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EXPLORING PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' *HISTORICAL THINKING* THROUGH
THE COOPERATIVE BIOGRAPHY: A DESIGN-BASED RESEARCH STUDY

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by

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Abstract

Through Design-Based Research (Cobb, et al., 2003), this study explores the intended outcomes and processes of the Cooperative Biography project. This research provides an *iterative analysis* (Cobb, et al., 2003) of how pre-service teachers experienced history while engaged in a Cooperative Biography, in a teacher-education setting. This includes analysis of observations, interviews, and survey data to offer deductive and inductive themes present in the *learning ecology* (Biesta & Burboles, 2003). Exploring and analyzing key concepts related to *historical thinking*, the study offers a re-conceptualization of the project goals and contributes to the fields of Social Studies, history education, and elementary teacher education, by offering examples of how participants used artifacts and sources to interpret and re-tell history.

The study addresses pre-service teachers' epistemic beliefs about history, which can be seen as a major force driving the ways they plan to teach history in the future (Evans, 1994; Jaeger & Davis, 1996). Research on teaching and learning history has pointed to teachers' historical understanding, historical consciousness and knowledge as the basis for the development of historical thinking among their students (Jaeger & Davis, 1998). Research on learning history has been reported over the past few decades, particularly, historical understanding and historical consciousness have been examined through several studies (Downey & Levstik, 1991; Armento, 1991; Carretero & Voss, 1997). However, much less research exists that posits the relationship between epistemic stance and historical thinking at the level of the individual as this study does. Research in historiography, historical understanding, and consciousness has opened the door to

conduct epistemological investigations that seek to unfold the relationship between individual beliefs and epistemic stances. The current study will offer insights into pre-service teachers' beliefs about history, and will paint a picture of participants' experiences within the Cooperative Biography.

The study will begin to fill a void in the literature surrounding the multiplicity of epistemological beliefs that form the basis of pre-service teachers' beliefs about history. Whereas, Evans (1989) painted pictures of teacher typologies, a move to understand the intersections of various typologies, where one begins to meet the next, or where, when, and why one triumphs over another, may mark a move toward further understanding the complexity of pre-service teachers' beliefs about history. Employing current theoretical frames, such as Design-Based Research (DBR), in the process of investigating pre-service teachers' *historical thinking* and *beliefs* about history will fill a gap in the literature that exists today. Moreover, this study provides themes and representations—explanations that go beyond 'fitting' a mold, making room for ways in which the data are anomalous, which may move the field towards a more nuanced understanding of the ways pre-service teachers' think historically.

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Introduction

In the fall of 2008, I joined a team of scholars and instructors responsible for designing and implementing a revised curriculum intended for the preparation of pre-service teachers who were preparing to teach elementary Social Studies. Led by our faculty advisor, Dr. Stephanie Serriere (from here on out I will refer to her as Stephanie), we were a group of four, two graduate assistants, including myself, and one fixed term instructor. We met regularly with the intention of revising and updating our shared syllabus to reflect what we saw as necessary changes in order to better prepare our pre-service teachers to teach elementary Social Studies. Initially, our meetings focused on a new college-wide initiative *EDUCATE*, which asked that we morph our course to become more digitally oriented and tech savvy. Thus, we began our meetings with the intention of choosing one or two of our capstone assignments to revise in order to reflect the new initiative and solidify improvements we felt could be made to the course.

Our regular meetings consisted of brainstorming different ways that the course could be changed, including the course capstone assignments to become more like digital products. The intent of the *EDUCATE* initiative was to make computing ubiquitous in the training of our pre-service teachers. Our attention quickly turned to one assignment in particular, that had been brought to the college, the year prior, when Stephanie arrived from The Indiana University, Bloomington. The assignment, *The Cooperative Biography*, had been in place at Indiana University for four years prior to Stephanie's arrival. Stephanie later explained that her advisor at Indiana, Dr. Boyle-Baise, first

introduced the assignment to her and that she had taught the assignment as an instructor there for four years.

Initially, what interested us about the assignment was the nature of the end product, a paper bound biography written and illustrated by groups of students, and the potential the assignment offered to become transformed into a digital product. We thought this could both enhance the assignment as well as meet the College's new initiative with technology. Many of us on the team readily took to the idea. It made sense to choose an assignment that we valued and to begin the process of trying to enhance it by blending the various goals of the project with new media that were consistent with the project's intent. There were, however, some warranted concerns brought to our attention by Stephanie.

Having experienced success in getting pre-service to become more active in re-telling history and thinking about the various perspectives that exist with the project, Stephanie raised questions that began our thinking about how the change may impact student learning. Particularly, we became cognizant of the tactile relationship of the project as a paper bound book and whether we would be sacrificing some of the project's effects by changing the sensory mechanisms to a screen and notebook. We began to think about ways to research the project in its new form. Our intention at the time was to better understand the impact that digitizing the Cooperative Biography had on our students and our students' understanding of the project and project goals.

In the Fall 2008, Stephanie and I began researching ways to better understand the changes that were taking place in the Cooperative Biography in our teacher education and preparation program and elementary social studies methods courses. During this process,

we realized a great deal about the assignment and much less about the precise nature of the impact of technology on the assignment. As a matter of fact, we quickly came to the conclusion that we were not able to parcel out the precise impact of technology on the assignment; however, we were learning a great deal about the kinds of thinking that arose via the data through our ongoing research. The information that we were yielding through our research reinforced our interest in the assignment and quickly turned our focus to one important factor. Though we were interested in changing the assignment media to be more digital-technologically oriented, we were not at all interested in changing the goal of the assignment or sacrificing what we believed to be a very important mission: encouraging students to think deeply about the nature of history, and more importantly, asking students to engage with historical reasoning by wrestling with competing accounts of history, *absorbing* and *doing* history, as history-makers (Parker, 2000; Levstik & Barton, 2011).

We were noticing some promising results from our data about the ways that the project was impacting our students' historical thinking. First, it seemed to be having an impact; their thoughts seemed to be advancing towards an idea that history is constructed. By this, I mean that students were telling original interpretations about history and had begun to make comments and voice their beliefs about the constructed nature of historical narratives. Moreover, students were creating products that took up the telling of biographical information in new and original ways using original perspectives to tell their historical narrative. What we were noticing, coupled with our desire to understand how the shift towards technology was impacting our assignment, led me to look more closely at the intent and goals of the project to ensure that the shift was not sacrificing what we

believed to be a well-conceived set of experiences for students. Therefore, I focused my gaze to better understand the Cooperative Biography and how it was impacting students' beliefs and thinking about the nature of history.

In order to better understand the assignment, I began to focus on the history of the assignment and how it came to be. I also focused on the rationale of the project and why and how it should be taught in our course. To better understand the project and its intended purpose, I traced the lineage of the Cooperative Biography and the scholarly work that has supported its use (Chapter 2). This will later be of use as I investigate the project's intended outcomes, which is an integral part of my methodology (as outlined in Chapter 3).

Chapter One: The Cooperative Biography in Context

Back at Penn State University, as part of a group of elementary Social Studies methods instructors, we desired to move pre-service student teachers toward an understanding of history that would allow for the teaching of history that matched Parker's (2001) description of the two wings of a plane; *absorbing* and *doing* history or learning content and creating historical narratives. We wanted to select an experience that would allow us to better understand what was taking place with regard to our students' beliefs about history and the ways that they were thinking historically and how they engaged with historical reasoning. The Cooperative Biography seemed to be the solution to our problem.

We agreed that pre-service teachers could learn to take up the topic of history in new ways, especially with regard to *doing* history. We believed that the assignment was a match for our course for two distinct yet equally important reasons. First, we believed that it was a way for our pre-service teachers to begin to think about ways to teach history to children that go beyond teaching the textbook, memorizing of facts, names, and dates. Second, we wanted our students to encounter a belief about the nature of history as constructed, questionable, fallible, and open to interpretation. The Cooperative Biography offered us both. Moreover, we took up the call by Parker (2001), who stated that in order for children to learn history, teachers needed to have an understanding and appreciation for what history is. When our digital-technologically oriented initiative came into the picture we began to see the Cooperative Biography doing more *and* less than we had originally envisioned.

Similar to the gaps in historical knowledge needed to understand past contexts that Zarnowski (1990) described in her work with biography as a method of constructing and learning history, we too had noticed large gaps in the understanding of many of our students. The language some students chose to use when discussing Rosa Parks seemed to indicate particular views about history and historical knowledge that represented static, dominant views of history. For instance, it was not uncommon for us to hear students comment that history was best ‘left to the experts.’

We wanted our students to embrace an understanding of history that would promote inquiry and discovery as much if not more so than memorizing dates, important people, and figures. We also wanted our students to go beyond trying to *absorb* history, because we held a belief that if they did, they would not encourage students to engage with the past and to think deeply about it when they were in the position as a history teacher. Our desire was for students to engage in original thinking (making decision about which aspect of the story to highlight) with regard to the life of Rosa Parks and the past in general, as it was our desire for students to embrace a notion that they too could engage in historical analysis and reasoning. Simply put, we wanted students to position themselves as capable of original thinking about the past so that they could embrace the value of teaching students to do the same.

We believed in Zarnowski’s (2003) notion of a *questioning approach*, as a method that would encourage students to create original interpretations of the past. We felt that if we could generate genuine interest in the topic by grappling with difficult historical questions about the life of Rosa Parks, it would translate into deeper historical

thinking for our students. We embraced Zarnowski's recommendations for allowing students to find a balance between finding facts and interpreting meaning.

Our team of social studies instructors embraced the benefits that Lindquist (1997) spoke of with regard to in-depth learning, and designed the unit to allow students to engage with the topic for over an extended period of time. We scaffolded the experience to begin with *absorbing* history by having students encounter historical knowledge through various readings. We also folded in opportunities for students to encounter primary and secondary sources, in hopes that some or all would manipulate the materials to make an original interpretation based on the sources. We also recognized what Lindquist (1997) had stated about the nature of biography as a way for students to learn about themselves, and to possibly learn more about the nature of history in the process.

In sum, we believed, like Parker (2001), that the teaching of history involved cultivating two distinct sets of skills. We felt that if our students experienced the Cooperative Biography, *absorbing* and *doing* history, that they would then embrace a view of history that valued the *doing* as much as it valued the *absorbing*. The Cooperative Biography could be the solution to our problem: We could move pre-service teachers towards a view of history as constructed. We could also provide experiences for them that could promote their thinking about the teaching of history, possibly even enable them to view historical reasoning as one wing of a plane and historical knowledge, as the other. We believed that many of our students held a view of history that privileged the accumulation of discrete historical facts over historical reasoning and interpretation as an act in which learners can and should engage. We also believed that our students'

experiences with learning history were sure to surface in the process of their thinking about the teaching of history. We strongly believed that if our pre-service student teachers were going to teach history effectively, many would have to change the way they think about history and embrace a different view of history, one perhaps that allowed for a constructed view of history. We thought students would experience the unit and begin the process of reforming their views about history. By placing students in the role of ‘history makers’, we believed that the unit would render changes in our students’ historical thinking, view(s) of history, ultimately impacting what Parker (2001) suggested need be in place order to effectively teach history: “knowledge about what history is.” (p. x)

This study is concerned with the kinds of thinking that pre-service teachers bring into the methods classroom. We believed that the Cooperative Biography could get pre-service teachers to *do* history, in large part, due to the contributions that various scholars have made with regard how to get students and teachers beyond teaching the basic facts. There is not enough research on the on the kinds of experiences that allow pre-service teachers to *do* history. Thus, we do not precisely understand the connection between experiences like the Cooperative Biography, *doing* history, and the impact on pre-service student teachers perceptions about history.

Research Questions

Based on desires to move students towards a view of history that would enable the “effective” teaching of history, I pause to look deeply at the outcomes of the Cooperative

Biography in our context. For this dissertation study, I seek to investigate the following questions:

1. What kind of evidence emerges from the Cooperative Biography that supports the instructional effectiveness of the project for the preparation of pre-service elementary teachers of history and social studies?
2. In what ways do students express historical thinking during the experience?
3. What kinds of historical understanding(s) emerge from the Cooperative Biography?

In the pages/chapters that follow, I will give precision to the meaning of these terms “effectiveness” as the field would define historical understanding and historical thinking namely for the purposes of this study.

Significance of Study

This study has been conceived utilizing a design-based research methodology (Chapter Three) in order to “test” the outcomes as framed by extant literature of the Cooperative Biography. However, the study does not rest in measuring or coding for the outcomes alone; it involves itself in the process. I sought to uncover the collective messy decision-making that students faced along the way. The study offers insights into the use of the unit in the teacher education Social Studies classroom. Moreover, it re-conceptualizes the possible outcomes of the unit by offering an in-depth analysis of the

process based on a deductive analysis (Chapter Four) testing the “intelligent action” guiding the field. Secondly, it offers an inductive analysis (Chapter Five), which promotes a different set of explanations to explain the experiences of participants in the environment. The results of these separate deductive and inductive analyses will contribute to further understanding of the unit and its possible outcomes as well as further understanding of different theoretical models that might explain what historical thinking and historical understanding look like.

Study Overview

In chapter two, I introduce the history of the Cooperative Biography and its goals. I also review a range of literature that captures how scholars view, past and present, various issues surrounding history education. By offering a description of how scholars have responded to the demands of teaching and learning history over the past several decades, chapter two offers a strong background of scholarship and terms that have guided scholarly understanding of teaching and learning history.

In chapter three, I introduce the overarching methodology driving the study, Design-Based Research (DBR) (Cobb et. al., 2003; Biesta, 2007). I also introduce and define key terms and provide a rationale for selecting the lens. I then apply the methodology to the Cooperative Biography in context and introduce two types of data analysis introduced through an ‘iterative design’ process. I also explain how data was managed via Nvivo9, a qualitative data analysis software program. Finally in chapter

three, I describe the setting, participants, methods, procedures and protocols, as well as introduce the data sources and method of data analysis.

In chapter four, I provide a detailed description of the Cooperative Biography day-to-day. I use the field's current understanding for a deductive analysis and offer three themes or types of historical thinkers and detail how each experienced the Cooperative Biography. Data from a variety of sources including, interviews, survey responses, class observations, and other written reflections, will be presented.

In chapter five, I offer the iterative analysis of the data. The inductive analysis will provide a ground up approach allowing the data to offer a new explanation or interpretation of the experiences of participants within the environment of the Cooperative Biography. These inductive themes demonstrate how the themes presented in chapter four may not have represented the best way to understand participants' historical thinking.

In chapter six, I offer findings and conclusions drawn from the two types of analysis. I provide a detailed description of how project goals can be revisited. I also offer a new model for thinking about historical thinking through a comparison of the two analyses. The findings will help shed light on the experiences of the participants and may offer a new way to conceptualize theories associated with how students and teachers think about history.

Chapter Two: Intelligent Action

“In reflective problem solving we do not use “old” knowledge to tell us what we should do; we use old knowledge to guide us first in our attempts to understand what the problem might be and then in the intelligent selection of possible lines of action” (Dewey, 1929, p. 9).

Introduction

Dewey’s notion of intelligent action, which refers to reflective problem solving, is central to this study. It offers a lens that promotes both inductive and deductive logic. It rests on the notion that, “knowledge acquired in previous situations-or knowledge acquired by others in different inquiry or research situations-does not enter the process of reflective problem solving in the form of a rule or prescription” (Biesta, 2007, p. 16). It does, however, acknowledge the role of “old” knowledge as a starting point for understanding what the problem might be and guides our attempts, “in the intelligent selection of possible lines of action” (Biesta, 2007, p. 16). Old knowledge, from this perspective, helps us to view and approach problem-solving in a more intelligent manner.

Central to the notion of “intelligent action” (Dewey, 1929; Biesta, 2007; 2003) is the idea that the, “proof of the pudding always lies in the action that follows” and that this action, “will verify both the adequacy of our understanding of the problem, and in one and the same process, the adequacy of the proposed solution” (Biesta, 2007, p. 16). Also central to a theory of intelligent action is what Dewey referred to as an “ends-in-view” hypothesis guiding inquiry. The ends in view can be understood as the basic building blocks and hypothesis that are necessary for the conducting inquiry in a specific content

area. Thus, in building a theory of intelligent action in this study, it becomes essential to reflect on research that speaks to knowledge created in previous situations (old knowledge) and to use that knowledge to form the basis for hypothesis (deduction) that will then be tested in the process of designing an intelligent action.

In this study, “intelligent action” will require the in-depth search for old knowledge that will be used to test an explanation of what is happening in the environment of the Cooperative Biography. It will also require an understanding of what the Cooperative Biography and its authors’ intended for it to do. In order to contextualize the intent of the Cooperative Biography, it is essential to understand more broadly, the theories that guide the project as well as the theories that have been offered that speak in similar ways within the domain of history education. Thus, it is essential to explore the intent of the project and compare it to that being said in the field of history education, more broadly, regarding understanding history or historical understanding. This makes the understandings brought to bear via extant literature, or “old knowledge,” that I present in the next chapter meaningful and useful, which I describe further below.

In order to engage in reflective problem solving, I have selected the lens of a Design-Based Research (DBR). DBR is used to test a proposed solution to a problem. In this study, DBR will be used to “test” the outcomes of the Cooperative Biography. I use the word test to explain a process of iterative design (described in-depth in chapter three). Analysis will rest upon a notion of an iterative design, or reflective problem solving. I will use the desired outcomes of the Cooperative Biography in our context (as outlined in chapter one & two) as we chose the assignment for particular reasons and beliefs about the kinds of experiences our students most needed in order to prepare them to teach

elementary social studies, and history, in particular. I will also engage in an analysis of what the authors' of the assignment claimed would result from the experience. In order to accomplish this task, I will use the literature base on the assignment to test if the outcomes matched the ones desired.

In order to test those outcomes, it becomes essential first to use *old knowledge* to determine if the *intelligent action* selected yielded the desired outcomes. This kind of iterative design analysis will rely upon deductive logic in order to search for the desired outcomes in the way that the authors' intended and the way that we intended the assignment to impact student perceptions and beliefs.

Finally, an inductive analysis will be conducted in order to test new theories to explain the outcomes of the assignment based solely on the data and emergent themes. The inductive analysis becomes essential only when the deductive analysis falls short of meeting the stated goals of the assignment. The inductive and the deductive analysis will be compared to shed light on a new theory if the *old knowledge* does not best explain what is happening during the project. In this case, a new intelligent action may arise and the theory associated with the outcomes of the Cooperative Biography will be adjusted to match what participants in the environment actually experienced.

The Cooperative Biography: A Brief History

The early work that formed the basis of the Cooperative Biography came from Zarnowski (1990; 2003) and her discussion of experiences creating biographies with elementary-aged students in New York City in the 1980's. She reported how her students became biographers in the process of learning and studying about history and famous

historical figures. She quickly became aware that her students had many *gaps in their background knowledge* about the historical contexts in their readings about the past. She offered an example of how the students seemed oblivious to key terms needed to understand the context of the story when she asked her students to read the children's trade book, *Through My Eyes* by Ruby Bridges:

To successfully read this book, it was necessary for my students to understand what is meant by *segregation, integration, separate but equal, Brown v. Board of Education, NAACP, federal marshals, Ku Klux Klan* and more. They needed to know about the political and social conditions of the 1960's because this was the context of Ruby's world. Building this background of contexts and concepts required effort, theirs and mine. (Zarnowski, 2003, p. 2)

The distance between what Zarnowski referred to as background knowledge about the context of past events and the thinking that students were doing in relation to the events took the form of questioning. Students questioned about what happened to Ruby Bridges. They also questioned the context of segregation and asked about details that lead to Ruby's experience. The questioning, reasoning, and creation of original interpretations marked for Zarnowski a turning point for how history can be taught to children. Notwithstanding a few problems, Zarnowski believed that her students were doing something quite profound, they were thinking about the past. She exclaimed, "Despite the gaps in their understanding, these children were capable of original thinking

about the past—thinking we might call creative, constructive and thoughtful” (Zarnowski, 2003, p. 2).

The assignment featured, “a questioning approach to reading and writing biographies” (Zarnowski, 2003, p. 1). The approach was intended to find a balance between, “finding out the facts and interpreting what they mean” (p. 2). The work gained the attention of other scholars who extended the theory and practice and coined the term, “Cooperative Biography” (Lindquist, 1997; Parker, 2001; 2010).

For Zarnowski, “these intriguing questions prompted discussion and writing that in no way resembled a simple retelling of remembered facts. Instead responses were passionate, engaged, and original” (Zarnowski, 2003, p. 2-3).

Terry Lindquist (1997) explained how she first encountered the project and its goals when she attended a professional development workshop lead by Walter C. Parker, a professor of Social Studies education and political science at the University of Washington. For Lindquist (1997), who took up the idea and expanded understanding of the project, the Cooperative Biography offered an opportunity for students to, “develop an understanding and appreciation for our American heritage” (1997, p. xxii). Moreover, Lindquist believed that the project embodied the *importance of in-depth learning*, which she believed allowed students to spend, “a considerable period of time on a single topic, time during which children can investigate, organize and manipulate stimulating ideas and materials” (1997, p. 100). Citing Zarnowski (1990) frequently, Lindquist echoed the importance of the assignment promoting students *manipulation of materials* during their process. “We are familiar with manipulatives in math or science classes, but few of us think of history as an area in which the manipulation of material is similarly productive”

(Lindquist, 1997, p. 100). Lindquist, like Zarnowski, was interested in the use of biography as a way to provide in depth learning that included manipulating materials and stimulating rich conversation.

Another aspect of the unit that caught the attention of Lindquist was the connections between *biography* and the themes that formed the framework for the National Council for the Social Studies themes. Lindquist believed that the Cooperative Biography allowed students to engage with several different themes (NCSS, 1993) central to the learning and teaching of the Social Studies. She explained,

Students learn about culture, particularly cultures different from their own, from the true stories of peoples lives. Students also learn about time, continuity and change from biographies. Learning how to read and reconstruct the past by walking in someone else's shoes helps our kids develop historical perspective. (Lindquist, 1997, p. 101)

Lindquist also suggested the Cooperative Biography as, “a way that works” (p. ix) because, “incorporating biographies into social studies helps students to understand themselves” (p. 102). She elaborated, “biographies of people whose lives have made a difference or who have overcome great difficulties are a means by which young learners can contemplate and emulate those people” (Lindquist, 1997, p. 101). For Lindquist, the notion that biographies can help children see the past and help them to better understand themselves marks an extension of the assignment as connecting closely with the themes endorsed by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 1994).

Perhaps a more theoretical discussion of the Cooperative Biography marks Parker's (2001) contribution to the project. Parker introduced the assignment in his discussion of two ways to consider the integrated nature of Social Studies through, "infusion and fusion" (2001, p. 410). Parker discussed a problem with regards to integrated Social Studies curricula. He stated, "interdisciplinary education needlessly confuses learners when teachers require them to study simultaneously topics that more fruitfully could be examined separately" (p. 414). He illustrated the problem by discussing, "a loss in analytical clarity and the increased difficulty would not justify the gains hoped for by integrating Social Studies, Language Arts and Science" (p. 415). His idea for avoiding the pitfall comes in his discussion of two distinct approaches to integrating curriculum-infusion and fusion.

Parker (2001) introduced the Cooperative Biography as an example of effective *infusion* of an integrated curriculum. For Parker, an infused curriculum occurs when "aspects of one subject area, such as Language Arts, are inserted or infused into a second to enhance the learners' grasp of the second" (p. 416). In the case of the Cooperative Biography, reading and writing (Language Arts) are brought to bare light on the learning of history, as a means and not an end goal. The highlight is the illumination of the Social Studies goal and the means become an infused curriculum, "linking literacy instruction to Social Studies goals and, in this way, giving literacy skills purpose and meaning while helping to achieve social studies goals" (p. 416).

The Social Studies goals, in the case of the Cooperative Biography, can be varied; however, one goal common across Cooperative Biographies is the dual nature of *absorbing* and *doing* history (Barton & Levstik, 2005, 2011; Parker, 2001). For Parker,

teaching history takes on a very special meaning that helps to see the value of the Cooperative Biography as integral in achieving two distinct goals that, like the wings of a plane, must both work in harmony in order to fly. One is exposing young learners to historical narratives that have been written or told by others, which Parker calls *historical knowledge* (p. 98). The other is encouraging and helping students to write and create their own historical narratives of their making, or what he calls *historical reasoning* (p. 98).

For Parker, considering the ways in which he defines *absorbing* and *doing* history, it became apparent how and why the Cooperative Biography can be seen as an effective way for young students to learn history. In the Cooperative Biography as conceived by Parker, students are engaged in the *absorbing* and *doing* of history, as, “they are using historical reasoning, interpreting sources, wrestling with competing eyewitness accounts, and deciding what story to tell about this person’s life and times” (2001, p. 418). This notion of *doing* and *absorbing history* that Parker described is central to this study and will be revisited again in subsequent discussions and chapters. Finally, for Parker, “if [students] are to do either thing well, and to understand the difference between them, their teachers need themselves to understand what history is and why they should bother with it in the elementary and middle grades” (Parker, 2001, p. 98). Parker seemed much more interested in the process (historical reasoning, interpreting sources, wrestling with competing accounts, etc.) of engaging with history than the results that may stem from that engagement. This notion of process orientation is also central to this study. It underscores the Cooperative Biography as an exercise in

deliberative dialogue, a concept that is central to the promotion of the civic and democratic mission of schools.

More recently, Boyle-Baise and Zevin (2009) took up the Cooperative Biography, offering an in-depth analysis supporting the assignments use through recent research on history and citizenship education. From their view, the Cooperative Biography served as a model for the development of engaged citizens and helped pre-service teachers, “envision engaged citizenship through the lives of people who have made a difference” (p. 124). Moreover, according to Boyle-Baise and Zevin (2009), the Cooperative Biography marked an opportunity in the teacher education classroom for pre-service teachers, “to learn to teach the Cooperative Biography by first writing their own” (p. 124). Thus, before they asked young students to engage in biography creation, Boyle-Baise and Zevin suggested that pre-service teachers should also engage in the process. The evolution of the Cooperative Biography now included support for the notion that teachers, pre-service in particular, could benefit from engaging in the process of biography creation prior to teaching Social Studies and history. Despite having offered this rationale and support for use of the project, little research exists that details the process of pre-service teachers engaging with the project (Boyle-Baise & Zevin, 2009).

In sum, the Cooperative Biography can be characterized as a pedagogical experience that is intended to fill in the, “gaps in their (student’s) background knowledge and conceptual understanding of the past” (Zarnowski, 2003, p. 2). It rests on the notion of, “a questioning approach” (p. 2), where students are given the opportunity to be drawn, “closer to the discipline of history because it taps the kinds of questions historians ask and requires the kind of sense-making that historians practice” (p. 3). It focuses on the

filling of gaps in background knowledge that student's need to understand the context(s) of historical figures and events, while allowing them to engage with the kinds of thinking that historians do. Again, the dual nature of the project engages children as they "learn information by reading a mix of primary and secondary sources, and engages (student's) in historical sense-making by exploring original interpretations of the facts" (Zarnowski, 2003, p. 3). In order to understand the processes of understanding history that the authors of the Cooperative Biography described, it becomes essential to compare the process to that which research suggests it might look like more broadly, outside of the Cooperative Biography.

"Old Knowledge"

Research in historical understanding and/or historical consciousness extended a larger body of education research in historiography. Simply put, historiography is the study of history and the methodology of the discipline of history. Furay and Salevouris (1988) define historiography as, "the study of the way history has been and is written--the history of historical writing" (p. 223). A study of historiography is not as concerned with the events of the past directly, but the changing interpretations of the events in the works of individual historians.

A great deal of education research has focused on historiography. Perhaps most known today are the works of Hayden White and his discussion of "impositionalism" and "metahistory" (White, 1973). White published *Metahistory*, as a response to the linguistic turn as he saw it applying to history and history education. In his magisterial work, he showed how historical narratives fit within one of four frameworks: Romance,

Comedy, Tragedy and Satire (p. 2). White problematized a traditional distinction between the philosophy of history and history, by arguing that all historians operate within a metahistory, a set of commitments that structure historical narratives. A major contribution from this work is the notion that particular historical events can be written differently by different historians, undermining a belief that historical stories are “correct” depictions of particular events.

Research in historiography has also demonstrated that epistemological stances guide historical thinking in particular ways. Segall (1999) distinguishes between two kinds of history in the classroom. One kind of history provides information to students and tells them about the significance of past events and people. The other focuses more on the *skills* needed for students to think historically. A history that is delivered as science, objective in nature, is a history that provides closure. This type of history does not initiate student thinking about history but rather encourages students to passively absorb it. In contrast to the notion of receiving information, Segall (1999) offers a kind of history that asks students to think rather than be told what to think. He offers the following about the nature of choice regarding two types of history,

This choice demands distinguishing between two kinds of history we might engage in classrooms: a history that poses as objective, scientific, and true and one that is aware of its limitations and admits its contingency and partiality; a history which is about the past itself and one that is about how we make sense of that past from a present; a history that provides closure, and one that encourages the openness of possibilities. In short,

the decision facing educators is between a history in which students are receivers of information or one in which they are its producers; a history education that provides students with *what* to think or one that encourages them *to* think. (pp. 366-367)

Segall (1999) values a view of history that he calls “critical historiography” (p. 366). He explains that the educational value behind the study of history is not found in the study of history for its own sake, but rather, in an understanding about the ways that, “such a study might provide as to which particular pasts and ways of storying the past we have chosen to call our own, and how these choices have positioned us to act (or not act) in the world” (p. 366). For some scholars, critical historiography has come to represent the study of history. The Cooperative Biography takes aspects of historiography, namely the notion that the study of history involves how we make sense of it, and asks that students engage in the kind of sense-making and decision making that places them in the position to story their own version history.

The work on historiography and particularly metahistory has influenced the field of history education in a number of ways. For some scholars, there has been a shift in epistemic beliefs about history. Many who write about history now believe that history is more than just the pursuit of putative historical truth, acknowledging that different people, governed by differing metahistory, can interpret and tell about the past in differing, often conflicting, ways (White, 1973). Thus, from the perspective of historiography comes an increased interest in epistemic cognition. *Epistemic cognition* can be understood as, “the cognitive process enabling individuals to consider the criteria, limits, and certainty of knowing” (Maggioni, VanSledright, & Alexander, 2009, p. 188).

Insights into the ways of knowing history have led to an understanding of *epistemic stances* or the ways individuals define what counts as knowledge and how that knowledge can be acquired and applied (VanSledright, 2011).

These conceptions of knowledge that one forms powerfully affects an individual's belief structure (Hofer, 2002) and understanding of teaching and learning within a subject matter (Hofer, 2002). Within history education, epistemic stances are used to make sense of historical constructs, influence an individual's thinking while working with historical texts, and, "affects the overall ways in which he or she approaches the study of the past" (VanSledright, 2011, p. 7). According to VanSledright (2011) it is important to acknowledge individuals' epistemic stances when considering the ways in which individuals think about history. Moreover, it is important to consider the relationship, "between the investigator (the knower) and the past (what's to be known). Such dimensions represent ways of knowing, which dictate how and what a learner constructs as knowledge" (VanSledright, 2011, p.7). Research in historiography has paved the way for deeper considerations about how individuals and groups experience history and how understanding history can be dependent on the beliefs of the learner as well as on a broader notion of metahistory, and has led to the notion of historical understanding.

Historical understanding is defined as, "a process that transforms historical data into a means of understanding past realities and their relationships to the present and the future" (Kennedy, 1983, p. 19). This early definition emphasized a cognitive process where students processed information as it was presented to them, while creating understanding based on the experience of reading and encountering new sources on a topic.

Early research on historical understanding focused on the differences between historical inquiry and research in the physical sciences (Kennedy, 1983). A key difference delineating historical research and inquiry, and research in the physical sciences came from Kennedy's study of a group of seventh to ninth graders in Sydney, Australia. He asserted, "the uniqueness of historical events and the problems of deriving historical generalizations lend a subjectivity to historical understanding that is not part of understanding in the natural sciences" (p.18). The conclusion he reached began to uncover the many ways that subjectivity worked in tandem with the objectivity in the creation of historical understanding.

Early research also focused on the cognitive capacity of students and asserted that the nature of historical understanding was developmentally determined and that younger children were not capable of the skills needed to interpret historical passages (Hallam, 1970; 1979). Levstik (1986) challenged the research that suggested young learners could not learn history. Levstik began a tradition seeking to understand learners in the younger years and their historical understanding. Citing research that suggested that precursors to historical understanding can be found developmentally (Egan, 1983), Levstik set out to demonstrate what those precursors looked like in a sixth grade classroom in a U.S. public school. Using naturalistic inquiry to study early historical response, she painted a picture that "narrative is a potent spur to historical interest" and that "narrative may help children make sense of history" (p. 2). Some scholars began to ask questions about the ways that children understand history and began to paint qualitative images of what that understanding looked like.

Around this same time, scholarship emerged that suggested history pedagogy

should be adjusted for young learners, especially through the use of narratives (Muir, 1985). Though this body of scholarship began to emerge, consensus did not exist about when history should be introduced to children. Scholarly discussions emerged that spoke, point by point, about which historical concepts may pose the greatest barriers for young learners to develop historical understanding. Thornton and Vukelich (1988) conducted a largely developmental study of how children understand the concept of time continuity. Their study concluded that children do understand time concepts (past, present, future) with only minor variations to the ways adolescents understand the same concepts. They asserted, “between the ages of eight and eleven, children’s temporal understanding develops markedly. By ages eight and nine, children accurately employ terms past, present and future and are able to accurately represent people and places with these terms” (p. 71). Their study, which demonstrated these kinds of abilities previously thought to not exist among young learners, began to influence the field towards the search for understanding young children’s historical understanding.

As research continued to uncover numerous ways that developmental theory, particularly Piaget’s (1972) theories of development, did not determine young learners’ ability, or lack thereof, to understand history, research began to focus on new methods and avenues to investigate children’s historical understanding. Levstik and Pappas (1992) issued a call to researchers to begin thinking about narrative and other avenues for young children to express their beliefs about historical topics, thus providing new outlets of study for researchers. They asserted, “asking children to respond to and create various historical narratives (fiction, biography, autobiography, and so forth), and at an early age during the elementary years, for example, might be one avenue to explore, both in

research and instruction” (p. 379). Such an implementation would mark a new avenue to begin to explore new theoretical questions surrounding the ways that children understand history.

Soon after the aforementioned studies were published, developmental approaches to history education came under attack along with many other disciplines in education. In history education, the attack centered on the history curriculum and disagreements about what it should be like for learners of different ages. The expanding environments approach (a curricular approach based on the notion that elementary Social Studies, history in particular, should begin by focusing on simple concepts found in the nearby environment of the child, then move to more complex concepts outside of the child’s intimate environment) that dominated the contents of history textbooks for years (and continues to do so today) fell under scrutiny by scholars as it assumes that developmental norms dominate a student’s ability to learn content (Parker, 2000).

Akenson (1989) conducted a study of a fourth grade Tennessee textbook, that despite research against the expanding environments approach, continued to rely upon the approach for its organizational set up. In his study, Akenson concluded, “developmental norms take on an almost genetic quality indigenous to the human species as it passes through childhood. By identifying the specific developmental levels, the assumption emerges that children can or cannot deal with particular concepts at a given grade level (p. 39).” Many textbooks today that are currently in use continue to advocate the approach, even the one used in our elementary Social Studies preparation program today (Maxim, 2010).

The debate that had taken hold of the social studies community was soon to expand

into a part of what has been called the “Social Studies Wars” (Evans, 2004). History education would no longer be the same as various stakeholders (researchers, teachers, policy-makers, and parents) each made different claims about what should comprise the best curriculum in the nation’s social studies and history classrooms.

As the curriculum wars in the Social Studies ensued, attention turned to the role of teachers in the formation of their students’ historical understanding. For one of the first times, the gaze of researchers fell not on the students but on teachers and how their perceptions of history influenced their students’ beliefs. Evans (1989) conducted an exploratory study of teachers’ perceptions of history, which enabled him to effectively name five conceptions of history educators that he illustrated through five teacher typologies. The five teacher typologies he noted were: the storyteller, the scientific historian, the relativist reformer, the cosmic philosopher, and the eclectic (Evans, 1989, p. 210).

Evans (1989) connected each typology to a particular view of history and conception of *why* history should be studied. *The storyteller*, represented by 11% of the teacher population studied, focused on specific people, places, and events and believed that history should be taught in order to gain knowledge of the fascinating people and places of the past. Evans noted “they (storytellers) suggest that we should emphasize the study of people and events to help our students grasp knowledge of basic facts and a sense of time” (p. 215-216). Evans goes on to explain how storytellers are comparable to idealist philosophers of history, who believe that asking questions about the meaning of events is a task best reserved for historians. History teachers, from the perspective of storytellers, should teach history so that students can gain cultural knowledge, paying

tribute to our predecessors, contributing to their sense of self that clues students to a shared sense of identity.

Evans' study also unveiled a teacher typology that he compared closely with analytical positivist philosophy of history, *the scientific historian*. Evans noted that this group of teachers “viewed history as a form of scientific inquiry and tend to borrow methods from scientific inquiry” (p. 220). Evans went on to explain how these teachers have a heavy reliance on evidence and pay critical attention to primary sources in an objective attempt to create historical truth.

The third teacher type, for Evans, was *the relativist reformer*, which represented 45% of his overall 71 participants. This group was best characterized as those who believe history should be studied as a way to reform the present. The group believed that the past connected to the present as a way to learn from past mistakes to ensure that they not be repeated in the future. In general, “these teachers endorse developing lessons from history to guide current decisions” (p. 224). A common bond amongst these teachers was their belief that the world could be improved and controlled, through close analyses of history. Simply put, knowing what happened in the past equates to ensuring past mistakes never re-surface for the relativist reformer.

Though Evans (1989) noted that each of the teacher typologies had some epistemic overlap, he nonetheless arrived at distinctions between them in order to distinguish between varying conceptions held by history teachers about *why* history should be taught. Evans asserted that teacher conceptions of history vary. He went on to paint pictures of differing types of teacher perceptions without deeply exploring the overlap he mentioned in passing.

A few scholars in history education began investigating what teachers' perceptions of history look like (Evans, 1989; Ochoa-Becker, 1999; Egan & Fraser 1989). How teachers' perceptions of history impact their students' conceptions? Which factors contribute to the development of a teachers' conception of history? For some, this kind of inquiry became of central importance to discussions of history education, as it became implied that the outcome, student learning and expression of learning, may in large part be connected to the beliefs of teachers regarding what history is or isn't.

Brophy and Good (1974) had long argued that teachers' belief systems were most important in influencing the kinds of curricular decisions teachers made. Other social studies researchers have concurred (Ochoa-Becker, 1999) and attempted to explicate the precise impact teachers' perceptions of history had on their students. Simultaneously, as researchers began to think about the impact that teacher perceptions had on the learner, researchers also began to focus on different layers of historical understanding. Egan and Fraser (1989) claimed that there were different purposes for the study of history and that each carried with them a unique set of historical understandings, none truer than the next.

Egan and Fraser (1989) paved the road for understanding how different purposes for the study of history contributed to different layers of historical understanding. They first spoke to the importance of identity formation through historical narratives and the ability to understand individuals' rights through current social conventions. Second, they spoke about the narratives of particular events, disasters, and atrocities that promote and invite individuals to associate with heroes in great movements. Egan and Fraser thirdly strove to uncover grand narratives of change and historical progress and how those related to individuals' sense of self. The fourth and final layer was histories that

attempted to uncover what actually happened in the past for its own sake.

Each of the layers, according to the authors, carried with them a different kind of historical understanding, all often present in the minds of learners simultaneously. They claimed,

These are four somewhat distinct kinds of history, and each represents a distinct kind of historical understanding. None of these kinds of history is truer or more proper than the others. Each uses the past for different social and psychological purposes. We tend to find all four mixed in our modern historical consciousness. (Egan & Fraser, 1989, p. 280)

Their study unveiled historical patterns dating back to the Ancient Greeks, and demonstrated the origin for each purpose of history and its relation to historical understanding. A few scholars now began to see different arenas of psychology and social purpose that could be attributed to different kinds of historical understanding.

Indeed, Yeager (1996) conducted an exploratory study of classroom teachers teaching history and uncovered three patterns of how they sought truth in the pursuit of historical inquiry. The author identified some teachers who pursued historical inquiry from the epistemic perspective of history as a “construction of meaning” (p. 151). Similarly, the author found that other teachers approached the inquiry as “history as entertainment” (p. 155), as a story to be brought to life. Finally, the author found that some teachers’ epistemic beliefs characterized history as “a search for accuracy” (p. 158).

Similar to the work of Evans (1989), Yeager (1996) gave the field further characterizations for teachers’ epistemological beliefs, from a teacher who may believe in

‘accuracy’ finding in history, to a teacher who valued historical inquiry for the purposes of constructing meaning. Though the author identified ways in which each of the three typologies may have blended together at times, through her structured interviews the particularities of each teacher type were illuminated.

Thus, by and large, fixed categories were used to represent the ways teachers viewed history epistemically. Through this research, some regained interest in the epistemic beliefs teachers brought with them into the history classroom and began to systematically ask about those beliefs and how they related to the development of students’ historical understanding (Bowen & Davis, 1998).

Bohan and Davis (1998) researched the path of personal development that led to pre-service teachers historical understanding through an investigation of pre-service teachers beliefs about history. Through written responses and capturing verbal utterances, the authors were able to identify some patterns about the nature of history and the experiences needed to best teach history. Throughout the study, the authors explored the ways in which students’ epistemology impacted their teaching of history. Bohan and Davis (1998) articulated their vision for effective history teaching and the need for history teachers to embrace a close familiarity with the kind of historical understanding that views history as involving multiple perspectives.

Noting a difference in the kind of views towards history that historians and pedagogues should possess, Bohan and Davis (1998) began the groundwork for claiming what kinds of experiences pre-service teachers should have to best enable them to teach history. Concluding that pre-service student teachers could benefit from more engagement with historical understanding and multiple perspectives, the authors caution

that if this does not occur there will continue to be a belief amongst students and teachers that history simply is ‘what happened in the past’ and that no need for creativity or interpretation exists in the teaching and learning of history (Bohan & Davis, 1998).

Extant research in history education

Given the contributions of historiography, metahistory and epistemic cognition, more recent scholarship in history education has focused on the ways that students understand history. This body of research has offered a great deal of knowledge regarding various “second-order procedural understandings” (Lee & Ashby, 2000, p. 3). These understandings have focused more recently on *historical empathy* (VanSledright, 2001; Lee & Ashby, 2001; Yeager, Foster, Maley, Anderson & Morris, 1998), *historical significance* (Barton & Levstik, 1998; Seixas, 1996), and *epistemology* (Wilson & Wineburg, 1988; Wineburg, 2001; Seixas, 1996). Taken together, this body of research forms the basis in the field of history education of when and how to use these understandings to best understand the past. More broadly, this kind of work has been referred to in a number of different ways, explicating the ways students think about history through *historical thinking*, *historical consciousness*, *historical cognition*, and *historical understanding* (Wineburg, 2001; Seixas, 1996).

Many scholars continue to use various lenses and conceptual frames when speaking about the ways students and teachers interpret and value history. Wineburg (1988; 1999; 2001) is considered a leading scholar in the field, having authored scores of articles and books about how students and teachers think and understand history. He employs the constructs of historical understanding, historical cognition, and historical

thinking in very similar ways. In the same passage, he will seemingly employ the terms interchangeably. For example, consider the following passage containing three conceptual references describing historical cognitive:

To reveal historical cognition before it gets tidied up for public presentation, I could not rely on the traditional arsenal of research techniques. Multiple-choice tests tell us only that the correct bubble was blackened, but not what thinking processes led to the choice. In search of historical understanding, I have ventured into hundreds of classrooms—sometimes for months on end. At other times, to get a closer look at historical thinking as it unfolded, I have taught historians and students, teachers and parents to articulate their thoughts, a technique that provides access to historical cognition in real time. (Wineburg, 2001, p. xi)

The passage may help to understand the interchangeable use of the terms in the field more broadly. However, distinctions can be gleaned from a closer analysis yielding a more tightly woven conceptual framing. Like Wineburg, I am interested in an historical understanding of how students, teachers, and historian's progress towards understanding, not to their end point(s) but to what they think about along the way. Thus, historical understanding is not an issue of getting it right, or being informed, but rather it is concerned primarily with the journey along the way. As Wineburg so aptly stated, "As a researcher into historical cognition, I am most interested in what goes on in the middle: the way stations of skilled historical practice, the false starts, the half-baked ideas, the

wild goose chases that are edited out of historians monographs, as well as their methods books for novices.” (p.103)

For some history education researchers, there has been a shift away the historian as a model for the K-12 student (who may be considered a novice when it comes to understanding history and past events) (Wineburg, 2001). Also gone are the days when it was sufficed to hold untroubled claims made by historians as somehow representing what really happened in the past (Seixas, 2004; White, 1973). However, it is worth acknowledging that not all scholars gave up on the notion of history education as a means of reproducing a shared, consensual narrative of historical heritage (Ravitch, 2003; Saxe 1991). History education, like so many other academic fields, felt the effects of the “literary turn” (Segall, Cherryholmes, & Heilman, 2006) and responded by grounding research and literature exploring the constructed nature of history as well as how historical narratives are created (Seixas, 2004; White, 1973).

This scholarship has opened a space for education research to explore the many ways that students and teachers arrive at their beliefs about history and also helps to understand precisely what a belief is within the domain of historical understanding. Lowenthal (1985) refers to a belief in history as “how people see, value or understand the past” (p. xvii) and refers to an “astounding paucity” (p. xvii) of research on the topic. Downey and Levstik (1991) refer to a disturbing lack of attention about beliefs and “what children know and how they come to learn what they know [about history] (p. 402).” From these perspectives a belief in history is a cognitive act of how people come to form their views, how they value the views they form, and how those views may change over time.

Beliefs about history operate in unique ways in relation to historical understanding/consciousness. A belief may or may not be consciously known to the believer. The relationship between knowledge and belief is not entirely understood (Pajares, 1992). Beliefs can be different from academic knowledge; individuals are not always aware of their beliefs and how they influence what they know. Beliefs can be used for understanding current realities, they can influence what a person views as knowledge, they may be formed quite early on in life and may pose a challenge to accepting new ideas that do not mesh with preconceived beliefs (Pajares, 1992).

A perspective in history is similar to a belief in history. Lowenthal (1998) defines a belief in history “as how people see or value the past” (p. 97). From this, he elaborates that there are two types of beliefs, those that are known and those that are unknown. When students, historians, or teachers engage with historical beliefs, there are choices to be made in the process of forming an historical understanding. These choices are often based on the experiences of the learners’ prior experiences with the topic (VanSledright, 2010), or they can be informed by collective memories (Wertsch, 2002) learners have encountered in school and outside of school (Wineburg, 1996). The process of making choices about which historical beliefs and/or perspectives actually count, is one in which the precise relationship between the choices made and on what grounds, eludes researchers.

Thelen (1995) and Nora (1996) both have studied how beliefs have entered into the realm of memory and have taken up the task of understanding the basis for the choices that learners make including what historical sources learners choose to believe, how they handle engaging multiple perspectives when they conflict, and the nature of

argument and debate with regard to choices made. Despite their depth of research, consensus has not been reached about how to value the different choices students make in the process of forming historical beliefs. Barton, McCully & Conway (2011) conducted two studies of students' perceptions of identity and national history in Northern Ireland. In each case, they concluded that students believed their school to be a major contributor to their beliefs about national history, yet also indicated that students were heavily influenced by experiences outside of school that impacted their perceptions about identity and national history. Levstik (1995), for example, favors a student vernacular vision of history, which stands in contrast to a more acute version of a search for accuracy or specific use of the past favored by Rosenzweig (1998). Lee and Ashby (1998) have also researched how students' developing beliefs about history grappled with the complex notion of handling conflicts that are brought to light when competing historical sources differ. They favored a view of teaching and learning history that focused on a reconceptualization of the discipline of history for and by students, one which allows students "to come to grips with the discipline" (p. 2) by recognizing its ontological and epistemological limits.

Seixas (2004) defines historical consciousness as "how people make sense of the past, or how their understanding shapes their current identity and their sense of possibilities for the future" (p.7). Similar to the way a belief is framed in *historical understanding*, other education scholars (Seixas, 2004) have explored how *historical consciousness* shapes our sense of the present and future. In his view, historical consciousness may represent a stronger connection to the current reality of individuals more so than put forth by Wineburg's discussions of historical understanding and/or

cognition. Understanding historical consciousness opens the door for exploring the various ways that identity and sense of self intermingle with past narratives in the process of individuals and groups forming their beliefs or consciousness.

Like Wineburg, Seixas is not primarily interested in the end goal but the process along the way of forming a belief and the ways that subjectivity or memory may influence historical consciousness. The lens that Seixas chooses to use illuminates the challenge of implementing a ‘one size fits all’ history curriculum. Furthermore, his discussion of historical consciousness also threatens the strong hold that tradition has played in historical narratives through “collective memories” or our changing ways of making sense of the past. For Seixas (2004), collective memories represent “a common past, preserved through institutions, traditions, and symbols, perhaps the crucial instrument in the construction of collective identity in the present” (p. 5). The threat comes from close “examination of collective memory over time raising questions not only about how narratives themselves vary, but also about how and why their forms and uses change over time” (p. 9).

Historical consciousness can also represent a broader collective concept connected to how an individual relates to history and the historical culture of a society. It is further complicated as it is concerned with the present and the future as connected to understanding the past. Thus, an individual’s historical consciousness can be seen as related to beliefs about the nature of history, historical knowledge, and personal interests and understanding. The subjective nature of an individual’s historical consciousness allows it to be seen as a historical pathway to an individual’s identity and sense of self.

Research has also focused on the ways historians think historically. Wineburg (2001; 1991) examined the cognitive skills used by historians during historical inquiry and document analysis and found that “source heuristic” was an essential skill for historians thinking historically.

When historians examine primary sources, they engage in the sourcing heuristic by asking questions about an author's credentials, motivations, and participation in events at the time a document was written and the audience for whom the document was intended. Historians contextualize the content of a document, which enables them to appreciate ways of perceiving and thinking that are quite different from conventional ways of perceiving and thinking today. When teachers and students use the sourcing heuristic, they can create a distance between their own views and those of the people of earlier eras. (Wineburg, 1991, p. 508)

For Wineburg, the ability to engage in source heuristic allows historians to construct meaning through text. Ultimately, this may be the hallmark of historical understanding, using sources not just to explain the world but as a way to construct it.

Historical epistemology (Wilson, 1998), also referred to as historical positionality (Epstein, 1997) or the view that one takes on the nature of [historical] knowledge, contributes to the choices that learners make when valuing historical narratives and historical evidence (VanSledright, 2010). However, the precise relationship among historical thinking, historical understanding, and the consideration of historical evidence

eludes researchers today (Seixas, 1996; VanSledright, 2010; Wineburg, 2001). Despite a recognition that learners' positionalities vary to a great degree and that they depend on local sociocultural contexts, memory, and experience (VanSledright, 2002), researchers have been able to identify various ways that explain "who the learner is" (VanSledright, 2005) with regard to the process.

Recent efforts to explain how learners change their epistemic beliefs, or the basis from which learners evaluate and value historical evidence informing their historical understanding, has indicated that epistemic change requires a holistic approach and sustained study overtime, including explicitly discussing epistemic issues (VanSledright, 2010). In between, students are left to "reckon with the limited availability of remnants of the past and the role of human witnesses, thus raising issues of bias and loss of information" (p.4).

Grant and Gradwell (2010) compiled the reflections of eight "ambitious history teachers" (p.9) who each used big questions to elicit student thinking and ideas during their teaching. In each case, the teachers relied upon the big questions to point to what they wanted to teach and allow students to grapple with different perspectives and stories about historical events. Their experiences paint a picture of moving beyond the test in a high-stakes testing environment and illuminate the arduous task of ambitious teaching in today's day and age. In each of the cases, the teachers relied upon big questions in spite of their perceptions of the testing environment highlighting skills like memorization and recitation that they otherwise felt drained their creative energies.

Thornton and Barton (2010) highlight a key dilemma facing social studies educators today, the separation of the discipline of history from the social studies. They

trace the development of the divide that has been fueled in large part by political agendas and the nationalist views of history education that were prevalent in the 1980s. Their study points to the need for the social studies to continue to guide history education for a number of reasons, including the practical and time restraints of the school day and the need for social sciences to guide the content that teachers teach. They conclude their study by reminding educators and historians that in order for students to continue to develop the kinds of skills that historians have claimed are necessary, the social studies must continue to develop students' conceptual understanding and guide the selection of content that is best suited to aid in the process.

Recent scholarship about teaching history with film has pointed to many of the benefits of teaching history with an emphasis on perspective, narrative, and empathy. Moreover, many scholars have identified the medium of film as an alternative to the use of textbooks, which often portray events as objective in nature, frequently avoiding opportunities for students to sift through conflicting interpretations, multiple perspectives, and the implications for the present (Marcus, 2007; Metzger, 2007; Stoddard, 2007). According to Marcus (2007), "films may help students construct their own insight about different eras and cultures, particularly when analyzed as primary sources reflecting the time period and culture in which they were made" (p. 3).

Additional insights have stemmed from the study of film and its relation to historical thinking. Stoddard (2007) helped to develop a sense of what historical empathy looks like and how it can be achieved and understood today. Moving beyond definitions of empathy as perspective taking or perspective recognition, Stoddard (2007) forms a view that infuses empathy for perspective recognition and empathy for caring, both

which work together in powerful ways influencing historical understanding. Stoddard also notes that while many historians believe aspects of empathy, like feeling sorry for someone should be avoided, he embraces a view that that film elicits such responses and that the responses are a way to further develop empathy and in turn historical understanding. Many of the insights afforded from scholars who use the medium of film to study history in the classroom parallel using written historical fiction and filmic historical fiction as instructional devices.

Clark (2009) conducted an international study in Canada and Australian probing students and teachers about their perceptions of historical study in the classroom. Pointing to numerous ongoing debates about what students should be learning in the classroom and a need to draw students closer to the discipline and national story, Clark cautions educators that a move back towards “teaching the facts” runs the risk of driving students further away from history and the understanding their national story. In contrast to simply teaching the facts, Clark argues for a disciplined historical literacy that draws students in on the discussion about what they think about history and marks a move towards further and deeper historical thinking and understanding. Moreover, through the voices of the students and teachers, Clark demonstrates that there is indeed a great desire to learn about the national history in both Canada and Australia, however, there is also a burning desire that history should be complex and inviting.

Bain (2005) conducted research on the notion of *doing* history and using *objects* to teach history in secondary history classes. His work focused on problems that secondary history teachers often face including but not limited to short class periods, use of text books, pre-determined course objectives, and difficulty engaging students in

historical thinking. He focused on the kinds of skills and thinking that historians rely upon in order to inform the kinds of things that pedagogues may concern themselves with in the classroom. He arrived at a pedagogical practice that he believed would entice his students to *do* more with history by focusing on presenting students with historical problems much like the ways historians conduct their investigations. Framing historical inquiry through problems that students could investigate such as why did people believe the world was flat, he embraced aspects of what historians do and brought them into the classroom in order to foster students' historical thinking and *doing* more with history. These contributions furthered theoretical and practical solutions aimed at furthering student's engagement with history and promoting *doing* history.

Recapping briefly, extant research on historical thinking points to students' linear progression of ideas regarding concepts such as causation, historical accounts, and evidence (Lee & Ashby, 2000; VanSledright, 2010). Part of the progression involves learners moving from an epistemic view of history as directly connected to the past, a view VanSledright (2010) referred to as "isomorphic" (p. 4), to viewing historical narratives as the result of the investigative work of historians.

Chapter Summary

Extant research in the social studies regarding historical understanding has taken up epistemological investigations. Researchers have used epistemological lenses when searching for how students think and learn historically. For example, research regarding an objectivist stance towards history shows how students may believe that "bias"

accounts for the presence of competing interpretations of history. Here, students may form their historical understanding, view, or beliefs on the “quantity (or specificity) of information provided” (as in Barton, 2008, p. 242; Ashby, 2005; Barca, 2005; VanSledright & Afflerbach, 2005). Learners embracing this epistemological stance may reject information as ‘inaccurate’ when alternative histories are presented.

Researchers have also focused on a constructivist stance, where a student may recognize that, “(t)here is not one true story about the past but a multiplicity of complementary, competing or clashing stories” (Lee, 2004, p. 129). Here thinking historically becomes an “unnatural act” (Wineburg, 2001) of going beyond a unitary (and comfortably contemporaneous) epistemological stance. This kind of research has demonstrated how through films, textbooks, teachers, and peers, learners may learn to construct their own historical understanding. Placing learners in such a role stands in contrast to experiences that perpetuate or embracing objectivist views because it places students in the role of knowledge creator rather than recipient.

Similarly, research has demonstrated that pre-service student teachers view history in different ways (Bowen & Davis, 1998). Research has also demonstrated that the historical understanding teachers possess directly impacts the kind of history education teachers provide and the kind of historical perspective students are offered (Yeager, 1996). Further understanding pre-service student teachers’ historical understanding, thinking and perspectives will help shed light on the myriad ways that children learn history.

A key feature of the study of *historical thinking* is how it relates to historical understanding. VanSledright (2010) defines historical thinking as how one makes sense

of the past, while Wineburg (2001) refers to historical understanding as the product, the narratives or the stories we tell our selves about how we make sense of the past. A key ingredient needed to understand the complex relationship between how a belief becomes something more, like a stance [position] or a worldview [epistemology], requires that we grapple with how learners and thinkers alike use frames of reference to determine how knowledge influences how the past is considered or evaluated. This process is tricky, to say the least, because of the personal nature of how learners and thinkers connect the past with a contextual base that then allows them to form their position.

Several terms outlined above are used in this study. However, key terms including historical thinking, historical understanding, historical consciousness, and historical epistemology are central to this study and are important because they currently guide the field regarding how history can and should be taught and help to understand the various obstacles students encounter during sustained historical inquiry. They also form the basis for the deductive analysis presented in chapter four and revisited in chapters five and six.

For this study, I deploy these key concepts as defined here:

Historical thinking: A set of reasoning skills that students should learn while studying history. The set of skills can be applied when individuals encounter any historical content. Coupled with historical content (facts about the past) historical thinking skills promote student interpretation, analysis and use of information about the past.

Historical understanding: Historical understanding is both a process and a product by which people develop internalized narratives about the past and its relationship to the present.

Historical consciousness: Historical consciousness reflects how individuals situate their group identities and solidarities within historical understandings of their world and its historical contexts.

Historical epistemology: Historical epistemology is the (stated or unstated) belief structure guiding what individuals accept as true, accurate, or persuasive (depending on the epistemological orientation) knowledge claims about the world in the past and present.

Historical interpretation: Historical interpretation is a cognitive process by which individuals utilize their historical thinking to reach and articulate historical understandings, based on their historical epistemology and grounded in their sense of historical consciousness.

Historical Truth: Historical truth represents an idealized conceptualization of accurate, factual content knowledge about the past. At the most basic level, historical truth consists of factual claims that cannot be refuted.

Chapter Three: Towards a Theory of Design-Based Research

Design-based research (DBR) in this study has been conceptualized for its ability to help shed light on the kinds of supports students used in the process of thinking within the content domain of an extended historical project, the Cooperative Biography.

According to Cobb et al (2003),

Most classroom design experiments are conceptualized as cases of the process of supporting groups of students' learning in a particular content domain. The theoretical intent, therefore, is to identify and account for successive patterns in student thinking by relating these patterns to the means by which their development was supported and organized. (p. 3)

Utilizing a theory of DBR allowed me to use current theory to understand pre-service student teachers' thinking (deduction) about the Cooperative Biography, and conversely, to use what is evidenced in the environment of the Cooperative Biography to understand pre-service student teachers' thinking about history (induction). This reflexive characteristic of DBR has been referred to as an *iterative design*, an ongoing feature of DBR. Within the context of the cooperative biography there are theories about where the project will bring students (as cited in chapter 1 and 2) and about the kinds of thinking that may result from the overall experience. Similarly, there are ideas more broadly from the field of history education (as cited in chapter 2) that describe the various stages or typologies of being that students typically go through on their way to forming their

beliefs about and understanding of history. Utilizing a theory of design encourages both induction and deduction and allows my study to shed light on the process through ongoing iterative analysis.

In this study, I am testing a hypothesis about how the Cooperative Biography impacts students in the process of constructing history. As such, I am speaking to the audience that believes that students' experiences in the process of *doing* history is pivotal to their development of historical thinking skills and historical understanding. I will first measure a typology approach to understand the impact the experience had on students. This analysis (chapter four) will be problematized (chapter five) as incomplete. The project goals are constructivist in nature and contrast with linear models of understanding how pre-service teachers and students think historically. I will look carefully at the kinds of experiences the participants had in order to infer the kind of reasoning that best describes the project and its influence on students and student engagement within the environment. The study will extend research on *doing* history and will add to the growing body of literature that favors this approach over *absorbing* content in more passive ways.

In this chapter, key terms that define design-based research will be introduced. A rationale for use of the methodology will be provided. The methodology will be applied the study that seeks to understand the environment and experiences of the Cooperative Biography from the perspective of the participants involved.

What is Design-Based Research?

In order to address the research questions, I took a design-based research (Biesta & Burboles, 2003; Bradley, 2008; Cobb et al, 2003) approach to educational research. Design-based research, also referred to design experiments, borrow elements of pragmatism in search of developing theories within a specific content domain (Cobb et al, 2003). More specifically, design experiments develop domain specific theories by focusing systematically on the learning and means of support within an environment dedicated to domain specific learning (Cobb et al, 2003). Design-based research experiments, then, “have both a pragmatic bent—and a theoretical orientation—developing domain specific theories by systematically studying those forms of learning and the means of supporting them (within a particular learning environment)” (p. 9).

The pragmatic bent can be understood as a way to conceptualize the collections of supports offered or presented to a learner within an environment. Rather than view the various supports students create, and receive as separate, mutually distinct factors, the pragmatic bent promotes a belief in the connectedness of supports. Thus, design contexts (environments) are conceptualized as “interacting systems rather than as either a collection of activities or a list of separate factors that influence learning” (p. 9). A theory of design is interested in explaining and understanding why designs work and suggests how they could be changed and adapted to suit new environments. Therefore, design experiments fit into the category of methodologies that become “crucibles for the generation and testing of theory” (Cobb et al, 2003, p. 10).

The result of design experiments is a greater understanding of a *learning ecology*—a complex interacting system comprised of different types and levels of

learning within a specific content domain (Cobb et al, 2003). A learning ecology can also be understood as comprising the kinds of supports students experience within an environment, the reactions, expressions, and espoused thoughts they articulate and the resulting understanding. The various elements that typically comprise a learning ecology and the focus of elements to be studied in a design experiment, are “the tasks or problems that students are asked to solve, the kinds of discourses that are encouraged, the norms of participation that are established, the tools and related means provided, and the practical means by which classroom teachers can orchestrate relations among these elements” (Cobb et al, 2003, p. 9).

In the case of the Cooperative Biography it then becomes essential to capture the elements that comprise the learning ecology—the intentions of the instructor, the tasks that individuals and groups undertake or are asked to undertake, the problems that groups and individuals encounter, and the models of discourse they use and create. All that occurs within the environment must be recorded and analyzed to capture the learning ecology in order to better understand the kinds of thinking and supports that impact students and the resulting beliefs about history that students express.

DBR has been used in several various research settings. Design based experiments have focused on one-on-one interactions (teacher-experimenter and student) in which a researcher conducts teaching sessions with a small number of learners to create a small-scale version of a learning ecology in order to study it in depth and detail (Cobb & Steffe, 1983; Steffe & Thompson, 2000). There have been classroom DBR experiments when a teacher and research team collaborate to assist in instruction (Cobb, 2000; Confrey & Lachance, 2000). Designed-based research experiments have supported

the professional development of a community of teachers (Lehrer & Schauble, 2000). Moreover, design experiments have focused on school and school district recruitment efforts in which a team of researchers collaborated with a team of teachers and other stakeholders to support organizational change (Confrey, Bell & Carrejo, 2001). Lastly and like this study, there have also been designed-based experiments charged with understanding pre-service teacher development in which researchers help organize and study the education of prospective teachers (Simon, 2000; VanSledright, 2002). Though design experiments in educational research have cut across a variety of settings, there are a few key features that apply to these diverse types of environments (Cobb et al, 2003).

Commonly, DBR experiments seek to better understand the development of a learning ecology within a specific domain of knowledge. In many such studies, the purpose for design experimentation has been to “develop a class of theories about both the process of learning and the means that are designed to support the learning” (Cobb et al, 2003, p. 10). In DBR the process of learning is broadly defined to encompass “what is typically thought of as knowledge, but also the evolution of learning-relevant social practices and even constructs such as identity and interest” (p. 10). The means for supporting learning can be understood then as encompassing “the affordances and constraints of material artifacts, teaching and learning practices, and...can include the negotiation of domain specific norms” (p. 10)—such as how students construct what counts as ‘good history’ and evidence of the construction of their learning. DBR is dedicated to domain specific learning and theories about how learning takes place given certain material artifacts, instruction, learning and teaching styles. It allows for many

factors to be considered simultaneously and is used to ensure that current theory adequately explains learning and thinking within a specific learning domain.

Another key feature that bridges DBR experiments across settings is the notion that they are typically “test beds for innovation” (Cobb et al, 2003, p. 2). The intent is to bring about different possibilities for improving current educational practices and theories of learning, to create new theories, and to investigate them systematically. Thus, design experiments seek to consider the ways prior research suggests learning takes place within a domain through deduction and knowledge of prior studies and literature. By focusing on that which has been well documented, the belief is that the researcher is more likely to encounter relevant factors that contribute to the learning process and become more aware of their interrelations.

Entering into a design-based experiment, it is of the utmost importance for the researcher to have a keen eye on that which is the target of investigation. Using such a theoretical orientation targeted to the study of learning ecologies (environments) precludes an understanding of the separation of everything that happens. Since it is believed that that which takes place in an environment is connected to that which has taken place prior and will take place in the future, it is vital to parcel out what is being studied with that which may be accidental or assumed as a background condition. As a test bed of innovation, DBR experiments can be used to test current theory and literature by applying them deductively to understand a specific learning ecology. If the theory is not a match to that which has been observed within an environment, DBR then allows for induction to arrive at new theories that may explain the learning ecology.

The final aspect of DBR that cuts across the majority of studies is its theoretical scope. Theories that stem from design-based research do not seek to become grand theories of learning. Rather, they are put forth in a humble way as domain specific learning processes that are accounted to the design. In other words, the contexts (environments) that are studied are specific to the kinds of supports students experience and the learning ecology that explains what is being done in practice. Thus, the scope of DBR may be much more central to the setting and the people involved in the setting than it would to all environments that may have common curricular goals.

DBR does not seek to extrapolate to all environments by focusing on the setting. However, many domain specific theories are not as humble in their reach and scope, placing design based research in a nice position to help shed light on theories that may, perhaps, overstep the boundaries of the context from which they were derived. It is important to note that design based research must first grapple with that which is intended to explain learning in a given content domain (deductively) prior to exploring the reflexive notion that something else may better explain what is occurring in the environment based on induction.

To recap, design-based research (DBR) has been used in a variety of settings. By definition, each study is specific to the discipline from which it is undertaken and is specific to the context of that particular learning environment and context. Within a specific context, DBR is able to test theories about how learning, for example, takes place within a discipline and a context. It can be used to test theories deductively based on the intent of the particular learning objectives in place in the context. It can also be used

reflexively, where the data allows new theories of learning within the environment to unfold through inductive reasoning.

Design-based research allowed me to explore pre-service teachers' *learning ecology* as evidenced in the *environment* of the Cooperative Biography and to focus on their thinking as connected to various ways in which they were supported through classroom practice. According to Bradley (2008), "In regard to defining reality (ontology) and how it can be known (epistemology), we believe that pragmatism provides an appropriate and useful philosophical basis for formative and design experiments and indeed for all education research" (p. 36). Thus, by using a DBR methodology in this study, I am able to test what the prior literature suggests should happen within the environment regarding how students think about history. I am also able to test what the evidence in the form of the learning ecologies expressed during the unit may suggest about student thinking and the kinds of supports that may have enabled those thoughts within the environment.

Research Questions

Based on my desire to understand how, and if, The Cooperative Biography moves students towards a particular view of history, I paused to look deeply at the outcomes of the Cooperative Biography in our context. I recap my research questions here to contextualize them with extant literature and with DBR:

1. What kind of evidence emerges from the Cooperative Biography that supports the instructional effectiveness of the project for the preparation of pre-service elementary teachers of history and social studies?
2. In what ways do students express historical thinking during the experience?
3. What kinds of historical understanding(s) tend to emerge from the Cooperative Biography?

Methods

A number of different data gathering techniques were employed that focused on the environment (observations), the participants (observations, interviews, and surveys) and the transactions between the two within the environment (observations and coding via Nvivo9). Here, I will describe these methods in detail, beginning with the research site, the specific methods and describe how they relate to DBR.

Research Site

I conducted this research in a social studies methods course for elementary teacher-candidates at a large Mid-Atlantic research-based university. The university was chartered by the state more than 150 years ago. The university was originally dedicated to agricultural science, however, roughly ten years after it's founding became a land-grant institution dedicated to expanding its support to include engineering, mining and other applied sciences to the list of courses offered. It is currently home to more than

80,000 students. Though catering specifically to the commonwealth's public, more than 160 countries are represented at the university. In 2010, the overall enrollment in the university reflected a 54.7 percent male population and a 45.3 percent female population. Shortly after the university was founded it adopted a three-part mission, teaching, research and public service, which continues to define the university today (Undisclosed, University Website).

Within the university, there are several colleges dedicated to expanding knowledge in each discipline. The College of Education is one of several colleges, which offers 21 different specialty areas for undergraduate and graduate study. The College of Education is home to more than 2,800 undergraduate students and 1,400 graduate students each year. The college is known nationally and internationally for its contributions to educational research and outreach. The college is also home to several centers and institutes, which contribute to the college's commitment to serve the general public and the Commonwealth, specifically.

Within the College of Education, there are several programs dedicated to the preparation of various k-12 professionals, including teachers, administrators, counselors, psychologists and other key educational personnel. One such program in the college, prepares elementary school teachers through certification and course requirements to teach general education. Through the teacher certification program for elementary education, students are asked to complete a discipline inquiry (DI) block consisting of three domain specific methods courses (Math, Science, and Social Studies), generally during the fall semester of student's junior year. Students do a field experience in conjunction, in which they are placed in one of the local schools within a 70-mile radius

of the university. The field experience precedes their student teaching semester and lasts approximately ten weeks. During this time, students are taking DI classes and preparing lessons to be taught at the pre-service teaching sight. The following semester students generally complete their full-time student teaching experience and prepare to fulfill their graduation requirements for the following year.

The Social Studies elementary methods course was a match to serve as my research site because of its access to the undergraduate teacher preparation population and because of the foci of the course in preparing future elementary teachers to teach Social Studies. As outlined in chapter one, the site was also the place where The Cooperative Biography was first introduced as a tool for preparing pre-service teachers' to teach and think about history.

There are generally twelve sections of course offered (including PDS) each year at this campus location. The enrollment of each section is about 25 pre-service student teachers. In the fall of 2011, one section taught by Mike (a pseudonym) served as the research site for this study. During the course, pre-service student teachers study research-based methods for delivering Social Studies content to elementary students. There is a common syllabus skeleton across the geographically-dispersed campuses that also teach this course that permits some variability in assignments. Despite minor differences based on instructor styles and desires, the overarching goal remains the same: "to coordinate and conceptualize the richness of anthropology, economics, geography, history, civics, and sociology so they can come alive in your classroom" (Course syllabus, 2010). The campus site of this study is the only that uses the Cooperative Biography as an assignment.

The Cooperative Biography in context

For all instructors at this campus, among the course assignments, is a capstone assignment, the Cooperative Biography. Students are introduced to the assignment as an example of how to teach history and as a way to engage students in interdisciplinary learning. The course syllabus introduces the process,

A cooperative biography is an authentic way to infuse writing, reading, speaking skills into the social studies curriculum by composing a biography with a team (hence, cooperative) about an outstanding citizen—in our case, Rosa Parks. Multi-modal learning and communication is fostered through a range of experiences and re-telling of history. (Course syllabus, 2011)

During the assignment, the class is broken into small groups of 4-5 students each, typically chosen by the instructor. The class is charged with the task of studying the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Each group is then asked to create an original telling of the Boycott focusing on the life of Rosa Parks through four separate episodes we call chapters. The four chapters are chosen based on student interest, however, represent four distinct parts to their story much like the chapters of a book separate distinct parts of a story. Prior to composing the biography students are instructed,

Before you get to the point of writing, producing, or composing the actual biography, you will do many in-class activities--You will watch a video, read a biography, enact a play and write after completion of each activity--This is *doing*

and *absorbing* history. Finally, your group (3-5 members) will think about the *perspective* from which you will re-tell the civil rights movement story. On the project's due date, you will share your biographies and celebrate the completion of this project. (Course syllabus, 2011)

In addition to choices regarding the original re-telling of the story, students are also given the choice of medium that the story would be told through. Various digital mediums were presented, as options for the students to choose from that we had identified prior to the unit, however, additional mediums were possible based on student interest and instructor approval. Digital mediums included but are not limited to *Iweb*, *Imovie*, Comic Life, Power Point, etc.

As an instructor of the course, I had close familiarity with the assignment and beliefs about its potential impact on students, which impacted my commitments to understanding the project and the experiences of students immersed in it. I did not know the participants prior to the study, however, as one of the course instructors, I assume that participants may have known who I was, an instructor of the course. This dynamic may have impacted the kinds of interactions that participants had in my presence. It must be considered that many of the expressions students espoused may have been impacted by their knowledge of my role and a desire to provide the kinds of insights they have felt I desired. Though our relationship may have impacted what students felt comfortable expressing, I believe a measure of trustworthiness was established through the natural setting of the classroom. Moreover, as a Latino male and instructor of the course observing experiences directly related to issues of race, tolerance and the Civil Rights,

among a group of five white pre-service teachers, there may have been a constraining impact on the students in the context of a university setting and working with someone who they may have perceived to have specific beliefs about the topic and events. While I acknowledge the potential for such an impact, I nonetheless believe the interactions were consistent with other teacher education settings.

Participants

Lindsay. Lindsay is a senior from suburban Eastern, PA. She identifies as a white American. She reported a high level of comfort with history prior to the study. She mentioned in initial meetings that she considered herself somewhat of history buff. She mentioned that her family frequently visited museums growing up and that her brother was an amateur historian. She also mentioned that the history channel is frequently on the television in her home.

Lee. Lee is a senior from a suburban town in South-East, PA. She identifies as a white American. She too reported a high level of comfort with history prior to the study. She mentioned having had very fond memories from her days as a student in both elementary and high school. She recalled frequently dressing-up during history classes as a young child and reported that she held an affinity for history in general.

Andrea. Andrea is a senior from Rural Central, PA. She identifies as a white American. She reported a medium level of comfort with history prior to the study. She recounted experiences studying history in elementary and high school that made her feel as though she wasn't good at it. She expressed a desire for history to be more than about dates and facts and attributed her reluctance with history to her experiences as a learner.

Kelsey. Kelsey is a senior also from rural Central, PA. She identifies as a white American. She too reported a medium comfort level with history. She expressed a desire to learn more about history but reported that she really wasn't that interested in it until she took a course in college as an elective that increased her interest in knowing more about the world and the past. She also shared that her parents had always been interested in history and as a young child they frequently visited historical sites, like Gettysburg, PA.

Karla. Karla is a senior from suburban Western, PA. She identifies as a white American. She too reported a medium comfort level with history prior to the study. She expressed never having been too interested in history, stating that she liked other subjects better, including Social Studies beyond history. She also expressed that her family really had little interest in history as well.

Information about the individual participants can be accessed through Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: *Profiles of participants*

Participant	Background Schooling: (Urban, Sub- Urban, Rural)	Gender/Race	Reported comfort level Teaching History (High, Medium, Low)
Pseudonym 1 Lindsay	Suburban	White, Female	High
Pseudonym 2 Lee	Suburban	White, Female	High
Pseudonym 3 Andrea	Rural	White, Female	Medium
Pseudonym 4 Kelsey	Rural	White, Female	Medium
Pseudonym 5 Karla	Suburban	White, Female	Medium

Mike. Mike, the instructor, was previously a middle school social studies teacher and is now a PhD. Candidate from a large research-based institution in the mid-West. He had taught the course twice during the previous year and expressed that he not encountered the Cooperative Biography prior to those experiences. He also expressed a strong affinity for the project, however, emphasized that he would on citizenship in the process of teaching about history.

Procedures

As an instructor in the DI Block, which hosts the methods course, I had familiarity with the course instructor's and assignments. After having gained university approval for research with human subjects, I then contacted Mike to ask if he would be amenable to having a researcher in the room. I explained that I was interested in following a group of pre-service teachers as they engaged in The Cooperative Biography. Moreover, I explained my motivation for a DBR experiment surrounding the assignment with the aim of reviewing the goals of the project with the outcomes. I further explained that I was primarily interested in investigating whether or not the assignment was meeting the goals and intent of the assignment and, if not, investigating how the goals or the assignment could be adjusted based on the outcomes of the experiment. The instructor agreed based on interest to further the course and our knowledge of the assignment and possible student outcomes.

Sampling

I approached the students after having gained the instructor's approval to be in the room conducting research. I began by identifying a sample group of students (explained in detail in next section). The pre-service teachers who agreed were given the Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research.

The participants were selected through a two-tiered process. First, the pool of possible participants were identified by offering the entire population, (undergraduates enrolled in SS ED 430W, x section), an opportunity to take part in the study. Participation was entirely voluntary. If more participants volunteered than were needed for the sample, the actual participants would have been purposively selected from among the volunteers. Each volunteer had an equal chance of being selected to take part in the study. Thus, the study sample reasonably represented the larger population. The volunteers were formed into a single working group for the project, as arranged by the instructor, which I followed in depth through out the experience.

Interviews

A primary source of data to understand participant thinking during the inquiry was a series of three in-depth, semi-structured interviews. After identifying the sample, each participant and I scheduled the first thirty-minute interview to take place prior to the unit. The interviews took place in my office located next door to the Social Studies laboratory where the class is held regularly. An interview protocol was used to conduct each interview (see Appendix B). In order to accommodate students' busy schedules, interviews were conducted following the regularly held classroom meeting times.

The interviews consisted of one-on-one interactions between the primary investigator and the participants. The three interviews took place first, prior to the unit second, during the unit, and, third, following the unit. Due to the brief duration of the unit (three weeks) there was an interview each week. All interviews were face to face. The purpose of the interviews was to gather information about participants' perceptions, attitudes, and dispositions about history and teaching history and to make sense of their understanding of the project and its influence on their thinking about history. The interview protocol (Appendix B) was presented as a questionnaire for participants, and was also used to probe for further information, more detailed responses, clarify any confusion, in open-ended follow-up interviews with individual participants.

The interview questions were broken into three categories, background information, understanding of the Cooperative Biography, and conceptions about history. The first set was important to be able to get to know participants individually and their motivation for becoming a teacher, specifically, how they felt about the teaching of social studies, history, in particular. Example questions in the first set include, "What sparked your interest in becoming a teacher?" And, "How do you feel about teaching history in the near future?" Pertinent responses to the first set of questions were presented in the participant's section above and were used to help to understand the perceptions that individual students brought to into the environment.

The second set of questions focused on students' understanding of the assignment and the their process while engaging with the project. Questions were also designed in this section to be able to ask students individually about statements, expressions, or occurrences that were observed during the day-to-day of the project. An example of the

second set of questions is as follows, “ In the process of doing The Cooperative biography, have you encountered any competing sources or interpretations? Any clashing-evidence? If so, what did you do, what did you believe, and how did you decide?”

The third set of interview questions were designed to capture responses regarding how the students were conceiving history, whether they believed history to be a matter of fact or if they believed that history was a matter of interpretation or somewhere in between. These questions were particularly important as follow-up interviews took place because it offered a forum to ask students about comments they made during the project and how those remarks compared with additional comments students made during interviews. Examples of these types of questions were as followed, “what is history? How would you describe or explain it? What is your opinion about the role of ‘perspective’ in history? In sum, the purpose of these sequential interviews were to probe the ways that participants viewed history and get a sense of the stability and coherence of those views.

Observation protocols

I made audio digital recordings (using an iPod) of the Cooperative Biography small group during nine SS ED 430W class sessions, in order to capture the learning ecology, students’ thinking, and students’ engagement with the project in the environment. Each class time was audio recorded, transcribed, and used for data analysis. I looked closely at the expressions students made and tried to capture the environment, which sparked those comments. I also looked closely at the evolving and

different kinds of historical thinking that students evidenced during the project and focused on documenting the specific events that may have occurred just prior and during those expressions. I also produced a narrative of events using an observation protocol to capture student reflections, and expressions during the project with notes to accompany audio recordings to capture the gaze and other non-verbal cues that the audio couldn't capture.

Survey protocols

As part of this study, participants were asked to take a survey (Appendix A.) at the beginning and end of the study. The survey was intended to understand participant conceptions about history while engaged in the Cooperative Biography. Parts of the survey questions aligned with Evans (1989) discussion of five teacher typologies: the storyteller, the scientific historian, the relativist reformer, the cosmic philosopher and the eclectic (p. 210). A search of prior literature reflected that it had been well documented that teachers and pre-service teachers alike thought about the teaching of history in different ways. It was important to use these categories to see if the participants fell into similar descriptions or if something else could better characterize their beliefs about history as evidenced during The Cooperative Biography. Moreover, this threshold was important to use more than once, not so much to test a notion of change but to revisit the idea that participants' beliefs remained consistent lending themselves well to the notion of categorization.

The five teacher type questions were chosen to be able to identify how participants were conceptualizing history. They were scattered randomly throughout the

survey so as to not dictate patterns to the survey taker. Responses were multiple choice, with four answer types, including, strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree. It was important to have some measure of how much the possible responses resonated with the participants so multiple responses were offered to qualify their chosen response. Some examples are as follows, ‘history is a matter of interpretation’, ‘disagreement about a single event in the past is due to lack of evidence’ and ‘historical claims cannot be fully verified because they are a matter of opinion.’

In sum, there were various data sources used to understand the environment of the Cooperative Biography and the *learning ecology*. Since my primary focus was on the *thinking* that occurred within the environment, it became essential to capture as many data sources that evidenced students’ thinking in the learning ecology. The interviews observations, and surveys offered a primary source to capture thinking and beliefs. Additional data sources included in class observations notes and records, and written work completed by students during the project. However, It also became apparent that students were collaborating out of class, and online. While I was able to ask students about those interactions, I was not able to be present. While I was most interested in the expressions students’ made, I also wanted to visit what they had produced, and their process in producing it, to see how all points of data represented my research questions. I was able to triangulate the data from different sources and use them as the basis for identifying themes and generating codes.

Data Analysis

An iterative design is a salient aspect of DBR that cuts across different design-based experiments in education. The iterative design process features a cyclical relationship between theories that are refuted, new conjectures that are generated and new theories tested. The process takes place and is repeated, resulting in “an iterative design process featuring cycles of invention and revision” (Cobb et al, 2003, p. 10) with an “intended outcome of an exploratory framework that specifies expectations that become the focus of investigation during the next cycle of inquiry” (p. 2).

Design-based research (DBR) is interested in two kinds of data analysis: *deductive* and *inductive*. Design experiments seek to create the circumstances for developing theories yet must also simultaneously be committed to testing the theories by placing them “in harm’s way” (Cobb et al, 2003, p.10). Designs are implemented with a learning theory in mind, or a specific learning ecology that has been well documented. For example, in this study, the Cooperative Biography was chosen for the potential to move pre-service teachers towards a view that history is constructed; promoting a view of teaching and learning history that embraced constructivist-learning theories. In this design study, I am interested in setting up the conditions for this to occur and to test how students respond, or not, to the experience. This can be referred to as the deductive component, with a hypothesized learning ecology and means of supporting it in mind.

There is however, an inductive component that is equally valuable in DBR. On the reflective side of design experiments are the conjecture-driven tests (Cobb et al, 2003) that operate at various levels of analysis. If and when the deductive driven theory being

tested seems to break down in light of what is being realized in the classroom, the theory can be rejected giving way to alternative theories, which can be generated and tested. The result of the rejected theory and the creation of an alternative theory to be generated and tested is known as an “iterative design” (Cobb et al, 2003, p 2). Within the iterative design, prospective analysis is deductive in nature. It involves finding well-supported explanations and using that theory or set of theories to make sense of what is taking place within an environment. Similarly, the inductive analyses in the iterative design process utilizes induction to bring to light alternative explanations for the learning as it arises via the data. When the deductive analysis does not explain the learning ecology then the inductive analyses can be considered to see how it holds up to the observed phenomenon.

Organization of Data

According to Merriam (2002), a method for managing and organizing data is essential. I used Nvivo9, a qualitative analytical software program, to create nodes for each participant that included interview questions and responses, researcher comments during interviews, in-process memos, transcriptions of interviews and any other document that was pertinent to the study. I then produced sources nodes, codes that allowed the data to be analyzed by theme. The codes were used for the deductive analysis as I combed through the data in search of evidence of historical thinking. The nodes became the basis for the inductive analysis, as the data was displayed in its entirety offering a different look at the experiences of participants from the ground up.

Chapter summary

Design-based research is a methodology that promotes increased understanding about *how* learning in a content domain takes place. It uses ‘old knowledge’ to begin investigations about what the process of content learning might look like within a learning ecology. It places theories explaining the process in harm’s way, by asking what other explanations can be offered to explain the learning ecology. It then uses the inductively driven analysis to reflectively consider the deductive analysis. The results, two types of analysis are compared to arrive at the best possible explanation. When the two types match, the old knowledge continues to be the intelligent action. However, when the inductive analysis contrasts with the deductive, then it requires considering whether the learning ecology represents a challenge to the way learning in the content domain can and should be understood or theorized.

Chapter Four: Finding old knowledge: History Makers, Shakers, and Takers

Introduction

Research in social education has demonstrated how learners' think historically (Seixas, 1993; VanSledright, 2002; Wineburg, 2001). In particular, *historical thinking* (Stearns, Seixas, and Wineburg, 2000) has become a lens for social educators to understand and investigate an authentic approach to learning and teaching history (Seixas, 1993; VanSledright, 2002). By deductively coding for concepts related to *historical thinking* we can test the outcomes of the Cooperative Biography using the theories that have been set forth as the 'intelligent action,' guiding how we understand how students' think historically.

The first section in this chapter offers a detailed description of the Cooperative Biography as experienced by the participants. It tells the story of what actually happened in the setting. It includes descriptions of readings, activities, performances, and a narrative timeline of events. It highlights many of the day-to-day activities that spanned the three-week project. The section is intended to provide the reader with a deeper understanding of the project and the varied experiences of participants immersed in it.

In the sections that follow the ecology description, I use deductive codes to explain participants' experiences in the learning ecology and setting. Coding for several themes, (engaging multiple historical beliefs and perspectives, historical epistemology and epistemic change) led to characterizations of the participants as "objectivist" (Barton, 2008; Wineburg, 2001) and "constructivist" (Yeager, 1996) *types* of historical thinkers,

or as I call them from here on out, as ‘history makers’ (Barton & Levstik, 2005) and ‘history takers.’ There was also a third characterization that reflected participants who fell somewhere in the middle, frequently moving between objectivist and constructivist views of history, which I call ‘history shakers.’ The themes were among the most salient presented in the data and represent a significant portion of research on historical thinking. Several sources of data were used in the coding process, including participant interviews, survey results, observations, and the Cooperative Biographies in order to render characterizations of the ways the participants used *historical thinking* during the experience. The data that follows demonstrates how the participants used *historical thinking* in the process of creating a Cooperative Biography.

Description of narrative of events

Three weeks into their fall semester, Mike handed out the assignment description for the Cooperative Biography. He explained the process they would go through and the expectations for the assignment. Along the way, he explained that he would ask that students do two things, a. absorb history by encountering and reflecting on a number of different primary and secondary sources, and b. to make decisions about the kinds of information they wanted to present in their final product. In their time out of class, Mike asked the students to read *Rosa Parks: My Story* (1992) by Jim Haskins and Rosa Parks. Mike asked the students to reflect upon it in journal writing and they spoke about it as a class and in Cooperative Biography groups. They were also read *The Myth of Rosa Parks* (1993) by Herbert Kohl. Again, they were asked to write and reflect upon it in class. In

these reflections, Mike asked students to think about Rosa as a citizen and to connect her actions to broader models of citizenship engagement (Westheimer & Kahn, 2002).

In class, students viewed *Mighty Times: The Legacy of Rosa Parks* (2002), a documentary film detailing the events of the Montgomery bus boycott and the contributions of Rosa Parks in particular. Together as a class, students read aloud, *If this Bus Could Talk* (1999) by Faith Ringgold, a children's book that tells the story of a fictional little girl, Marcy, who met Rosa Parks on a bus years later and was taken back in time to experience Rosa Parks' story, first-hand. The point of this activity was to introduce the idea of telling a part of the Civil Rights Movement from "another" point of view, even an inanimate bus's.

Then, the class performed three reenactments of Rosa Parks' famous 1947 and 1951 bus scenes. The first two, were performed with scripts from the play and the third, involved student's adlibbing their own lines but in character. The purpose was to allow students a sense of what it might have felt like for Rosa that day on the bus and begin to *do* history by enacting Rosa and others who were present that day.

The students read poems by Langston Hughes, including *Dream Deferred* (1951), which offered themes present in the Civil Rights Movement, and then created stanzas that followed the rhythm and beat of the poem. The purpose was to further students' understanding by expanding their knowledge of the Civil Rights Movement by looking at the broader context and contributions of African Americans at the time. It was also intended to allow students to create an artistic artifact touching upon similar issues that students chose to develop further.

The instructor, Mike, engaged the students in reflecting upon the Civil Rights Movement by considering whether the movement had ended and asking them to contemplate the issues today that students would stand out against, fight for, and possibly get arrested for. In class discussions, Mike asked students to draw comparisons between the Civil Rights Movement and the Montgomery Bus Boycott with contemporary issues such as *don't ask don't tell*, sexual harassment, and racism. They were asked to consider what issues and details of the Civil Rights Movement would be appropriate to share with their students, and when it would be appropriate to introduce certain details to children and at what age. In general, students responded by discussing and thinking about which aspects of the events might be appropriate to share with students and at what age. Many seemed to gravitate towards a notion that much of the violence would be inappropriate for young children.

Finally, in subsequent class periods, Mike asked students to consider the various sources they had encountered, and make decisions about which sources would enter into their telling of the story and events. After decisions had been made in their groups, students created a biography about Rosa Parks and the Civil Rights Movement that reflected a sound retelling that they felt comfortable sharing with children.

After having encountered, took notes on, discussed, and “absorbed” the sources, Mike asked the students to create their story together in groups of four to five, to *do* history. The steps needed to complete the assignment were detailed prior to the students creation of the their final product. Students were asked to follow seven required elements that included (See Appendix. E) [1. compiling a story into four episodes, 2. a ‘Citizens Take Action’ section, 3. a timeline of events, 4. a map of where events took place, 5. a

glossary of terms, 6. an about the authors page, and, 7. a works cited page] in order to receive full credit for the assignment. Thus, in small groups, they were to arrive at some sort of consensus for these assignment components.

Many students had individual reactions to the sources they encountered in order to arrive at a shared perspective with some sort of consensus and a story from which to tell and teach the Civil Rights Movement. From the beginning, Mike had introduced the assignment as both a way to understand the events and as way for students to imagine sharing and teaching the Cooperative Biography with kids. Along the way, I sat with one student group, comprised of Lindsay, Andrea, Kelsey, Karla, and Lee described above, to capture the historical thinking and understand that which became evident as the students wrestled with a variety of data sources.

As the students began the project, I sat with one group with my laptop on my lap taking field notes and conducting observations. As students began the process of encountering different sources, I recorded student comments and dialogues, including comments made by non-group members in order to reflect upon how the broader ecology and environment may have impacted group members' historical thinking. After having absorbed a variety of sources, the participants began the process of choosing their perspective, quickly arriving at the idea of using a dog to narrate the story of Rosa Parks and her contribution to the Civil Rights Movement and the Montgomery bus boycott. In the following sections, I introduce the participants as 'history makers,' 'history takers' and 'history shakers.'

There were many instances throughout the Cooperative Biography where students expressed epistemic beliefs about the nature of history. Many of the instances offered a

portrait of how the participant's valued evidence based on their positionality. Evidence spoke to how student's valued history from the onset and remained present throughout the project. The data will show that Lee, and Lindsay were 'history makers' in the process of reflecting their views about history and their own role in the process of forming historical knowledge. Kelsey was a 'history taker,' adopting the most passive role in the process of evaluating history and forming historical understanding. While Karla and Andrea, were history shakers, embracing elements bridging both positions.

History Takers: Avoiding Perspective(s) in History

The Cooperative Biography offered many opportunities for students to engage with multiple, even competing, perspectives on a singular historical topic. During the Cooperative Biography, students confronted conflicting beliefs about history. In some cases sources introduced to students differed from their preconceived ideas about history or about Rosa Parks and her contribution to the Civil Rights Movement. There were instances in which learners' beliefs conflicted among each other's. There were also instances in which the entering conflicting belief replaced the prior ideas students brought with them into the unit and study. During the process, students encountered primary and secondary sources that conflicted with one another. Moreover, there were instances when their grappling with multiple perspectives impacted their beliefs about history, in general, as well as instances when it seemed to have no impact at all. A 'history taker' is a term that I created to capture a group of my participants whose beliefs were readily replaced as

if the new information were handed down to them and allowed to replace the prior understanding. It is meant to point to an objectivist mode of historical understanding.

In individual interviews, I probed each participant regarding how they felt about the differing perspectives they had encountered and if they could speak about how that influenced their motivation for the project and their views about history in general. When asked to speak about why her group chose a dog as the perspective to tell the story from, Kelsey discussed her group's pursuit to clear up misconceptions. Interestingly, she used her own prior beliefs as the basis for determining what parts of the story were in need of re-telling. She stated,

We choose to highlight many of the misconceptions that we had about Rosa Parks and the Civil Rights Movement, you know before, and not allow those same things to be told in the way we learned them. I mean, they were not necessarily lies, but we need to clarify certain things, you know? (Kelsey, Interview Transcript 2, 9/12/2011)

Kelsey used the phrase 'truth' and 'true story' when referencing new information she had encountered, or absorbed, and referred to her prior knowledge or historical understanding as 'not necessarily lies' but things in need of clarification. In a follow up interview, Kelsey discussed some of the misconceptions that she felt needed to be cleared up that she held prior to the unit,

I had thought she was this poor, quiet person and that's not really how she was at all. She actually always stood up for herself, not just one day. Misconceptions like that and that the boycott was actually planned rather than a spur of the moment event when Rosa Parks was just tired. That day was a normal a day, she was just coming from work and just decided like spontaneously to do what she did. The truth is that she was part of a team that had been thinking about that for years. Like the book we read in class written by Rosa says, it was planned. That was a great book. (Kelsey, Interview Transcript 2, 9/12/2011)

Kelsey reflected a belief system that suggested that she preferred to leave the creation of historical knowledge, or historiography, to the experts. Upon encountering a set of sources that differed from her prior knowledge, she allowed the newly absorbed information to replace the old. Kelsey did this without much hesitation or reservation about the limits of her newly formed historical understanding. Quite simply, Kelsey allowed the new historical beliefs she encountered to replace her prior historical understanding. Kelsey was a 'history taker.'

Kelsey also reflected characteristics of a 'history taker' claiming that the group decision to use a dog was beneficial because dogs, "have unbiased opinions, so that kind of doesn't lead you to more of the white people's side or the black people's side, it sort of gives an equal perspective." For Kelsey, perspective or sides, was something to be avoided. She alluded to her group's choice to use the dog to narrate the story as one that would eliminate perspective sides for the readers. She equated white and black perspectives and avoided both. She seemingly did not regard either perspective as right

or wrong, more reasonable or less. Rather, that both perspectives should be met with something more objective or neutral as she puts it, the dog.

Kelsey's survey responses reflected similar views as a 'history taker'. When asked to respond to the prompt "history is a matter of interpretation" (item 2) she selected "strongly disagree" indicating her belief in history as something more objective. In response to "It is impossible for us to know anything about the past since we were not there ourselves" (item 12) she answered "strongly agree" demonstrating her belief that witnessing an event places a person in close proximity with understanding it. In response to "historical facts speak for themselves" (item 13) she answered, "agree" and in response to the prompt "there is no true evidence in history" (item 16) she selected "strongly disagree". Each response indicated her views as a 'history taker' as someone who believes in objective forms of historical evidence and that represent the truth as what actually happened.

Kelsey had a different reaction about how to deal with competing sources or interpretations. For Kelsey, she viewed the presence of competing interpretations of a single historical event as representing someone who "must be wrong." She stated,

When you study the Civil Rights Movement and Rosa Parks, there are so many different angles and directions that people seem to take it in. I mean, I kind of have to make decisions about who to believe and trust because some of them must be wrong when they say totally different things. (Kelsey, Interview Transcript 2, 9/12/2011)

Kelsey embraced the role of making decisions about which story to believe and which to disregard. Kelsey grew very skeptical about the nature of history claiming that, “because we aren’t really sure of what happened and we weren’t really there at the time, we have to make decisions and come up with our own ideas.” This was a concept that made her question the various historical topics she has previously studied. She suggested,

It’s almost like you are trying to gather these different viewpoints to see what you can do to make sense of it because we aren’t really sure of what happened because we weren’t there at that time but we are trying to make sense of it anyway. So you sort of have to come up with your own idea. So, it really makes me question sources and their validity and accuracy. (Kelsey, Interview Transcript 3, 9/18/2011)

Kelsey can be characterized as an objectivist historical thinker or as a ‘history taker’. The manner in which she grappled with competing perspectives and beliefs during the Cooperative Biography, an area that scholars have claimed are important issues delineating types of historical thinkers, demonstrate a belief in objective knowledge and the desire to eliminate perspectives in history which she called “bias.” Since she embraced views of objectivism, I call her a ‘taker’ because of the value she placed on others in arriving at historical beliefs and/or understanding based on expert accounts. Rather than placing herself in the role of deciding for herself, she valued a view of history that can be done by others and taken by her in the process of forming historical understanding. For her, she may view the study of history as gaining historical

knowledge, or ‘taking’ history away with her.

History Makers: *Using Perspective to Value History*

Kelsey’s interpretations differed from that of others in the very same group who relished in the notion that while the presence of multiple perspectives may have represented bias, ultimately, they held that the one story you choose to believe might not necessarily be without its own perspective. I utilize and slightly reinvent the term ‘history maker’ from extant literature to characterize an amalgam of constructivist views that place the learner in the role of creating historical knowledge and understanding. With regard to engaging multiple perspectives, these thinkers can be characterized as ‘history makers’ as evidence suggested they placed themselves in a role of capable of making decisions about perspective and beliefs and which one(s) to value.

In the following remarks made by Lindsay, when asked about her thoughts of her groups’ decision to use a dog to narrate the story, she details her desire to embrace a view of the events that avoids perspectives.

I think it will allow us to kind of look at it [the CRM and story of RP] through the eyes of someone who is not a white person telling the story or a black person telling the story it’s not Rosa Parks’ so and so it’s someone that is completely, I mean it’s a dog that has a completely unbiased perspective, I mean it’s not coming from um you know a person who all caught up in race it’s someone who is completely...removed from any racial issues I guess that would bias their

description of events. (Lindsay, Interview Transcript 2, 9/21/2011)

This quote would seem to place Lindsay in the same role as Kelsey as a ‘history taker,’ however, Lindsay unlike Kelsey, valued views that she attributed to individual perspectives. Despite Lindsay’s comments echoing a seemingly skeptical view towards perspective(s) in history, Lindsay chose to value *My Story*, which she indicated she felt was rife with perspective. This marks a detachment from the views of ‘history takers’ who shared a skeptical view towards perspective, which led them to pursue and value sources which they felt were purely objective. When I asked Lindsay to clarify some of her views about perspective and how it had influenced her beliefs about Rosa Parks and the different sources she had encountered during the project, she suggested that she felt Rosa’s perspective, “was the most genuine one.” She added, “even though that’s coming from a black woman, it is her story she is telling so she kind of has the right to, I don’t know, it’s just the facts”

Clearly for Lindsay, perspective was something that she was very aware of. She mentioned multiple times that the decision to use a dog would allow her to tell the story avoiding the pitfalls of perspective, or what she referred to as white and black sides. Yet, in the end, she refers to *My Story* as the most valuable source she encountered while citing it also as a source rife with perspective. Lindsay is a ‘history maker’ because of her choice to believe a source that she notes as perspective laden, yet acknowledged as the most valuable. She seems wary of perspective issues in history; however, she ultimately chose to recognize a source that she claimed was filled with perspective.

Lindsay's survey responses also characterized her as a 'history maker.' She agreed with the statement "History is a matter of interpretation." (item two). In response to the prompt "an essential part of historical inquiry involves comparing sources and understanding authors' perspectives," (item 11) she again selected "agree". Both responses placed her as a 'history maker' because she agreed with the interpretative nature of historical inquiry and suggested that authors' perspectives are important. In response to another prompt "history consists of different stories people tell about the past in order to make sense of their world, and these stories are open to interpretation and debate," (part 2, item 2) she selected "strongly agree", which again reinforced her characterization as a 'history maker.'

In the following interview transcript response, taken from the last of three individual interviews, I asked Lindsay if she could talk about some of the things she knew after the project that she didn't before. Her response pointed to key concepts that characterize her as a 'history maker',

I think that I know all the different pieces that created the CRM, like the different pieces of the puzzle, like the bus boycott and the events that took place but I mean granted do we really know what happened? But I feel like I have a better understanding of what happened and sort of the kinds of things that were set in motion before...it doesn't really change anything, I still think Rosa Parks was like an amazing person, it doesn't change that I think she deserves all the respect that she has been given but it kind of gave me a new lease on the fact that there were all of other people involved in this process and ideas set in motion before she

[Rosa] ever decided not to give up her seat on the bus and I think that that's all just like given me a different appreciation that you know that there are so many people behind the scenes that you need to be, that need to be heard about, and that children need to be taught about. (Lindsay, Interview Transcript 3, 9/21/2011)

She began the statement by claiming that understanding The Civil Rights Movement is like different pieces of puzzle. She goes on to place herself in the role of puzzle maker by referring to herself in the first person while describing her interpretation. She placed herself in the role of choosing between different pieces of a puzzle in order to get a picture. She referred to her new understanding as giving her a new lease on the events and an appreciation that many people "behind the scenes" deserve recognition.

Lindsay also reflected an awareness of changes in her beliefs about how history can be taught. In a closing interview following the culmination of the project, Lindsay expressed that reading and encountering *My Story*, directly impacted her epistemic views about history. She referred to the experience as "getting a better sense of what actually happened." She also referred to the historical perspective in *My Story* as offering "a different side of the story than she had previously believed." For Lindsay, this transition was swift and easy for her to achieve. She viewed *My Story* as a "window into the past" and remarked that it gave her "a new lease on history." Lindsay's espoused beliefs reflected how the project and her experience with it impacted her beliefs about teaching history, claiming,

By seeing that there are so many different ways that you can teach or even think about history, it is not just this straight and narrow path that you have to follow. It doesn't have to be taught a certain way, like people typically think. (Lindsay, Interview Transcript 3, 10/3/2011)

She claimed that history was not a straight and narrow path and could be taught in many different ways, utilizing a variety of techniques and experiences beyond memorizing facts. Her change is best characterized in the following statement,

But it's [history] not just about committing to memory, its not just about memorizing facts and important details but like, maybe just understanding history and like why it is important to understand why things are the way they are today in like society. (Lindsay, Class Observation, 9/27/2011)

My Story impacted Lindsay profoundly. She claimed that she had not “known” many of the details the book offered her. She allowed for the newly absorbed information to replace her prior understanding of the events. She detailed how the experience influenced her perception about how history can be taught. In detailing her new impression, she points to a new understanding about historical study as a form of understanding contemporary issues. She expressed a new view about why historical knowledge is important, “to understand why things are the way they are today in society.”

Lindsay's epistemic beliefs about her own historical understanding differed from Kelsey. Lindsay seemed to have a filter that promoted her expressing a bit of reservation

when discussing how she valued what she knew about the Civil Rights Movement after three weeks of sustained study. She felt confident in her own words regarding what she referred to as “the different pieces of the puzzle” that created the movement, yet, she quickly curtailed herself by questioning whether it was possible to really know what happened. For Lindsay, the different pieces of the puzzle came in the form of encountering competing and often conflicting perspectives about the events. Unlike, Kelsey, Lindsay placed herself in the role of a learner capable of sifting through the different beliefs and perspectives. While she too engaged in a search for accuracy, she placed herself in the powerful position of making choices with regard to the perspectives she encountered, and rather than replacing the old information with the new, she seemed to evaluate all of the evidence together. This made Lindsay a ‘history maker.’

Lee responded in a similar way to Lindsay when probed about her beliefs about perspective and the decision to use a dog to narrate the story, which she initially showed resistance to during the group’s meetings. Like Kelsey and Lindsay, she pointed to the dog as someone who could tell a story without the pitfalls of perspective. However, like Lindsay, and unlike the Kelsey, Lee came to belief that *My Story*, though filled with issues of perspective, was the one source she valued most. She claimed, “I think the *My Story* book has been the most impacting because it is in Rosa Park’s words and I keep going back to that one to check facts and information. Since it’s an autobiography, you kind of take it as the real truth.” Though Lee referred to the dog as something that could avoid perspective, she echoed Lindsay’s position that *My Story* marked the most impacting account for her.

Lee's survey responses also pointed to her role as a 'history maker.' In response to the prompt "history is a matter of interpretation," (item 2) she selected "strongly agree". Again in response to the prompt "students should be taught that history is a matter of interpretation," (item 14) she selected "agree". Both affirmative responses are consistent with a thinker who places value on interpretation. In response to another prompt "history is a fixed set of information about what really happened in the past that informed citizens need to learn to make informed decisions about society and the world," (item 1, part 2) she selected "disagree", which again affirms her beliefs that history can be constructed rather than found.

Lee had reactions to the notion of clearing up misconceptions that bridged the reactions of Kelsey and Lindsay. Like Kelsey, Lee referenced her own prior historical understanding about the Civil Rights Movement and Rosa Parks as "wrong". She also mentioned that her prior beliefs might have been a "scam". She also referenced her new knowledge as the 'real truth' and expressed a desire to have the new knowledge replace her prior historical understanding. However, like Lindsay, she espoused beliefs about the impact of *My Story* and her decision to value that source.

When asked to speak about her group's agenda to clear up misconceptions, Lee's epistemic view as a 'history maker' became apparent. In the following passage, Lee placed her own prior understanding in harm's way,

Coming into the unit there was a lot of things that we didn't know. Or worse yet, that we were wrong about. I was surprised there were so many things we didn't know. I felt kind of like scammed why didn't I know this? How didn't my

teachers tell me this stuff? How could I have gone 21 years without knowing such important stuff? Why? So, I just wanted to make sure that other kids know that stuff and understand that it wasn't just RP who acted it was other people too. Like the book about 'if the bus could talk' it showed how others were involved and we didn't want to write another basic book that every kid has already heard. I mean, we have all already heard that basic story, every kid has. We all grow up knowing that version. We wanted to make sure...now that we know the real truth we want to make sure we tell everyone else as well. (Lee, Interview Transcript 3, 9/21/2011)

Like Lindsay, Lee placed herself in a unique position of determining for herself what constitutes the real story. In fact, she phrased her new historical understanding, as seeing for herself based on the multiplicity of perspectives she encountered. She offered, "I guess you could say it was the multiplicity of sources together that helps me see the story and feel like I know it better." In this regard, Lee, like Lindsay, placed herself in the role of 'history maker', of doing history, rather than Kelsey who seemed to prefer to have history handed to her by the experts. She again offered how the multiplicity of sources helps to place her in the role of history maker,

Well, I think it is just that now, I realize that there is just so much out there. And, knowing that like as a student there was so much that I never learned, or worse, learned incorrectly that I want to make sure that my students have the opportunity to learn what I didn't learn and since I know now that it is out there I don't want

to hold back that information and not teach it to them. (Lee, Interview Transcript 3, 9/21/2011)

Though each group member eventually agreed on the use of the dog as the narrator, and each viewed the notion of confronting multiple perspectives in the telling of the Rosa Parks story and the Civil Rights Movement, they differed in how they perceived the importance of perspective as something to be avoided or embraced. Lindsay and Lee each concluded that the one source they valued most was a source that they identified as being from ‘a black perspective.’ Yet, unlike Kelsey perspective was not something that was to be avoided, outright. Participants viewed perspective with a careful eye, however, their interpretations of how it impacted meaning differed. Interestingly, it seems as though both ‘history makers’ placed themselves in the role of being capable of making choices with regard to how to engage with multiple perspectives, arriving at individual decisions about which sources were to be valued in their retelling, thus, characterizing Lee and Lindsay as ‘history makers’ in regards to how they dealt with multiple beliefs and perspectives.

Recapping the view of ‘history makers’ contrasts with that of ‘history takers’ exemplified by Kelsey. Kelsey avoided a view of history that embraced the multiplicity of perspectives and beliefs. Instead, she pitted the perspectives against one another in the process of searching for the one true perspective, presumably that they would ‘take’ with them and potentially teach/present to children. She embraced a view of history that prioritized truth over choice with regard to how she navigated competing perspectives

and beliefs. She can be characterized as a ‘history taker’ or objectivist historical thinker because of her beliefs about the nature of perspective and subjectivity in history.

Lee differed from Kelsey in her reaction to how she changed her beliefs about teaching history. While Kelsey curtailed the impact that the experience had on her views of history by expressing that her views of the particular events studied had changed, but that she “just didn’t know” about how it impacted her beliefs about other historical narratives and events. When I asked Lee if the unit had impacted her beliefs about teaching history, she claimed,

Yeah, I think it has. I guess it does for Rosa Parks anyway, make me feel like I could go out and teach a lot of Rosa Parks. But there’s something about other topics, like in history that I just don’t know, but...it [The CB] just has given me other ideas about how to go about teaching other topics in history.” (Lee, Interview Transcript 3, 9/18/2011)

For Lee, changes in her epistemic beliefs rested on the notion that finding information had taken on new importance for her. She characterized her changes in beliefs about Rosa Parks and the Civil Rights Movement, as stemming from encountering sources that she previously did not know existed. For her, it was encountering new information that changed her views. She expressed the need to continue her search for accuracy when studying other historical topics. Interestingly, Lee differed from Kelsey, in her view about how she envisioned historical inquiry. She placed herself in the role of needing to find the resources that she referred to as “digging deeper and not just like teaching the

basics...if you really want to teach you have to really dig deeper.” Rather than viewing primary sources as evidence of what happened in the past; she characterized them differently, as offering her new ideas that go beyond the basics. She stated,

And, there are resources out there that can help you do that, like, I had no idea that Rosa Parks had written her own book before the Cooperative Biography so if you are going to teach the Civil War or something then maybe you are just doing the basic things that everyone learns and if you really want to teach it, you have to go out there and like, find it. (Lee, Interview Transcript 3, 9/18/2011)

Lee’s changes in her epistemic views about history and teaching history can best be characterized by her, offering,

Well, um, I guess it’s just like it made me realize that there is more out there than what meets the eye and is in textbooks. But, it didn’t really change my views on history it’s just now I know that there are different perspectives and that people tend to stick to their own. (Lee, Interview Transcript 3, 9/18/2011)

Lee placed herself in a unique role. She put the impetus upon herself to go out and find more information in order to best be prepared to teach historical topics. The breadth of information that she encountered during the Cooperative Biography impacted her beliefs about history. She claimed that there are two types of stories about historical events, those that scratch the surface and those that dig deeper. She commits herself to digging

deeper by finding the stories that go beyond the basics. In her description, it seems as though she is prepared to offer students the deeper stories, and places herself in the role of needing to find them. In this regard, her new views of history place a unique value on searching for accuracy, while also placing herself in the role of capable of doing so. These attributes place her again as a history maker and demonstrate a key difference between makers and takers, the impetus they place upon themselves in the process of forming historical understanding.

History Shakers: Bridging the Takers and Makers

In terms of historical thinking this group embraced elements of both of the previous positions. The history shakers were in the middle between the takers and makers. They embraced some aspects of each position. Andrea and Karla were history shakers because of the ways they balanced engaging multiple perspectives and historical epistemology between objectivist and constructivist stances. However, it is important to note that their balance was not equally distributed. They may have leaned closer or further towards the two positions for different reasons and at different times.

Andrea pointed to the importance of telling history differently than the way it is normally told, stating, “My biggest thing is that I think is important to tell the story in a completely, different perspective than it is normally told in.” She explained, that by having a dog narrate the story it would afford the group a level of objectivity. She exclaimed, “but there is also something bigger that we wanted to look at by using a dog. A dog may be more objective and less opinionated than people are.”

Andrea further elaborated her desire for the group to use their retelling to allow students to take a different view of the events, one that she referred to as the “true story” that would clear up misconceptions kids have. She explained,

Since one of our goals is to share the true story and to clear up misconceptions that kids may have or that other stories may create, we wanted to use a dog to be more believable and to allow us to take a perspective that wasn't just a black or white one. We also made sure the dog had both black and white spots so that it was like I am not sure what kind of dog he is if he is black or white. (Andrea, Interview 1 Transcript, 9/12/2011)

On the one hand, Andrea's comments begin with a complex historical notion regarding shifting the way that history is told. Andrea realized that the idea of having an omniscient narrator implies something profound about the telling of history, that it is neutral and can be found or presented to others as if it fell from the sky. This for her became something to be avoided, to be counteracted through a different way of telling history. Yet, she also seemed to undervalue the presence of multiple perspectives by alluding to her intent being to eliminate forms of perspective, which she calls bias. Andrea can be seen as a history shaker because of her balance between dynamics from objectivist positions and constructivist ones. She seemed to want to avoid notions of objectivity, a constructivist trait, by using a different way to tell the story, yet she also valued notions of truth, objectivism, in the process of doing so. Andrea seemingly valued both objectivist and constructivist stances.

Andrea demonstrated her desire to view history objectively through survey responses (Appendix A). Her survey responses indicated a view of history that was objective. In her response to the prompt “history is a matter of interpretation” (item 2) Andrea selected “disagree”, which matched her skepticism towards subjectivity in history that she expressed in initial interviews. She also indicated in response to another prompt “students should be taught that history is a matter of interpretation” (item 14) “disagree”, which matched her view expressed in interview and prior survey responses. When asked her opinion on the statement “History is a fixed set of information about what really happened in the past that informed citizens need to learn in order to make informed decisions about society and the world.” Andrea selected “agree” which offered an affirmative indication of similar kind of historical objectivism. Finally, in survey item thirteen (historical facts speak for themselves) she indicated “agree” also matching her prior responses and pointing towards her objectivist beliefs about history. With regard to engaging multiple perspectives and beliefs, the data surrounding Andrea indicated that she was a ‘history taker’, choosing to eliminate “bias” in her pursuit to “clear up misconceptions and tell the true story.”

Andrea reacted in a very similar way to Lee when probed about her reaction to the group’s agenda to clear up misconceptions. Again, she used her own prior historical understanding as the basis of the misconceptions, noting the various elements of the events that she did not know prior to the project. Like Kelsey, much of the newly absorbed information was allowed to replace her prior beliefs. Also, like Lee and Lindsay, Andrea demonstrated a limit to how she perceives her own knowledge of the

events, noting that she would feel more comfortable engaging in discussion but would not claim absolute truth with regard to her beliefs.

In the passage below, Andrea discussed how show allowed the newly encountered information to replace her prior understanding and how she used her prior knowledge to assess various misconceptions about Rosa Parks,

I guess the first thing would be, um, I kind of thought Rosa Parks was just like me an average person who just one day just got fed up and decided you know what, I'm not moving. And it was kind of just like no big deal with no real background to it. And I have learned that she wasn't just like an average person, she was someone who was really involved and like I think knowing the context of everything that really happened, I didn't know any of that before. That's the first thing. And the second thing, um, I guess, I didn't know that there was a connection between Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King. I never made that connection and I guess that's probably because I just didn't know, like I may have learned that at point but didn't really piece together what that meant. It strengthened my understanding because I guess I could now connect a timeline with who was involved and when. It [the CRM and connections between key players] seems bigger now than it did to me before. (Andrea, Interview Transcript 2, 9/21/2011)

In the passage below, Andrea discussed the limits she placed on her own historical knowledge offering a sense of her epistemological views about history,

I wouldn't say that I'm very, very sure but whereas before if there were a group of people like who I would consider intelligent people, talking about it, before I would have never walked into that conversation because I wouldn't want to say something stupid. Now I would step in and talk Rosa Parks and the whole [CRM] situation and maybe like I'm not going to be like Oh my God, everything I am saying is definitely right, but I'm more confident now that the things I am saying would be more accurate. (Andrea, Interview Transcript 3, 9/21/2011)

There were differences in how each perceived the limits of their knowledge. Kelsey was satisfied having a new narrative of the events handed down to them by the experts. She was confident in her new knowledge, and seemed to simply change their views without hesitation. She viewed history as a form of truth prior to the unit, and equipped with their new knowledge, ended the project viewing historical truth as well. Lee, and Lindsay, while engaged in the search for accuracy and clearing up misconceptions, limited the scope of their knowledge by acknowledging their own role in the process and by curtailing the new information by hesitantly claiming the value of their new historical understanding.

Andrea like Lindsay, reflected changes in her beliefs about how history can be taught in schools. However, for Andrea, unlike Kelsey, the changes impacted her perceptions about history in general. Through the Cooperative Biography, Andrea grew uneasy about the nature of historical knowledge claiming that she now believed much of the history she learned in school was not "accurate or fair" and "probably not how it

really was.” For Andrea, this process made her uneasy, particularly when thinking about the nature of curriculum in schools, which lead her to believe that teaching history in a “way that is easy” promotes meeting standards that ask that students know the same facts about history. Despite her uneasiness with the prospect of teaching history, she freely expressed changing her views and beliefs about the Rosa Parks story and the Civil Rights Movement. Like, Kelsey, Andrea viewed her experience in the Cooperative Biography as a glimpse of the past. However, unlike Kelsey, the experience led her to think about the nature of history and freed her up to think about the nature of perspective in history, leading her to a skeptical view of historical narratives claiming them to be “not the whole story” but “just a way to easily teach and talk about it.” Below, Andrea expressed changing her beliefs about the events,

I guess the first thing would be, um, I kind of thought Rosa Parks was just like me an average person who just one day just got fed up and decided you know what, ‘I’m not moving’. And it was kind of just like no big deal with no real background to it. And I have learned that she wasn’t just like an average person, she was someone who was really involved and like I think knowing the context of everything that really happened, I didn’t know any of that before. That’s the first thing. And the second thing, um, I guess, I didn’t know that there was a connection between Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King. I never made that connection and I guess that’s probably because I just didn’t know, like I may have learned that at point but didn’t really piece together what that meant. It strengthened my understanding because I guess I could now connect a timeline with who was involved and when. It [the CRM and connections between key

players] seems bigger now than it did to me before. (Andrea, Interview Transcript 2, 9/18/2011)

For Andrea, her newly formed historical understanding impacted her beliefs about the scope of the events. She discussed having viewed the events in a particular way and detailed how that perceptions had grown and changed for her. Below, Andrea expressed how her new historical understanding impacted her perceptions about history in general,

I think that it, kind of at first, it was just kind of like the Rosa Parks story but now I'm looking back over what I've learned in school and there are just so many things that are being taught with not the whole story but just in a way that is easily taught. So I guess it has changed the way I view history and the way history is taught in schools. It is not accurate or fair in the way the things are taught because it ignores many different perspectives and treats it like the cold hard facts. But it's hard to change that focus, with the emphasis placed on curriculum today to make sure kids learn the same stuff...I can see why it [history] isn't taught that way. But it's just like, everything I learned in school is probably not how it really was or is, I guess. (Andrea, Interview Transcript 2, 9/18/2011)

Andrea experienced a shift in her beliefs about the Civil Rights Movement and the contribution of Rosa Parks and other key players. For her, this process was somewhat personal, leading her to question history in general, realizing that much of what she felt she knew may have been less than the "truth". For her, she experienced a bit of

uneasiness when thinking about how the implications of her new epistemological views about history.

Andrea was a ‘history shaker’ due to her embracing aspects of both of the other positions, ‘history takers’ and ‘history makers.’ She reflected similar sentiments about the unit and history in general as participants from both of the other groups. Like Kelsey, the history taker, she viewed the unit as a glimpse into the past. However, unlike Kelsey the experience impacted her perceptions about history in general leading her to become uneasy about historical knowledge. The process was less swift and easy for Andrea than it was for Kelsey. She also reflected a view that placed a unique value on her own role in the process, similar to Lindsay, one of the history makers. Andrea’s experiences in the Cooperative shifted the way she felt history could be taught and allowed her to embrace a view of *using* history to engage students in thoughts about it.

In her initial individual interview, Karla had a similar response to Andrea when asked about the decision to use a dog to tell the story and how that impacted her perception about perspective in history. Karla, like Kelsey, seemed to gravitate towards a notion that perspective is something that can be avoided when telling history, claiming in interview responses about her group’s decision to use a dog to narrate the story, “it’s a really good idea, that the dog will not take like a black side or white side, so, that’s a great way to tell a story, without sides.” Neutrality seemed to be something to strive for when she imagined teaching children. She remarked in the same interview, “It’s kind of like the book we read in class [Faith Ringgold’s *If this bus could talk*] about the bus, but with a narrator that is neutral.” She echoed the same remarks to her group during project workshop periods, when she frequently referred to neutrality as a model for their story,

claiming first about Faith Ringgold's book, "it is a great idea to tell the story without sides, in a more neutral way, like the bus, we can use the dog to make the story like that so that it's not one story versus the other." (Karla, Class observation, 9/28/11) There were also comments made that day, when the group was planning the illustration of the dog about the use of black and white spots to offer a more neutral dog who is neither black or white. Karla responded to Lindsay, who first brought up what the dog should look like, "we should try to make the dog with an equal amount of black and white spots so the dog can be more neutral both black and white." (Karla, Class observation, 9/28) Each of her comments above would seem to place Karla as a 'history taker' seeking to eliminate perspective(s) in the process of telling a neutral story.

Karla also reflected survey responses that pointed to her being a 'history taker.' In response to the survey prompt "An essential part of historical inquiry involves comparing sources and understanding authors' perspectives" (item 14) she selected "disagree", which matched her objective beliefs and desire to eliminate perspective, viewing history more neutrally. Similarly, in response to another prompt "historical facts speak for themselves" (item 13) she selected "agree" offering an affirmative response indicating her views as a 'history taker' or objectivist thinker.

Karla valued a historical account that she felt was void of perspective, or what she called 'sides'. She made sense of the group's decision to use a dog as the narrator as one that would be more neutral. She alluded to race, white and black, as an important factor in determining perspective, at least in the Civil Rights Movement. Ultimately, for Karla, like Andrea and Kelsey, perspective was something to be avoided and each initially seemed to indicate that perspective, sides and bias, place understanding history

somewhere between very difficult if not impossible.

Karla echoed many of Kelsey's beliefs about the nature of misconceptions and the need to re-tell the story in a way that uncovered many of the prior beliefs that she previously held. She seemed a bit more nuanced in her discussion of the particular details that she felt needed clarification when she said,

I think there are so many misconceptions about Rosa Parks, the Boycott and the Civil Rights Movement. I didn't know about her leadership role in her community and her involvement with the NAACP and that school [Highlander School in Tennessee] and other things and I kind of just didn't know the background of the other people involved, like E.D. Nixon, and King. (Karla, Interview Transcript 2, 9/12/2011)

Again, like Kelsey, Karla placed her prior historical understanding in the way of the new information she was absorbing "Basically, when I was younger I was taught that Rosa Parks was just this hero and it seemed she just spontaneously became a hero one day." Also, like Kelsey, Karla replaced her prior beliefs with the newly encountered information, almost instantaneously,

Another misconception is that that particular day on the bus, Rosa was tired and that was the main reason she refused to give up her seat and it actually had to do with racism at that time, it had been building up and it wasn't just that day in particular that she was frustrated. (Karla, Interview Transcript 2, 9/12/2011)

Despite her hesitance to claim that the meaning of the events is impacted by the details in need of clearing up, Karla, unlike Kelsey, implied a skepticism towards history in general, referring to many historical narratives as sugarcoated and claiming that she probably doesn't know the 'truth' about many historical events despite having studied them. Karla stated, "I have just been thinking that like you know many important events in history are actually sugarcoated and I probably believe them in that sense and don't know the real truth."

This is where Karla's views became less like Kelsey's as a 'history taker' and help to see why she can be seen as a 'history shaker,' instead. Karla embraced a view of history that valued the learner in the process of creating knowledge through interview and survey responses. She claimed, "it also allows students to use their own ideas and put them together in a way that can really transform an event in history and someone's viewpoints and thoughts about the event." She also her expressed her beliefs that history can be transformed into one's own words, and that the process of doing so opens up opportunities to use your own ideas about history to make a statement or to show a viewpoint. She claimed,

I just think that being able to look at and take an event in history and transform it into your own words, or through your own eyes and in a creative way to make a statement or show a viewpoint, is something that is really empowering for me.

(Karla, Interview Transcript 3, 9/18/2011)

She referenced her shift from a belief in a more traditional model of teaching history, one that focused on a correct version, to a possibility to tell a historical narrative in a meaningful way that allows students to use their own ideas that can transform history. She stated, “It’s a lot different than maybe other more traditional focuses in history classrooms that maybe focus on one particular right version.”

Karla’s placed the learner in a very unique role of being capable of changing historical events by including their own viewpoints and moreover, allowing learners to use history to make a statement or expression. Karla also reflected a stronger skepticism towards the nature of historical knowledge than others did. When asked about how her experiences in the project have impacted her perceptions of history more broadly, she responded by saying that she now has to question the basics of everything she had learned, previously. Karla stated,

I guess it makes me question like basics, of the things that have happened in history because if I’ve only learned about it in a small number of ways from limited sources then there are people who...I mean I might not know the actual truth about a lot of events that have happened. And I might not know all the details on certain topics. (Karla, Interview Transcript 3, 9/18/2011)

Karla’s newly expressed nuanced views about history place a very unique role on the learner. She seemed to have taken up interest in the process of historical inquiry as much as the product. She talked about how this may impact learners and possible benefits of

doing so. She mentioned a desire to get beyond the use of traditional teaching methods and pointed to something much more subjective as a value in the process, the learner. She detailed her belief that history can be used by the learner to make a statement or change a view. Finally, she expressed beliefs about the nature of perspective in history, moving from a ‘history taker’ an avoider of perspective, to someone who finds value in the pursuit of multiple perspectives as ‘history maker’. In her final interview, she articulated the position well,

Being able to look at the different sources and take them together, The Kohl article and reading My Story was a variety of different sources with different perspectives and media, gives you insights into what happened that you wouldn’t have otherwise. And, um rather than focus on one perspective, like opening a history textbook and reading about the bus boycott, you can look at many sources and do different things not focusing on like how much the students remember or know but allowing them to take time to form their own viewpoint. (Karla, Interview Transcript 3, 9/18/2011)

Karla can be seen as a ‘history shaker’ because of her expressing beliefs that bridge the makers and takers. She seemed interested in using a dog to narrate the story in order to avoid bias and arrive at a true version of the events, an characteristic attributed to the ‘history takers.’ Yet she also valued the role of individuals in the process of creating historical narratives, a characteristic attributed to the ‘history makers.’ For Karla, she seemed to embrace aspects of both makers and takers, like Andrea, which help to place

them in a category of their own.

Chapter summary

During the Cooperative Biography, participants encountered a number of different sources as outlined above in the narrative of events. Many of the sources they encountered presented the events of the Civil Rights Movement and the story of Rosa Parks, emphasizing particular historical beliefs and perspectives about the events. The evidence demonstrated that participants dealt with instances of engaging multiple perspectives in different ways. For some, like Kelsey, perspective took a strong hold over her motivation for the project. She wanted to eliminate perspective and bias from history, as a ‘history taker’.

For others, like Lindsay and Lee, confronting competing perspectives marked an opportunity to get it right, and to clear up misconceptions. For the ‘history taker’, telling a story without perspective became of the utmost importance. Whereas for the ‘history makers’, they chose to confront multiple perspectives not by choosing between them, but by blending them and relying upon on their own view to offer a more complete and accurate picture. For both groups, albeit in different ways, gaining a coherent narrative on history was the goal.

Karla and Andrea grew skeptical about the nature of their own historical beliefs and understanding. They reflected a curtailed belief about historical knowledge, yet, placed the unique role of deciding between different understandings upon themselves, often choosing to disregard competing interpretations when they differed from their own

beliefs. They embraced notions of historical objectivity, like Kelsey; however, differed in the role they placed upon themselves and their future students in the process of arriving at an historical understanding. They were 'history shakers' due to their beliefs in aspects of both the maker and taker positions.

Chapter Five: Exploring the Learning Ecology: Oscillations, Equivocations, and Contextualizations

Introduction

In Design Based Research (DBR), it is theory building that drives the overall intention of the methodology. In the previous chapter, I presented the data using the *intelligent action* that guides the field of Social Studies, particularly *historical thinking*. I have done so, by deductively coding for concepts (engaging multiple perspectives, historical epistemology and epistemic change) that have been put forth as ‘old knowledge’ in order to render characterizations of learner typologies. The deductive analysis presented in chapter four, led to characterizations of participants, as ‘history makers,’ ‘history shakers’ and ‘history takers’ and demonstrated varying levels of participants’ epistemic change. In the current chapter, I will provide an inductive exploration of the overall learning ecology as experienced by participants to generate inductive theories to explain their historical thinking. Data will be offered and analyzed in support of the new theories presented. The deductive codes previously presented, will be revisited exploring the entire learning ecology in order to render new theories that explain the data from the ground up, using the data to offer explanations rather than sifting through the data to support pre-existing ideas.

In the current chapter, I use new explanations of the data to render inductively driven theories, which demonstrate that learners’ historical thinking can be explained differently than distinctions gleaned from a view of historical thinking that embraces the notion of typologies, hierarchies, stages or progression of stages. Whether movement is

linear in nature or fluid, trying to identify how or when learners move between characterizations may miss seeing the multiplicity present during cognitive acts of historical thinking as they unfold in a specific learning ecology.

The inductive analysis begins where the deduction analysis left off. Using the results of the deductive analysis as a starting point, the inductive analysis will show the how learners' experienced the broader learning ecology as represented by series of inductive themes that raise questions about the completeness of the deductive analysis. Inductive themes (Equivocations, Oscillations, and Contextualizations) generated from the ecology are used to demonstrate the messiness in the participants' historical thinking. A line of reasoning will be presented that helps to understand the inductive data, and theories are generated that explain the differences between the inductive and deductive analysis, the intelligent action and the new explanations.

Oscillations: Movement between two positions

Deductively driven data analyses demonstrated in chapter four attempts to use the data to render characterizations that best captured participants' historical thinking surrounding key concepts that have been used to understand the process. It involved looking through the data for explanations about how students responded to areas that research has demonstrated represent the ways people think about history. The analysis focused on identifying how the participants used issues of 'perspective' to make sense of the past, the 'epistemic views' they expressed during the project, and understanding 'changes in epistemic views' that may have been espoused during the project.

When asked to confront multiple perspectives and beliefs about the Civil Rights Movement and Rosa Parks, Lindsay and Lee chose to ignore the multiplicity of narratives instead opting to value a single source: *My Story*. Interestingly, despite their espoused beliefs about the dangers of perspective and the connections between perspective and “race” they each stated beliefs surrounding race (?) that both could and should be avoided. They indicated in interviews that *My Story* (1992) was the most valid perspective and the one, which they would use to “search for accuracy and clear misconceptions.” Lindsay did in fact, as the deductive analysis presented, offer many instances in which her beliefs supported a clear and stable view on engaging multiple beliefs and encountering different perspectives about an historical events. However, there were also other instances during the course of the project, when she expressed divergent views that demonstrated a much less stable and static thinker with regard to engaging multiple beliefs and perspectives. By coding for Lindsay through a deductive analysis, these divergent details were lost. Though Lindsay expressed a desire to rid history of perspective(s), she nevertheless relied upon a version that she herself discussed as perspective laden. Perhaps for Lindsay, a better way to characterize her beliefs about issues of perspective is to describe how she reflected *oscillating* between ‘avoiding bias’ and finding the one story that most accurately represented the events.

In the previous chapter, Lindsay was characterized as a ‘history maker’ because of her espoused beliefs about the importance of *My Story* and the impact it had on her beliefs, and the role she placed herself in during the process of creating knowledge. Despite expressing some concern about issues of perspective, she chose to value a source that was perspective laden. Lindsay demonstrated an awareness that issues of perspective

in history were certainly present and reflected what she described as “bias.” For her, individual perspectives were something to be avoided, opting instead to focus on the telling of history in more “neutral” ways. She expressed reluctance towards perspectives that she viewed as white or black, and felt strongly about the potential of choosing a dog to narrate the story in order to achieve a level of objectivity that she felt would best characterize the historical narrative for students.

The tension that Lindsay experienced, oscillating between notions of perspective as something to be avoided or embraced, was evident through class observations, as well. When the group first began planning their Cooperative Biography on the first workshop day in week three, she was quick to point out to her group some of the benefits that using the dog would offer them. She expressed that the dog would be a “character that didn’t have an opinion” and that it would be an “unbiased dog.” She further offered, “the dog should be a Dalmatian, equal parts white and black.” Yet, as their work continued to evolve, she began to point out some of the details of the story that she had in mind and how the dog could be *used* to “walk back in time” and to tell the story from the perspective of “someone who was actually there.” Here, again, Lindsay can be seen oscillating between notions that perspectives should be avoided while simultaneously using perspective to share the story.

In a second reaction to the *Mighty Times*, Lindsay detailed her view that race and perspective may equate in the re-telling of history. In it she described her reaction to the film’s ending, and her belief about the significance of the event for “the African American race.”

The movie leaves you with such a good feeling about segregation ending, but unfortunately, I still feel as though we have issues of race that occur today. I could not stop thinking about a racial issue that occurred during my lifetime with the O.J. Simpson trial. I feel that it was almost a way for the African American race to sort of rejoice and feel as though they were treated equally. I think too often we do not see the bigger picture of what is really going on. During the times of segregation people were being murdered and abused. Regardless of whether they were white or black, they are still people. Just as in the O.J. Simpson murder trial, two people were murdered, yet it still became such a racial issue in our country. I feel as though we have made huge strides from the days of Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, but racial lines still exist and we see it too often in our countries legal system. The movie, overall, did leave me feeling with a sense of empowerment and that anything is possible. I think that we say that in such a cliché manner, but by showing this to our students they can see that one tiny act can start something much bigger. (Lindsay Journal entry 9/12)

Despite the positive tone taken in the statement, Lindsay equates historical perspective along racial lines. She implies that a contemporary reaction to the O.J. Simpson trial reflected a change in the legal system for an entire race as she puts it, and while referencing the bigger picture, she does not allow space for perspective to distance itself from race. In this regard, she seemed frustrated with the lingering presence of issues of race saying, “unfortunately I still feel as though we have issues of race that occur today.” Lindsay’s words demonstrated a skeptical view about perspective dictating for people how they perceive various issues, including understanding historical events.

It is important to remember that despite the views about perspective and race that Lindsay expressed above, she still stood by the belief that the one story she valued most was *My Story* by Rosa Parks. Moreover, she referenced on many occasions that her choice to value this source did not stem from her desire to believe it but from her belief that Rosa was in the best place to tell her story having experienced it herself, first-hand. This again demonstrated her oscillation between two beliefs. On the one hand, she detailed the reasons why people embellish or perhaps even manipulate history for their own benefit and yet also acknowledged that people who were present, are in the best position to say what happened. The data presented in this section demonstrated Lindsay's oscillation between reconciling the role of eyewitnesses, who were present during events, and her view that the very same perspective could equal bias.

Using intelligent action to understand Lindsay's movement between two notions of the importance of perspective would point to her movement between different ideas about the role of objectivity and subjectivity in history. A theory of historically oscillating may offer a view of a historical thinker who is undecided, still reckoning with the idea that historical narratives may represent bias or truth. For Lindsay, the process can be seen as ongoing as she oscillated between the two notions. Since for her, the act of thinking historically took place in and through conversations and social interactions with group members and classmates, her oscillating expressions may represent the process of her using social interactions to try on different understandings for her to test reactions from others and gain for herself a level of confidence with the different notions.

In the previous chapter, the evidence demonstrated Lindsay as a historical thinker who was engaged in an objective search for accuracy, as a learner of history who placed

herself in the role of choosing between sources in the process of forming her own historical understandings, as a ‘history maker.’ Through deductively coding and analyzing for her epistemic beliefs about history, it would seem that, by and large, Lindsay expressed a fairly nuanced view of historical inquiry by placing herself in the position of deciding which “pieces of the puzzle” contributed to her beliefs. Though she expressed these views, there were also isolated yet important instances that demonstrated her oscillating from the stated relationship of her own role in the process of forming historical understanding, evidence that did not “fit” in the deductive coding scheme.

In the following passage we encounter Lindsay again expressing a similar view noting her role in the process of enacting Rosa Parks, in a bus boycott reenactment. Despite her echoing her role in making choices, she also referenced something more objective that she felt was guiding her decision making. Though Lindsay acknowledged choices made, she simultaneously referenced something outside of her, guiding those choices.

I think the reenactment of the Montgomery Bus Boycott was extremely beneficial to us as students and as future teachers. I was able to take everything that I had learned about the bus boycott and put feeling behind it. Not only did I learn about Rosa Parks, but because I played her in the reenactment I had to think about how she would feel. I wanted to act angry and upset over the way people were talking to me in the play, but I had to remember that is not what I learned about the woman who Rosa Parks was. She was respectful and reserved, but yet still

defiant. It made me understand how difficult that would be to be an African American woman during that time. (Lindsay, Journal reflection, 9/26)

In the passage, Lindsay described her tension between making choices about how to portray Rosa, the feelings she would have and the manner in which she wanted to act out against the discrimination she faced. Interestingly, she referenced her role as choosing how to act but implies that notions of objective accuracy guided her portrayal. She referenced the things that she learned (absorbed) and how they stood in contrast to the choices (doing) that she wanted to make. She described a personal tension between how she wanted to act as Rosa Parks and her objective understanding about “who Rosa Parks [actually] was.” This is a tension that depicts Lindsay oscillating between her own role as ‘history maker’ and the view that history represents something more objective, outside of her. The oscillating tension described here was not captured through the deductive analysis. Rather than Lindsay’s choices solely guiding her historical understanding, something outside of Lindsay, a form of historical objectivity, also guided her thinking by placing a set of rules about how she should act as Rosa Parks.

I asked Lindsay about these tensions in the third follow-up interview. In it she detailed the tension that she experienced during the reenactment, and again offered an oscillating view about her own historical epistemology:

Well, personally for me in the play I just felt, like, everyone got to be very animated and as you know the bus driver, Chris, got to be very loud and expressive and it was hard for me because I had to take myself and not act how I would respond. I couldn’t like read my lines and ask myself, how would I

respond, like put on my emotion because I feel like she was very just like calm and just matter of fact like stood her ground but she didn't, she never like sassed back she never raised her voice so for me that like was sort of a learning process because I had to like put myself in her shoes and if that were me I probably would have been like screaming and giving attitude or something and she was just like very calm and sure of herself. So, that's like playing her in that kind of made me really like put myself in her shoes and think like I don't know it kind of just made me realize how she was I guess. (Lindsay, Interview Three, 9/27)

Though Lindsay can be heard making choices about how to portray Rosa, she believed that it was objective knowledge guiding her choices. The situation she described is not one of someone who embraced a nuanced view of the various ways in which history can be told and thus choosing for herself ways to tell it. Rather, it seems clear that Lindsay felt limited in the choices she could make guided by what actually happened, regardless of her beliefs.

Lindsay had initially demonstrated her beliefs that history was a difficult topic of study. In an initial interview, prior to the project beginning, she expressed her view by asking, “whether is it even possible to understand what happened in the past.” Throughout the course of the project, though, she reflected many views that characterized history as a much more objective set of facts—as something to be found. As the unit culminated, she espoused a great deal of skepticism towards how people contribute to historical accounts through various issues of perspective. Nonetheless, she concluded by suggesting that Rosa Parks' perspective represented for her “the golden one.” Lindsay

expressed views that pointed to her belief that she was intricately involved in the process of making choices about which sources to value, however, also made many references to something objective that was guiding her decisions. Lindsay oscillated between notions of first-hand witnesses and notions of perspective, which for her seemed almost automatically to represent a bias of some kind.

In a closing interview I asked Lindsay if she could elaborate on this tension. She offered,

I think it [perspective] has a huge impact on history because if you, I mean in this instance, its kind like, I mean for me it's kind of like, Rosa Parks was there, it involved her so that perspective is true. But, if we took the perspective of like maybe in that exact time, like a police officer who was recounting the details, he would say, she was not doing what she was supposed to be doing like we have these rules for a reason so its like you may hear a different story and think oh my god, she was like, crazy, I mean she was being dis-obedient so it can impact like the immediate what people hear and think and I am sure there are other instances in history, too, like, if you hear, in any war in the American Revolution, if you hear the side of like um, an Indian who was helping, you know there are so many different ways that a story can be told that I think it is important if want to fully understand it [history] then you have to hear all the different perspectives but I still think, like in the case of Rosa Parks, that her perspective is kind of like the golden one. (Lindsay, Interview 3, 10/3/2011)

Overall, Lindsay offered a range of historical thinking during the course of the

Cooperative Biography. She oscillated between notions of perspective in history, initially claiming them to equate to bias and detailed her desire to get passed them. However, she remarked on multiple occasions that she rested upon Rosa Parks' *My Story* as the most valuable resource for her, one in which she could "check the facts."

Lindsay also demonstrated oscillating between notions of historical epistemology. She represented someone who searched through various interpretations, making decisions along the way, to someone who was bound by an objective understanding about history that guided and limited the choices that she could reasonably make.

She demonstrated epistemic changes that can best be characterized as oscillations, as she moved between different sets of explanations about how she valued history. During interviews, she espoused more concrete examples of her epistemic beliefs and shifts in those beliefs, yet, through various examples of the learning ecology, she appeared much less cohesive and more fragmented. Lindsay now appears as someone who values multiple stances with regard to issues of perspective, bias, certainty of knowing and her own role in the process.

The intelligent action would point to Lindsay as unfinished in her pursuit to understand history. She would be seen as a historical thinker who is stuck between least and most powerful cognitive acts according to a hierarchy of historical thinking. Yet, Lindsay's oscillations may not represent a thinker who is still deciding. She may be viewed as a thinker who oscillates not because she is unsure but because she can see value in each of the interpretations she expressed. Lindsay is not more than one person acting historically simultaneously, however, her thinking does not need to be characterized as unified representing 'who she is' as a thinker. Perhaps, the breadth of

background and engagement with history that she has had, led to her see value in oscillating between different notions, each of which that she finds value in, depending on the deliberative context.

Equivocations: Misleading use of words

When we last encountered Andrea, she was characterized as a historical thinker who did not find value in the presence of multiple perspectives; she was a ‘history shaker’. She discussed her group’s decision to tell the story from the perspective of a dog as a necessary move that would help students learning about the events view or encounter the story without sides, as she put it, referencing bias. She too, like Lindsay, expressed skepticism towards white and black sides, which she believed were strongly motivated to tell the story in a certain way, emphasizing certain elements, details and facts.

Andrea believed that the best way to re-tell the story of Rosa Parks would be to tell it in a “neutral way” that did not reflect perspective(s). She revealed a view of history that embraced an objective re-telling claiming “a dog may be more objective and less opinionated than people are.” She added that her group had also chosen the dog in order to help “clear up misconceptions that other stories may create for students” and to “share the true story.” Despite stating that her group’s agenda to tell the story from the perspective of a dog would help to allow the story appear less rife with ‘opinion’ or perspective, a move that would point towards an objective view of history, she continually alluded to telling the story differently. Andrea presented a strong motivation

for, “telling the story [of Rosa Parks] in a different way,” one which she described would promote “a different view of history.”

For Andrea, she equivocated between the notion that perspective is something that can and should be removed from historical discourse, resulting in a neutral account, and telling history in a way that did not reflect an omniscient narrator. While she reflected a desire to eliminate perspective(s) from history, she simultaneously reflected a belief that history should be told differently, presumably avoiding the pitfalls of presenting objective history to students. This can be seen as an equivocation. She seemed convinced that perspective issues in history pose a problem, and yet ambiguously, expressed a desire to tell history differently avoiding the complete lack of perspective found with an omniscient narrator. Andrea’s equivocations can be understood as a misuse of language.

Andrea referenced her group’s decision as representing an opportunity for students to clear up misconceptions. Interestingly, despite her insistence that historical narratives can be wiped clean of perspective or bias, she continually referenced an agenda for her group’s retelling, implying a form of critical historiography, or a history that would intentionally counteract competing narratives. This for her represented another equivocation. She believed history should be objective, yet, discussed “using” history to do something quite profound.

For Andrea, there were many instances during the Cooperative Biography when these equivocations came to light through the learning ecology. In the following passage, Andrea detailed her reactions in a journal to the film *Mighty Times: The Life and Legacy of Rosa Parks*. In it she expressed views that value how she perceived encountering different perspectives about the events. She also detailed how she found value in the

process, which equivocated her claims about how perspective should be eliminated from history. She stated,

As we concluded the movie we started last Wednesday, I think that I can highlight some major differences I found between the book we read and the movie. I think that the book gave a better understanding of Rosa's perspective, but the movie helped viewers to see how great the victory was. I really liked how the movie highlighted the bombing of Dr. Martin Luther King's house. I don't think that is covered as thoroughly in the book and I think that it was a significant event that he told everyone to remain peaceful and non-violent. I thought that this was a great moment that really helped to define King's character. I think that if I were in his situation, I could not remain as calmly. The bomb could have killed his wife and baby and this would have pushed me over the edge. Dr. King was a very peaceful man and the movie highlighted him and the part that he held in the revolution. As someone else pointed out, I really liked the use of children's opinions in the video. If children were to be watching the video, they might be able to relate more or feel more included when they saw the children speaking.

(Andrea, Journal, 9/7/2011)

The passage reflects the value that Andrea found in encountering two different perspectives about the events. She compared the film with *My Story*, which she too valued as 'a golden source,' like Lindsay. She expressed that she liked how the movie "highlighted" events that were not covered in the book and that the film "helped viewers

see how great the victory was.” She also expressed an affinity for the inclusion of a child’s perspective, which she suggested might help elementary-aged learners relate more or feel more included in the story. Each of the positive aspects she wrote about while encountering a story that highlighted different aspects of the events can be viewed as equivocations from her espoused beliefs that perspective(s) should be eliminated from historical discourse. Moreover, the different benefits she described when she encountered the varied perspectives equivocated from her prior statements about the need to tell history in neutral ways. It would appear clear from the excerpt above that Andreas’ views about perspective in history equivocated when reflecting upon it through interviews.

Andrea also seemed torn about how history should be presented to learners. She expressed a view that history is generally told as if it were found on the ground, and expressed a desire to tell it differently. However, she also referenced her beliefs that the group’s re-telling would target “the true story” of what actually happened, aimed at clearing up misconceptions that she felt were persistent. In the following passage, the equivocating tensions Andrea expressed came to light again,

After reading the Kohl article, I feel that my idea of how elementary schools across America tell the stories from the past hide much of the important facts. Rosa Parks was not just the “average, everyday, church going seamstress, and the time she was arrested for refusing to give up her seat was not the first time she had done so. I think that the context in which the Rosa Parks “famous” story happened and the boycott that followed is just as important as the facts being

taught. In a way, it gives students the idea that if they stand up for something they believe in on one occasion, it may get them in trouble but they will definitely see results. In reality, it's not like this at all. (Andrea, Journal, 9/12/2011)

Andrea espoused her belief that history should be told differently than it normally is. Presumably for her, the typical way of referencing the past was problematic in that she felt it needed to be changed. The implication was that she had a view of history that valued non-traditional modes of presenting historical narratives. Yet, in the journal entry above detailing her reaction to the Kohl article, she expressed views that aligned more with objectivist orientations, than her desire to re-tell history differently. She referenced historical context as a matter of fact and attributed missing details from pervasive historical narratives as the fault of schools. She expressed her view that holistic understanding about the events is a matter of knowing the right facts, yet, alluded to something more elusive in her description about the implications for learning a simplistic version of events.

Andrea expressed, on numerous occasions, her desire to take perspective out of history. Yet, in practice she found value in the different contributions offered to her through encountering multiple perspectives. Similarly, Andrea expressed a desire that history be told differently than it normally is when referencing her group's motivation for their re-telling. Yet, on different occasions positioned history in the very way she espoused needing to avoid. Using the data to understand Andrea's historical thinking demonstrated how she equivocated between different concepts and meanings.

In chapter four, we were introduced to a glimpse of Andrea's historical positionality or epistemology. Prior to the Cooperative Biography she was characterized as a historical thinker who valued history as a "search for accuracy" and viewed the value of historical study as "clearing up misconceptions." In the process of her changing her beliefs about the events of the Civil Rights Movement and the contributions of Rosa Parks through the Cooperative Biography, Andrea experienced changes in her epistemic views about history. The process of changing her beliefs came easy for Andrea. She encountered a source [*My Story*] that offered her new information. She absorbed the new information and espoused a new historical understanding.

The process was swift and took place without hesitation. However, the resulting historical understanding(s) impacted her perceptions about history more broadly, leading her to make claims about her beliefs of the limits of history and wondering how many historical narratives she had previously encountered offered perspectives and positioned them as fact, or as knowledge. She readily spoke about the uneasiness she had after the unit, claiming the narratives she had formed did not represent "absolute truth." Her epistemic change as presented in chapter four, promoted her claiming that history itself did not represent "the whole story." This shift would imply a change in how Andrea viewed perspective in history and the impact it would have on historical knowledge. Yet, the learning ecology raised questions about the nature of her change.

Throughout the course of the Cooperative Biography Andrea reflected her desire to learn and teach history that avoided a re-telling that was "simply a black or white side." She also expressed arriving at a point where she grew weary of the "accuracy" or "completeness" of different historical topics because of the presence of multiple and

often competing interpretations and perspectives. Yet, she positioned the act of learning about history as valuing the presence of multiple perspectives. In the following passage, Andrea detailed her beliefs about how she envisioned teaching history in the future,

I think the Cooperative Biography has shown me how you can kind of like teach history in a different way, in way that involves the students a little bit more and I feel like if students are involved in their learning process than they can learn it in different ways and I feel like if the process involves including students a little bit more in a Cooperative biography even if students are in elementary school it involves them more in like just a different and more interesting way of teaching. I definitely think before I had a totally different idea about who Rosa Parks was. And I think that I would not have known about creative, different ways to teach history like we did in class. I would have probably just read or assigned a textbook reading on it. But like the things we did in class, the acting of the bus scene for one, kind of opened the door to teach history in different ways, involving the students differently, more. (Andrea, Interview Transcript 3, 9/28/2011)

In the interview passage taken from our closing interview, Andrea referenced her beliefs about the nature of student involvement in the process of learning history. In it she valued the notion that student involvement will allow “students to learn it [history] in a different way,” presumably to experience it. Interestingly, these remarks equivocated prior remarks she had made about the nature of perspective and the need to eliminate bias

from history. Andrea discussed how this notion had impacted her beliefs about teaching history for the benefit of students learning and revealed her belief that students can experience history in different ways, enabling her to view teaching history beyond the textbook. It became apparent that the precise reason why Andrea had reflected epistemic change, the presence of competing interpretations and perspectives, became the reason for her to claim changes in her beliefs about the teaching history for the benefit of student learning.

In sum, Andrea experienced a range of historical thinking throughout the Cooperative Biography. She equivocated between notions that perspective should be taken out of history and using historical narratives to counteract various historical discourses. She also moved between notions that history represented what happened in the past and the need to tell it differently so that it didn't appear as though it's being told in a way that represents it as exactly 'what happened in the past.' She reflected skepticism towards claiming the limits of history, noting that it is perspective laden, leading her to become uneasy about the nature of historical knowledge. Yet, in the end she also valued a view of history that promoted students' experiences with it and describing a view of history where learners are capable and encouraged to experience it for themselves and make decisions about it along the way, using their own perspective.

The intelligent action would point to Andrea's confusion or movement between less and more powerful cognitive acts of historical thinking. Yet, equivocating on deep and important issues such as the impact of eye-witness accounts and the role of perspective in history can be seen not as a confused thinker but someone who embraced many of the interesting dynamics of historiography. Perhaps, Andrea's equivocations

helped her to address many of the limits of historical discourse, while also valuing the benefits of sustained historical inquiry. Again, rather than view these attributes in Andrea's espoused beliefs as representing who she is as a thinker, *equivocations* can be seen as a safe way to navigate the "competing shoals of historical discourses" (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. x) while immersed in a communicative practice. Andrea like Lindsay does not need to fit within a hierarchy of historical thinking. In fact, her movement need not be seen as a pathway towards enlightenment, though it could be.

Contextualizations: Constraints of the Communicative Situation

There were many different settings and audiences that participants encountered throughout the Cooperative Biography. This section offers data to support *the constraints of the communicative situation* as an explanation for the varied historical thinking reflected by participants in the setting. In using the term constrain, I mean that the setting funneled or structured, in one way or another, the expressions and utterances that participants espoused and could have possibly impacted their beliefs, as well. I call these instances *contextualizations*. This concept has put forth by linguistic anthropologists (Ahearn, 1990), as well. As participants moved between interviews, surveys, classroom practices, and interactions among group members, it became apparent that the situations were impacting the communications that students were expressing. Moreover, as students encountered each other, the instructor and myself, their historical thinking took on different shapes and forms. This section is used to offer a different kind of explanation about the different characterizations offered in chapter four.

As participants progressed throughout the project, their experiences built upon one another. Similarly, as participants moved between different communicative settings, their expressions were constrained by the different settings. From the onset of the project, the different communicative settings set the tone for much of students' discussion and reflection of their historical thinking.

Kelsey was last introduced in chapter four as an a 'history taker.' Through interview responses she reflected views about her own role in the process of arriving at historical understanding. She readily expressed that she had changed her views about the events in Montgomery, and about her views about history in general. Yet, there were instances in the learning ecology that demonstrated a shift in how she responded depending on the audience and the nature of her communication. In her first journal response to the film *Mighty Times*, a data source that was meant to be for personal use and not shared with other classmates or the instructor, She stated, "the boycott not only ended segregation on busses, but it ended segregation everywhere. The colored and white signs were taken down and blacks were now treated equally." Following the fifteen minute free-write, the class reconvened with Mark, the instructor, leading discussion as he asked the class to share their thoughts about the film. Kelsey responded,

The first thing that caught my attention in the film was the happy ending. Why does there always have to be a happy ending? Sugarcoating the truth because the audience is young is unacceptable. Students need to know about racism in the past and that it is still ongoing today. (Kelsey, 9/14/2011, Class Observation)

The example is somewhat extreme because in the two passages, Kelsey expressed fairly divergent views. In the first passage from her private journal she claimed that “segregation had ended and that blacks were now treated equally.” Yet, in the context of communicating with the instructor and aloud in front of the class, her views seemed contextually constrained. She criticized the “happy ending” offered in the film, calling it “sugarcoated” and suggested that students needed to learn about ongoing racism today. It would be difficult to suggest that Kelsey changed her views in the five or so minutes between her written reflection and verbal expression. Instead, it seems as though the audience, the forum and the direction of the discussion, constrained her expression, one way or the other.

This pattern became evident for Kelsey in other settings as well. Kelsey was a firm believer from the beginning in the group’s need to use the dog to address issues of bias and perspective and the connection to race and ideology. In her group discussions, she reminded her peers of the need to tell the story “without white and black sides.” Claiming, the dog would be a good medium if he had an “equal amount of spots that were black and white.” These comments would point to her desire to view history objectively and to allow the group’s re-telling to take on an objective narrator. Yet, through her survey responses, Kelsey indicated responses that pointed in a different direction. While she did indicate survey responses that matched her views about an objective history, she also indicated responses that pointed to her viewing history in more relativist ways. In response, to item 6 (historical claims cannot be fully verified because they are a matter of opinion, she selected “agree.” In response to item 14 (students should be taught that history is a matter of interpretation) she selected “agree.” These differences could be

attributed to oscillations or equivocations; however, Kelsey herself indicated a view that helps to see how her set of responses may be better understood as contextualizations. She stated,

We decided as a group that we would like to do a book but we kind of each wanted to do it in a little bit of a different way because we each had different perspectives and ideas. But as a group project, we had to make compromises. I feel as though if we had each done this alone, it would have looked much different because we would have just used our own perspective without having to discuss or even hear from people who felt differently. (Kelsey, Interview Transcript 2, 9/12/2011)

Kelsey's response indicated a different way to understand the impact of project and the historical thinking expressed along the way. For her, she acknowledged that being in a social context, with a group, impacted what their re-telling looked like. She discussed, "making compromises" with "people who felt differently." This process may explain why Kelsey reflected different views about history in journals, in class, and through survey responses.

When Karla was last introduced in chapter four, she was characterized as a 'history Shaker' for her desire to view history objectively and her desire to re-tell the story in "neutral" ways. Data was presented from class observations, survey responses and transcripts that supported the characterization. However, through different interview responses, Karla offered views that can be understood quite differently, pointing to more constructivist views of history. In her final interview, I asked Karla to discuss if she felt

the Cooperative Biography had helped her to view history differently than she did before. She offered,

Yes. Taking in all the different things we did, using ideas from all the different resources, being able to look at the different sources and take them together was a variety of different sources with different perspectives and media, gives you insights into what happened that you wouldn't have had otherwise. Rather than focus on one perspective, like opening a book and reading about the bus boycott, you can look at many different things to form your own opinion and viewpoint. (Karla, Interview Transcript 3, 9/27/2011)

The excerpt offered through interview response provides a different communicative setting for Karla, where she expressed divergent views about the nature of history and about her desire to view history objectively. Rather than viewing this as evidence of epistemological change, it may be that the communicative setting pushed her towards an explanation of history as constructed. There were more instances throughout the project where Karla expressed views that history should be more neutral. Yet, in the context of the final interview, she seemed to readily offer a different take. Again, while its possible to analyze this same communicative event as an oscillation or equivocation, it seems relevant to suggest that interaction with researcher may have constrained Karla's beliefs or expressions thereof.

Karla also demonstrated being constrained by the communicative setting during the two class periods when her group was asked to choose a perspective to tell the story

from. Prior to the group arriving at the decision to use of a dog to tell their story, the conversation began about what to tell and how to tell it. After Mike began class that day, he instructed students to get together in their groups and brainstorm possible ideas for their re-telling. The students had already been introduced to the assignment and had absorbed a great deal of history, including sources: *Mighty Times*, *My Story*, the Herbert Kohl article, *If This Bus Could Talk*, Poems by Langston Hughes and the play re-enactment. The conversation began by Karla asking the group, “does anyone have any ideas for our four episodes or who will tell our story?” A few ideas were tossed around. Andrea suggested that, “it doesn’t matter who tells the story.” To which Lee responded, “lets think of someone who was close to Rosa.” Lindsay asked, “did she even have kids?” Kelsey offered, “there can be fiction, too, let’s play with perspective.” Andrea chimed in by saying, “I’ve got it, there can be a Civil Rights dog. He could be telling the story but also have a part in it.” Karla seemed troubled by the idea, asking “I don’t get it, what does a dog have to do with the Civil Rights?” After two of the other group members jumped on the idea, Karla sat back in her chair and remained silent for the next few minutes. She finally asked, “can we at least use the dog to bring out the significance of the events?”

This situation for Karla demonstrated the difficulty in arriving at a shared perspective. She had mentioned her desire to tell a story in a certain way, claiming, “we have to get the facts right” and “we need to tell the story to show that she was heavily involved in the movement more broadly.” She had previously suggested that the story start on Dec 1, 1955, the day of Rosa’s second bus incident. While her fellow group members were emphasizing “entertainment value.” Karla later revealed through

interview data that she was upset about the group's decision to use a dog because of the seriousness of the events and her desire to "tell a story that would clear up misconceptions, not add to them." She did not voice her concern over the direction of the project to her group members, perhaps, due to the constraints she felt placed upon her by the communicative setting.

Shortly after the conflict arose, Mike, found his way over to the group for a daily check-in during the workshop. He asked if the group had decided upon a perspective. Andrea began explaining the use of a dog that would narrate the story as someone who was present during the events. She and others in the group explained that they had chosen the dog because, "dog's are neutral and less opinionated than people," making it a good choice to narrate the story for kids who may not understand how and why segregation was permitted to exist. Mike offered that the dog would also be a good symbol to use to re-appropriate the events, considering that dog's had frequently been used as a symbol of violence during the Civil Rights Movement. While Karla had previously seemed reserved about the idea, possibly not yet convinced that the dog was the best character to use to "share the kinds of information we didn't know." Following Mark's visit to the table, she seemed won over. Joining in on the conversation with her instructor she claimed, "we can use the dog to subvert different aspects of the events. Maybe the dog can drink from a water fountain that he wasn't supposed to or something." From that day on, Karla did not question the group's decision again in public, though she did expand upon her doubt in subsequent interviews.

The process of group negotiation, arriving at shared perspectives did involve, "compromises," as Kelsey stated. However, for Karla and others, their ability to

compromise may have been constrained by the contextual setting in which communications took place. For Karla, she was interested in a re-telling that was serious and that targeted the kinds of things she didn't know. For her, a dog, did not meet that threshold. Yet, she was hesitant to claim as much in front of the group, especially after the idea had been well received by the instructor.

These data offer another kind of explanation to understand different types of historical thinking. However, rather than point to changes in the learner, a theory about the *contextualizations* constraints of a communicative setting, place the notion of change within the environment. As the environment and settings change, including the dominant discourses present in each, a theory of constraining communicative settings would be interested in the environment in which expressions take place. This would include, who is speaking, what is being said, what the motivations are, and how each mesh with the prior experiences of learners. From this, it becomes possible to illustrate how communicative settings might influence learners, as well as understand how the expressions made by learners in different communicative settings may constrain what the learner feels comfortable expressing and sharing. Viewed from this perspective, changes in learners' espoused beliefs can be attributed as much to the setting, as the learner.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, inductive themes were presented to offer new theories to explain the historical thinking learners espoused during the Cooperative Biography. Oscillations, equivocations and contextualizations were introduced through the data in an *iterative* way to explain the learning ecology in the environment. Each theory represents

a challenge, albeit small, to the intelligent action that currently guides theoretical understanding about historical thinking.

Oscillations can be used to understand the different movements or fluctuations that learners espouse during historical inquiry. Currently, we view these movements as representing learning in progress, or as learners stuck between positions in the process of moving between more or less powerful cognitive views of history. *Oscillations* can be used for a different view. One that promotes greater understanding of the space in between positions and the possible reasons why learners' navigate in between.

Equivocations in participant expressions of historical thinking would typically be viewed as contradictions, pointing to the confusion learners have when unnaturally thinking about history. Yet, a theory of equivocation as supported through these data may challenge that view, instead pointing to the benefits of using language to simultaneously address more than one conception of history. It can be viewed as a safety net, embracing the benefits of the post-modern turn, while holding onto the desire for history to be much more concrete in nature. In this regard, equivocating can be seen as potentially less divisive when the act of thinking historically goes public.

Contextualizations constraints of the communicative setting demonstrate that shifts in the expressions of learners engaged in historical inquiry may be the product of the environment, the audience, and the dominant discourses present. Rather than view changes in the espoused beliefs of learners as changes in the learner, this theory would seek to unfold changes in the environment and how they may have constrained the learner in his or her expressions. Building an awareness of the ways that communicative

settings constrain learners points to a theory of historically thinking that critiques the setting as much as the learner.

Chapter Six: Implications

Introduction

This study adds to a small body of literature that embraces the notion of *doing* history, constructing beliefs about the past, through experiences that ask that students utilize the kinds of historical thinking skills needed for them to grasp both the content of the events studied, and develop and understanding of the limits of historical discourse. The study pushes back against current research on historical thinking and epistemic movement in relation to historical understanding that has demonstrated a hierarchy and progression model for the typical ways that students learning about history move from less to more powerful ideas about history (Lee & Ashby, 2000; VanSledright, 2010). Though scholars have also cautioned that this movement may not be linear (Lee & Shemilt, 2003), progression models currently guide understanding about how learners move from one epistemic position to the next, as they move closer or further away from deep understanding of the past. On opposite sides of this progression the least powerful cognitive act is when learners view the past as given, while the most powerful cognitive act is when learners view the past as reconstructed (VanSledright, 2010). During the process of movement towards a more powerful cognitive act, learners may pass through a series of stages ranging from least to most powerful, including the past is inaccessible, the past as stories anyone might tell, the past as reported in a biased way, and the past as selected from a particular viewpoint (Lee & Ashby, 2000).

The Cooperative Biography may not be the best venue to test the logic surrounding the kind of epistemic movement that Lee & Ashby (2000) and VanSledright, (2010) describe due to the brief nature of study and the short time period the unit engages students in the process of understanding history. However, it offers a micro-level view into the ways that students movement can be characterized as it unfolds in a specific learning ecology, intended to bridge the lack of opportunities that pre-service teachers' often have to engage with the discipline of history towards a stable view of what history is. Plus, it mirrors the possibility in a semester long course in a teacher-education setting.

During the project, participants offered a view into how they perceived the limits of history during the process of learning about a specific set of historical events.

Evidence from the exploration of the learning ecology (as described in chapter five) contrasts with a view that the various "stages" described in the intelligent action (as described in chapter four) represents distinctions in the epistemological paradigms or frameworks of learners engaging with history. Instead, through the inductive analysis, participant data can be understood differently than representing 'who the learner is' in regard to expressions they make and actions taken within the ecology. It is precisely this kind of micro-level analysis of the project that offers this challenge, as the inductive theories generated represent a model that demonstrates the multiplicity of epistemic beliefs that can co-exist simultaneously as learners' navigate historical discourses and thinking towards a view of history or historical understanding. The data demonstrates that the lines between characterizations (name them) derived from the intelligent action may often be blurred as learners test their new beliefs and understandings in and through dialogue and interaction derived from the learning ecology.

Revisiting the Cooperative Biography

The Cooperative Biography was set forth with a goal of moving students towards a constructivist belief that history is constructed and that they too, can take part in the act of creating historical discourse. Among the goals of the assignment was to fill in gaps in students background knowledge about the Civil Rights and the contributions of Rosa parks, specifically. In this regard it was a success. Students took part in the act of creating historical discourse and along the way evidenced learning a great deal about the time period. Students were invited to embrace a view of history that allowed them to see a multitude of evidence and make decisions about the impact each had on their understanding. The Kohl article (1993) helped to shake students perceptions about alternative histories and to encounter a view that contrasted with the ones they brought into the experience. Similarly, students were invited to read about Rosa Parks in her own words and absorb the experience from her perspective. Students viewed and discussed the film *Mighty Times*, which also helped to move them towards a view that history is constructed and invited them to take part in that process. Each of the experiences helped to move students, to shake them up, in a way that matched the project goals and allowed them to absorb new knowledge, while also taking part in the creation of it.

The Cooperative Biography continues to be a valuable tool to allow pre-service teachers and students alike to have a space to grapple with critical issues in history. This includes opportunities to encounter new information, and engage with it by absorbing and doing history (Barton & Levstik, 2005). It also includes an opportunity for learners to “fill in gaps needed to understand past events” (Zarnowski, 2002, p. 7). The Cooperative

Biography may in fact offer students numerous opportunities to view history beyond memorizing what happened in the past and allowed them to make interpretations about which sources to value and how to go about creating an original re-telling of the events.

Though many goals of the Cooperative Biography were met, there were areas where the project fell short of being the solution to our problem: getting pre-service teachers closer to a view of history as constructed. Instead, it is now clear that while it *may* move students closer to a view of the past as reconstructed, it does not guarantee that significant changes in students' historical thinking or views of history will be rendered. There were instances where evidence pointed to the kind of historical thinking and understanding we had hoped to see; however, evidence also suggested that the changes were less than enduring or marked a clear epistemic change.

In order to address aforementioned challenges, and extend the success of the project, there are some warranted adjustments that could move the Cooperative Biography closer to the kind of intervention we had originally hoped it could be. Explicit discussion of epistemological issues in history could help to bridge the results we had hoped for and the ones that were evidenced. Making key features about the various benefits of different historical conceptions explicit so that students can begin to gain metacognitive awareness, may promote further student engagement with different conceptions of history. Additionally, creating a space for students to experience different *contextualizing communicative settings* may help to decrease or illuminate some of the constraints students experience along the way.

In the teacher education setting, one of the objectives is to promote students development of a teaching philosophy and methodological partner to accompany the

philosophy. By allowing students an opportunity to grapple with the discipline of history, the Cooperative Biography could extend its impact on pre-service teachers. A meta-history (White, 1973), a history of the evolution of the discipline of history, could be used to accompany the project in ways that may help to bring students closer to *their* view of what history is, can be, or should be. This is particularly important in the context of teacher education because an understanding of the ways the discipline of history has evolved over time can help students free themselves from the ‘need to know’ mentality about teaching history and encourage them to think about ‘discovery’ as a viable alternative to teaching history.

Two possibilities exist for enabling student engagement in a communicative setting rather than allowing the setting to constrain students expressions. First, another section can be added to the assignment that contains an individual component, possibly reflective in nature, that provides students the opportunity to reflect changes or different directions that he or she would have taken the project in and for what reasons. This may allow more autonomy for individual participants and may decrease communicative constraints. This could be a space where student voices are recognized, valued and celebrated for a dissenting view. This step could be done as a reflection with the instructor as the main audience, or it could become for a group reflection, promoting dialogue about the decision being made.

A second possibility to encourage reflection and metacognitive awareness surrounding historiography could be to group students together based on similar interests and views after students had begun their historical inquiry. They can be grouped based on their desires to depict a similar type of story. This is not to say that there isn’t value

found in students encountering such communicative settings even if they have a constraining impact. Promoting students' metacognitive awareness about history is a lofty and difficult task, however, the process can be supported by introducing students to explicit dialogue and discussion about how conceptions of history have changed over time. As students encounter differing conceptions of history, they can be encouraged to share their views and thoughts about how they view history. Going visible with ones beliefs is a powerful form of member checking as students test their own ideas by bouncing them off of others. This type of democratic deliberations has its place and can be encouraged by allowing students to express their views individually and group accordingly. Moreover, providing an opportunity to have students work in groups based on similarities may promote further or increased involvement and ownership over the direction of the Cooperative Biography and may render different results. Nonetheless, the suggestion that I make for the Cooperative Biography, increased explicit discussion of historiography and added components for individual reflection, may help to promote increased metacognitive awareness and work towards limiting the impact of constraining communication among group members, class members and instructors.

The goal of the project was constructivist in nature, however, it was not intended to lead students down a relativist role where the result would be confusion or anger about the nature of history. Rather, it was intended to create a deliberative atmosphere where students can take part in democratic ways, through free speech and dialogue while working towards a goal. In this regard, issues of truth were not sacrificed at the bequest of issues of belief. Built into the assignment is the notion of absorbing history as one equal wing of a plane. Since two wings are needed to fly, it reasons that the assignment

itself values claims of historical truth to a certain degree. However, it does not rest in the notion of acquiring historical truths but in the process of creating them. There are many conditions under which issues of historical truth should be valued. However, there are also situations when deliberately discussing issues of truth can become useful in the process of moving towards a specific goal i.e. equity and racial discrimination. When working towards a greater good, issues of historical truth can take a back seat to understandings that support a greater agenda. For example, discussing the contributions of Rosa Parks in the Civil Rights Movement may extend beyond the scope of simply what happened. Understanding her impact today has implications for who we are and where we go from here and should be open to interpretations. Especially ones that work towards an understanding of history that offers potential benefits for the future moving forwards.

Theoretical Representations of Historical Thinking

Using intelligent action to understand student movement between two or more notions of the importance of perspective would point to a fluctuation between different ideas about the role of objectivity and subjectivity in history. A theory of historically *oscillating* may offer a view of a historical thinker who is not undecided, or still reckoning with the idea that historical narratives may represent bias or truth. The process can be seen as ongoing as learners oscillate between two or more notions. When the act of thinking historically takes place in and through conversations and social interactions (like with group members and classmates), oscillating expressions may represent the

process of using social interactions to ‘try on’ different understandings to test reactions and gain a level of confidence with the different notions.

Moreover, the intelligent action would point *equivocations* as movement between less and more powerful cognitive acts of historical thinking. Yet, equivocating on deep and important issues such as the impact of eye-witness accounts and the role of perspective in history can be seen as someone who embraces many of the interesting dynamics of historiography, not as a confused, or less powerful thinker. Perhaps, equivocations may help learners recognize some of the limits of historical discourse while also valuing the benefits of sustained historical inquiry. Again, rather than view these attributes as representing ‘who a learner is’ as a thinker, equivocations can be seen as a safe way to navigate the competing shoals of historical discourse, while immersed in a communicative practice. Historical thinkers do not need to fit within a hierarchy of historical thinking. In fact, their movement need not be seen as a pathway towards enlightenment though it could be.

Analyzing these data through a theory of *contextualizations* offered another kind of explanation to understand different types of historical thinking. However, rather than point to changes in the learner, a theory about *contextualizations*: constraints of a communicative setting, place the notion of change within the environment. As the environment and settings change, including the dominant discourses present in each, a theory of constraining communicative settings would be interested in the environment in which expressions take place. This would include, who is speaking, what is being said, what the motivations are, and how each mesh with the prior experiences of learners. From this, it becomes possible to illustrate how communicative settings might influence

learners, as well as understand how the expressions made by learners in different communicative settings may constrain what the learner feels comfortable expressing and sharing. Viewed from this perspective, changes in learners' espoused beliefs can be attributed as much to the setting, as the learner.

Historically Thinking: Like A Star Fish

“I imagine that starfish don't think about alternatives, like left or right, forward or back; they'd think in terms of five kinds of left and rights, five kinds of backs and forths.”

(Ursula LeGuin, 2003, p. 170 as in Strain, 2006, p. 1)

The quote above, was featured in an article titled, “Moving Like A Starfish: Beyond a linear model of student transformation in service learning classes.” The article critiqued a linear model of students engaged in service learning moving from a *charity model* of service learning towards a *social justice model*. The article critiqued the notion of linear movement between the two positions, claiming it falls short of adequately describing what the movement might look like, frequently missing what happens in between. It offers instead, a model to understand the movement students' experience “enabling the starfish to move.” (p.1)

The quote, and the rationale it lent itself to in the article, can be carried over into history education, and the pursuit to understand historical thinking. The choices that learners make in valuing history are varied, and so too are their motivations for doing so. In fact, the study of history and historical discourse has been around for thousands of years since the time of Plato. Needless to say, learners are not always aware of a

contextual understanding of the various reform efforts that have guided the differing understandings about what history is, can be, or how it should be understood.

Nevertheless, they are a part of a deliberative democratic society that evidences various conceptions that students frequently encounter through a variety of media and with a variety of messages. Expecting clarity in this process would be a mistake.

Similarly, placing value on the process of others, still in motion, may not adequately capture the numerous movements and motivations that learners make and experience. While value can be placed on the work of historians, placing the same kind of value on learners would be a mistake. It would miss the space in between, as students try on different historical hats in the process of testing the reactions that accompany the different epistemological and ontological conceptions of history. *Historically thinking like a starfish* offers a theoretical orientation that allows for an understanding of the multiplicity of thoughts that learners espouse and experience.

Extending the metaphor of a starfish, I'd like to offer that the way starfish move, parallel the varied historical thinking that students espouse at any given point. A starfish moves slowly along the ocean's bottom, encountering numerous obstacles along the way. Yet, it doesn't rely upon its eyes to guide it along the sea floor. Rather, it may move in one direction using 'feelers' and when it encounters an obstacle, it may quickly change directions in one, two, three, four or five ways. I can imagine that starfish, not unlike novice historical thinkers, have difficulty staying along a singular navigational course.

For learners, engaging in the process of thinking about history is like a starfish moving along the ocean floor. They may not be sure what obstacles they will encounter along the bottom. However, like starfish, students can quickly change course while

moving along the ocean floor. Interestingly, for the starfish, when it changes courses, using feelers, it may not even know *why* it is changing directions. It doesn't use its eyes and cannot see what it is trying to avoid. However, their feelers help out. Student's eyes can be seen as their metacognition. Students may not be aware, metacognitively, of what they are avoiding. It may be that like a starfish, students only change course when their feelers tell them something problematic might lie ahead. In this regard, we may begin to see starfish and students, traveling along the ocean floor or navigating competing historical sources as safely trying to move along, smartly preparing themselves to change directions when obstacles arise. From this kind of theoretical orientation, like the movements of starfish, the movements in students' historical thinking may be understood as their avoiding obstacles while moving in as many as five directions for a pretty good reason, in order to safely navigate the many different conceptions of history that they see on the ocean floor.

When trying to understand why starfish move or change course along the ocean floor, it would seem strange to point out how the starfish moves without also trying to understand *why* it is moving and what obstacles lie in its path. When thinking about the way starfish move, we would be remiss in pointing only to the starfish. We must also look to the ocean floor and try to understand what that fish is trying to avoid. The inductive data in this dissertation points to the ocean floor and tries to understand the movement students espouse through explanations highlighting the natural beauty of the movement. Perhaps, the move is safe. Perhaps, it will bear more fruit in one direction or the next. Surely, the various directions that students or a starfish move in, do not preclude an understanding that either organism will not get where it originally intended

on going. However, it implies that the zigzagged path may be warranted based on numerous explanations, like that of the obstacles that lie on the ocean floor. A move to embrace this kind of theoretical orientation moves the field of history education towards understanding *why* movements can be understood outside of a hierarchical model. It may also begin to fill in some of the space in between positions and characterizations. It may be helpful when divergent data represent the ways students' think about history.

The Space In Between

As I have discussed/presented, current theoretical representations of historical thinking offer hierarchical understanding of the ways students think historically. The continuum depicts movement from the past as given, at the low end of the spectrum to the past as reconstructed at the high end. While much can be learned viewing historical thinking in this way, including how to best characterize the ways that historical thinking takes place, it does not offer a view or explanation about what happens in the space in between. Moreover, this type of theoretical orientation does not seek to explain *why* movement along the continuum may take place. Nor would it value an explanation that seeks to uncover or illuminate the benefits that can be gleaned from *historically thinking like a starfish*, or occupying more than one space along the continuum, simultaneously, and moving on a less than desirable navigational path, but with good reason.

Using a theory that allows for multiple, non-hierarchical data representation and interpretation, promotes a view of multiplicity that promotes understanding about how and why learners may embrace more than one position at a time. Asking why students

move in the way they do requires an understanding of the environments and learning ecologies that reflexively contribute to student experiences. It also requires an understanding of the overlap present between positions and how the environment may offer obstacles that promote students movement in one direction versus the next. If students move along, thinking historically in different ways, then we must allow a view that recognizes the multiplicity present, not in the form of fragmentation or confusion but from a perspective that values the possible reasons that account for the movements not in the form of causation but as a possible explanatory factor.

The learner is not in isolation as they think about history. There are a lot of reasons that contribute to and support different conceptions about history. Many of which are present in a learning ecology, perhaps even more than one at a time. In many teacher education settings, when students' grapple with diverse issues, it can be seen as embracing the value of each position. It can also be that dominant discourses surface during particular discussions that push students in particular directions, until new pervasive discourses up root the learner, moving them again in a different direction. These types of occurrences and explanations can account for the space in between and deserves a seat next to typology or hierarchical characterizations that attribute movement to the learner.

Chapter Summary

Through design-based research, I offered two iterative analyses of the data. The first, used current theoretical frames, 'old knowledge', in order to render characterizations of the learners based on different typologies of historical thinking. The

second, used inductively driven data in order to offer a different kind of explanation based on an exploration of the learning ecology. Both iterations have positive attributes, however, they gaze slightly differently at the learner-environment transaction. By design, the first points to the learner and asks why is the starfish moving? The second, by design, thinks of the learner as a starfish moving along the ocean floor and while it too asks *why* does the starfish move, it scans the oceans floor in search of different explanations that could explain the movement while not suggesting direct causation as people are complex in their motivations to act and speak. Theoretically representing historical thinking in a way that highlights the learner-environment transaction marks a move towards further understanding the complex nature of historical thinking. Moreover, alternative explorations may uncover several explanations about why movement in historical thinking occurs, and what it might look like, which can be used for further testing and production of new iterations and new testing situations. In this sense, this study is ongoing.

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Appendix A. Interview protocol.
Interview protocol sheet

Name of interviewee: _____

Date of Interview:

Interview #: 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____

Hi There! Thank you for agreeing to spend a few minutes discussing the Cooperative Biography with me. As you know, I am doing research on the ways that pre-service student teachers' view history. Specifically, by recording and analyzing your group and group member's experiences in The Cooperative Biography, and thoughts and perceptions about history while doing the unit. I have prepared a few questions to guide our discussion and will be asking some follow-up questions from time to time. Is that okay with you? Shall we begin?

Questions:

Background

- 1) Could you please state your name and say the program you are in and where you are within that program including more or less when you plan to graduate?
- 2) What sparked your interest in becoming a teacher?
- 3) What do you remember about social studies from when you were in school?
- 4) How do you feel about teaching social studies in the near future?
- 5) What do you remember about learning history from when you were school?
- 6) How do you feel about teaching history in the near future?

Cooperative biography

- 7) Could you tell me a little bit about the unit you are doing or soon to be doing called the Cooperative Biography?
- 8) What are some of the things that you will be asked to do?
- 9) I understand that you be asked to take an original perspective about Rosa Parks. Is that correct, how do you feel about that? What does that mean to you?
- 10) And, you will be working in groups or already are? How is that going? Is it easy to do a project like this in groups?
- 11) I understand you have been reading about Rosa Parks already. How is that going? Have you learned anything new or interesting that you didn't know before? If so, could you discuss what you've learned?
- 12) Could you tell me more about what kind of sources you've been reading and how valuable you think they are and why?
- 13) How accurate do you think they are and why?
- 14) In the process of doing The Cooperative biography, have you encountered any competing sources or interpretations? Any clashing evidence? If so, what did you do, what did you believe, and how did you decide?
- 15) What is your understanding about the goal of this unit? Why are you doing it? How do you feel about it?

Conceptions of History

- 16) What is history? How would you describe or explain it?

- 17) How sure are you about the things you know about the past?
- 18) How do you know them?
- 19) How unsure are you about the past? Why?
- 20) What is your opinion about the role of “perspective” in history?
- 21) What would say are some of things historians do?
- 22) How is historical knowledge found? How is it created? Is there a difference between history that is found and history that is created? Could you explain?
- 23) Is history important in schools? If so, why?
- 24) Why do we study history?
- 25) What are some essential components of teaching history?
- 26) How about learning history?
- 27) What do you think is good historical evidence?
- 28) How would describe or characterize historical knowledge? Can you give an example of an historical truth?
- 29) Who decides what counts as good history?
- 30) What role do you play in deciding what good history is?
- 31) What do you think of the role of consensus in history? Should everyone agree with the same historical narrative(s)? Why?
- 32) Are some historical narratives biased? What is the role of bias in history?

Appendix B. Survey
Part 1

1) It is essential for students to be taught to support their historical reasoning with evidence.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Unsure			

2) History is a matter of interpretation.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Unsure			

3) A historical narrative or account is the result of a disciplined method of inquiry.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Unsure			

4) Disagreement about a single event in the past is due to lack of evidence.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Unsure			

5) Students must be taught to deal with conflicting historical evidence.

6) Historical claims cannot be fully verified because they are a matter of opinion.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Unsure			

7) Strong reading and comprehension skills are enough to learn history.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Unsure			

8) Since it is impossible to know what really happened in the past, students should choose the story they like best.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Unsure			

9) History is a critical inquiry about the past.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Unsure			

10) The past is whatever historians want it to be.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Unsure			

11) An essential part of historical inquiry involves comparing sources and understanding authors' perspectives.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Unsure			

12) It is impossible for us to know anything about the past since we were not there ourselves.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Unsure			

13) Historical facts speak for themselves.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Unsure			

14) Students should be taught the history is a matter of interpretation.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Unsure			

15) History is the reasonable reconstruction of the past based on the best available evidence.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Unsure			

16) There is no true evidence in history.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Unsure			

17) Even eyewitnesses disagree about events, so there is no way to know the facts.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Unsure			

Part 2

Indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about what is history:

1) "History is a fixed set of information about what really happened in the past that informed citizens need to learn to make informed decisions about society and the world."

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree
 Unsure

2) "History consists of different stories that people tell about the past in order to make sense of their world, and these stories are open to debate and interpretation."

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree
 Unsure

Part 3

1) Please select (by placing an X in the space provided) the excerpt that best matches your view/beliefs about what history is and should be in school:

A) I believe history should emphasize fascinating details about people and places and events in the past. Learning specific knowledge of other times, people, and places is the most important rationale for studying history in school. _____

B) I believe uncertainty and different possible explanations or interpretations of the past is what makes history most interesting. In fact, I would argue that historical processes and gaining background knowledge are the key reasons for studying history. _____

C) I believe history should emphasize the relation of the past to present-day problems and perspectives. History is necessary for understanding contemporary issues and should inform/guide current decisions. _____

D) I believe that history is bound to repeat itself. There is a cyclical pattern in human history that is like a law of nature. Understanding how events connect to each other over time is the most important reason for studying history. _____

E) None of the above accurately depicts my beliefs about history, or I would use a combination of two or more of the above descriptions to articulate how I feel about history. My beliefs about history are best characterized as... (Please explain in the space below.)

Cooperative Biography

What is it?

A cooperative biography is an authentic way to infuse writing, reading, speaking skills into the social studies curriculum by composing a biography with a team (hence, cooperative) about an outstanding citizen—in our case, Rosa Parks. Multi-modal learning and communication is fostered through a range of experiences and re-telling of history.



What will we do?

Before you get to the point of writing, producing, or composing the actual biography, you will do many in-class activities—You will watch a video, read a biography, enact a play and write after completion of each activity—This is *doing* and

absorbing history. Finally, your group (3-5 members) will think about the *perspective* from which you will re-tell the civil rights movement story. On the project's due date, you will share your biographies and celebrate the completion of this project.

What are the required elements?

1. Compile the story into four episodes
2. Include a "Citizens Take Action!" section, tell how Rosa Parks made a difference but was part of a larger movement
3. Include a timeline of events
4. Include a map of where events occurred
5. Include a glossary section of terms (to grade level)
6. Include an "about the authors" (or producers) page.
7. Include a 'works used and/or cited' page.

Transmediate...

Re-tell History!

An experience in *transmediation* gives us an opportunity to look at alternative perspectives and be involved in more complex thinking and problem-solving. In *transmediation*, we come to new understandings by expressing ideas in another sign system (Semali, 2002). For children, transmediations can take the form of drama, podcasts, digital books, and comic strips. Transmediation also helps children learn and talk about history.

Using the tools on your desktop such as iWeb, iMovie, GarageBand, ComicLife, etc., you will re-tell history in a new way.



Cohesiveness, craftsmanship, presentation matter!

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EDUCATION

- May 6, 2012 **The Pennsylvania State University**, University Park, PA
Ph.D., Curriculum and Instruction
- 2005 **The University of Massachusetts**, Amherst, MA
M.Ed., Multicultural/ESL Education
- 2002 **The University of Massachusetts**, Amherst, MA
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DISSERTATION

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Understanding Pre-service Teachers' Beliefs About History within the Context of A Cooperative Biography: A Design Based Study.

Through Design Based Research (Cobb, et al., 2003), this study explores the intended outcomes and processes of the Cooperative Biography project. This research provides an *iterative analysis* (Cobb, et al., 2003) of how pre-service teachers experienced history while engaged in a Cooperative Biography, in a teacher-education setting. This includes analysis of observations, interviews, and survey data to offer deductive and inductive themes present in the *learning ecology* (Biesta & Burboles, 2003). Exploring and analyzing key concepts related to *historical thinking*, the study offers a re-conceptualization of the project goals and contributes to the fields of Social Studies, history education, and elementary teacher education, by offering examples of how participants used artifacts and sources to interpret and re-tell history.

Research Interests Teaching History to Elementary-Aged Students; Pre-service Teacher Learning; Multicultural Education; Adolescent Identity Development, Diversity in the Social Studies; Civic Efficacy in Elementary Schools; Student Voice in Elementary Schools, Service-Learning.