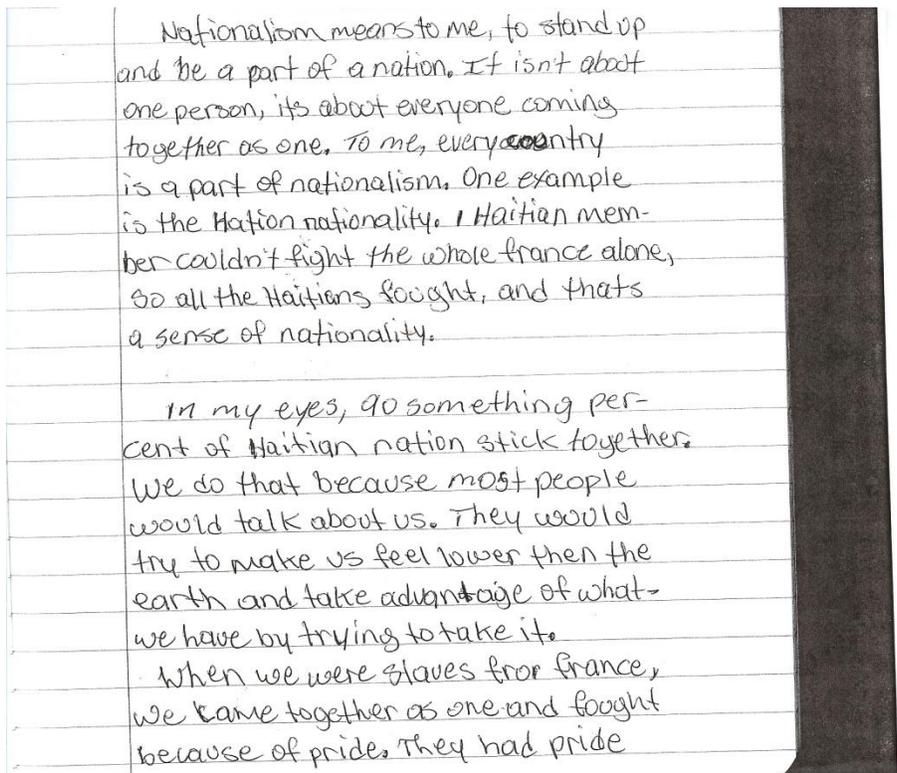
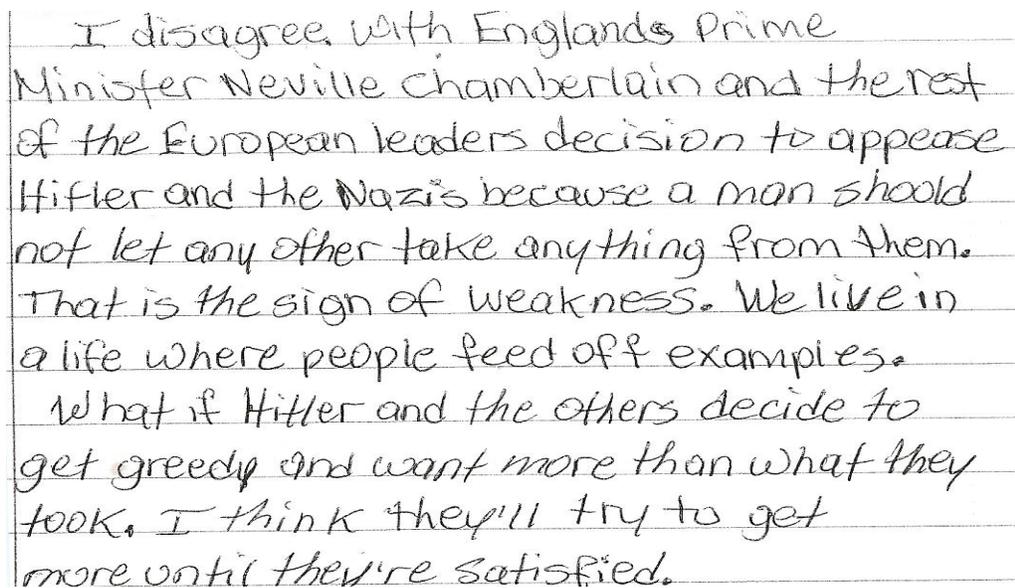


Figure 5.5

In another journal entry, John reflected on the decision of England's Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, to enact a policy of appeasement to keep Hitler from attempting to take over all of Europe vs. the advice of Winston Churchill [who would succeed Chamberlain and serve as Prime Minister during and after the war] for the countries of Europe to unite and stop Hitler by force. After some class discussion and primary source document analysis, John and the rest of the class decided on which perspective they agreed with and discussed why in their journals. John decided he agreed with the advice of Churchill. What I liked about

his reflection was that John first briefly described why he *did not* agree with Chamberlain. John then went on to write about why he agreed with Churchill.

The first part of John's journal entry [Figure 5.6] connected the past to the present because he saw a correlation between the actions of Hitler and how people today can be greedy no matter what they are given.



I disagree with England's Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and the rest of the European leaders decision to appease Hitler and the Nazis because a man should not let any other take anything from them. That is the sign of weakness. We live in a life where people feed off examples. What if Hitler and the others decide to get greedy and want more than what they took. I think they'll try to get more until they're satisfied.

Figure 5.6

The second part of John's journal entry [Figure 5.7] went on to demonstrate his ability to think historically by discussing how and why he would have done things differently if he were faced with the same situation. Historical empathy was demonstrated when John discussed why Churchill's plan would have been better. John stated that if Churchill's

advice was followed then an all out war may have been avoided because Hitler's army would have been decimated.

Even if they want the war to stop they still shouldn't agree with the appeasement. It wouldn't be their first time going to war anyway. I think Churchill thought it was better for the European countries to unite to stop Hitler because in the end, win or lose, Hitler wouldn't have got anything including no appeasement. If everytime Hitler tried, ^{and} the Europeans fight it would be better. Hitler wouldn't have no army if the minister would've to him when Hitler was gathering soldiers. Everyone would be happy because they wouldn't lose anything.

Figure 5.7

John started off extremely well. He was in class every day, participated in class discussions and group assignments, and was never a behavioral or discipline problem. However, for some reason John all of a sudden started missing classes. He did not have an appointment with any of the other departments [parole, social services, etc.] that would have excused him from class. He just started skipping. At first it was a day here or a day there but then he began missing multiple days per week. When he did come to class he would say he wanted to drop out. For a

short time I was able to convince him not to by telling him how well he was doing, the excellent work he did, and how much I appreciated his contributions to the class. Then in late November I was informed he finally dropped out. John is no longer at the facility. He told me that when he did get out he wanted to live in Haiti with family he had there. I do not know if he got that chance. Wherever he is, I wish him the best.

The Story of “A” Block

Steve, Joe, and Brian are three of my students who have been with me for awhile. They are three of my main contributors to class discussions but also have trouble putting their thoughts into words. Their journal entries really helped them improve their ability to do this.

Steve

Steve was a native of Colombia who was assigned to my “A” block just after his 20th birthday. He came to my class with an 11th grade education and spoke English as a second language. Steve was [and still is] a willing participant in class. He contributed to all class discussions and activities throughout the study. In his first journal entry on Nationalism, Steve presented his view of Nationalism and how people in general used Nationalism as motivation to come to the aid of their country. However, when he began to apply his view of Nationalism, I felt he missed the mark on making any type of connection between the past and the present as well

as demonstrating any historical empathy. Steve demonstrated his ability to think historically when he stated, “Nationalism is basically where in your heart and mind [you believe] that you belong to one nation and you [are] loyal with love and sacrifice towards that nation.” Steve’s journal entry from 10/4/11 [Figure 5.8] provided an example of how Steve was able to think historically but did not demonstrate a past or present connection or a sense of historical empathy.

However, Steve demonstrated his historical empathy in his journal entry as well. Steve was able to look at the situation Germany was in and how Hitler took advantage of the situation in order to promote his views through speeches and propaganda. Steve showed how Hitler was able to take an unfortunate situation [Germany’s Great Depression] and use it as a way to gain support. Steve used the course material and the primary sources to help formulate his thought and opinions on what he thought about Hitler’s intentions. Steve referenced the fact that Hitler was born in another country but still felt a strong sense of Nationalism and loyalty to Germany. Steve noted that Nationalism was a major influence and driving force in pre-World War II Germany.

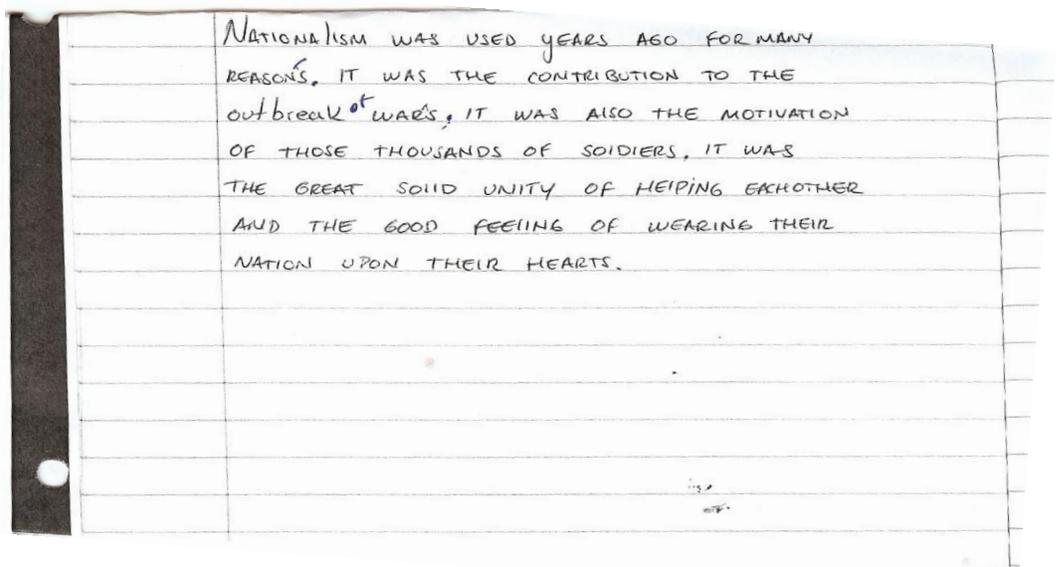
In CRITICAL MOMENTS WHERE A COUNTRY FEELS
IN DANGER OF WAR, MANY PEOPLE ^{UNITE} ~~BEFORE~~ TO
CREATE A SOLID UNITY, THIS WAY THEY CAN RESPOND
TO THEIR COUNTRY AS FIGHTERS OR WHATEVER
OCCUPATION THAT WILL MAKE PEOPLE FEEL PRIDE OF
WHAT THEY ARE GOING TO REPRESENT.

NATIONALISM IS BASICLY ^{where} ~~where~~ IN YOUR HEART
AND MIND ^{you believe} THAT YOU BELONG TO ONE NATION AND
YOU ^{are} ~~will~~ LOYAL WITH LOVE AND SACRIFICE TOWARDS
THAT NATION.

GERMANY ~~like~~ LIKE HITLER HAD TO ~~know~~ MUCH KNOWLEDGE,
EVEN THOUGH HE WAS FROM ANOTHER COUNTRY
HE WAS ~~fighting~~ FIGHTING FOR POSITION AND
TRYING TO CONTROL ^{all the} ~~the~~ AN MOVEMENTS OF GERMANY.

HE WASN'T CONFORTABLE WITH THE PROBLEMS THAT
ALL GERMANY'S POPULATION HAD GOING THROUGH, AND
BASICALLY HE WAS ABLE TO DO ANYTHING TO
CHANGE THE PAST, CREATE A NEW FUTURE, AND
MAKE HISTORY AS A KING.

Figure 5.8

A photograph of a piece of lined paper with handwritten text in blue ink. The text is written in all caps and spans across several lines. The paper is slightly wrinkled and has a dark binding on the left side.

NATIONALISM WAS USED YEARS AGO FOR MANY REASONS. IT WAS THE CONTRIBUTION TO THE OUTBREAK OF WARS, IT WAS ALSO THE MOTIVATION OF THOSE THOUSANDS OF SOLDIERS, IT WAS THE GREAT SOLID UNITY OF HELPING EACH OTHER AND THE GOOD FEELING OF WEARING THEIR NATION UPON THEIR HEARTS.

Figure 5.8 continued

For his next journal entry, Steve needed to choose between the idea of appeasing Hitler presented by Chamberlain or the idea of a direct confrontation presented by Churchill and explain why he made the choice. However, in this journal entry Steve did not discuss either perspective. Instead, he wrote about what Hitler was attempting to do rather than discuss either plan of action Chamberlain or Churchill proposed. At this point, I realized that Steve was not entirely clear on the concepts of historical thinking and historical empathy. I set aside some time for Steve and me to talk about what historical thinking and historical empathy were. We looked back on some class assignments in which we looked at examples of Nationalism throughout history and how we analyzed them.

Steve was able to interpret the examples and put them into his own words to explain what he thought they meant. I told Steve to apply this strategy to his next journal entry and to just put what he thinks in a historical context.

Steve's next journal entry showed a lot of improvement compared to his previous entries. In our continued discussion of the events leading up to WWII, we began a study of the Great Depression of the 1930s in both the United States and Germany. I asked the students to write a letter to either government explaining their situation and what they felt the government should do to help. Steve did a really nice job this time around. He demonstrated historical thinking by looking at the problems that arose during the Depression and how they affected not only him but others. Steve's journal entry was an example of part six of Yilmaz's (2007) definition of historical thinking. According to this part of Yilmaz's definition, Steve was able to put aside his modern perspective in order to understand the past without putting a modern spin on past events.

Steve demonstrated his sense of historical empathy through his analysis of the events of the Great Depression and the effects it had on the people of the United States [the perspective he chose to write from] at the time. This aligns with parts three and four of Foster's (1999) six-part definition of historical empathy. Part three of Foster's definition states

Even though it took Steve a few tries, he started to understand the meanings of historical thinking and empathy. I think reviewing Steve's previous work helped him to get the gist of what historical thinking and empathy was. Also, I discussed again with Steve how student journaling would help him with the development of historical thinking and empathy. Like Colt and Connelly (1981) and Kerka (2002) state, student journaling gave Steve a way to take the course material into a form that meant something to him personally. What was especially encouraging in Steve's journal entries was the demonstration of Kerka's research in how he was able to analyze the course material with clear thought and emotion in order to keep his writing in a historical context. While his first couple of journal entries did not meet the standards I was looking for, Steve's third entry did. I liked how Steve was able to realize he was not expressing himself or his thoughts the way he wanted or needed to and was willing to go back to review what he did previously to alter what he was doing to meet the standards.

Joe

Joe was eighteen years old when he was first assigned to me. He is a young African-American male who only completed the ninth grade. He is working toward his high school diploma and I am hopeful he will

complete it before leaving the facility. For being one of my younger students, Joe is one of my most active and hard working students.

When we first started our study of WWII and the journaling activity, Joe seemed very interested. In his first journal entry that reflected the idea of Nationalism, Joe did a nice job of providing a definition of Nationalism that captured how Nationalism could be used for either a good or bad purpose. Joe's entry reflected both perspectives in that he first discussed how a strong sense of Nationalism can bring people together to fight for what they think is right for their country. Joe's journal entry went on to reflect how if the people felt their leader(s) did not have the best interest of the country at heart the people would resist, causing the country to suffer.

Joe also made a connection between his own sense of Nationalism and that of how strong the sense of Nationalism was among the people of the past. Joe's ability to connect his ideal of Nationalism to that of the past demonstrated his ability to connect the past and the present, as well as think historically. According to Yilmaz (2007), part of historical thinking is to be able to understand historical events and conclusions. Evidence of this can be found in Joe's journal entry [Figure 6.1] from 10/6/11 where he wrote, "The reason I am proud to be an American is because America stands up for [itself]. For example: September 11, 2001, was a day that

would never be forgotten in America. But the best thing about all of that is America came together as one to stand up for themselves. That is why I am proud to be an American."

Nationalism for a fact is "Having pride in being part of a nation". But my opinion for Nationalism is for the Majority to come together as one ^{and} for everyone ^{to} be on the same page. The reason why I say that is because everybody can have pride, but at the same time some people's pride can be for the good and some for the bad.

Because some people could have felt some type of way about their ^{the} governor, and they probably didn't want to fight for him, because he didn't give them what they wanted ^{so} ^{they're} not gonna fight for him because ^{their} pride just won't let them. Now on the another hand some people did like what the governor was doing for their ^{where} country. So in return they would fight for him. So with that said, Nationalism to me is when the Majority to come together to stand up for their country.

Figure 6.1

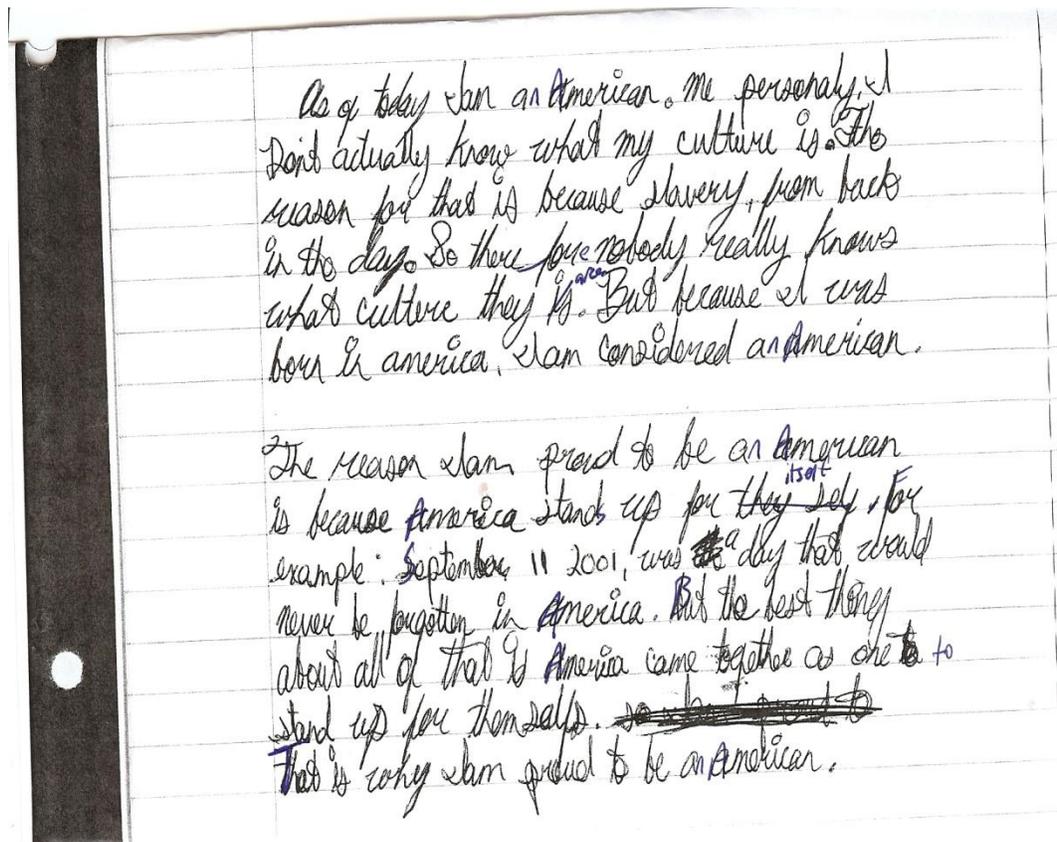


Figure 6.1 continued

In his second journal entry, Joe showed his ability to demonstrate historical empathy in his explanation of why he would have followed the advice of Winston Churchill to unite the European countries to stop Hitler and the Nazis. Joe explained that because of the relative weakness of the German army at the time, an armed response would have worked. Joe went on to describe how most of the other European countries were afraid of another world war and that led to the decision to follow Chamberlain's policy of appeasement. The problem with that was that Hitler already

decided he was going to try to take over the rest of Europe. Joe wrote, “He [Hitler] already had his mind made up he was just getting his army strong the whole time so he could invade the countries that he wanted. He [Churchill] thought it would be a better move for the European countries because he knew what was about to happen. He already knew that Hitler had his mind made up to invade the European countries. That’s why he wanted to stop Hitler before his army got big and strong.”

According to Foster (1999), the first component of historical empathy is to be able to understand why people in history acted as they did. Joe demonstrated his ability to understand why Chamberlain took the action he did in appeasing Hitler. Even though Joe disagreed with Chamberlain’s decision, he understood why he made this decision. Joe was able to analyze the primary sources he used in class to formulate his thoughts and opinion to come with his own solution. Joe determined that given the weak state of the German army and the country as a whole, they would not have had the ability to defeat a unified attack by the other European countries. Thus, stopping Hitler and avoiding a large scale war that would have caused further damage to all of Europe.

The following excerpt [Figure 6.2] from Joe’s journal entry reflected this component through his explanation of why he felt

appeasement was not the answer and why he felt a direct confrontation would have been better.

I agree with Churchill's idea of trying to stop Hitler from the start. Me personally I would of got my army together so we could go to war with Hitler and his army. I decided this, because looking back on what was going on, I found out that Hitler's army wasn't that strong at the time, so before he could ever start trying to take over we would've stop him and his army. I think Churchill thought it was better for the European countries that opposed Hitler to come together to stop Hitler so that they army could be as big as possible because they knew that even if Hitler's army was that strong, that knew no one country could stop Hitler because he was a smart ~~man~~ man, so they needed to come together with they armies so they could stop Hitler. but Chamberlain suggested that a policy of appeasement

Figure 6.2

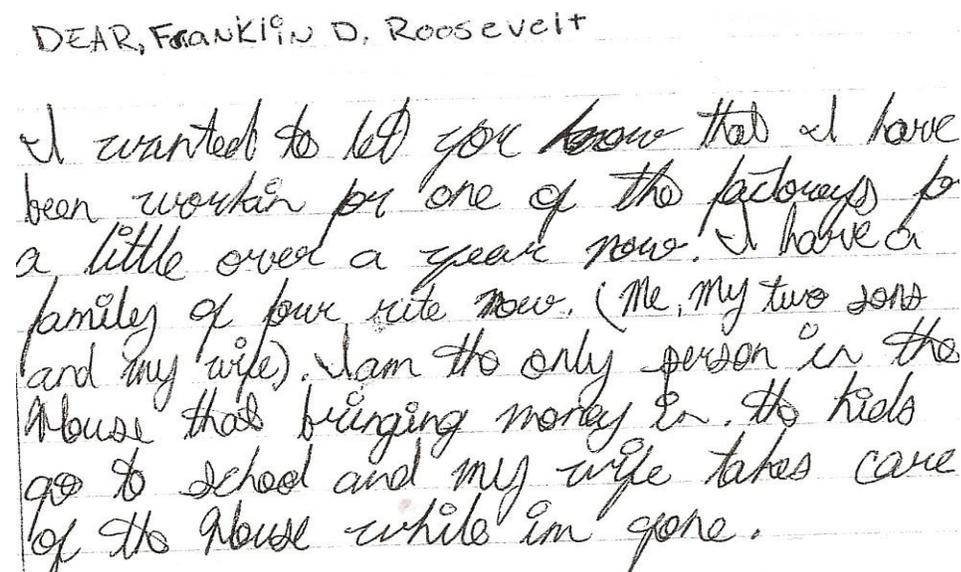
was the best way to deal with Hitler.
But while they were appeasing Hitler
He already had his mind made up he
was just getting his army strong
the whole time so he could invade
the countries that he wanted. He thought
it would be a better move for the European
countries because he knew what was
about to happen. He already knew that
Hitler had his mind made up to invade
the European countries. That's why he
wanted to go in, stop Hitler before
his army got big and strong,
because they were weak. But at the
same time they were small and the
European countries were strong but
Dumb. I say this because the European
countries were strong but they were
scared. and Hitler's army was weak
but they was big. so I think Churchill's
thought was better than appeasing Hitler.

Figure 6.2 continued

In his third journal entry, Joe wrote a letter to President Franklin Roosevelt from the perspective of an out-of-work factory worker during the Great Depression. What I liked most about this journal entry was that Joe showed his ability to think historically in order to demonstrate historical empathy. Joe's letter reflected the definition of historical thinking presented by Yilmaz (2007) because he was able to

look at an event of the past through the perspective of those that lived through the events. Joe did a nice job of keeping the perspective of the out of work factory worker in the context of the past by describing how he found himself in such a bad situation.

Historical thinking, as defined by Yilmaz (2007), was further reflected in Joe's letter in his ability to keep a modern perspective out of his reflection. He could very easily have written about getting another job, going on government assistance, turning to a life of crime, etc. but he did not. Joe did not try to judge or analyze the events of the Great Depression through a modern lens or hindsight. He kept his letter [Figure 6.3] in terms of the past and offered his thoughts on the job President Roosevelt was doing to help bring the country out of the Depression.



DEAR, FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

I wanted to let you know that I have been working for one of the factories for a little over a year now. I have a family of four kids now. (Me, my two sons and my wife). I am the only person in the house that brings money in. The kids go to school and my wife takes care of the house while I'm gone.

Figure 6.3

about five months ago, I invested my money in the stock market, so I can support my family. But as you know the stock market crashed. Now I can get my money back and I'm at a time where me ~~and~~ my wife and kids really need it. I want to let you know that the New Deal plan that you created to bring the country out of the depression was very good. #

I want to let you know that I think that you're the best leader that we ever had. So keep doing what you're doing, and once again thank you for the social security act.

but but not least I really respect the fact that you had the idea of the social security act. I think that would work, as a matter of fact I know that it works for a lot of people. so I just want to thank you for everything that you have done for me and the people.

Figure 6.3 continued

Joe's sense of historical empathy was demonstrated when he stated, "I wanted to let you know that I have been working for one of the factories for a little over a year now. I have a family of four right now (me, my two sons, and my wife). I am the only person in the house that bringing money in. The kids go to school and my wife takes care of the house while I'm gone." Joe's journal entry showed his sense of historical empathy because he was able to analyze and evaluate historical evidence in order to understand the consequences of past actions (Foster, 1999). Joe understood how the Great Depression affected people because he was able to look at evidence from primary source documents and our class discussions and then reflect upon them in his journal.

The use of the student journaling gave Joe the opportunity to write freely without worrying about what anyone else's opinions were so he could express his personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences in relation to the course material (Colt and Connelly, 1981; Kerka, 1996). Joe incorporated the idea of historical thinking from Yilmaz (2007) and historical empathy from Foster (1999) into each of his journal entries in such a way that he used the student journaling to present his ideas clearly and effectively.

Brian

Brian came to my “A” block class at the same time as Bob. Brian was twenty years old when he came to my class and only completed school to the ninth grade. He was classified as a special education student because of his age and the fact that he only had one year of high school education. As a classified student, Brian has to be in school until he is twenty-two or until he leaves the facility.

Brian, like Bob, really enjoyed the journaling activity. Even with the limited course material he had available to him, Brian jumped right into it. I worked with him individually to try to get him as caught up as I possibly could. I told him not to worry too much about how his first journal entry would be. All I wanted him to do was try. For his first attempt, I thought Brian’s journal entry turned out good. In his description of what Nationalism meant to him, Brian displayed historical empathy when he discussed the responsibilities citizens have for their country and the loyalty they should feel toward it. Brian reflected on the events leading to WWII and how Nationalism was a very influential force when people were deciding where their loyalties lay. This was especially reflected in Brian’s journal entry when he discussed how Hitler used Nationalism in order to gain the loyalty and support of the German people to eventually take control of Germany.

Brian also demonstrated his ability to connect the past and the present. He wrote about how the increased sense of Nationalism after Pearl Harbor and 9/11 were very similar. The ability to link a past event to a present one showed Brian had a strong sense of what Nationalism meant to the people who experienced these events first hand without adding his own biases or modern views (Steffens, 1992). Also, the ability to connect the past and the present helped Brian develop his sense of historical empathy. Connecting the past and the present in order to develop historical empathy, this was reflected in the definition of historical empathy provided by Foster (1999). In Foster's definition, two key components were reflected in Brian's journal. Brian was able to show "an appreciation of historical context and chronology of past events" as well as "an appreciation for the consequences of actions perpetuated in the past" (p. 19). Figure 6.4 from Brian's journal entry illustrated his thoughts on the events of the past that helped him connect the past and the present to develop his sense of historical empathy.

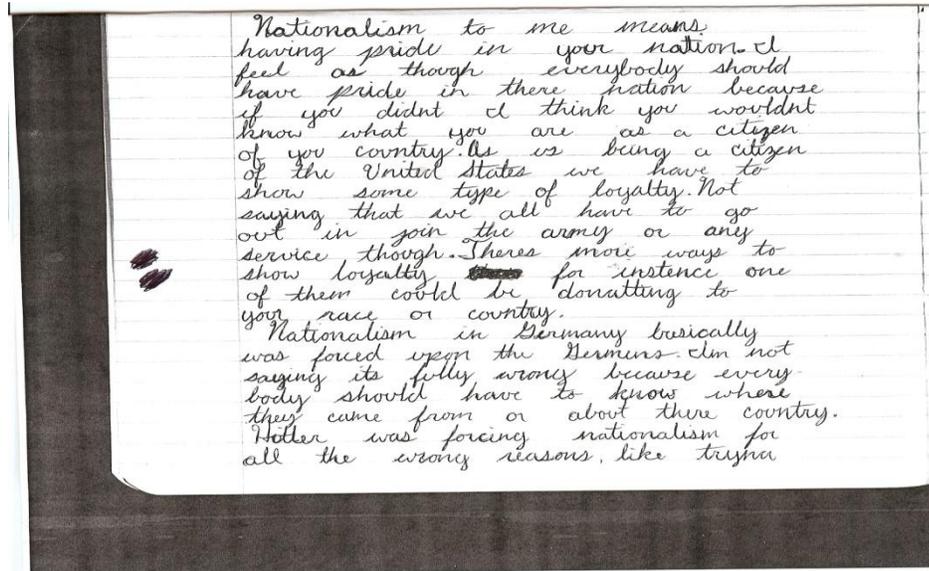


Figure 6.4

Brian continued to demonstrate his ability to think historically and his sense of historical empathy in his next couple of journal entries. First, he gave his opinion on the decision to appease Hitler rather than stop him by force. Like Steve and Joe, Brian also felt that appeasement was not the answer. In his journal entry, Brian demonstrated historical thinking in his analysis of the facts and evidence provided to him, by me, in the unit material. Brian's analysis of the material led him to his conclusions because he was able to view the material in a historical context in order to form his opinion. This aligns with the definition of historical thinking presented by Yilmaz (2007). Brian's analysis led him to the conclusion that in order to keep Hitler from continuing his destructive path across Europe, the leaders of the other European countries, including

Chamberlain, needed to match the aggression of Hitler if they truly wanted to stop him.

Brian's sense of historical empathy continued its development in this journal entry. Foster (1999) stated that part of demonstrating historical empathy was the ability to analyze historical evidence in order to understand why people of the past acted and/or reacted as they did in a given situation. Foster also stated that this analysis was necessary to understand the consequences of past events. Brian's journal entry reflected these aspects of historical empathy in that he explained why he thought appeasement would not have worked and why he thought a direct confrontation would have been better. Brian's conclusions were based on the evidence provided to him on the situation Chamberlain and the rest of the European leaders were faced with as a result of the actions of Hitler. The following is Brian's journal entry from 10/4/11 [Figure 6.5] in which he demonstrated his historical thinking and sense of historical empathy in order to form his opinion and what his plan of action would have been.

First off let me start by saying I don't agree with Chamberlain and the rest of European leaders decision to appease Hitler. At the Munich Conference they shoulda been talking about everything but appeasement. They must understand "He who is not courageous enough to take risks will accomplish nothing in life". Hitler took risks and it got him far. I would of simply bomb the whole Germany or I would of died for my country like Hitler was ready. If Hitler seen that other countries was willing to play as dirty as he was, he would of probably fell back. Chamberlain decided to appease Hitler cause he didnt want to go to war. By him not wanting to go to war he showed a sign of weakness. Churchill did not want to give Hitler what he wanted without a

war. And Churchill knew if he could get Chamberlain and the rest of European leaders to come together, he can win the war.

Figure 6.5

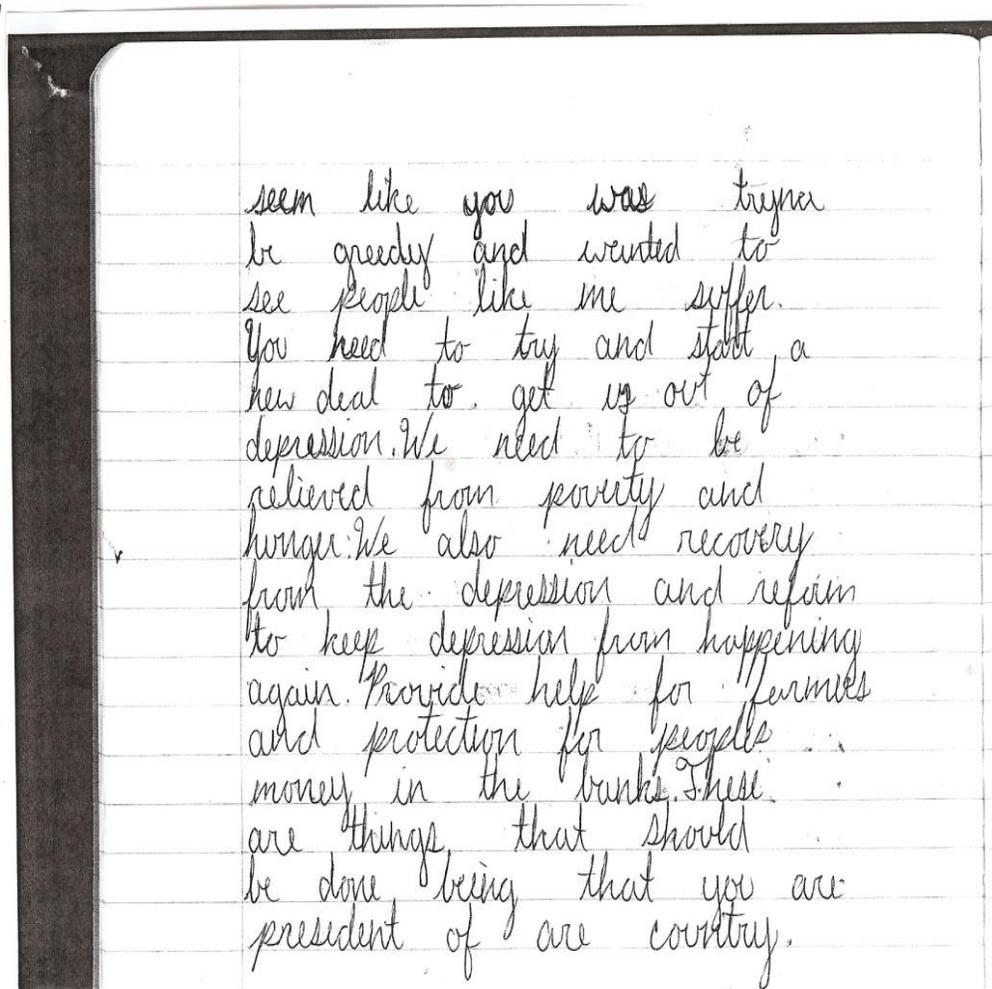
In another journal entry, Brian wrote a letter to President Herbert Hoover in which he expressed his displeasure with the state of the country during the Great Depression. Once again, Brian displayed his historical thinking and historical empathy by using the ideas presented by Yilmaz (2007) and Foster (1999). Brian used his journal as an avenue to air his displeasure with his situation during the Great Depression. Much like the students in the action research study conducted by Meo (2000), Brian was able to use historical information to discover his own meaning in the severity of the hardships people living during the Great Depression faced.

Figure 6.6 provided me with an excellent example of Brian's ability to think historically and demonstrate historical empathy when he wrote "A couple years ago I invested a pretty penny in the farming and stock businesses. To make the investments I borrowed money from the bank knowing I had a million dollar plan...Before I knew it I started losing more and more business...Provide help for farmers and protection for people's money in the banks." This excerpt from Brian's journal helped me see how well his historical thinking and sense of historical empathy were developing. He was able to relate to a situation that was one of the worst ever faced by America. Brian was able to look at the circumstances faced by people and the effects of the circumstances.

Dear President Herbert Hoover

Ever since the stock market crashed in 1929 it has left me broke in a blink of an eye. Let me take the time to explain my situation. A couple years ago I invested a pretty penny in the farming and stock business. To make the investments I borrowed money from the bank knowing I had a million dollar plan. Being that your government put high ^{taxes} on imported goods from Europe and Europe and did the same on America I had to start getting less goods. Before I knew it I started losing more and more business. I never understood why you increased the taxes on the imported goods. To me it just

Figure 6.6

A photograph of a piece of lined paper with handwritten text in cursive. The text is written in dark ink and is somewhat difficult to read due to the handwriting style. The paper is placed on a dark surface, possibly a desk or table. The text discusses the author's opinion on a president's actions during a crisis, mentioning a 'new deal' and the need for relief from poverty and hunger.

seem like you was trying
be greedy and wanted to
see people like me suffer.
You need to try and start a
new deal to get us out of
depression. We need to be
relieved from poverty and
hunger. We also need recovery
from the depression and refrain
to keep depression from happening
again. Provide help for farmers
and protection for people's
money in the banks. These
are things that should
be done being that you are
president of our country.

Figure 6.6 continued

The Story of "B" Block

Seth and Jack are two of my students who came to my class with very little educational background. Seth, coming from Mexico, and Jack being an older student, struggled a bit when they first came to my class. However, they have made excellent progress and are two of my top students.

Seth

Seth was assigned to my “B” block just after his seventeenth birthday. He was a native of Mexico who came to the United States at a very young age. He also speaks English as a second language. Seth only went to the ninth grade before dropping out. Seth has been in my class for nearly two years and is doing quite well. He has a positive attitude toward completing his education. He very rarely misses class with an unexcused absence and is a real pleasure to have in class. It is almost hard to believe he is an inmate. Seth has a very strong sense of pride in being Mexican. He very often refers to his Mexican heritage when we discuss various historical topics. I like how he does this because he is trying to make a personal connection to the material to help him understand it better and explain his perspective.

I knew Seth would be an eager and willing participant in my action research study. I also knew that the journaling activity would be something Seth would be interested in participating in because it would give him yet another way to explore his Mexican heritage and relate it to the course material. The journaling gave Seth the opportunity to provide his views in a manner other than open discussion. As Kerka (1996) and Blake (2005) stated, journaling gave students the freedom to talk without

talking. In his journal entry [Figure 6.7], Seth "talked" about what Nationalism meant to him.

A nation with nationalism ^{now} sometimes fighting for a good or bad purpose but ~~one~~ ^{also} they united as patriots of their country. Like once Germany was rising in to power by Hitler killed a lot of innocent people. ^{Then} ~~To~~ their response, the United States got involved in WWII to defeat Germany. The American patriots that sought revenge due to the attack of Pearl Harbor. About 3,000 heroes died on that early morning of 1941.

In their senses, Nationalism means being patriotic to where you come from also being proud of being part of a Nation. Me, being Mexican I'm proud to be it, I would die to defend my country. Like ^{our national} the anthem say "Mexicans shout for war". That means that we united to fight when needed. Our ancestors fought for independence and gave their lives for us to be alive and keep our heritage. In my opinion I think everybody should be proud from where they ^{came from} or once felt proud.)

1/18

Figure 6.7

A patriotic country that fought for revenge due to the Pearl Harbor attack, that got United States involved in WWII. Even though America was made out of immigrants from different countries, they still had a sense of Nationalism of being Americans. When the Pearl Harbor attack happened, the ~~entire~~ ^{whole} country volunteered as brave citizens and stepped up because their country needed them. Now a days people in the United States don't have the sense of Nationalism like they did back in the days. 60 years ~~past~~ ^{passed} to reunite a stronger America to fight a "terrorist" group like they call it, even though over 3,000 people died more than the Pearl Harbor were lost. People from all over the world died. I think people have to look back to history and who was involved with the Government.

Nationalism to me is having pride of my heritage. ^{In} Germany leading up to WWII, the sense of Nationalism was a good thing for a bad purpose. While I think Hitler was trying to do good for the German people, he was wrong when he used for Nationalism to have only German people and kill people that weren't Germans. Nationalism in America today seems to me to be still strong. I feel that if more people around the world had more pride in their heritage and culture than other generations

Figure 6.7 continued

I honestly do not think Seth would have shared this openly in class because of what the other students might have said. My students are very conscientious about what they say in class; they do not want to be perceived as weak. There have been instances where a student shared something personal, and some students made unpleasant comments. I dealt with this as best I could by talking about respecting others and their opinions. This had happened to many of my students in the past. According to Dewey (1938), these past experiences can shape the future. This was certainly true with Seth. The journaling allowed Seth to look at his own memories and experiences that were unique to him in order for him to think historically and develop a sense of historical empathy when he analyzed the course material (Colt and Connelly, 1981).

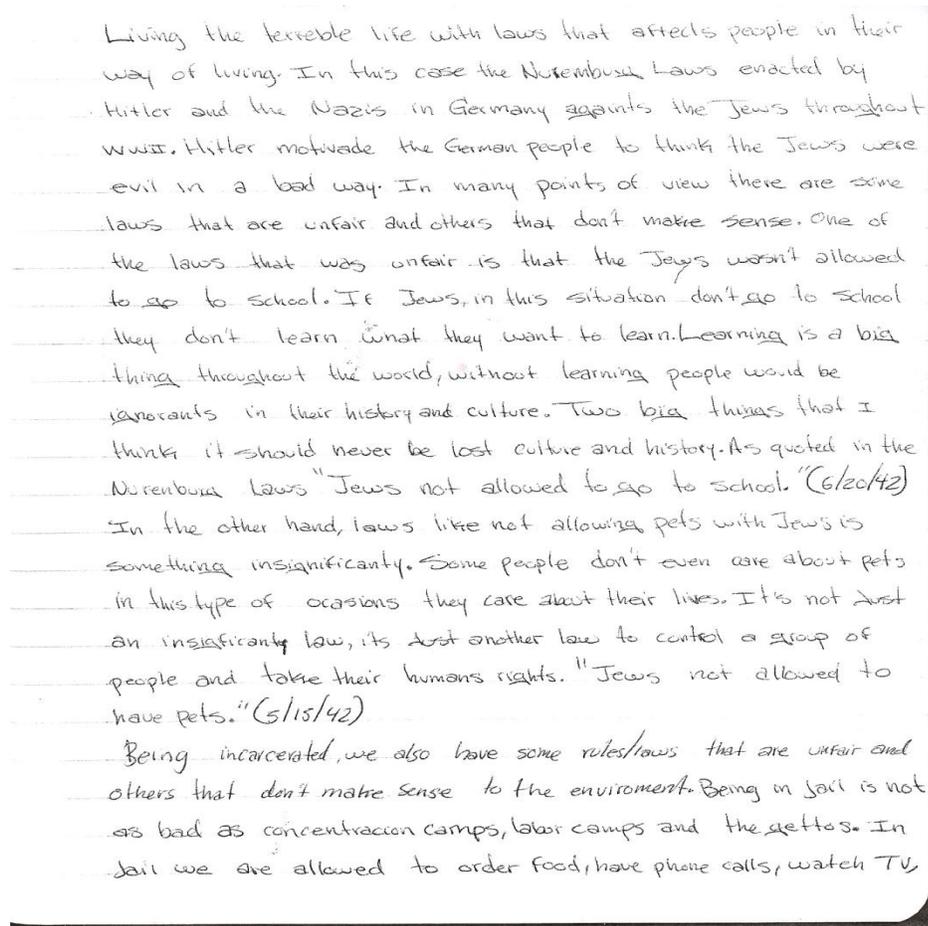
Seth displayed his historical thinking in this journal entry when he wrote about what his ancestors did to gain independence. The previous above, that Seth wrote, showed his understanding and appreciation for the events of the past (Yilmaz, 2007). Seth communicated his understanding in a contemporary fashion so that I could get a feel for what message he was trying to convey. Seth was trying to show that he had a deep understanding of the past, and how the past helped shape his perspective through journaling (Colt and Connelly, 1981; Kerka, 1996; Blake, 2005).

Seth's journal entry also gave me a look at how he was developing his sense of historical empathy. In the following excerpt, Seth saw both positive and negative aspects of how Hitler was using Nationalism to gain the support of the German people.

This journal entry showed how Seth was empathetic toward the German people; they wanted someone and/or something to believe in because of how bad their lives were. Seth was saying because the German people were so desperate for something better, they blindly followed a dictator bent on ruling the world as well as pursuing his own personal agenda of genocide. Seth did this through his analysis and evaluation of historical facts to understand why the German people followed Hitler (Foster, 1999). Seth went so far as to explore what might have happened had Hitler been successful.

Another key component of Seth's journal entry was his ability to think historically. Seth wrote about how the attack on Pearl Harbor led to all Americans rallying together to defend their country and seek revenge for what happened. Seth discussed a very important aspect of American culture during the WWII Era. He wrote that America was made of immigrants and that even though the people came from other countries, they still viewed each other as Americans. Seth's journal illustrated his thoughts on this key piece of historical evidence.

Seth wrote another journal entry that compared the restrictions put on the Jews as a result of the Nuremberg Laws to the restrictions faced at the facility. Seth did not state that being incarcerated was like living in the concentration camps. He realized that the two were quite different to say the least. Rather, he focused on the restrictions faced by both groups as a result of their situations. Figure 6.8 from Seth's journal entry showed how he compared the two.



Living the terrible life with laws that affects people in their way of living. In this case the Nuremberg Laws enacted by Hitler and the Nazis in Germany againsts the Jews throughout WWII. Hitler motivated the German people to think the Jews were evil in a bad way. In many points of view there are some laws that are unfair and others that don't make sense. One of the laws that was unfair is that the Jews wasn't allowed to go to school. If Jews, in this situation don't go to school they don't learn what they want to learn. Learning is a big thing throughout the world, without learning people would be ignorant in their history and culture. Two big things that I think it should never be lost culture and history. As quoted in the Nuremberg Laws "Jews not allowed to go to school." (6/20/42)

In the other hand, laws like not allowing pets with Jews is something insignificantly. Some people don't even care about pets in this type of occasions they care about their lives. It's not just an insignificantly law, its just another law to control a group of people and take their humans rights. "Jews not allowed to have pets." (5/15/42)

Being incarcerated, we also have some rules/laws that are unfair and others that don't make sense to the environment. Being in jail is not as bad as concentration camps, labor camps and the gettos. In jail we are allowed to order food, have phone calls, watch TV,

Figure 6.8

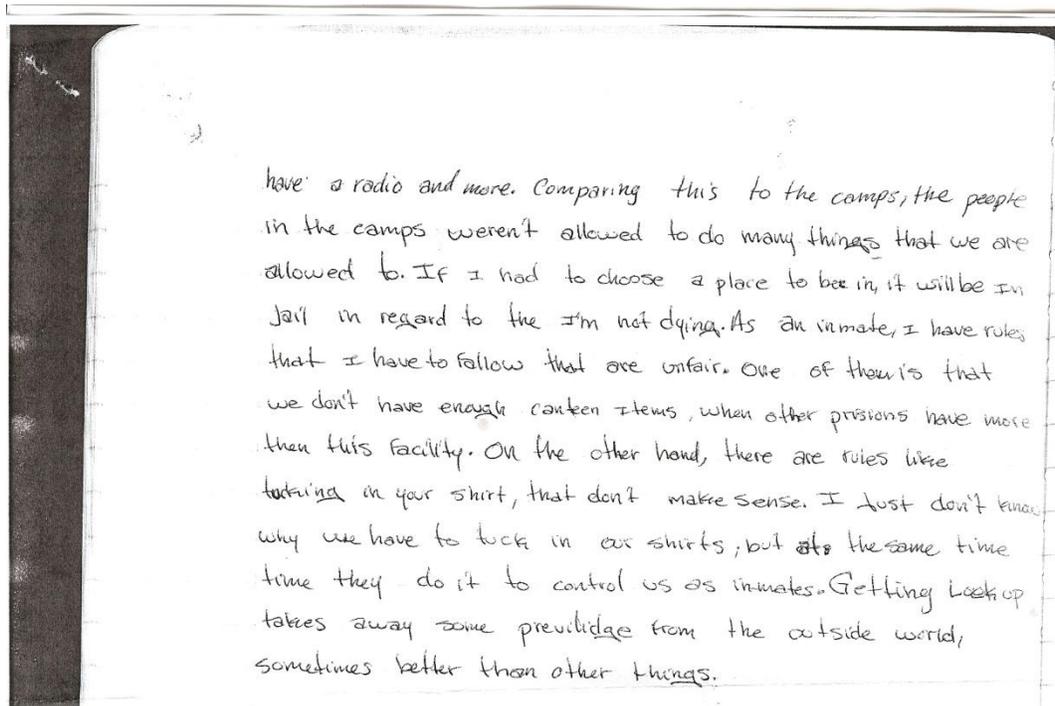


Figure 6.8 continued

A key aspect of Seth's journal entry that I noticed was how he was able to connect an event of the past to the present. Not only did Seth connect a past event to the present, he connected it to *his* present. Seth turned his incarceration into something he would learn from and was connecting it to a past event to make it more relevant to him (Steffens, 1992).

As Seth wrote more journal entries, his sense of historical empathy continued to grow. Since Seth did well connecting the past to the present and thinking historically, that he began to develop a sense of historical empathy. I think Seth stayed true to the definition of historical empathy

provided by Foster (1999). His journal entries reflected his understanding of how the events of the past affected people and caused them to react the way they did. Seth's journal entries in which he wrote about why the German people followed Hitler, how the restrictions faced by the Jews compared to his incarceration, and the reaction of all Americans, regardless of ethnicity after the Pearl Harbor attack, provided exemplary examples of his sense of historical empathy. Seth's ability to connect the past to the present to gain an understanding of the past (Steffens, 1992) and thinking historically to analyze and interpret the events in the context of the past (Yilmaz, 2007) aided him in his development of historical empathy. Thus Seth was able to keep his modern-day perspective in check in order to fully appreciate past events, and the effects they had.

Jack

Jack was one of my older students who did not have to be in school. He was twenty-one years old when he was assigned to my "B" block class and has been with me for about eighteen months. Jack continues to come to school on a voluntary basis because he wants to obtain his GED. He is a Caucasian male who only completed school to the tenth grade. Even though he was a GED candidate, Jack participated on our class discussions and assignments in our history class because he likes history and felt that learning the content would help him understand

the questions on the social studies part of the GED test. Also, the writing assignments we did in history would help Jack with his essay for the GED test. The essay is a major part of the test. If a student fails the essay portion of the test, they automatically fail the test. Jack wanted to make sure his writing skills were sharp, and the more practice he received in class; the sharper his skills would be.

Even though Jack was a candidate for the GED test, he still agreed to be a part of my action research study. I was glad he did because I felt this would be an excellent way for him to get the practice he needed. In his journal entry on Nationalism, Jack focused on how Hitler used Nationalism in a negative way and how eventually this hurt Germany. Jack took the stance that Hitler was only interested in advancing himself to gain power to control all of Germany. Jack mentioned how Hitler used the Jews as scapegoats for the problems that existed in Germany prior to WWII. Jack's journal entry from 10/8/11 [Figure 6.9] reflected the perspective he took in order to define what he thought Nationalism meant, and it could be used in a negative manner.

Nationalism means to me is to have pride in being part of a nation. Nationalism can be a positive or negative thing. In Germany leading up to WWII, nationalism was used for a positive and negative. Hitler used nationalism in a bad and good way. However, Hitler used nationalism in a negative way by oppressing the Jews and anyone not German. *How did he use it as a good way?*

I would have to say if I was Germany it would be kind of hard to support someone like that. *Alot of* Cause he was doing positive things for *like* the German people but also was doing alot of negative against innocent people that was just trying to support their families. *like what?*

As far as what Hitler was doing leading up to WWII I would say there was alot of negative things he was doing to get where he was. I wouldn't agree with really anything he did. He killed alot of people just ~~so~~ so Germans can have jobs houses, etc. He started a war against the USA. *Even the USA* Cause he wanted everything for the Germans. *How do you feel about this?*

Figure 6.9

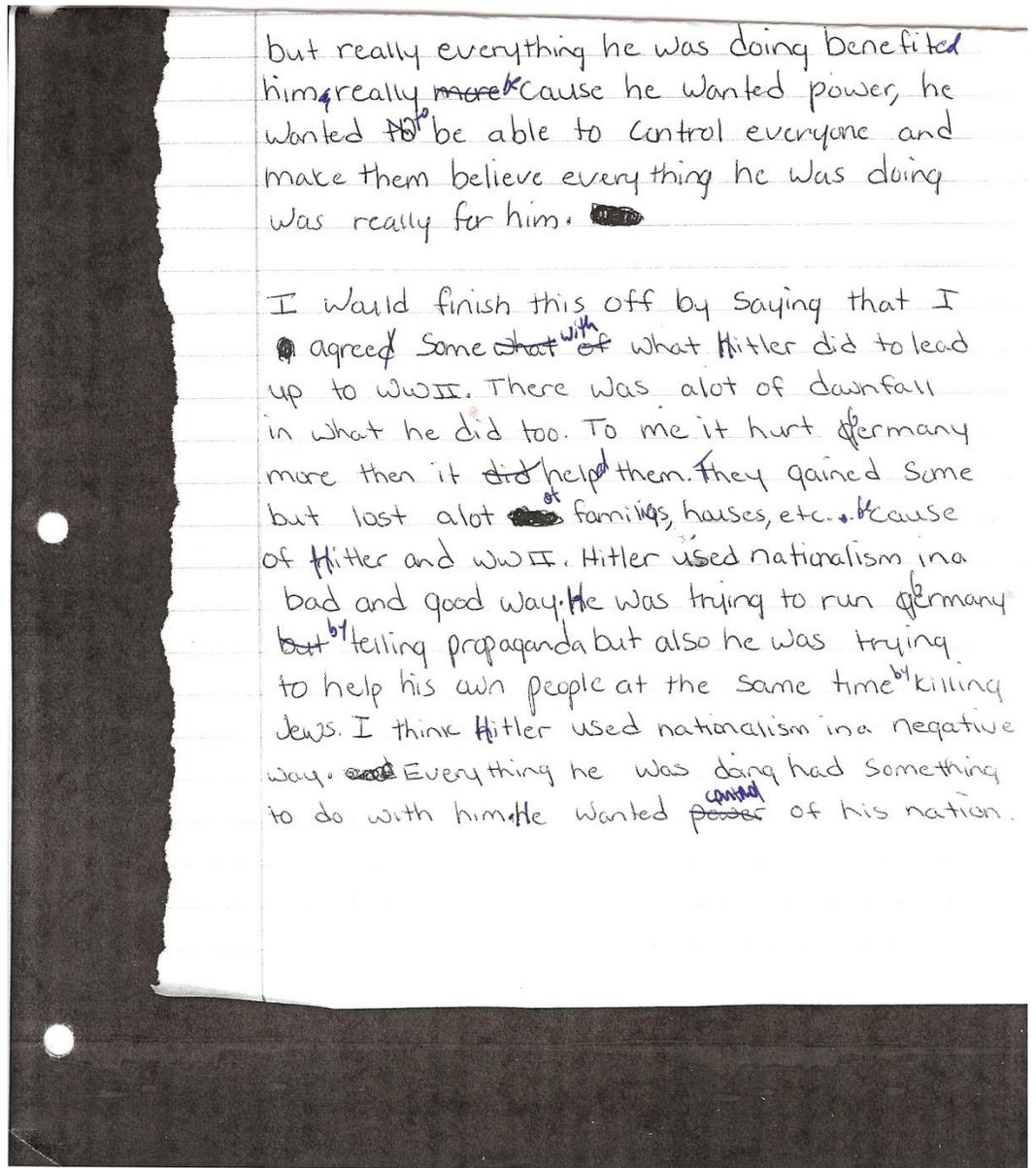


Figure 6.9 continued

In this journal entry, Jack demonstrated his ability to think historically through his analysis of the events of the past, and then, he formed his opinion as to how Nationalism was being used by Hitler.

According to Yilmaz (2007), to think historically, Jack needed to examine the primary sources we studied in order to understand what Hitler wanted, why, and what the consequences were. Jack did an admirable job of keeping his journal entry in terms of the past so as to not include modern views and biases. The ability to do this was also an important part of Yilmaz's definition of historical thinking that Jack was able to reflect in his journal entry.

Jack also demonstrated his sense of historical empathy in his journal entry when he discussed how if he were a German citizen living at this time, he would not have agreed with what Hitler was trying to accomplish. He discussed how Hitler was trying to oppress the Jews for no reason. Jack stated that all the Jews were trying to do was live their lives, yet Hitler still took away their possessions and persecuted them. According to the definition of historical empathy presented by Foster (1999), Jack's journal showed his ability to understand how and why Hitler took the actions he did. Jack also determined that these actions were wrong in the context in which they took place.

In another journal entry, Jack continued to display his sense of historical empathy when he wrote about the effects of the Great Depression in America. Jack wrote a letter from the perspective of an out of work American asking the government for help not only for him but for

the country as a whole. Figure 7.1 was Jack's letter that demonstrated his empathy for the plights of Americans living during the Great Depression.

To the Government of the United States of America,
I am a hard working, tax paying citizen of the U.S. I would like to give you my point of view of this situation at ~~last~~^{Hard} and give you my advise ^{what} as I think you should do. I recently lost my employment when the stock market crashed. I'm ~~recently~~ ^{at} unemployed ~~at~~ the moment. It's hard to find any job. I have no income coming in to take care of myself as well as others. My opinion as what the government should do is. They should have any employment lined up for everyone. We could lose everything we worked hard to get due to the depression. The government should have something in mind to help the citizens get pass this depression. I think the government should ^{give} ~~dr~~ ~~ever~~ ~~er~~ some income based on what they were making at their jobs. A lot of us have businesses and farms that we are living off of. Now we have nothing due to this. We are going to be homeless. There has to be something that the government can do to help the hard working, tax paying citizens to get pass this hard time in our country.

Figure 7.1

my suggestions would be try to fork out
some money to everyone that had a bussness
and a farm. We need some kind of help
or we are forced to give up everything, we
all have family's included with everything else
I explain threw out this letter. I would like
to thank you for taking in consideration
on this letter im writing. I hope you can
take some advice I included and try to
help this country and the citizens in it,
Thank you so much for listening and I
hope do better for this country.

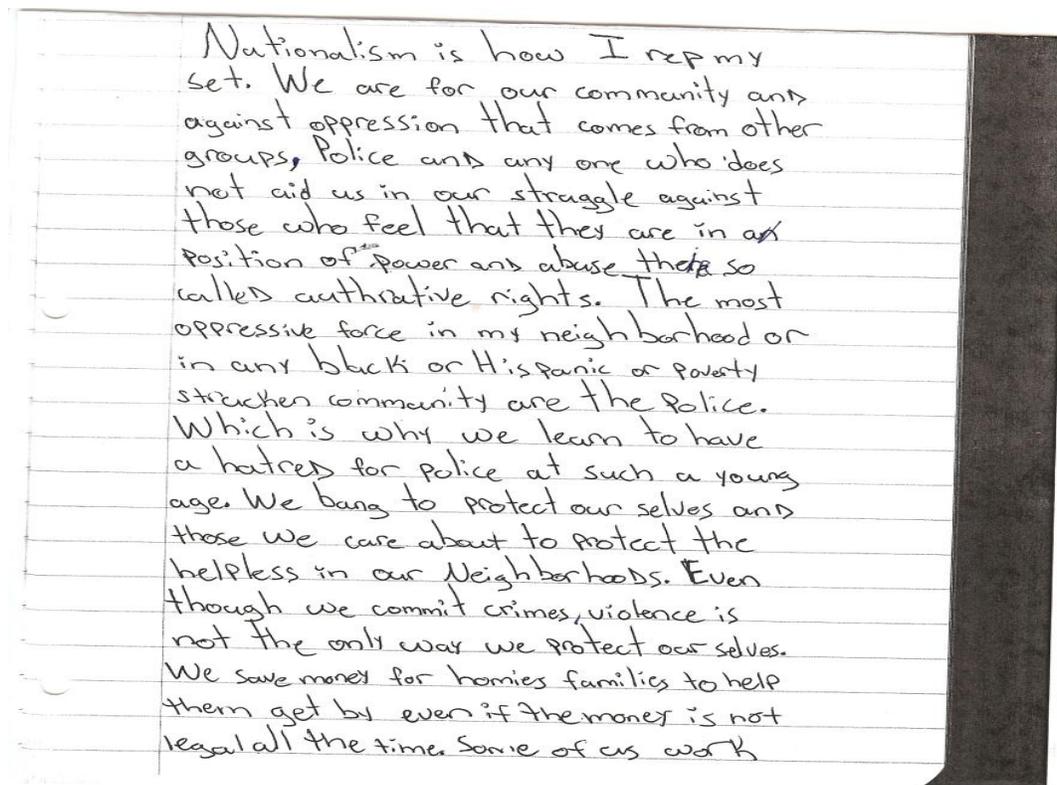
Figure 7.1 continued

Unfortunately Jack was only able to complete a few journal entries because we needed to start focusing on his GED preparation. However, I wanted to include some examples from Jack because I felt what he wrote were important and powerful examples of how my students can think historically and develop a sense of historical empathy. In only a limited time, I thought Jack wrote excellent journal entries to gain an understanding of past events that he then used in his analysis.

Dan

The last story, I wanted to share, was that of Dan. Dan was nineteen years old when he was assigned to my "C" block class. Dan grew up in one of the worst inner city settings in New Jersey. He only went to the tenth grade before dropping out and joining a gang. Many of my students joined a gang at a very early age and feel a strong sense of

pride in being a gang member. However, Dan took this a step further when he wrote a journal entry on the idea of Nationalism. In his explication of what the idea of Nationalism meant to him, Dan used his gang affiliation. His entry did not demonstrate an ability to think historically or a sense of historical empathy. Dan did connect an idea from the past to something personal to him today. Figure 7.2 was Dan's journal entry that showed this connection.

A photograph of a handwritten journal entry on lined paper. The text is written in cursive and discusses the author's perspective on nationalism, focusing on community protection and a distrust of police. The entry is written on a single page of lined paper with a dark binding on the right side.

Nationalism is how I rep my set. We are for our community and against oppression that comes from other groups, Police and any one who does not aid us in our struggle against those who feel that they are in a position of power and abuse their so called authoritative rights. The most oppressive force in my neighborhood or in any black or Hispanic or poverty stricken community are the Police. Which is why we learn to have a hatred for police at such a young age. We bang to protect our selves and those we care about to protect the helpless in our neighborhoods. Even though we commit crimes, violence is not the only way we protect our selves. We save money for homies families to help them get by even if the money is not legal all the time. Some of us work

Figure 7.2

9 to 5's or as lawyers, doctors and other jobs in society all working together to achieve a common goal by any means necessary. That's why I lay my ~~life~~ life on the line everyday and pledge my loyalty to my set. This is the nation I stand for and am proud to represent. People who aren't a part of our organization often look at us as delinquents or criminals who wreak havoc in our communities. But anyone who is banging ~~and~~ ^{or} understands our history will know that we share a greater cause and want to protect the less fortunate people who live in the ghettos of America from our oppressors. That is what our set leaders teach us to stand for. Since the beginning of our people's arrival in this country we have been oppressed. The only difference is that starting in the late sixties we started fighting back by gang banging.

Figure 7.2 continued

I think the reason Dan decided to write about this, was because he would not normally speak openly about it in class. According to Kerka (1996) and Blake (2005), student journaling gave students the opportunity to privately share their thoughts they normally would not. Dan shared his reasons why he became involved in the gang life and what that meant. Also, he wrote about the responsibilities he had as a result of being involved in a gang. This was a very personal aspect of Dan's life that he compared to Nationalism. Nationalism means to have pride in your

nation, culture, and heritage. Dan's journal entry reflected this pride not in a nation but a culture. Gang life to Dan was his culture and the sense of pride Dan wrote in this journal entry was evident. He did not care about anyone else's opinion about what he wrote because he knew I was the only one who was going to read it. I liked that Dan could share his thoughts on something so personal with me. I felt this was an example of how sometimes my students let their modern views get in the way of their ability to think historically and develop their sense of historical empathy. I thought this was what happened with Dan. Before I had the opportunity to have him write more, he started being pulled from my class in order to work with another teacher for his High School Proficiency Assessment. It just seemed unfair that Dan did not get the opportunity to really show what he was capable of doing.

DATA ANALYSIS

The four main data collection methods I used throughout my qualitative research study were student interviews, pre- and post-surveys, and my double-entry journal. These data collection methods were the most effective because they came directly from the participants. Collectively, these data collection methods provided me with the data I needed in order to gain an accurate view of how the student journaling was helping the students develop their ability to think historically and to develop a sense of historical empathy.

Student Interviews

At the beginning and conclusion of my qualitative research study, I interviewed each participant using a set of interview questionnaires [Appendices C and D]. The first set of interview questions were used to get a sense of how the students learned in previous history courses and how they felt about the opportunity to share their thoughts and opinions. The second set of interview questions was intended to check the progress of the students as the journaling continued throughout my study. I believed that sitting down with the students and asking them questions directly would be a more effective way to gain a sense of what they thought rather than just giving them a questionnaire to fill out. I wanted to study the students' body language as they gave their answers because this gave me a good indication if their answers were sincere or not. If I just gave

them a questionnaire, I feared that the students would not write what they thought but rather what I wanted to hear.

When I sensed the answers the students gave were sincere during the interviews, I thought that when they wrote in their journals they would mean what they wrote. Since the journal writing was such a personal way for the students to share with me their thoughts and opinions, I thought that a good way to make them feel comfortable with sharing with me was to conduct the student interviews. The students and I sat one-on-one in a private room when I conducted the interviews. I thought that being away from the rest of the class; each student would have been willing to open up a bit with their responses because they did not have to worry about what the others would say. I thought this worked really well because I gained some really valuable insights from their responses.

What I found was my students really did not like the way they learned about history when they were in public school. They told me that the teachers they had lectured a lot, used the textbooks as the main data source, and used mainly multiple choice assessments. When I asked them about writing in our history class as a means to learn the content and express their thoughts, their faces lit up, they sat up straighter in their chair, and their eyes got huge. These bodily responses showed me that they were excited about the idea of writing. If I had just given them a questionnaire, I would not have observed these bodily responses and would not have a true sense of what the students were thinking. Their bodily

responses gave a better indication of what they thought than their verbal responses ever could be.

Student Survey Data

At the beginning and conclusion of my study I gave the students a survey to complete. The purpose of the pre-survey [Appendix E] was to gain an understanding of how the students would respond to writing in our history class. The purpose of the post-survey [Appendix F] was to check with the students if the journal activity helped them better understand the content more and make a connection between the past and the present in order to develop their ability to think historically and develop a sense of historical empathy. I asked the students not to put their names on the survey because I did not want them to worry about being scrutinized for how they responded. I wanted the students to be able to answer honestly. For instance, if they did not agree with any of the questions or statements I wanted them to indicate this on the survey. The pre-survey also included an open ended question that gave the students the opportunity to list any advantages or disadvantages they felt journal writing might have for them.

The pre-survey was given to the students the same day I discussed my study and asked for their informed consent. Once the students read and returned their informed consent forms, I then passed out the survey to all the students who gave their informed consent. The post-survey was given to the students at the end of the study. The only problem with the post-survey was that I was not able to

give it to my “Lost Boys” Bob, Gabe, and John. Table 6.1 shows the results of the pre-survey, and

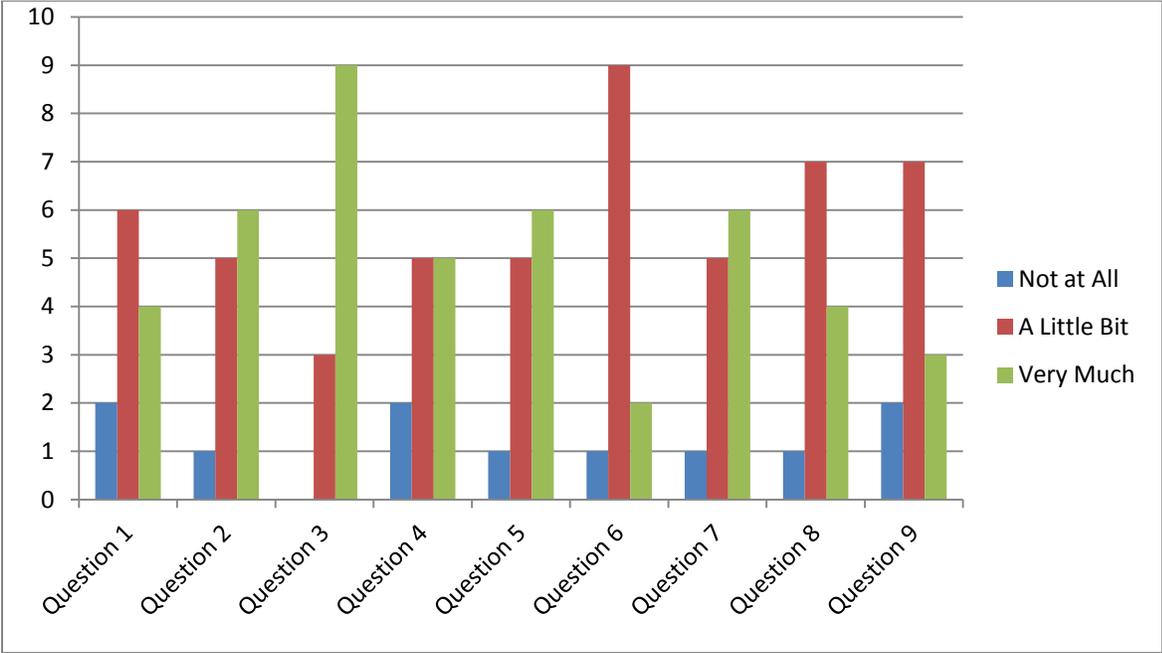


Table 6.1

Table 6.2 shows how the students responded to the post-survey.

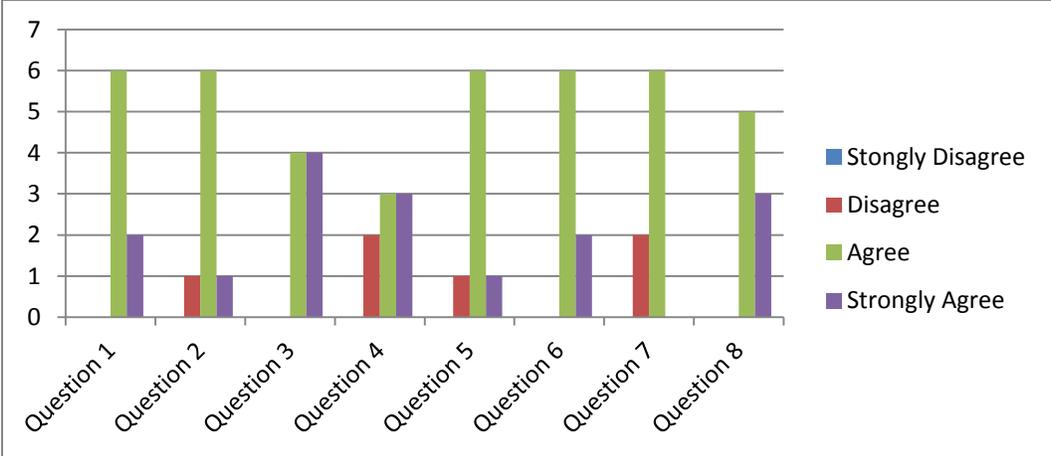


Table 6.2

The results of the surveys indicated that the students had some interest in writing and that journal writing could help them understand history better. The post-survey indicated that when the qualitative research study ended, the journal writing did help the students understand the content better. Also, that the students were able to think about the content in terms of the past through the perspective of those that lived during the era we studied.

Double Entry Journal

My double entry journal enabled me to record the events that occurred in my class throughout the implementation of my study. The course discourse, actions of my students and my observations, and any other relevant information I might have needed was recorded in my double entry journal. The double entry journal served as an ongoing record of how my study was progressing and how the students were responding to the journal activity. One benefit of keeping the double entry journal was that I could refer back to it throughout my study to check how it was progressing. Another benefit of keeping the double entry journal was that it served as the basis for my research study. I needed to be able to go back and look for important pieces of data that would make my story accurately reflect what happened. My double entry journal provided me with the information I needed to tell my story about what my students did throughout my action research study.

Codes, Themes, and Bins

As my action research study progressed, I began to code the data I had collected in my field log. I looked through the student journal entries, my double entry journal, the student interview responses, and surveys to find any emergent themes that became evident during my action research study. I began the coding process a few weeks into my study and coded new data as they emerged. I continued the coding process throughout the completion of my action research study. I placed the codes into bins [Figure 7.3] that helped me keep the themes organized. This organization of the emergent themes into bins led to the development of the theme statements [Figure 7.4] that led to my findings.

I created four bins to place my codes into. The four bins I created were: Strategies, Correctional System Education, Skills Development, and Challenges. The codes that I discovered and placed in the Strategies bin were student journaling, multiple perspectives, and student engagement. In the Correctional System Education bin, I placed the codes historical empathy, past experiences, and learning activities. The codes in the Skills Development bin included student journaling, historical empathy, connecting the past to the present, and historical thinking. The Challenges bin contained the most codes. The codes in the Challenges bin included historical empathy, connecting the past to the present, historical thinking, multiple perspectives, past experiences, student engagement, and gangs/violence.

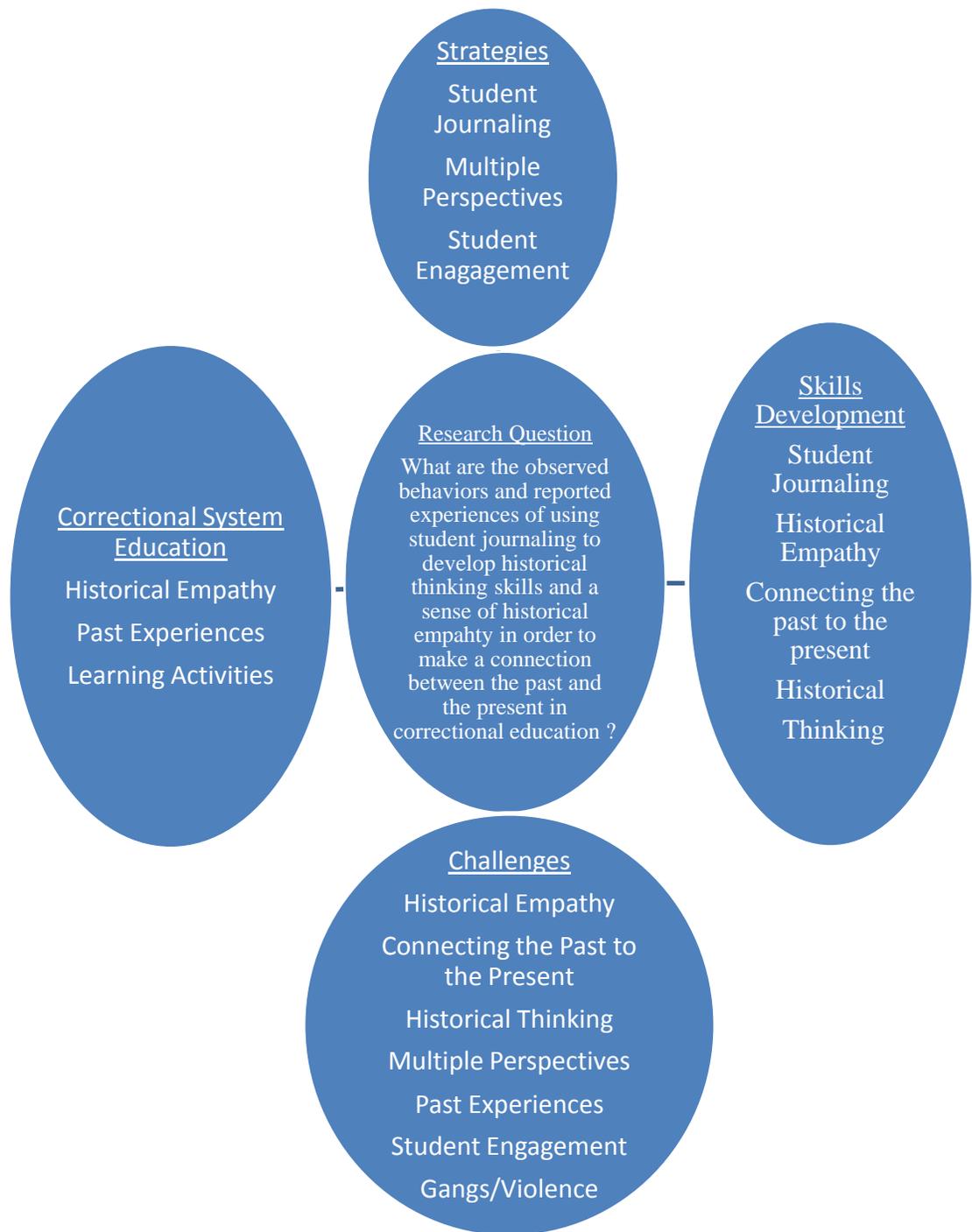


Figure 7.3

THEME STATEMENTS

Analysis and interpretation of primary source documents helped my students learn and understand the course material, making it easier for them to think historically and develop historical empathy.

Engaging the students in metacognitive strategies such as self-reflection through the student journaling helped my students know how and why they thought the way they did. This helped them to learn to think historically to develop historical empathy.

Helping the students connect the past to the present enabled them to think historically and develop their sense of historical empathy.

Realizing the challenges they faced outside of my classroom in a correctional setting helped my students develop their historical empathy and historical thinking by connecting those experiences in their journal reflection to their life experiences, connecting the past to the present.

Understanding how education works in a correctional setting helped me to address my research question because the limitations of the correctional setting and the past experiences of the students played vital roles in their education. Understanding how this system works enabled me to effectively teach my students to develop historical empathy, think historically, and connect the past to the present.

Journaling enabled my students to share their private thoughts and feelings about to what they are learning as well as how they related to the events of the past and how those events affect their lives today.

Figure 7.4

FINDINGS

Throughout my action research study I utilized student journaling as a means to help my students learn about and appreciate history. By giving my students the opportunity to share their thoughts on the unit content, they had a way to demonstrate their ability to think historically and develop their sense of historical empathy. Some of my students struggled with the journaling in the beginning of the study. However, as they progressed with the journaling my students began to show that they could think historically and feel empathy for others. Also, my students were able to start connecting the events of the past to the present. This helped them come to the realization that what happened in the past greatly affects us today. My students also were able to make some personal connections to ideas and events of the past that they did not know existed. Each of the six theme statements that emerged from the coding and analysis of my data helped me discover the following themes.

Theme Statement #1: *Analysis and interpretation of primary source documents helped my students learn and understand the course material making it easier for them to think historically and develop historical empathy.*

My students had little experience analyzing primary source documents when they attended school prior to their incarceration. During the pre-study interviews I conducted, none of my students mentioned using primary source

documents and artifacts in their previous history classes. By giving my students the opportunity to examine and analyze primary sources, they established a basis for their journal entries. A good example of this is found in Bob's journal entry on Nationalism when he wrote, "Germany stood together like a brick wall, no matter what obstacle, they were side by side fighting for what they thought was right for their country." Without analyzing the primary sources used in class, I do not think Bob would have been able to come to this conclusion. Before they could form their opinions and thoughts for their journal entries, they needed to understand what facts and historical events their opinions and thoughts would be based on. Throughout the study, my students continually gained more of an understanding of the course material. The students' journal entries reflected their understanding of the course material through the development of their abilities to think historically and develop historical empathy.

The effectiveness of primary source analysis in a history classroom was supported by Meo (2000) in an action research study conducted with college students. Meo found that through the analysis and interpretation of primary sources the students were better able to reflect on the course material, find their own meaning through their analysis, and understand historical events from the perspectives of those that lived through them. Throughout the journal writing process in my study, I found that my students were developing the same skills.

Because my students were presented with an authentic method of learning about history they were better able to understand it and see its effects.

Theme Statement #2: *Engaging the students in metacognitive strategies such as self-reflection through the student journaling helped my students know how and why they thought the way they did. This helped them to learn to think historically to develop historical empathy.*

The self-reflection my students did in their journal entries led my students to understand why they thought about history the way they did. At first my students thought about history through a modern day lens. In order to for them to be able to think historically and develop historical empathy, this needed to change. The student journaling gave my students the opportunity to change their way of thinking. It served as an outlet to give my students a “voice” that they normally would not use in class discussions (Colt and Connelly, 1981; Kerka, 1996). When the students had to write down their thoughts on the course material they had to re-evaluate their thought processes. The more they wrote in their journals, the more they began to think historically and develop historical empathy (Kerka, 2002).

Prior to this experience, my students only thought about things in one way. Their own. No one ever helped them to think in any other way. I used their past experiences as a way to motivate the students to think differently by giving them the opportunity to write what they thought about a specific topic (Blake, 2005).

By giving my students a specific focus to write about, they were able to use their own thoughts along with the course material to change their thinking. Brian's journal entry on Nationalism reflects his ability to change his mindset from only thinking of himself to thinking about what is best for the good of all citizens. Brian wrote, "As being a citizen of the United States we have to show some type of loyalty. Not saying that we all have to go out [and] join the army or any service though. There's more ways to show loyalty for instance one of them could be donating to your race or country." Brian and the other students began to understand that they needed to think differently about the past in order to connect the past to the present to understand how the past affected them today (Blake).

Theme Statement #3: *Helping the students connect the past to the present enabled them to think historically and develop their sense of historical empathy.*

As Steffens (1992) states, establishing a connection between the past and the present enables the students to understand why learning about history has value because it then becomes personal to them. When students see the value in learning about history and make it personal to them, they then begin to think historically and develop a sense of historical empathy.

Foster's (1999) definition of historical empathy and Yilmaz's (2007) definition of historical thinking gave me multiple ways to help my students make history personal to them. When used in conjunction with the student journaling, my students began to understand that past events were important factors in the

formation of present. The definitions provided by Foster and Yilmaz served as guides in my study so that I could effectively aid the students in developing their historical thinking and historical empathy.

My students demonstrated their ability to think historically and their sense of historical empathy more and more as they continued to write in their journals. Seth in particular progressed nicely as he completed more journal entries. At first he wrote about himself and from his own perspective. However, the more he analyzed the primary sources and course material; he was able to write from multiple perspectives. I think because Seth established a personal connection early with the course material, he was able to think historically and develop his sense of historical empathy in order to learn about the past and connect it to the present. Seth's journal entry comparing the Nuremburg Laws instituted by the Nazis to limit the freedom of the Jews to being incarcerated, demonstrates this comparison in the following example, "Being in jail is not as bad as being in the concentration camps, labor camps, or ghettos. In jail we are allowed to order food, have phone calls, watch TV, have a radio, and more. Comparing this to the camps, the people in the camps weren't allowed to do many things that we are allowed to."

Steve developed his ability to think historically and sense of historical empathy the more he wrote as well. As stated previously, Steve struggled a bit when he first began the journal activity. Yet after we reviewed his work and

analyzed the course material, Steve began to demonstrate his ability to think historically and sense of historical empathy to a greater degree. The following excerpt from Steve's journal entry in which he wrote from the perspective of an out-of-work farmer during the Great Depression provided me with an excellent example of his ability to think historically and demonstrate historical empathy. Steve wrote, "All over the world small things are growing bigger. The Great Depression is really affecting us. There is no money to pay and repay loans. This is getting out of control, and all I would like to ask you is to create a law protecting our goods." I used the definitions of Foster (1999) and Yilmaz (2007) to help Steve analyze the content. This enabled me to make sure Steve was on the right track and keep him focused on how past events affected the people at the time.

Theme Statement #4: *Realizing the challenges they face outside of my classroom in a correctional setting helped my students develop their historical empathy and historical thinking by connecting those experiences in their journal reflection to their life experiences, connecting the past to the present.*

Being incarcerated presents many challenges for my students. Not only do they have to go to school, work, or both, they also have to worry about keeping safe. They must constantly be aware of their surroundings because at any time they could be faced with a dangerous situation. They have to be sure to follow the rules and regulations of the institution or face the consequences from the

Correctional Officers. These are only a few of the challenges my students face on a daily basis at the institution. Going to school a lot of the time is a low priority for them.

According to Dewey (1938), past experiences greatly affect a person's present situation. The present situation my students find themselves in is a direct result of their pasts. However, I needed to find a way to use their experiences to help them learn. Student journaling allowed me the opportunity to do just that. Kerka (2002), states that when students are engaged in reflection of past events and how the events affected the people who experienced them, they are better able to express their thoughts. One thing my students have a lot of is time. A lot of their time is spent reflecting on their incarceration. The student journaling enabled me to harness my students' ability to reflect on situations and their effects by giving my students a way to share their reflections without fear of anyone but the teacher knowing what they think and feel (Blake, 2005).

Theme Statement #5: *Understanding how education works in a correctional setting helped me address my action research question because the limitations of a correctional setting and the past experiences of my students play vital roles in their education. Understanding how this system works enabled me to effectively teach my students to develop historical empathy, think historically, and connect the past to the present.*

When students have nothing but negative past experiences, their present often turns out the same way. In the cases of my students, they not only faced negative past experiences in school but also in their personal lives. Many of my students come from the worst inner cities in New Jersey. They are faced with life-threatening situations on a daily basis. Tileston and Darling (2009), state that students who come from these backgrounds often drop out of school and wind up in the prison system. Wald and Losen (2007), contend that the greatest common factor among those in the prison system is the lack of an education. As my study progressed, I realized that this was true of my students more so than I had in the past. When my students began the journaling activity, some of them had a difficult time expressing their thoughts because they did not know how to view history through a different perspective. They were only used to seeing things from their own. For example, Steve's journal entry on the idea of Nationalism did not reflect a connection between the past and the present because he could not see how the past affected the present.

Toward the conclusion of my study, my students were able to look at the course material from their own perspectives as well as the perspectives of people from the past. Their ability to view historical events through the perspectives of those that lived through them enabled my students to develop their historical thinking skills and historical empathy. A good example of this was Seth's journal entry in which he wrote about what his ancestors experienced, how he felt about

it, and how those events impacted the present. Seth wrote, “Me, being a Mexican I’m proud to be it. I would die to defend my country...Our ancestors fought for independence and gave their lives for us to be alive and keep our heritage. In my opinion I think everybody should be proud from where they come from or once felt proud.” I wanted my students to use their past experiences as a basis for what they wrote in their journals. The more they wrote, the more they did this. In order for them to develop a sense of historical empathy, they needed to think about what they had experienced and how they felt about it so they could better understand how the past events affected those that experienced them. Student journaling was an effective tool to accomplish these goals because in a correctional education setting there are not a lot of ways for the students to express their thoughts and feelings privately. Student journaling gave my students the chance to do so.

Theme Statement #6: *Journaling enabled my students to share their private thoughts and feelings about what they learned, as well as how they related to the events of the past and how those events affect their lives today.*

Connecting the past to the present was an important aspect of my study. The students needed to develop this skill in order for them to be able to make the unit content personal to them. By making past events personal to them by understanding how the past connects to the present, my students were able to see the value in learning about history (Steffens, 1992). My students used to often tell

me that they had no reason to learn about history because it had nothing to do with them. When my students attended school prior to their incarceration, one of their least favorite subjects was history. I realized that this was due to the fact that they never understood *why* they had to learn about history. I knew that because of these negative experiences they would have a difficult time in my classroom.

I implemented the student journaling activity as a way for my students to be able to connect the past to the present. Kerka (2002), states that engaging students in journaling gives them the opportunity to explore past events with their personal thoughts and emotions. I found that the more my students wrote in their journals about the unit content, the more they started to connect the past to the present. In some cases my students started to use their personal experiences as a basis for their journal entry. The best example of this came from Dan when he wrote about his gang affiliation as an example of Nationalism, stating “Nationalism is how I rep my set. We are for our community. We bang to protect ourselves and those we care about to protect the helpless in our neighborhoods. That’s why I lay my life on the line everyday and pledge my loyalty to my set. This is the nation I stand for and am proud to represent.” Gang affiliation is not something my students really openly discuss. The fact that Dan chose to write about his affiliation showed that my students started to use their

journal entries as their means of connecting the past to the present in a personal way.

WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

Since my action research study is over, what happens now? Based on my research findings, there are several teaching practices I can further explore with my students. The first option is to continue the journal writing with the other units. I think continuing the student journal writing will aid my students in their understanding of history. Another option is to choose units of study that my students express an interest in learning about. This could help my students feel more of a personal connection between the past and the present. A third option is to continue analyzing primary sources with my students so they are able to gain a solid understanding of the content as a basis for their journal entries.

During our study of the WWII era, I incorporated the role that African-Americans played in the war effort. I thought this was an important aspect to include given the cultural make-up of my students. As part of our discussion, we examined how African-Americans were held to the same standards and expected to perform just as well as the Caucasian soldiers even though they were not given the same amount of opportunities, the racism they faced, and how they were segregated from Caucasian soldiers. The further our discussion progressed on the role of African-Americans and the problems they faced, the more interested my students became. I decided a good unit to transition to was Civil Rights. I asked my students what they thought about going on to this unit and they liked the idea.

The content of the Civil Rights unit is one my students can really make a personal connection to, think historically about, and develop historical empathy toward. Civil Rights is a topic my students can really relate to. In hindsight this unit may have been a better one to use for my action research study. However, I wanted to use a unit that was outside their comfort zone. WWII was a topic my students wanted to learn about, but if I had used Civil Rights perhaps my students would have had an easier making a personal connection to past events, developing their ability to think historically, and increasing their sense of historical empathy. I wanted to challenge my students to try to develop these skills with a topic that was not really familiar to them. Now that my students can connect the past to the present, think historically, and feel empathy in an area unfamiliar to them, I can plan units of study that the students express more of an interest in to continue the student journaling.

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APPENDIX A

September 2011

Dear Supervisor of Education,

During the 2011 school year I will be taking courses at Moravian College in order to obtain a Master's of Education Degree. The purposes of taking these courses to obtain a Master's Degree in Education are so I can become a more effective teacher and to further my career in the education field. The courses I am taking provide me with the knowledge and tools to better serve my students in the classroom and help them reach their educational goals.

For the fall 2011 semester spanning from September through November I will be conducting a reflective action research study of my teaching practice and student learning. The action research question that will serve as the focus of my reflective action research study will be: What are the observable behaviors and reported experiences from using student journals with young adult offender learners in order for them to develop a sense of historical empathy. My ultimate goal at the end of the research study is to improve student knowledge and understanding of historical events and how they affect the modern world and, more importantly, their lives.

The data that I will be collecting to conduct my research study will consist of teacher observations, teacher journal, student journals, student surveys/interviews, and relevant student work. The names of all students who choose to participate in the study, any colleagues that I may interview to help me with my research study, and anyone else that is involved in the study will all remain confidential and not appear anywhere in the final report. Any relevant student work that is used will have the names and other identifying information removed before being copied or used in any other way. All research materials will be kept securely in my home and discarded after the research study is over.

All students will have the choice of being part of the study or not to be. All students, regardless of participation, will be instructed in the same way and complete all the same assignments. Only the data of the students who chose to participate will be used. If at anytime any of the students wish to no longer be a part of the study they will be removed from the data collection process without penalty. Also, any student who chooses not to participate in the study will *not* be penalized in anyway.

My faculty sponsor at Moravian College is Dr. Joseph Shosh. He can be reached at (610)-861-1482 or via e-mail at jshosh@moravian.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns about my action research project please feel free to contact me at my extension 7317 or via e-mail at nsvr1018@yahoo.com. If the proposal outlined above meets your satisfaction and approval please sign and date the bottom of this letter and please return it to me as soon as possible. Thank you for assistance in this matter and helping me to become a better educator to serve our students.

With much appreciation and thanks,

Nicholas J. Stefano

I attest that I am the Supervisor of Education at Mountainview Youth Correctional Facility and that this teacher is under my supervision, that I have thoroughly read and discussed this proposal with the teacher, and a copy of this consent form will be kept on file in my office. Nicholas J. Stefano has my permission and support to conduct this research study.

Supervisor's Signature:



Date:

9/22/11

APPENDIX B

September 2011

Dear Students,

During the 2011 school year I will be taking courses at Moravian College in order to obtain a Masters of Education Degree to become a more effective teacher and to further my career in the education field. The courses I am taking provide me with the knowledge and tools to better serve you, my students, in the classroom and help you reach your educational goals.

For the fall 2011 semester spanning from September through November I will be conducting a reflective action research study of my teaching practice and student learning. The question that will serve as the focus of my reflective action research study will be: What are the observable behaviors and reported experiences from using student journals with young adult youth offenders in order for them to develop a sense of historical empathy? My ultimate goal at the end of the research study is to improve your knowledge and understanding of historical events and how they affect the modern world and, more importantly, your lives.

The data that I will be collecting to conduct my research study will consist of teacher observations, teacher journal, student journals, student surveys/interviews, and relevant student work. The names of all students who choose to participate in the study, any colleagues that I may interview to help me with my research study, and anyone else that is involved in the study will all remain confidential and not appear anywhere in the final report. Any relevant student work that is used will have the names and other identifying information removed before being copied or used in any other way. All research materials will be kept securely in my home and discarded after the research study is over.

All students will have the choice of being part of the study or not to be. All students, regardless of participation, will be instructed in the same way and complete all the same assignments. Only the data of the students who chose to participate will be used. If at anytime any of the students wish to no longer be a part of the study, he simply needs to notify me, and the student's data will be eliminated from my study. Also, any student who chooses not to participate in the study or who opts to withdraw from the study will *not* be penalized in anyway.

If you have any questions or concerns about my action research project please feel free to talk to me at anytime before or after class. If you are or are not willing to participate please sign and date the bottom of this letter in the appropriate space and return to me. Thank you for assistance in this matter and helping me to become a better educator to serve you and your educational goals.

With much appreciation and thanks,

Mr. Stefano

I attest that I am an Education Student at Mountainview Youth Correctional Facility and that Mr. Stefano is my teacher. I have thoroughly read and discussed this proposal with my teacher and a copy of this consent form will be kept in a file in Mr. Stefano's classroom. Mr. Stefano does have ____/does not have ____my consent to use my work and any other data I may be involved in for his research project.

Student's Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C

Interview #1 Questions

1. How did you learn in your history classes when in the public school system?

What types of activities did you do in past history classes?

2. Do you feel that your interest in learning about history would have increased if you had the opportunity to share what you thought about the content and how it related to your life? Why?

3. Do you think you would have been more involved in how you learned about history if you participated in activities that were more engaging? How?

4. How do you feel about writing about what you have learned in history class in order to share what you have learned and how the content relates to the present? Do you think writing about historical content will give you a better understanding of history and the past and connecting it to the present to see how it affects our lives? Why?

APPENDIX D

Interview #2 Questions

1. Do you think the journaling activity we have begun in class has helped you learn about history better than in the past? How?
2. Do you feel that your interest in learning historical content has grown since we started the journaling activity? How?
3. Since we started the journaling activity do you feel more of a connection to past events and historical content as it relates to your life today? Why or why not?
4. Do you feel that the journal writing has given you a good opportunity to share what you think and feel about the past? How has the journal writing helped you gain an understanding of events of the past, how it affected the people of the past, and how these events affect the present?

APPENDIX E

STUDENT SURVEY #1

DIRECTIONS: Please circle the number of the answer you feel answers the question/statement best *for you!!* **DO NOT** put your name on this survey. The purpose of the survey is so I can get an idea of what your opinions are in regard to learning in history class. Only I will see this. Please be honest.

1. I enjoy writing in all school subjects.
 1. Not at all
 2. A little bit
 3. Very much

2. I wrote in my history class in public school on a weekly/daily basis.
 1. Not at all
 2. A little bit
 3. Very much

3. I think writing in history class will help me to learn the content better.
 1. Not at all
 2. A little bit
 3. Very much

4. I would like to have a way to share my thoughts and feelings about the content we are learning
in class.
 1. Not at all
 2. A little bit
 3. Very much

5. Have you ever written in a journal before?
 1. Not at all
 2. A little bit

3. Very much

6. Do you feel that writing in a journal is something you want to try in history class?

1. Not at all

2. A little bit

3. Very much

7. Writing in a journal will help me to make a connection to past events and how they affect my life today.

1. Not at all

2. A little bit

3. Very much

8. Writing in a journal will help me to understand the plights and hardships of people of the past.

1. Not at all

2. A little bit

3. Very much

9. Writing in a journal will make me feel more engaged in the class.

1. Not at all

2. A little bit

3. Very much

10. Please list any other types of advantages or disadvantages journal writing may have for you in learning the material being taught in class.

APPENDIX F

Student Survey #2

Directions: Circle the number of the response that answers the question/statement best
for you!!!

Only I will see your responses to this survey. Please be honest!! The purpose of this survey is so I can get an idea of how the journal writing has or has not helped you make a connection to the best and understand the content better.

<u>Question/Statement</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>
I enjoyed the journal writing in history class	1	2	3	4
The journal writing was more helpful than how I learned about history when I was in public school.	1	2	3	4
Journal writing helped me learn the content we discussed better than before we began this activity.	1	2	3	4
Journal writing helped me to make a connection to the past and the present.	1	2	3	4
Journal writing helped me make a connection to past events and my life.	1	2	3	4
Journal writing made me feel more engaged in class.	1	2	3	4
Did the journal writing help you to empathize with the people of the past in regard to any plights/hardships they endured?	1	2	3	4

