Teaching and Learning History in Classroom Contexts

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Curry School of Education

University of Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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May 2018

Abstract

This dissertation consists of three independent manuscripts, each of which addresses an aspect of a larger study that explored teaching and learning history in classroom contexts. While situated in two very different contexts (a public high school and a classical Christian middle school), the three manuscripts are connected in that they explore how a teacher teaches and what their students learn in their respective classrooms. A qualitative case study design allowed an in-depth exploration of how a teacher enacted a unit, how the students described their learning, and how the context influenced both teaching and learning. Analysis indicated both teachers (public school and classical Christian school) were influenced by the larger context in which they worked and emphasized student learning of factual information as opposed to conceptual and procedural knowledge (VanSledright & Limón, 2006). Students, in both contexts, learned some factual information from the unit, but walked away with misconceptions that were related to how their teacher's enacted instruction.

In the first manuscript, I examined how a teacher, Miss Gill, at a classical Christian school articulated her goals for a unit on World War II, how she enacted those goals in a unit on World War II, and what her students learned from the unit. The second manuscript also draws on data from the classical Christian school to investigate how the students described and related their learning to instructional strategies and resources used by Miss Gill during a unit on World War II. In the third manuscript, I explored how a teacher and students made sense of and experienced a district mandated performance assessment while still preparing for a state mandated high-stakes multiple-choice assessment.

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APPROVAL OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation, "Teaching and Learning History in Classroom Contexts," has been approved by the Graduate Faculty of the Curry School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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March 22, 2018

Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not be possible without the many people who supported me while pursuing my passion. I will be eternally grateful to the students and teachers at Mountain View High School and Cristus Academy for letting me into the classroom and so openly talking with me about themselves and their school. Spending time in the classrooms and working with the teachers and students gave me immeasurable joy and reminded me of why I began this degree in the first place.

I have been fortunate to have an incredible dissertation committee who guided me throughout this process and helped me understand how to situate my research. Dr. Grimes, Dr. Moon, and Dr. Youngs, you have increased the rigor and quality of this work and encouraged me to explore different and new avenues of research. I am especially indebted to Dr. van Hover, who from the first day at Curry, has not only supported me in my research agenda but also provided me with a vision of what a teacher educator should be. I have relied on Dr. van Hover's guidance, perspective, and humor throughout this process and for that, I will be eternally grateful.

I would also like to thank my friends and colleagues at Curry with whom I have created a small and loving, yet somewhat dysfunctional, support group. Their ideas and insights have made me a better teacher and researcher and provided balance to my life. I must thank my parents for their continued support throughout 20+ years of education and for my brother, who ensured that I remained grounded throughout this process. Above all, I would like to thank my husband and son who have seen all sides of this project for two years. It will take a lifetime to repay the patience and kindness you have shown me throughout this process. Thank you.

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"Everyone knows what history is until he begins to think about it. After that, nobody knows."

Alan Griffin

Introduction

The quotation above, Griffin's (1962) entry for the definition of "history" in the *World Book Encyclopedia*, rings true today and reflects the ongoing (and very current) debate over what history is, how different groups interpret history, how it should be taught, and what student learning in history looks like (Cuban, 2016). History is often viewed as a set of facts to be memorized and any number of contentious debates has taken place over which particular set of facts is 'the history' that should be taught (and remembered) in schools (Evans, 2004). In the field of history education, history is not viewed as a static list of facts but rather as a fluid, contested, and constructed narrative (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013). An extensive body of research calls for students to learn not "just the facts" (Vogler & Virtue, 2007), but rather how to think historically by engaging in historical inquiry and analyzing available evidence in order to explore meaningful questions from the past (see Davies, 2011; Fogo, 2014; Lee, 2011; Wineburg, 2001).

While the field of history education is in broad agreement that learning both the content and skills of history is essential for all students, there is continued debate over the specific goals of history education: to teach citizenship skills (Barton & Levstik, 2004), to teach historical empathy (Brooks, 2009), to understand how the past influences the present (Lee, 2011), to teach disciplinary literacy (Monte-Sano, 2011), or to teach critical thinking (Ercikan & Seixas, 2015). Confusion over the specific goals of history education leads to questions over how best to assess student learning (Smith, 2018). This makes any exploration of teaching and learning history situated in classroom contexts challenging at best, yet there is a recognition that the field will not

move forward without more research that examines teaching and learning history in classroom contexts (see Barton & Avery, 2016; Hicks, van Hover, Doolittle, & VanFossen, 2012; van Hover & Hicks, 2017). The manuscripts in this proposal focus on teaching and learning history in two distinct classroom contexts: (1) a classical Christian grammar school and (2) a public high school situated in a district and state with a shifting accountability context. In this connecting paper, I briefly outline the literature informing these studies and provide a brief overview of each manuscript.

Role of Context

Previous research in history education has examined how contextual factors, specifically standards-based settings with associated high-stakes tests, influence teachers' pedagogical decision making (see Grant, 2003; Grant & Salinas, 2008; van Hover, Hicks, & Sayeski, 2012). Au's (2007) metasynthesis on this topic found that high-stakes tests control "the content, knowledge forms, and pedagogies at the classroom level" (p. 264). A growing body of research indicates that in high-stakes testing contexts many teachers focus on specific test taking skills (Vogler & Virtue, 2007) and limit the amount of time they spend on higher order thinking in the classroom (Jennings & Bearak, 2014). Research has often shown that teachers will narrow the curriculum they cover in the classroom to what is included in the state standards (Vogler, 2006; Smith, 2018), despite many of the standards documents being "bloated" and including information not considered historically significant by professional historians (Wineburg, 2005, p. x). And while Grant and Salinas (2008) argue that high-stakes tests are more likely to influence the content a teacher covers than their pedagogy, there is no doubt that high-stakes tests "complicate [teachers] efforts to help students 'dig into' historical questions, evidence, and arguments" (Meuwissen, 2017, p. 249).

A fairly robust body of research in social studies explores teaching and learning in standards-based public school settings, but far less research has explored teaching and learning history in school contexts other than public schools. Exploring contexts beyond public schools is important as a growing proportion of students attend private schools, particularly private, religious schools (Council for American Private Education, 2013). Private religious schools in America do not have to follow state curricula and can provide teachers the freedom or flexibility to discuss and focus on religious issues based on their beliefs (Groome, 1998). This has interesting—but unstudied—implications for history education. What (or whose) history are students in these schools learning?

A small, but growing body of research examines teaching and learning history in fundamentalist Christian schools. While fundamentalist as a term is widely debated by religious scholars (Porterfield, 2012; Sutton, 2014; Wuthnow, 1988), the term is frequently used to describe Christian schools not associated with a particular denomination and who place significant emphasis on religious and theological certainty. This certainty has the potential to bound educators to teach in a specific way, potentially limiting the democratic discourse in the classroom (Hess & McAvoy, 2015). Schweber (2004, 2006, 2008; Schweber & Irwin, 2003) has written extensively on teaching and learning about the Holocaust in a variety of school contexts, including fundamentalist Christian schools. Schweber and Irwin (2003) examined how one teacher taught about the Holocaust in a fundamentalist Christian school and how the students in the class made sense of the teacher's enactment of the unit. The students viewed the Holocaust through their collective religious history—that is "their faith supplied background narratives" that provided the lens to understand events surrounding the Holocaust (p. 1710). Schweber and Irwin's findings indicated that the teacher taught the Holocaust from a particular viewpoint that

emphasized the role of Christian "saviors" and led to an incomplete and limited historical account. The shared religious beliefs between the students and the teacher clearly influenced what the students were expected to learn and how the students understood the Holocaust. Schweber and Irwin (2003) argue that more research needs "to investigate fully the ways that religious communities, fundamentalist and nonfundamentalist, teach and with what effects" (p. 1715). Within Schweber's studies, she recognized the importance of both the context and the teacher in how students learned and what they learned about the Holocaust.

Role of the Teacher

Thornton (1991) argued that teachers act as curricular-instructional gatekeepers by deciding both what (the content) and how (the pedagogy) history curriculum is enacted in the classrooms. While Au (2011) asserts that public school "teachers' power [is] being increasingly usurped through both policy and curriculum structure" (p. 38) because of high-stakes tests, there is little doubt that teachers take the primary role in how policies are enacted in the classroom (Sloan, 2006). Within classrooms, teachers decide "what to emphasize within a particular unit, whether to encourage students' questions (and how to respond to them), how to develop learning experiences, and how to create meaningful classroom discussions" (Barton & Avery, 2016, p. 1012). Barton and Levstik (2004) argue that one of the main factors in teacher's decision making is their purpose for teaching history—that is, teachers with clear purposes for teaching history will make decisions in the classroom that align with their purpose. They contend that a teacher's purpose is more impactful on their decisions then a teacher's pedagogical content knowledge. Part of teachers' gatekeeping is developed through their personal identity and beliefs (Grant, 2003). Teachers make decisions of what and how to teach history based on what they believe is significant for students to know and what knowledge has the most worth. There is

not one singular factor, but there are a variety of context-dependent factors that influence what decisions a teacher makes in the classroom (Grant, 2003).

Teacher's gatekeeping becomes more complicated in religious schools as teachers must make sense of both the religious and secular content they are ordained to teach (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993). Schweber (2006) has argued that "history and religion are one and the same, as are instruction in history and instruction in religion" (p. 408); further complicating the role history teachers take in religious schools. Previous research has explored how a teacher's religious identity influences how teachers understand the nature and purpose of history (James, 2010; White, 2009), but few studies examine how this influences teacher's gatekeeping in the classroom. The research on the role of teachers and how and why they make decisions in the classroom is growing, but much less is known about how students are experiencing classroom instruction (Barton & Avery, 2016). And as Hattie and Yates (2014) remind us, learning is "too often absent from discussions about schooling. Instead the focus of discussion is too often about teaching; this is not to say that teaching is unimportant, but the purpose of teaching surely relates to learning" (p. xii).

Students in History Classrooms

Most of the research that examines student thinking in history centers around four main topics: 1) student understanding of history and historical narratives, 2) student interpretation and reading of sources, 3) where students' ideas of history come from, and 4) what it means to think historically (Grant, 2001). Much of this research occurs outside the context of the classroom and involves interviews with students on topics disconnected from their history course (see Barton & Levstik, 1996; Wineburg, 2001). This work is undoubtedly significant and has provided insight into student thinking about history. Yet, many argue that an important, and understudied, focus

is student learning *in context*—that is, the experiences of students in history classrooms versus students talking about history in settings outside a school or classroom setting (Barton & Avery, 2016; Monte-Sano, 2011; Reisman, 2012; van Hover & Hicks, 2017). Very little work has been done in this area, and most of the work that has been done is in international contexts (see Lee & Shemilt, 2003, 2004; Shemilt, 2000).

The most substantive research on student learning in classroom settings was conducted in an elementary school by New Zealand researchers Graham Nuthall and Adrienne Alton-Lee (see Alton-Lee & Nuthall, 1990; Nuthall 1996, 1999; Nuthall & Alton-Lee, 1993, 1995). Nuthall and Alton-Lee explored the relationship between teaching and learning in order to create an educational learning theory founded in classroom practice (Nuthall & Alton-Lee, 1993). In order to achieve this aim, they worked with classroom teachers to create assessments that aligned with the teachers' goals for the unit. Students were given a pre-test, observed during the unit, given a post-test, and then participated in a think aloud of the post-test. During the unit, audio recorders were placed near focal students to capture any conversations they engaged in during the unit. Focal students participated in a second think aloud of the post-test one year after the unit was completed to collect evidence about whether or not students had retained substantive knowledge. They then created "concept files" for each student and the concept they were supposed to learn. Based on the individual concept file, Nuthall & Alton-Lee could predict with relative accuracy (80-85%) whether students would answer test questions correctly (Brophy, 2006).

Nuthall (1999) found that student learning "results from the connections students make between newly evolving knowledge constructs and their background knowledge" (p. 335). Learning was not always based on what was explicitly taught by the teacher, but instead based on the "participation in those classroom activities in which students [were] required to recall and

use their previous knowledge and experiences" (Nuthall, 2000, p. 248). Nuthall (1996) recognized that "every aspect of classroom life is complex, multilayered, and context dependent" (p. 209). Ultimately, student learning of substantive knowledge is a "dynamic interactive system" (p. 210) where "students' access to and participation in the learning activities of the classroom are structured by their negotiation of social status" (p. 211).

Yet, little research in history education has examined how contextual factors influence student learning of history. The question is important as the field calls for a shift from history teaching as a didactic presentation of facts to a focus on historical thinking and inquiry. In order to assess student historical thinking skills, such as historical writing (Monte-Sano, 2010) and source analysis (Smith, 2017), researchers are calling for forms of assessment, other than multiple-choice tests that emphasize factual recall, that assess students knowledge of and ability to engage in historical inquiry (Ercikan & Seixas, 2015; Smith, 2018). However, more needs to be known about what and how students currently learn so that any proposed shifts in teaching and assessment have an evidence base to support them (Barton & Avery, 2016; van Hover & Hicks, 2017).

Overview of Manuscripts

This dissertation aims to understand how the context of a school influences how a teacher teaches, what the students learn, and how students make sense of their classroom experiences. The following research questions guided the study: In what ways does the context of schools influence teaching and student learning of history? How do teachers and students make sense of the context in which they are teaching and learning?

This dissertation consists of three manuscripts, each of which addresses one aspect of the larger study. Based on feedback from committee members during the proposals, the focus of the

manuscripts has grown to include the role of the teacher. In the proposal, the teacher was part of, but not a large focus of, the manuscripts. The manuscripts in their current form pay equal attention to the role of the teacher, the student experiences in the classroom, and the context in which teaching and learning occurs. While the papers were written separately, they address similar issues and the reader will encounter periodic repetition in the description of the study and literature. Nevertheless, the framework for each study is unique. The first two manuscripts focus on teaching and learning history in a classical Christian school, while the third focuses on teaching and learning history in a public school with a shifting accountability context.

Classical Christian schools: Manuscripts 1 and 2

Classical Christian schools have a well-articulated mission and purpose for learning that provides a rich site for exploring issues related to teaching and learning of history. The mission of classical Christian schools is different from public schools (Wilkins, 2008) and the unique setting has the potential to highlight the role context plays in student learning of history. Classical Christian schools are a distinct context to study teaching and learning of history because of their distinct philosophical, pedagogical, and religious approach to education. Douglas Wilson, the founder of the Association of Classical Christian Schools (ACCS), states "the use of [the term] *classical* is thoroughly Christian, and grounded in the …great truths of Scripture recovered and articulated at the Reformation" (Wilson, 1996, p. 23 emphasis in original), thus linking the classical pedagogy of the school with their Christian, typically evangelical Protestant, beliefs (Leithart, 2008). Supporters of classical Christian schools believe biblical truths and liberal arts education must both be included in a classical Christian education because "understanding the world from God's perspective is the foundation of true liberty" (Wilkins, 2008, p. 2).

The number of classical Christian schools has risen dramatically since the mid 1990s when the ACCS was formed. The ACCS traces its roots to Dorothy Sayers' (1947) *The Lost Tools of Learning* in which she outlined her vision for how to fix education based on what she saw as the failure of public education since the Industrial Revolution and the rise of progressive education (Leithart, 2008). Sayers (1947) believed that public schools had become too pragmatic and while they taught students more subjects, she worried students were not "actually more learned" (p. 3).

Little research on classical Christian schools exists; there have been a few dissertations completed by doctoral students at evangelical Christian universities. These dissertation studies compare various aspects of classical Christian schools to private Christian schools (see Anderson, 2016; Dernlan, 2013; Scouller, 2010; Splittgerber, 2010). These studies demonstrate classical Christian schools commitment to their philosophy (Scouller, 2010) as well as students' higher commitment to the Christian faith, attributed to instructional methodologies used at a classical Christian school (Dernlan, 2013). These studies are beginnings to explore what is happening in classical Christian schools, but they do little to explicate what students are learning day to day in the classroom. While the authors forefront the context of classical Christian schools, they lack an in depth analysis of how various aspects of the context interact with teaching and learning.

Shifting accountability contexts in Virginia: Manuscript 3

In the mid-1990s and early 2000s, as part of the growing national accountability climate, Virginia began to require students to take and pass a certain number of Standards of Learning tests in history (DeWitt, et al., 2013). Currently, Virginia is not a Common Core State and has maintained an accountability system that includes high-stakes testing in history and social

science education. At the time of this study, students in Virginia had to take (and pass) end-of-course Standards of Learning (SOL) tests in three history courses in high school in order to earn a diploma (van Hover, Hicks, Stoddard & Lisanti, 2010). The students' scores also impact school accreditation. The SOL tests in history use a four option multiple-choice format designed to assess knowledge of first-order narrative ideas of history without any emphasis on higher order thinking (DeWitt et al., 2013). Recently the state, responding to complaints about overtesting, has removed three high-stakes tests in history and social science courses (at the elementary and middle school levels) and called for increased attention to "authentic individual student growth measures" (Virginia Department of Education, 2014) which many districts have interpreted as performance assessments, or a task "that requires students to construct a response, create a product, or perform a demonstration" (Arter & McTighe, 2001, p. 180).

Within this policy context, Granger School District spent intensive time and energy to create performance assessments across grade levels and disciplines. In high school history courses, the performance assessments took the form of document-based questions (DBQs). The DBQ (see, for example, the DBQ project, AP College Board, New York Regents Exams) is a commonly used approach for source integration and historical writing in classrooms and as a way to balance testing with an emphasis on factual knowledge. Initially developed in the 1970s as part of the Advanced Placement (AP) examination, the DBQ is intended to assess how students can analyze 6-8 historical sources (Reisman, 2015) and construct a written response that draws on this analysis as well as students' background knowledge on the topic (Grant, Gradwell, & Cimbricz, 2004). The district required teachers to implement a certain number of these DBQs over the course of the school year while concurrently preparing students for the high-stakes multiple-choice end-of-course tests. While research has explored the influence of high-stakes

testing on how teachers teach, little research examines how teachers and students experiences in the classroom when the accountability context begins to shift.

The Manuscripts

The first manuscript examines teaching and student learning of World War II in a classical Christian school. The manuscript uses Thornton's (1991) notion of teacher as a curricular-instructional gatekeeper as a framework to understand how the teacher (Miss Gill) enacted a unit on World War II in light of the philosophy of classical Christian schools and how students made sense of the teacher's implementation of the unit. This manuscript focuses on the teacher's religious framing of the unit and what students learned from this frame. The second manuscript uses activity theory to understand how a teacher and students use both conceptual and practical tools in order to achieve their objective, student learning of World War II. Activity theory emphasizes the collective participation between teachers and learners within a particular context. This allowed an examination of how the students used the practical tools provided by the teacher to learn and remember information from the World War II unit over a period of nine months. The third manuscript examines teaching and learning history in a public school that is currently experiencing a shifting accountability climate. Manuscript 3 examines how a teacher (Mr. Smith) implemented a district-mandated performance task while still preparing students for a high-stakes multiple-choice exam and how students described their learning experiences during the performance task. Table 1 outlines the status of each manuscript.

Table 1. Status of Manuscripts

	Title	**Status**
Manuscript 1	Fitzpatrick, C. "'Courage, loyalty, and cruelty': Teaching and learning about history in a classical Christian school	Submitted Nov. 2017 to *Religion and Education*

Manuscript 2	Fitzpatrick, C. Books, and songs, and lecture, oh my!: Student memories and use of classroom experiences in their learning of history	Not yet submitted for publication
Manuscript 3	Fitzpatrick, C., van Hover, S., & Cornett, A. A DBQ in a multiple-choice world: A tale of two assessments in a unit on Byzantium.	Not yet submitted for publication

Together, these manuscripts explore teaching and learning in history in classroom contexts. While in drastically different contexts, the reader will see parallels between how historical knowledge is constructed in the classroom and what type of knowledge students learn. Taken together, these manuscripts raise new questions about how to encourage teachers to teach in a way that provides students the opportunity to gain deep understanding of history as a domain. These studies show the importance and uniqueness of each school context, but at the same time, that despite the context, historical knowledge remains focused on discrete pieces of factual information.

In both schools, the teacher's purpose influenced how they taught and what the students learned. For Miss Gill, this was a focus on factual information for students to use during the logic and rhetoric stages of classical Christian schools. While Miss Gill had religious themes for her unit, her emphasis remained on having the students be able to recite factual information. For Mr. Smith, despite a district initiative to promote historical thinking skills, he remained focused on having the students pass a high-stakes multiple-choice exam. Mr. Smith taught, and students learned, factual knowledge. As will be discussed in all three manuscripts, larger historical concepts, such as cause and effect, progress, and source reliability, were lost in both contexts. While students in the classical Christian school were able to retain some factual knowledge over a period of time, they didn't understand the facts and had misconceptions about what they

learned. The findings from these studies highlight the need to better understand student experiences in the context of their history classroom. These studies add to the growing body of research on teacher's gatekeeping and how their purpose and beliefs influence how they teach and thus what students learn.

Researcher as Instrument

It is important to establish my positionality as researcher and various aspects that may influence my analysis of the school contexts. While I did not teach at or attend a classical Christian school, I did teach at Catholic middle and high schools throughout the United States. This experience has informed how I approach the tension that sometimes exists between history classes and the religious context of a school, especially when teaching controversial issues. Because my religious background is primarily Catholic, I recognize that my biblical interpretations may be different from the participants. While not exclusively Protestant schools, classical Christian schools tend to focus on evangelical Protestant teachings (Wilkins, 2008). This allows me a unique position as both an outsider and an insider. I also recognize that my religious background may have granted me access to the site that might not have been granted to a researcher without experience in a religious school.

Timeline

IRB approval for the study was granted the spring of 2016. Contact was made Granger School District, Mountain View High School, and Cristus Academy[1] in the spring of 2016 and the administration and teachers consented to be part of the study. Notification was sent home to parents and the focal students returned consent and assent forms. Data collection at Cristus Academy began in the spring of 2016 and continued through the spring of 2017. Data

[1] All names are pseudonyms.

collection at Mountain View High School occurred in the spring of 2016.

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“COURAGE, LOYALTY, AND CRUELTY:”

TEACHING AND LEARNING ABOUT WORLD WAR II

IN A CLASSICAL CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Abstract

Research has demonstrated the complex role context, specifically standards-based accountability contexts, plays in teachers' pedagogical decision making in history classrooms. Far less research examines how teachers teach history in religious schools and what students learn from their classroom experiences in religious schools. This case study explores one teacher in a classical Christian school's goals for a unit on World War II, how she enacted those goals in the classroom, and what the students learned. Data analysis indicated that the teacher had conceptual goals that emphasized religious teachings for the unit; however, her teaching focused on memorization of factual content, which influenced what students reported learning.

KEYWORDS: Religious Schools, Teaching History, Student Learning

Best practice in history education calls for teachers having students engage in historical inquiry through the analysis of historical evidence (Fogo, 2014). In this way, students are "doing" history and engaging in historical thinking (Wineburg, 2001). However, a growing body of research indicates that context matters in whether and how teachers enact best practice in their classroom. Most of this research is conducted in public school settings in states with high stakes testing (Barton & Avery, 2016; Hicks, van Hover, Doolittle, & VanFossen, 2012). High stakes testing has influenced what happens in public school classrooms by "narrowing curricular content…resulting in the increased fragmentation of knowledge forms into bits and pieces…compelling teachers to use more lecture-based, teacher-centered pedagogies" (Au, 2007, p. 264). While standardized tests were not intended to create such changes in the classroom, their introduction changed the context within teachers worked and, both explicitly and implicitly, altered how teachers served as curricular-instructional gatekeepers. Thornton (2001) argues that teachers act as curricular-instructional gatekeepers, deciding both what (the content) and how (the pedagogy) curriculum is enacted in the classroom. Frequently, these decisions are shaped by the context within which teachers work. While the literature is quite expansive on teaching in public schools with high stakes testing, with few exceptions, the literature has been silent on history teachers in religious schools.

The question of what happens in religious schools is becoming increasingly important for a number of reasons. A large—and growing—number of families are choosing to send their students to private, religious schools, yet we know little as to what is happening in these schools. Many teachers at religious schools do not go through formal teacher education programs and the majority of states do not require teachers to be licensed in order to be hired by a private school (Department of Education, 2009). Furthermore, many religious schools do not have to follow

state standards and the teachers are not held accountable to curriculum pacing guides set by the district or the state (Barton & McCully, 2010, 2012). Questions remain about what, and how, history teachers in religious schools are teaching. Barton and Levstik (2004) argue that the focus of history education is to help "prepare students for participation in a pluralist democracy", or the "common good" (p. X). While teaching history for the common good is a widely accepted goal in public schools and research has provided examples of teachers teaching in ways that reflect this purpose (see Hess & McAvoy, 2015), little is known about what history instruction looks like in a religious school with an explicit religious mission and identity. In fact, some religious schools, such as classical Christian schools, explicitly reject notions of pragmatic and progressive education, instead calling on schools to initiate students "into a cultural heritage" (Leithart, 2008, p. 5) by "cultivating wisdom and virtue by nourishing the soul on truth, goodness, and beauty" (Veith & Kern, 2001, p. 12). This, in conjunction with the political and religious polarization in America, represent a growing dichotomy in American society that does not seem to be dissipating in the near future. This is a battle that will, and already has, come to fruition in schools. And the history classroom is of critical importance as history has, as historian Margaret MacMillan (2009) has argued, "shaped humans' values, their fears, their aspirations, their loves, and their hatreds" (p. 8).

This study takes place within the context of a classical Christian school. Classical Christian schools are a rapidly growing subcategory of Christian schools and promote a specific and purposeful religious identity. These schools provide a useful site within which to explore the interactions between religion, religious identity, and the teaching and learning of history. The current study, part of a larger study on student learning in history, seeks to investigate the nature of the interactions between a teacher, her students, and the religious context of the school.

Learning and Teaching in Classroom Contexts

Research on student learning in secondary history classrooms has primarily focused on how students understand history and historical narratives, student interpretation of sources, and what it means to think historically (see Monte-Sano & Reisman, 2015). Over the past few decades, there has been greater attention to various factors that influence individual's understanding of history such as race/ethnicity, nation of origin, and gender among other factors (Barton & Avery, 2016). While this research gives us a better understanding of how students understand history, it is often disconnected from a classroom context and a teacher created unit. Recently, some researchers have begun to focus on teaching and learning disciplinary literacy skills, such as reading and writing, situated in a public school context (Monte-Sano, 2008, 2010, 2011; Reisman 2012, 2015). This work highlights the power of a teacher's practice and how it can impact a students' ability to improve their disciplinary literacy skills.

Teachers clearly play an important role in developing the culture of the classroom and on what and how to teach in the classrooms. Teachers' decisions range from "what to emphasize within a particular unit, whether to encourage students' questions (and how to respond to them), how to develop learning experiences, and how to create meaningful classroom discussions" (Barton & Avery, 2016, p. 1012). Grant (2003) argues that part of teachers' gatekeeping is based on their personal identity and beliefs. Teachers make sense of historical narratives, and present these narratives through their instruction, based on what they value and see as significant for students to learn. Grant asserts that there is not one singular influence on teachers' pedagogical choices, but instead there are multiple, intersecting factors that are often context-dependent. Research on teachers' gatekeeping of classrooms has shown the role that a teacher's purpose for teaching history, high-stakes testing, and perceived pressure from the larger community

influences history instruction (Grant & Salinas, 2008; van Hover & Yeagar, 2007). While there is a growing body of research on gatekeeping in the context of public schools, the research has largely ignored teachers' instructional decision-making in religious schools. Some research has begun to explore how a teacher's religious identity can influence their approach to teaching history (see James, 2010), but there has been little work connecting these ideas with student learning and the day-to-day realities of teaching.

Religious Contexts

Research has begun to explore how a school's religious context can exert an influence on what happens in the history classroom, both in terms of student understanding of history and a teacher's pedagogical decisions. Simone Schweber has written extensively on teaching about the Holocaust in various school contexts (Schweber, 2004, 2006, 2008; Schweber & Irwin, 2003). In particular, she examined how one teacher in a fundamentalist Christian school taught about the Holocaust and how the students made sense of the teachers enactment of the unit. The students viewed the Holocaust through their collective religious history—that is "their faith supplied background narratives" that provided the lens to understand events surrounding the Holocaust (Schweber & Irwin, 2003, p. 1710). The teacher taught the Holocaust from a particular viewpoint that emphasized the role of Christian "saviors" and led to an incomplete and limited historical account. Furthermore, the teacher in the study selected a text with a Christian narrative for which the students to understand the Holocaust, exerting her influence as curricular-instructional gatekeeper.

Students at religious schools are not unique in using their religious beliefs to understand historical events. Students who self identified as Christian in public schools have also been found to make sense of the Holocaust through the lens of those beliefs (Spector, 2007). Although

the students in Spector's study relied on religious narratives to understand the Holocaust, the teachers in the study never addressed them. One teacher feared talking about religion in a public school because of the reactions of the students' parents. While divergent contexts, teachers in both public and religious schools made pedagogical decisions based on the school and community context within which they taught. The context of the school can greatly influence a teacher's autonomy and decision-making in the classroom. As Hess and McAvoy (2015) have argued, teachers at religious schools have to find the "correct balance between promoting religious/ethical values and promoting democratic values within the context of her school" (p. 74). There are clear differences between teaching in a private school and a public school; however, questions remain over how a teacher makes sense of that difference.

Informed by the work on gatekeeping and teaching history in religious schools, I chose to study one teacher at a classical Christian school's history unit and to examine what the students learned from the unit.

Methods

I examined one sixth-grade teacher at a classical Christian school during her unit on World War II. A case study approach allowed me to examine the context of the school and the classroom in depth and to explore the complexities that surrounded the teaching and learning of World War II in a classical Christian school (Yin, 2009). In this study, I explored the following research questions:

1. In a unit on World War II, what were the teacher's goals, how did she enact the goals, and what did her students learn?
2. In what ways, if any, did the classical Christian context influence her approach to teaching of World War II?

Context and Participants

Classical Christian schools offer a unique culture and context within which to study the teaching and learning of history. Classical Christian schools that are members of the Association of Classical Christian Schools (ACCS) under the Wilson model teach students "how to think and what to know" (Jain, 2015, p. 2). Schools are divided into the trivium disciplines of grammar, logic, and rhetoric which "is believed to provide the academic rigor and love of learning these communities want for their children" (Scouller, 2012, p. 70). In the grammar stage (grades K-6), the focus of the present study, students are expected to "learn the grammar of a subject before dialogue can take place in it" as grammar school children are viewed as more readily able to memorize facts than older students (Anderson, 2016, p. 29).

Present throughout each of the trivium disciplines is a focus on biblical truth and the belief that all knowledge comes from God. Very few empirical studies examine classical Christian schools and even fewer are conducted by researchers outside of the classical Christian tradition. These studies collectively highlight students who attend classical Christian schools as more knowledgeable about the biblical narrative and more likely to be committed to the Christian faith (see Anderson, 2016; Dernlan, 2013; Splittgerber, 2010). In one of the few studies on teachers in classical Christian schools, Scouller (2012) found that teachers were able to articulate the school's purpose, but very few were able to discuss how their Christian beliefs impacted their classroom practices. With the growing rise of classical Christian schools, it is important to understand how teacher's understanding of the schools mission influences their teaching and student learning of history to add to the research base on the role of context in history education.

Cristus Academy

Located in a small mid-Atlantic city, Cristus Academy[2] is a classical Christian school that enrolls students in grades K-12. The school, originally located in a church basement, began in 2010 with only seven students. At the time of the study, the school was rapidly growing with over 100 students. Cristus' mission statement promotes an education in which their students will learn truth, beauty, and wisdom to help them serve God in a society that they believe is declining.

The teacher: Miss Gill

The study focused on a sixth-grade class, specifically their time spent on history, taught by Miss Gill. At the time of the study, Miss Gill had been teaching in classical Christian schools for nine years and was just completing her second year of teaching sixth-grade at Cristus Academy. Miss Gill had no formal teacher education course work outside of two classes (history of education and philosophy of education), which she took during her undergraduate work at a small Christian liberal arts college. While taking these courses, Miss Gill decided she wanted to become a teacher, but did not want to work in public schools or go through a teacher preparation program. Instead of enrolling in her college's school of education, Miss Gill began volunteering one day a week at a local classical Christian school that aligned with her "beliefs and values" towards education (Interview). After graduating college, Miss Gill took a job at the school where she volunteered during her undergraduate work. Similar to many teachers at Cristus, Miss Gill does not hold a teaching license nor does she hold a degree in education. In interviews, Miss Gill described her "passionate belief" in classical Christian education (Interview). For example, when she travels somewhere, she researches whether there are classical Christian schools to visit. It was during one such visit that she found Cristus Academy. Without ever

[2] All names are pseudonyms.

applying to work at Cristus, she was offered a job and "through the blessing of God" decided to move (Interview).

Although Miss Gill taught all subjects including Latin, American history, science, and religion, the only posters on the wall came from her history unit. The bulletin board in the back of the classroom featured propaganda posters produced by the U.S. government during World War II. The bulletin board in the front of the room featured the Bible verses Miss Gill based the World War II unit's themes on. The only other posters in the classroom were a large world map, a map of the United States, and a picture of Teddy Roosevelt that a former student had drawn for Miss Gill.

The students

Miss Gill's sixth-grade class was one of the smaller classes at Cristus with only ten students, eight females and two males. Miss Gill described the class as "eager, interested and engaged, but not outstanding academically" with "not a whole lot of A+'s." The students, in Miss Gill's mind, were "not overachievers, but intellectually curious" (Interview). All ten students participated in the study (see Table 1).

Table 1: Student Participants

Name	**Age**	**Self-reported Religious Identity**	**Length of time at Cristus**	**Previous Education (K-5)**
Angela	12	Presbyterian	1.5 years	Homeschool (4 years) Private Christian School (1.5 years)
James	12	Baptist	3 years	Homeschool
Erin	12	Non-denominational Christian	3 years	Public School
Katie	12	Non-denominational Christian	First year	Public school (1 year) Classical Christian

				school in England (5 years)
Georgia	12	Catholic	First Year	Homeschool (3 years) Christian school (3 years)
Gina	12	Non-denominational Christian	3 years	Public School
Maggie	11	Baptist	2 years	Homeschool
Nicole	12	Acts 29	3 years	Public school (3 years) Homeschool (1 year)
Claire	12	Anglican	4 years	Christian school
Mark	13	Non-denominational Christian	First year	Adopted from Bulgaria year prior Public school (Intensive English immersion)

When asked to describe their racial and ethnic identity in interviews, students more closely associated with their Christianity, no matter the denomination, then their race or ethnicity. Some students struggled to understand the question about race and ethnicity. Students and Miss Gill actively and openly discussed their faith in class and during interviews. Despite the varying religious denominations amongst students, they all articulated a commitment to an evangelical belief in the ultimate authority of the Bible.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected for this project during the spring of 2016 and included two semi-structured teacher interviews, 13 observations, and 10 student interviews. (See Appendix A for interview protocols). The semi-structured interviews with the teacher occurred approximately two weeks before the start of the unit and one week after the student focus groups, each lasting about an hour. The first interview focused on the teacher's background and her goals for the

unit, while the second interview asked Miss Gill to reflect on the unit and react to preliminary findings. During the unit, six students had audio-recorders on desks to capture any student-student or student-teacher talk during class that would not have been captured by the video cameras. All student work, including notes, essays, and drawings, were collected, yielding 69 artifacts (See Table 2). In addition to observations during history classes, three observations were conducted in the literature class as the book *Number the Stars,* a story about a young girl during World War II, by Lois Lowry was being studied. Each observation was video-recorded using two cameras positioned throughout the room.

Table 2. Documents Collected

Class	Documents Collected
Class 1	Pre-Assessment
Class 3	Pearl Harbor Drawing
Class 5	Primary Source Worksheet
Class 6	Homefront Drawing
Class 7	D-Day Drawing
Class 8	Truman Atomic Bomb Decision Letter
Class 13	Number the Stars Essay: Who was the best character? Post Assessment Unit Notes (taken throughout the unit on one sheet of paper)

Before the unit began, students took a pre-assessment consisting of 10 questions. A few days after the unit, all 10 students were interviewed, each interview lasting between 20 and 40 minutes. Each student was asked to think aloud while examining the World War II test. Students were asked what they thought the correct answer to the question was, how they knew that information, and whether they remembered the answer or question coming up in class.

Follow up questions were asked to probe student misconceptions and to clarify student answers. All data were transcribed and stored in the qualitative computer software, Dedoose. Data were analyzed using codes based on Miss Gill's goals for the unit, described below in greater detail, that she discussed in her pre unit interview (see Table 3). Miss Gill had three themes for the unit (courage, loyalty, and cruelty) as well as factual objectives for the unit.

Table 3. Codes Based on Miss Gill's Pre-Unit Interview

Code	Sub-code
Themes for the Unit	Courage Loyalty Human Sin/Cruelty
Factual Objectives	Causes (i.e., Invasion of Poland) Results (i.e., division of Germany) Main Leaders (i.e., Hirohito)

However, based on beginning analysis of the pre and post assessment, more codes were needed. Initial coding demonstrated that her test differed from her stated objectives. The pre and post-test was coded based on the content of the specific question (see Table 4). Data was then analyzed using the codes created from both Miss Gill's pre unit interview and her assessment

Table 4. Codes From Pre- and Post- Assessment

Code	Sub-code
Tested Content	Dates (i.e., June 6, 1944) Date Details (i.e., Pearl Harbor) Countries (i.e., Soviet Union,) Holocaust (i.e., concentration camps) Vocabulary (i.e., rationing)

The next round of coding focused on the instructional strategies and resources (i.e., lecture, children's literature) used by Miss Gill. Line by line analysis of student work followed. Data

displays were used for code co-occurrences, with a focus on Miss Gill's three themes for the unit. The following section provides an overview of Miss Gill's unit on World War II.

The Unit

The World War II unit spanned a little over three weeks. Miss Gill had the autonomy to decide how long and often she would teach history. There were no associated high stakes tests or set of standards that Miss Gill was required to teach. Miss Gill could choose both how and what history she taught. Miss Gill acknowledged during the pre-unit interview that she spent more time on history than other subjects because of her passion for the subject. History was taught at least four times a week with classes ranging from 20 minutes to 60 minutes. In contrast, science was taught every few weeks. When Miss Gill announced they would be "returning to their old friend science" when the students returned from lunch, the students started giggling and a few asked when the last time they had a science class was (Observation, Class 7).

Miss Gill approached the World War II unit chronologically and based it on "what we learned about at the end of World War I and how it set the stage." Miss Gill hoped to have the students "engage with as much primary source material as possible." She anticipated having the students "act out the battle of Pearl Harbor similar to how we acted out the Battle of San Juan Hill" and that they would "make victory garden promotional posters or sing songs from the war." Miss Gill approached the World War II assessment as "very straightforward, fill-in-the-blank," but did not believe in multiple-choice questions. She also wanted the students to "think thematically" and included two essays on the post-test. The essays were intended to "not be boring to grade." Miss Gill provided a previous essay question as an example, "Describe Robert E. Lee from the perspective of his horse." For the World War II unit, Miss Gill anticipated the students answering a question along the lines of "Pretend you live in Germany, why are you

tempted to join Adolf Hitler." Miss Gill hoped that these types of essay questions would have students "get in to their minds and think as they would think" (Interview).

Miss Gill had two goals for the unit. Miss Gill's first goal for the unit focused on having the students learn "memorized facts" such as "causes, results, and the main leaders." Miss Gill wanted them to learn the "basic facts" of World War II to be used later in school (Interview). Miss Gill also articulated Christian, biblical themes she wanted the students to understand. Miss Gill saw World War II as the ideal unit to discuss human cruelty, loyalty, and courage. She related each of the themes to a biblical passage and each was displayed on a poster in the front of the room (see Table 5).

Table 5. Miss Gill's Themes for World War II

Theme	Teacher's Description	Bible Passage
Human Cruelty	Sin has corrupted God's plan for loving human fellowship by producing wars, violence, persecution, and hatred. Christians are called to be salt and light in this cruel world.	"The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Genesis: 6:5
Courage	Countless brave men and women faced grave danger in order to protect the defenseless and fight for good.	"Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes before you. He will not leave you or forsake you." Deut. 31:6
Loyalty	People refused to abandon their friends and nations.	"Many a man proclaims his own steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find?" Proverbs 20:6

In reflecting on the unit during the post-unit interview, Miss Gill discussed how she wanted students to see the "virtue of courage and loyalty in the midst of all this suffering and evil." She discussed how she wanted students to "walk away with…those three things and think

of maybe a story that fit with each of them." Miss Gill explained that some historical events, did not represent one particular theme, but instead demonstrated a level of "complexity." For example, Miss Gill discussed the decision to drop the atomic bomb and the "courage it took for them to do that…even though it ended up in cruelty but they were thinking it was being loyal" (Interview).

The three themes were discussed periodically during classroom instruction. Table 6 outlines Miss Gill's daily instruction with the biblical themes that were brought up during class and how the biblical theme was incorporated into the class.

Table 6. Summary of Miss Gill's World War II Unit

Day	**Content**	**Instructional Strategies**	**Biblical Theme**	**How theme was incorporated**
Day 1	The rise of the Axis Powers	Teacher goes over pretest Students act out things T calls out Look at pictures (political cartoons) in history book	None	N/A
Day 2	Holocaust	Lecture Students read history book	Courage, Loyalty, Cruelty	Explanation of themes Ask for examples from daily lecture
Day 3	Events (1939-1941)	Teacher led review Timeline Activity T reads Pearl Harbor book. S draw pictures	Courage, Loyalty, Cruelty	Ask for examples from children's book
Day 4 Literature Class	Beginning of Number the Stars	Read selections "I wonder" statements	Courage, Loyalty	Ask for examples from novel
Day 5	Homefront	Primary Source	None	N/A
Day 6	Allies	Review questions Notes on Allied powers	None	N/A

		Think/pair/share		
Day 7	42-44 D-Day	Review of previous information Think/pair/share of how the war would be different in the Pacific from in Europe. Notes/Timeline Activity 42-44 T reads D-day book. S draw pictures	Courage, Loyalty, Cruelty	Ask for examples from children's book
Day 8	VE Day Atomic bomb	Notes/Timeline Activity end of the war S write letters as if they were P. Truman deciding whether or not to drop the bomb	None	N/A
Day 9	Atomic bomb	Review of previous information Lecture about Atomic Bomb and aftermath S write speeches as if they were P. Truman's grandchild	None	N/A
Day 10 Part of Literature Class	Number the Stars Results of the War	Read Number the Stars Students read their essays Review Bee Notes on the Marshall Plan and the results of the war (UN etc.)	Courage, Loyalty, Cruelty	Students find examples from novel
Day 11 Part of Literature Class	End of Number the Stars Internment Camps GI Bill	Call and Response questions Lecture Examine iconic images of the end of the war	None	N/A
Class 12	Review	Jeopardy Game based on the three themes Making connections b/w sticky notes	Courage, Loyalty, Cruelty	Jeopardy categories

Class 13	Test Day		Courage, Loyalty, Cruelty	Essay #2 on test

Findings

Although Miss Gill stated in her post-unit interview that the three biblical themes "kept coming up," observations indicated that the biblical themes were briefly addressed in 6 out of the 12 instructional days. The biblical themes did not appear to be the focus of class and Miss Gill was not observed providing instructional time for in-depth discussion of the biblical themes or a critical examination of the themes. The biblical themes were discussed during brief conversations at the end of class when Miss Gill would ask students to provide examples of courage, loyalty, and cruelty. These conversations would frequently occur after the class read pieces of children's literature related to the day's topic and not after using other pedagogical techniques, such as examining primary sources or lecturing on a historical topic. While Miss Gill did provide corresponding scripture quotes to the themes, she did not discuss them in depth and did not clarify any definitions or religious implications. Analysis of student essays revealed student misconceptions about the biblical themes. In addition, these essay responses also revealed several moral and ethical questions about the student perspectives of World War II.

Introduction of Biblical Themes

Observations indicated that Miss Gill incorporated the themes of courage, loyalty, and cruelty into 6 out of the 12 instructional days. Five of these days Miss Gill introduced new history content and the sixth day consisted of a review day before the assessment. She introduced the biblical themes on the second day of the unit when the content focused on the Holocaust. Miss Gill introduced the themes as a way for the students to understand the larger World War II narrative because the class just had "a few weeks to study World War II" and she

felt they could have "spent all of sixth grade learning about World War II" (Observation, Class 2). Miss Gill then passed out a worksheet that listed the themes as well as a scripture verse and her explanation of the themes. Under each theme, Miss Gill left a blank space for students to write down examples of the theme throughout the unit. Outside this introduction, Miss Gill did not reference the handout the rest of the unit.

When introducing the themes to students on the second day of the unit, Miss Gill spent time on human cruelty because she stated that it "was the main focus for the day" (Observation, Class 2). She told the students they would discuss courage and loyalty in more depth later in the unit. When introducing cruelty, Miss Gill asked the students "when you think of cruel what comes to your mind?" Student responses included child and animal abusers (Angela), Scrooge (Mark), and the Wallaces from *Roll of Thunder Hear my Cry* (Maggie). Miss Gill agreed with all these answers and defined cruelty as "someone taking advantage of or harming other people on purpose." When asked why cruelty exists in the world, James responded, "it's all possible because of sin." At this point, Miss Gill briefly discussed the religious nature of cruelty saying

> where the Lord says look I made this world and it was supposed to be so beautiful but people have chosen to worship themselves instead of worship me. And when you're worshiping yourselves that often means you do whatever you need to do in order to make yourself have what you want (Observation, Class 2)

This brief discussion was the only time during the unit when Miss Gill made direct connections between a biblical theme and religious teachings. Students did not ask questions and Miss Gill did not check for comprehension. After this brief seven-minute introduction to cruelty, Miss Gill moved into her lesson on the Holocaust. During the rest of the unit, Miss Gill was not observed introducing the other two biblical themes in this manner.

While the biblical themes were tied to a scripture verse, Miss Gill only explicitly related cruelty to religious teachings. The biblical themes of courage and loyalty were not verbally introduced in class and Miss Gill assumed students understood the terms. She did not provide definitions of the terms that would provide a basis for discussion about the biblical themes throughout the unit.

Teaching the Biblical Themes

Miss Gill discussed the biblical themes six times throughout the unit; five out of the six times came after the class had read pieces of children's literature. In their literature class (Class 4, 10, and 11), the students were reading *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry, a fictional novel about a young girl during World War II. As the class finished reading chapters aloud in class, Miss Gill would ask the students where they saw examples of courage, loyalty, and cruelty. She followed this same pattern when reading two books by R. Conrad Stein (1977), *The Story of the U.S.S. Arizona* and *The Story of D-Day*. For example, after reading *The Story of D-Day* and having the students draw pictures of what was happening in the book, Miss Gill asked the students to give "one example of loyalty from *The Story of D-Day*." Only one student, James, responded, and stated that he saw "loyalty when General Roosevelt leads…he realizes they were attacking the wrong beach and he [didn't] want to move the battle to the other spot." Miss Gill briefly acknowledged James' answer by saying "good" and then asked, "where do we see courage." Erin responded that she saw courage when "I don't remember what his name was, but he said there was only two types of men, one where men are dead and one that men fought to die." Miss Gill replied that it "was impressive" that "the men actually followed him" into battle. The responses were typical of how Miss Gill responded to student answers about the biblical themes. Her responses were usually a sentence or less before turning to her next question.

However, during the question and answer session after reading *The Story of D-Day*, Miss Gill gave a more detailed reply to one student's answer. Mark said that "there was cruelty when the Germans start firing at people in parachutes and they can't do anything about it." In one of the few times Miss Gill responded to a student answer, she stated that:

> it seems like the Germans are the only cruel ones but the cruelty of human sin is what makes both sides to the point that they are fighting each other. If someone is invading your country in a way, you would fight back. But the cruelty that we would need all this barbed wire and the invasion of hundreds of thousands of men shows us the cruelty of human hearts that we would be able to even come up with a war of this magnitude. What about also that Hitler made Mr. Rommel drink poison? For trying to overthrow him. We see that even when he was trying to do something good to get rid of this evil dictator, that he's forced to die. Um we'll talk a little more about D-Day another time. The next time we have history, but please put your name on your D-Day comic… [and] then scurry down to music. (Observation, Class 7)

In this quotation, rather than indicate whether Mark was right or wrong Miss Gill highlighted the cruelty of war, ignoring any potential for a just war. It is not clear what the students learned from the example as she did not ask any follow up questions to check for understanding. Miss Gill did not relate the student answer or follow-up comments to the Bible quote on the handout or other religious teachings. The class ended very abruptly as she dismissed the students to their music class. Contrary to Miss Gill's statement, the class did not talk more about D-Day in their next history class.

On the second to last day of the unit, courage, loyalty, and cruelty were used as organizational tools during the review game the class played. At the beginning of class, Miss

Gill had the students write names and events from World War II on post-it notes. The students then placed the post-it notes on the white board according to whether they thought the term related to courage, loyalty, or cruelty. Miss Gill highlighted 3 out of 40 terms (Adolf Hitler, Charles de Gaulle, and Normandy Beach) and asked the students follow up questions. For example, when discussing Adolf Hitler, Miss Gill noticed "it seems as though everyone wanted to say something about Adolf Hitler and no one put him under loyalty. But I think if I were German, and it was 1938, I would certainly put Hitler right here *[points to loyalty]*. Why?" Katie responded "Hitler said he was going to build up Germany and they would become great." Claire stated that Hitler could "go into any of these categories" even though "America and the Allies did not appreciate him." Miss Gill affirmed their answers saying "Hitler was loyal, but to a bad cause. He was loyal to Germany, which is a fine cause, but the way that he put out that loyalty was cruel by making it a cause against the Jewish people." Here, Miss Gill was describing the complexity of the biblical themes. She pointed to how being loyal could be a negative characteristic, but did not stop to check for student comprehension of loyalty or Adolf Hitler. It became unclear as to what loyalty means and if loyalty is a virtue. Instead she moved directly to the next term, asking "why would Charles de Gaulle be a good choice in courage?"

After the brief exchanges about Hitler, de Gaulle, and Normandy, the class began playing a factual review game where courage, loyalty, and cruelty were the categories they could choose from. When it was a student's turn, they would choose one of the biblical themes. Miss Gill would then pick a post-it note from the board, such as Pearl Harbor. The students would have to respond in the form of a question that corresponded to the term Miss Gill had chosen. Before the game began, Nicole asked if they needed to "explain why they are courageous, cruel, or loyal." Miss Gill responded by saying that would be "too weird to ask in a question and get the other

information in. We'll try it next round. Okay go." However, there was not a second round of the review game and the biblical themes were not discussed further. The game continued as a review of factual knowledge from the unit. For example, James choose courage for his category and was given the answer Allies. His question was "what was the group that consisted of the United States, Russia, Great Britain, and France." Miss Gill then asked a follow up question, asking for the "proper name for Russia at this time," but did not ask why the Allies were considered courageous. James responded the USSR and the game passed to the next student. Throughout the game, Miss Gill would ask for greater factual detail in a student's answer. For instance, Nicole chose cruelty as her theme and Miss Gill chose atomic bomb as the clue. Nicole's question asked "What was the atom splitting, deadly bomb, that killed many many people?" Miss Gill responded that the answer didn't give "the most pertinent information." The question then moved to the next student, James, who responded "what was the…split atom bomb that destroyed a lot of Japan and killed many people." Miss Gill said there was "an important fact that needs to be known" and the question moved to the third student, Katie. Katie's answer included more detail, asking "what is a deadly bomb that was dropped in 1945 in Japan that led to VJ-day?" Miss Gill reminded the students that they needed to "know where it happened and that it brought the end of the war…and you need to know both cities. What are the two cities?" Miss Gill paused to have the students respond, checking for comprehension of the factual details, before moving on to the next review question. Despite using the biblical themes as categories, the emphasis of the review game was on recitation of historical facts.

Throughout the unit, Miss Gill would frequently pause and check for comprehension of factual information, but rarely would ask follow up questions related to conceptual knowledge of the biblical themes. While she did ask the students for examples of the biblical themes after

reading pieces of children's literature, she did not ensure students had a clear understanding of the terms. Periodically throughout the unit, Miss Gill attempted to push student understanding of themes by discussing how various historical events could be any of the three themes. With these brief and infrequent conversations, such as the conversation about Hitler on the review day, Miss Gill seemed to want to promote the complexity of the biblical themes and how they interacted. However, Miss Gill did the thinking for the students and never ensured that the students were reaching and understanding her goals for the unit. Miss Gill's focus remained on student recitation of factual knowledge.

The Biblical Themes in Student Writing

Throughout the unit, the students wrote two longer writing assignments as well as two short answer questions on the summative assessment. In one of the longer writing assignments, Miss Gill had the students write a speech as though they were Harry Truman addressing the War Department explaining whether or not he would decide to drop the atomic bomb. Two students submitted their essays. It is unclear what happened to the other eight students' essays. One student who did submit the essay, Nicole, directly addressed cruelty in her writing. The other student, Georgia, did not mention cruelty in her writing. Nicole wrote that dropping the atomic bomb was necessary, but she thought there were other necessary steps to take before using it. Writing as President Truman, Nicole wrote "I will attack once more and if they do not surrender I will have to use your deadly atomic bomb." While she "hoped it would not come to that…cruelty must come to an end no matter how we may have to do it." In Nicole's writing, the Japanese kamikaze pilots were cruel and the atomic bomb was a way to end cruelty. Nicole continued that using other forms of bombs was not what President Truman "had in mind to force [the Japanese] to surrender." There was no discussion of how dropping the atomic bomb was a

cruel act. Dropping the bomb was "necessary" for the Americans to win the war and therefore not an act of cruelty.

The second writing assignment during the unit asked students who they believed was the best character in *Number the Stars.* Students were not instructed to include the biblical themes in their reasoning, but all students except one decided to include references to either courage or loyalty as to why a character should be considered the best. Seven students discussed how a character displayed courage. Nicole chose Peter Nielson, a character who was a member of the Dutch resistance, as the best character because he was an "honorable hero" who showed courage because "he rescued many Jews from the Nazis and helped them arrive to safety in Sweden." Six students used a character's loyalty as a reason they were the best. For example, Claire wrote that Ellen Rosen, the protagonist's best friend, was the best character because "she displayed quite a bit of loyalty to her faith." Ellen was loyal to her faith because "she wore the Star of David around her neck every day." The students used courage and loyalty as a virtue that made the characters "the best." Some students read their essay aloud to the class, but there was no discussion or follow up questions about the biblical themes or the rationales for the best character.

In addition to the Truman and *Number the Stars* writing assignments, the students wrote about the biblical themes on their summative assessment. Miss Gill's assessment consisted of 15 short answer, 11 matching, and 2 essay questions. In one of the essay questions, Miss Gill asked the students "how have the themes of World War II impacted you or influenced your perspective?" The students were also asked to provide three lessons with a specific example for each. Three of the students (Erin, Georgia, and Mark) did not mention cruelty, loyalty, and courage. Instead they wrote about other lessons that they had learned from the unit. For

example, Georgia wrote "the war taught me to care for what I have. During the war, many people had nothing. People wanted to give their items to soldiers." Despite not discussing any of the biblical themes, Georgia received full credit for her answer from Miss Gill. Miss Gill did not make any comments on Georgia's essay or make any indication that Georgia did not include any of the biblical themes. Five students discussed at least two of the biblical themes and provided examples for each. For instance, Maggie wrote how "one way that the themes have influenced my perspective is seeing how courageous the young men fighting were…for instance, the young man mentioned at the end of *Number the Stars* who was willing to die for his country." Of these students, only one student, Gina, made direct connections between the themes and her Christian beliefs. Gina knew "people could be cruel to people who don't have the same religion as them, but when I heard about Hitler and the Nazis I knew it could be worse…It makes me realize how gracious God is when we Christians sin and God will save us." While Gina did mention all three themes and make connections to her faith, she made a troubling connection to loyalty. Gina believed that "if I was a person in Germany in World War II I would want to be loyal to my country and follow Hitler." Gina wrote "even if someone is bad and has an influence on people they will still be loyal and follow." For Gina, being loyal meant following a country's leader without question. Gina conflated the idea of leader and country, saying that Hitler and Germany were the same thing. Gina never questioned whether one could be loyal to Germany without being loyal to Hitler. Miss Gill did not comment on this essay besides thanking Gina "for connecting [the themes] to her faith."

Miss Gill provided the students many opportunities to write about the biblical themes, but she never directly assigned an essay on the biblical themes. While the essay question on the summative assessment could directly relate to the biblical themes, Miss Gill accepted answers

that did not include courage, loyalty, or cruelty. When assessing student answers, Miss Gill did not write any comments about the student answers outside of correcting their grammar and spelling. Occasionally Miss Gill would write positive comments such as "yes" or in the case of Gina, thanking her for making connections to her faith. Many students struggled to articulate the complexity of the biblical themes in their writing and Miss Gill did not provide feedback to push their understanding to a deeper level.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings highlight the complexity of teaching and learning history in the context of a classical Christian school. Miss Gill had clear biblical goals for her students to learn during the unit on World War II; however the large majority of time during the unit was spent on teaching the facts of history. While high-stakes testing is often seen as the major factor in teacher's dividing history into bite size pieces of factual information, Miss Gill appeared to be interacting with and influenced by the context of classical Christian schools and her personal understanding of what history is. Even though there was no associated high stakes test or state-sponsored curriculum, Miss Gill emphasized factual knowledge more than conceptual or procedural knowledge of history. This approach did align with the classical Christian schools desire to have students at this age learn factual information. However, many students struggled to make connections between the facts and the biblical themes. It seemed that although Miss Gill intended to use three biblical themes to help students understand larger issues in World War II and she would periodically bring the biblical themes up throughout the unit, she did not engage the students in critical thinking of the biblical themes or check for student understanding of the themes. The brief conversations Miss Gill had with the students about the biblical themes only served to confuse the students about the themes themselves as well as historical facts. Acting as

the gatekeeper, Miss Gill chose "what to emphasize within a particular unit [and] whether to encourage students' questions (and how to respond to them)" (Barton & Avery, 2016, p. 1012).

For Miss Gill, the emphasis remained on recitation of factual information evidenced by what the students learned during the unit. Students were able to correctly answer Miss Gill's factual questions and she continuously asked questions to ensure students were retaining the information. However, she did not ask follow-up questions about the biblical themes and while she articulated these themes as her primary learning goals for the unit, they remained an afterthought in the enactment of the unit. On the summative assessment, students did not have to include the biblical themes on an essay in order to receive full credit. When students did write about the themes they made some made troubling comments. Gina's short answer on the summative assessment mirrors the language used by Miss Gill throughout the unit. For Gina, being loyal to Hitler was the same as blind obedience. Gina did not engage in critical thinking of what it means to be loyal and Miss Gill did not encourage her to do so. For Gina, and Miss Gill, loyalty justified Germans actions and removed any culpability from them. Despite reading *Number the Stars*, where many characters are members of the Dutch Resistance, resistance and standing up against Hitler was never mentioned in class as an example of being loyal.

The findings of this study demonstrate two areas for further consideration. First, teachers need to understand the impact their language has on student learning and to be intentional with their language. If teachers at classical Christian schools are to "cultivate wisdom and virtue," as Veith and Kern (2001) argue, they need to be clear as to what those virtues are. Students walked away with unclear definitions of courage, loyalty, and cruelty that shaped their historical narrative of World War II. Student narratives of World War II contained "singular factual statements" but "the meaning of the account may still be highly contestable" (Lee, 2005, p. 59).

Without a clear definition for the terms and how they relate to the narrative of World War II, students created historical accounts that differed from what is accepted by the general American public. The themes were intended as concepts for which the students to organize and focus their learning of World War II. Without ensuring students fully understand concepts, teachers allow students to make their own structure from which they understand history. Furthermore, as World War II has become a dominant myth in society and used to understand national identity, further questions arise about what students in classical Christian schools are learning and how teachers are infusing the mission of the school into the subject areas in their classroom. Miss Gill could articulate how the mission of the school influenced her teaching, but the findings show her enactment of the mission through the three themes did not serve to deepen student understanding of their religion.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocols

Teacher Interview #1 (Pre-Unit) Topics:
Background:

- How long have you been teaching? How long have you been teaching this particular course?
- What is your educational background?
- Describe the class—what are the students like?

Learning Targets & Assessment of Student Learning

- What do you hope to accomplish during this unit of study?
- How do you approach planning for this unit?
- In this unit, what are your objectives or learning targets?
- What is your approach to assessment?
- How would you describe your teaching style?
- At the end of the unit, what do you want students to know, understand and be able to do?

Teacher Interview #2 (Post-Unit) Topics:
Reflection

- How did the unit go?
- Did you meet your learning targets? How do you know?
- Let's talk through the assessment data. What jumps out at you? How do you think students learned [identify topics]?

Individual Student Interview #1
Adapted from Nuthall "Project on Learning: Classroom Recording & Data Analysis"
http://www.nuthalltrust.org.nz/index.shtml

Show each student an unanswered copy of the test. For each item in the test ask each student to describe the correct answer, to recall how he or she had learned that answer, and to recall any experiences or activities that were relevant to learning the answer.

Ask student: "Please say anything that comes to mind as you answered the questions, any mental pictures, feelings or thoughts. Think aloud, so that you can talk as you are thinking, so that I can understand."

Prompts for each item:

a) How did you learn (know) that?
b) Where did you learn that?
c) Do you remember that coming up in class?
d) Was there anything said or done about that in class?
e) Where would you have seen (heard about) that?
f) Did you know that before the unit?
g) Did you learn that during class?

Individual Student Interview #2
Adapted from Nuthall "Project on Learning: Classroom Recording & Data Analysis"
http://www.nuthalltrust.org.nz/index.shtml

Show students 3-5 brief excerpts from classroom video. Ask students: "Please say anything that comes to mind as you see this video from your class. Think aloud, so that you can talk as you are thinking, so that I can understand."

Prompts:

a) What do you notice?
b) What were you thinking and feeling at that time?
c) Do you remember that happening up in class?
d) Did you know [topic in video] before the unit?
e) Did you learn that during class?

BOOKS, AND SONGS, AND LECTURES, OH MY!

STUDENT MEMORIES AND USE OF CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES IN THEIR LEARNING OF HISTORY

Abstract

Using activity theory as a framework, this case study examined how students at a classical Christian school described their learning and how they associated their classroom experiences with what they learned. It employed qualitative research methods (observation, interview, document analysis) to examine what pedagogical tools (Grossman et al., 2000) a teacher used and how students made sense of the tools and related their learning to these tools. Data analysis indicated that students learned some factual information from the unit, but struggled with a deep understanding of the content, which was associated with pedagogical tools the teacher used in the classroom.

Keywords: student learning, activity theory, religious schools

According to results from a recent Pew survey, there is an undeniable growing political polarization among Americans (Pew Research Center, 2017). One needs to only briefly glance at the news or social media to see examples of this political polarization played everyday between politicians and the American populace alike. As part of the political polarization of America, there is also a growing religious divide amongst Americans. While the overall percentage of Americans who identify as religious is declining, Americans who do identify as religious are as devout, if not more, than previous decades (Pew Research Center, 2015). Many of these highly religious Americans are choosing to send their children to private religious schools. As of 2015, 4.6 million students in America attend private religious schools (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2018), with a growing percentage of students attending conservative Christian schools (Council for American Private Education, 2013). Christian schools are not required to adhere to state standards and provide schools and teachers with greater flexibility to align the education provided to students with the school's religious affiliation and beliefs (Groome, 1998). This raises questions about what students are learning and experiencing in Christian schools and has interesting implications for history education in particular as historian Margaret MacMillan (2009) has argued that "so much of our identity is both shaped by and bound up with our history" and cautions that determining "which version we want, or on what we want to remember and to forget, can become so politically charged" (p. 49).

Typically research on the teaching and learning of history takes place in public schools, with many studies examining how the presence (Au, 2007; Meuwissen, 2013) or absence (Pace, 2011) of accountability measures and/or standards documents may or may not influence how teachers teach history (Grant & Salinas, 2008). And while there is a growing body of research on both what history and how history is taught in pubic schools (Cuban, 2016; van Hover, Hicks,

Stoddard, & Lisanti, 2010), little is known about what teaching and learning history looks like in private religious schools. A small body of research examines teaching and learning history in fundamental Christian schools. The term 'fundamental' presumes theological certainty in the second-coming of Christ and an "opposition to modernist attempts to bring Christianity into line with modern thought" (Marsden, 1980, p. 4), which has the potential to limit the democratic discourse in the classroom (Hess & McAvoy, 2015), an often cited aim for history education (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Castro & Knowles, 2017). Using collective memory as a framework, Simone Schweber (Schweber, 2006a, 2006b; Schweber & Irwin, 2003) has extensively studied students' historical understanding of a particular historical event, the Holocaust, in a fundamentalist Christian school. Collectively, Schweber's studies demonstrate the influence of the school's religious context on how a teacher enacts a unit on the Holocaust and how students' "faith frames their historical imaginations" (Schweber & Irwin, 2003, p. 1710). Based on their findings and the dearth of research in religious schools, Schweber and Irwin argue that more research needs "to investigate fully the ways that religious communities, fundamentalist and nonfundamentalist, teach and with what effects" (p. 1715). Classical Christian schools, the context for this particular study, are similar to the school that Schweber studied in their emphasis on biblical truths and teachings (Leithart, 2008; Wilkins, 2008). In addition, classical Christian schools have a distinct pedagogical and philosophical approach to teaching and learning that has the potential to influence a teacher's decision making, both content and pedagogy, in the classroom and what students learn and remember.

Given the growing balkanization of our society, it is becoming increasingly important to know what history and how students are learning in history classrooms across all school contexts. While Grant (2003) recognizes that it is impossible to establish a "direct and causal

connection" between teaching and learning, two "richly complex activities" (p. 58), understanding how students make sense of experiences in history classroom can provide important insight into what classroom learning activities support (or hinder) the development of historical knowledge and understandings (van Hover & Hicks, 2017). This study addresses Schweber and Irwin's (2003) call for more research in religious schools, by exploring how students represent what they learned and remembered from a specific history unit, World War II, and what relationship exists between how their teacher teaches, the context in which they are learning, and what they learned.

Literature Review

Over the past few decades, researchers in history education have called for best practice in history education that "runs counter to the 'traditional' history classroom" (Fogo, 2014, p. 153) where the teacher and textbook dominate the classroom. Best practice in history education has students actively involved in the classroom as they answer "compelling questions" (National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS], 2013, p. 17) and "engage in conceptual analysis, evaluate diverse sources, discuss and debate competing claims, and construct evidence-based narratives" (Fogo, 2014, p. 153). Best practice in history education views history as a discipline that is constructed, contested, and fluid. Based on this understanding of the nature of history, VanSledright and Limón (2006) divide historical knowledge into three different types of knowledge: first-order factual knowledge, second-order conceptual knowledge (concepts such as power, cause and effect), and procedural knowledge (such as source attribution and corroboration). Teachers who use best practice in their classroom help students "build deep first-order ideas and understandings," by "possessing reasonably sophisticated procedural and second-order ideas" (p. 548). By doing this, teachers create a classroom in which students have the

opportunity to learn all three types of knowledge conjointly, recognizing the importance of factual, conceptual, and procedural knowledge.

The literature—both empirical and descriptive—is replete with cases or examples of how to integrate source analysis and inquiry into classroom instruction in order to teach historical thinking skills and leverage best practice into the history classroom (Bain, 2006; Gradwell, 2006; Grant & Gradwell, 2010; Monte-Sano, 2011; VanSledright, 2011). The teachers in these cases all have a clear, deep understanding of history that is "understood in the context of a conceptual framework" (Ashby, Lee, & Shemilt, 2005, p. 80). Yet the majority of public school classrooms remain spaces where history is presented and assessed as a set of facts to be memorized (Cuban, 2016). This is particularly true in accountability contexts where teachers face pressure from standards-best settings with associated high-stakes tests (Grant & Salinas, 2008). Research has shown how teachers in these contexts rely on teacher-centered lessons (Gayler, 2005), covering a great deal of content with little attention to history best practice. Many teachers in these settings spend class time for specific test-taking strategies (Jennings & Bearak, 2014) or rely on reading and answering questions from textbooks, which limits the time spent on second-order conceptual and procedural knowledge in history (Pace, 2011). While the research on how high-stakes tests have influenced teachers and their use of best practice in classrooms is growing, we know far less about how best practice is, or is not, used in private religious schools and what students learn in these various school contexts, public or private.

Student Learning and Student Understanding of History

An important distinction for this study is between student understanding and student learning of history. There is a growing body of research on how students understand the discipline of history (Monte-Sano & Reisman, 2015) and how they engage in acts of procedural

knowledge, often referred to as historical thinking (Wineburg, 2001). Some of these studies trace student understanding of historical time during elementary school (Barton, 1995; Barton & Levstik, 1996); however, at the secondary school level, particularly the high school level, research tends to focus more on the narratives students use to understand history. Research has indicated numerous factors that influence students' understanding of history and historical narratives including their race and ethnicity (Epstein, 2009), gender (Colley, 2015), nation of origin (Wertsch, 2000), and religion (Barton, 2005; Mosborg, 2002), among other factors. The research on student understanding of history typically takes a phenomenological approach and is situated outside the context of what students are learning in the classroom. Many studies utilize a task-based interview where students are asked to think aloud as they sort various images or sources (e.g. Barton & Levstik, 1996; Barton & McCully, 2010; Wineburg, 2001). While this highlights how students think and understand the discipline of history, it does little to examine how they learn history in a classroom context. As van Hover and Hicks (2017) argued, student learning and student thinking are distinct concepts and while research regarding both is necessary, more research should explore "student *learning* in classrooms, in context" (emphasis in original, p. 271). Separating these "two veins of research activities…will provide a more refined understanding about how students learn and how students think" (p. 282).

Teaching and Learning in Classroom Contexts

In the 1980s and 1990s, Graham Nuthall and Adrienne Alton-Lee began research in New Zealand studying how learning is constructed between teachers and students as well as amongst students (see Alton-Lee & Nuthall, 1990; Nuthall 1996, 1999; Nuthall & Alton-Lee, 1993, 1995). Nuthall (1999) found that student learning "results from the connections students make between newly evolving knowledge constructs and their background knowledge" (p. 335).

Similar to findings from other studies (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000; Lee, 2005; Lee & Shemilt, 2004), Nuthall (2000) argued learning was not always based on what was explicitly taught by the teacher, but instead based on students' "participation in those classroom activities in which students are required to recall and use their previous knowledge and experiences" (p. 248). While Nuthall believed in constructivist theories of learning, he also promoted "tighter structuring and scaffolding of students' activities" (Brophy, 2006, p. 536). Ultimately, student learning is a "dynamic interactive system" (Nuthall, 2000, p. 210) where "students' access to and participation in the learning activities of the classroom are structured by their negotiation of social status" (p. 211). Nuthall and Alton-Lee (1995) pushed for more research that is contextualized in classrooms arguing, "it is important in the evaluation and improvement of teaching and school practice that educators understand how students' classroom experiences relate to their learning of new knowledge and skills" (p. 186).

Recently, there has been more research on student learning of history, situated within a classroom context. Reisman's (2012, 2015) intervention studies examined classrooms where teachers were assigned to use a prescribed curriculum or continue with their regular instruction. In order to assess student learning, Resiman created assessments that focused on students' historical thinking, reading comprehension, transfer of historical thinking, and factual knowledge. She found that students in the treatment classroom performed better on the assessment than the students in the control classrooms. Monte-Sano (2008, 2010, 2011) examined how instruction impacts student learning as evidenced through student writing. In order to assess student learning, Monte-Sano gave students a writing assignment, designed by researchers, before and after a U.S. history course. Monte-Sano found that when students that were taught how to engage with multiple sources from differing perspectives to address a

historical problem, the students tended to improve their argumentative writing even if the teacher did not directly address argumentative writing. While both Reisman and Monte-Sano used intervention research, they represent the beginnings of history education research in America that "disentangles research on student thinking from classroom-based research on student learning" (van Hover & Hicks, 2017, p. 282).

Teaching and Learning History in Religious Schools

Despite the growing calls for more research that explores teaching and learning history in classroom contexts (Barton & Avery, 2016; van Hover & Hicks, 2017), there is a dearth of research on teaching and learning history in religious schools, with the exception of Schweber's research on teaching and learning the Holocaust in various school contexts. Schweber paid particular attention to the intersection between the written curriculum, how the teacher enacts the curriculum, and the student experiences of the curriculum all within the context of a classroom (Schweber, 2004). In Schweber's (2006a) comparison of a Holocaust unit taught at a fundamental Christian school and a public school, she argued that the "narrative divergences were reflective of their schooling contexts" and could "embody political critiques of both Christian and public schools" (p. 27). It was the context and purpose of the schools that drove how the teachers enacted a unit on the Holocaust and ultimately the historical narrative that students used to understand the Holocaust.

This particular study is situated within a classical Christian school. Classical Christian schools trace their roots to Dorothy Sayers' (1947) essay, *The Lost Tools of Learning*, in which she argues for a return "to the point at which education began to lose sight of its true object, towards the end of the Middle Ages" (p. 3). Sayers, and proponents of classical Christian schools, believe that progressive education teaches students more subjects, but questions whether

or not students are "more learned" (Sayers, 1947; Wilkins, 2008). Pastor Steve Wilkins (2008) argues that classical Christian schools require more than just teaching Latin, but should instead "equip our children with the tools of learning and exposing them to the 'classics'…and doing all this in the context of a self-conscious submission to the infallible revelation given us in the Bible" (p. 2). Wilkins continues that an education, "if it is devoid of the fear of the Lord, is the foundation of folly not wisdom" (p. 3). While not affiliated with one specific Christian denomination, classical Christian schools are "fervently evangelical" (Leithart, 2008, p. 11).

Classical Christian schools began to gain prominence in the 1990s, starting with Douglas Wilson, the founder of the Association of Classical Christian Schools (ACCS), and the popularity of the Logos School in Idaho. The Logos School was the founding school of the ACCS and over the past 20 years, the membership of ACCS has grown to over 234 schools, enrolling over 40,000 students. In order to ensure students are receiving an education that is both classical and Christian, classical Christian schools are divided into three stages of learning: grammar, logic, and rhetoric. The focus of each phase is designed to teach students "how to think" (Jain, 2015, p. 2) using instructional strategies and resources proponents of classical Christian schools believe is developmentally appropriate for each phase (Anderson, 2016). This particular study focuses on the grammar stage of classical Christian schools. The grammar phase, typically students from kindergarten through fifth or sixth grade, focuses on the memorization of facts because "observation and memory are the faculties most lively at this period" (Sayers, 1947, p. 12). It is necessary for students to "learn the grammar of a subject before dialogue can take place in it" (Anderson, 2016, p. 29). History, at the grammar stage, should emphasize memorization of dates "to which one can peg all later historical knowledge" (Sayers, 1947, p. 12). It is during the grammar stage that students learn the "fundamental rules

of each subject" (Spencer, 1996, p. 92). According to the educational approach of classical Christian schools, students need to be able to *retain* this information because "attempting to go on to the other levels of the Trivium without this foundation is also disastrous" (Wilson, 1996, p. 132). During the logic and rhetoric stages, students use the factual knowledge that they learned in the grammar stage to create and present arguments. This places a great emphasis on student learning and retention of factual information over time. In addition, classical Christian schools place a particular emphasis on historical knowledge that is rooted in the bible because "heinous sins are traced to a neglect of historical knowledge" (Spencer, 1996, p. 158). This approach to history education is incongruent with the literature on best practice in history education and raises questions about what students are learning in history classrooms in classical Christian schools. With a rise in the number of students attending classical Christian schools, it becomes increasingly important to understand the relationship between the context in which students are learning, how the teacher teaches, and what the students learn.

Theoretical Framework

Informed by the work of Vygotsky (1978), sociocultural theory provides a way to understand the situated nature of teaching and learning. Teachers and students cannot operate independently of a context and it is in the interactional nature of teachers, students, and the context, that student learning occurs. There is an assumption within sociocultural theory that the individual and "the environment are parts of a complex system that co-creates consciousness through human participation in activities" (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010, p. 15). In activity theory, part of the broad term sociocultural theory, Engeström et al. (1999) pays particular attention to "object-oriented, collective, and culturally mediated human activity" (p. 9). Student learning, or the "object," is not an individual activity, but a "collective" activity, which involves participation

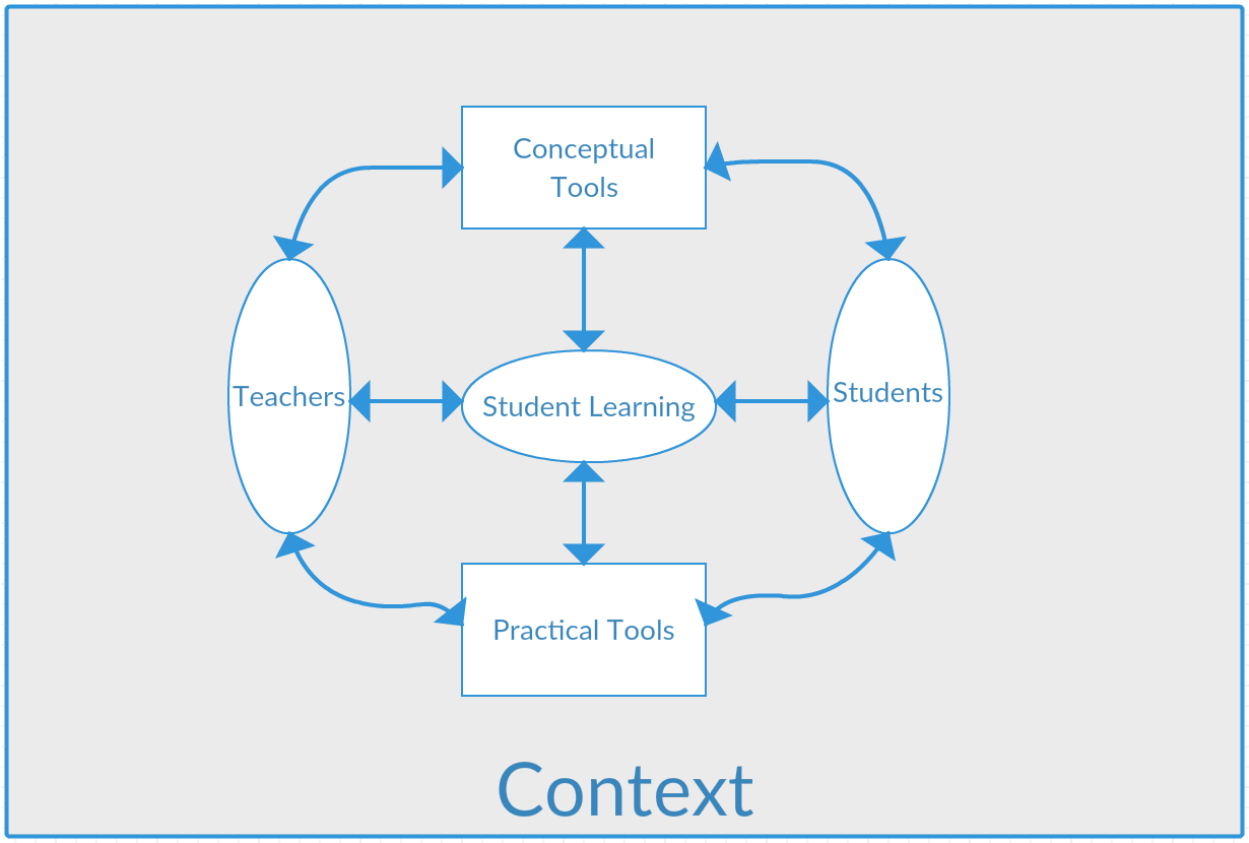
from teachers and other students in the classroom as well as engagement with the situational context.

Activity theory emphasizes how actors within a system appropriate and use tools in which to achieve their object. Grossman et al. (2000) identify two different sets of pedagogical tools for teaching and learning, conceptual and practical tools. Conceptual tools, as defined by Grossman et al., are "principles, frameworks, and ideas about teaching and learning" (p. 633). They refer to the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of education, such as constructivism or big idea teaching (Grant & Gradwell, 2010). As examples for this particular study, classical Christian schools are driven by a "Copernican revolution which comes to see Scripture as the sun" (Wilson, 1996, p. 14) and an explicit rejection of egalitarian and pragmatic education (Leithart, 2008; Wilson, 1996). These conceptual tools are not always evident in a classroom, but frequently act as rationales for the use of practical tools by teachers and students.

Practical tools serve a more "local and immediate utility" (Grossman et al. 2000, p. 634) as teachers make day-to-day decisions as to what instructional resources, such as children's literature and textbooks, to use or what instructional strategy, such as group work or lecture, to employ (Bauml, 2016). Students interpret the conceptual and practical tools brought into the classroom by the teacher and they bring their own conceptual and practical tools into the classroom as well. Students enter the classroom with "preconceptions about how the world works" (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000, p. 14) and conceptual understandings of what history is that they have developed based on their previous experiences in history classrooms as well as such experiences as movies they have seen (Stoddard, 2012; Wineburg, 2000), talking with their family members (Barton, 1995), or interacting with groups outside of a school context (Barton & McCully, 2012)—what Wineburg, Mosborg, Porat, and Duncan (2007) refer to as the

"cultural curriculum." Students use these conceptual and practical tools to make sense of their classroom experiences, which are in turn shaped by the conceptual and practical tools used by the teacher (see Figure 1). This has the potential to lead to contradictions and tensions which Kuutti (1996) argues "manifest themselves as problems, ruptures, breakdowns, clashes" (p. 34) between and among actors in an activity system.

Figure 1. Activity Theory Heuristic



For the purposes of this study, I primarily focus my analysis on the practical tools that a teacher uses in the classroom at a classical Christian school and how students make sense of and respond to these tools. I also consider the extent to which these practical tools are consistent with conceptual tools that are emphasized at this school and in scholarship about social studies education. While conceptual and practical tools should ideally align and support each other, practical tools are more easily accessible and observable to teachers and students in the

classroom. Conceptual tools cannot be ignored, as they are part of the activity system, and are ever present throughout this study although they are less explicit than the practical tools used by the teacher and students.

Methods

Using case study methodology (Yin, 2009), I studied how students in a classical Christian school made sense of their teacher's instruction and how they related their learning to her instructional strategies and resources. An embedded case study approach (Yin, 2009) allowed me to examine how the context interacted with the pedagogical tools used by both teachers and students to improve students' learning and remembering of World War II. In this study, I examined the following research questions:

1. What do students learn and remember from a unit on World War II, both immediately after its conclusion and nine months after its conclusion?
    a. What instructional strategies and resources (practical tools) do students use to represent what they learned and remembered from a unit?
2. In what ways does the context of the school interact with the classroom experiences designed by the teacher and what the students learned and remembered from their classroom experiences?

It is necessary to define student learning for this study as researchers rely on different frameworks (i.e., behaviorism, social constructivism) to define what learning is (van Hover & Hicks, 2017). In addition, researchers use different forms of assessment to measure student learning of history including student writing (Monte-Sano, 2008), discussion (Reisman, 2015), and multiple-choice tests (Heafner & Fitchett, 2015). For the purposes of this study, student

learning will be based on teacher's "intended outcomes" (Nuthall, 1999)—that is learning and remembering will be measured based on students' performance on teacher created assessments.

Context

The school and the teacher

Cristus Academy[3], the site of the current study, is a classical Christian school in the mid-Atlantic region. Cristus opened in 2010 with only seven students. As of 2016, it had over a hundred students enrolled in grades K-12. Cristus Academy hopes to provide students with an education that is centered on truth, beauty, and wisdom that will help students learn to serve God and fix a society that Cristus believes is in decline. Miss Gill, the teacher, had worked in a classical Christian school for nine years, the last two teaching sixth-grade at Cristus. Despite attending public school herself, Miss Gill had no desire to teach in public schools. She attended a small Christian liberal arts college for her undergraduate where she majored in history. During her undergraduate work, Miss Gill took two education courses, philosophy and history of education, but decided to not pursue a degree in education. Instead, she began volunteering at a local classical Christian school. It was at this school that Miss Gill developed her "passionate belief" in classical Christian education. Whenever she travels to a new city, she looks to see if there is a nearby classical Christian school. It was during one such visit that she found Cristus Academy and was offered a job without ever applying for one.

The students

The sixth grade class, at the time of the unit, was one of the smaller classes at Cristus Academy, eight females and two males. Miss Gill described the class as "eager, interested, and engaged, but not outstanding academically" with "not a whole lot of A+'s" (Interview). Table 1

[3] All names are pseudonyms

overviews the self-reported student demographics. The students were asked about racial and ethnic identities during interviews, but struggled to answer the question. Many students were unclear as to what was being asked of them. Interviews and interactions with the students during observations indicate that two students (Mark and Erin) were adopted. Erin was adopted from China when she was a baby. Mark was adopted within the past year and a half from Bulgaria. Both students openly talked about their adoption, but did not discuss issues of race or their racial identity. Students closely related to their religious identity as they described their religious beliefs and openly talked about their attendance at various churches.

Table 1. Student Participants

Name	**Age**	**Self-reported Religious Identity**	**Length of time at Cristus**	**Previous Education (K-5)**
Angela	12	Presbyterian	1.5 years	Homeschool (4 years) Private Christian School (1.5 years)
James	12	Baptist	3 years	Homeschool
Erin	12	Non-denominational Christian	3 years	Public School
Katie	12	Non-denominational Christian	First year	Public school (1 year) Classical Christian school in England (5 years)
Georgia	12	Catholic	First Year	Homeschool (3 years) Christian school (3 years)
Gina	12	Non-denominational Christian	3 years	Public School
Maggie	11	Baptist	2 years	Homeschool
Nicole	12	Acts 29	3 years	Public school (3 years) Homeschool (1 year)

Claire	12	Anglican	4 years	Christian school
Mark	13	Non-denominational Christian	First year	Adopted from Bulgaria year prior Public school (Intensive English immersion)

Data Collection

The current study is part of a larger study on student learning of history, adapted from Nuthall and Alton-Lee's (1993) research on student learning. Data were collected in two phases during the spring of 2016 and the winter of 2017. The first phase of data collection included two semi-structured teacher interviews, 13 classroom observations, 10 student semi-structured interviews, and two focus group interviews. All documents (i.e., study notes, worksheets, essays etc.) were collected as well. Each of the observed class periods was video recorded with two cameras positioned throughout the classroom. In addition, six students had audio-recorders on their desks to capture any student-teacher or student-student talk during class not caught by the video cameras or the observer taking field notes. Prior to the unit, nine students were given a pre-assessment, created by the teacher, pseudonym Miss Gill, which aligned with her goals for the unit. One student (Georgia) who missed the first week of the unit did not take the pre-assessment. At the end of the unit students were given the post-assessment, consisting of the same 10 questions from the pre-assessment as well as additional questions Miss Gill wrote. Two weeks after the unit, the students were interviewed and asked to participate in a think aloud of the World War II assessment, the immediate post-assessment. See Appendix A for the full interview protocol. Students were asked what they thought the correct answer to the questions was, how they knew that was the answer, and whether they remember the information coming up in class. Follow-up questions probed student misconceptions and sought clarification of any of

their answers. Two weeks after the first interview, eight of the original ten participants participated in a focus group interview. Two students (James and Mark) were absent during the last two weeks of school and were unable to participate in the focus group. During this interview, students were asked follow up questions based on general misconceptions during the individual interviews. Students then watched two clips from the unit and were asked to reflect on what they remembered from the class.

The second phase of data collection occurred in the winter of 2017, nine months after the conclusion of the unit. Eight students were interviewed again following the same protocol as the individual interview from the first phase of data collection. The eight students represent the entire class that attended Cristus Academy for sixth and seventh grade. Two students (Angela and Mark) were not part of the seventh grade at Cristus Academy. Angela had left Cristus Academy all together and Mark had repeated the sixth grade to help him develop stronger language skills. During the long-term assessment/interview, students were asked what they remembered from the World War II unit, both content and classroom experiences, in general before being given a blank copy of the assessment. Students attempted to answer each of the assessment questions. After each question, they were asked where they learned the information and if they remembered the topic coming up in class. Finally, students were asked what they believed the most important information about World War II was. Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed. All data (both phase one and two), with the exception of audio and video recordings, were stored and analyzed using the qualitative computer software Dedoose. Due to file size, the audio and video recordings were stored in a password protected computer file.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began with determining what students remembered from the World War II unit. I analyzed student results from the pre-assessment, immediate post-assessment, and long-term post-assessment. Using codes developed by Nuthall and Alton-Lee (1993), each question for participants was coded as Already Known, Not Learned, Learned and Forgotten, and Learned and Remembered (see Table 2).

Table 2. Definitions of Codes (Nuthall & Alton-Lee, 1993)

Code	Definition
Already known	Answered correctly at time of pre-assessment
Not Learned	Wrong on pre- and both post-assessments
Learned and Forgotten	Wrong on pre-assessment, correct on immediate post-assessment, wrong on long-term post-assessment
Learned and Remembered	Wrong on pre-assessment and correct on both post-assessments

Based off of initial coding of the data, two codes, Already Known and Forgotten and Learned After Unit, were added to the coding schema (see Table 3).

Table 3. Additional Codes

Code	Definition
Already Known and Forgotten	Correct on pre-assessment and immediate post-assessment, wrong on long-term post-assessment
Learned After Unit	Wrong on pre-assessment and immediate post-assessment, correct on long-term post-assessment

A felt difficulty from preliminary data analysis of the first phase is Miss Gill's grading of the pre- and post-assessment. Miss Gill accepted or marked answers correct that are historically inaccurate. For example, one question asked students when V-E Day was. Miss Gill frequently accepted May 2, 1945, despite V-E Day actually being May 8, 1945. For the purposes of this study, answers will be marked correct if they are historically accurate, even when it goes against Miss Gill's grading. Miss Gill's preferred approach to tests was to create fill in the blank and short answer tests. This added a level of subjectivity to some of the answers; particularly questions that asked students to explain an event, such as D-Day. See Appendix B for the complete pre- and post- assessment.

After preliminary coding was complete, I then created item files based on each assessment question. Item files consisted of excerpts of data and analysis of the assessment questions (i.e., Learned and Forgotten, Learned and Remembered etc.). Each item file was given a code based on the content of the question (i.e., Allied countries, V-E Day). Data were then coded for when and how often the concept or fact was discussed in class. These data excerpts were then added to the corresponding item file. Item files were analyzed for the amount of time spent on the topic, the instructional strategies and resources Miss Gill used in the classroom associated with the topic (see Table 4), and any emerging patterns of students' learning and remembering of World War II.

Table 4. Content by Day and Instructional Approach

Tested Content	**Number of Test Items**	**Days Taught**	**Instructional Approach**	**Days Reviewed**
Invasion of Poland	1	Class 3	History Song Timeline	*Class 11*
Dates of WW2	1	Class 3	History Song Timeline	

Axis Powers	1	Class 1	Lecture History Book Timeline	Class 3 Class 6 Class 7 Class 9 Class 10 *Class 11*
Allied Powers	1	Class 6	History Song Lecture	Class 7 Class 9 Class 10 *Class 11*
Holocaust	2	Class 2 Class 4	History Song Lecture Images *Number the Stars* History Book	Class 3 Class 10
D-Day	2	Class 7	Lecture Picture Book & Drawing	Class 8 Class 10 *Class 11*
V.E. Day	2	Class 8 Class 11	Lecture *Number the Stars* History Book	
Pearl Harbor	2	Class 3	Lecture Picture Book & Drawing	Class 5 Class 6 Class 7 Class 9 Class 10 *Class 11*
Rationing	1	Class 5 Class 6	Lecture/Stories Primary Source Activity	

Based on the instructional approaches in the item files, student interviews were coded for their memories of classroom experiences and when the students remember interacting with the content, particularly what instructional strategy or resource they associated with the content. These codes were developed based on the instruction observed during the unit (i.e. lecture,

primary source, textbook). Some codes were added during this round of coding due to "false memories" of the students. In these instances, students tied their learning to events that did not happen during the unit. An additional code was also added for any outside source of learning, such as a book or movie that the student personally read or viewed.

The Unit

Because Miss Gill taught all subjects, outside of art, music, and physical education, to her students, she had the flexibility to decide how long and how often the students would be in history class. History was taught three or four times a week, lasting between 35 to 60 minutes a lesson. The World War II unit, the unit of study, lasted just over three weeks and was the second to last unit of the year. During the pre-unit interview, Miss Gill described her goals for the unit and how she planned to structure the unit. She had two main goals, one historical and one religious for the unit. She wanted her students to learn the "basic facts" of World War II, which to Miss Gill was the "causes, results, and the main leaders" of the war (interview). In addition to the factual knowledge Miss Gill wanted the students to gain, she also wanted the students to be able to understand three biblical themes (courage, loyalty, and human cruelty) and how the themes were evidenced in World War II (See Table 5). Miss Gill saw the three themes as a way to discuss Christian virtues with her students throughout the unit and for them to see examples of these virtues in history.

Table 5. Miss Gill's Themes for World War II

Theme	**Teacher's Description**	**Bible Passage**
Human Cruelty	Sin has corrupted God's plan for loving human fellowship by producing wars, violence, persecution, and hatred. Christians are called to be salt and light in this cruel world.	"The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Genesis: 6:5

Courage	Countless brave men and women faced grave danger in order to protect the defenseless and fight for good.	"Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes before you. He will not leave you or forsake you." Deut. 31:6
Loyalty	People refused to abandon their friends and nations.	"Many a man proclaims his own steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find?" Proverbs 20:6

During the unit, Miss Gill used a variety of practical tools in her classroom; however, most of the instructional strategies were teacher-centered activities (i.e. lecture, read-aloud) (see Table 6).

Table 6. Summary of Miss Gill's World War II unit

Day	**Content**	**Instructional Strategies**
Day 1	The rise of the Axis Powers	Teacher goes over pretest Students act out things T calls out Look at pictures (political cartoons) in history book
Day 2	Holocaust	Lecture Images from history textbook
Day 3	Events (1939-1941)	Silent Bee Timeline Activity T reads Pearl Harbor book. S draw pictures
Day 4 Literature Class	Beginning of Number the Stars	Read selections "I wonder" statements
Day 5	Homefront	Primary Source: Think/pair/share
Day 6	Allies	Silent Bee Notes on Allied powers Images from history textbook
Day 7	42-44	Review of previous information

	D-Day	Think/pair/share of how the war would be different in the Pacific from in Europe. Notes/Timeline Activity 42-44 T reads D-day book. S draw pictures
Day 8	VE Day Atomic bomb	Notes/Timeline Activity end of the war S write letters as if they were P. Truman deciding whether or not to drop the bomb
Day 9	Atomic bomb	Silent Bee Lecture about Atomic Bomb and aftermath S write speeches as if they were P. Truman's grandchild
Day 10 Part of Literature Class	Number the Stars Results of the War	Read Number the Stars Students read essays aloud Silent Bee Notes on the Marshall Plan and the results of the war (UN etc.)
Day 11 Part of Literature Class	End of Number the Stars Internment Camps GI Bill	Silent Bee Lecture Images from history textbook
Class 12	Review	Jeopardy Game based on the three themes Making connections b/w sticky notes
Class 13	Test Day	

The class followed the same structure for most days. Each class began with a recitation of a poem, such as Robert Frosts' "The Road Not Taken," (observation, class 6) or a Christian prayer, such as the Nicene Creed in both Latin and English (observation, class 8). Miss Gill would then begin a review of the previous day's lesson by asking factual recall questions, frequently playing a game called "Silent Bee." In this game, the students would stand in a circle and toss a stuffed bee back and forth. The thrower would ask a question, such as "who was the leader of Italy" (Observation, class 3), from a previous lesson. Who ever caught the stuffed bee would answer the question before asking another student a question. After a few minutes of

"Silent Bee," Miss Gill would transition into the new content for the day, typically through lecturing. During her lectures, Miss Gill would either write important information on the board or add an event to the class timeline. Above the whiteboard in the front of the classroom, Miss Gill would pin a paper star with an event and a date (e.g. Pearl Harbor, Dec. 7, 1941). As she pinned each star on the timeline, she would tell the students what she considered important information about the event. For example, while pinning the star that read, "Hitler invades Poland, Sept. 1, 1939," Miss Gill told the students that Hitler's goal was to "expand the empire and Poland was next door and not as hard to capture as other places." Miss Gill then moved onto the next event "Hitler makes pact with USSR, 1939" (observation, class 3). At the beginning of the unit, the students were given a blank timeline to fill in as she discussed events, but Miss Gill did not check the students' notes and many students did not take any notes.

After the lecture or timeline activity, the class would begin their activity for the day. With the exception of the class on life on the home front (class 5), the activity was always teacher-led. During the home front class, students were given a primary source, such as a ration card, and asked to answer three questions about the source: 1) What is the purpose? 2) How does it present the War? 3) Do you see any possible challenges? Students answered the questions on an index card and shared their primary source with a neighbor. During every other class period, Miss Gill led the activities and the students were recipients of information she presented. Frequently, she would use various books and images to emphasize points from her lecture. Miss Gill used *A History of US: War, Peace, and All that Jazz, 1918-1945* by Joy Hakim (2006) as the main textbook for the course. While not a textbook written for classical Christian schools, it is a recommended textbook from a classical Christian publisher, Veritas Press, because of it's ability to "draw in students" (Veritas Press, n.d.). The students would look

at the pictures in the book, as Miss Gill would tell the students details about the images they were looking at.

In addition to the main textbook, Miss Gill used three pieces of children's literature to illustrate different historical events. In order to help align her English class and history class, Miss Gill taught Lois Lowry's (1989) *Number the Stars*, about a young girl growing up in Denmark during World War II and the Nazi occupation. Most of the observed instruction of *Number the Stars* had the students read aloud or act out different scenes from the novel (Observation, Class 4, 10). Miss Gill also used two pieces of children's literature by R. Conrad Stein (1977), *The Story of the U.S.S. Arizona* and *The Story of D-Day*. In each lesson, Miss Gill read the book aloud and then had students draw images that summarized the timeline of events. The books were used as the sole source of decontextualized factual information relating to the specific event.

Towards the end of the unit, the students engaged in various creative writing assignments. Miss Gill provided them with two prompts about President Truman's decision to drop the atomic bomb. One prompt asked them write a letter as if they were President Truman debating whether or not to drop the atomic bomb and the other prompt asked the students to pretend they were President Truman's grandchild commemorating the dropping of the atomic bomb 70 years later. On the second to last day of the unit, the students played a review game where Miss Gill would give them the answer (i.e., Pearl Harbor, D-Day) and the students would have to write a question. After playing the review game, each student was given a sticky note with an important term. They walked around the classroom and had to make connections between the term on their sticky note and the term on a classmate's sticky note.

When reflecting on the unit, Miss Gill "thought that the students seemed engaged," said that she felt that the students "understood the sides and the purposes of what was going on" and that most students had "earned As and Bs" and "understood what I thought was most important for them to understand." The most important outcome from the unit, for Miss Gill, was that students "seemed to actually care about [World War II]." She felt the students had enjoyed reading *Number the Stars* in English class because it "helped them feel the gravity of what was going on at the time." When asked to reflect on her instructional decisions, Miss Gill discussed the children's books she read to the students throughout the unit. She believed these showed the students "different perspectives" and was pleased with the "specificity" in students work related to the children's books. Miss Gill's definition of "different perspectives" was how different people were represented in the book (i.e. a navy pilot, a Japanese admiral) rather than understanding historical perspectives of the various forces that impact a person's actions (Seixas & Morton, 2012).

One thing that Miss Gill wanted to improve upon the next time she taught this unit was the "actual battles and battle strategies and battle maps because I don't understand those as well." She worried that some of the students who "might be really interested in things like tactics" weren't getting that from her class (post unit interview). Despite this perceived weakness, overall, Miss Gill stated that she was pleased with how the unit was implemented and the student's performance on the post-assessment.

Student Performance on Assessments

Data analysis highlighted that student scores improved from the pre-assessment to the immediate post-assessment (See Table 7). Not surprisingly, student scores decreased from the immediate post-assessment to the long-term post-assessment, with the exception of one student

Maggie. Maggie's scores remained constant; however, she correctly answered different questions on the immediate post-assessment to the long-term post-assessment. The student test scores provide a general overview of how students performed on the test and general trends in their learning. Looking at the test scores, it is clear that students learned, but it is less clear what students learned and if students learned similar information.

Table 7. Student Scores

Student	**Pre-Assessment**	**Immediate Post-Assessment**	**Long-Term Post-Assessment**
Angela	10/17 (69%)	15/17 (88%)	N/A *left Cristus Academy*
James	8/17 (47%)	13/17 (76%)	10/17 (59%)
Erin	6/17 (35%)	16/17 (94%)	10/17 (59%)
Katie	9/17 (53%)	14/17 (82%)	11/17 (65%)
Georgia	*Missed first week of class*	7/17 (41%)	5/17 (29%)
Gina	6/17 (35%)	14/17 (82%)	10/17 (59%)
Maggie	8/17 (47%)	12/17 (71%)	12/17 (71%)
Nicole	7/17 (41%)	13/17 (76%)	9/17 (53%)
Claire	5/17 (29%)	15/17 (88%)	9/17 (53%)
Mark	4/17 (24%)	11/17 (65%)	N/A *repeated sixth grade*

Similar to findings from previous studies (Brophy, 2006), students knew approximately 40% of information before the unit began (See Table 8). However, the students had clear factual misconceptions coming into the unit. Many of these misconceptions were cleared up during the unit, however some of them persisted throughout the unit and some misconceptions returned nine

months after the unit's completion. During the unit, students learned a little less than 50% of the assessment items. However, they forgot about half of what they learned nine months after the unit's conclusion. Two students (Nicole and Katie) answered questions incorrectly on the long-term assessment that they answered correctly on the pre-assessment and the immediate post-assessment. While Table 8 provides a general overview of student scores, analysis of individual questions and students highlight the individuality of student learning and their memories of classroom experience.

Table 8. Items by Learned Code

Student	Already Known	Not Learned	Learned and Forgotten	Learned and Remembered	Already Known and Forgotten	Learned After Unit	Percent Learned[a]
Claire	5	3	5	4	0	0	53%
Erin	5	1	6	5	0	0	65%
Nicole	6	2	5	2	1	1	47%
Katie	7	2	2	4	2	0	35%
James	7	4	3	3	0	0	35%
Maggie	8	2	3	4	0	0	41%
Gina	6	2	5	4	0	0	53%
Georgia[b]							
	37%	14%	24%	22%	2%	<1%	47%

[a]Percent Learned refers to items either learned and forgotten and learned and remembered.
[b]Georgia missed the first week of the unit and did not take the pre-assessment. Thus coding of her answers was different from the class.

Some students reverted back to their prior knowledge on the long-term post-assessment, as exemplified by the code "Learned and Forgotten." This was particularly evident with questions pertaining to historical dates and the question on who fought for the Allied Powers.

There were three questions that asked for specific dates (month, day, year) of events (Pearl Harbor, D-Day, and V-E Day). Classical Christian schools emphasize having students learn dates of historical events during the grammar phase of schooling. These dates are necessary in order for students to organize information and create arguments during the logic and rhetoric phases of schooling. Despite the emphasis and importance of dates, none of the students were able to correctly answer any of these questions on the long-term assessment.

Another common struggle amongst students was to identify which countries fought for the Allied Powers (Question 4). For the most part, students were able to correctly answer Great Britain and the United States; however, only one student (Erin) was able to name the Soviet Union as an Allied Power on the long-term post-assessment. Five students (Claire, Katie, Maggie, Gina, Georgia) correctly answered this question during the immediate post-assessment, but could not answer it during the long-term post-assessment. Two of these students (Claire and Gina) identified the Soviet Union as fighting for the Axis Powers. Claire knew that the Soviet Union was part of the Axis because "[Stalin] was evil" and Miss Gill had shown the class an image of him and told the class "he was a really bad person" (long-term interview). For Claire, the United States could not be on the same side as the Soviet Union because the United States would always fight on the side of good. Students struggled to associate the Allied countries with a classroom experience. During the unit, Miss Gill had lectured on the Allied countries for 10 minutes, writing the countries and the names of the leaders on the board. However, most students had no memory of Miss Gill discussing who the Allied countries were.

While it is clear that students learned some factual information during the unit, misconceptions persisted and other misconceptions developed during and after the unit. Some misconceptions that students articulated about historical events were tied to Miss Gill's

instruction and use of practical tools. Further analysis of student interviews highlights the disruptions in the activity system between Miss Gill's instructional strategies and how students made sense of her instructional strategies.

Memories of Classroom Experiences

Similar to the variability in what content students remembered, students also remembered a variety of classroom experiences, as evidenced by instructional resources and strategies they described. Between the immediate post-assessment and long-term post-assessment interviews, student variability in their memories of instructional strategies and resources increased (see Table 9 and Table 10). During the immediate interview, students had similar memories of their classroom experiences, which closely aligned with observation data from the unit. However, by the long-term interviews, not only did some students have false memories from the unit, they individually recalled different instructional resources and strategies. It is not clear why students remembered and learned from various resources and strategies, but there were emerging patterns of which practical tools students recalled and how they associated the tools with their learning.

Table 9. Student Memories from Immediate Interview/Post-Assessment

	History Song	**Silent Bee**	**Pearl Harbor Book**	**History Book**	**D-Day Book**	**Teacher Talking**	**Primary Source**	**Map**	***Number the Stars***	**No associated activity**	**Outside of class**
WW2 Dates	8										1(1)
Poland	5			1				1		(1)	2
Axis Countries		4	1		1	1				3	1(1)
Allied Countries		1				2				4(1)	2
Pearl Harbor			8							1	(1)
Concentration Camps				5		4(1)			1	(1)	1
# of Jews killed	10										
D-Day				1	3(3)	1				1(1)	
V.E. Day				1		4			2	2(1)	
Rationing							6			2(1)	1

During Phase 1, there were ten students enrolled in the class. Some rows will add to more then ten because students remembered multiple classroom experiences related to the content.
Numbers in parentheses are numbers of students who answered incorrectly. Numbers outside of parentheses are numbers of students who answered correctly. 2(3) is two students who answered correctly and 3 students who answered incorrectly.

Table 10. Student Memories from Long-Term Interview/Post-Assessment

	History Song	Silent Bee	Pearl Harbor Book	History Book	D-Day Book	Teacher Talking	Primary Source	Map	*Number the Stars*	No associated activity	Outside of class	False Memory
WW2 Dates	7									(1)		
Poland	2			2		(1)		2		1(1)	1	1
Axis Countries		(2)		1(1)		1(1)				1(1)		2
Allied Countries	1	1(1)				(1)				2(2)	(1)	1(1)
Pearl Harbor			6			1(1)				1		
Concentration Camps				5		3(1)			2	(1)	(1)	
# of Jews killed	6(2)	(1)				1						
D-Day		(1)		(1)	1(3)	(2)						(1)
V.E. Day				1(1)		3(2)				1(1)	1(1)	
Rationing				(1)		1	4(2)				1	(1)

During Phase 2, there were eight students enrolled in the class. Some rows will add to more then eight because students remembered multiple classroom experiences related to the content.
Numbers in parentheses are numbers of students who answered incorrectly. Numbers outside of parentheses are numbers of students who answered correctly. 2(3) is two students who answered correctly and 3 students who answered incorrectly.

Students recalled a variety of instructional strategies and resources that they used to answer assessment questions; however, there were questions where students used similar classroom memories to describe their learning. One such question was Question 5 on the assessment, which asked students why the U.S. declared war on Japan. During the immediate post-assessment, eight of the ten students remembered reading a book in class about Pearl Harbor. By the long-term post-assessment, six out of the eight students still remembered this experience. James was the only student who remembered the book on the immediate post-assessment who no longer remembered reading the book during the long-term post-assessment. Katie remembered that the United States entered World War II because "Japan bombed Pearl Harbor and killed the people." When asked how she knew this, she remembered reading "a book on the bombings of Pearl Harbor and it was one of the perspectives of a soldier on one of the boats." She also remembered drawing pictures while Miss Gill read the book. While Katie couldn't remember the exact book, she did remember that it was a picture book and not a "big book" (long-term interview). On the long-term post-assessment, Georgia was the only student who was not able to correctly answer this question and did not associate this question with the picture book, most likely because Georgia had missed the first week of the unit and was absent on this particular day. Despite being absent on the day Pearl Harbor was originally covered, Georgia "remembered Miss Gill talking about why they declared war on them but I can't remember what she said." Georgia struggled to answer the question finally saying, "Japan, they were like friends or connected with allies and then um Japan did something or wouldn't do something" (long-term interview).

As mentioned previously, Miss Gill used three different pieces of children's literature throughout the unit. While students remembered the narrative from the Pearl Harbor book, they

struggled to remember the historical narrative from the D-Day book. On the long-term post-assessment, only four students remembered reading the book, but only one student (Katie) correctly answered the question. The other three students remembered random bits of information from the book that did not fit into a larger narrative. Gina, for example, was able to remember specific anecdotes from the book, but described the larger narrative incorrectly by defining D-Day as when "Hitler invaded France." She remembered the book, but only that "it said something about submarines and different colored lights." Despite spending the majority of a class period reading the D-Day book (class 7), four students did not remember reading the book and instead recalled other classroom experiences, or none at all. Claire knew that D-Day "had something with navy ships" but couldn't remember a specific classroom experience related to it or any more information about the larger historical narrative. She guessed that she knew about D-Day "probably from our history book" but could not remember any specific instances in the class when they had learned about D-Day (long-term interview).

In a few instances, three (James, Nicole, Maggie) students remembered classroom experiences that did not occur, what I refer to as false memories. These three students could vividly describe an event they believed happened during the World War II unit and tie it to how they knew the answer; although, analysis of the observation data revealed that these events did not happen. Most of the time students who had false memories were able to correctly answer the question, but their memory of the classroom experience did not align with field notes and observations from the unit. For example, Maggie remembered which countries, with the exception of the USSR, belonged to the Allied Powers and which belonged to the Axis. She was able to keep the countries straight because she could picture a map in her head and remembered that they had colored the map different colors for the different sides, red for Axis and blue for

Allied. Maggie remembered that Miss Gill "had it up on the board as a reminder when we were studying" (long-term interview). As a second reference point for how she remembered the Axis and Allied countries, Maggie described a classroom experience where each student was assigned a different country. "We would stand up and we had the Axis Powers and the Allied Powers…when we allied with each other we would come in a circle and hold hands or however we did that." Maggie believed that she had been assigned Italy, but was not positive. She did remember that Katie, a student who had recently moved from England, was assigned to represent England. After referring back to the field notes and videos, neither of these activities occurred during the unit. The only role-playing during the unit occurred during the review where students were assigned a person (i.e., Adolf Hitler, FDR) and had to state how the people were related (i.e., Hitler and FDR fought on opposite sides). It is possible that the activities the students remembered occurred during other units, most likely a unit on World War I. While this is a possibility, in this particular example, Maggie clearly remembered it happening during the World War II unit.

The History Song

Analysis of the students' memories of classroom experiences highlighted that all students relied on what they called "the history song" to answer at least one assessment question. Classical Christian schooling uses a variety of songs during the grammar phase in order to help students learn factual information (Anderson, 2016). The songs used by Cristus Academy come from Veritas Press and are written specifically for classical Christian schools and classical Christian homeschools. As part of the Veritas curriculum, students learn a variety of songs in each discipline. For example, during this particular unit, the students were learning a song about

the countries in Africa during their geography class. While the "Africa song" was used for one specific unit, the history song covered the content of the entire year.

Students frequently relied on the "history song" as how they remembered information from the unit. Miss Gill had taught the song to the students at the beginning of the year and it covered various events in American history. Throughout the year, the class played "the trampoline game," which was similar to hot potato. Miss Gill would play the history song and the students would walk in a circle and jump on a small trampoline when they came to it. If Miss Gill pushed stop while the student was on the trampoline, they had to say or sing the next lyric in the history song. If the student answered correctly, they continued as part of the game. If they answered incorrectly, the student was eliminated from the game. The students played the game frequently throughout the year as it covered content from the beginning of the course (the presidency of James Monroe) to the end of the course (the Cold War). For the unit on World War II, two stanzas related directly to content on the assessment.

29. Came World War II,

Hitler invaded Poland,

he persecuted six million Jews.

The biggest war was raging.

From 1939 to 1945,

the US fought with the Allied troops.

Victory was on their side.

Based off of the lyrics, the students should have been able to answer three complete questions and part of one question correctly on the assessment (See Table 11).

Table 11. Assessment Questions Related to the History Song

Question 1: The dates for World War II are _____ to _____.
Question 2: Hitler's invasion of the country of _____began World War II.
Question 4: Three countries in the Allied Powers [were] _____, _____, and _____.
Question 7: Hitler had _____ (how many) Jews killed.

All of the students stated that they learned information for at least one question from the history song. On the pre-assessment, many of the students were able to correctly answer questions related to the history song. While students were not asked on the pre-assessment how they knew the correct answer, with such high numbers of students already knowing the answer (four to six students), it is fair to assume that the history song played some role in their answers on the pre-assessment. Gina stated that the history song was "probably my main source for most of these questions" (immediate interview).

Seven of the eight students stated during their long-term interview that they remembered the dates for World War II from the history song. All seven of these students correctly answered question one. One student, Erin, did not remember the dates of World War II and was unsure if they talked about it in class stating "I completely forget all of this." However, Erin later cited the history song as to how she answered Question 7. When asked how she knew six million Jews were persecuted, Erin answered very succinctly saying, "in our history songs it was one of the things. He persecuted six million Jews. So yea. That's about it" (long-term interview).

Students were able to remember some factual information from the history song, but when asked follow up questions students struggled to articulate conceptual knowledge or further details. After answering Question 7, pertaining to the number of Jews killed during World War

II, students were asked how and why Jews were killed during World War II. Most students struggled to articulate any answer during both the immediate and long-term interviews. Georgia simply responded, "I don't know" (immediate interview). If students could voice any answer, it centered around Hitler's cruelty, as Mark said, "Hitler was just bad" (immediate interview). Two students (Claire and Nicole) expressed reasons other than Hitler just did not like Jews. Claire remembered that "Hitler did this because he thought that the Jews were not like holy or righteous people and he wanted a perfect army and a perfect people in Germany" (long-term interview). Nicole also used a religious rationale for the persecution of Jews. She stated that the Nazis "weren't nice to the Jews" because "they didn't like God for number one…and Jews had a lot, they would work hard and I guess [the guards] would like be jealous of that" (long-term interview). Four students were unsure how so many Jews were killed because they associated concentration camps with a loss of identity and hard labor rather than a place where systematic killing took place. Georgia was unsure how Hitler "killed 6 million Jews, but I think it might have been during a war" (long-term interview). Gina defined concentration camps as places where Hitler "made [the Jews] work for no reason; like they built stuff but it wasn't for any purpose" (long-term interview). James focused more on the loss of identity and defined concentration camps as places where "Nazis would put Jews [and] wouldn't call them their actual name and they would like have a tattoo" (long-term interview). Six of the students were able to quickly remember that 6 million Jews were killed on the long-term assessment, but they struggled with further details surrounding the Holocaust. The history song provided a scaffold from which they could recall certain factual information, but their conceptual understandings and larger historical narratives were limited.

Discussion and Conclusion

While a small sample size, the memories of the students in Miss Gill's class provides a snapshot into how students are experiencing classroom instruction in classical Christian schools and what they learn from those experiences. It was clear from student interviews that they enjoyed Miss Gill as a teacher and had fond memories of her classroom nine months after the unit. Some students felt that they were letting Miss Gill down because they struggled to answer the assessment questions. Miss Gill intended for the students to learn the "basic facts" of World War II and the students did learn some of these facts, but misconceptions persisted and some students reverted back to their prior knowledge from before the unit, despite the fact they had learned the facts during the unit. According to the educational philosophy espoused by classical Christian schools (as opposed to schools that don't use the trivium approach to learning), it is important to ensure that students are learning and remembering factual information over periods of time. In this case, both the initial learning and the remembering were flawed, as students walked away with misconceptions in their factual knowledge and an incomplete narrative of World War II. This raises questions as to what happens when students to progress to the logic and rhetoric stages of the trivium without the factual knowledge from the grammar stage.

While Miss Gill used a variety of instructional strategies and resources in the classroom, two of the most powerful practical tools the students used to remember factual information were the history song and some pieces of children's literature. These practical tools that Miss Gill used aligned with the classical Christian school emphasis on memorization and factual information. The history song provided students with a way to quickly recall pieces of discrete information. This is not surprising as multiple disciplines employ songs to support memorization of facts (Ludke, Ferreira, & Overy, 2014). Yet while students could recite some factual

information from the history song, they struggled to articulate a deep understanding of the factual information or how the facts related to larger historical concepts. Miss Gill provided students with a framework to memorize factual information, which is a good thing as factual knowledge is necessary to make sense of the past (Lee, 2005), but the students were not given the opportunity to organize information around second-order conceptual knowledge. Conceptual frameworks require a deep understanding of second-order concepts, such as change, causation, decline, account, that historians "impose on the past in the practice of interpreting and making sense" of historical narratives (VanSledright & Limón, 2006, p. 546). Miss Gill provided the students with a way to remember some factual information of history through the history song, but these facts were disconnected from any conceptual knowledge of history. Without a deep foundation of a conceptual framework, it did not matter that students had an organized way to remember factual knowledge.

Miss Gill's use of children's literature reflects some best practices suggested in content area reading texts (Daniels & Zemelman, 2004), but there were variations in what students remembered from these books. Despite being the same instructional strategy, students learned and remembered historical content in different ways from the various pieces of children's literature. The content and structure of the book mattered—students were able to remember more about Pearl Harbor and it seemed to be related to the named characters and the clear narrative storyline. The book on D-Day did not have characters with name, or a clear narrative, and student understanding of this event appeared to suffer as a result. While students stated that they relied on the D-Day book for how they knew about D-Day, they only remembered random, disconnected pieces of information. Children's literature can serve as a potentially powerful pedagogical tool to engage students in learning history, but a) attention to accuracy of content is

essential; and b) facts need to be tied to a larger second-order concept (e.g., significance) (Seixas & Morton, 2012). Similar to the history song, the pieces of children's literature acted as a framework for students to solely remember factual information without regards to second-order or procedural knowledge. And while this may be aligned with classical Christian schools, serious questions remain over what and how students are learning history.

Miss Gill provided the students with a variety of practical tools for students to learn factual information; however, they did not fit in with the conceptual understandings of what history is. As Lee (2011) argued "while classroom activities really do matter, they can be futile unless they fit into a clear conception of what a history education ought to be, which in turn rests on reflexive knowledge of the nature of history, and on empirical evidence about learning" (p. 63). Miss Gill and classical Christian schools have a different conceptual understanding as to what history is and why students should learn history. And while private religious schools have more freedom to conceptualize history in light of their religion, there still needs to be some attention to second-order conceptual and procedural knowledge and a complete view of what history as a discipline is. Understanding what students learn in religious contexts is particularly important because history has "shaped humans' values, their fears, their aspirations, their loves, and their hatreds" (MacMillan, 2009, p. 8). As the number of students attending classical Christian schools is growing, we need to better understand how these students are learning history and what history they are learning. Future research should explore how teachers are using practical and conceptual tools to enact the mission of classical Christian schools and how that aligns with the research on student learning of history in classroom contexts.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Individual Student Interview #1
Adapted from Nuthall "Project on Learning: Classroom Recording & Data Analysis"
http://www.nuthalltrust.org.nz/index.shtml

Show each student an unanswered copy of the test. For each item in the test ask each student to describe the correct answer, to recall how he or she had learned that answer, and to recall any experiences or activities that were relevant to learning the answer.

Ask student: "Please say anything that comes to mind as you answered the questions, any mental pictures, feelings or thoughts. Think aloud, so that you can talk as you are thinking, so that I can understand."

Prompts for each item:

h) How did you learn (know) that?
i) Where did you learn that?
j) Do you remember that coming up in class?
k) Was there anything said or done about that in class?
l) Where would you have seen (heard about) that?
m) Did you know that before the unit?
n) Did you learn that during class?

Individual Student Interview #2
Adapted from Nuthall "Project on Learning: Classroom Recording & Data Analysis"
http://www.nuthalltrust.org.nz/index.shtml

Show students 3-5 brief excerpts from classroom video. Ask students: "Please say anything that comes to mind as you see this video from your class. Think aloud, so that you can talk as you are thinking, so that I can understand."

Prompts:

f) What do you notice?
g) What were you thinking and feeling at that time?
h) Do you remember that happening up in class?
i) Did you know [topic in video] before the unit?
j) Did you learn that during class?

Appendix B: Pre-Post Assessment

World War II Test

1. The dates for World War II are _____ to _____. (1)
2. Hitler's invasion of the country of _____ began World War II. (1)
3. Three countries in the Axis Powers were _____, _____ and _____. (3)
4. Three countries in the Allied Powers _____, _____ and _____. (3)
5. USA declared war on Japan on _____ because _____ _____. (2)
6. What were concentration camps? (2)

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____
7. Hitler had _____ (how many) Jews killed. (1)
8. When and what was D-Day? (2)

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____
9. When was V-E Day? _____ On that day people _____. (2)
10. Restricting the amount of certain goods that a family could purchase was called _____. (1)

A DBQ IN A MULTIPLE-CHOICE WORLD:

A TALE OF TWO ASSESSMENTS IN A UNIT ON BYZANTIUM

Abstract

This case study was designed to explore how a teacher, Mr. Smith, and students experienced a mandated performance assessment while still preparing for an end of the year high-stakes, multiple-choice assessment. It employed qualitative research methods to examine how the teacher enacted a mandated performance task during a unit on Byzantium and how students described their learning and classroom experiences from the unit. Drawing on Grant's (2003) idea of ambitious teaching and learning of history and work on policy realization (Ball, 2008), analysis of these data indicated that Mr. Smith interpreted and enacted a performance assessment that differed from how district and state policy makers intended. Despite an assessment that the district designed to promote historical thinking skills, students learned primarily factual knowledge.

Keywords: student learning, high-stakes testing, world history

Interviewer: *Did you like [the Document Based Question]?*
Mr. Smith: *No. It was one more test that I didn't get to create.*

Mr. Smith, the teacher quoted above, taught World History I in Granger School District in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Virginia is not a Common Core State and has an accountability system that includes high-stakes testing in history and social science education. Students in Virginia must take (and pass) end-of-course Standards of Learning (SOL) tests in three history courses in high school in order to earn a diploma (van Hover, Hicks, Stoddard & Lisanti, 2010), including World History I, the course for this case study. The students' scores also impact school accreditation. The SOL tests in history use a four option multiple-choice format designed to assess knowledge of first-order narrative ideas of history without any emphasis on higher order thinking (DeWitt et al., 2013). Research has clearly documented the complex and interactional role standards-based settings play in teacher's curricular gate-keeping in Virginia, that teachers make sense of the policy contexts in ways that lead them to focus on rapid coverage of content with the purpose of test preparation (van Hover, Hicks, & Sayeski, 2012; van Hover, Hicks, Washington, & Lisanti, 2016). This approach is directly at odds with best practice research in history which emphasizes teaching students to think historically; to read, write and discuss critically; to engage in historical inquiry; to understand, evaluate and ask critical questions about historical evidence; and to construct historical narratives (e.g., Lee, 2011; Fogo, 2014; Reisman, 2012; Wineburg, 2001).

Recently the state, responding to complaints about overtesting, has removed three high-stakes tests in history and social science courses (at the elementary and middle school levels) and called for increased attention to "authentic individual student growth measures" (Virginia Department of Education, 2014) which many districts have interpreted as performance assessments, or a task "that requires students to construct a response, create a product, or perform

a demonstration" (Arter & McTighe, 2001, p. 180). Within this context, Granger School District has spent intensive time and energy to create performance assessments across grade levels and disciplines. In high school history courses, the performance assessments took the form of document-based questions (DBQs). The DBQ (see, for example, the DBQ project, AP College Board, New York Regents Exams) is a commonly used approach for source integration and historical writing in classrooms (both as an activity and a form of assessment). Initially developed in the 1970s as part of the Advanced Placement (AP) examination, the DBQ is intended to assess how students can analyze 6-8 historical sources (Reisman, 2015) and construct a written response that draws on this analysis as well as students' background knowledge on the topic (Grant, Gradwell, & Cimbricz, 2004). The district required history teachers to implement a certain number of these DBQs over the course of the school year while concurrently preparing students for the high-stakes multiple-choice end-of-course tests.

During a unit that we observed in Mr. Smith's classroom, he enacted one of the district's mandated performance tasks. The picture that Mr. Smith painted of these performance tasks was one of frustration; he has yet another test he has to give his students that he didn't write. Mr. Smith wished he "had more choice in adding more or different documents to it" (interview), but was not allowed by the district to alter the DBQ in any way. Research has shown that teachers often face "issues of control over classroom practices…with teachers' power being increasingly usurped through both policy and curriculum structure" (Au, 2011, p. 38), echoing the sentiment behind Mr. Smith's comments. Our study aims to understand how a teacher made sense of and enacted a DBQ in a complex high stakes testing context and what students learned from classroom experiences assessed both through a low-stakes DBQ and a high-stakes unit test, which mirrored the end-of-course SOL test.

Literature Review

Best Practice and Ambitious Teaching and Learning in History Education

Best practice in history education emphasizes the active role of students in a history classroom where students are "addressing rich historical questions, engaging in conceptual analysis, evaluating diverse sources, discussing and debating competing claims, and constructing evidence based narratives" (Fogo, 2014, p. 153). Research on best practice in history education calls for a vision of history as "evidence-based interpretation in which inquiry is central" (Monte-Sano, 2008, p. 1046) and students engage in historical thinking, or historical reasoning, which Monte-Sano describes as "analyzing evidence, interpreting the meaning of evidence, and using evidence to construct and explain historically plausible accounts" (p. 1046). Grant (2003) offers a different term for 'best practice'—ambitious teaching and learning—that recognizes this vision of history education, but also adds attention to the context of high-stakes and standards-based settings. Rather than viewing history as a set of facts to be memorized (and presented through lecture or textbooks), ambitious teaching and learning seeks for students to view history as constructed, fluid, and contested. Ambitious teaching and learning, Grant (2003) argues, develops:

> (a) when teachers know well their subject matter and see within it the potential to enrich their students' lives; (b) when teachers know their students well, which includes understanding the kinds of lives they lead, how they think about and perceive the world, and that they are capable of far more than they and most others believe; (c) when teachers know how to create the necessary space for themselves and their students in environments that may not appreciate either (p. vi).

These teachers know their students and their contexts well; they are able to create classrooms that "address the needs of their students, encourage them in the classroom, and engage them in rich historical content" (Grant & Gradwell, 2010, p. 11).

Types of Historical Knowledge

Grant's (2003) conception of ambitious teaching and learning emphasizes 'knowing' subject matter and understanding of the nature of history. A number of researchers have explored the epistemology of history, or what it means to "know" history (see Levesque, 2008; Seixas & Morton, 2012; Wineburg, 2001) but our paper draws on widely accepted work by VanSledright and Limón (2006). VanSledright and Limón conceptualize historical knowledge as two knowledge types, substantive and procedural. Substantive knowledge is further divided into first-order narrative ideas of history and second-order conceptual ideas of history. First-order knowledge is the "what of the past" (p. 546) that answers the questions of what happened, where did it happen, who was there, and how does this relate to the larger historical context. While first order knowledge is often times dependent on what course students are in (e.g., British History, World History etc.), second-order conceptual knowledge is transferable across content topics (Lee, 2005). Second-order conceptual knowledge consists of "concepts and ideas that historical investigators impose on the past" (VanSledright & Limón, 2006, p. 546) to make sense of historical events. These ideas, such as power, causation, change over time, and decline, help historians organize first-order knowledge and connect them with the procedural knowledge of doing history. Procedural knowledge is the knowledge historians and students use to analyze historical sources, which allows them to "build interpretations that result in first-order types of knowledge" (p. 547), resulting in cyclical and interconnected types of knowledge. For students to develop a deep understanding of history, which Grant (2003) argues is an integral part of

ambitious teaching and learning, students need to be able to simultaneously "develop deep understandings of first-order ideas" that are rooted in "the study of second-order concepts, thinking capabilities, and domain-specific procedural knowledge" (VanSledright & Limón, 2006, p. 548). No doubt that this can seem a daunting task for teachers, especially as they face high-stakes assessments that primarily, or solely, promote knowledge of first-order concepts, as is the case in Virginia (DeWitt et al. 2013).

Teaching and Learning History in Standards Based Settings

In the 1990s and early 2000s, as part of the growing national accountability climate, many states began to require students to take and pass a certain number of standardized tests in history (Grant & Salinas, 2008). By 2011, 23 states required some type of testing in history (Smith, 2018). Fourteen states, including Virginia, implemented tests comprised of only multiple-choice items. As Smith (2018) argues, "it would be premature to condemn multiple-choice testing outright" (p. 6) but many researchers have questioned whether this approach ever does—or can—assess first-order knowledge (content) *and* procedural skills (historical analysis, reasoning, and interpretation) that draw on second-order knowledge (Counsell, 2011; Lee, 2011; Ercikan & Seixas, 2015; VanSledright & Limón, 2006). It is easier and cheaper to write and implement multiple-choice tests but, unlike other fields (such as science education), very little research has explored the validity of these tests (Reich, 2009, 2013; Smith, 2018). So, while the research is mixed as to what multiple-choice assessments actually teach us about students' knowledge of history (DeWitt et al., 2013; Reich, 2013; Smith, 2018), the fact remains that they are widely used by states and districts to assess student knowledge of history.

As the prevalence of high-stakes multiple-choice assessments has grown over the past few decades, research has clearly documented how these tests have influenced the teaching and

learning of history (Gerwin & Visone, 2006; Grant, 2006; Saye & the Social Studies Inquiry Research Collaborative [SSIRC], 2013). Pressure (real or perceived) from state standards and associated high-stakes tests has the ability to "complicate [teachers'] efforts to help students 'dig into' historical questions, evidence, and arguments" (Meuwissen, 2017, p. 249). In his metasynthesis on this topic, Au (2007) argues that high-stakes tests control "the content, knowledge forms, and pedagogies at the classroom level" (p. 264). Research has also illustrated that in a high-stakes context many teachers focus on specific test-taking skills (Vogler & Virtue, 2007) and reduce the amount of attention they devote to higher-order thinking processes (Jennings & Bearak, 2014).

The question of what history—both content and processes—is taught in classrooms is another issue explored in research on standards-based settings. Grant and Salinas (2008) argued that standards-based settings and high-stakes assessments are more likely to influence the historical content teachers present rather than teachers' pedagogy. Research has shown that teachers tend to narrow their history curriculum and cover only what appears in the state curriculum standards (Vogler, 2006). In many states, the content standards in history are often "bloated" and include information that professional historians might not know or find significant, (Wineburg, 2005, p. 662), or include long lists of historical content developed after a "contentious, politically-charged ideological battle over what knowledge is of most worth" (van Hover, Hicks, Stoddard & Lisanti, 2010, p. 81), as was the case in Virginia. The research on standards-based settings in social studies education clearly focuses on the influence of a high-stakes test and has demonstrated the variety of ways that the standards and high-stakes tests can influence a teacher's practice. In sum, as Smith (2018) asserts, "research indicates that tests

shape what happens in the classroom and that instruction tends to mirror the form and content of the tests that are used to assess students" (p. 2).

In order to counterbalance the emphasis on first-order knowledge, many states and districts have begun to include a writing component on their standardized assessments. Monte-Sano (2010) argues that historical writing is integral to students' learning of history because it "reflects what it means to learn in history, what counts as knowledge, and how knowledge is constructed in history" (p. 563). Historical writing allows students to "examine the nexus between claim and evidence" (Monte-Sano, 2008, p. 1046), in which students impose second-order concepts (e.g. causation, progress, decline) on the past through procedural knowledge (e.g. source analysis, constructing evidence based arguments) (VanSledright & Limón, 2006). While policy makers may assume that adding a writing component (often in the form of a DBQ) to assessments will promote attention to all three knowledge types, and thus promote ambitious teaching and learning of history, teachers interpret and enact policy in the classroom in a variety of ways. As Grant (2003) has argued, "until we better understand how these teachers and the students in their classrooms, think and act, that assumption is hollow at best" (p. vi). Thus, in this study, we explore how a teacher enacted a performance assessment (DBQ) in a standards-based setting, and how it related to student learning of new knowledge and skills.

We use Grant's idea of ambitious teaching and learning to frame our study, but also draw on work in policy sociology and policy realization (e.g., Ball, 1994, 2003, 2012). Ball (2012) asserts that the field of education has been experiencing an unprecedented level of governmental activism, subjected to "policy overload" and "hyperactivism" (p. 2). However, districts, schools, and teachers do not accept and implement policies in a uniform way; policies are not one-sided affairs, but "ongoing, interactional, and stable" (Ball, 2008, p. 7). Ball argues that policy

realization and policy translation is highly dependent on context and is a contingent, localized, and messy process. Before the policies are enacted in the classroom, they have "been interpreted by district- and school-level leaders and filtered through teachers' intentions and experiences multifariously" (Meuwissen, 2017, p. 251). Viewing teachers as powerful agents in the classroom is critical to understanding how policies are enacted in the classroom. Teachers take "a primary role in interpreting disseminating, and then acting on information concerning such policies" (Sloan, 2006, p. 122). Our study explores ambitious teaching and learning of history while attending to the institutional processes and relations that go into shaping history teachers' decision-making in high-stakes testing contexts and how students make sense of their classroom experiences.

Research Methods & Data Sources

We employed a case study methodology to explore teaching and learning history in standards-based settings with a high-stakes test. The site was a 9th grade World History I course during a five-day unit of study on the Byzantine Empire; two days of this unit were dedicated to a performance assessment (DBQ) but the teacher also assessed student learning with a multiple-choice test that mimicked the SOL tests. Because we were interested in the teacher's goals for the unit and how he enacted the goals as well as what the students learned about the Byzantine Empire, the bound for the case is the unit of study, the Byzantine Empire (Yin, 2009). Our research questions were as follows: How does a teacher implement a performance assessment (DBQ) in a standards-based setting with an end-of-year high-stakes test? And, how do students experience a performance assessment (DBQ), and in what ways does it relate to their learning of new knowledge and skills?

Context and Participants

The study took place in a 9th grade World History I class in Mountain View High School, a large diverse public school with approximately 1900 students located in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The World History I course, according to the standards documents published by the Department of Education, "enables students to explore the historical development of people, places, and patterns of life from ancient times until 1500 A.D. (C.E.) in terms of the impact on Western Civilization" (p. 1) and includes an end-of-course test that assesses that content.

The teacher, Mr. Smith, an African-American male, had been teaching World History for six years, three at Mountain View High School. He had a Bachelor's degree in history and had graduated from a secondary social studies teacher education program with a Masters degree in education. He described his teaching style as "engaging and connecting," that he always tried to focus on the student, and he taught "the student rather than the content" (interview). Mr. Smith hoped that students would leave class with a "smile on their face, [that] they were engaged in the content that they learned…[and] they learned whatever our objective was or…[were] still thinking about what our discussion was or what our activity was" (interview).

During the course of the unit, we chose to follow a small number of 'focal' students in order to understand how they experienced learning in a standards-based setting (see Nuthall & Alton-Lee, 1993). The small number allowed us to study learning experiences in depth. Thus, out of a class of 24 students, 4 students (identified by the teacher and consented through IRB processes) were selected as focal students and identified by the following pseudonyms: Benny, Mackenzie, Olivia, and Laura (see Table 1).

Table 1. Focal Students

Name	**Gender**	**Age**	**Interests**	**Experiences with Social Studies**
Benny	M	15	Tennis	"I've always found them very interesting…I find history repetitive. I kind of like how it all forms

				together."
Mackenzie	F	15	Soccer Spanish	"they've been good. Sometimes, I think they can be boring, but overall I've really enjoyed them. And I'm just fascinated about learning about history. I think it's so interesting to see the connections from history to the present because you realize that history just repeats itself and I love learning about history."
Olivia	F	14	Drama Tennis YouTube	"I think for the most part I like it…if I like a class, especially social studies, it really depends on the teacher... And some years I just did not like it, like it's really boring. But...this year, I love history."
Laura	F	14	Math Field Hockey Model UN	"I feel like [they] have been pretty traditional. Like I haven't really had a teacher that's like doesn't really learn from the textbook, you know what I mean? … we read a few chapters about something like a primary source, then go and write about it."

Data Collection

Data collection included the following: two hour-long audio-recorded semi-structured interviews with the teacher (pre- and post- unit), five 90-minute video-taped classroom observations (two cameras as well as detailed field notes), daily audio-recordings of focal students and teacher, one hour-long audio-recorded semi-structured interview with each focal student (a total of four interviews), one hour-long audio-recorded semi-structured interview with two pairs of focal students (a total of two interviews), pre- and post-test data, copies of all student work (class notes, graphic organizers, writing assignments, etc.) and classroom artifacts (lesson materials). Follow-up interviews with Mr. Smith were also conducted to clarify any questions during data analysis. During the first interview with the teacher (a few weeks before the start of the unit), Mr. Smith described his objectives and goals for the unit and how he

planned to assess student learning (a unit test). He shared the test with the researchers prior to the beginning of the unit; it emphasized first-order factual knowledge, not second-order conceptual knowledge or procedural knowledge, and reflected the state standards and the structure of the end-of-year examinations. Mr. Smith used a district-wide test bank to pull items, each aligned to a specific standard. The end-of-unit interview (which took place a week after the end of the unit) involved asking Mr. Smith to reflect on the unit and engage in a think aloud of the test in which he was asked to talk through each item in order to identify and explain the correct answers as well as to anticipate students' responses and to specify where he thought the information necessary to answer the question correctly came from (e.g., class activities, textbook readings, etc.). Mr. Smith also provided the full DBQ created by the district that included the documents, writing prompt, student graphic organizer, and the rubric the district used to assess the students' writing.

Interviews with the individual focal students took place five days after the post-test and involved questions about their experiences learning during the unit as well as a think aloud of the unit test in which students were asked how and why they answered in a particular way and when or how they had learned this information. The focal students were interviewed in partners six weeks after the end of the unit and asked follow-up questions from the first interview, focusing on topics that, in our initial analyses, appeared to generate confusion or misconceptions. The students then watched two short video clips of the class, excerpts of those instructional experiences, and asked to think aloud while watching the clip, to describe what they remembered from this class and what they remembered learning in the class. All interviews (teacher, individual focal student, pair interview) were transcribed.

Each class period was videotaped using two Go-Pro cameras that allowed us to see the entire classroom including teacher and focal students and detailed field notes were taken. The focal students had an audio-recorder on their desks to capture all verbal interactions that might not have been picked up on the video cameras or by the observers (and these were transcribed). All student work was collected or scanned and included the following: pre-test, post-test, graphic organizers (charts in which students identified the Social Structures/Political/Interaction between humans and the Environment/Cultures/Economic Systems [SPICE], note-taking organizers, DBQ worksheet), free-form class notes, and DBQ paragraphs. For the purposes of this study, we focused on the materials related to the DBQ and the unit test. All data (with the exception of the audio- and video-recordings) were stored in qualitative computer software, Dedoose. Due to file size, the audio- and video-recordings were saved in a password protected shared folder.

The Unit

Mr. Smith stated that he viewed the unit on the Byzantine Empire as a smaller unit, as the state standards emphasized (and tested) "only five things that you really have to cover" (interview). He noted that "this is the first time I've set the Byzantine [Empire] as its own unit. I usually just do it as a continuation of Rome. I'm ending Rome as a unit, testing on it, and then [using the Byzantine Empire] as a tie between what's happening in Europe and then, what happens in East Asia or Russia" (interview). He planned for four days of instruction with one day for the test. He reflected that "Rome falls, the Middle Ages happen" (interview) but that students didn't understand that the Byzantine Empire was happening at the same time. He wanted students to learn about "Justinian and his contributions as an effective leader, and to help [students] understand that the effectiveness of an empire depends on a leader" (interview). Mr. Smith developed a unit test using the district's computer-based item bank, which included

released items from previous SOL tests as well as four-choice multiple-choice questions created by other teachers in the district that mimicked the format and structure of the high-stakes end-of-course examination in World History I.

Mr. Smith spent, as planned, four days of instruction on the Byzantine Empire. The unit opened with a geography activity, followed by the two-day document based writing assignment (the performance assessment) that focused on Justinian's leadership, then a final day that focused on Byzantine culture and religion and included a test review packet (see Table 2).

Table 2. Unit Outline

Day	**Content Focus**	**Instructional Approaches**
1	Introduction to Byzantine Empire Geography of Byzantine Empire Language of Byzantine Empire	PPT Lecture Images of Interesting Facts Fill in SPICE Chart through: • Map Work (QR Code) • Video Clip & Virtual Tour • Website Sources
2	Emperor Justinian	PPT Lecture Review of Day 1 Documentary: Justinian Backchannel Chat DBQ Activity (Group Work)
3	Emperor Justinian	DBQ Activity • Whole Group Discussion • Individual Writing PPT Lecture
4	Religion Art & Architecture Review	PPT Lecture Short Answer Question (Google Classroom) Review Study Guide Kahoot Quiz
5	Review Unit Test	Unit Test

Mr. Smith stated that he would use a multiple-choice test to assess student learning but also explained that the district was requiring teachers to periodically implement a performance task (i.e., DBQs in history) in order to develop learning skills beyond multiple-choice test taking (interview). He had downloaded the Justinian DBQ from the district performance assessment resource page. We focused data analysis on the implementation of and student experiences with the task (a DBQ) as well as the topic (Justinian) and how that compared/contrasted with student responses on and experiences with the unit test.

Data Analysis

Data analysis included several steps. First, we initiated analysis by reading through the data corpus, making notes on themes emerging from our first close reading. Second, we analyzed the multiple-choice test itself by sorting the items by SOL topics (see Table 3).

Table 3. Test Questions by SOL

SOL	Topics	Item Categories	# Test Questions	Test Item #
6k	Constantine Constantinople	Leader Geography	1	11
7a	Location & Role of Constantinople	Geography	3	8, 11, 13
7b	Byzantine Emperor Justinian	Leader	3	5, 16, 17
7c	Byzantine Art & Architecture	Art & Architecture	4	1, 3, 6, 9
7d	Great Schism	Religion	4	2, 4, 18, 21
N/A	Theodora	Leader	1	15

We used these categories to code observation and interview data in order to create what we called "item files" (Nuthall & Alton-Lee, 1993) so we could trace the instructional interactions students had with tested content (see Table 4).

Table 4. Item Files

Item	Summary: Content Focus	Item Categories	SOL	Instructional Interactions
1	Byzantine influence on Cathedral of Christ the Saviour	Art & Architecture	7c	None
2	Language of Christian Liturgy in Byzantine Empire	Religion & Language	7d	PPT Discussion Review Sheet
3	Hagia Sophia	Art & Architecture	7c	Film Clip Virtual Tour DBQ: Document F Review Sheet
4	Characteristics of Eastern Orthodox Church	Religion	7d	PPT Discussion Review Sheet
5	Emperor Justinian	Leaders Expansion	7b	Film Clip Backchannel Chat SPICE Chart DBQ Review Sheet
6	Examples of Byzantine Art	Art & Architecture	7c	PPT Lecture Review Sheet
8	Survival of Constantinople	Geography	7a	SPICE Chart Review Sheet
9	Identify art form (Icon)	Art & Architecture	7c	PPT Discussion Review Sheet
11	Location of Constantinople	Geography	7a	PPT Lecture SPICE Chart

				Review Sheet
13	Location of Bosporus Strait	Geography	7a	Film Clip Review Sheet
14	Emperor who renamed Constantinople (Constantine)	Leaders	6k	PPT Lecture Film Clip Review Sheet
15	Theodora	Leaders	N/A	Film Clip DBQ- Document E Review Sheet
16	How Justinian expanded Byzantine Empire	Leaders Expansion	7b	Film Clip DBQ- Document B Review Sheet
17	Code of Justinian	Leaders Law	7b	Film Clip DBQ- Document C Review Sheet
18	Great Schism	Religion	7d	PPT Discussion Review Sheet
21	Roman Catholicism	Religion	7d	PPT Discussion Review Sheet

**certain items on the pre-test related to Russia, taught in another unit. They were removed for the post-test.*

Our next round of coding used the district-created rubric (see Table 5) to assess the students' DBQ paragraphs. The student paragraphs and their scores on the DBQ became an item file to be coded in the final round of coding.

Table 5. DBQ Rubric Provided by Granger School District

Thesis	**Source Use**	**Interpretation of Sources**	**Structure**	**Score**
The thesis does not answer the question	The paragraph does not incorporate evidence from	The paragraph does not incorporate any correct evidence	Uses first or second person more than once and only has 2-3	1 (not observed)

	the documents	from the documents	sentences. Repetitive sentence structure	
Thesis is weak or only partially addresses the question	The paragraph mentions evidence from the documents but does not reference the specific document	The paragraph only incorporates evidence from 1-2 documents correctly in the paragraph	Uses first or second person once and only has 4 sentences. Repetitive sentence structure	2 (emerging)
The thesis adequately answers the question	The paragraph directly references the documents	The paragraph correctly supports the thesis with supporting evidence from 3-4 documents	Uses third person throughout and paragraph is at least 5 sentences. Varies sentence structure	3 (proficient)
Has a strong, clearly stated thesis that directly answers the question.	Main points of the documents are worked effectively into the overall argument.	The paragraph correctly supports the thesis with supporting evidence from 5-6 documents	Well-written and well-developed. Thoughts are organized and paragraph is 7-8 sentences in length.	4 (mastery)

Our final round of coding focused on VanSledright and Limón's (2006) domains of historical knowledge (see Table 6). Item files were coded based on the type of knowledge being taught and assessed. When questions arose as to what type of knowledge was being taught, the three authors discussed the item file until a consensus was reached.

Table 6. Domains of Historical Knowledge

Domain	**Example Codes**
First Order Knowledge	Who (i.e. Justinian, Theodora) Where (i.e. Constantinople, Bosporus Strait) What (i.e. Justinian's Code, Iconoclasm)

Second Order Knowledge	Causation, Power, Progress, Significance
Procedural Knowledge	Evaluate, Annotate, Argue, Analyze, Bias, Infer, *Spin

**"spin" is not a term typically used by researchers when discussing historical thinking. Preliminary analysis indicated that Mr. Smith used this term frequently when discussing the documents, so it was included as a code.*

We focused analysis on the item file 'Leaders' and 'Justinian' and the instructional interactions that we coded as "DBQ." Line by line analysis of the DBQ worksheets and the actual DBQ paragraphs followed. Data displays informed further refinement of codes. The following section provides a snapshot of the two-day implementation of the DBQ.

The DBQ Days

On the first day of the DBQ, Mr. Smith showed a brief video intended to provide students with background information about Justinian. Then, he introduced the purpose of the task as well as a prompt, stating "we're going to evaluate [Justinian] today in terms of his leadership. We're going to look at, it seems kind of simple, but was he a positive leader or a negative leader?...We're going to evaluate his legacy" (Observation). After introducing the purpose and prompt, Mr. Smith explained the step-by-step process in which students would analyze documents related to Justinian as well as produce an abbreviated DBQ:

> "We're going to do a source analysis with the documents we have in front and that's why the room is set up a little bit differently from last time. Then at the end, we're not writing a full DBQ. The third time that we'll write a full DBQ is next quarter. We're just writing one paragraph for [this one]. It's going to be a lot easier than even writing the outline." (Observation)

Next, Mr. Smith commented on the types of documents in the students' source packets and provided instructions in regards to expectations for the student groups:

> "So, what I want us to do, there, if you look at your source packet, guys, there are seven sources…but you're going to decide was Justinian a positive ruler or a negative ruler. But here's the catch, there's seven sources and I'll tell you, there are some that are pretty significantly positive and some that are pretty significantly negative. I wouldn't give you one or the other. But this is what I want you to do. If you are in the front, if you're working on this board, you have to convince me that he is a positive ruler. If you're in the back, you have to convince me that he is negative ruler." (Observation)

Mr. Smith then divided the students into two groups and assigned whether they would take a positive or negative view on Justinian. He asked students to collaboratively analyze seven historical sources (see Table 7). For each source, the students completed a graphic organizer that was created by the district that asked: "What facts can you pull from the document? What inferences can you make from the document? In a sentence what is the overall big idea of the document?" and to circle "positive or negative" (DBQ handout).

Table 7. Historical Sources from the DBQ

Document Title	**Author & Date**	**Type of Source**	**Guiding Question(s)**
Buildings (A)	Procopius 558	Court Record & Map	What were Justinian's major accomplishments?
History of the Later Roman Empire (B)	Prof. J. B. Bury 1923	Account	Why do you think that Justinian focused on the importance of teachers converting to Christianity?
Justinian Code/Institutions (C)	Justinian 529	Excerpt from Justinian's Code (*Corpus Juris Civilis)*	What was important about Justinian's code?
Secret History (D)	Procopius 550-562? Published 1623	Personal Commentary	Based on Doc. D, what did Procopius think of Emperor Justinian? According to

			Procopius, what were the major effects of Justinian's rule?
The Wars of Justinian (E)	Procopius 551/Theodora 532	Account	Why is it significant that the revolt started at the Hippodrome? What was Theodora's role in putting down the revolt?
Hagia Sophia (F)	Unknown	Images	Why was the Hagia Sophia a significant achievement?
(No Title) (G)	John of Ephesus 542	Record of personal travel	What did Justinian do to people who did not convert to Christianity?

While analyzing the seven historical sources, the focal students had a wide variety of experiences with the content, teacher, and other students that contributed to their differing understandings of Justinian as either a negative or positive ruler. Olivia and Benny were working in the group that was examining Justinian as a positive ruler. From the beginning of the first day of the DBQ, Olivia assumed the role of group leader with refocusing comments such as "Ok. Let's get to the big idea. Are you guys ready?" (Observation). Initially, Benny served as the group's writer. As the writer, Benny had to record the group's ideas on a large whiteboard. In this role, Benny exhibited signs of distraction. On one occasion, Benny, off topic, asked another student, "What do your parents say in the car? [Pause.] Are we there yet?" (Observation). Then, Olivia stated, "Hey Benny! Will you put up that [Justinian]'s smart?" Benny responded with, "He what?" and Olivia had to begrudgingly repeat her information, "He's smart." At one point, Mr. Smith approached the group and requested, "Guys, just, next one switch, just so Benny can get his notes down, then someone else can go up to write" (Observation). Aside from redirecting Benny's behavior, Mr. Smith's other interactions with Olivia and Benny's group revolved around defining content vocabulary (e.g., illustrious), spelling words (e.g., I-D-E-O-L-O-G-Y),

reminding them about writing expectations, and checking in with their work (e.g. "have you gotten your big idea yet?"). Throughout the remainder of the first day of the DBQ, Olivia continued to serve as the group's leader and synthesized her group members' thoughts while Benny became increasing distracted with conversations about food, football, and another student's handwriting.

Laura and MacKenzie were working in the group that was examining Justinian as a negative ruler. None of the group members assumed distinct roles. Thus, collaboration was apparent through their interactions with one another. The group members shared and confirmed ideas as well as asked questions to extend one another's thinking. Collaboration is evidenced in this interaction between Laura and MacKenzie:

> MacKenzie: Through conquest, Justinian strained resources and was…ummm [Pause.] Under Justinian's rule, ummm, he overexpanded, straining resources, leading to dislike…
>
> Laura: Would you call it through his conquests?
>
> MacKenzie: Let's put "Under Justinian's rule, the Byzantine empire expanded, overexpanded causing a strain in resources" [Lots of background noises]. "Causing strain on resources causing dislike for him." Ummm, causing a strain on resources, causing a problem…
>
> Laura: Unhappy citizens.
>
> MacKenzie: Unhappy citizens and foreigners, yea, who were forced into the Byzantine…
>
> Laura: Unhappy, we could do unhappy citizens and conquered…
>
> MacKenzie: Conquered foreigners, yea, say that.

Overhearing this exchange lead Mr. Smith to make the following compliment, yet it was directed towards the entire class: "Ok, guys. I'm seeing some great collaboration on both sides, both the

positive group and the negative group" (Observation). Somewhat similar to his questions to the other group, Mr. Smith asked questions about the documents, answered group member's questions, and encouraged them to make connections between the past and present. However, with this group, Mr. Smith had to combat lethargy (Observation):

Female student: I can't focus on DBQs.

MacKenzie: Me neither.

Mr. Smith: Why?

Female student: They bore me.

Mr. Smith: They bore you?

MacKenzie: Yea. This is better than SPICE charts though. SPICE charts are the worst.

Throughout the first day of the DBQ, student talk and teacher talk during the DBQ did include some attention to aspects of procedural knowledge (VanSledright & Limón, 2006). For example, when working as a group to analyze Document A (an excerpt of *Buildings* by the court recorder for Justinian, Procopius, written in 588 CE), MacKenzie identified the author as "the court recorder, Procopius" and went on to say, "OK, then, that probably means [Procopius] likes [Justinian] because he was a court reporter." A student responded, "That means [Justinian] appointed him…" and MacKenzie said, "he was appointed, obviously he would like what Justinian did…and he was also probably a royal, so he was not actually effected by all of the bad things" (Observation). Mr. Smith, who was listening in, said, "OK, so you get the bias."

The students then shifted their focus to the guiding question for the document, "What were Justinian's major accomplishments?" and began working on the required "inferences" section of the worksheet. Laura said, "for the inference we could have put that he was a strong leader because he, he improved the empire," to which MacKenzie responded, "I don't like DBQs

for this reason because you can, there's not one right answer." Laura shot back "then, you can do anything and it will be good." Mr. Smith interjected by saying, "not necessarily. There are some conclusions that you could say that are just incorrect, but you can come to some conclusions that you can support both ways. So that's what I'm trying to get you guys to do right now." MacKenzie replied, "but you can really spin anything to make stuff end up the way you want to see it." Mr. Smith agreed, and used the example of watching the news on Fox or CNN, that "they'll take the same event, the same information and they'll each spin it in their own different ways. It's about can you support it?" This exchange reflected attention to a component of second-order and procedural knowledge, namely "author perspectives" and "assessing perspective and judging reliability" (VanSledright & Limón, 2006, p. 547). Yet, the conversation remained at the superficial level, with an overemphasis on "bias" (see Barton, 2005). Ultimately, the group shifted to pulling facts from the document and the overall big idea they developed stated: "Justinian conquered new lands resulting in overexpansion, reluctant new subjects, and the straining of resources." (MacKenzie, DBQ Worksheet).

At the end of the first day of the DBQ, Mr. Smith concluded the class period with directions regarding their homework, "Your assignment for homework is finishing these sources so that you'll be able to discuss them next class. […] Remember that your homework is to complete the rest of them before next class. Looking at this, is Justinian a positive ruler or negative ruler?" (Observation). On the second day of the DBQ, Mr. Smith began the class period with a short review about Justinian through images and discussed a couple of the more challenging documents from the source packet in depth. Then, Mr. Smith provided the students with instructions for writing their DBQ paragraph:

> "In terms of what group you went in- positive or negative- you can argue this both ways, ok? You can argue it either positive or negative, but one of things that you can do is you can say both, ok? Does that make sense? Ummm, when you do that, the biggest thing I'm looking for is that thesis and that you're supporting your thesis with your documents. Yes?" (Observation)

Mr. Smith's students asked several clarifying questions ranging from inquiries about submitting their work to how it would be graded. Mr. Smith explained to the students that "there will be teachers that are going to grade all of these task assessments," but that he would also grade the paragraph and that is what would go in his grade book. Olivia was concerned about if there was a difference between Mr. Smith's grading and the other teacher's grading, wondering "what if they give us a better grade than you do?" Mr. Smith told Olivia not to worry because "you won't know that" (observation), indicating that the students would not receive any feedback from the other teachers' assessment of their writing. Mr. Smith gave the students thirty minutes to write the DBQ paragraph that included a "thesis statement answering the essential question" (DBQ handout). While writing his DBQ paragraph, Benny intermittently hummed and sang songs. Additionally, Benny talked to other students working at his table about topics unrelated to the DBQ paragraph. Mr. Smith had to repeatedly redirect Benny's behavior with mandates (e.g., "No talking. No talking. Keep going. No voices. No sounds coming out of your mouth.") as well as suggestions (e.g., "Look guys, if you have a question, raise your hand, ok?") (Observation). Olivia, Laura, and MacKenzie were sitting at the same table. While they were writing their respective DBQ paragraphs, they occasionally whispered about formatting and how to phrase specific ideas within their sentences. Their interactions remained focused on the DBQ paragraph rather than on unrelated topics. At the end of the class period, Mr. Smith gave the students a

four-minute warning and reminded them about the submission guidelines for the DBQ paragraph on the school district's website.

Student Performance on Assessments

Interesting themes emerged from analysis of the students' DBQs and interviews. Mr. Smith spent considerable instructional time facilitating student analysis of documents (through the question prompts), and included some focus on second-order conceptual knowledge and procedural knowledge—that is, some attention to best practice outlined in research on ambitious teaching and learning (Grant, 2003). However, in their written paragraphs, the students treated the documents as sources of factual information to be used to answer a question, which was in part related to how Mr. Smith gave directions. And, when asked to reflect on how they learned about Justinian during interviews, and what learning experiences they drew on to answer test questions, two students who actively participated in the activities (Olivia and Laura) referenced the documents as a source of factual information, while Benny, who appeared distracted through most of the group interactions, struggled to articulate classroom experiences related to Justinian.

Student Writing

The focus on documents as a source of factual information (versus thinking skills) was present in classroom conversations and also evident in the paragraphs submitted by the students, which were factually oriented and did not reference a) who created the document and how that might influence a historical argument; or b) the larger historical context. For example, Olivia's DBQ paragraph read:

> Justinian was an intelligent and positive ruler, who united and strengthened the Byzantine Empire. As shown in document A, Justinian's strong leadership and intelligence allowed him to expand, strengthen, and bring order to the empire. He made the empire safe with

> his strong military and the building of walls, and built new cities, which caused the population to grow. Justinian united the empire with a common ideology of Christianity, which promoted a standard of mortality. He was also not too harsh in doing it, as shown in document B. Stated in document F, Justinian supported the building of the Hagia Sophia, the largest Christian building in the world, because he was proud of his religion and cared deeply about it. This helped unit [*sic*] all Romans under a common ideology and connected them. He also gave over 10,000 people jobs in order to build the magnificent church. Justinian was caring and smart, and worked to make fair laws with good morals, such as to live honestly and hurt no one. He worked to make sure the laws were easy to understand, so he could create a well educated society (document C). document E shows that Justinian did not want to go to such drastic measures as to mass killing, but rioters were doing physical damage to the empire and he had to protect it. He was wise and saw that people needed him as a good leader, so he was forced to do something horrible in order to reassure his power. Justinian was a great emperor, who helped the Byzantine Empire flourish and grow. (Olivia, DBQ paragraph)

In this paragraph, Olivia makes an argument (as she was required to do)—that Justinian was a great ruler—and followed by listing reasons why. Olivia's writing followed Mr. Smith's teaching and the DBQ handout he provided the students. Olivia focused on the main idea from the documents, but did not treat the documents as sources to be analyzed. Throughout the time allotted by Mr. Smith to write the DBQ, Olivia and her tablemates discussed their thought process and how they planned to approach the DBQ. Before beginning to write, Olivia and her neighbor discussed whether they were going to argue whether Justinian was a negative or positive ruler. They continually checked in with each other to see what they were writing. For

example, Olivia's neighbor asked Olivia if she "used document C" and "did you talk about [inaudible] view of Christianity." Olivia had "made it positive" and had not discussed Christianity (audio-recording). The language Olivia and her neighbors used during these side conversations mirrored the language Mr. Smith used during instruction as he had them 'spin' all the documents to fit their side during the first day of the DBQ. Olivia and her neighbor frequently mentioned how they "made" documents fit their argument, rather than allowing the documents to shape their argument. The students never discussed why they "made" a document positive or negative.

Benny offered a different argument than Olivia, but had a similar emphasis on lists of factual content:

> During Justinian's rule both negative and positive things happened to the society of Constantinople (Document A). Justinian's intelligence allowed him to bring order to his empire, while strengthening and expanding it. (Document B). He also accomplished uniting his empire with a common ideology of Christianity, creating a standard of morality. (Document F). He also embraced the building of the Hagia Sophia (a church) promoting even more Christianity. (Document C). Justinian also worked on making fair laws with good morals, and they were also easier to understand. During his reign he also caused his empire to decline and fall apart. (Document D). His reign led to many people being killed, taking away people's money, and even cause universal poverty. (Document E). Because of his high taxes he started the Nike [*sic*] Revolt, killing even more people. (Document G). Also, because of Justinian's religious beliefs, he tried to convert pagans, and if they didn't convert they would be killed. Justian's [*sic*] rule allowed Constantinople to both thrive and decline (Benny, DBQ paragraph).

Benny offered a similar list of facts to Olivia's paragraph, but his argument focused on both positive and negative aspects of Justinian and an empire that thrived and declined. Similar to the other students, Benny also failed to attribute authorship and did not recognize the perspective of the documents, but pulled the facts that he deemed important. Unlike, Olivia, MacKenzie, and Laura, Benny did not interact with his tablemates while writing the DBQ. While Benny was writing the DBQ, he had frequent interactions with Mr. Smith as Mr. Smith reminded him to stay on task. Benny also asked Mr. Smith clarifying questions about formatting of the paper or the definition of pagan. Despite having different experiences while writing the DBQ, the students did not exhibit procedural knowledge by engaging in sourcing of the documents or corroboration amongst the sources.

All of the paragraphs submitted by the focal students referenced the documents by letter versus the authors of the documents (i.e., Procopius). This was in part due to Mr. Smith's instructions to cite documents by letter, which appeared to contradict his emphasis in class discussions about authorship and bias. While Mr. Smith had access to the rubric the district had created for the DBQ, students did not receive the rubric to guide their writing. And despite telling the students he would grade the paragraphs, Mr. Smith did not read the paragraphs or provide written feedback. Students submitted their paragraphs on the school district's website where it became unclear as to what would happen with the essays and what the essays would be used for. Interestingly, students would have done well according to the district provided rubric. They mostly scored threes (proficient) or fours (mastery), as students supported their answers "with supporting evidence from 5-6 documents" and met the requisite number of sentences (DBQ rubric). While the rubric assessed a generalized writing skills (i.e., thesis, evidence) (Monte-Sano, 2010), it did not assess disciplinary specific knowledge, such as examining the

authors' points-of-view and the reliability of the sources, and did not assess students ability to place their argument in the larger historical context, all of which are key components of second-order and procedural knowledge.

When Mr. Smith reflected on the implementation of his unit, he stated:

> I thought the source analysis of Justinian went really well. It was a different way [than from] the past two years. I've always done it in terms of an individual performance task. And I feel that because I allowed them to have some group work with it and then actually debate and discuss the articles, or the sources, they were actually able to get at a deeper understanding of them. And you could tell based on their responses of, like, if they thought Justinian was effective. Because at first, they'd focus in on "oh, like, he's a good leader" without noticing, like, you know, some of the terrible things he did with the revolts and just, like, his persecution of Christians and then, just, his type character. They really didn't pick up on that stuff. Because they were sort of isolated learning it on their own and then, writing the essay for it. But I sort of drew it out this time and taught the unit- taught, like, two days through it. Cause in it, I was able to cover things that they need to know, like, the Hippodrome, the Nika Revolt, the continuation of Roman architecture within the Byzantine Empire. All of those things which they have to know is covered in those sources and being able to discus it as a class and then, show it to them was a lot more beneficial this time around (interview).

Mr. Smith's description of how the performance assessment went, and his perceived success of implementation, focuses on the fact that he covered things students needed to know while also giving the students the opportunity to work together to deeply examine sources. Mr. Smith saw the students working together as a way for them to get a "deeper understanding" of the

documents. He was pleased that students were able to gain first-order factual knowledge, but didn't discuss students' procedural knowledge. When reflecting on why he chose to spend two days on the DBQ, Mr. Smith responded that he "did more than most teachers. Most teachers just gave it and that was it" (interview).

Student Think Alouds

Three questions on the post-test focused on Justinian and his leadership and all four focal students answered these three questions correctly. Yet, despite experiencing the same instruction, when asked to talk aloud about why they chose particular answers on an item about Justinian on the unit test, students answered in different ways. Two students (Olivia and Laura) frequently referenced the documents as a way they learned (and remembered) factual content. MacKenzie remembered learning about Justinian through a variety of teacher-centered interactions (the teacher telling her, a SPICE chart, a map she had to fill out). Benny repeatedly mentioned "talking about it" and despite prompting, rarely provided much detail about when and how he learned something.

Question eight, for example, asked students to "Identify the ruler associated with the above characteristics: 1) Byzantine ruler; 2) codified Roman law; 3) reconquered Roman territory." Olivia identified Justinian as the answer and said,

> We talked about Justinian a lot and like how he codified the law and how he was an emperor of Byzantine. And how he did a lot of conquering all around. And I remember we looked at a lot of documents to see for a positive or negative ruler. And like we wrote about that on documents. We talked about that in class. And so we looked at different stuff that Justinian did… (interview).

When prompted by the researcher to talk more about the documents, Olivia said, "they all talked about [how] he was a Byzantine ruler. I know one of them did like talk about how he codified Roman law…. And he organized them and got rid of the old Roman laws they didn't need anymore." Olivia did not remember any of the specific documents, but talked about the documents as a collective unit.

Laura used the process of elimination to reject the other options (Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great, Constantine) and settled on Justinian because she remembered he codified laws. She said she learned about Justinian's Code when

> we did this DBQ and I'm pretty sure it was actually a performance task. But we learned all about Justinian and his accomplishments, especially like the Nika Revolt. But we also learned how, like he reconquered territory and also before that we did some sort of activity in which we learned about Justinian's Code (interview).

Benny and MacKenzie also identified Justinian as the correct answer, but Benny stated that he knew that was the answer "because we talked about it in class… we talked about his accomplishments and his failures" (interview). When asked who, specifically, was talking about it, Benny said the teacher, that "he was just giving us examples of what he did… how [Justinian] made laws more fair" (interview). MacKenzie said she learned about Justinian when "Mr. Smith told us, and I feel like we put it into a SPICE chart, taking notes or something" (interview). Despite MacKenzie's active participation during the DBQ process during class, she did not mention the DBQ during the think aloud of the test.

When Mr. Smith participated in a think aloud of the test during his post-unit interview, he believed students should know the answer to question eight because it was part of a list of short answer questions "on their review that we did…that they would need to be able to answer." Mr.

Smith had taken the multiple-choice question directly from a handout given to the students the first day of the unit, which asked students to "identify Justinian and his contributions to the progression of the Byzantine Empire" (SPICE chart). Throughout the interview, Mr. Smith gave rationales for why answers were correct and what activities he believed students should attribute their learning to. However, Mr. Smith frequently focused on test-taking strategies for how students should be able to answer the question correctly. For example, one of the things Mr. Smith taught students is to look at other questions on the test to look for answers. If students had "gotten question 8 right," which Mr. Smith "thought was a fairly easy question" they should have been able to correctly answer question 12. Question 12 asked students how "Justinian expanded the Byzantine Empire?" with the correct answer being (a) reconquered former Roman territories. While Mr. Smith did mention the DBQ for a few multiple-choice questions, he primarily focused on other classroom activities, typically lecture or the study guide, as how students learned the information to answer the questions.

In summary, all four students experienced the same instruction, yet described their learning in different ways. The two students (Laura and Olivia) who mentioned the document analysis and the document-based question remembered the factual content they drew from the sources, not that the documents were evidence or a source to be interrogated. The other two students (Benny and MacKenzie) did not recall the DBQ or analyzing sources during class. Instead, they focused on the teacher-centered lectures and handouts provided by Mr. Smith.

Discussion & Significance

The data suggest that despite good intentions and some attention to second-order and procedural knowledge, sources were viewed, by both Mr. Smith and the students, as a means to glean facts, not as evidence to make claims as part of an authentic historical inquiry. The

structure and implementation of the DBQ led it to become an activity in which students learned 'stuff' about Justinian. Remembering 'stuff' is a good thing in a high-stakes testing context, but second-order and procedural knowledge was mostly lost in translation. Mr. Smith's instruction focused on, and thus students learned, first-order knowledge. This study provides empirical support to Barton's (2005) argument that, "effective use of original historical sources requires careful attention to their educational purposes" and that "if students work with sources in isolation" they will "not learn how historical knowledge is constructed, and they will not learn to use evidence to reach conclusions about issues that face them as citizens" (p. 753). Mr. Smith's educational purpose appeared to be for students to "discuss and debate" the sources—which they did—not to engage in authentic historical inquiry. He talked about bias, but as the findings illustrate, his intent for this was unclear as he suggested students identify the documents by letter, rather than by author. Mr. Smith "create[d] the necessary space" (Grant, 2003, p. vi) in his classroom for students to engage in document analysis and historical writing, but did not provide students the "essential conceptual apparatus which students must acquire if they are to understand history" (Lee, 2011, p. 69).

Second-order conceptual knowledge and procedural knowledge were limited in the students' writing and in-class conversations about the documents; however, this mirrored Mr. Smith's instruction and the rubric provided by the district to assess student's historical writing. The DBQ was intended to be a form of performance assessment that was different from the multiple-choice SOL tests, something that pushed student thinking beyond the facts. And while the DBQ included components that could have promoted with ambitious history and teaching (evaluate sources, make inferences from the sources, and create a thesis/argument), the final products did not reflect high quality historical writing. In part this was due to the rubric, which,

reflected Monte-Sano's (2010) observation the "practice of assessing historical writing is generalized and misses the disciplinary practices in students' writing" (p. 540), exemplified by the rubric provided by Granger School District.

As the field of history education shifts from an "emphasis on a 'story well told' (or the story as told in the textbook), to an emphasis on 'sources well scrutinized'" (Levstik, 1996, p. 394), we need to ensure that assessments actually assess history as a domain knowledge and not just first-order factual knowledge. As Smith (2018) notes, "if educators want students to achieve these ambitious historical thinking goals, then assessments are needed to gauge whether they have learned them" (p. 2). And in the case of Mr. Smith and Granger School District, the stakes attached to the assessments need to be balanced in a way that promotes all three types of historical knowledge.

The stakes attached to this learning activity as compared to the summative assessment for the unit (a graded multiple-choice test) emerged as a theme. The students spent two days on this activity, yet their DBQ analysis sheets and paragraphs were not graded nor did they receive feedback from either the teacher or the district. The unit test was graded and returned and discussed by the teacher; it was clear from interviews that the students knew which task 'mattered.' This suggests the interactional nature of policy (see Ball, 1994), that despite the no doubt good intentions of the state innovation committee and the district attempting to innovate and promote performance assessments like DBQs, if the fact-recall multiple-choice test is the one with the real stakes, it, in this one case at least, seems to take priority.

Another key theme emerging from this case study—that, while a small sample size that cannot be generalizable—the four students experienced learning in such different ways (Nuthall & Alton-Lee, 1995). The four students experienced the same instruction on Justinian, all four

wrote a paragraph about Justinian, all four got all test items about Justinian correct, yet they described their learning in different ways. Two attributed their learning to teacher talk (despite a two-day group activity). The other two attributed learning to the document-based question activity, but students treated the documents as another source of factual content. Student learning and student experiences in the classroom need to be attended to more in the research on history education as learning is a multifaceted and complex task that cannot be separated from a teachers practice and the larger educational context.

Our findings have implications for history education. First, students have to be taught all elements related to a performance assessment, in this case a DBQ,—what it means to argue, what it means to cite documents, and how to meaningfully analyze documents. And for students to learn to write means providing feedback, using a high quality rubric, and offering opportunity to re-write—all elements missing in the unit we observed. Also, it is useful for teacher educators to help future teachers attend to the fact that students experience learning in different ways, and that developing a clear educational purpose is essential (Barton & Levstik, 2004). While the field continues to develop assessments that focus on historical thinking, how teachers understand and implement policy and assessments, sometimes in various ways, must remain a critical piece.

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