

2016

# Teacher Strategies for Developing Historical Empathy

Billy Kenneth Harris  
*Walden University*

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Review Committee

Dr. Elina Lampert-Shepel, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty

Dr. Kimberly Strunk, Committee Member, Education Faculty

Dr. Jennifer Seymour, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer

Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University  
2016

Abstract

Teacher Strategies for Developing Historical Empathy

by

Billy Kenneth Harris

MA, California State University Dominguez Hills, 2007

MEd, National-Louis University, 1999

BS, University of Maryland, 1993

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

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## Abstract

Research indicates that the application of historical empathy, defined as using historical evidence to reconstruct past perspectives, engenders critical thinking in students. There is lack of research on the level of comprehension and use of historical empathy as an instructional strategy by high school history instructors. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore teachers' comprehension and application of historical empathy in 2 high schools. This study was grounded in Edmund Husserl's concept of intersubjectivity, which suggests that apperception facilitates the grasp of multiple perspectives. Research questions addressed history teacher comprehension and employment of historical empathy as a tool to improve students' understanding of multiple historical perspectives. All 7 local history teachers participated in this case study. Data collection included classroom observations that were followed by semi-structured teacher interviews to discuss what was observed. Six themes resulted from open, axial, and selective coding of field notes and interview transcriptions. These themes indicated that participants were unfamiliar with historical empathy, emphasized the necessity of emotion in learning, perceived the need to help students understand historical actors, stressed the need for artifacts and site visits to generate context, and used analogies to develop perspectives. These themes informed the project of a position paper recommending professional development for teachers in historical empathy. Increasing awareness of and developing empathetic instructional strategies within the classroom can foster positive social change by engendering apperceptive skills among local history students and has broader potential to increase the efficacy of museum education and heritage programs.

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## Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my wife and best friend. KathaLee has inspired me to continue my work in education while providing loving support and ample quiet time to complete coursework and the project study. At the time I began my doctoral journey I encouraged her to restart her studies towards the completion of her bachelor of arts degree in the humanities. Together we have shared 40 years of marriage, raised a family, and endured more than seven years of separation while serving in the Air Force. Lately, we have encouraged each other as we joyfully completed our academic endeavors simultaneously. Watch out world.

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## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	iii
Section 1: The Problem.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Definition of the Problem .....	4
Rationale .....	5
Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level.....	5
Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature.....	9
Definitions.....	10
Significance.....	11
Guiding/Research Question .....	12
Review of the Literature .....	13
Implications.....	22
Summary.....	24
Section 2: The Methodology.....	25
Introduction.....	25
Conclusion .....	59
Section 3: The Project.....	62
Introduction.....	62
Description and Goals of the Position Paper .....	62
Rationale .....	63
Review of the Literature .....	66



Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions.....	101
Introduction.....	101
Project Strengths .....	101
Recommendations for Remediation of Limitations .....	104
Scholarship.....	105
Project Development and Evaluation.....	107
Leadership and Change.....	110
Analysis of Self as Scholar .....	111
Analysis of Self as Practitioner.....	113
Analysis of Self as Project Developer .....	114
The Project’s Potential Impact on Social Change.....	116
Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research.....	117
Conclusion .....	119
References.....	120
Appendix A: Position Paper: Strategies for Developing Historical Empathy:	
Creating Possibilities for History Classrooms .....	152
Appendix B: Interview Guide Questions.....	181

List of Tables

Table 1. Theme Generation..... 37

Table 2. Participant Classroom Observation Summary.....40

## Section 1: The Problem

### **Introduction**

History teachers have long been challenged to help students understand why and how people in ages past made decisions or acted upon circumstances the way they did. As a result, teachers have resorted to a variety of pedagogies ranging from constructivist to traditional positivist, rote memory approaches. The constructivist approach relies upon teacher creativity and open dialogue with students while the latter relies upon the presentation of facts without attempts to help students understand the context of a given time period or event. The positivist approach requires a basic understanding of historical processes and stresses causal factors in history, but often does little to propagate critical thinking skills. As a result of No Child Left Behind (Pace, 2012; Trolan & Fouts, 2011) and recent Core Curriculum requirements (Fogo, 2014; Virgin, 2014), teachers and school leaders continue to seek strategies to help students foster critical thinking skills in classrooms to meet the demands of high-stakes testing.

In 1931 historian Carl Becker, then President of the American Historical Association, presented the concept of “Everyman His Own Historian” (Colby, 2010). Becker stressed that every person, not just the elitist cadre of professional historians, possessed the capability to understand history through the study of documentation and dialogue with the past. By considering historical personages and their thoughts, Becker surmised that people could develop “thinking-in-time” skills to empathize with past events (Colby, 2012). Through the decades, scholars have developed this idea using several approaches to help students identify with the past. In the late 1980s, scholars

began using the notion of historical empathy, suggesting it could be used in classrooms to help teachers foster historical reasoning with their students. The idea of historical empathy continued to grow throughout the 1990s, but was met with some scholarly resistance because research failed to accept a formal definition of historical empathy (Brooks & Endacott, 2013). Debates also focused on whether historical empathy was a cognitive or affective process. Additionally, history scholars argued that empathy remained somewhat synonymous with sympathy. This led many historians to discredit the notion of empathy, especially in academic circles, suggesting that empathy had little to do with reasoning in history (Cunningham, 2009). However, teachers rebuffed this notion, and argued that academic historians often had little understanding of elementary, middle, and high school history classrooms. They also contended that students of all ages had the ability to develop critical thinking skills as long as teachers used instructional strategies to foster those skills (Barton & Levstik, 2009).

In the late 1990s, scholars again sought a practical understanding of historical empathy (Lee & Shemilt, 2011). Based on research into empathic approaches in history classrooms, they posited that a number of elements were necessary to develop historical empathy (Davis, Yeager, & Foster, 2001). This included the idea that students needed to recognize the perspectives of past societies. Scholars held that students could accomplish this through recognizing otherness, developing a sense of shared values with past societies, placing events in context with the time, and comprehending that multiple viewpoints existed (D'Adamo & Fallace, 2011). Scholars also suggested that this approach, especially the latter element of multiple perspectives, had the propensity to

engender democratic values, critical thinking, and the recognition of diversity (Brooks, 2011; Endacott, 2013b).

Throughout the early 21st century, scholars have noted that many teachers employ some of these important tenets within their classrooms, sometimes in tandem (Dadamo & Fallace, 2011). Activities included reenactments, lively discussions, debates, film reviews, dramatic readings, and other approaches to help students understand particular blocks of instruction or to place events in an historical framework (Gibson, 2012). However, many scholars have contended that teachers do not approach historical empathy consistently, and that some simply do not understand the tenets of historical empathy. Further, scholars have found that, while teachers have sought to highlight the first few elements, two of the most important, contextualization and multiple perspectives, were not just the most time consuming but also the most difficult for students to understand (Morgan & York, 2009; Brooks 2011).

Recent research indicates that the cognitive and affective aspects of historical empathy may be realized in history classrooms through the use of primary sources, group work, discussions, and additional research (Lazarakou, 2008; Endacott 2013a). Each of these activities involves student-centered instructional strategies that encourage teachers to explore their own beliefs and further develop their historical empathy while sharing their passion with students (Cunningham, 2009). Additionally, scholars contend that historical empathy fosters life-long learning. It also compels social change by facilitating students' recognition of diversity, mutual understanding, and open-mindedness (Colby, 2009; Gibson,2012).

### **Definition of the Problem**

In conversations that I have had with teachers and administrators at two high schools that serve children of military sponsors (military members), they have indicated that high school history teachers use a variety of methods when considering affective approaches to instilling processes of historical thinking (S. Stevens [pseudonym], personal communication, 10 January, 2014; R. Roberts [pseudonym], personal communication, 30 May, 2014). Some teachers engage with students using instructional strategies that involve activities and role-playing. Others use classroom time more formally, adhering to lesson plans while hoping to help students develop contextual understanding of historical events. All teachers understand that their instructional time is limited because of the large amount of material to cover during a semester, a reality reinforced by comprehensive testing. They also acknowledge that specific empathic strategies are useful to help students understand historical events (W. Wilson [pseudonym], personal communication, 30 May, 2014). Empathic strategies can also help students develop skills that will increase as they mature (Endacott, 2015).

However, teachers may not necessarily be employing all of the components of historical empathy to engender what many researchers view as historical perspective or historical thinking (Pellegrino, Lee, & D'Erizans, 2012; Winstead, 2011). Historical empathy is engendered by teachers as they help students consider multiple perspectives, a process which runs counter to "facts only" history instruction (Morgan & York, 2010; Ray, Faure, & Kelle, 2013).

Scholarly research across the national and multinational spectrum mirrors the findings at the local level. Within the United States, teachers face numerous challenges in the classroom that may inhibit the development of empathic skills in students (De La Paz & Wissinger, 2015). These include limited class time, which may prevent constructivist approaches to history. High stakes testing to meet No Child Left Behind goals also promotes the tendency for teachers to teach specific facts and personages without delving into such important subjects as causality and long-term effects of historical actions (Chapman, 2011). Additionally, scholars have posited that most teachers and administrators are not aware of the tenets of historical empathy and its link to historical perspective (Ormond, 2011). Internationally, teachers face similar issues as they seek to balance curriculum with strategies aimed at instilling a deeper understanding of historical causation and perspective (Lazarakou, 2008; Smith, 2012).

### **Rationale**

#### **Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level**

History teachers within two high schools two high schools that serve children of military sponsors did not necessarily understand or utilize the tenets of historical empathy. Because empathy helps lead students to a deeper level of comprehension when studying history, students may have limited opportunities to develop historical thinking and a deeper understanding of historical tenets and causation without classroom instruction that explicitly fosters historical empathy.

Teachers at my study sites used classroom time to work with students and provide varied activities. These activities may promote historical thinking but may also create

obstacles to historical understanding, notably the concept of presentism, the tendency for students to interpret past events using present values. Additionally, teachers used elements of historical empathy, but did not necessarily understand the difference between empathy and sympathy, the latter of which belongs to an emotional domain (Cunningham, 2009; Colby 2009). Empathy, however, requires intellectual engagement to craft specific understandings of context, usually bolstered by documentary evidence. It also leads students to a greater comprehension when studying history, a skill necessary for understanding multiple perspectives which scholars view as a critical element of historical empathy (Barton & Levstik, 2009; Ray, Faure, & Kelle, 2013).

Principals at my study sites were aware of and supported creative activities within their high school history classes, but were unaware of whether history teachers in their schools used empathic strategies. They also understood the unique nature of historical knowledge and how it is measured in standardized testing, and they were adamant that every effort be made to increase the critical thinking skills of every student. Principals were also aware that extant history instructional strategies may also lead students to make hasty generalizations or to romanticize history. These comments imply that principals are not aware of the sequential nature of empathic tenets (S. Stevens, personal communication, 10 January, 2014; R. Roberts, personal communication, 30 May, 2014).

I conducted the research at two high schools that serve children of military sponsors. On several occasions I have discussed historical empathy concepts informally with the high school principals. When I described the concepts and how professional historians used historical empathy in their work centers, the principals asked if I might



consider historical empathy and empathic strategies in history classrooms as a doctoral project, notably to determine if history teachers were utilizing empathic approaches to help students. They asked this in light of the completion of recent plans for the 2014-2018 school years which mandate specific metrics with the ultimate goal of increasing student achievement developing learning environments tailored to meet the unique needs of military-connected children (S. Stevens, Personal Communication, 10 January 2014). The principals hope to accomplish this by focusing on new levels of excellence in student achievement, school performance, organizational effectiveness, professional development, and community outreach. As part of this plan, the high school principals planned to engage with key stakeholders in the local communities, and to encouraging these stakeholders to help empower each student (R. Roberts, Personal Communication, 30 May 2014). Empathetic skills are critical to this effort to help students develop a deeper sense of critical thinking in the history discipline.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore high school history teachers' perspectives on using historical empathy in their teaching. My ultimate objective in this study was to increase teacher effectiveness within the classroom by improving teachers' understanding of historical empathy and encouraging its incorporation within their instructional strategies. As a key community stakeholder within the district, I had the unique opportunity to observe teacher approaches to developing historical empathy within their students, and to make recommendations to modify instruction using empathic strategies.

Several theoretical concepts form the backbone of teaching with historical empathy. Michel Foucault (1994) and John Dewey (1981) suggested that higher order thinking are linked to experiences with objects, alternate perspectives, and empathizing with the past. Likewise, Maurice Halbwachs (1992) suggested that empathy with the past is derived of images and imagination that comes through varied instruction. Buber (1996) also posited that an “I-Thou” relationship may be established not only between people, but also between people and objects if the individual accepts the object and ponders its essence (p.23). Jason Endacott (2013a) suggested, however, that additional studies are required to understand affective and cognitive constructs within a classroom setting.

I used these and other theories to as shape the project and interpret the findings. The project was intended to assist high school history teachers in identifying approaches or methods that will help students learn and remember historical events by developing a sense of perspectives differing from the student’s, contextualizing events, and comparing past events to understanding the present rather than learning through rote memory. This study will contribute to the little research that exists on methodologies for incorporating empathy into instructional strategies and on how these methods elicit students’ empathic responses.

I will share this study with the schools in hope of helping their teachers and administrators understand the value of historical empathy and how it can affect teaching practices, generate enthusiasm among students, and create a deeper understanding of current historiographical narratives among history teachers. I will also pursue publication of the findings in a more teacher-friendly format to share with schools around the world.

### **Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature**

Although many teachers approach history instruction using concepts associated with historical empathy, the idea of historical empathy is not widely known among history teachers and administrators (Endacott, 2013a; Ormond, 2011). Many teachers, under the constraints of No Child Left Behind and high-stakes testing, attempt to generate creative conditions within their classrooms with the aim of helping students achieve perspective recognition (Brooks, 2011; Gibson, 2012). However, limited time on specific subjects and little or no use of primary source documentation as teaching tools prevent students from achieving stages of historical empathy (Winstead, 2011). These limitations run counter to scholars' findings that a deeper understanding of historical empathy has the propensity to assist teachers and students alike (Chapman, 2011). This deeper understanding can be achieved by ensuring teachers understand the differences between empathy and sympathy, that is, the difference between understanding perspectives of historical actors and projected feelings (Brooks, 2011; Fuhrer, 2009)

Scholars have noted that historical empathy may be a critical tool for teachers as they seek to help students understand context as part of historical understanding (Brooks, 2011; Connerton 2012). Although many teachers unknowingly use some of the tenets of historical empathy, two of the most critical, contextualization of the present and development of multiple perspectives, are the most difficult for students to achieve without understanding the other tenets. As a result, many teachers fail to understand that these final two tenets assist in deeper-level learning and help students maintain historical principles (Endacott & Brooks, 2012). They also help students develop a deeper

understanding of historical processes and differing approaches for addressing current issues (Yogev, 2013). A deeper awareness of diversity also results from considering multiple viewpoints, an attribute necessary for participation in democratic processes (Gordon, 2011; Colby, 2010).

### **Definitions**

*Contextualization:* Teachers' and students' understandings of the period or events being studied and their relations to other events or personages. In many cases, the historical causal effects are considered. Contextualization also includes the idea of hindsight, which stresses the use of chronology to help students and teachers place events in a time and space (Brooks, 2011).

*Empathic responses:* The ability to conclude how others felt, placing one's self in the place of "the other," and projecting those feelings upon one's self (Endacott, 2013b).

*Historical empathy:* Seen more as a goal rather than a process, historical empathy is a tool for helping students understand history. Empathy occurs when students understand the conditions and perspectives of how historical personages made decisions or exhibited specific behaviors (Brooks, 2011; Endacott 2013).

*Multiple perspectives:* An understanding of the notion that, just as current people consider several perspectives before making decisions, historical actors also considered multiple perspectives. Teachers and students must understand that not all actors in specific periods of history believed in one idea or cause, but instead considered many ideas or beliefs to reach decisions (Cunningham, 2009; Lee & Semilt, 2011).

*Perspective recognition:* A critical aspect of historical empathy that requires students and their teachers to analyze their own beliefs and not necessarily attribute those same beliefs to historical actors (Brooks, 2011).

*Presentism:* The tendency of students to define past historical events through the lens of their own era, values, and mores (Cunningham, 2009).

### **Significance**

Discussions with the principals two high schools that serve children of military sponsors indicated that a key element of their respective strategic plans is to create student-centered learning environments. Part of that effort includes helping students develop critical thinking skills to prepare them for post-school challenges and university work. The recent adoption of the Common Core curriculum also mandates standardized testing to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional strategies. Linked to these instructional strategies are engagements with key stakeholders within the communities associated with the schools. These engagements assist students in understanding the applicability of curriculum within the work environment and how stakeholders use the information and apply it in everyday situations.

As a government historian and a key stakeholder within the community, I use empathetic skills when documenting current history. Additionally, other historians and I use historical empathy and object primacy studies during professional staff rides to important sites in Europe. During many of these events, we employ the key concepts of historical empathy, which help participants understand important historic events and the decision-making of senior leaders (Robertson, 2011).

In response to the high school principals' desires to assist with high school history classroom instructional strategies, I was given the opportunity to observe teacher approaches to developing historical empathy in their students. The high schools are located in a historic area which provided opportunities for me to assist teachers with primary sources and historic properties and further develop their understanding of the principles of historical empathy. However, many of the history teachers did not understand that the military services employ historians who could be potentially usefulness within the classroom. In this study and project, I aimed to make the historians and teachers partners in the students' education.

Ultimately, researching teachers' perceptions and use of historical empathy within the classroom can benefit teachers by helping inform and modify their teaching strategies. Increasing teacher effectiveness within the classroom by improving their understanding of historical empathy can help students gain a greater appreciation for historical thinking. Review of lesson plans and classroom observations can also assist in refining classroom activities and instructional strategies.

### **Guiding/Research Question**

The purpose of this study was to explore how high school history teachers at two high schools that serve children of military sponsors utilize the concepts of historical empathy. I addressed the following research questions:

1. How do history teachers at two high schools that serve children of military sponsors employ historical empathy in their classrooms?

2. How do history teachers at two high schools that serve children of military sponsors perceive historical empathy instruction in their classrooms?

## **Review of the Literature**

### **Introduction**

I began this project with a thorough review of research conducted on historical empathy that included books and journal articles covering a span of more than 50 years. My initial review of journal articles directed me to readings in both philosophy and educational theory, ranging from John Dewey to Martin Buber, which provided the theoretical underpinnings. The scholarly sources in my review focused on such subjects as instructional methodologies, historical thinking, engagement with students, and the idea of historical empathy. In the process, I examined literature on the tenets of historical empathy and how teachers perceive and employ this concept in the classroom.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study is grounded on the theoretical work of Edmund Husserl published in 1913 *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (2012), Hans Georg Gadamer's 1960 work *Truth and Method* (2013), and Patrick Gardiner (1961). As one of the founders of phenomenology, Husserl was concerned with perception, and studied intersubjectivity and the nature of phenomena. Intersubjectivity, according to Husserl, occurs when people employ acts of empathy. In this sense, Husserl advocated for an apperceptive approach to events and artifacts whereby individuals comprehend them through previous knowledge and experience. Apperception, or the act of being conscious of perceiving, placed the person in another's position through the idea of "epoche" or

“bracketing.” From a historical perspective, bracketing means confining one’s self to the particular era or historic personage to understand reasoning, beliefs, and feelings from what scholars term an egocentric point of view. A person utilizing egocentricity then seeks to embody actions of another that may be similar to the apperceptive being. That is, a person may be able to understand another’s actions through the study of their own. In essence, intersubjectivity may be exhibited by an individual who considers one’s self as a being who experiences phenomena and who also understands that another being also experiences phenomena. In short, two separate minds are experiencing.

Husserl also reasoned that artifacts, or objects, could be subjected to the same apperceptive reasoning. Husserl expanded upon the Aristotlean idea that things existed and fit into two categories: naturally made objects and artifacts fashioned by humans for specific purposes. Using the term “spiritualized objects,” Husserl suggested that artifacts required a “comprehensive unity” (Husserl, 2012, p. 121). That is, a cultural object has both “body and spirit” which must be analyzed to understand the nature of the object and its creator. Husserl suggested that objects of previous eras, similar to people, may be analyzed using the same apperceptive, or intersubjective, approach. He termed this ability appreciate an object through empathic approaches the “apprehension of artifacts” (Ferenz-Flatz, 2011).

Husserl’s ideas influenced Hans-Georg Gadamer. Gadamer, a contemporary of Martin Heidegger, sought to expound on the Husserlian ideas of phenomenology intimated, but not emphasized, by Heidegger. In his work *Truth and Justice* (1960/2013), Gadamer argued that the temporal distance between the present and past was not to be



avoided but embraced. By doing so, historic events could be interpreted not through the historical romanticism espoused by British historian and philosopher R.G. Collingwood, but through the careful analysis of previous perspectives (Aldridge, 2013; Kobayashi & Mathieu, 2011). Gadamer posited that this hermeneutics-based approach to explaining history should be based on empathic perceptions of both participants and subsequent interpretations of those events (Tamura, 2011). This would then give a holistic view of the events and how succeeding generations interpreted them. Gadamer also argued against the long-held idea that the approaches of the humanities should be the same as the sciences. He suggested that people's consciousness were largely affected by history and culture, which in turn affected how we interpreted historical events.

Philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1992) argued that individual memory relies on tradition and remembrances served as an intermediary for interpretation. By recognizing and understanding the practice of the tradition's genesis, individuals may increase understanding of current traditions. This collective context, similar to Gadamer's hermeneutic approach, suggested that the origins of traditions needed to be studied contextually and that class contextualization differs depending on interpretation. However, from an ontological framework, Halbwachs suggested that awareness of these differences were required in order to comprehend the idea of varying perspectives.

Sir Charles Oman (1939), one of Britain's revered historians, likewise argued that history was not a systematic evaluation of events, but rather the study events in the context of people and their traditions. Oman suggested that the historicist view of history,

notably the “unity” concept of linear, unbroken history, was neither purely objective nor substantive. Rather, he argued that periods of history and societies were worth studying in their own right and that continuity in history was important in order to understand developments of succeeding generations. He argued against the idea of historical discontinuity, which would eventually become a major issue in post-war Europe. Perceived breaks in history, which could be an issue with historians and their students studying events out of context, could be overcome by addressing events evolving from causal factors relating to previous generations. Taking Oman’s idea even further, Patrick Gardiner (1961) suggested that perspective comes by comparing our human condition to those of past societies. The “logic of the situation” calls upon those studying history to understand the circumstances that historic societies found themselves and reasons for their decisions (Gardiner, p. 49). This implies that multiple perspectives are required because societies acted differently because of divergent outside stimuli.

Understanding empathy means considering the ideas and potential actions of others by placing one’s self in the perspective of another. Awareness of intersubjectivity and apperception allows individuals to contextualize events distant from their own which generates a sense of “otherness.” In turn, otherness helps generate awareness of differing perspectives and the comprehension of causal factors. Understanding this phenomenon then allows an individual to better understand how and why individuals acted in the past and, in doing so, helps them understand the traditions and customs of the present.

Historical empathy may be seen as a valuable tool for helping students understand the nature of people, things, and events prior to their own. As a core subject, history is

necessary for students to understand responsible citizenship, develop temporal and spatial thinking, and cultivate critical thinking (Brooks, 2011; Yeager & Foster, 2001).

Objects and empathy are interrelated and help establish links to the past to help students understand their very essences within the present (D'Adamo & Fallace, 2011; Frazier, Gelman, Wilson, & Hood, 2009). Many scholars also have suggested that not all teachers utilize this valuable framework (Ferencz-FLatz, 2011; Mayer, 2012). Those that do utilize specific activities to reach their students may not necessarily understand the constructivist ideas underpinning the activities (Brooks, 2009). Calling upon the work of Martin Buber, Hani Gordon (2011) has suggested that the development of dialogue with persons and objects, including those of the past, produces “a kind of presence of other beings in which one is receptive and open to being influenced by them” (p. 207). Other scholars have posited that historical study calls upon an internal dialogue that differs from other disciplines (Baron, 2012; Fitzgerald, 2011). Because history is made by the actions of people or natural events, historical empathy helps guide students to a greater understanding of those events by promoting this internal dialogue.

### **Framework for Teaching History**

Traditional methods of teaching history through textbook reading, rote memorization, and lecture pose serious challenges to student learning (Boxtel & Van Drie, 2013; Cunningham, 2009). This traditional form of teaching largely focuses on the objectivity of history, inculcating the notion that dates, facts, and personages rather than context comprise history (Brooks, 2008; Barton & Levstik, 2005). It also mitigates opportunities to develop effective instructional strategies (Slekar, 2009; Marino, 2012).

Contextualization and historical empathy, however, are necessary elements for students if they are to develop critical thinking skills (Colby, 2010; D'Adamo & Fallace, 2011).

Scholars and teachers alike agree that the study of history differs from other subjects since students use different skills to reconstruct events (Berti, Baldin, & Toneatti, 2009; Heller & Stacy, 2013). This conforms to Sarah Brooks' (2011) compelling views that many competing conceptualizations of historic-mindedness are results of practicing the idea of historical empathy as they aid in the "reconstruction of others' beliefs, values, and goals, any or all of which are not necessarily those of the historical investigator" (p. 168). Teachers call upon these historiographic skills as they transport their students to different historical eras (Lovorn, 2012; Nokes, 2011). This concept of historical discontinuity, referred to as "chronotope" by Mikhail Bakhtin, helps students make connections between the past and the present, time and space (Ravenscroft, 2012, p. 47). Teachers, however, may be subconsciously approaching the historical moment from a singular perspective rather than helping the students to develop their own. Additionally, serendipitous moments often occur within the classroom as teachers use objects, original source materials, place-names, or "what would you do?" exercises. However, these serendipitous moments tend to be somewhat fleeting, resulting in lost opportunities when helping students make the emotional connection between the past and present (Kemp, 2011).

Historical empathy provides avenues for students to understand multiple perspectives and avoid the pitfall of presentism, or the tendency to project current values on historical events (Brooks, 2010; Cassedy, Flaherty, & Fordham, 2011). Empathy also

embraces the concepts of diversity by helping students develop a sense of otherness (Morgan & York, 2009; Gair, 2013). Researchers also have suggested that empathetic activities establish contexts that help students develop critical thinking skills known as historical-mindedness or historical thinking (Lindquist, 2012). This idea of historical investigation helps develop cognitive skills more aligned to those employed by professional historians, and ensures that concepts and research processes, rather than facts, are retained by students (Ohn, 2010; Pellegrino, Lee, & D'Erizans, 2012)

Historical study calls upon an internal dialogue that differs from that required by other disciplines (Baron, 2012). Because history is made by the actions of people or natural events, historical empathy helps students place themselves in the place of another to comprehend perceived psychic experiences (Lazarakou, 2008). Other scholarship has supported the idea that objects (artifacts) and empathy are interrelated and help establish links to the past as a means of helping students understand their very essences within the present (D'Adamo & Fallace, 2011; Frazier, Gelman, Wilson, & Hood (2009). Empathy, long considered too subjective for understanding history, is now receiving increased emphasis among academic historians (Lee, 2011). This subjectivity increases a student's ability to consider multiple perspectives while increasing cultural literacy (Morgan & Yori, 2009).

Inseparable to the study of history, artifacts and historical objects, if not analyzed under a human construct, hold no interest to people (Nagalingham, 2011). They do, however, become recognizable as historic objects with meaning as historical empathy is applied, especially within archaeological or museum educational contexts. This has

tremendous implications for teachers since time and distance theories of history may be enhanced using historical objects within instructional periods. They may also help students develop critical thinking by researching origins, purpose, and interpretation, and has the propensity to enhance contextualization of a historic era (Ohn, 2012).

### **Empathy Versus Sympathy: Tenets of Empathy**

Researchers have recently conducted studies of how secondary schools teachers use historical empathy to help students understand big ideas in history (Brooks, 2011). By helping students understand and practice perspective recognition, Smith (2012) suggests that students learn better and retain more information for longer periods. However, empathy and care can be confusing, prompting students to use default understandings of events when multiple perspectives become too overwhelming (Salinas, Blevins, & Caroline, 2012). The research conducted by Salinas, Blevins, and Caroline supports other scholarly work that reconstructing past perspectives can be complex and challenging (Ragland, 2014). Lindsay Cassedy, Catherine Flaherty, and Michael Fordham (2011) also argued that without critical historical thinking, students will not understand the concepts of interpretation and multiple perspectives, both of which are necessary to understand the discipline of history.

Recent studies have focused on the need for teachers to understanding the concept of historical empathy in order to creatively teach the “why” and “how” of history, as opposed to the “what” and “when,” which tends to be predominant among teachers overwhelmed with NCLB requirements (Van Boxtel & Van Drie, 2013; Seng & Wei, 2010; Winstead, 2011; Cunningham, 2009). Dilek (2009), Frazier, Gelman, Wilson, and

Hood (2009), and Lemisko (2010) posit that historical imagination may be enhanced by activities that engender historical imagination. This may include constructivist group study, differentiation, site visits, and object study. Using empathic approaches to understand artifacts may enhance student learning and perspective taking.

Jason Endacott (2013a) and Sarah Brooks (2013) discuss the theoretical and practical models for promoting historical empathy within classrooms, formulation of instructional strategies, and affective student engagement with historical thinking. They posit that historical empathy consists of five major elements based on research initially proposed by Barton and Levstik (Endacott & Brooks, 2013; Barton and Levstik, 2009). These elements include contextualization of events, undertaking perspective, and affective connection. Contextualization considers a sense of otherness, which teachers use to avoid the presentism pitfall. Social and political dimensions are considered as are the unique cultural practices associated with historic eras and peoples. The linear realm of history is also considered including knowledge of events and causal factors that may be taking place simultaneous to one another. Secondly, perspective taking is comprised of a sense of shared normalcy. This prompts students to consider the perspectives of others without making judgments and promotes a comprehension of value systems, norms, and beliefs of people in the past (Austin & Thompson, 2014).

Perspective taking also includes aspects of the emotional realm as teachers and students seek to understand how historical actors felt. Finally, the affective connection seeks to link understandings of past events and comparing them with current circumstances. This helps students and teachers understand the dynamics of socio-

political or politico-military influences (Endacott & Brooks, 2013; Brooks, 2013).

Ultimately, these three activities provide an active and rich learning environment that promotes critical thinking. Finally, Babson Fuhrer (2009) suggests that empathic storytelling affect knowledge retention since storytelling aligns these three concepts and encourages the sharing of empathy.

### **Implications**

Research into historical empathy has indicated that teachers may be using but not understanding the concept. Informal conversations with the teachers and administrators also suggests that teaching history can be fun and engaging when activities or higher order thinking exercises prompt students to consider causal factors, decision-making on the part of the historical actors, and thought processes unique to the particular society they are studying. Administrators indicate that historical empathy in a history classroom is intriguing and a subject worthy of analysis because it requires the students to look beyond their own familiar surroundings. Teachers in these schools have indicated that they have sundry opportunities to use historic sites, documentation, and artifacts to increase student interest in history. In a sense, they are unknowingly engendering the concepts of historical empathy to help students contextualize events, and consider perspectives beyond their own. The research question “How do history teachers at two high schools that serve children of military sponsors employ historical empathy in their classrooms?” seeks to identify which elements of historical empathy teachers are using and in what sequence.



Informal conversations with high school history teachers suggests that they are dedicated to their discipline and passionate about history. Teachers use objects to illustrate practices of former societies or dress in period costume to capture and maintain attention with students who sometimes view history as a less than interesting subject. These and other methods are described in the literature selected for the project. But while teachers may be aware of certain strategies for portraying historic personages or specific events in history, teachers may be taking students into a spatial realm that might not require critical thinking. The research question can be addressed by interviews with teachers, allowing them to give their perspectives on what strategies they use to engage students while reflecting on their own understanding of empathy.

Themes taken from analysis of the interviews and classroom observation will reveal how teachers use historical empathy and in what sequence the tenets are applied. Analysis of these themes can be discussed with the teachers to help them understand the empathy concept perspective analysis or the concept of historical discontinuity.

The potential for social change cannot be underestimated. The most critical element of historical empathy, understanding of multiple perspectives, helps students develop a deeper understanding of diversity, community involvement, and value of human existence. This will assist students refine such ideas as respect for all human beings by developing perspective recognition and care. However, as other scholars have suggested, historical empathy is difficult to achieve for all students. Teachers and students face predispositions, some of which are informed by community and culture in general, which may not necessarily reflect empathic practices. An investigation into

teacher employment of such practices or lack thereof could inform future studies aimed at further research into affective practices.

### **Summary**

To summarize, teachers can benefit from a study into those methodologies that help students develop historical empathy. Calling upon the concepts of historical empathy posited by Jason Endacott and Sarah Brooks (2013), I hope to identify those activities high school history teachers use within the classroom to develop historical empathy within their students as prescribed by national goals for the development of critical thinking skills.

## Section 2: The Methodology

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to explore how high school history teachers at two high schools that serve children of military sponsors use the tenets of historical empathy within their classrooms, and to understand how historical empathy informs their classroom instruction. In this doctoral project, I addressed the question: “What are high school history teachers’ perspectives on using historical empathy in their teaching?”

The principals of the high schools were aware of historical empathy and its long-term benefits. They were also aware of recent research into empathic studies, but did not know if teachers were utilizing empathic strategies aligned with recent scholarly findings. The principals provided correspondence of intention to cooperate with the study. Additionally, teachers indicated an interest in sharing their classroom practices and understanding historical empathy and its potential benefits for the classroom.

I used a qualitative, descriptive case study design to determine how teachers employed historical empathy in their classrooms and in the instructional strategies they used to help students develop a deeper understanding of history. I interviewed seven teachers and observed their classroom activities. Recent scholarly research helped me formulate the interview questions and informed the classroom observations.

### **Research Design**

To answer the research questions, I used a qualitative research design for this study. Specifically, I used a qualitative descriptive case study design to investigate the perceptions of high school history teachers at two schools supporting children of military

sponsors. A descriptive case study design helped answer the research questions since it enabled me to gain insight into a particular area of interest or phenomenon (Merriam, 2009, p. 42) and provided “insights and illuminate meanings that [expanded my] experiences” (Merriam, 2009, p. 51). This approach was the most appropriate since the small number of participants represented a bounded system, and their comments afforded rich descriptions to illustrate “interpretations in context” (Merriam, 2009, p. 42).

Phenomenological or ethnographic approaches were not practical since they focus on lived experiences and behaviors of a particular culture, respectively (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Likewise, a grounded theory study focused on developing a theory from the data was not suited to this particular research process, nor was critical action research since the issue did not involve emancipation of particular classes or concepts of power struggles (Merriam, 2009). My case study design conformed to the “bounded system” represented by high school history teachers.

The local problem informed the research question and guided my creation of a product that reflected the teachers’ views of historical empathy and the instructional practices they used to engender historical thinking in their students. I also considered methods for informing teachers of the tenets of historical empathy, with the goal of providing a position paper on the subject that outlined methods for increasing student awareness of empathy and highlighted its role in helping students understand the contexts of historical actors. Ultimately, I sought to evaluate how teachers utilized and sequenced the tenets of historical empathy as they endeavored to teach the required curriculum in a specific curricular cycle.

## **Setting and Sample**

I conducted the research in two high schools that serve children of military sponsors. The principals from both high schools were very cooperative and eager to discover how teachers approach their history instruction, and were excited by the potential to increase students' critical thinking skills based on recent scholarly research into empathy. The target population, approved by the headquarters' governing body, included eight history teachers. No specific grade was targeted, and I considered all history teachers at the site.

Once the Walden University Institutional Review Board granted approval to conduct the research (IRB approval 10-13-15-0318878), I contacted the teachers informally through email or by the personal introductions of other teachers. I used snowball or network sampling, which proved effective in introducing the subject to the participants. During these informal conversations I explained the subject and recent research on how teachers were using primary source documents and artifacts within the history classroom and during field trips to develop historical empathy in their students. I also explained my role as a government historian and informed participants that I had no connection with the school or its administration. Further, I informed each of the participants that they were in no way required to participate in the study, and that participation was voluntary. Participants were then given a consent form that described the research. The form also included descriptions of methods for ensuring privacy of the personal information, the security of the information, the assignment of pseudonyms for each participant to protect identity, and the right to withdraw from participation at any

time. Finally, I informed participants of the risks and benefits of their participation in the study, which would include one classroom observation and a short interview.

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

### **Methods to Collect Data**

In this research study, I focused on how high school history teachers at two high schools that serve children of military sponsors use the tenets of historical empathy within their classrooms and how it informs classroom instruction. A total of eight teachers were invited to participate in the study. Seven teachers responded to the invitation and participated in both the classroom observations and brief interviews, which lasted approximately 45 minutes.

Classroom observations preceded the interviews. Because the interview questions focused on such concepts as historical empathy, classroom strategies, and student perspectives of historical empathy, I felt that the interview, if it were conducted before the observation, may inform classroom practice and prompt the teacher to please the researcher rather than conduct a typical classroom instruction period. I discussed the classroom visits with each of the participants who selected the time and date. I explained that the goal was to be as nonintrusive as possible and be located at some section of the classroom to mitigate student distraction. If the classroom reflected a traditional layout with desks lined in rows facing the front, I opted to sit at the rear of the classroom. In non-traditional arrangements, such as those where students worked in clusters, I placed myself in a corner or other location away from the groups.

I arrived at each classroom approximately ten minutes before class. I reminded the participant of the activity's purpose. Every effort was made to place the teacher at ease, and I emphasized the teacher was the expert and that I was not in the classroom to critique teaching abilities. Conversely, I stressed transparency during the process, and established rapport with the participant through conversation and by showing interest in their work, classroom layout, and areas of interest. This, in my view, was necessary to ensure I interacted with the "subjects in a natural, unobtrusive, and nonthreatening manner, because "the more controlled and obtrusive the research, the greater the likelihood that the researcher will end up studying the effects of his or her methods" (Bogdan & Biklen, p. 39). I also informed participants on numerous occasions that I would be taking notes on their use of historical empathy in the classroom and on their strategies for helping students understand such concepts as context and perspective. I also stressed that I was neither engaging with nor observing student behavior, since students represented a vulnerable population. Further, I noted that I would be documenting teacher efforts to engage with comments or questions, and would note if the engagement was or was not successful. Prior to the research phase, I made the decision not to video record the observations since this would have added an element of discomfort to the classroom session.

I developed a classroom observation protocol that included pre-observation information (date, time, and topic), classroom disposition, lesson objectives, intended outcomes, how students would be engaged, and planned activities. The protocol also included key terms or phrases associated with historical empathy and if the teachers used

them. These included but were not limited to *feel, empathize, sympathize, putting one's self in another's place, and context*. Another section included the aspects of historical empathy that were not present and my reflections on the classroom activities. At the conclusion of each observation I conducted member checks with the participant to ensure clarity of key terms, and to reconcile ambiguities. Post-observation dialogue with the participants also allowed them to discuss particular goals of the instructional session, reasons for visual aids, and lesson outcomes. It also allowed me time to reflect on the notes with them and thank them for their valuable participation. The notes were transcribed within 24 hours of the event.

During the proposal development phase, I considered using focus group interviews and individual interview sessions. While focus groups promote spontaneity and allow thought-sharing, they can also be dominated by one or two personnel, and make other members apprehensive to participate. I decided to conduct individual, semi-structured interviews at a location of the participants' choice, which provided a quiet, non-threatening environment (Cresswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009). The locations and time selected by the participants also allowed the participant to relax and feel free to share ideas and thoughts on classroom instruction and facilitated extemporaneous discussion throughout the session.

With the approval of the participants, I recorded each session with a small hand-held digital recorder. The interview guide, refined with the assistance of my committee and research reviewer, consisted of nine questions (see Appendix B). The questions ranged from more general subjects that included teacher experiences, to more focused



subject matter including definitions of historical empathy and how instructional strategies may be adjusted based on student empathic responses. Research into historical empathy and how teachers employ it also informed the questions. I felt that question sequencing played an important role as history teachers may reflect on their own understanding of empathy as a student, whether positive or in a pejorative sense, and amend those practices for their particular classrooms. Additionally, when participants responded with diminutive answers, I asked follow-up or clarification questions to seek clarification and enable the participant to expand on the reason for the answer. Non-verbal responses, normally captured by video, were documented on a paper copy of the interview guide and included in the transcripts. The interviews were transcribed within 24 hours and returned to the participants for review.

To ensure privacy and security of the participants, I assigned them pseudonyms on the transcripts and field notes (e.g. Teacher 1, Teacher 2). I then developed a code key was to identify the names with the pseudonyms, and then placed the key in a locked filing cabinet. Additional safeguards included using a password-enabled computer and deleting back-up files. I placed each file on a removable hard drive, which was likewise locked in the filing cabinet. Additionally, each transcript file was only accessible to me, and I locked each with a password. The removable hard drive will be secured and maintained for five years in accordance with Walden University IRB requirements.

### **Data Analysis of Field Notes and Interviews**

Coding did not begin until all of the field notes and interviews were complete. The rationale behind this was to avoid any premature development of themes without

having all of the research. Nonetheless, it was necessary to maintain focus on the research question while exercising contemporary reflection on the field notes and interviews (Endacott, 2010; Merriam, 2009). Maintaining focus on the research questions allowed me to maintain concentration during subsequent interviews and classroom observations and ensure proper reflection. This was important because as a government historian I found it easy to merge into a historiographic mindset during classroom discussion rather than maintaining focus on the teacher's presentation as it related to empathy.

Once the research was complete, I found it essential to conduct two rounds of manual coding. While reviewing the transcripts I created marginal notes, noting specific words or phrases. This preliminary analysis was necessary because of the considerable amount of what I deemed to be substantive comments made by the teachers. For the first round I used open coding was used to place comments and observation notes into specific categories. Using a table, the first round of coding produced 98 units of data in 11 categories. This conformed to Sharan Merriam's views that, once preliminary analysis was complete, the first set of themes were preliminary and I was not yet aware of "which groupings might be subsumed under others" (2009, p.180). I also found the preliminary coding allowed me to take a brief two-day respite from the data collection without being overly consumed with the data analysis. This allowed for internalization of the material and, once refreshed, I was able to objectively review the categories to look for similarities (Bogden & Biklen, 2007).

I used axial coding for the second round of analysis. Four themes emerged during the second round of analysis. The field notes and interview transcripts were also

subjected to Atlas-ti, a coding software that analyzed the material to look for more complex codes and quotations applicable to those codes. The coding software results corresponded with the initial four codes and identified an additional two: historic sites as heuristic and analogies and metaphors in perspective recognition. All six codes were then scrutinized and weighed against the research question to avoid researcher bias. The six themes that surfaced included; (a) The obscurity of historical empathy; (b) emotion as key to understanding; (c) empathic sequencing and contextualization; (d) historic sites as heuristic; (e) primary sources, artifacts, and historic dialogue; (f) and analogies, metaphors, and perspective recognition. Refer to Table 1 for the themes and how they were generated. Each of these themes will be discussed.

Table 1

*Theme Generation*

Theme	Coding	
Theme 1: Obscurity of Historical Empathy	Axial	Atlas-ti
Theme 2: Emotion as Key to Understanding	Axial	Atlas-ti
Theme 3: Empathic Sequencing and Contextualization	Axial	Atlas-ti
Theme 4: Historic Sites as Heuristic		Atlas-ti
Theme 5: Primary Sources, Artifacts, and Historic Dialogue	Axial	Atlas-ti
Theme 6: Analogies, Metaphors, and Perspective Recognition		Atlas-ti

**Reliability and Validity**

The goal of the research was to address how teachers understand and employ historical empathy in their classrooms. As with any study, validity and reliability of the study had to be considered throughout the research, notably the bias issue mentioned earlier. One of the strengths of a qualitative study, notably a case study, however, is the notion that “human beings are the primary instrument of data collection and analysis in qualitative research, interpretations of reality are accessed directly through their observations and interviews” (Merriam, p. 214). And it was because of the human

interaction between the research subject and researcher, every attempt was made to seek understanding of actions documented in field notes or comments made in interviews.

Triangulation was a goal throughout the two-month research effort. Member checks, an important key to internal validity, ensured the notations made during classroom observations were correct. For example, Teacher 1 often used analogies to reinforce ideas. When questioned, the teacher validated that analogies remained a key aspect of their instructional strategy to help achieve context. Notations were then made on the observation protocol sheets to corroborate the findings. Member checks took on even more importance when interpretations of specific instructional deliveries were involved.

As a non-educator, I had to exercise caution when observing classroom activities to avoid over oversimplifying activities that may have had deeper significance to the teacher or correlated to curricular requirements. For example, Teacher 3 introduced a subject by singing a historical song. When questioned, the teacher implied that the song was a hook to captivate student attentions. They also used the song as a primary source to introduce context of Civil War themes. In this case, respondent validation ensured that I ruled “out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on....” (Merriam, 2009, p. 217). I then documented the comments on the field notes. The comments also guided clarification questions during the interview.

Multiple methods for collecting data also ensured validity. Triangulation occurred when the field notes and interviews were subjected to review by the participants. The

information gathered from the participants also paralleled with that of recent scholarly research, which suggested the responses were relevant to the phenomenon being studied. Feedback from the participants also ensured mindfulness of my own bias, which was critical during the classroom observation periods. Finally, one of the more important goals in the triangulation process was to achieve saturation, that is, when “no new information seems to emerge during coding” (Saldana, p. 222). This phenomenon was achieved during the fifth interview when I was aware participants were providing similar responses and no new information was forthcoming. Nonetheless, I hoped that two additional interviews might provide additional information to ensure saturation of the subject matter.

### **The Findings**

The results of the research and subsequent findings are contained in this section. Each of the participants was assigned a pseudonym (Teacher 1 through Teacher 7) to ensure the privacy of each individual. Table 1 depicts classroom observation data and application of historical empathy.

Table 2

*Participant Classroom Observation Summary*

Participants	Tenet Sequencing	Empathy Associated Vocabulary
Teacher 1	Shared Normalcy Contextualization of Present Otherness	Beliefs, culture, emotion, sympathy, caused, feel/felt, sentiment, "what did they/you think," romanticism, identification
Teacher 2	Multiple Perspectives Otherness Contextualization of Past	Feel/felt, emotion, sympathize, put one's self in their place, "What did they/you think?", culture, beliefs, caused, context
Teacher 3	Otherness Shared Normalcy Multiple Perspectives Contextualization of Present Contextualization of Past	Empathize, feel, philosophies, caused, context, perspective, idealism, appreciate, compassion
Teacher 4	Otherness Contextualization of Past	Passion, feelings, put one's self in their place, sensitivity, caused, beliefs, sensation, environment, passion, compassion
Teacher 5	Shared Normalcy Contextualization of Past Otherness	Feel, sympathy, sentiment, "What did they/you think?", context, framework,
Teacher 6	Otherness Shared Normalcy Contextualization of Present	Beliefs, culture, perspective emotional, sensitive, empathize, ethnocentrism, compassion, environment
Teacher 7	Otherness Multiple Perspectives Contextualization of Present Contextualization of Past	Feel, empathy/empathize, beliefs, perspective, context, passionate, identify, consideration, "what did they think?"

**Theme 1: The Obscurity Of Historical Empathy.**

Classroom observations and interview responses validated initial assumptions that teachers practiced tenets of historical empathy during the course of their classroom instruction. Additionally, the research also corroborated earlier assumptions that teachers were not aware of the term historical empathy and its tenets somewhat obscure. Many were, however, familiar with empathy and its role in the classroom. When asked about the terms associated with historical empathy, Teacher 1 replied:

I haven't read or studied anything about historical empathy. I haven't subscribed to any magazines or journals in a long time so I'm not aware of what is really meant by historical empathy. However, knowing what empathy means, it means trying to get people to ask questions of how you feel if you were living in this time? That's my view of empathy.

Four other teachers made similar responses, stating that they had not heard of the term and had little knowledge of the subject. Additionally, the obscure concept prompted them to suggest that it was just another new idea that teachers must cope with in addition to other demanding concepts and ideas. The questions did prompt the teachers to offer definitions and examples of what they believed to parallel with historical empathy. Teacher 4, for example, responded "I really don't know. I suppose historical empathy means getting into people's heads. Trying to get the students to understand that can be a challenge."

Two teachers, both of whom used numerous strategies within the classroom including primary source documents and artifacts part of their instructional strategies,



provided definitions that resembled those espoused by Barton and Levstik (2009). Both of these teachers believed that to understand empathy one needed to incorporate all of the senses, participate in historic events, visit historic sites, and use emotive-based thinking to develop perspectives. For example, Teacher 2 articulated the importance of empathy in their daily instruction, which included all five tenets of historical empathy:

It means putting one's self into someone else's shoes, if you will, but not exactly having experienced what those people experienced. For example, in a couple of weeks we will be studying the Holocaust. That's a perfect example. They will not have a Holocaust experience but we will ask why these people were put into camps, the purpose of the camps, and so forth. So they will study that. Where the empathy comes in is when they actually visit these camps at Dachau or Auschwitz and ask the questions of why such camps existed and why people were put into them. How could people allow that to happen? Then we have some wonderful discussion about that. Then we discuss empathy and ask how we can relate it to today. What type of events are happening that warn us of similar atrocities? It's always interesting to fast-forward and look for applications.

Teacher 3, while not incorporating all five tenets in their explanation, was aware of the subject and its implications, and emphasized historical empathy from a philosophical narrative as key to informing instructional strategies: "Understanding empathy at the secondary level is the real gateway to helping students understand correct historical context. Empathy is necessary for historical context."

**Theme 2: Emotion As Key To Understanding**

Five teachers discussed the importance of emotions in the learning process. Many commented that as a unique discipline, history could be considered mundane or unimportant to students with concerns inside and outside of the classroom. The teachers stressed that history was a human activity and often used analogies to compare contemporary events, including trials within the students' lives, to those of historical actors. Nonetheless, teachers agreed that for the student as well as teacher to understand an event it must involve some form of emotion for the concept to embed itself in the student's consciousness. Teacher 5 explained that emotion was tied to empathy:

I think it can be subjective and where do you draw the line as to when empathy is effective and not effective. I think empathy plays an important role in every aspect of history. But it is difficult. Does empathy have limits? Does emotion have limits? I know we are emotional creatures. Emotions help us learn and remember things, especially those we find interesting. History is one of those wonderful subjects that I love. I developed that as a child and later as an adult when I was touched by a particular subject or moment in time. It is a unique discipline that is both linear and dimensional. You have to know and love your subject matter. You also have to grow because the more you know the less you know. That's why I'm still trying to catch up.

Similar to Teacher 5, Teacher 4 agreed that feelings and emotions also helped create memory. However, sympathy, while important, had its limits and did not necessarily have the same attributes as empathy and its connection to emotion:

If I understand the idea of historical empathy, any way that I can help them relate to a former society and its decision making, sure it will make them better students. Emotions can be best teachers, especially because they connect with an event. People remember how they feel. Certainly more than what they see or hear. That's the reason I show films. Not every day. I show them quotes from the British that there is no violence in Zimbabwe and then show them a film and they say "What? There's no violence in Zimbabwe?" That's when it makes the connection. Those images make them feel which opens up to empathy. I often ask them how they might place themselves in another's place and it makes them think. Most of my memories of historical events involve some sort of feeling that made me remember that event. We're all touched in one way or another. In my view, that's how emotions help guide our thoughts. But when I sympathize with something it doesn't mean I'm learning of that event's consequences or a person's plight. I guess that's the difference between sympathy and empathy.

Teacher 1 explained that, from a cognitive point of view, emotion enhanced a student's understanding of a particular artifact. In particular, art or architecture could be better understood by relating to the emotions of the object's creator and the context in which the creation occurred:

I really try to emphasize style and content for the students. Sometimes it includes the emotion the artist was trying to show the audience, and probably to the artist themselves. Art is about feeling and appreciating the movement, color, and impression. You know the old adage, you can lead a horse to water but you can't

make him drink. My goal is to make the horse thirsty, not give him water or anything, just make him thirsty and they'll go find their own water. It's a good situation when they feel. Feelings vary and of course it can be an emotional event or situation that they're referring to. The kids who visit museums or art galleries get real excited and can't wait to share it. My response is go get some more. That's great. There's a trigger there but it varies with the kids. That's the thirsty horse I mentioned. I want them to learn more about the artwork or bones and it's encouraging. Art has that ability to prompt a person to look into the soul of the art's creator. That's good for the students.

Teacher 2, however, intimated that emotions had to be carefully monitored, especially when contextualizing events. In their view, emotions had the propensity to cloud judgment if not properly channeled.

I think the students now sense that before they make a judgment they must gather all of the facts together and leave the emotions on one side and look at the issues. Another is the current race relations and recent shootings of African-Americans by white police officers. These are issues they're concerned about. But I always state that before they engage emotions they must get the facts and understand the context. They need to dissect the report, look at the dashcam video. That type of thing. It's not always just that easy to make a judgment of what happened. They're very attuned to their surroundings and they want to make the right judgments. Feelings and emotions make us human and that's an important part of empathy. I think that emotions make empathy intelligent.

As evidenced in Table 1, during each of the observation periods I noted that teachers used emotion and emotive related language during their classroom instruction. Teacher 1, who used art as part of their instruction to describe the close of the 19th century, utilized a number of terms to describe feelings the art portrayed and, in turn, encouraged their students to describe the artwork through feelings. The teacher also encouraged the students to express a wide array of emotions ranging from anger to the sublime, which generated variegated responses.

Teachers 1 and 5 also used the term “sentiment” and teachers in conjunction with what I perceived as discussion revolving around the tenet of shared normalcy. While not outwardly stating the term, both of these teachers used artwork and architecture to engender sensibilities with the students that historical actors had the same desires and needs as contemporary societies.

Teachers 1, 2, 4, 5, and 7 all used the terms “what did they/you think” and “put yourself in their place” in context with challenging students to develop a sense of otherness. The teachers used these statements to generate discussion, four of which supplemented answers with “why” or “how” questions. Teachers 3, 4, and 6 also used the term compassion to elicit empathic responses from their students likewise to develop a sense of otherness.

Context was also a term used frequently by teachers 2, 3, 5, and 7. On several occasions, each of these teachers used the term in correlation with contextualization of the past. Teachers 2, 5, and 7 used these terms at the beginning of each instructional session in the form of a lecture to guide students toward the session’s subject matter and

used in conjunction with the term “feel” to develop a chronological order of events and how historical actors interrelated with events of their forbears or their contemporaries.

### **Theme 3: Empathic Sequencing and Contextualization**

As depicted in Table 1, empathy participants often varied their sequencing of the tenets of historical empathy. These tenets include a sense of otherness, a shared sense of normalcy, historical contextualization, more than one perspective, and the need to contextualize the present as defined by Barton and Levstik (2009, p. 210-217). Barton and Levstik (2009) view these tenets as comprising perspective recognition and, when used in order, help students understand historical methodology (p. 208).

Teachers and students demonstrate the first tenet by understanding that others exist outside of one’s own experiences. The second tenet, shared normalcy, suggests that the actions and thoughts of historical actors were different from one’s own and normal to that actor. Beliefs, attitudes, and decisions of historical actors comprised the third tenet, contextualization of history, and sought to avoid one exercising the practice of presentism. The fourth tenet, which required a higher level of critical thinking, required the individual to consider multiple perspectives and that in any era historical personages held manifold views when deliberating issues. Considering one’s own contemporary setting and applying historical precedents represents the highest level of critical thinking in the fifth tenet, or contextualization of the present (Barton & Levstik, 2009; Endacott, 2010).

Sequencing had to be considered before the observation because the teacher may introduce any number of subjects or use analogies of other historic periods during the

instructional session. Therefore I made the decision to focus on sequencing as a whole during the hour-long observation period. This would then provide a more holistic view of how teachers employed sequencing.

Teachers 3 and 7 dedicated half of their classroom sessions for specific subjects. Teacher three discussed the Reconstruction period in American history and used all five of the tenets, with contextualization of the past observed before multiple perspectives. Teacher 7 discussed the causes of the First World War and utilized four of the five tenets, excluding shared normalcy. Additionally, the multiple perspectives tenet preceded contextualization of the past and contextualization of the present. Contextualization of the past concluded the subject. Open-ended “why” and “how” questions accompanied both contextualization tenets. Both of these teachers used “what” and “when” queries infrequently.

Teachers 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 used between two and three tenets whose sequencing differed from each other. The lesson for Teacher 4 during the observation included a review before semester testing and may not have represented a normal instructional period. Nonetheless, Teacher 4 relied on contextualization of the past as part of the review and reinforced the notion that students needed to consider the plights of the historic actors being considered (otherness).

Teachers 1, 2, 5, and 6 employed “what” and “where” questions as much as they used “why” and “how” inquiries. The latter, however, accompanied contextualization efforts whereas the former were used to address chronological aspects of the subject being studied.

When interviewed, with the exception of Teachers 3 and 7, the participants did not elaborate on sequencing nor were the tenet terms used. Teacher 3, however, described how they addressed their older high school students, which incorporated all of the tenets in generalized terms:

The first mistake social studies students make is trying to place today's context on to actions of the past. The one phrase I hear a lot from students is "how could those people be so stupid?" Once you have a student displaying that trajectory it's obvious that is when I need to emphasize more empathy. I understand that this student does not have the empathy required to correctly construct context and therefore their understanding of this period is going to be shallow. That is because they believe everything that is now is true and shouldn't they have known that back then? America, slavery, and so forth. How could they be so stupid? Well, I tell them they have to understand the context of the time. I think many of my students start understanding that. Examining primary source documents and understanding the motivation behind their creation is the key to increasing the empathetic abilities of students. Of course, once they get out of that structured, linear thinking then they can adopt the buzzword of synthesis and take disparate elements and do the old philosophical dialectic and arrive at a higher meaning. To me, empathy is a tool of achieving that magical dialectical synthesis that increases true understanding and analysis of the past. And, of course, understanding the past is not just understanding the past, it is enriching their understanding of the present and its possibilities. That is the role of empathy and how I use it in the classroom.



Teacher 7 likewise described nearly all of the tenets during the interview. The teacher specified the basic tenet, otherness, was crucial as a building block in order to dissolve stereotypes among younger students.

At the start of the school year, I start each class with the ideas of how we got to be here and how events shaped our current physical environment. The current issues, how did they develop? What were their origins? Who were their designers? When you address otherness, I start that from day one. I warn my students to be careful to judge people by modern standards. Yes, our founding fathers were flawed human beings. They owned slaves. They opposed the rights of women to vote. They were thoroughly wrong by today's standards. And they often failed to live up to the standards of their own rhetoric. I lead them to a general understanding that history isn't really a circle but rather a spiral with similar events and similar ideas but they are displaced in time. The context around them is different so they don't play out 100 percent the same way. They cannot be held up to our own standards because they were operating within their own historical contexts.

Teacher 6 also believed that causation played an important role when placing contextualization in perspective. Causation and relevance of history, they stressed, were necessary steps to creating an empathic atmosphere in the classroom:

The teacher has to help guide them into understanding the context and how those people lived. You have to help them understand those people had beliefs and dreams of their own. Relevance is about the reasons and causes and not just the facts. I am constantly working on lesson plans and if I find something that

someone else found to be practical or successful in the classroom I will try it out. That is very important. Even though I have been teaching geography for 19 years I am always trying new things to get to kids and help them understand that the era they are living in is no different than any other. The empathy part of this is creating a climate that recognizes diversity and other societies. I really don't know how you could teach history without teaching empathy skills.

#### **Theme 4: Historic Sites as Heuristic**

All of the participants deemed site visits, whether to museums or historic locations, as an important part of the empathy process. Four teachers believed that the sites had the potential to facilitate the empathic process without formal instruction.

Teacher 2 explained:

I mentioned about making connections when visiting historic sites. There's a story there, whenever you look at a site or an artifact. I think the images and feelings sites create are an easy way for students to engage and create dialogue. They then want to know more about it. And when we jump off with an idea or image at the start of the class afterward then that gives them an opportunity to expand their creative side of thinking. Site visits sort of serve as a trigger for kids. Sometimes I don't even have to explain a battle site. The kids can feel it by looking at the site, seeing the cemeteries, walking in things like shell holes. Cemeteries really have an impact.

Teacher 7 also emphasized the role that sites play in student learning, chiefly a medium for developing empathy:

The physical world shapes the events. Once they [students] were on site one of the things they marveled at was how much more compact the site is rather than the wider expanse in the movie. They all were amazed they were standing on the same spot as the movie. I think they made the connection between the movie and the spot and once that happened I think they understood the site better. But the site stirred more questions than could be answered. They started asking things like when and how and why this particular site versus another site. That was neat. We visited a military cemetery near the site and all went quiet. I think it was overwhelming to them that that many soldiers died in that one location. The site spoke more than I could ever explain to them. It was the same for me. Sometimes you've just got to be quiet and let the kids figure it out. It engages all the senses that can't be tweaked by a book or lecture. Even movies don't provide the luxury of smell or touch.

Four teachers also commented that site visits prompted additional inquiry, leading the student to conduct research outside of the classroom. In this sense, information gleaned from the site empowered the student toward self-learning thereby developing rudimentary interpretive skills that were practical as well as enjoyable. Teacher 4 commented that their students, once engaged with the site, found it rewarding to see the growth in critical thinking:

It's great for the kids. I give them extra credit if they go to one of the sites we're reading about and do a show and tell. I make them a big certificate. I can also tell which ones travel. Those are the ones who are hungry to learn about their

surroundings or a famous place. They tend to bring stuff back with them. The place's importance is not up to me, but up to them to explain why. That's the fun part about interpretation because the site is invitational and inspiring to them.

There's an increase in knowledge. Sites do that. It's more than curiosity.

Teacher 2 concurred with Teacher 3's statement, indicating that the temporal aspect of historic sites aids in categorization or contextualization of events.

There's a lot to be said about investigating the site and revealing the timeline or sequence of events. There's also the mystery of what happened that prompts you to go back and dig into the books. Being in a place is different from reading about a place. It works on all the senses. Once, when I took a bunch of students to a historic battlefield, they started asking questions like "What happened first?" Then the kids began several debates ranging from topography to a timeline of events. That's when the site grabs them. It's magic.

Five teachers also implied that site visits also informed instruction. Teacher 1, who visited museums and historic sites at every opportunity, reflected on their own teaching style and concluded:

I literally fight the car's steering wheel not to turn in to these sites. Have they enriched my experience? Oh yes. It has to do with walking the site, feeling it, smelling it, sensing the emotion through the battle scars. Do historic sites teach? They teach me and they could teach my students if I could get them there. I also try to utilize map literacy. It's art history, architectural history, map literacy, geographical literacy, all of these literacies I'm trying to throw in. Sites throw in

all these things together and make you think. I look at a monument or memorial or a cemetery and ask myself, “now, how’d you get there?” That’s the creative historical thinking I want my students to develop. I did have a totally disinterested and disconnected boy student whose mother bought into the idea. She took him to a museum kicking and screaming and the light switch went on and he developed the ability to identify the master works of art. It was night and day. Context was really important for him, you know, who the artist was, where he painted, and so forth. Then he wanted to go to more museums. I think we all feel that way.

Visiting these sites gives you perspective. They also make you hungry. We can turn that around and use local sites as learning opportunities. Our building was built over 60 years ago as a hospital. My students didn’t know that. I didn’t know that until the vice-principal told me. That can bring up all sorts of images.

### **Theme 5: Documents, Artifacts, and Historic Dialogue**

All of the teachers’ classrooms contained assemblages of objects, media, and educational materials for students to utilize during classroom hours and study periods. Objects included historic artifacts, items gathered during travels, or articles found by students. When asked about the objects, four teachers explained that objects, like historic sites or museums, maintained a life of their own and initiated some sort of informal inquiry with the past. Teacher 4, who required their students to develop a presentation on an artifact, stated:

My primary sources are artifacts. They are open to interpretation and incite thoughts that two-dimensional objects don’t. Mainly I send my students on these

quests because they want to tell me what they've found. I don't care what they use or where they find it. Some discretion has to be exercised to be applicable to the classroom. But the curious thing is they are finding more than I ask them to find. And that is what artifacts do. I have them look at everything from tombs to combs.

Teacher 3 maintained a collection of historic uniforms and objects used by soldiers from the American Civil War to World War Two. Often times, they donned the uniforms, illustrating to students the morphology of the item and its specific use. In their view, the artifacts helped mediate the message of the particular era, especially when the object was presented without interpretation.

Most of my students know me as the weird person who dresses up in uniforms. Because I am a collector of militaria and collectibles, both reproduction and original, I sometimes bring those into the classroom to show them real artifacts and to discuss what those artifacts mean and how we can derive meaning from what them. Sometimes I leave them scattered around the room and find the students picking them up, which I encourage, and observe them asking questions with fellow students. Sometimes students run their fingers along the seams, fondle a button, feel the coarseness of the wool material. That's okay. That's how objects speak to me too. And I find that once I ask a question, another will follow.

Whether it's comparing or contrasting with similar object, the artifact has its own life that helps me understand in some small way what those wearing it experienced.

Teacher 2 underscored the notion that objects possess facilitative properties and initiate internal dialogue:

Walking through the battlements or touching the cannon helped me think that people actually fought and died here. I would sit and try to take the battle in and start talking to myself. Sometimes I would look at a cannon or monument and mumble and say “How’d you get here?” or “Who made you?” Everybody had buckets of mini balls, artifacts like buckles, and other stuff in their garage.

Everybody did. You got caught up in it. You really did. You began laying out the different types and comparing them, then finding out if they were Confederate or Union, and later on we began to think of them in human terms.

Four teachers suggested that artifacts, while valuable as teaching aids, also required some form of interpretive activity to help the students conduct proper analysis of the object. These teachers also suggested that they were not trained in interpretive methodology and were aware that interpretive skills could enhance student understanding of objects. They also suggested that artifacts not be confined to mere objects of antiquity. Conversely, they suggested that artifacts included art, documents, buildings, and other three-dimensional articles. Teacher 4 commented that objects, which included historic film clips, required mediation to assist various student learning levels:

My kids are very basic in terms of their exposure to historic events, sites, and artifacts. Some are not comfortable readers. So, you have to choose carefully. The projects, which include artifacts and discussions have to be lively enough to maintain interest. They also have to have some visual impact because many kids

are visual learners. But at the same time you have to be accurate and guide the analysis. If they ask question, including a context question, such as how a Medieval garment was made or why it looked the way it did, then I try to keep the context going so they understand such things as fashion differences, necessities based on environment, that sort of thing. I spend a lot more time...how it relates to the material being studied, and if it is appropriate for the learning levels.

Teacher 3 also commented about the requisite interpretive skills needed to increase an artifact's relevance within classroom instruction:

I appreciate when fellow soldiers part of the reenactments or observers ask questions. It's sort of existential because you're in one character and they in another. But I think we have to be careful with interpretation. There's a specific skillset that goes with interpretation and I'm not sure I have all of the skills required to help another understand an object. There may be triggers or strategies an interpretive specialist can use to increase an individual's interest. That has always intrigued me. As an educator, I'm always trying to find the best way to make headway with one of my students. Some kids may be disinterested in an item. I just have to find the right skill or trigger that peaks their interest. That's where learning begins.

Teacher 6 underscored this notion, suggesting that artifacts could take on a greater learning role if the teacher had the requisite skills to explain objects:

I like having things around. It helps the kids understand that we live in a material world and those objects can drive history or represent history. I like to visit



museums or sites I'm interested in. I really enjoy visiting museums with religious objects or textiles. Looking at 17th century dresses and other clothing takes me closer to the period I'm trying to study. I only wish I could bring them to the classroom but the museums wouldn't take too kindly to that (laughter). And I've always wondered about how the museum people write the signage to explain stuff. I would like to know how they do that because I could use some of those talents to explain stuff to my students. I don't have any really old or expensive items in my classroom to share, but when I show film clips I'd be able to share an object's importance. Like sugar harvesting using scythes, or weaving using old looms. I can say "that's a loom." Would the kids get it? Probably. But they wouldn't understand it unless I had the right explanation.

### **Theme 6: Analogies, Metaphors and Perspective Recognition**

Five of the seven teachers made frequent use of analogies and metaphors in their classroom discussions. During the observation period, Teacher 2, whose activities included student presentations on the First World War, concluded each student presentation with an analogy. For example, the teacher assigned the subject of the 1909 Dreadnought Crisis and used analogies of the Cold War buildup in the 1960s and current Russian incursion into the Crimea. The teacher then asked open-ended questions of how the subjects interrelated. Teacher 2 stated that the use of analogies in history provided perspective for the students in an effort to gain a better grasp on context:

Their analogies are a bit younger than mine (laughter). They'll listen to mine and go "oh yeah," and then they'll remember something they've been thinking about

or something they experienced and mention it to me. I think they like analogies. I always tell them to try to find a link to what they see or hear and try to make a connection. Then, when you do, put it in context. Metaphors and analogies are easy to help them get to that understanding and make the link.

Teacher 3 used several analogies at the opening of the class session. They remarked to the students that they were encouraged to ask any questions relevant to history. One such question revolved around the supposed UFO incident at Roswell in 1947. The teacher used a recent “fear of the unknown” analogy, notably the rise of nanotechnology and how it caused widespread panic around the world. The “technomyth” analogy and “death by bots” metaphor inspired additional discussion. The teacher then questioned students about other analogies and application to their own circumstances. The teacher later commented that this was an effort to help them gain a better perspective of contemporary history. Teacher 3 pointed out that the analogies were part of the comprehension process:

Of course, had one of my administrators walked in and we are talking about Roswell they probably would have raised an eyebrow and asked what connection UFOs had with our curriculum (laughter). But, to me, no question or example is beyond an informed answer. These kids are interested in these subjects and it's up to me to provide an informed, intellectual response. Like me when I was growing up, I needed to why and how and when. So do they if they're going to increase their interpretive skills. To me, gaining perspective is most of the battle in

comprehending cause and effect. Analogies help guide the students to the connections.

Teacher 4, who used an activity to describe the development of a late Medieval city, drew upon analogous descriptions to reinforce the human perspective between then and now. For example, the teacher queried students about the reason for reducing forests to build houses and the impact upon the topography. Teacher 4 then used an analogy of strip mining in the early 20th century and excessive logging in the 1930s resulting in the great dust migrations into Oklahoma and Texas during the Depression. After the session Teacher 2 explained that analogies were powerful tools that helped students make affective connections between the material being studied and application to other historical eras.

Teacher 5 believed that metaphors helped reframe history for students. They used the metaphor of a highway to help students understand their contemporary view of history. The teacher often stated “you don’t have a great deal of highway behind you to reach back and pull ideas to help you.” Another metaphor included a box of wooden blocks. Initially, the box contained instructions on how to build a specific structure. As student knowledge increased, the teacher informed the students that they would eventually throw out the instructions and begin building their own design using experimentation and knowledge. The teacher also described an episode to the class where one student experienced difficulties understanding the Holocaust. The analogy used and more contemporary with the student’s knowledge involved the genocide in Rwanda. The

students acknowledged the similarities and began offering other analogies of their own as part of the perspective process.

### **Summary**

The six themes identified in the study suggest that teachers do employ aspects of historical empathy in the classroom, which comprised the first research question “how do history teachers employ historical empathy in their classrooms?” Even though teachers were not familiar with the term historical empathy, they utilized a number of empathic tools within their classrooms to help students gain a better understanding of the material being presented. In this sense, the results validated the research question as well as the initial assumption that teachers knowingly or unknowingly used empathy in their classroom instruction and that tenet sequencing was used randomly by most teachers.

The second research question, “how do history teachers perceive historical empathy instruction in their classrooms” proved a bit more complex. Instructional strategies within the classroom varied including group work, use of artifacts (that included historic documents), and activities to increase student awareness of the historical actors or eras being discussed. The awareness of those strategies were also at the forefront as teachers often identified and used empathic approaches to help students deepen their understanding. The fact that all teachers were aware that empathy was indispensable during their daily instruction validated my initial assumption that teachers used the tenets of historical empathy. However, the awareness of historical empathy and its tenets were not readily identifiable as teachers had not been exposed to the concept,

either in their own studies or in professional development. In this regard, teachers exhibited little perceptivity of historical empathy within their classrooms.

### **Conclusion**

The research involved in this project concentrated on how high school history teachers at two high schools that serve children of military sponsors utilize the concepts of historical empathy within the context of their classroom instruction. I chose this subject as the focus for my project based on recent research that historical empathy plays a critical role in engendering critical thinking among history students. Historical empathy, according to Bardon and Levstik (2009) is also referred to as perspective recognition. In their view, historical empathy is comprised of five tenets that enable students to comprehend and retain history while simultaneously building critical, or “historical,” thinking skills.

History teachers are aware that history and social studies represent unique disciplines that require particular constructivist methodologies to help students understand causal relationships between events and historical actors. Teachers, however, face increasing demands in the classroom with emphasis placed on a tight time schedule and mandatory curriculum. This means little time for creative activities or meaningful site visits. Teachers are also aware of the challenges of maintaining student interest in history as one of the less interesting courses in high school and its application to “real world” scenarios outside the classroom. Nonetheless, teachers postulate that students show an interest in history if it has application to their lives and aids in a greater understanding of the world around them.

This section summarized the research methodology employed to develop this project. During classroom observations and interviews it was apparent that teachers were not aware of recent research into historical empathy but nonetheless practiced some or all of the tenets during the course of their instruction. They also employed certain empathic terminology during their instruction they hoped would engender empathic responses from students to understand the historical subject being studied. Tenet sequencing, ranging between a sense of otherness to contextualization of the present, also differed between teachers, suggesting that instruction could be enhanced by understanding proper sequencing of all five tenets with the final tenet, contextualization of the past, being one of the most difficult to achieve for students yet the most important for understanding contemporary causal factors. Each of the teachers also associated emotion as an internal key to understanding historical actors and their responsive actions to societal stimuli.

Based on the research results, I identified a need to develop a position paper reflecting the importance of understanding historical empathy for history and social studies teachers and its potential to help students deepen their understanding and applicability of historical concepts. The position paper will argue that the study of history represents a unique discipline that necessitates teachers use a graduated approach during historical instruction to ensure the five tenets of historical empathy are employed in order. Because teachers suggested that the use of artifacts within the classroom can be affective tools for student learning, the position paper will suggest that the employment of artifacts can encourage empathic understanding of the artifact's context with the respective period being studied. Finally, the paper will argue that site visits play a key

role in teacher and student understanding and encourage internal dialogue by walking and “feeling” the site through site empathy.

### Section 3: The Project

#### **Introduction**

Using the results of the interviews and classroom observations, I identified six themes. I then used these themes to inform the literature review and subsequent policy paper for the project. The policy recommendation paper, written in an easy to understand format, guides the reader to understand the nature of historical empathy and its potential to enhance critical thinking. Three recommendations include professional development training for history and social studies teachers on historical empathy, site visits, and use of historical objects/artifacts within classroom instruction.

#### **Description and Goals of the Position Paper**

Following the conclusion of the research and subsequent informal discussions with administrators, one of my more immediate goals was to communicate in condensed format the need for and efficacy of historical empathy. Administrators also suggested that the paper could be used for an informal presentation to the schools and could potentially guide curriculum adjustments. Additionally, teacher comments about wanting to know more about empathic approaches, contextualization, object primacy studies, and benefits of site visits indicated that a position paper would be most effective because of its potential to be used by administrators, teachers, key stakeholders, and colleagues within my profession. Whereas a professional training workshop for teachers would have a limited audience, a position paper would have far-reaching effects beyond the classroom. The position paper's title *Historical Empathy: Creating Classroom Possibilities* alerts administrators, teachers, and those within the heritage and history profession to this



relatively new area of study. In this section, I discuss the efficacy of the position paper and its role in informing a multivariate audience.

### **Rationale**

A position paper includes compelling evidence to frame rationale for a particular action (Wilson, 2012). Position papers are used to promote new ideas and help educate readers on subjects of interest (Kemp, 2005). In addition, the contents of a position paper can be relevant to multiple audiences. I developed this paper in response to the findings in my study. The research resulted in six themes: The obscurity of historical empathy; emotion as key to understanding; empathic sequencing and contextualization; historic sites as heuristic; primary sources, artifacts, and historic dialogue; and analogies, metaphors, and perspective recognition.

The initial idea of researching historical empathy stemmed from my experiences while working in classrooms during graduate work, and while working on archaeological sites. I participated in two major excavations in England during the spring and summer of 1997 and 1999 that yielded hundreds of medieval burials and a smattering of Bronze Age and Iron Age inhumations. The sites sat adjacent to two schools whose leadership and teachers expressed an interest in viewing the sites or participating in the digs. I developed a site visitation and participation plan for schools and families during both events. During the site visits, students had opportunities to view the human remains and burial goods, which initiated considerable dialogue with the archaeologists. The dialogue included questions of an empathic nature, and the students embraced the humanity of the recovery effort. Teachers and parents later commented that the site visits prompted spontaneous

research in libraries, museums, and on the internet to increase knowledge of the medieval habitat and the lives of its people.

One of my key responsibilities as a senior historian includes the development of professional site visits (known in the military as “staff rides”) for senior staff as a means of expanding knowledge of historic sites and their relationship to key decision-making. I noticed a trend in responses that were not too dissimilar from the students participating in archaeological excavations. At the beginning of the staff rides, participant comments focused on strategy and operational levels of operations. After walking through shell craters, trenches, defensive earthworks, and adjacent cemeteries, participants evolved to empathize as they sought to understand the human drama and its relationship to the context of sacrifice, death, and commemoration. My own experiences in these sites also prompted me to pause and reflect on my own views of the sites and how to understand events from an empathic perspective.

My initial contact with the term historical empathy occurred when conducting research on empathic strategies for successful staff rides. I also thought it may have some bearing on museum educational studies since I had oversight for four field museums or heritage centers. Informal discussions with educators during social events indicated that new approaches to critical thinking among history students were always being considered but were not always implemented because of the need to cover such a wide curriculum. Their suggestion was, that as a key stakeholder in the local community, I should conduct research on the subject and its applicability to a local school setting. However, before that could occur, I needed to research how teachers perceive historical empathy and employ it

in the classroom. Discussions with my committee chair confirmed that this was a subject worth pursuing in further research. That research indicated that historical empathy had significant potential for classrooms, artifact interpretation, and site visits.

My research into teachers and historical empathy indicated that the concept was well understood by scholars. However, little attention had been given to how teachers use it in the classroom, or if their perceptions had been considered, and what (if any) tenet sequencing they used. Boolean searches on Yahoo and Google resulted in the same journal articles or books, which proved to be rather few regarding teacher perceptions of historical empathy. A thorough review of *Historical Empathy and Perspective Taking in the Social Studies* (Davis, Yeager, & Foster, Eds., 2001) indicated that historical empathy was somewhat obscure to most teachers, but that these same teachers engaged in numerous activities aimed at creating higher thinking skills among their students. Davis et al. also suggested that teachers are the main mediators for historical empathy and serve as enablers for student understanding. Brooks (2011) and Ohn (2010) likewise indicated that teachers are the conduits for creating an empathic atmosphere within their classrooms, and are key stakeholders in creating avenues for constructivist, student-centered learning. Empathy also creates an atmosphere that recognizes good citizenship and diversity, notably with the demands of schools' goals of sending students with higher order thinking skills into society to enable positive changes within their communities (Damico & Baildon, 2011; Dolby, 2014).

I also had to consider administration and teacher positionality on historical empathy. In terms of conceptualization, historical empathy seemed to appeal to many

teachers, and their classrooms revealed empathy in practice. Integration into curriculum, however, has the potential for rejection or dismissal as just another good idea (Barton & Levstik, 2009). In this sense, understanding historical empathy is more about process rather than curriculum change (Endacott, 2011; Cunningham, 2009). The position paper thus serves to advocate for teacher success rather than advocating for a paradigmatic shift in teaching. The paper also informs readers of how historical empathy is used by teachers, and how activities, empathic language, and the avoidance of presentism enables empathic understanding (Huijgen & Holthuis, 2015).

### **Review of the Literature**

#### **Project Genre**

My literature review involved a thorough investigation into position paper formulation and use. Having written dozens of position and background papers for military staff, I was aware that they were used as primers for senior staff when addressing major points during conferences or to aid in decision-making. I also wrote or co-wrote four white papers relating to historical processes within my professional field, and read dozens more prepared by the Department of Defense and State Department when writing annual historical reports. These multi-page, thematic tomes usually reflected a policy recommendation or addressed a particular issue that, like expanded point papers, balanced evidence with proposed courses of action.

I determined that the position paper was the most appropriate project for this study for two main reasons. First, I am not an educator by trade, and advancing a developmental training seminar for educators may be viewed questionably by individuals

in the profession. Professional development for teachers is most appropriate when conducted within an educational construct by professionals within the educational domain (Holm & Kajander, 2015). Teachers also accept ideas to a greater degree when professional learning is integrated within a collaborative learning community (Kelly & Cherkowski, 2015). Second, the position paper presented an opportunity to share results across professional domains. While teachers and schools are the primary audience, museum education and historic site interpretation programs can also benefit from the paper as an introduction to the scholarly research on historical empathy.

Position and white papers have several items in common (Kemp, 2005; U.S. Department of Commerce, n.d.). These include the need to attract the right audience, engage the audience, inform the audience, encourage the reader, and compose in a language familiar to the intended audience. According to the U.S. Department of Education website, a white paper should range between 10 and 20 pages, and provide an executive summary, introduction, findings, recommendations, and conclusion (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

### **Conducting Research**

My online searches for position papers resulted in few examples, and instead highlighted formatting for brief examples in secondary and undergraduate school programs. I also used Boolean searches for *white papers*, *background papers*, *expository papers*, and *business briefs*. State and federal agencies including the Department of Education, Department of State, and Department of the Interior, for example, share a number of position papers and white papers for public consumption or to publicize

various policies related to functions under their oversight. I also carried out research at two local universities and community colleges, and visited three public libraries and various bookstores. These searches provided marginal results including two books whose preface mentioned origins as white papers.

I obtained better results by conducting searches through Walden University's library database. Because I was focused on education, I searched ERIC, SAGE Premier, and Education Research Complete databases. Search results included titles of some position or white papers. Because I was also interested in looking at museum and artifact interpretation, I also used Thoreau, which searched across several databases. This search effort led to a number of position and white paper examples, but none on historical empathy. A search of dissertations through ProQuest led to a number of studies on teaching history and social studies, four of which included position papers as the main project. Again, none specifically addressed historical empathy. The position paper references within these dissertations, however, were between five and fifteen years old, which proved somewhat disheartening.

I then turned my attention to online journals, including several I subscribe to. These include the *Journal of Social Studies Research*, *Journal of Social Studies Education Research*, *The History Teacher*, *Museum Education Journal*, *Teaching History Journal*, and *Studies in Philosophy and Education*. Many of the journal articles referenced position papers, the majority of which were written over the previous three decades.

The second part of the online research included Boolean combinational descriptors *historical empathy, empathic studies, object studies, artifact analysis, historic sites and interpretation, feelings and emotions and learning, museum education, teaching history, and social studies instruction*. The results yielded a number of journal articles relating to the six themes I identified in the study. The databases searches led me to several journals whose articles addressed these issues that informed the preparation of my position paper.

### **Analysis of the Findings**

The subject of this qualitative study addressed how high school history teachers at two high schools that serve children of military sponsors utilize the concepts of historical empathy. Seven semi-structured interviews and an equal number classroom observations focused on the tenets utilized and sequencing during instructional delivery. They also focused on the perceptions of historical empathy and how, if any, instructional strategies were adapted to increase student comprehension of historical events. When analyzed, the interviews and observational periods resulted in six themes.

**Theme 1: The obscurity of historical empathy.** Analysis of the interviews indicated that teachers had little knowledge of historical empathy. At times they often intermixed the term historical empathy with empathy but had not received any formal training or orientation into the study of historical empathy. Teacher 5 explained what other teachers expressed during their interviews.

I don't believe that any of us history teachers were taught to approach anything from an empathy perspective. It doesn't happen. We didn't learn from a teacher or

professor, okay, in tomorrow's lesson we are going to learn about the fall of Constantinople from a perspective of empathy.

Research into historical empathy and teacher perceptions result in similar findings. While empathy's relevance in history can be traced back to the 1920s, new history, identification, and other terms associated with empathic approaches circulated through history teachers' circles and academia throughout the 1960s and 1970s. The term empathy was also discredited by professional historians as relying on emotion rather than intellectual processes. As such, colleges that provided coursework for pre-service teachers did not use the term in the coursework (Cunningham, 2009).

Lovorn (2012) posits that many teachers were not exposed to this concept during their pre-service education and that empathic concepts were not a fundamental requirement for professional development in the social sciences. Teachers may be taught instructional strategies, questioning approaches, and the pursuit of objectivity but few given the opportunity to "do" history during the pre-service history (Cashman, 2014). Further, when interviewed, many pre-service teachers expressed apprehension about inadequate training in understanding and the application of historical thinking. Manuel Montanero and Manuel Lucero (2011) and David Neumann (2012) endorse this notion that pre-service training and the earlier formative years of teaching may have focused on testing schedules and delivery of historical subjects without the basic understanding of historiographical approaches or causal connection. This, in turn, discouraged many young teachers from trying new approaches to engender student understanding. Instead, many may retreat to what they view as safer practices of content delivery for fear that new



approaches may be too time consuming and ineffectual in their delivery. As a result, many teachers may be engaged more with the idea of teaching history to achieve historical study rather than the practice of doing history (Van Hover, Hicks, & Cotton, 2012; Martin, 2012).

Research into history or social studies teacher training likewise suggests that teachers undergoing pre-service training focus on history content and pedagogical theory. However, some teacher preparation programs tend to overlook some of the empathic approaches to historical synthesis (Martel, 2013). Additionally, many textbooks did not contain any terminology relating to historical empathy. Instead, much of the material focused on helping students understand important historical precepts and causal relationships but little focus on empathic strategies (Westoff, 2012; Keirn & Luhr, 2012). Nonetheless, Nokes (2011) suggests that many teachers who use a constructivist approach often adjust instructional strategies that lean on empathy as an important teaching tool. This was evident in the results of the current study.

Historical empathy may also be absent in history and social studies textbooks (MacPhee & Kaufman, 2014). Bias may be present in some textbooks which focus on content or certain agendas, or, in some cases the content “is a collection of boring facts...and omit much of the ambiguity, passion, and drama from our country’s past—the very features that make history interesting” (p. 124). Without textbook or other sources to provide orientation into empathic strategies, Fogo (2014) reported that empathic activities or use of multiple perspectives consistently ranked lower in history teaching practices for those teachers not exposed to literature that contained some elements of historical

empathy or perspective recognition. Sarah Brooks (2013) suggests that research gleaned from a 2010 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in U.S. History indicated that of hundreds of middle and high school students surveyed reported that lecture tended to dominate class time while textbook information consumed much of their homework time. With content being the predominant focus and no benefits from empathic approaches, chronological application and “big picture” history tends to diminish student understanding of historical continuity and current application.

Systemic knowledge may also be an issue. Historical empathy is not widely known throughout education including the state and federal levels (Lazarakou, 2008). The fluctuation of educational policies at these levels tends to focus on content while strategies remain at the district and school levels (Wood, 2012). The term perspective recognition thinking may not be pervasive in existing district and school vocabularies. Scholars suggest that vocabulary at these levels tends to drive perceptions of both processes and understanding of concepts within the educational domain and that historical empathy, or perspective recognition, are not prevalent within that domain (Brooks, 2009; Davis, Yeager, & Foster, 2001). Aimee Alexander-Shea (2011) also suggests that vocabulary development within social studies is necessary to help students create and employ understanding of both content and context. Without this vocabulary, she states that “deficiencies in vocabulary instruction create the most critical obstacles to comprehension in social studies” (p. 95).

Research confirms that pre-service education and early in-service teachers who concentrate on student development in and application of historical comprehension has

the propensity to create an environment where pupils engage in discussion that includes historical contexts (Martel, 2013). The same research suggests that teachers who utilize the tenets of historical empathy tend to be in the minority. Most teachers tend to remain in the fact and date memorization realm. Discussed earlier, the demands of high stakes testing and mandatory curriculum tend to drive this application for fear of missing historical elements or causal links from one era to another (Brooks, 2013; Tieso, 2013) Kate Hawkey (2015) also suggests that the apprehension of missing important curricular elements places even more experienced teachers at a disadvantage. She states that perceived important historical events receive greater focus and that “the lens through which we view the past has got stuck at a certain magnification” (p. 40). This focus tends to interrupt the flow of chronological change and continuity in history which may be more effective if constructed through an empathic approach (Gubkin, 2015).

**Theme 2: Emotion as key to understanding.** Throughout the classroom observation periods, the frequency of empathic or sympathetic terminology was quite noticeable. During an exercise that related to the development of a medieval village, Teacher 6 stated “Consider their feelings. How would you cope with loss of a family member from a disease that is fixable by doctors today?” This teacher also used the terms “sensitive” and “compassion” with regularity as the students struggled to understand a historic community alien to their own. Teacher 6 and Teacher 4 also used first-person emotional terminology to reflect their feelings toward the historical actors as a method for inducing emotions and stirring empathic understanding. Teacher 1 consistently used the term sympathy in regard to their own students as well as reflecting their own feelings

of historical actors coping with contemporary events. The term “passionate” tended to be a focus of Teacher 7 within the context of appreciating one’s own situation and the study of history as an exemplar developing answers or coping mechanisms using historical precedents. It was also a means of inciting enthusiasm for history and its potential to provide answers to modern challenges.

Research into student understanding of historic events and the role of emotion or feelings underscores this notion. In this regard, many scholars posit that understanding emotion for history teachers may have two benefits. First, because history is the study of historical human beings and their actions, comprehending and depicting one’s own emotions to the event also has the tendency to boost the dimensions of empathy. Secondly, by identifying emotional deficits prior to instructional delivery through self-reflection, one could likewise analyze shortages in empathy (Swan & Riley, 2015; Andersen, Evans & Harvey, 2012).

As illustrated in some of the teachers’ comments, they were all aware of how students’ perceptions of history tend to fluctuate depending on how they apply emotion to the subject matter. This conforms to research conducted over the past 15 years regarding student experiences within the classroom and their relation to the teacher’s emotional disposition (Swan & Riley, 2015). In addition to teacher emotional approaches, researchers indicate that the relationships between teachers and their students are also important, especially where the students can identify with teacher passion for the subject and how it is perceived in teaching practice. This suggests that a number of empathic approaches may be used to enhance this emotional tie between the teacher, material being

considered, and student understanding using emotion to entice perceptual changes from a cognitive perspective (Naude, Van den Bergh & Kruger, 2014). It also suggests that these emotional ties to subject matter will also increase retention after the student has increased distance between the classroom experience and newer instruction (Walker, 2011; Sakr, Jewitt & Price, 2016). By understanding this emotional connection between the student and teacher, educators may reinforce their empathic skills by practicing periods of self-reflection, communicative skills, and awareness of shared aims within the classroom and between teachers (Swan & Riley, 2015; Thompson & Thompson, 2015). They also have the propensity to facilitate one of the more critical aspects of historical empathy, multiple perspectives, which enables a greater understanding among students and engenders higher order thinking (Berg & Shaw, 2014).

Teachers 1, 3, 4, and 6 all mentioned during their interviews that sometimes students did not necessarily understand empathy toward others because they may not understand how it relates to themselves. In this regard, it may be difficult for students to empathize with or understand the dilemmas faced by historical actors. Without an understanding of one's own disposition, one may not care to exercise feelings for another. In her educational practice, Liora Gubkin (2015) suggests that empathy and feelings are considered through both a cognitive and affective domain. To understand and analyze another's emotional disposition lies within the cognitive realm. This prompts students to understand that others are under stress or incapacitated to function because of an emotional state. Gubkin uses Holocaust studies to generate the cognitive aspect of the lesson and help generate questions regarding the origins of the events surrounding the

deaths of millions of Jews. The affective domain results when the student responds to another's situation by recognizing the other's plight while and how a person could expect to feel under similar circumstances. "It is the capacity to perceive, anticipate and respond with care to the unique affective experiences of another" (Swan & Riley, 2015, p. 222).

In this regard, Charles Walker (2011) suggests that the more teachers engage with positive affirmation of emotional dispositions and affirm empathic responses the more an affective climate will exist. This then facilitates social cognition when promotes the ability for students to navigate world events while identifying undercurrents of change and continuity within a socio-historical context. True empathy, asserts Swan and Riley (2015), "occurs when teachers suspend their single-minded focus of attention, and instead adopt a double-minded focus of attention" (p. 223). Marina Goroshit and Meirav Hen (2014) underscore this idea that the more emotional self-efficacy teachers have the more empathy they will have. Factors influencing self-efficacy include job stress, fear of not covering requisite material within the classroom, student comprehension issues, and reflections on instructional delivery. Focusing on empathic strategies, posits Gubkin (2015), Debbie Storrs (2012), and Arnold Bakker et al,(2015), fosters an empathic environment that can be reciprocal for students and teachers and increasing student engagement at higher levels of understanding.

But while emotion and feelings were important to an empathic classroom, keeping them at a measurable level to facilitate understanding was also important. Teacher 2 reflected upon their years of teaching and suggested that teachers needed to mediate emotions within the classroom. Too much emotion could return to the concept of

presentism and enrage students, which would keep the students more within the affective rather than cognitive realm: their rage could overshadow accurate understanding of the historical content. It is for this reason that emotion has been avoided within the classroom. Instead, lecture tended to prevail in hopes of returning to objectivity. Teacher 2 stated that:

But emotions are kind of like sympathy and can be hollow if kids don't use them to someone else's benefit. That's how I try to guide them. Empathy is a powerful force for us as humans and helping kids understand empathy takes time and patience. But they eventually get there. These kids are very perceptive and will quickly see through the message tainted by media. That's my role as a teacher. But the kids are very capable of grasping these concepts. That's why I love teaching history so much.

Teacher 4 agreed with Teacher 2. Empathy and emotions were interconnected and the former informed by the latter. Emotions also played a key role in the educational process when used in context with emotional intelligence.

Compassion is part of who we are and that involves emotion, so sympathy is important. But I think there's a difference. One can't simply see something, feel bad about it, and then wish them well. One must feel like they're compelled to act. I suppose that's a concern that one could possibly be in a similar situation. And we've got to remember, they're teenagers. They'll remember more if they feel it.

Storrs (2012) stressed that emotion was an indispensable part of learning and played a key role in empathy. Sympathy, which usually connoted a singular, one-way feeling on the part of the students, had the propensity to keep the student from increasing their knowledge of otherness in history. As such, emotions needed to be guided and used with effect in the classroom (Garrett, 2012). It also avoided the notion that students would remain objective in their answers and only give responses of what they thought teachers would like to hear. Employing emotions within the classroom, and teacher mediations to both enact and channel emotions, results in what Phil Fitzsimmons and Edie Lanphar (2011) term “self-dialogue” which facilitates internalization of the material and a response with empathic elements. This ensures that the students begin and then later emerge from the “feel good” phase to one that is reflects on meaning using higher levels of analysis (p. 39). Walker (2011) suggests that too little emotion within the classroom can also detrimental effects. Boredom and decreased responses from students may indicate that challenges within the classroom may be too few. The result will be few opportunities to recapture the students’ attentions and subsequent loss of meaning for critical portions of the curriculum. Too much emotion, conversely, may result in distractions and decreases in self-awareness (p. 444).

Over application of emotions within the classroom may also imply an ethical dimension. Over emphasizing empathy within the classroom might initiate misunderstandings within a specific context (Metzger, 2012). Students are not living within the context of the period being studied. Additionally, they project emotions and feelings in their own domains with some emotions greater than others in context with a



particular situation. An inadvertent result may be student misapplication of understanding because the fissure between the historical event and the student's is too wide (Gubkin, 2015). This may have the student believing that a particular section of history is inconsequential and may seem somewhat trivial. Teachers should then be aware of this tendency and consider different strategies than emotion and empathy (Nokes, 2014; Fogo, 2014).

Of note, each of the teachers took great care to ensure their classrooms were warm, inviting, inclusionary, and accepting. At no time did the teachers seem to possess an air of exclusivity to other students and all questions, when asked, received responses within the time limits allowed during the class. Additionally, four teachers endeavored to stir student interest in current events by asking for parallels in recent history. Teacher 1 asked if students had observed newscasts on comments made during presidential debates. This opened considerable discussion which the teacher channeled to contextualize the comments. Teacher 5 requested feedback on an episode of *Band of Brothers* which some students observed the night before as part of their homework for extra credit. The teacher used specific scenes of the episode to address specific contexts and informed the class that there were no wrong answers but opportunities to learn. Teacher 3 used the first 15 minutes of class to allow students to ask any question on any aspect of history as long as it was respectful and not aimed at to anger or disparage fellow students. One question addressed the alleged Unidentified Foreign Object (UFO) incident at Roswell, New Mexico in 1947. The teacher also responded to a female student's question about the history of current female attire in Saudi Arabia. The teacher's non-threatening, balanced,

and respectful responses ensured that the students received answers appropriate to their age and gender followed up by numerous clarifying questions aimed to seek understanding among the students.

These positive classroom environments and respect for students conformed with recent research that constructive educational climates facilitate learning (Naude, Van den Bergh, & Kruger, 2014; Bakker, Sanz Vergel, & Kuntze, 2015). Teachers who encouraged student participation through positive feedback and respectful responses tend to create an atmosphere that encourages empathic discussion (Gubkin, 2015; Thompson & Thompson, 2015; Brown & Kennedy, 2011). A safe and nurturing classroom environment also has the propensity to create empathic relationships between students that can foster a greater appreciation for empathic understanding of historical actors (Fitzsimmons & Lanphar, 2011; Hebert et al, 2014; Haapanen, 2014).

**Theme 3: Empathic sequencing and contextualization.** Throughout the classroom observations teachers used tenets of historical empathy as noted by Barton and Levstik (2009) and Endacott and Brooks (2012). In each case, the tenets were used to help students see beyond their own perspectives to view those of the historical actors being studied. Teacher 1 often referred to the context of the present during the course of activities, asking students how they would apply the course of study to their own lives. Shared normalcy preceded this discussion in hopes of helping students understand that humans, regardless of the time period they were in, shared the same concerns and needs. Otherness succeeded these two tenets as the teacher emphasized recognition of the historical actors as real. This discussion followed some students' responses about a

certain point in First World War that hinted at presentism. The teacher was quick to adjust the dialogue to avoid hasty student judgments and projection of current values to those of previous generations. In this sense, the term “realness” of history was addressed by the teacher on numerous occasions, which resonates with research on establishing historical contexts as not exclusive to the student’s (Jackson, 2013; Fordham, 2014). Context, in this case, was aided by introducing certain wartime photographs and letters to the students to contextualize feelings and views of how the war affected people and not just personages with no connections to their own lives. This helped the students connect with the reality of the war since imagery and personal items can create in-depth learning (Gallavan, Webster-Smith & Dean, 2012).

Teacher 2, who used three of the tenets, began with one of the more advanced tenets, multiple perspectives. This teacher began the class with an overview and then commenced to have students address individual projects assigned three weeks before. Otherness was addressed when students began asking “now and then” questions which, again, hinted at presentism. The teacher then readdressed multiple perspectives which rechanneled student thoughts. Contextualization of the past then consumed the preponderance of the class as the teacher tried to summarize the half dozen student presentations. The student presentations and causal explanations affirmed contextual understanding that resonates with the research on contextualization conducted by that “is that meaningful connections between the past and the present necessitate that some control of the curriculum be handed over to students” (Brooks, 2014, p. 88).

Teachers 3, 4, 6, and 7 began with the concept of otherness as they established fundamental issues with understanding historic actors and their respective historical contexts. As many of these teachers were reviewing events prior to, during, and immediately after the First World War, the teachers used every means available to them to address the war's meaning and resultant realignment of world order. Teacher 3 used all of the five tenets in order as to address student responses. Of interest, Teacher 3 invited questions from the students at the beginning of the classroom period regarding any current or historical issue of interest. The teacher then took time to address causal factors, period context, and how historical actors perceived these actions and then used analogies to tie current perspectives on similar issues. This approach resonates with recent research on conversation and empathic approaches within the history and social studies classrooms that empathy, within a historical context, can address multiple learning styles and levels of comprehension. (Jones & Hebert, 2012; Terry & Panter, 2011). They can also aid in the development of context when students have difficulty leaving the present to address contextualization of the past (McCully, 2012).

Teacher 5 engaged their students with an interesting activity with purposeful elements of confusion to encourage inquisitiveness and contextual understanding of previous events. Similar to dissonance in a musical score, Teacher 5 introduced the idea that not all people in America were supportive of the First World War. Using maps, demographic information, and newspaper articles from isolationist pundits, the teacher soon had students questioning that statement. Since, in their misrepresented views that America and not the allies had won the war, why would America the engage with the

allies to defeat an aggressive enemy with imperialist aims? This evocation of student emotions were then tied to current events including recent policies in Europe to increase the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's efforts to confront an expansionist Russia in the Crimea. This effort at contextualization conformed with the views of John Bickford and Molly Bickford (2015) that higher order thinking and comprehension of historical context can be stimulated through the introduction of multiple perspectives and shared normalcy with historical actors. It also introduces the concept that history is not neat and tidy but a complicated series of events and views that requires more than one explanation (Chapman, 2015; Stacey-Chapman, 2015).

Tenet sequencing obviated contextual understanding during the classroom instruction. Each of the teachers used each of the tenets employed to achieve some form of contextual understanding or to appeal to the students' higher order of comprehension. Teachers used open-ended "how" and "why" questions rather than their close-ended "what, when, and where" counterparts. In certain cases, teachers vacillated between two tenets periodically (Teachers 3 and 7) when students did not provide appropriate answers or to help reinforce a previous contextual precept. In this sense, the classroom observations revealed that the majority of the teachers did not conform to the five sequenced steps mentioned by Barton and Levstik (2009) but instead used them at will to address contextualization of certain historical precepts. Lauren Harris and Brian Girard (2014) note that determining historical sequence is an important facet of teaching history and social studies and associated empathic approaches to ensuring student understanding. Tenet sequencing may occur at different times within the classroom and not necessarily

in sequence (Endacott, 2013; Monte-Sano, De La Paz & Felton, 2014; Montenaro & Lucero, 2011).

Receptivity of the past on both the students' and teachers' part was also present in the classrooms. Teachers never hesitated to introduce concepts in a way that left students without some way of comprehending the subject. For example, Teacher 4 introduced a specific subject relating to the end of the 19th century by suggesting that at the beginning of their studies in college they did not truly understand the concept themselves. They then explained how they grasped important concepts through additional readings, discussions with teachers, and relating to the event by understanding previous eras of history. Some students asked clarifying questions and the teacher responded why the students needed to know the information as a means of informing their own lives. This effort at contextualization helped the students to see history as both important and with ethical overtones since the phrase "compelled to act, not just understand" was used on four different occasions. This approach helps students understand contextualization of the past and increase awareness of human agency in history (Chinnery, 2014; McDaniel, 2015).

Finally, teachers understood the need for history to be viewed as McDaniel (2015) suggests as "a useable past" (p. 90). Using the Christmas Truce of 1914 as an example, McDaniel drew upon the voices of the participants, poetry, and letters to illustrate how students gain a deeper understanding of historical context and its alignment with empathic approaches. Participants in the study used similar examples in their classrooms as a method for captivating student interest and drawing parallels between the historical

actor's feelings and the students'. Teacher 7 used the example of Eliza Lewis Pinkney because of her age, which corresponded to the students':

Even with the great figures of history I am trying to put faces on them.

Understand them as real people. Eliza was a 16-year old girl when her dad returned to Barbados and left her in charge of the family plantations. Not just the nominal figure. She was THE boss at age 16. I tell them that the foreman probably argued with her because of her age and gender, but she made her mind up. I tell my students she was the same age as them. I then give them the context. Life expectancy was in the 40s or 50s because of disease and malnutrition. I also throw in icky factors, such as marriage at age 13, six children by age 25, and marriage to ensure survival of the family name. Marriage wasn't always about the blessed arrangement it was in the 19th and 20th centuries. It was about having children to work the farm. That really hooks them. And it's serves as a reminder to me that I have to always reflect on what these kids don't know.

In this sense, gaining a deeper understanding, or "historical consciousness," through personal accounts or other media such as historical fiction, help increase student awareness and context between the past and present (Letizia, 2016; Pellegrino, 2013). Teacher 7, in addition to the example above, also uses letters to help elevate historical consciousness by comparing correspondence between historical actors and popular texting or email exchanged between students. Within a document-based question exercise:

Then, I ask for a third paragraph that asks the student to do something with it, whether it is to compare or contrast the views or explain how this document derives from that document or what historical thinking skill is being used to explain the document. The letters between John and Abigail Adams for example regarding women's rights to vote and the context of creation of the Constitution. Letters are great because they can be mushy or to a point. And the part the kids love is that both husband and wife probably didn't see things alike. They probably had arguments about this stuff. So how does that differ from email today? It doesn't. That's the great part.

**Theme 4: Historic sites as heuristic.** Historic sites and their potential to help students comprehend historical empathy was addressed by all teachers. Many of the teachers indicated that the sites impacted both how they taught history and their influences on empathic approaches to understanding. They also mentioned that historic sites were educational and offered opportunities for teachers and students alike to explore feelings and connections between the period being studied and the reality offered by the site itself.

During classroom observations, each of the teachers recommended students take advantage of local historic sites, some of which were in context with historical periods being studied. Teacher 1 stressed the importance of visiting a site because of its ability to induce emotion. In this case, the site involved an art museum containing several works of expressionist and impressionist art the students were studying. Another site, a prominent battlefield within an hour's drive, contained a cemetery and small museum while the battlefield itself contained extensive earthworks. During this particular discussion, the



teacher used the terms experience, gut-wrenching, and sadness to describe perceptions of his visit. He then produced photographs of the site which included a memorial with unique, somewhat visceral statuary that received notable responses from the students.

Teacher 3, who acknowledged that they toured numerous historic sites over several years across the United States, the Pacific, and Europe, had similar feelings about sites associated with human drama. The teacher mentioned a visit to the Cold Harbor Civil War battlefield in Virginia and explained how the site served as its own instructional medium. Teacher 3 produced books and photos purchased from the visitor's center which illustrated the site during and after the battlefield. The students cued in on the burial of human remains by Union soldiers months after the battle which incited considerable responses from the students. Another example included this teacher's visit to the Verdun battlefield in France. Some students acknowledged their visits to the battlefield, notably the ossuary, which contained chambers of human remains visible from the outside through windows into each chamber. The teacher then explained the site's impact as they walked through shell craters and destroyed trenches, some still containing bone fragments. The teacher used, among others, the phrases couldn't comprehend, leaves an emotional impact, and my senses were overwhelmed to describe the experience. The teacher also explained the memorials and how their peaceful exteriors conflicted with the horror of the battle.

In each of these cases, teachers were moved by what scholars call the "power and authenticity" of a site or museum (Kenkmann, 2011, p. 279). Human beings are sensitive to changes in space that requires internalization and self-dialogue to make sense of the

site (Hurt, 2010; Clark, et al, 2011). In this sense, there is truth in the site which is mediated by human interaction or some interpretive medium (Wineman & Peponis, 2010; Levi & Kocher, 2013). Site visits and exposure to interpretive systems also provide examples of how to develop critical questioning in a classroom environment (Baron, Woysner, & Haberkern, 2014). The teacher's emotional responses are not atypical for site visitors. Dewey included museums during his various discourses on experiential learning because of its ability to open avenues of learning not afforded without site exposure. An in situ experience also affords a visitor to discover the site's natural setting via dialogical learning, very similar to the "I and Thou" concepts espoused by Martin Buber (Monk, 2013; Buber, 1992; Gordon, 2011).

Teacher 3's discussion about walking to and spending inordinate amounts of time at particular locations hinges on spatial theories as well as the concepts introduced by Vygotsky, chiefly his views of symbolic play and the intellectual effort to derive meaning from form (Hackett, 2014). Time spent at, movement around and within, and activities associated with documenting or internalizing the site coincide with current theories that sites necessitate the involvement of the entire person (Larsen & Svabo, 2014; Anderson, Frappier, Neswald & Trim, 2013). They also incite recall of prior knowledge, reflection on the site and previous experiences including prior study of site particulars, and object facilitation through association with the site that may include memorials, cemeteries, and topographical features (Blair, 2016; Groce, Wilson & Poling, 2013). Sites also facilitate transfer of information and knowledge to the learner and from one learner to another.

This incites shared meaning and allows for facilitation of multiple perspectives during classroom discussion (Jant, Haden, Uttal & Babcock, 2014).

The idea of historic sites as a self-educational venue, or heuristic, stems from the mid-20th century when educators and scholars believed that historic sites or normal, everyday locations had the opportunity to teach context (Kenkmann, 2011; Bevan & Dillon, 2010). Research into sites as learning spaces also suggested that sites and associated objects are observer unique, which means that interpretations vary but incite experiential learning frameworks (Peacock & Pratt, 2011; Baron & Dobbs, 2015). This may seem problematic at first since intended outcomes may not immediately be noticed and the site may not automatically adduce interpretive meaning. However, scholars posit that an unexpected outcome of a site visit includes critical questioning, internalization, and emotional responses not evoked in a controlled setting (Grever, De Bruijn & Van Boxtel, 2012; Blair, 2016; Kaschak, 2014). As an informal learning venue, museums and site visits create environments for self-learning and opportunities to explore concepts previously discussed in a classroom environment (Tenenbaum, Tom, Wormald & Pegram, 2015).

Teachers 4 and 6 mentioned historic sites and the need for students to view and touch the objects maintained as part of the site. They likewise mentioned listening to “taps” or the sounds of birds at a military cemetery. Touching objects on the site included both natural items and those added to the site such as memorials, heritage trees, and artifacts. Halbwachs (1992) confirms that part of collective and personal memory involves the senses as they apply to object or site understanding and tradition

appropriation. In this sense, Dorion Cairns (2011) argues that traditions are a form of experiencing and a basis for developing empathy. Likewise, Connerton (2012) posits that individuals and societies recognize spaces and their contexts are best experienced through experience and sensory participation.

Object intentionality is also considered when placed within a given historic context. This includes the objects such as memorials, which cause conflict between the event and its depiction. This may be the case when teachers or students visit battlefields and experience tensions between the violence of the battle and a static memorial of sacrifice embedded upon a carefully tailored lawn. This tension increases the need for plausible explanations and desire for meaning (Grandy, 2007; Nieuwenhuys & Wils, 2012). This is similar to hearing birds sing at a cemetery or battlefield which necessitates reconciliations between the event and post-event structures (Bischof, 2015).

The aspect of wonder, corporeality, and feelings are also important aspects of site visits (Burton, 2013). This idea is germane to the comments made by Teacher 7 when they state that sites facilitate empathy as they try to come to terms of how the historical actors dealt with circumstances distant from their own.

Seeing these sites that I've read about first-hand and taught literally factors into the teaching. It also helps me paint a scene. That's the story teller in me. I don't go to see specific persons (at cemeteries) but to experience the site and view the crosses. Every time I go to these sites I'm humbled and understand just a little bit of what those soldiers went through. I go again and again and again. That's what the sites do to me. It's a mixture of awe and sadness and expressions I can't even

say. They're all wound up in emotion and astonishment. Anger is also there. The question that keeps coming to my mind when I see battlefields is, how did those guys do it? What were their thoughts moments before their deaths? Did they rely on their buddies? On one site there are benches next to earthworks. I'll sit on those benches and start wondering all kinds of stuff. I've watched it in the kids too. I'm amazed when you see kids in a military cemetery. They look at a cross or Star of David and I can see their lips when they say the person's name. I mean, they're making a connection with that soldier.

This aspect of self-reflection and projection of thoughts for understanding the other is one of the characteristics of historic site visits (Maitles & Cowan, 2012; Freeman, 2014). Site visits increase intentionality by engaging emotions, even when visitors view the site with attitudinal predispositions. That is, sites can stir wonder and empathic responses when viewers engage the site through a variety of feelings even though the viewer may be initially preoccupied with conflicting feelings (Marcus, 2010; Arnold-de Simone, 2012; Chinnery, 2011). A result, emotional rationalizing has the propensity to contextualize subjects and create empathic questioning (Grenier, 2010). Historic sites also introduce new avenues for students to address ways of navigating emotions and analytical dispositions (Baron, 2012; White, 2010).

The investigation of local sites, similar to contemporary artifacts, have benefits for students and teachers. Probing meaning while observing local buildings, public venues, and community events provide opportunities for students to understand civic history and community practices (Henthorn, 2014). In this sense, urban history can

engender empathy through conciliatory negotiations between opposing policies portrayed by agencies during planning and construction phases. It also introduces the untidiness of public policy and prompts students to understand multiple perspectives within a contemporary setting (Foster & Goudie, 2015).

**Theme 5: Primary sources, artifacts, and historic dialogue.** Each of the teachers viewed artifacts as indispensable for student understanding. The teachers constituted artifacts in several categories. Most of the teachers mentioned three-dimensional historic objects that ranged from prehistory through contemporary periods. An important item for some teachers included artworks spanning prehistory (cave paintings), Greco-Roman statuary, medieval works, Renaissance representations, and modern compositions. Two-dimensional items including letters, government documents, speeches, and posters were viewed as important because of their tactile and visual applications. Teachers also included music and movies as artifacts because of their associations with certain historic periods.

Teachers connected artifact usage to specific curricular activities. This included emphasizing artist feelings during the impressionist period, musical compositions during the Vietnam War, flint tools in the prehistoric period, and patriotic posters during the First and Second World Wars. Objects abounded in the classrooms as means of stirring interest among students. During two classroom observations, teachers engaged with students viewing objects that were part of the teachers' personal collections. The dialogue and explanations mediated the objects which incited additional questioning and requests for similar objects. In all cases, teachers suggested that artifacts amplified upon the

respective lesson being addressed. They also suggested that artifacts and objects helped create empathic connections with the historical actor or era it was representing.

The importance of teacher and student engagements with objects is underscored by recent research, notably in regard to object interpretation and creating avenues for understanding (Absher, 2012; Banerjee, Kominsky, Keil & Madhawe, 2015). As part of the object interpretation, viewers create narratives based on assumptions that induce mental triggers (Humphries & Smith, 2014; Bowen, Greene & Kisida, 2014). In terms of materiality, humans see objects as possessing important and variable social dimensions beyond their original design purpose (Cornish, 2004; Card, 2015). The latter has the propensity to induce curiosity of the object and how it represented the individual (Turkle, 2007). Objects also prompt inquiry beyond the students' or teachers' beliefs (Waring, Torrez, & Lipscomb, 2015; Poers, Prather & Cook, 2014). Similar to site visits, artifacts and objects can enhance understanding through self-directed learning. This helps students who are accustomed to teacher-based learning adjust their learning skills by focusing on object literacy (Warburton & Volet, 2012; Johnson, 2012). Mindful use of objects also engender long-term curiosity and prompts connections between traditional and object learning (Sederberg, 2013).

Teacher enthusiasm for use of artifacts in the classroom to increase empathic understanding is one of the main reasons for artifact usage in the classroom. The centrality of objects in everyday use, including those objects utilized within a classroom environment, contain what Sophie Woodward (2015) terms "life histories" of the objects (p. 1). These histories then encourage social relations between the objects and those

studying them which, in turn, creates meaning for the viewer (Black, 2014). But this initial interpretation is open to other meanings when considered through tactile and other sensory mediums. The objects also help a student to frame temporal experiences through comparisons. Delving into the object's creation encourages suppositions into the originator's thoughts, life patterns, and reasoning for creating the type object. This enables a tacit understanding of the object and builds further inquiry which extends beyond original suppositions (Woodward, 2015; Gygi, 2004).

The tenets of shared normalcy and otherness are engaged through the use of artifacts or collections and enable students to view history through a chronological perspective. Artifact comparisons and constitution of meaning also enable students to create dialogue between themselves and the object. By recognizing the object as having an identity, the student no longer views it as an "it" but an entity capable of reciprocity (Powers, et al, 2014; Buber, 1996). Artifacts also increase inquiry-based learning since inquiry-based learning equates to self-learning (Gureckis & Markant, 2012). They also have the capability to elicit emotions and help the students understand how the object is identified with a particular era. In particular, musical compositions and artwork have the capacity to develop empathic skills in the cognitive domain (Laird, 2015). It also aids students when visualizing artifacts. Visualizing the object creates images and helps the student navigate internal narration (Heafner, Groce & Finnell, 2014). Working with artifacts is also viewed as pleasure and incites individual learning, allowing the observer to learn for one's self (Cartwright, 2012).



Objects are also a reflection of a particular society if they are contemporary with that society (Maurstad, 2012). Museums and their objects can guide students to a greater understanding of social communities within certain collections (McManus, 2011). However, the collections must be representational to the viewer in context with the subject or era under consideration. Thus teachers should be aware that introducing objects into a discussion must be given considerable forethought if the genuineness, or truth, of the artifact is to have effect (Hogsden & Poulter, 2012). If misrepresented, the artifact can then have detrimental effects on viewer understand and miscomprehend it item's relational context with its particular communal use.

An object's oversimplification or misapplication of importance can also cause students and teachers to draw incorrect conclusions, resulting in the ascendancy of an item without proper context. Nonetheless, object affection, if guided correctly, can create greater understanding of the object and its connection within a given cultural context (Geoghegan & Hess, 2014). The artifacts can also increase emotional engagement when students address how their feelings toward the object by understanding visual and tactile responses to the object (Taylor & Statler, 2013). From a school perspective, teachers and students can explore their own school grounds to gain a greater understanding how artifacts represent organizational identity. For example, students can research room development, room relationships, building additions, playground layout, and myriad other subjects to determine relationship within communal constructs (Scholar, H. 2016; Pink, Morgan & Dainty, 2014). In this sense, students can also assign new meaning to

their schools as an artifact since objects can connect the object with its application to a type function (Rinkinen, Jalas & Shove, 2015; Ingold, 2012).

The ascendancy of a document to an artifact can propel students to seek a synthesis of object and content connection (Jantzen, 2016). Documents within a classroom are often used to develop data-based questioning (DBQ) in more advanced classes (De La Paz, et al, 2012). These documents are often taken as literal accounts of events, policies in context with the era, or private missives meant to illustrate relationships (Foster & Gouldie, 2015). However, documents also have a propensity to inform in terms of representations to other documents (King, 2014). For example, in a study of the U.S. Constitution, documents with provenancial relationships, can be viewed as a whole object and create, what Karen Charman (2014) views as “additional layers of narratives that are revealed” when students and teachers address the collection (p. 252). When analyzed, the documents can also reveal bias toward one particular cultural or ethnic group, generating critical thinking among students and increasing exposure to multiple perspectives (Swartz, 2012). Documents also increase literacy in the history discipline by having students interpret and dissect aspects of the document. This segmentation then allows students to ponder concepts within the document rather than focusing solely on facts, dates, and places (Shanahan, et al, 2016).

**Theme 6: Analogies, Metaphors, and Perspective Recognition.** Analogies and metaphors were present in all of the classroom observations. Throughout the course of instruction, many teachers used analogies to help students comprehend subjects and gain additional perspective, including those subjects deemed somewhat complex. Teachers

also had so many hours during the week to cover the required curriculum and used analogies and metaphors to generate interest or draw out student responses. Teachers also encouraged students to draw their own conclusions using their own analogies when completing projects.

Barton and Levstik (2009) suggest that analogies are part of the analytical formation of historical empathy. These can be associated with particular circumstances in the past that may hold relevance to current circumstances. In particular, previous actions may have a direct bearing upon recent events. For example, Teacher 4, when asked about the usage of analogies, responded “What took Spain off the major power grid in the late 1500s? He went bankrupt four times. What happened to Louis XIV? War. We shall see. I hope I’m wrong. It’s guns or butter.” This type of analogy was used extensively by Teacher 4 throughout the classroom instruction, including attempts to help students understand the re-drawing of the map by referring to the designation of new Arab states in 1919 and current events involving Russia in the Crimea. Teacher 5 also corresponded activities in Vietnam with the fear of similar actions in the Balkans in the early 1990s. The teacher used this as an example of ethnic conflicts that led to the First World War. In this sense, analogies helped students make correlations between the past and the present while simultaneously reducing abstraction (Apthorp & Igel, 2012).

All of the teachers used film as both analogy and artifact. From an artifact perspective, sequences from 1950s “big bug” science fiction movies were used to depict fears of the nuclear age throughout the post-World War Two era. Teacher 3 suggested the same clips films were also used as analogy to emphasize the world’s current discomfort

with steroids or genetic manipulation of plants used for human consumption. Two teachers mentioned that they also used clips from the movie *Sergeant York* to address America's feelings on isolationism prior to the Second World War and as analogy for rhetoric espoused by presidential candidates on decreasing American presence in European politics. In this sense, William Russell (2012) and Melissa Mitchell (2011) suggest that the atmosphere portrayed by film may also be used by teachers to present a distorted view of a particular historical era and that the intended message not be received by students. Instead, film and popular media can offer opportunities for teachers to analogize current events portrayed by a biased media with an agenda.

The use of analogies and metaphor also help students understand and retain concepts (Mozzer & Justi, 2013; Genc, 2013). When presented in a teacher-student or student-teacher schema, both teacher and student seek comprehension through query (Fielding, 2015; Foster 2013). They can also make the bridge between what is and is not known, including abstract concepts that may be represented in visual form such as photographs or books. They also serve a functional purpose that illustrates similar attributes (Dikmenli, 2015; Allender & Freebody, 2016). Metaphors and analogies also connect students to historical consciousness and how they enable students to make connections between the present and the past, both of which are components of historical empathy (McDaniel, 2015; Chauncey, De La Paz & Felton, 2014).

Analogies and metaphors are also means of helping students connect historical events with events in their own lives (Cunningham, 2009). Apart from contextualization of the past and present, connections of past historic events also helps the student consider

their place in history. Analogies can then serve as a mnemonic, providing a spatial and corporeal sense of self (Colby, 2010; Ohn 2010). In this sense, analogies increase the notion of multiple perspectives by emphasizing that one's own views of events may align with but are not necessarily the same as a historical actor's (Robertson, 2011).

The tenet of multiple perspectives as associated with analogies also has implications to increase student knowledge of multiculturalism. As an experiential exercise, analogies may allow students to step outside of their own reality realm to generate a concept of evenness between themselves and a group differing from their own (Suthakaran, Filsinger & White, 2013). From an analogous perspective, the impact of and use of storytelling and metaphors by teachers within the classroom can broaden student perspectives about diversity since the stories involve personal accounts that may include comparisons of contemporary thoughts with those of historical actors (Baloche, 2014; Doecke, 2013). The use of this important medium also suggests that stories serve as teaching tools, including those stories helping understanding the otherness of historical actors outside of their own cultural borders (James, Martinez, & Herbers, 2015; Lawrence & Paige, 2016; Cheeseman & Gapp, 2012). Teacher 3 recalled their own experiences listening to family stories and how those accounts helped students view historic events through a personal lens.

The family stories were the most important. That included life before the modern era which was the post-atomic era I was growing up in. It's different than what my students have experienced. They come from different backgrounds and perspectives. I have students coming from environments I have no clue about and

there are variables in these kids' lives that I can't control but I still have to manage to get them to master knowledge and skills to a lot of them are hypothetical to their modern lives. That's difficult. I use a lot of stories, jokes, and metaphors. I also use a lot of theater based on my theater training to try to get them to a point of the validity of why they are here and what we are trying to teach them.

### **Sharing the Results**

Upon approval of the governing headquarters, this study will be shared with the schools that participated in the study. The results will be condensed into a two-page point paper that includes the findings as well as recent research conducted into historical empathy. Additionally, a slide presentation will be developed and presented to the administrators and teachers. Emphasis will be placed on how teachers can use local historic sites and architecture to stimulate interest in historical subjects. Additionally, the use of artifacts will also be discussed and their role in the classroom to increase critical thinking skills. The results will also be shared with interested community stakeholders who support the schools and district. This will include key staff members within my organization and colleagues since the elements of historical empathy will benefit heritage activities with education programs.

## Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to explore how high school history teachers at two high schools that serve children of military sponsors utilize the concepts of historical empathy. In this section, I address the strengths and limitations of this study, and discuss alternative approaches to the problem and possible methods for conducting additional research on the subject. Next, I reflect on project development, leadership, and myself as a scholar practitioner. Following these reflections, I consider the study's usefulness for teachers and its implications for positive social change. Subsequently, I summarize the importance of the project study as it pertains to schools, and outline its benefits in my role as a government historian, manager of historic properties, and senior staff coordinator for historic site visits. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of the project's implications, applications, and directions for future research.

### **Project Study Strengths**

In this doctoral project I aimed to understand how high school history teachers comprehend and utilize the concepts of historical empathy within their classrooms. One of the project's strengths was its embeddedness within a local context. Two local high schools contained a number of history and social studies teachers who were eager to understand historical empathy and its potential to increase their effectiveness in the classroom while exploring local historic contexts with their students or using affective approaches to artifact interpretation. Another strength included the nature of the study itself. Little research has been conducted on how teachers perceive or employ historical

empathy. This study contributes to the growing body of scholarship on historical empathy and its potential to increase teacher awareness of empathic sequencing and methods for engaging students to increase empathic responses within the classroom.

Transcript reviews by the participants and member checks of the field notes also increases the strength of the study. Teachers made minor changes to their transcripts or expanded upon notations I made during the observation periods. Saturation was reached by the fifth interview, which suggested that no new information was forthcoming. The information saturation also paralleled research I conducted prior to and during the research period.

The localized problem also provided an opportunity to observe teachers in their natural environment and interview them on their teaching experiences, inspirations that led them to teach such a unique discipline, and perspectives on empathy within the classroom. As such, this qualitative approach enabled me to reflect the insights of the teachers within a localized setting. The localized setting also allowed the teachers to discuss best practices within their classroom contexts, and to identify those activities they deemed critical to develop what they viewed as historical thinking in their students. This self-reflection was also a strength of the study because the inductive, ground-up nature of the analysis led to results that I could carefully analyze and compare with published, peer-reviewed research.

The resultant position paper, I which I discuss the importance of historical empathy in history and social studies, may be used as an extractable, stand-alone document. It proffers a readable, condensed product that avoids the complexities of a



formal research product and may be shared with local stakeholders, administration, and teachers. The research may also elicit interest among professionals associated with the heritage profession, including colleagues who are responsible for historical property management, interpretation, and development of professional staff rides to historic sites.

As with any study, limitations must also be considered. One limitation includes the brevity of classroom observations. The study proposal limited observations to one session per teacher, which may not truly represent the full spectrum of approaches the participants used to employ historical empathy within their instruction. Additionally, one class was atypical. The teacher involved conducted a review for end of semester testing and did not incorporate instruction into the day's events. Another limitation included the small sample size. I observed and interviewed seven of the school's eight history and social studies teachers, but the findings may not be generalizable to other organizations. Cresswell (2008) suggests that generalization may not be the intention of such a qualitative study. Instead, the case study approach focuses on a local phenomenon, and I made sure to highlight potential limitations in the position paper.

My role as a non-educator may be viewed as both a strength and limitation. As an outsider with little experience in education, I may be viewed by educators as not having the requisite expertise to observe and appraise curricular activity or determine its significance. My historian's biases should also be taken into consideration, and education professionals may want to delineate between pedagogy and my role as a history practitioner. I address this bias in the position paper while also noting the corresponding

benefits of a professional historian viewing characteristics of teacher delivery styles and use of empathic strategies.

One of the position paper's limitations is its applicability to an audience external to the history or social studies community. While other disciplines, including language arts and sciences, may benefit from empathic approaches, those approaches would have to be demarcated within those curricular specialties. The paper also draws upon current theory regarding the role of historical empathy and tenet sequencing to evoke student understanding of historical actors. While it does connote the subject's importance, it does not include any recommendations for curricular modifications or best practices normally associated with professional development or content delivery.

### **Recommendations for Remediation of Limitations**

Two local high schools were considered for this study. An alternative approach would have been to consider additional high schools in the region. This would have increased the number of teacher observations and interviews, and may have generated additional ideas for greater generalization. Another approach may involve focus group responses contrasted with individual voices. Focus group interviews could include stakeholders, community partners, parents, and school administration, since some of these may be advocates for modifying curriculum and increasing site availability for the proliferation of architectural and topography analysis.

My avoidance of student responses was purposeful. As a vulnerable population, students require additional permissions from the Institutional Review Board and school governing authorities. As another alternative approach, observing and documenting

student responses, whether pedantic or detailed, would allow a researcher to gain additional perspectives on how students are influenced by empathic pedagogy. Yet another approach may include the development of formative and summative assessments attentive to student recognition of and engagement with empathy-based activities.

### **Scholarship**

Prior to this doctoral journey I learned that history was both a passion and a methodology for discerning causal relationships. Having applied historic methodology to research, oral history, and archival activities throughout my career, I knew that these skills and thought processes informed how we perceive the temporal world in relation to our own contemporary circumstances. But these approaches tended to be somewhat broad in focus while historic events informed the research. Identification of a local phenomenon within an educational construct required a different approach. I thus needed a systematic approach to research that was validated by scholars knowledgeable of the theoretical underpinnings of the phenomenon. Once I had identified the problem, narrowing the focus and articulating the problem proved to be a significant learning curve.

Second, successful doctoral progress is predicated upon collaboration with other scholar practitioners. Research and writing history tends to be an individual effort. Conversely, working with faculty, specialists, librarians, and other doctoral candidates brings different viewpoints and recommendations for approaches to the research. For example, having never conducted a qualitative case study, I quickly became overwhelmed by the myriad approaches to such a study. Other doctoral candidates and a very patient chairperson helped lower my anxiety levels and offered advice on how to

approach research within a local setting and assemble a proper research question. During the prospectus phase, I realized the responsibilities doctoral candidates must incur to assist a school within the context of positive social change. Once embraced, this social change context then provided me the impetus and focus to narrow the research to insure that it would benefit teachers and their students. Collaboration, I also found, was multidirectional. I realized that many of the other doctoral candidates also faced similar uncertainties, so offering suggestions soon became the norm rather than exception. Our cohort became a support mechanism. What were once viewed as criticisms, suggestions became critical tools to optimize or question certain assumptions. I soon learned that professional learning communities spring from such dialogue. I must say that I also learned from these new peers, many of whom had dozens of years as professional educators.

Third, Walden University's Educational Doctorate program required a new set of skills, notably writing with the APA format and proper execution of sentence syntax and referencing protocols. The coursework also used a building block approach to developing scholar practitioners, emphasizing the contemporality of education and the need for improvement in all spheres of educational processes. In this sense, the work was quite demanding and the learning curve quite steep, including the use of scholarly sources and approaches for validating them and their use in supporting the project study.

Finally, Walden's requirement to develop and adhere to a project timeline ensured success. As part of that timeline, I had to consider potential setbacks in research and unexpected life events. The coordination process for the final study, which included the

prospectus and proposal, also had to be factored into the timeline. This timeline underpinned Walden's foundation for success, which eventually led me to the final project as a scholar practitioner.

### **Conclusion**

This study was conducted out of my own interest in how teachers employ historical empathy within the classroom. Administrator interest in how empathy could support student learning also led to the research on the subject. The purpose of the study focused on gathering personal perspectives of teachers who taught history and observe classroom instruction. The eagerness of the participants also validated that this study set a precedent. No other research had been conducted in the schools on historical empathy and teacher responses validated that premise. When introduced, the concept of historical empathy proved somewhat elusive yet the teachers knew the primacy of empathy within history classrooms. The teachers, as willing participants, shared their concerns for helping students to help them become productive and informed individuals with the potential to set the stage as change agents within their communities.

The project, a position paper, reflected on the importance of historical empathy within the classroom and offered suggestions of how to inform teachers of its potential. Suggestions also included teacher engagement with and analysis of historic artifacts and object use as part of the learning process. The study also suggested that teachers include site visits as an affective approach to increasing empathic engagement. Empathy, which is requisite for understanding human contexts, also has significant implications for social change. Empathic understanding acknowledges diversity. Further, empathic analysis of

the mistakes of the past can help guide students to understand historic events in their own lives and place them in context, enabling historical recall to avoid making similar mistakes in the future.

### **Project Development and Evaluation**

As a government historian I was frequently tasked to support staff tours of prominent historic sites as part of a professional staff development program. When researching these I often asked myself how participants viewed the site and if empathy or feelings played an important role. My graduate studies in education focused on some of these issues including artifact interpretation, site empathy studies, and how sites affected learning. But without a group to study the project seemed improbable. Informal discussions with local educators and principals prompted me to consider the idea of historical empathy and its affectivity for those involved in certain educational processes. Additional discussions with my chairperson helped resolve any overriding concerns about research within local schools and provided the impetus to formalize the proposal. Additionally, I worked with community stakeholders who likewise recommended that explorations of local architecture and topography could benefit students if used in context with curriculum requirements. Many suggested that the subject needed to be codified in some form of guidance, similar to a white paper. A thorough review of scholarly works, including those written by early theorists, resulted in the need to formulate a position paper that described the need for understanding historical empathy and its potential for engendering critical thinking within students.

The position paper was designed to inform the schools, community stakeholders, and colleagues on the value of historical empathy based on the findings presented in the study. Central to the paper is the usefulness of empathy within a number of contexts including the interpretation of sites and use of artifacts within the sites. The paper also

introduces the idea of developing a professional development program for training teachers in historical empathy, sequencing, and methods for identifying responses associated with empathic terminology. The paper is informed by the participants' experiences and scholarly research and reinforces the potential for creating an empathic environment to cultivate student success. It also seeks to encourage administration and parent participation, notably where exploration of local sites, museums, or galleries can stimulate a student's desire to learn. The paper also discusses extant resources within the immediate environs of the schools that may be used at no cost in a fiscally constrained environment.

### **Leadership and Change**

As a burgeoning scholar-practitioner within my community, government history programs, and in higher education, I am dedicated to the pursuit of further research into this new area of study and its relation to educational excellence. The course of study and resultant project have increased my leadership abilities and I will continue to seek higher levels of leadership within my profession. One opportunity is to assist the instructor who oversees the course to train new historians. An empathic approach to research during the course of study will aid in the development of a new generation of life-long learners capable of providing excellent support to their staffs.

Empathic approaches in leadership is also critical. The research into this important subject validated my initial assumptions that empathy can assist leaders as they navigate complex issues. I found that by applying empathy during daily work routines I understand how individuals within work teams work more efficiently and with greater



passion when their needs are recognized and attended to. As a senior staff member, I also have a greater appreciation for the need to establish relationships with other staff members as we collectively seek resolution to challenges or problems. By applying tenets of historical empathy into my daily routine as a senior historian I have become more effective in my research and application of historical lessons when advising the senior staff.

### **Analysis of Self as Scholar**

As a career government historian I have researched and written dozens of unit histories, monographs, and special studies, all of which were related to military operations of one variety or another. I have also been involved in training personnel new to the historian career field. However, I was not satisfied with my current level of knowledge on education theory. I also understood that I needed to study theory on how people construct meaning when viewing objects and how empathy played a role in that development. With this in mind, I searched for a doctoral program that could compliment my profession, chiefly in the heritage and museum education domains. After speaking with Walden University I was assured that my project would align with the curriculum, instruction, and assessment program but that the coursework and project refinement would require rigor beyond that of my previous experiences with graduate work. The demanding coursework and residency confirmed this, helping me to refine my research goals while understanding the critical aspects of reliability and validity.

Mentioned earlier in the study, as a non-educator I had a great deal to learn from educators and professors. This included the necessity of rigor when interpreting

scholarly, peer-reviewed literature, theory, and vocabulary associated with education.

The advanced studies into curricular planning, development, and delivery also helped me understand that researching and developing heritage educational programs was much more involved than previously perceived and prompted me to reconsider my whole project ensemble. I realized that research and development of such a project needed to be grounded in theory. Moreover, I realized that conducting research into an existing problem or phenomenon would be the correct approach while balancing the need to address a local problem with my professional interests.

Despite my years of conducting research and using documents to write historical narrative, conducting research with human subjects proved to be much more involved and intricate. Additionally, designing the research questions proved to be just as demanding as the focus narrowed to the appropriate subject. Problem description, rationale, and other parts of the proposal also demanded new skills. At this time I also realized I was growing as a scholar-practitioner, refining my informed writing to persuade rather than summarize events.

Prior to my enrollment with Walden, I often defined the term scholar as one who would be perceived as an expert in a given field. My perception changed over the course of the five-year program, now understanding that a scholar is never truly an expert, but one who becomes proficient in researching and writing. They are also those individuals with an awareness of problems and challenges and seeking answers to them. A scholar is also one who embraces change, analyzing and implementing processes that benefit schools and communities.

### **Analysis of Self as Practitioner**

In 1981 I trained to become an active duty unit historian. Responsible for writing about unit activities, I felt I had found my calling. I enjoyed hearing and documenting personal accounts, researching documents, and developing heritage displays. During my active duty career I had opportunities to work with students of all ages on military bases around the world. I realized that children and adults alike enjoy searching for, finding, and working with artifacts. However, I realized that my delivery when dealing with artifacts or site contexts was not always as refined as it should be. While in a graduate program in education I had completed a practicum with two prominent museums and a middle school and realized that teaching was both a science as well as an art. Additionally, the study of objects from a museological perspective also lie outside of my current knowledge domain and required additional study. Nonetheless, I realized that education should be student-centered in order to create a life-long learner. I also realized my approach in the classroom was less than optimal.

As my professional career developed as both an active duty and civilian historian with the Department of Defense I was able to assist in the refinement of host nation curriculum, provide artifacts to teachers, and conduct tours of historic sites on base and found that my other interest lie in the educational realm. From a theory standpoint, I lacked the knowledge of theories relating to how humans derived meaning from objects and applied empathy toward a specific item. Further, I did not understand how to conduct a study of this important subject. When I approached Walden about my interests, again, the university understood my desires to immerse myself in theory and current research

into such subjects. Since my enrollment I have grown as an educational practitioner and have a greater appreciation and comprehension of education and theoretical underpinnings of object primacy, experiential learning, and authenticity theories in museum studies.

As a historian, my new knowledge in these areas has enhanced my performance as an artifact curator. I also have a new perspective on visits to historic sites, understanding that the tour docent serves as a mediator between what is being viewed and how it is being perceived. I have also changed my practices when conducting oral history interviews. I now use open-ended questioning and semi-structured approaches to interviews. This allows for spontaneity and focuses on the humanity of the moment.

#### **Analysis of Self as Project Developer**

One of the greatest benefits of the Walden program has been the challenge to develop a project designed around a particular need or problem. While I have accomplished numerous small-scale projects, I have not had to plan a project the scope of the one I developed for my dissertation. Because I often dealt with inanimate objects (artifacts, documents, landscapes) during fieldwork I did not have to consider the human element when designing a project. Additionally, I was not aware of the care needed to protect a person from the stressors involved in such a project not the potential to divulge personal information. Over time, the policies on protection of human subjects demanded by Walden required constant adherence to processes and procedures that became second nature. They also helped me be a better communicator during the project development phase.

Deciding on a case file study approach to the project aligned with my own interests, chiefly a human's perspective on specific issues and how they apply within a classroom or site-specific context. The aspects of qualitative inquiry always intrigued me because I believed that there were elements of truth in all human perspective. Placing the human voice within the framework of historical empathy was not just a challenge, but also a joy because the study offered an opportunity to learn from professionals in the educational domain with knowledge different from my own.

Maintaining a focus on social change also proved challenging. Prior to enrolling in Walden's educational doctorate program, my personal philosophies were more aligned with social continuity rather than social change. However, as I proceeded through the curriculum I soon learned that social change means focusing on schools as learning communities and how to help them as a community stakeholder. It also meant identifying processes and developing a project that enabled students and their teachers to make classrooms a fun and exciting place to learn. I also learned that social change does not begin with someone else. It begins with me. As such, I am no longer simply an observer in life. Rather, I now have additional skills to seek resolution to challenges and problems for the benefit of another.

The processes of identifying and developing a project have carried over into my historian profession. Long neglected projects are now being reviewed and prioritized. These include a unit historian training program aimed to provide initial and upgrade training for newer historians. Another large-scale project involves the display of 300-plus pieces of original Air Force artwork throughout a wide-spread headquarters campus that

incorporates a brochure for a walking tour and signage to inform the viewer. As curator for hundreds of unique historical properties, I have gained proficiencies as a project developer to cultivate policies for proper display and care and provide learning opportunities for my senior staff. Ultimately, developing a scholarly project for Walden University has also helped reduce barriers to project development in other areas.

Finally, a word must be said about a growing pool of colleagues. Walden's incremental course program put me in contact with a variety of learned professors whose knowledge of theory and experiences in teaching help set a path to excellence. Their advice and counsel set an example of how to provide the same professional courtesy to those I supervise and work with. The doctoral candidates I communicated with and shared ideas over the past five years introduced me to growing groups scholar practitioners with expertise differing from my own. While I now have the ability to develop a project, I am by no means proficient to tackle project outside of my own experience. It is this group of professors and soon fellow graduates that will serve as a collective group with which group to consult and share ideas. In my view, scholarship means recognizing that others hold knowledge and experience and to tap into that expertise is critical for successful project accomplishment.

### **The Project's Potential Impact on Social Change**

I also want to share the study with educators and use it as a tool for increasing internalization of empathy as a means of helping teachers develop empathy within their students and view empathic approaches as change agent. As a community stakeholder for local schools and interpretive programs, I see that another goal is for the study to

influence a student-focused, empathy-inspired curriculum. I also hope that the empathic strategies used by teachers can increase critical thinking skills but also help construct an environment that acknowledges and celebrates diversity and develops empathic relationships. These and other efforts reflect my beliefs in Walden University's philosophy to create and sustain social change.

A position paper, as a condensed version of the study, has the potential to impact not just the schools where the research took place, but to add to a growing body of research. This research seeks to enhance the awareness of empathic approaches to history and its propensity for students to consider the lives of other as well as their own. Historical empathy can help increase an awareness of diversity, multiculturalism, and understanding. By viewing their own communities through the lens of another, students can understand how their communities function by comprehending the feelings and views of those members embedded within those communities.

### **Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research**

#### **Implications**

The results of the study imply that administrators and head teachers can use the information to understand the concepts of historical empathy and consider how it is being employed during classroom instruction. Classrooms observations validated that specific tenets were in use as teachers attempted to bring their students to reach a fuller understanding of historical actors and causal factors. Teacher responses also indicate an understanding of empathy and its role in helping students comprehend historical contexts in connection with their own. Implications also indicate that teacher responses and

actions during observations are validated by peer-reviewed research on the importance of historical empathy and perspective recognition.

### **Applications**

The study's applications include a pathway for professional training, theoretical understandings of historical empathy, the efficacy of using objects in classrooms, and importance of site visits for teachers and students. With minimal effort, administrators can use the study to develop a seminar to inform history and social studies teachers on historical empathy and the sequencing of its tenets to support students within their respective classrooms. While change within curricular delivery or classroom practice can be an issue, simply helping the teachers understand the existence and theoretical underpinnings of historical empathy within their daily routines.

Similarly, historic site exploration need not be an all-day, costly effort. Conversely, local buildings, earthworks, or even modifications to building can provide a rich learning experience for students. The same applies to artifact and object interpretation. Ancient artifacts may not be available, but modern objects can provide the same benefits for increasing student activities as they engage in typological analysis. Providing teachers with the interpretive training on artifact or site construal theories can increase the effectiveness of both teacher and student encounters. The application of this study may also have far-reaching effects for other schools. Because the voices of the teachers themselves described a local phenomenon, other teachers and administrators may be experiencing similar circumstances as they strive to meet the demands of core curriculum balanced with student needs.



### **Directions for Future Research**

This study does not, however, imply additional research is not warranted. On the contrary, additional research studies could focus on collaborative efforts between schools and community stakeholders to create atmospheres that engender empathic processes. Another recommendation would be to study sequencing in classroom instruction and the interaction of empathic terms on student understanding. Mentioned earlier, observations of students in the classroom are warranted, focusing on empathic strategies employed by teachers that may include activities, use of primary source documents, and group work. Another consideration may include the differences in student empathic responses between advanced placement and other history or social studies courses. Similar opportunities may exist for museum education professionals. Museum education programs often focus on the interpretation of objects and their use within a given context. They also hope to reinforce the positionality of a particular historic actor. Tenet sequencing may aid these professionals in their instructional practices, notably those museums that tie their programs with state curriculum requirements. Finally, scholars need to focus on teacher experiences at sites and considerations of sites as a teaching alternative (heuristic). While site interpretive theories are relatively obscure to most teachers, approaching the research from an empathic perspective may result in new findings.

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Appendix A: Position Paper: Strategies for Developing Historical Empathy: Creating  
Possibilities for History Classrooms

**Executive Summary**

This position paper encapsulates some of the more important findings and suggestions of a recent study entitled Teaching Strategies for Developing Historical Empathy. The study was conducted at two high schools that serve children of military sponsors.

**The Problem.** The problem addressed in this study was how teachers utilize the concepts of historical empathy during their daily instruction.

**Methodology.** A qualitative study was conducted with seven teachers and included semi-structured interviews and one classroom observation per teacher. Additionally, two research questions were developed that formed the study:

- Research Question 1: How do history teachers at two high schools that serve children of military sponsors employ historical empathy in their classrooms?
- 2. How do history teachers at two high schools that serve children of military sponsors perceive historical empathy instruction in their classrooms?

**Results.** Once coded, the data was organized into six major themes that suggested teachers, although unfamiliar with the term of historical empathy, utilized a number of its tenets during classroom instruction. Teachers also included, when feasible, activities aimed at increasing empathic reasoning within their students. The themes included:

- The obscurity of historical empathy
- Emotion as key to understanding
- Empathic sequencing and contextualization
- Historic sites as heuristic
- Primary sources, artifacts, and historic dialogue
- Analogies, metaphors, and perspective recognition.

**Recommendations.** Outcomes of the study resulted in some recommendations that may increase teacher awareness of historical empathy. These recommendations include:

- A professional development seminar outlining historical empathy and its potential for classrooms.
- Introducing local historic site visits and projects aimed at developing and sustaining empathic processes with teachers and their students
- Increase usage of historic artifacts in the classroom to facilitate critical thinking
- Introduce empathic strategies into history and social studies curriculum

Each of the recommendations may be cross curricular in nature and possibly assist teachers in other disciplines.

**Conclusion.** In many regards, this is one of the first studies to determine how teachers perceive and employ historical empathy in their classrooms. The voices of the teachers will be included and some of the observations made during classroom sessions. Each of these findings are also validated by recent scholarly literature and present opportunities to enrich students' lives as they seek to discern critical historical concepts.

**Author.** The position paper's author is Dr. Bill Harris. Dr. Harris conducted the research as part of his requirements for the Doctor of Education degree at Walden University. His previous educational experience include a Bachelor of Science degree with the University of Maryland, a Master of Education degree with National-Louis University, and a Master of Arts degree with California State University, Dominguez Hills. He has served as an historian for the United States Air Force for more than 35 years and his academic interest includes First World War memorialization studies. Mr. Harris can be contacted by email at [billy.harris@waldenu.edu](mailto:billy.harris@waldenu.edu).

A Position Paper: Teaching Strategies for Developing Historical Empathy:  
Creating Possibilities for History Classrooms

### **Introduction**

The goals of this position paper are aimed at:

- Understanding the nature of historical empathy and its components
- Discuss the findings based on a recent qualitative case study with of how high school history teachers perceive historical empathy and how they employ it within their classrooms
- Encourage recommendations to consider teacher training in historical empathy, importance of site visits, increasing artifact usage
- Potential implications for organizations that incorporate interpretive programs within their heritage activities
- Add to the growing body of literature on historical empathy and its implications for further research
- Illustrate the potential for social change

### **What Exactly Is Historical Empathy?**

At the present time there is much interest in how history and social studies teachers help students develop critical thinking skills. Traditional strategies include lecture and rote memorization of facts and dates. While this helps students develop what some view as “operational” memory, they do little to help students understand causal factors, the continuum of change, and historical links. Conversely, constructivist approaches to history require student engagement through activities that focus on the

recognition of historical actors and events that will help the student relate those actions to their own. However, most teachers will suggest that with so much curriculum to teach, it all boils down to time to address all of the subjects to meet the demands of high stakes testing. Empathy, to many, is a byword that means different things to different teachers. But empathy is not a new concept in educational circles.

Empathy's theoretical underpinnings were mentioned by Edmund Husserl (2012), Hans Georg Gadamer (2013), and Patrick Gardiner (1961). As one of the founders of phenomenology, Husserl concerned himself with how people perceive by studying the nature of phenomena and their intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity, according to Husserl, occurred when people employed acts of empathy. Husserl also reasoned that artifacts, or objects, could be subjected to the same apperceptive reasoning.

Husserl's ideas of phenomenology influenced Hans-Georg Gadamer who sought to expound on the Husserlian ideas of phenomenology. In his work *Truth and Justice* published in 1960 (2013), Gadamer argued that people needed to embrace the distances between the past and present through empathy. By doing so, historic events could be interpreted not through the historical romanticism but through the careful analysis of previous perspectives (Aldridge, 2013; Kobayashi & Mathieu, 2011). Gadamer also suggested that historic interpretations should be based on empathic perceptions of historical actors. In other words, getting into the heads of people to understand their reasons for carrying out actions was of great concern to Gadamer.

Philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1992) argued that individual memory relied on tradition and remembrances. By recognizing and placing one's self in

the tradition or experiences of another meant to increase understanding of current traditions. He also suggested that a correct understanding of historical traditions depended on awareness of these time differences. In short, different views meant a person had to consider more than one perspective: the historical actor's and one's own.

Sir Charles Oman (1939) favored the idea that history is not a systematic evaluation of events, but to study events in the context of people. Taking Oman's idea even further, Patrick Gardiner (1961) suggests that perspective comes by comparing our human condition to those of past societies. The "logic of the situation" calls upon those studying history to understand the circumstances that historic societies found themselves and reasons for their decisions (p. 49).

### **What's So Important About Empathy?**

Historical empathy suggests that the second word, empathy, requires someone to think about something or someone apart from themselves. It differs from sympathy, which is a one-sided feeling for someone. As one teacher in the study stated, "empathy compels one to act." That's the difference. But what about studying history?

Historical empathy may be seen as a valuable tool for helping students understand the nature of people, things, and events prior to their own. As a core subject, history is necessary for students to understand responsible citizenship, develop temporal and spatial thinking, and cultivate critical thinking. (Brooks, 2011; Yeager & Foster, 2001).

Objects and empathy are interrelated and help establish links to the past to help students understand their very essences within the present (D'Adamo & Fallace, 2011; Frazier, Gelman, Wilson, & Hood, 2009). Historical empathy then requires a student to

look beyond their own bias and perspectives to consider those being studied. And the more they consider the perspectives of others, the more they remember because the learning is deeper.

### **What's In It For the Teacher?**

A number of recent journals and books written on the subject indicate that not all teachers utilize this valuable framework (Ferencz-FLatz, 2011; Mayer, 2012). Many teachers may already be using aspects of historical empathy in their daily instruction but not quite understand how to maximize it. Historical empathy may provide opportunities for questioning and engaging student responses that help students have those “a-ha” moments in comprehending the points the teacher was trying to make. In this sense, historical empathy is not just an action but a thought process. It also helps the teacher to practice being a historian. Not that they may already not be doing that. But there is a difference between thinking history and doing history. Teachers and students who “do” history are more likely to engage in more critical thinking through application of empathic tenets. Doing history study also calls upon an internal dialogue that differs from other disciplines (Baron, 2012; Fitzgerald, 2011). Because history is made by the actions of people or natural events, historical empathy helps guide teachers and their students to a greater understanding of those events by promoting this internal dialogue.

### **The Tenets of Historical Empathy.**

Debates about what constitutes historical empathy have continued for decades. Even noted historians have disagreed about the nature of causation and historiographical



approaches. Recently, however, scholars have rekindled interest in perspective recognition for students. Keith Barton and Linda Levstik (2009) included an example in their book *Teaching History for the Common Good* where a telephone survey was conducted with 1,500 U.S. residents on what role history played in their lives. Respondents, which spanned religions, ethnicities, gender, and income, indicated that history or historical recall played a major role in their daily lives. It also indicated that history helped them make connections with then and now. The same respondents also mentioned that they disliked history in schools because the subject was too dry and held little relevance to their current disposition. A similar study conducted with children provided the same results. Kids used historical recall on a daily basis to make sense of things.

This and other studies prompted a re-analysis of such philosophers and educational psychologists as Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky who suggested that experiential learning was key to help children develop their thinking skills and create historical narratives (Endacott, 2011). Taking this further, educational theorists understood that perspective recognition played a key role in helping students make connections with the past. That is, students had to understand both their perspective and the perspectives of historical actors. Barton and Levstik (2009) took this concept further and introduced certain components that represented levels of comprehension for topics (pp 211-222). These included:

- A sense of otherness: Recognizing another beyond one's self

- Shared normalcy: Inclination to consider that another's actions are not silly or that the person acted out of ignorance
- Contextualization: Understanding historical actors' beliefs, values, and attitudes
- Multiple perspectives: The concept that even historical actors debated with each other and had multiple views about issues in their own lives
- Contextualization of the present: Students understanding that their own beliefs and values are a result of their own current context

The study mentioned in this document focused on these five elements and how teachers employed them. The results indicate that teachers do employ aspects of historical empathy in their daily instruction.

### **The Findings**

#### **Data Collection.**

The data collection and analysis was conducted solely by the author. Seven teachers participated in semi-structured informal interviews and one classroom observation was made of each teacher. The interviews and field notes were transcribed and open coding was used to develop general themes. A second round of coding, axial coding, was used to refine the themes. A total of five themes were developed. The data was also submitted to Atlas-ti, a coding software, which resulted in a total of six themes. The themes included:

- The obscurity of historical empathy. Teachers practiced but were not aware of the term "historical empathy." Empathy was also an affective tool in their instructional strategies.

- Emotion as key to understanding. Teachers used emotive-based language and terms on a frequent basis. These terms were tied to specific empathy components to help students empathize with historical events or actors.
- Empathic Sequencing and Contextualization. Teachers used different components of historical empathy throughout their classroom instruction. Few teachers exercised all of the tenets or in the sequence described by Barton and Levstik (2009)
- Historic sites as heuristic. Teachers were universal in their views that historic sites engaged the viewer on multiple levels and served as an instructional medium by themselves. Teachers also felt that historic sites encouraged internal dialogue, engaged the senses, and provided spatial understandings.
- Primary Sources, Artifacts, and Historic Dialogue. Documents and artifacts were important to teachers for document-based questioning and contextualizing events being studied. Artifacts also encouraged internal dialogue with the past, allowing the teacher and students to compare items with their own.
- Analogies, Metaphors, and Perspective Recognition. Teachers used analogies and metaphors frequently as a method for helping students grasp historical perspective and context.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the research results and implications, four recommendations are set forth to help those involved in history education or the heritage profession with

educational programs. Each recommendation is informed by peer-reviewed scholarly research. The sources used are mentioned in each recommendation and included in a list of references at the end of the paper.

**Recommendation 1: Provide Professional Development on Historical Empathy.** As evidenced in the research findings, teachers were not aware of the term historical empathy nor its theoretical underpinnings. Teachers could benefit from exposure to the concepts of historical empathy and methods for utilizing it within classroom instructional strategies. Developmental training may increase opportunities for teachers to engage students through differentiation by shifting through the various components or through strategies that include differentiation and constructivist approaches. Additionally, teachers could be aware of non-empathic responses from students and approach material from a different perspective. Empathy also has the propensity to recognize diversity so working within a multicultural context would create a context where students learn to appreciate and understand differing perspectives.

Research into this area concluded that:

- Many teachers were not exposed to this concept during their pre-service education and empathic concepts not a fundamental requirement for professional development in the social sciences (Lovorn, 2012).
- Research into teacher training likewise suggests that teachers undergoing pre-service training focus on history content and pedagogical theory. However, some teacher preparation programs tend to overlook some of the empathic approaches to historical synthesis (Martel, 2013).

- Kate Hawkey (2015) suggests that the apprehension of missing important curricular elements places even more experienced teachers at a disadvantage. She states that perceived important historical events receive greater focus and that “the lens through which we view the past has got stuck at a certain magnification” (p. 40). This focus tends to interrupt the flow of chronological change and continuity in history which may be more effective if constructed through an empathic approach (Gubkin, 2015).
- Developmental training, when provided by a respected member of the local educational team, will be more effective and received by teachers in a more positive light. This member can enable historical empathy to be part of the social studies or history corpus (Chapman, 2011).
- Teachers who know and utilize historical empathy within their classrooms increase student understanding of important historical issues and help create a critical thinking culture within their classrooms. The more teachers use tenets of historical empathy within their classrooms the more adept students will be in generating empathic responses toward the historical actors they are studying (Endacott, 2013).
- The more teachers engage with positive affirmation of emotional dispositions and affirm empathic responses the more an affective climate will exist. This then facilitates social cognition when promotes the ability for students to navigate world events while identifying undercurrents of change and continuity within a socio-historical context (Walker, 2011).

**Recommendation 2: Increase Site Visits.**

Site visits are an experiential form of learning that remove the student from a theoretical to a practical setting. They also engage with visitors on the empathic level which requires dialogue with the site to develop perspectives of the historical actors and events associated with it. Sites can incorporate site-specific artifacts which engage all of the senses and stir feelings that enable memories. Site visits need not be major historical sites. Tours at local heritage activities, a local building, or series of earthworks representing decades of industrial archaeology have the propensity to evoke interest if placed within specific site, historical, and curricular contexts (Garcia, 2012). Emphasis needs to be placed on a full experience of the site, or “feel” the site by considering what historical actors experienced.

Research into this area concluded that:

- Teachers and students visiting sites are affected by what is referred to as the “power and authenticity” of a site or museum which incorporates tenets of empathy as part of its visitor experience (Klenkmann, 2016, p. 279).
- Human beings are sensitive to changes in space that requires internalization and self-dialogue to make sense of the site (Hurt, 2010; Clark, et al, 2011). In this sense, there is truth in the site which is mediated by human interaction or some interpretive medium (Wineman & Peponis, 2010).
- Historic sites are often viewed by students and teachers as relevant as part of experiential learning (Blair, 2016).

- Site visits and exposure to interpretive systems also provide examples of how to develop critical questioning in and out of the classroom environment (Baron, Woyshner, & Haberkern, 2014; Philpot & Guiney, 2011).
- Time spent at, movement around and within, and activities associated with documenting or internalizing the site coincide with current theories that sites necessitate the involvement of the entire person and increases empathic responses (Larsen & Svabo, 2014).
- Research into sites as learning spaces also suggested that sites and associated objects are observer unique which means that interpretations vary but incite experiential learning frameworks (Peacock & Pratt, 2011; Baron & Dobbs, 2015).
- Touching objects on the site included both natural items and those added to the site such as memorials, heritage trees, and artifacts. Halbwachs (1992) confirms that part of collective and personal memory involves the senses as they apply to object or site understanding and tradition appropriation (Kaschak, 2014).
- Museums provide a variety of exhibits and artifacts that, when viewed in chronological order, enhance student understanding of historical continuity and relationships between objects and societies. This conforms to the contextualization tenets of historical empathy (Hubard, 2014).
- Object intentionality is also considered when placed within a given historic context. This includes the objects such as memorials which cause conflict between the event and its depiction. This may be the case when teachers or students visit battlefields and experience tensions between the violence of the

battle and a static memorial of sacrifice embedded upon a carefully tailored lawn. This tension increases the need for plausible explanations and desire for meaning (Grandy, 2007; Nieuwenhuysen & Wils, 2012).

- Sites also facilitate transfer of information and knowledge to the learner and from one learner to another and incite shared meaning (Jant, Haden, Uttal & Babcock, 2014)

### **Recommendation 3: Continue Usage of Artifacts.**

Single artifacts or assemblages of objects engender typological activities leading to specific learning constructs. They also enable teachers to create patterns of object use in context with the period under study. This helps students develop the concepts of change and continuity while linking periods together in terms of human materialistic studies. Artifact analysis, like historic exploration, is enjoyable and channels empathic thinking in multivariate ways. It also helps the observer create a form of dialogue with the object which obviates the item's existential properties.

Research into this area concluded that:

- The importance of teacher and student engagements with objects is underscored by recent research, notably in regard to object interpretation and creating avenues for understanding. As part of the object interpretation, viewers create narratives based on assumptions that induce mental triggers (Humphries & Smith, 2014).
- Humans see objects as possessing important and variable social dimensions beyond their original design purpose and has the propensity to induce curiosity of the object and how it represented the individual (Cornish, 2004).



- Objects prompt inquiry beyond the students' or teachers' beliefs (Waring, Torrez, & Lipscomb, 2015). Similar to site visits, artifacts and objects can enhance understanding through self-directed learning. This helps students who are accustomed to teacher-based learning adjust their learning skills by focusing on object literacy (Warburton & Volet, 2012).
- Teacher enthusiasm for use of artifacts in the classroom to increase empathic understanding is one of the main reasons for artifact usage in the classroom. The centrality of objects in everyday use, including those objects utilized within a classroom environment, contain "life histories" of the objects (Woodward, 2015, p. 1).
- Objects help a student to frame temporal experiences through comparisons. Delving into the object's creation encourages suppositions into the originator's thoughts, life patterns, and reasoning for creating the type object. This enables a tacit understanding of the object and builds further inquiry which extends beyond original suppositions (Woodward, 2015; Gygi, 2004).
- Working with artifacts is also viewed as pleasure and incites individual learning, allowing the observer to learn for one's self (Cartwright, 2012).
- Objects are a reflection of a particular society if they are contemporary with that society. Museums and their objects can guide students to a greater understanding of social communities within certain collections (Maurstad, 2012).

- Object analysis also engenders aspects of ownership and function and increases empathic sensitivity of the object and its creator (Banerjee, Kominsky, Fernando, & Keil, 2015).
- Artifacts can increase emotional engagement when students address how their feelings toward the object by understanding visual and tactile responses to the object (Taylor & Statler, 2013).
- Objects are also an important as they incite aspects of collective memory as they have perceived biographies that enable empathic responses from the observer (Halbwachs, 1992).

#### **Recommendation 4: Introduce Empathic Strategies into History and Social Studies Curriculum.**

Reviewing curricular content and delivery and content would be necessary to introduce empathic tenets into historical subjects. This could include historical empathy terms in district and school faculty meetings, increase student knowledge of the subject through handouts and assignments, and increasing empathic vocabulary with community stakeholders.

Research into this area concluded that:

- Historical empathy may be absent in history and social studies textbooks. Bias may be present in some textbooks which focus on content or certain agendas, or, in some cases the content “is a collection of boring facts...and omit much of the ambiguity, passion, and drama from our country’s past—the very features that make history interesting” (MacPhee & Kaufman, 2014, p. 124).

- Systemic knowledge of historical empathy is not widely known throughout education including the state and federal levels as well as district and individual school echelons (Lazarakou, 2008).
- Vocabulary development, including empathic terms, within social studies is necessary to help students create and employ understanding of both content and context. Without this vocabulary “deficiencies in vocabulary instruction create the most critical obstacles to comprehension in social studies” (Alexander-Shea, 2011, p. 95).
- Introduce concepts of historical empathy to promote historical thinking skills during throughout pre-service and periodic professional training. This will increase awareness of empathic strategies and help teachers identify empathic responses within the classroom. It will also increase learning opportunities during informal teaching activities such as site visits and artifact analysis in the classroom (Keirn & Luhr, 2012; Swan & Riley, 2015).
- Empathy may be confused with sympathy and not recognized as a tool for developing critical thinking among students. Placing historical empathy within a proper framework will ensure teachers understand its tenets and potential for increasing critical thinking skills within the classroom (Cunningham, 2009).

### **Potential Implications for Other Organizations**

Those within the heritage profession, including museums or managing historic sites, can also employ historical empathy into their daily interpretive regimen. As

collections of objects remain nameless until curated and displayed, the interpreter as a mediator has the opportunity to assist viewers by developing context and connecting past with present (Quinn & Ryan, 2016). Additionally, museum education programs often focus on the interpretation of objects and their use within a given context. They also hope to reinforce the positionality of a particular historic actor. Tenet sequencing may aid these professionals in their instructional practices since visitors tend to vary in age and in operational knowledge. Empathic approaches may also be practical for museums specializing in local history whose programs tie their programs with state curriculum requirements. Finally, when historic site administrators and museum education program provide interpretive training on historical empathy, these formal training sessions can increase teacher experiences at sites and develop relationships as valued community stakeholders for each other's activities.

### **Study Implications and Further Research**

While recent scholarly research on historical empathy has focused on historical empathy and the debates of its meaning, little research has been conducted on how teachers perceive or employ historical empathy within their classrooms. This study will add to the growing body of scholarship on historical empathy and its potential to increase teacher awareness of empathic sequencing and methods for engaging students to increase empathic responses within the classroom. The study was conducted in a local setting and the comments of the participants reflect a phenomenon unique to that setting. Transcript reviews by the participants and member checks of the field notes also increased the strength of the study. Member checks of the classroom observations, teacher reviews of

the transcripts, and saturation of the subject likewise increased the validity of the study. The localized problem also provided an opportunity to observe teachers in their natural environment and interview them on their teaching experiences, inspirations that led them to teach such an important and demanding career as an educator.

Limitations to the study must also be considered. The brevity of classroom observations and limited observations to one session per teacher may not truly represent the full spectrum of approaches teachers used to employ historical empathy within their instruction. The small sample size of seven teachers may also limit the study's generalization to other audiences.

### **Historical Empathy and Potential for Social Change**

The potential for social change cannot be underestimated. The most critical element of historical empathy, understanding of multiple perspectives and contextualization of the present, helps students develop a deeper understanding of diversity, community involvement, and value of human existence. Empathic strategies may also help develop the joy of learning for such a unique discipline as history. Additionally, scholars believe that historical empathy fosters life-long learning. Teachers, as they commented in their interviews, can be the genesis of this social change effort as they encourage their students to look beyond their immediate knowledge to consider the settings of the historical actors they are studying. Comprehension of the values, beliefs, and causal factors affecting these historical actors carries the possibility that students can apply the same empathic strategies to their own historical context and foster environs to

help build communities based on mutuality, respect, and care. As one of the teachers summarized in their interviews:

I tell kids that it's not that you have to have sympathy for them but that you have to be able to understand how to be them. That includes having an understanding of different ethnicities and different cultures which is really important and try to take away that sense of otherness away from the study to realize that we are all human and our acts are human. That's important. It's about our humanity and our ability to seek the best for each other and not just ourselves. Growing closer to the people of history helps us grow closer to who we are. I hope the study of history helps my students become more informed people. That has huge potential for the future. Empathy is necessary in the study of history. It's what makes us human.

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## Appendix B: Interview Guide Questions

1. What drew you to teaching history or social studies?
2. How long have you been teaching?
3. Would you please describe some of the more notable experiences you had as a high school or college student and how did they aid in your understanding of historical events or concepts?
4. Can you please describe your interest in a particular area or era of history and how that interest developed?
5. What does historical empathy mean to you?
6. Living abroad presents opportunities to discover historic sites. How have these opportunities enriched your teaching experience?
7. Have you used primary source documents within your activities? If so, can you please describe how you chose them and their purpose in the classroom?
8. What historical empathy skills do your students exhibit and how are they observed?
9. When students display empathy skills, how might your instructional strategies be more effective and why?