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How the Medium of the Portrayal of a Historical Event Affects Students' Perception of the Event

Andrew R. Episcopo
St. John Fisher College

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How the Medium of the Portrayal of a Historical Event Affects

Students' Perception of the Event

By

Andrew R. Episcopo

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Supervised by

Dr. Joellen Maples

School of Arts and Sciences

St. John Fisher College

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Abstract

This paper sought to answer how social studies students perceived information through different mediums. This author claimed that students were perceptive to different mediums and their implied relevance, importance and credibility. Through the use of qualitative analysis, the researcher determined the need for teachers to practice multimodality, that students need to be taught to practice historical empathy, and that there are negative repercussions to heavy technology use in class. The implications are that teachers need to be practitioners of multimodality in their instruction, and that students want to maintain physical contact with the medium from which they are learning.

How the Medium of the Portrayal of an Historical Event Affects Students'

Perception of the Event

In the world today, there are multiple ways in which an event can be depicted and its issues and ramifications expressed to the population for which it is intended. Whether an event is read about in a newspaper, watched on the television, or listened to on the radio, the way in which people consume these stories and the manner in which they are portrayed can greatly affect the way in which they are deciphered. In our classrooms, students are presented mainly with one way that they can become aware of and informed about a particular event: textbooks. Textbooks present information in a compact and, at times, with a bias that attempts to persuade a student to feel one way or another about that particular event. Fox and Exley (2009) claim that interpersonal meaning has to do with how students interact with textbooks. The idea that students can forge a relationship with a physical textbook in an increasingly technologically driven world seems counterintuitive, yet the relationship exists. Yet technology is still a major factor in how students learn and interact with knowledge. Yang (2009) determined that students became seekers and creators of knowledge through the use of technologically mediated presentations, meaning that technology does play a major role in how students can and do learn in school. Interestingly enough, it may be that the most effective way in which students learn is through an amalgamation of both traditional resources, such as textbook and photos, and non-traditional teaching tools, such as the Internet and computer-based technologies. With all of the technological access that today's students have to a multitude of informational resources, it is imperative that we gain an understanding about how they view the events that they read about or see online or television. More

importantly, how does the portrayal of an event affect the student's perception of that event? I aim to explore how students perceive particular historical events through a variety of media such as textbooks, television, and Internet based resources. The ever increasing media and, consequently, technological related presences in our students' lives and on how they learn and perceive the importance and relevance of the new information is an important area of research for a number reasons. First, I believe that students are perceptive to biases in how events are recorded for mass distribution and consumption. Second, if I show that students understand how an event's portrayal in a certain medium affects how they come to understand that event, it will serve as a basis for how educators can adjust their instructional approach toward subjects in the classroom that show to present themselves with a bias in media. With many different avenues for students to gain access to information about events of all types, it is imperative that I look into how the portrayal of an historical event affects how a student perceives the event, its facts, and its importance. The different ways in which students will encounter information presents both challenges and exciting new avenues through which information can be transmitted.

How student and their teachers interact in a face-to-face manner is important as well in how students learn and perceive new information. Kohlmeier (2006) states that the use of Socratic seminar is a tool that students will struggle with at first in using, but over time, this type of learning will facilitate in their ability to learn and question new information presented to them. Expanding beyond the use of technology, it is important to present students with information through conversation as being able to talk and bring about new information through conversation is an important part of being able to practice and learn history. Furthermore, talking about history in an open-ended fashion allows for

the transmission of new ideas to develop around a foundation of knowledge one already has. The intermingling of technology and a teaching method like the Socratic seminar are tools that alone, are solid teaching methods, but tend to be one dimensional in their approach and ability to relay information to others. But by intertwining such instructional methods, teachers can begin to demonstrate to their students how different modes of information transmission can effectively assist them in being able to learn about different topics and gain new information and insights into ideas and events in a multitude of ways.

This study asked how students perceive information from different types of mediums as well as how students became engaged with the material through the use of different types of mediums. In order to determine the extent to which students both engage with and learn from different types of mediums used in class, I collected data from group interviews with three sets of students, an interview with their social studies teacher and information collected packets filled out by the students pertaining to their interactions with the media. The findings of this study are that the use of multimodal presentations of information can increase student engagement in social studies material, that historical empathy can be a tool to foster student engagement in learning and that there is a negative impact of using multimedia resources in classroom instruction. The implications of this study are that teachers must work to present information in a variety of ways to their students in order to give them the best chance at connecting with the material and that students tend to want to physically interact with the medium in some form.

Theoretical Framework

Becoming or being literate means learning to effectively, efficiently and simultaneously control the linguistic, cognitive, sociocultural and developmental dimensions of written language in a trans-active fashion (Kucer 2009). What Kucer means is exactly how he describes it to us that literacy is a mixture of things we do both in our respective classrooms and outside of those classrooms. Gee (2001) argues that literacy is control of secondary discourse, which is the identity kit that comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act and talk so as to take on a role, which others will recognize. The meaning presented by Gee indicates that literacy is a tool that goes beyond merely reading and writing but is sets of tools that are used throughout life that help one navigate society and fit into different societal roles that one attempt to fit into. Goodman (2001) states that children can make sense through written language as they use it. Goodman and Gee both hold somewhat different ideals of what exactly literacy is and yet they are both interconnected. Essentially, in order for Goodman's principles as to what literacy is to take place, children must first learn how to control the secondary discourse that is literacy. Once they have obtained the initial ability to practice literacy through its use, then they care able to transform their practice of literacy into secondary discourse, which is used to hold a role in life. If students are able to make sense of what they read, then they must have a background for placing the writing in the correct context. Based on these definitions of literacy, the power of written language and its influence on students is tremendous, as are the tools that students bring the classroom to decipher their meaning.

The most influential theoretical approaches to utilize in answering this question dealing with how students perceive information on historical events in classrooms through different sets of media is the Critical Literacy theory and the Critical Media Literacy. Critical Literacy theory is defined in four criteria by Lewison, Flint and Van Sluys (2002) as consisting of four dimensions. These four dimensions are: disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints, focusing on sociopolitical issues and taking action and promoting social justice. The first dimension, disrupting the commonplace, deals with problematizing all subjects of study and understanding existing knowledge as a historical product. The first dimension can be defined as including popular culture and media as a regular part of the curriculum for purposes of pleasure and for analyzing how people are positioned and constructed by television, video games, comics, toys, etc. It relates to this topic for its importance in dealing with how students rely upon and use of technology in order to bring in new information and ideas that affect their learning in school and therefore disrupt what is seen as common. The second dimension, interrogating multiple viewpoints, emphasizes the use of multiple viewpoints of an event in order to fully learn about the event, including, examining competing narratives and writing counter-narratives to dominant discourses. This dimension relates to the topic at due to the importance of presenting students with different types of viewpoints pertaining to historical events and allowing the students to make meaning of the event on their own through their interactions with the information via these different viewpoints. The third dimension, focusing on sociopolitical issues, deals with students' awareness for how sociopolitical issues surround everything we do in our lives. Another form of this dimension focuses on how literacy can help us engage the politics of our

lives. Dimension three pertains to the topic through the line of thought that students need to be able to venture deeper into sociopolitical issues of historical events, how the event affected the people and society around the time of the event and how the events everlasting effect has changed their world. Furthermore, the students can use the lessons learned from the sociopolitical issues surrounding the event to make a positive change in and around their personal lives. The final dimension is promoting social justice, which deals with how students can use praxis, or reflection and action on the world in order to change it. Another way in which this dimension can be understood is by understanding how language can shape the world around someone. Lewison, Flint and Van Sluys came to these definitions for literacy through the review of different definitions of critical literacy in the 30 years prior to their research. Critical literacy theory is the most substantial and well-equipped theory that will allow me to investigate how the portrayal of an even affects a student's perception that particular event through its four dimensional framework and criteria. Larson and Marsh (2005) claim that critical literacy deals with raising the critical consciousness of learners. This only works to strengthen the argument for the four dimensions that Lewison, Flint and Van Sluys lay out as the foundation for their criteria for critical literacy theory.

Alongside Critical Literacy theory, I will be using Critical Media Literacy theory to expand on critical literacy theory. Critical Media Literacy is defined by Kellner (2007) as an educational response that expands the notion of literacy to include different forms of mass communication, popular culture, and new technologies. Critical media literacy, as defined here, will help to determine to what extent the information is transmitted and received by students through the identification of students' use of and relationship with

media. With students having ever more interaction with technology both during school and at home, it is necessary to use this theory as a frame for understanding the study. Critical media literacy theory and critical literacy theory are both excellent frames as they outline newer and more revolutionary methods for exploring the field of literacy.

Research Question

Given that students are presented daily with many different mediums in which information is presented to them both in school and out of school, this action research project asks, how does the medium through which students receive information affects their ability to engage with and understand the information as well as how students preconceived notions of the medium affect their ability to interact with the medium?

Literature Review

In order to create an effective action research project, it is imperative that an overview of research done in this field is studied and dissected to help me understand what insights have been discovered in this field as well as what questions still persist in understanding social studies as it relates to literacy. The first theme to be explored is the media and text biases that both students and educators will encounter while they explore social studies. No matter what type of text or media the students are exposed to, there will some sort of bias or voice expressing the idea or opinion that they are learning about. Next, ability for students to connect with a text leads to the second theme of this literature review, which deals with the importance of student engagement in authentic and historical texts. In order for students to truly gain an appreciation and understanding for what is being studied, full and personal engagement with historical texts is critical to gaining a true and full understanding of what is being studied. Insofar as fostering

engagement with the texts, the articles repeatedly reported the importance of historical

inquiry and historical processes in the social studies classroom. The final theme extends

these practices to studies on educators and the impact of their use of critical literacies and

critical media literacies in the classroom. The studies advocated for greater teacher

involvement in expanding not only the media that they share and explore with their

students, but that they also explore expanded critical literacy practices in their

classrooms, forcing their students to think outside of their comfort zone, confront their

own prejudices, and challenge information presented to them.

Bias in Textbooks and Media and Children's use of Media to Understand Historical Text

Classrooms are places where students are influenced heavily by their educators,

the information they obtain and the media in which the information is transmitted.

Textbooks are one form of media that are going to be found in more classrooms than any

other type of media. Groups outside the scope and jurisdiction of the schools themselves

that use these books, leaving the textbooks subject to the will of the authors and editors

creating them, create textbooks used in classrooms across the US public school system.

In social studies classrooms, dealing with issues that are subjectively understood leaves

their information open to interpretations of the historians and editors that compile them.

Barbre (2012) is quoted as saying,

> History texts within the school curriculum begin the creation of a larger cultural
>
> and historic narrative and lens through which students will view and interpret
>
> further information about the world. This lens is oriented toward the

distinctiveness and legitimacy of the particular culture that teaches through it. (p.

318)

Barbre insinuates that the culture or the powers that control the textbook construction are

the people that control how students are to gain an understanding of history through the

lens of the creator of such a text. Textbooks and other media are incredibly important

devices that are used in all content areas in public schools. The persistent issue with all

forms of media contends to be the voice or bias behind their authorship. Textbooks and

media bias encompass everything that our students will read, whether at home or at

school. Two terms that must be introduced and defined for the purpose of this literature

review are media and popular culture. Media, or mass media, means referring to those

technologies that can distribute information to large audiences at any given moment

(Baran, 1998). Media, in this case, will pertain to mostly textbooks, the Internet, and

films as they pertain to history. The second term in need of a definition is popular culture.

Storey (1998) states that popular culture is always defined, implicitly or explicitly, in

contrast to other conceptual categories: folk-culture, mass culture, dominant culture,

working class culture. Media and popular culture are two terms that will be used

frequently and assigning them a definition allows me to use them when necessary with a

defined context.

Adkins-Covert & Wasburn (2007) state that the vast literature on media bias,

almost exclusively based on analyses of major television, network news programs and

elite newspaper coverage, provides contradictory findings" (p.690) is a claim that shows

the limitations of how much more ground still needs to be covered in understanding

biases that exist within texts in schools. Findings tend to be contradictory due to the

different lenses and used to determine the objectivity or subjectivity of the publication.

Adkins-Covert and Wasburn conducted study to determine the political language of

national news-magazines in the United States. They claimed that most such writing

within these magazines about media bias was seriously flawed. First, they are based on

anecdotal evidence; they do not answer the question: 'biased according to what

measure?' Second, they do not differentiate and compare various media organizations.

Their study focused on the language and articles objectivity of four major US

publications over a span of 25 years, from 1975-2000 using four article criterion: crime,

gender, poverty, and the environment. Surprisingly, they determined that both *Time* and

Newsweek magazines were politically centrist publications despite their long running

time demonstrating that mainstream media that students would have access to and may

use in class as well as outside of class, are capable of abstaining from a biased viewpoint

over time. These findings are important as articles from magazines such as these may be

used in a social studies setting can transmit data to students in a way that doesn't attempt

to bias a student's opinion, rather, articles from these magazines would be more

applicable for allowing a student to come to their own conclusions about the event. In

contrast, Bromley and Russell (2010) presented a case study wherein textbooks from

various nations were examined for their content coverage of the Holocaust. What they

examined in the books was their language, coverage, and overall message pertaining not

just to the Holocaust but also coverage of other genocidal acts of the twentieth century.

Their findings concluded that coverage of the subject was expanding, tended to be

narrative about the text and therefore lacked coverage for other acts. They did find,

however, that western textbooks had the most in-depth and extensive coverage of the

event and others like it, such as other genocidal crimes against humanity, determining

that western textbooks show more promise than many other nations of having balanced

reporting and depictions of historical events. Barbre (2012), Foster and Nicholls (2005),

and Hall (2011), all came to various conclusions at odds with Bromley and Russell's

(2010) and Adkins-Covert and Wasburn's (2007) findings. These articles all work from

an understanding that textbooks are going to offer different scopes and analyses of events

and will present this information according to the author or editor's will. First, Foster and

Nicholls's (2005) study, which was determined to offer a detailed analysis of the role of

the United States during World War II as portrayed in history textbooks. The four nations

whose textbooks to be analyzed came from: England, Japan, Sweden, and the United

States. In their study, they examined the coverage of certain events and the time line of

such events during World War II that were covered in nationally used textbooks and

discovered that each nation geared content toward their viewpoint of the war. Foster and

Nicholls claim that they inescapably represent a powerful means to render a particular

vision of a nation's past in the history classroom. The idea that history is subject to the

vision of a few people constructing a national history for impressionable students should

drive educators to make an effort to introduce evidence that allows students to come to

their own conclusions about an event. Barbre (2012) states that the subsequent

interpretation of history reinforces the dominant forms of knowledge, culture, beliefs, and

morality of national or cultural groups. Repeated assistance and insistence by teachers

helps to reinforce the idea in textbooks, that whoever creates the text is in control the

language and material being discussed and that educators need to look at and critically

view and inspect textbook doctrine and information.

Kohlmeier (2006) conducted a study at a suburban school district social studies classroom in which the Socratic seminar was used to discuss ninth grade students' historical empathy. In this study, it was determined how students' historical empathy could be measured regarding historical texts written by women. The study was conducted in a Mid-western city in a suburban high school. The documents used were historical documents written by women. Kohlmeier found that, through the use of Socratic seminar where question an answer between students rather than between student and teacher, though the students struggled at first with this method of conversation and interpretation, over the course of the study, the students became more sophisticated readers and thinkers through the experience. Kohlmeier's findings coincide with the work of Hall (2011) wherein he found that students bring their own experiences to the classroom and conversations. Embracing this type of knowledge can assist in building a strong foundation of dialogue through a Socratic seminar and consequently, build more socially aware and active students.

Fox and Exley (2009) claim that interpersonal meaning has to do with how students interact with textbooks. Interpersonal meaning has to do with the ways in which text producers and consumers exchange meaning. The relationship between students and textbook information, in which text producers and consumers interact with one another is important for teachers to keep in mind as they select media to supply their students with. Textbook publishers take advantage of their voices in textbooks when they encourage textbook dependency by aligning textbooks with state academic content standards and by accompanying textbooks with lesson plans and supplemental activities (Romanowski, 2009). Romanowski's study worked to examine the language and information presented

in US textbooks pertaining to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. He found for instance, when textbooks covered the motives for the attacks, that little information was provided, which makes it difficult for readers to understand the terrorists' motives. Furthermore, His study determined that textbooks should not be the final word on events due to their limitation with the scope and accuracy of their information. He suggested that teachers should be the ones to challenge textbook doctrine in a more critical manner and to provide more activities that allow students to take different perspectives when studying a historical event. These different perspectives are important for students to remember and keep in mind when critically reading a document or piece of media, especially in terms of the language used to portray major world changing events to students in textbooks.

To gain a fuller understanding of text and its language, Fox and Exley (2010) conducted a study that focused on the how texts affect students' ability to take notes and present information in a timeline format. The notes showed the ability of the students to selectively quote relevant texts and the timeline was used as due its nature as more than just a factual representation of text and information. What can help us to understand the nature and power of language in text is part of the frame work they adopted, which relied on a three separate meanings of text: ideational meaning, the way that language represents the experiences of the world; interpersonal meaning, the way in which text producers and text consumers exchange meaning and textual meaning, the way in which text is organized and connected. This frame allowed, alongside the student work on timelines, the researchers to determine that acquiring literacy in social studies is a multimodal process that indicates when students become text creators, they are able to better interact with information presented in a textbook setting where they will see

information as a means to gaining a more full understanding of the historical context

rather than as just information in a textbook. This article demonstrates the necessity for

multimodal design within a social studies setting by presenting insight into the

importance of students designing their own learning through the use of interaction with

text and information in a variety of ways.

Building upon the idea that students interact with text and become more fluent

with the text and its information as they use it and make it their own, we look to Hall

(2011) who drew upon reader response theory which states that it is what the individual

reader brings to bear on the text that will ultimately influence his or her response to it. In

the study, which took place at two middle schools over a period of three months, the

study had a number of goals in mind as they pertain to social studies texts. These goals

included becoming metacognitive, making and checking predictions, activating prior

knowledge and answering questions before, during and after reading. The goals were

assigned to determine how students use pop culture media to make inferences and

connections in social studies texts, the study concluded that students use pop culture texts

to help them interpret social studies texts, and that students use pop culture texts as

evidence to support their arguments about social studies. Pop culture, in this case, were

strictly movies and television shows that the students watched and felt they could relate

in one way or another to the social studies conversation, showing that the students

recognized when their lives crossed with history. Hartzler-Miller (2012) claims, "in

support of these types of constructs that children use, that [children] draw upon life

experiences to construct personal understandings" (p. 675) meaning the idea of a personal

construct, which is how students use their everyday experiences and obtained

information, can help them forge understandings about information they obtain in a classroom, can be drawn from various part of their personal lives, including their experiences with pop culture. Furthermore, Hall (2011) claims in his study that a students' interaction with the text that builds personal meaning with the text by incorporating elements of popular culture that students understand and attempt to connect to text and information to make sense of the text and information through their use and interaction with the text itself. The idea presented by Hall can assist educators in facilitating further connection to in-school texts by connecting the information and text to out-of school media and pop culture. The idea of connecting in-school and out of school texts to help students become more interested in what they learning in the classroom can assist teachers in staying involved in what students find important outside of the classroom and being able to use that understanding when teaching. Flores-Koulish (2006) refuted this claim on allowing students to freely using media to build constructs stating that, "We should stay aware of popular media culture, looking for texts with multiple interpretations, controversy and thus, potentially allied critical material" (p. 247). With children's use of pop culture text to formulate understanding of historical text, the need to understand how media literacy affects students' understanding within social studies should be examined. Flores-Koulish sought to determine how pre-service teachers can engage students in critical conversation, specifically on media and popular culture. Critical conversation is particularly useful for topic introduction and to help in moving ideas about said topic along in classrooms. She claims that "media literacy education is a critical tool that we can use to experience media differently with democratic and even emancipative implications. Media here include television, technology, film, advertising

and popular culture in general" (p. 240). The claim by Flores-Koulish demonstrates the

meaning behind educating students in real world media practices, that educators can

make students more effective democratic participants and learners in real life. Media

literacy is a device where many students have the ability to utilize media outside of the

scope of the classroom to forge connections with what they are interacting with in the

classroom, drawing from elements of popular culture to make information they encounter

less formidable, more understandable, and ultimately, more important to themselves.

The study used an older Madonna music video to facilitate critical conversation,

whose process included studying elements of media literacy education: access, analysis,

and evaluation. Flores-Koulish's (2006) study was conducted with a secondary language

arts classroom and sought to conclude what effect popular culture can have on critical

literacy skills on those students. The study concluded that media literacy dialogue on

appropriately chosen text could lead toward conscientization. These findings indirectly

concur with Hall's (2005) findings dealing with how students use popular culture to

critically discuss topics by relating what they already know and have experienced through

media to topics and texts at hand.

Building upon the aforementioned ideas of children's use of and understanding of

media and how it can help them understand the social studies text at hand, Stoddard

(2010) aimed to discover how teachers' ideologies affected their use of media in the

classroom. Stoddard stated that,

Despite the vast amount of recent research into historical thinking and the

frequent use of film in social studies classroom little is known regarding teachers'

beliefs about pedagogy with other historical media such as film to help students

think historically. (p.155)

The study followed two teachers who incorporated a greater amount historical media into

their classrooms for the purpose of advancing historical thinking skills. The findings of

the study concluded that the history education community should think about how to

integrate critical media literacy skills into historical inquiry and social studies education

in general. Stoddard went on to reinforce the notion that critical media literacy should

play a part in history education. Furthermore, he reiterated that:

In the case of students and future citizens who will most likely run across or seek

out historical media other than primary sources when they want to learn about a

historical event, it is essential that they be able to critique all types of media that

represent the past as 'evidence' within the given historical context. (Stoddard,

2010, p. 166)

Stoddard's findings imply that students must be able to navigate through texts historical

in nature, understand where they come from and what they mean by reading through the

lens present in the text or media in order to be able to understand the full nature and

meaning. His findings build upon the aforementioned studies, such as with

Romanowski's (2009) findings about 9/11 in textbooks. According to the aforementioned

researchers' findings thus far, students will need to possess the ability to critically read

and understand texts and media in order to gain the proper meaning from them about the

events, which they are reading. These findings seem to indicate, thus far, that students

need to be equipped with the tools to critically explore historical media. Another study

that enhanced the findings thus far, conducted by Nokes (2010), pertained to how

teachers are faced with numerous literacy-related decisions both in their planning and in

their execution of lesson plans. Similarly, the study was intended to observe the literacy

related decisions made by teachers in high schools in order to make inferences about their

view of the purposes of teaching history and the literacy instruction they provided. What

was concluded was that educators needed to make fuller and more lasting literacy

decisions and practice to their students in order to present to the students a greater

amount of literacy education and practice when it comes to working with historical text.

A reasonable assumption within the framework of these findings at this point is that the

findings point toward a greater need for students to be fully equipped to critically read

and understand the historical text which they will encounter in social studies classrooms.

There is a need for educators to keep up their use and understanding of media as it relates

to both students and historical texts and information because the language presented in

many of these texts need be read and interpreted critically in order to facilitate proper

understanding, comprehension and synthesis of the information (Stoddard, 2010,

Romanowski, 2009, Flores-Koulish, 2006). The aforementioned studies indicate that

Mangram (2008) conducted research evaluate the effectiveness of such media and critical

literacy incorporation into social studies classrooms. Media, with students ability to

connect, work with and interact with, can make an educator's job either easier or more

difficult in implementing media into their teaching practices based on his or her

understanding of how students engage with and use different types of media in their lives.

His study, conducted by interviews and research into 15 different social studies teachers'

classrooms, gave insight into how teachers viewed media. One educator interviewed and

observed gave this interpretation of media:

> Media can be biased, media can be impartial and media can have an agenda.
>
> Media can take all kinds of different forms, But, basically in the modern world
>
> that is the primary way that we get information about what is going on outside of
>
> us, outside of our personal observations. Depending upon the source of the media,
>
> its mission can be to promote a certain point of view. (p. 43)

The researchers found that educators are acutely aware of what is out there for students to

read and make meaning of and from in the world around them. Educators understand that

their students will use the world to decipher the messages that they are acquiring and

interpreting. Schleppegrell, Greer, and Taylor (2008) conducted a study on a professional

development project that draws on functional linguistics constructs to prepare history

teachers to engage students in talk about language and content. The researchers study as

they refer to social studies texts. Their study drew upon the Systemic Functional

Linguistics theory, which provided a framework for linking language choices with

meaning in ways that enable us to analyze language patterns as a means of recognizing

how information is presented as well as the author's purposes and interpretation. Their

study included one teacher who, who ran her own secondary social studies classroom and

was finishing her master's degree. Findings of their study with the teachers demonstrated

that as students use and utilize text more and more in their classrooms, that they begin to

become more aware of how text can shape their understanding of the event being

described. Schleppegrell et. all (2008) support the findings in Mangram's (2008) work, in

which both studies indicate that teachers are innately aware of what language is out there

surrounding their students' lives and reading, but that work must be done in the classrooms to enhance their more full understanding of how that language works to represent a full picture of what is being discussed in the text or by the media surrounding the topic.

Within the framework of the aforementioned studies, it is fitting to find answers to how teachers see biases within the texts and media that students use both in and out of school for a multitude of reasons, specifically in this case, social studies and historical texts and media. Barbre (2012) found that culture is a natural transmission of value that occurs within any school setting. The subject of how textbooks either disseminate or refute the claims of a nation's historical narrative can be a slippery slope. Students need to be aware of the language and motives behind texts and media and according to the framework provided by the findings of these articles, teachers need to be cognizant of the languages that exist within the text and media that students encounter and rely upon. His work demonstrates that teachers need to be aware of the scope and language of the textbooks they use in their classrooms in order to assist their students' navigations through them. Being unaware of what a textbook contains within its language and coverage could lead to student being unaware of what is either missing or misleading within the text.

Engaging Students in History Classrooms

The next section of this literature review goes into great depth about understanding how to engage students in authentic historical texts. "As adolescents' engagements with media increase, educators will continue to be faced with questions regarding adolescents' literacy practices with media and their intersections with

traditional notions of comprehension and reasoning" (Staples, 2008 p. 107) meaning that

educators must address the growing trend of how students use interactive media in their

lives both in and out of school. One term that needs defining that will be used throughout

this section of the literature review is historical inquiry, which is designed to transfer the

responsibility of constructing knowledge to students (Lindfors, 1999). Historical inquiry

is most identifiable when students start to become more curious about the events they are

learning. Furthermore, when students are required and able to construct their own

knowledge, they will be able to make the new information more meaningful and relevant

(Meyerson & Secules, 2001). Historical inquiry, in this section, is the ability of the

student to actively engage with and process the historical information that is presented to

them and the ability to interact, synthesize and gain meaning from the material being

learned about. Understanding this term and its meaning are vital to being able to engage

with this section.

      Hall (2011) sought to determine what, if any, comprehension skills could be

taught to students and how to harness what they already had acquired through pop culture

understanding to facilitate their understandings. The study found that students do indeed

draw upon pop culture to help them interpret social studies texts; that they used pop

culture texts as evidence to support their arguments about social studies and that they also

used pop culture texts to shut down others' interpretations of social studies text. Popular

culture, in this case, helped Hall to further demonstrate that it can be used in classrooms

to facilitate a more personal understanding of what students can and do learn when

dealing with information that comes from a different time than which they are living and

understand. Another lens in which this area of literacy can be viewed is through what

Staples (2008) refers to as popular culture narratives, or PCNs for short. PCNs are valuable tools to use in education as they allow the teacher to expand on the students' at home knowledge to build upon what needs to be taught, learned and reinforced in classrooms. Staples expanded upon Hall's (2011) notion of how pop culture affect students' perception of historical texts and media. PCNs reflect and affect our sensibilities, meaning making, and determinations. In Staples' (2008) study, in which there are five primary descriptors of PCNs, the two most relevant points to this review being the mingling of standardized English and variations of English and the ability of PCNs to provoke readers to deeper revelations of predicaments of human conditions. Staples work dealt with 'disengaged' students who were able to demonstrate engagement and comprehension and reasoning in relationship to media texts (in this case male African American students studying black femininity). Disengagement was shown to erode through these two studies by virtue of the use of media as a collaborative and engaging part of education. Engagement through PCNs allows students to use their own experiences in their own lives to connect with the text and information on their own terms to come to a personal understanding of the event and information. Furthermore, this type of learning fosters greater engagement because of the personal nature of the learning itself, meaning that since students come to their own understanding of the information and event and when different types of media are used to present the information, as mentioned above, students may shows a tendency to gravitate naturally toward the information.

Yang (2009) demonstrated a higher level of engagement among adolescents via technology enhanced historical inquiry. Yang's study focused on how adolescents

interacted with elderly interviewees to record their historical stories and experiences during important events, i.e. wars, implementation of laws, etc. In this project, Yang observed that students began to change from being receivers of knowledge to co-seekers and builders of knowledge and that they became empowered by this change in dynamic as they presented their historical inquiry findings through technology mediated presentations. The students show growth and ownership of their learning as well as are able to connect with their community more fully. Delaney's (2007) study expanded on Yang (2009) findings, observing and recording students' thoughts on textbooks as they were instructed in historical inquiry processes. One student in the study was recorded as saying that "textbooks don't care what people thought. They just say facts." (p. 32). This comment reflects heavily upon why historical inquiry runs congruently with critical literacy and critical media literacy. This student has shown the ability to read beyond the text, call to the front its inadequacies and feel strongly enough in his interpretation of the text to call it out as he sees it. Rogers (2008) reminds us that critical literacy is often represented at the social/class/group level rather than at the individual level, and furthermore, it is also important to understand individual development and engagement as learners become critically literate. Rogers's study concluded that, through a case study on instructing new teachers how to teach critical literacy and adopt it within their teaching pedagogies that students need to be engaged in the texts they are reading and in their experiences before they can accelerate. Instructing new teachers in how to teach critically and get their students to become critical learners appears to be a need for young teachers as they have yet to navigate the teaching world on their own and that they need assistance in incorporating critical literacy practices into their teaching pedagogies

Manfra and Lee (2012) provide insight as to how engagement can be facilitated using technology. They state that "Digital technologies have been found to be particularly well suited to the purpose of engaging students in the in the signature pedagogy of 'doing history'" (p.119), a statement that indicates that students are going to be drawn toward using technology they employ in their personal lives in the classroom because of their familiarity with the interactive, engaging, and familiarity of the media they already have. Their study sought to determine how teachers could facilitate higher engagement though blogging activities. Manfra and Lee dealt with one teacher and his secondary social studies classroom to examine the effects of blogging and access to various technological, Internet based resources on the Roaring Twenties, on students' understanding, and transactions with the information. What was determined was that consistently when the children were able to connect content featured in an activity to their personal interests or prior knowledge, they were more successful in their authentic intellectual work. This is an important finding that connects all of the studies mentioned in this section thus far, claiming and displaying information pertaining to student engagement in historical text. When a child feels that he or she has some way in which he or she can connect with the text beyond facts, he or she will explore and retain information more usefully. Furthermore, in the study by Manfra and Lee, it was discovered to be important to encourage student interaction in order to facilitate student transaction within the information and with each other as supported by evidence from Manfra and Lee and Yang (2009). These findings indicate that students will interact and engage more fully with informative texts when they connect with texts on a personal level. When a student can connect their personal lives to the text, according to these findings, is when he or she

is able to fully engage with, transact, and learn from the text and information being presented to them.

Building upon this foundation of engagement with text and information on a personal level, the use of mass media, or at the very least, media access that students have, Jackson (2011) sought to identify how students use mass media in their learning and text producing. Jackson analyzed qualitative data showing how one teacher and a group of her learners draw from mass media genres of advertising, infomercials, talk shows and popular music, and blend these with elements of local culture, in order to meet their specific, communicative purposes. Jackson found that many young people are astute and canny [have a strong ability in being able to learn and project what they have learned] in their responses to mass media. However, much of their insight sits within tacitly embodied knowledge, meaning that what they know is embedded within the text and media that they utilize in their learning. The lack of ability to accurately transact with text despite the familiarity with said technology is an interesting point that the other studies have mentioned but have failed to explore thus far, being that they recognize children's knowledge and understanding of popular culture, technology, but there is still a need to direct students as to how to explore these media in terms of how to process and evaluate the knowledge they derive from them. This study indicates that while students are able to utilize many forms of media, they may still be limited in their ability and knowledge of how to use and interact with certain forms of media, limiting their engagement and information gained from the medium. Furthermore, it provides insight as to how students can use information obtained outside of a traditional classroom setting to create something that fulfills a traditional educational requirement. This study has much

in common with Staples' (2008) conclusions about PCNs and their validity and importance in the classroom setting, that by drawing from a student's outside of school knowledge, learning can be made to be more informative because the students connect more fully to the material.

In order to fully gain an appreciation for authentic engagement, primary documents have been shown by a number of studies to be lacking in being included in classroom instruction. Reisman (2012) created a study to test the effectiveness of a history curriculum focused on disciplinary reading with primary sources. Reisman's study focused on the effects of historical reading instruction in a classroom and how this instruction translated to student writing by incorporating and modeling disciplinary strategies of historical reading rather than generic reading comprehension strategies. What was discovered was that between the control classroom and study classroom that the study classroom scored significantly higher on measures of factual knowledge and reading comprehension than the control classroom. These findings provided the information for the basis of Reisman's argument that access and use of primary documents is vital to assisting students in achieving higher comprehension and writing levels. Hartzler-Miller (2012) expands the use of authentic historical texts. Her study again, explored teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and school context in light of the effort to introduce historical inquiry as best practice. The idea of historical inquiry parallels the interest that historians have in their field and is stressed to students in the capacity that they are able to think about and critically view images from the past (images being primary documents, such as photographs and paintings). According to findings of the studies thus far, engagement requires that the students take a personal interest in the

material by connecting their lives to the text and primary texts make for a stronger

bonding agent for students to connect with than overview texts such as textbooks.

The study conducted by Yeager, Foster, and Greer (2002) found that when

students were asked to list important historical events, many of them felt that personal

events like a death in the family or a divorce or marriage warranted being listed as a

major event in history, though such an event would not be listed in a textbook. If

educators are to engage students in historical inquiry, this evidence from Yeager et. al can

be considered validity of the findings made by Hall (2011), which again, he reported that

children rely upon pop culture, or in this case, personal culture, to make sense of what is

historical and important against what is not considered historical and important, such as a

WWII in comparison to a death in the family of a student.

One criterion that impacts the validity of the text being explored, according to

Barbre (2012), is the culture of the text itself, meaning the nature and society that

surrounds the students and text which they consume and produce. Teachers and students

must be aware of the multiple factors that affect the presentation of print and pictures on

their pages. Walker (2009) expands on this idea of how students should be allowed and

instructed to engage with texts. Walker's case study included five teachers from different

secondary schools, all of them instructing in secondary social studies. This current

analysis provides a picture of practice regarding interactions with media texts in social

studies classrooms as such that teachers are very limited in their inclusion of texts and

media outside of textbooks and film. In her study, she found that, " In only 9 of 32 hours

of social studies instruction were students engaged with media texts" (p. 11). This

evidence is a sign that the educators in the observed classrooms felt the need to lead

classrooms discussions and lacked an understanding of how critical literacy can be a component of a successful social studies classroom. Walker went on to claim that:

> However, as the meaning of literacy has been extended beyond simply decoding the printed word to cultural and critical literacies which focus on understanding the world, social studies seems to be the perfect place to turn students on to the knowledge's and issues wrought through the development of multi-literacies. (p.11)

The issue within social studies and engagement tend to stem from the area that students feel disconnected from the material and therefore, have no incentive to engage with or learn from it. As educators work to foster engaging topics and ideas surrounding the material, the teacher will begin to see an improvement in comprehension and retention. As such, readers learn to use their previously developed knowledge as they problem-solve while reading a variety of different texts, which increase in the level of difficulty (Rogers, 2007). When students are able to implement other facets of learning into their text transactions, they will invariably be able to connect with and around the text and media more effectively.

What may be an incredibly important piece of information on understanding is how students can utilize these engaging strategies and evidence to synthesize texts and media that are truly their own. Fox and Exley (2009) conducted research in which they paired students together and had them create organizers with text they transacted with electronically. What Fox and Exley discovered was that multimodal timelines (organizers the researchers had the students use) created new challenges for the students. Second, they found that their research promotes the notion that acquiring literacy in SOSE (the Australian equivalent of United States Social Studies) is not just a matter of acquiring

content knowledge alone, but that it was demonstrated to be linked to appropriate

grammatical forms of the written, visual, spatial and gesture design. These findings

would be viewed, through Walkers's (2011) work as a pure form of a development of

multi-literacies, and as a way in which we can view critical literacy. This finding supports

the evidence that by supporting students' initial literacy practices in reading and writing

assists in advancing critical literacy in later social studies practices.

Nokes's (2010) work may help to shed some light on other ways in which we can

view what isn't engaging, multi-modality in student work. He found that, in his research,

teachers were spending very little time actually working on student skills or even with

historical content. Furthermore, he reported that the only time spent actually instructing

outside of the scope of the textbooks was done training students how to read charts and

the use of an organizational framework for analyzing a society. Most surprisingly, Nokes

reported that on only one occasion did a teacher refer to a primary source located in the

textbook. This lack of engaging, challenging work on the part of the teacher leads us to

examine what the educators can do in their work to engage their students in social

studies. What is gained from his research is that there is limited engagement on the part

of the educators in the form of what types of media are used in their teaching practices

which limits the differentiation in instructional approaches, wherein limiting the amount

of different types of media in which the teachers can use to engage and teach the

students. This type of limited instruction inhibits historical inquiry, as there is only one

mode of information transmission that dictates what information is important to the

student rather than asking the student to seek out important and pertinent information to

answer a question or synthesize what they have learned. How his findings translate into

the classroom is that teachers must remember to allow students to interact and engage with the material through multiple media outlets and in vary forms of those outlets rather than just exposing the students to information through repetitious versions of the same type of media.

Ray and Pemberton (2010) studied secondary social studies teachers who were teaching on 9/11 and looked to them for information about how teachers can facilitate learning through live media events. For this study, it wasn't about simply engaging the students rather it was about how to engage them and with what information that could be used to teach them. This study used anecdotal references from the educators to gain an understanding of where they were instructionally with this event as well as where the children's engagement levels were. One recording of anecdotal information from a teacher was that one of her student's aunt and her father were both working in the towers that day and that the teacher struggled to address the issue in class. This type of literacy is a different mode of engagement than other studies have tapped into and a shortfall of having this type of engagement with an activity, is knowing how to direct or even how to redirect it so that the teacher can harness what is there for a greater learning experience for that student. Learning and engaging an event in this manner stands apart from what has been examined thus far due to the fact that the educators were working with real-time information and in a real-world application: news and radio. Engaging students, in this setting, meant that the educators had to determine what information to allow their students to hear and learn about as it pertained to the real world. Teachers need to be fully aware at all times of the information they are transmitting to their students and focus on making the information meaningful and engaging in order to facilitate meaning making.

Teachers as Literacy and Information Mediators

      The classroom is a place where students are constantly introduced to new information through a variety of method. How the information is introduced and reinforced by the teacher can influence how a student reacts to and retains that new information. Teachers are force in the classroom that mediates how the students will be exposed to that new information and in turn, how they will retain and understand the new information. In order to understand what students should be experiencing in the social studies classroom setting, our focus should turn to what the teachers in these rooms can be doing to further educate their students about critical literacy. The first focus area in this literature review dealt with textbook and media language. A term that will be used throughout this section is historical empathy, which was a term that ran through many of these articles and is an important term to social studies learning for the fact that it is an important force in getting students to truly care about history and the events at hand. Historical empathy, according to Kohlmeier (2006), is a complex balance between considering the perspectives of and connecting with people in the past. Essentially, it is the ability for a person to read a primary document and understand how it fits in context of when it was created rather than in present day. Historical empathy, Kohlmeier states, has two essential components: perspective recognition and the element of care.

      Obenchain, Pennington and Orr (2010) focused their attention in their case study on a single classroom educator in the far west United States to focus on a different area of critical literacy and thinking. Their study aimed to discover how a teacher could impact their students' democratic citizenship in a secondary social studies classroom in ways that reflected her critical constructivist beliefs. They discovered that in her classroom that the

philosophical foundations of the United States, as well as more current issues related to the themes of democracy and diversity were discussed and used for critical dialogue. Furthermore, Obenchain et al. found that the teacher "engaged her students in the knowledge production process…[and was] concerned with the exaggerated role power plays in these construction and validation processes." (p. 506). The students were found to struggle at times with the critical thinking process that the teacher was pushing for and multiple exchanges recording by the researchers within the teacher's classroom show the teacher failing to take a critical topic and pushing it to make the students confront their own prejudices. The teacher seems to be doing a very good job at approaching and working along side critical literacy in the form of oral transactions among the students, but failed to clear the critical hurdle. As a teacher pushes expectations for their students to become not just learners but more democratic citizens through the study of historical events and data, the teacher must demonstrate to their students how to become democratic citizens through the demonstration of their democratic beliefs. Showing students, not telling them, how something like a power structure in society is the way in which students will begin to work and learn democratically, and therefore, they will become more democratic and constructive learners.

Hartzler-Miller (2001) insists upon the process of historical inquiry. Her study focused on historical inquiry and followed the instruction of two teachers. What was discovered by Hartzler-Miller about the teachers was that the teachers exhibited an apparent discrepancy between knowledge and practice. "[Both] were familiar with disciplinary debates over objectivity and significance, yet did not use an historical inquiry approach [in their practice]" (p.687) indicating that the educators didn't understand the

difference between practicing knowledge instruction in their classrooms versus and

demonstrating to their students how to interact with the information and each other. The

limitation described here is that the teachers limit their instruction in their classrooms,

which, in turn limits their students from truly exploring the nature and critical issues

surrounding the issue or event at hand. By limiting how students are able to interact and

work with different information and in different ways, teachers can, in turn, limit the

amount of active learning and construction of knowledge of the material.

Issues dealing with historical empathy and inquiry and the limitations that

teachers find themselves dealing with in classrooms, comes from the teachers themselves.

Referring to the aforementioned quote by Flores-Koulish (2006) pertaining to

conscientization, or the ability for students and teachers to become aware of the language

and nature of given texts, the idea of conscientization can be used to interpret as to when

a teacher makes appropriate use of a text, document or media in their classroom, and then

the students given the proper instruction in studying the artifacts, that the processes of

historical empathy and inquiry will naturally follow them through the lesson and

eventually life. Manfra and Lee (2012) hold that their findings would support these ideas

thus far. Pertaining to technology and teacher instruction, they found that an, " education

blog could be used to facilitate student collaboration and construction of new knowledge"

(p. 128). The use of teacher directed technological media presents the idea that students

can learn directly from the teacher by indirectly following their lead through digitally

based resources such as websites and educational blog formats. Jackson (2011),

conducting mass media and mass consumption and its effect on students' work drew on

technology and its ability to affect local practices in education by expanding upon the

role that technology and mass media have on students outside of a traditional education setting. Jackson, drawing from the conceptual blending theory, conducted a case study in South Africa that analyzed how one teacher and a group of her students draw from mass media genres, such as popular music, to meet specific, localized communicative purposes. Jackson's study drew from an understanding of the mixing of cultures, and sought to determine to what extent the students' work is influenced by popular culture and mass media when creating a project in an advertising setting. Jackson found that, "critical literacy approaches could be richly productive" (p. 71) when using mass media in creating a powerful narrative. Jackson's work is important to this review in the fact that it dealt explicitly with mass media and mass consumption and the affect that it has on students in a classroom setting and vice versa.

Drawing back from mass media and into the classroom setting, Schleppegrell, et al. (2008) found that in their study which focused on professional development in teachers' understanding of how language needs to be studied and reviewed in their classrooms in order to facilitate their students' understanding of the language. They explained how their findings related to the idea that teachers need to be mediators of the texts, which their students use and interact with by claiming that:

> Texts students are expected to read and write in secondary school are quite
> different from the language which everyday life is lived. Academic language the
> language of schooling presents information and interpretation in new ways, using
> vocabulary, grammar, and text structures that students can learn to recognize
> when they read and to adopt when they write. In order to engage students in such
> learning, teachers need to understand the academic language demands of the

subjects they teach. History, in particular, makes great linguistic demands on the

students, as it is constructed mainly through texts and cannot be easily

experienced hands-on. (Schleppegrell et al., 2008, p. 176)

This idea that history and social studies teachers need to be very strong in their

understanding of the language in and around the texts and constructs they use in their

rooms works at multiple levels. First, these findings indicate that teachers need to know

how to navigate the actual language in the texts as well as how to teach their students to

navigate it through the use of talking and critical conversations. Second, drawing from

the idea of the first theme in this review, teachers need to be aware of how students will

perceive and transact with the texts. These two ideas should be kept in mind when

planning and executing a social studies lesson. The importance of their findings on

teaching social studies relates to how teachers must vary their instruction with their

students. Historical language is different from classroom language in that though the

teacher is adept at understanding the language surrounding the event or text, the students

may not be fully capable of understanding it and therefore need to be exposed to

language that is suitable to their understanding at the time of the lesson. This also

expands on the idea of the importance of a multimodal approach to instruction and

utilizing different methods of teaching to include technology and other forms of

information transmission.

Returning to Stoddard (2010), whose framework for his case study was founded

on the idea that there is strong evidence that teachers' beliefs about the nature of

knowledge in their discipline has an impact on their instructional decisions and classroom

interactions with students, turn our attention to what teachers use as a media, short for

medium, when planning and executing a lesson. His study, which again followed two

educators and a semester in each teacher's classroom observing their instructional and

delivery practices to their students, as well as their use of certain types of media in the

process of their instruction. His findings lead him to assert that,

> Through constructing media on historic events or contemporary social issues,
>
> students could potentially learn about the nature of the medium and the role of
>
> media producers in constructing particular viewpoints through their selection of
>
> content in the media text and shaping of narratives. (p. 167)

Media, in this case, is a very relevant source of information and material for classrooms

because of the impact that certain media or the use of certain mediums. The medium, i.e.

the way that the information is transmitted (Internet, textbook, television) are incredibly

important as to how students perceive the actual information and message. What can be

ascertained from Stoddard's findings is that by introducing and allowing students to

experience different text and literacy mediums, that they will eventually gain a fuller

understanding of the importance of the information as well as its original medium. By

having students interact and work with and among different types of media, they can

begin to construct meaning with the information based on what information they

comprehend. Their comprehension can be affected by the media that they use in both

positive and negative ways, depending on the media, the information, and their

comprehension of the material, but eventually they will become meaning makers with

their newfound information.

Building upon the idea that different type of media transform how students interact and acquire information, Ray and Pemberton (2010) found in their research on teaching during the 9/11 attacks, that teachers felt prepared enough with their media discerning abilities to be able to allow the students to watch what was occurring in real time, and essentially, what live images and information to share with their students. Further talk with the educators revealed, in contrast to what had been found, that they would like to see some more professional development, especially in selecting age appropriate strategies. These overall findings suggest that secondary social studies educators feel very prepared to take a major event and use it to teach their students in real time, but that they recognize their own limitations regarding how to go about using these types of events as a learning tool. The information presented within this study relates to this study relates to how educators can approach the use of current events within social studies classes and how to mediate new information in a classroom. The insight provided in this article connects to Hall's (2008) discussion about PCNs where PCNs allow the teacher to connect the event and information with their students through the use of popular culture. Popular culture, as it would relate to these findings, would assist the teachers in

The literacy-related demands on history teachers are complex and involve issues specific to the discipline of history (Moje, 2008). This idea can be used to facilitate a greater understanding of how teachers should approach teaching historical events due to the fact that each event should be presented from a perspective where it is important at both the time it happened as well as how it is important presently Nokes (2010) found in his study, that:

In classrooms, where the focus is exclusively on the historical narrative, general

reading strategies such as summarizing, visualizing, or outlining can help students

reach instructional objectives. Instructional methods that have general

applications across content areas, including vocabulary instruction, general

writing instruction, providing a variety of texts, fostering learning with text

through implicit strategy instruction and fostering the development of literacy

strategies through explicit strategy instruction promote learning narrative in

history classroom. (p. 522)

This insight into Nokes's understanding of the issues pertaining to literacy inside of the

social studies classroom as well as into school in general is contradictory to Walker's

(2011) findings that promoted the idea that more critical literacy and multi-literacies are

essential to a successful and well-rounded social student because of the need for the

student to have transactions with text beyond the simple decoding processes. These

contradictory conclusions indicate that there needs to be more information collected in

order to fully understand how students react to different presentations of media. The

importance here lies with how the teacher decides to present the information being that

the way in which they deliver the lesson and information will impact how their students

respond to the new information and what they are able to make meaning of within the

new information.

Yang (2009) provides conclusive evidence of what can occur when students take

over for their own learning after gaining insight and direction from their teacher. In

Yang's study, the project performed by the students and used for data collection by Yang

was designed, "to understand and develop roles that oral historical interview and

technology play in history learning, making history learning more learner-centered, more

rigorous, more collaborative, and more inquiry based" (p. 245). These goals are

indicative of what the aforementioned studies have provided as a goal for critical literacy

and critical media literacy in classrooms for the reason that greater inquiry and more

learner centered instruction and activities in secondary social studies classrooms.

Consequently, Yang also discloses that in the study it was observed that group members

were able to recognize when their roles moved from knowledge-receiver to co-seeker and

builder of knowledge. These actions and steps taken by students in classroom and in the

study are what most teachers aim to have their students reach the point in their education

where students feel empowered to take over responsibility for their own learning.

Furthermore, the findings by Yang (2009) tie in with the evidence presented by Staples

(2008) and Walker (2011). Their findings discussed the importance of collaboration on

students' abilities to work together and learn. Consequently, Staples (2008) found that,

"students' collaboration relied on their willingness to investigate ideas, negotiate

language, images an social situations discussed in multiple sources" (p. 113) fostering the

idea that what students learn about needs to be made important to them for once reason or

another so that they can connect with the text on a personal level. The implications of

these findings asserts the assumption that students are able to take over command of their

own learning and that they can become true seekers of knowledge and co-collaborators of

information to facilitate learning because the new information means something to them

beyond just random facts.

  The information presented within this literature review reflects the latest in

research pertaining to the field of media literacy as it relates to critical media literacy and

critical literacy. The common theme within these three areas presents the idea that students need to be presented information in an impactful, meaningful and personal way. No matter what the information in a social studies setting is, what is important is how students are presented information and are allowed to connect with it in order to create meaning an truly learn from the text.

Method

Context

The research for this study took place at a mid-sized suburban district in Western New York. For the 2010-2011 school year the district had 8,795 total students enrolled in the district from Kindergarten through12th grade. The student population for the 2010-2011 school year was made up of 90% Caucasian students, 4% Hispanic or Latino, 3% African-American, and 3% Asian or Native Hawaiian. Of this population, 9% of the population was eligible for free lunch and 4% were eligible for reduced-price lunch. This district is relatively large, consisting of seven elementary schools, two middle schools and two high schools. Research for this study was conducted in one of the middle schools, which is comprised of grade 6 through grade 8. During the 2010-2011 school year the middle school was comprised of 998 students. No information was available on self-contained or special education classrooms within the middle school. The average social studies class size for the 2010-2011 school year was 22 students. This study drew from three of those classes run by one social studies teacher as well as interviews with three other social studies teachers in the building. All three classes contained mainly Caucasian students, and two African-American students. The classroom itself has a variety of sports posters from schools teams that Mr. Sozio has coached. He also has

student work as well as posters from a science fiction television show that demonstrate what propaganda is and how it is supposed to work.

Participants

The participants of this study consisted of the teacher of the students studied as well as nine students who were chosen by the teacher as a wide variety of ability and achievement levels according to the teacher and their student profiles to help provide validity to the data collected.

The teacher in this study is Mr. Sozio. Mr. Sozio obtained his Masters Degree in Inclusive Education from Nazareth College in 2002. He has been an eighth grade teacher at the middle school for nine years and is active in many school functions. He operates as a football and lacrosse coach at the adjoining high school, appears on the schools morning and afternoon shows gaining visibility for student and school driven charity events and hosts afterschool study periods for students when he deems it necessary. For this study, I will be using students from him classroom settings to collect data.

Students

For this project, I was granted access to nine of Mr. Sozio's students that he had chosen ahead of time for this project. Each of them is presented with a pseudonym to protect their anonymity.

Julie (a pseudonym) is a 13-year-old student with a 95+ overall GPA. She doesn't receive any assistive services at school. She participates on both in and out of school volleyball teams, school softball and skiing. She is an avid Internet technology user with photo sites Tumblr and Instagram. She informed me that she enjoys reading realistic fiction and learns most effectively through hands-on activities and demonstrations.

Michael (a pseudonym) is a 14-year-old student in the eighth grade. He is an athlete and participates on both in an out of school sports team in football, lacrosse and cross-country. He has an 88 overall GPA and doesn't receive any assistive instruction. He is an avid reader and enjoys mystery and thriller genre novels. When learning about something new, he informed me that he learns most effectively through videos. He also enjoys using the Internet via Youtube, eBay and Facebook.

Douglas (a pseudonym) is a 14-year-old eighth grader who is involved in sports at school, such as football, soccer and basketball. He has a 94 average and doesn't receive any assistive instruction at school. He enjoys using the Internet for such sites as Youtube, Google, Wikipedia and Twitter and is also an avid learner when it comes to gaining information through videos in class. He enjoys reading science fiction novels, especially the *Hunger Games* series.

James (a pseudonym) is a 14-year-old eighth grader. He is involved in gymnastics and diving both in and out of school. He has a 90 average in school and doesn't receive any assistive instruction. He uses the Internet mostly for watching videos through Youtube and informed me that he is a visual learner, especially through videos and watching others complete tasks. He enjoys reading fantasy novels and has read the *Harry Potter* series multiple times over.

Melissa (a pseudonym) is a 14-year-old eighth grader is involved in multiple sports, including soccer, lacrosse, cross-country, basketball, skiing and track and field. She has a 92 overall average and doesn't receive any assistive instruction. She uses the Internet for sites such as Youtube and Google. She learns the most effectively through the

use of videos and textbooks in the classroom. She informed me that she enjoys reading all types of genres of books.

Thomas (a pseudonym) is a 14-year-old eighth grader. He is involved in lacrosse, hockey and cross-country sports teams at school. He is part of the ski club in the district. He has 91 overall average and doesn't receive any assistive instruction. When learning about something new in class he learns best through the use of videos and textbooks passages. He enjoys reading mystery and suspense novels in his leisure time.

Ralph (a pseudonym) is a 13-year-old eighth grade student. He has a 94 overall average and doesn't receive any assistive instruction. He is involved in basketball and baseball in school. He uses the Internet to access sites such as Google and Ask.com. When learning, he informed that he learns best through the use of interactive notebooks where notes are derived from PowerPoint presentations and blanks are filled in as the information is presented to you. His favorite types of books are written about sports.

Rachael (a pseudonym) is a 14-year-old eighth grader who has a 90 overall average. She doesn't receive any assistive instruction. Rachael is involved in soccer, track and field, gymnastic, and cheerleading at school. She uses the Internet to access sites like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. When learning in school, she informed me that the she likes hands-on activities. When reading, she enjoys any type of book that involves people her age in realistic settings.

Caty (a pseudonym) is a 13-year-old year eighth grader with a 94 overall average in school. She doesn't receive any assistive instruction. Caty is involved in the photography club, yearbook club, and in the writing clubs at school. When on the Internet, she accesses sites such as Wikipedia, Tumblr, Google, and Youtube. She learns

most effectively through the practice of reading and listening to the teacher in class.

Rachael enjoys a lot of reading and likes to read books in the mystery genre.

Researcher Stance

I am currently a graduate student at St. John Fisher College studying for a

Master's degree in Literacy Education in grades 5-12. I presently have a Bachelor's

degree from St. John Fisher College in American Studies and Adolescent Education

grades 5-12. As researcher in this study, I will act as an active participant observer,

meaning that I actively engage in teaching while simultaneously observing the outcomes

of the study (Mills, 2011). In acting as an active participant observer, I was able to

remain "actively engaged in [my] teaching' while simultaneously monitoring and

observing "the outcomes of [my] teaching" (Mills, 2011, p. 75). As a result, I was able to

adjust the interactions of the students to the event media as needed based on student need.

Method

During this study, I collected qualitative information to examine the effect of the

medium in which an event is broadcast to students on their perception of the event. It

dealt specifically with how students interpret the information that they receive on a

certain subject based on the way in which that information was transmitted to them. For

the purposes of this research, the three students were removed from the general class

setting in three classes and brought to an empty room setting at the middle school where

the research was conducted in a quiet, neutral setting. In total, there were nine students

participating in this study. The students were brought in for the study in groups of three

for a single day. Each session lasted for approximately one hour with questions and

answers before and after each medium being presented to the students. The questions and answers were audio recorded.

This study sought to introduce the sets of students with a major historical event in US history, the Cuban Missile Crisis. The Cuban Missile Crisis was chosen as the event of focus for this study for a number of reasons. The first reason is that the students have yet to cover it extensively in class and therefore have a very limited knowledge of this event, therefore making the data collected more objective. The second reason for using the Cuban Missile Crisis is that there is a wide variety of media available depicting the event from many different media outlets. The third reason for using this event is due to its importance to social studies curriculum at the end of the eighth grade year. This action research study will focus on three different types of media depicting the Cuban Missile Crisis and how the students perceive the importance of the event, the validity of the information presented through the medium, and the credibility of the medium itself by viewing the information on this even through multiple types of media.

Before each medium was introduced to the students, they were presented with a short, two-paged questionnaire (see Appendix A). On the first page there were be two to three questions pertaining to the students' general perception of the type of medium they will be interacting with that will be filled out before the medium is presented. Once they experienced the medium, they were then required to answer three questions based on information presented and learned through interaction with the media. During the interaction with the medium, they were asked only to engage with the medium itself. Finally, they were asked to turn their questionnaire sheet over and answer three to four post-usage questions pertaining to the medium itself as well as to test their information

retention from the medium and their engagement levels with the medium. The first

medium they were introduced to was information presented from their history class

textbook. Relevant information from this textbook was used for this study. In order to

facilitate an objective response about the medium and the students' interpretation of the

medium and the information, the passages were taken out of the book and presented only

as a textbook passage on copied paper. The second medium introduced to the students

was an Internet based video from a major news website that pertains objective

information, interviews, and audio recordings from modern day historians and from the

period containing the Cuban Missile Crisis. The third medium introduced was a primary

document audio recording of John F. Kennedy Jr. addressing the United States about the

Cuban Missile Crisis. Each session presented these three pieces of media and information

to the students in an attempt to ascertain the students' perception of each piece of media

and the information that the media presents to them. In addition to gaining an

understanding of how students perceive these different types of media and the

information they convey, this study sought to look for how engaged the students become

with each type of media. Through the use of audio recordings of the meetings with the

students, I looked to discover not only how the students knowingly perceive the

information but also determine how engaged students became when they interacted with

the medium and its information. For the teacher interview, I used an audio recording for a

question and answer session with Mr. Sozio. I used a set of pre-determined questions for

the formal interview but also asked him questions as they present themselves through the

question and answer format that was used.

The interview process with the students was much less formal and included the students and myself as a large group. The questions were generic in nature, but dealt with the students' perceptions of history as a whole as well as each of the media being used in this study. Questions were presented to the students both before and after each media was presented. I sought to obtain information through the use of written answers as well on the packets that each student used.

Quality and Credibility of Research

In completing any action research it is of the utmost importance that the data collected and the method in which it is collected to be of the highest quality and credibility, In order to do so, Mills (2011) has drawn on the work of Guba (1981), identifying credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as essential components of a qualitative research study's trustworthiness. With this in mind, these four components have been examined and put into place within the current research to ensure its trustworthiness.

Mills (2011) defines credibility as the "researcher's ability to take into account the complexities that present themselves in a study to deal with patterns that are not easily explained" (p. 104). To ensure that this study is credible, I have practiced triangulation. Triangulation, according to Mills (2011) is to "compare a variety of data sources and different methods with one another in order to cross-check data" (p. 104). This study will be triangulated through the use of experiential, enquiry and examination data. Actively viewing students interact with different type of media, the use of questionnaires, pre and post-interaction reactions of students with the media, and audio-recorded teacher and

student audio-recorded interviews are various types of data collection implemented throughout this study.

In addition to credibility, transferability is another facet of this study that was implemented. Transferability refers to the "qualitative researcher's beliefs that everything they study is context bon and that the goal of their work is not to develop 'truth' statements that can be generalized to larger groups of people" (Mills, 2011, p. 104). In order to ensure transferability in this study, I will collect descriptive data pertaining to media in classrooms for comparisons to other contexts. In providing descriptive data specific to the context of my study, others then may "make judgments about fittingness with other contexts possible (Mills, 2011, p. 104).

Dependability is the third component of ensuring a valid and trustworthy study that has been considered for the research. Dependability refers specifically to the stability of the data collected throughout the research (Mills, 2011). My study has ensured dependability through the use of triangulation in data collection. As I stated before, I will use my assessment of student data, teacher interviews and audio recordings of students during this study. Through the use of three methods of data collection, the weaknesses of one are more likely to be compensated by the strengths of another, further strengthening their stability (Mills, 2011).

The final component of ensuring a quality study is confirmability. Mills (2011) defines dependability as the "neutrality or objectivity of the data that has been collected" (p. 105). Again, through the use of triangulation in this study I have ensured the component dependability. Through the use of a variety of data sources that can be compared to one another, they can be compared to one another, allowing for cross

checking of the collected data (Mills, 2011). Furthermore, I practiced reflexivity by

reflecting on the collection of my data through the keeping of field notes and reflections.

Through the practice of reflexivity, I was able to "reveal [any] underlying assumptions or

biases" that may affect my perceptions of the data and cause me to " present findings in a

particular way" (Mills, 2011, p. 105). I feel that through the process of meeting these

criteria, that I will present qualitative data in this study that is trustworthy and that offers

valid learning points and insights into how students perceive data transmitted through

certain media.

Informed Consent and Protecting the Right of the Participant

Prior to conducting research, I had to obtain permission from the parents of all of

the students who were going to be asked to participate in this study. Each parent was

given a permission form containing information pertinent to the study that was to be

signed and returned to me by the time that the study was going to be conducted.

Additionally, each student will give me informed assent prior to beginning the research

portion of this study. Each student was given an explanation of the purpose for the study

as well as further explanation of what I would be asking for him or her to do. Both

students and parents were informed that all names would be changed in the study to

protect their identities. Furthermore, all names and identifying symbols would be

changed on any documents to protect their identities. Furthermore, the teacher, Mr.

Sozio, signed an informed consent form for this study in order to be used as an

interviewee for this study.

Data Collection

As I have previously stated, I collected three different forms of data in order to fulfill the requirement of triangulation. One form of data collection I used was a teacher interview. This interview was done in a face-to-face setting where Mr. Sozio was asked a series of questions and follow-up questions pertaining to the topic of their use of media in the delivery of information in the classroom. This conversation was audio recorded, transcribed, and then destroyed in order to maintain anonymity in the research. This interview sought to determine how this middle school teacher perceives the mediums that his students use and work with in the classroom and the effectiveness of delivery of information to the students through these mediums.

I also used information obtained from the selected students to go through using three different mediums depicting the Cuban Missile Crisis. During the sessions, when I asked the students questions, it was done so in a group setting. All of the sessions were audio recorded before interaction with the medium and after to gauge interest of the students of the selected media. The audio recordings were transcribed and then the recordings destroyed to preserve anonymity. The students took pre-interaction questionnaires for each medium; answered questions based on information presented in the media, and then filled out a second questionnaire based on their interactions with the media. These questionnaires were used to determine the students' perceptions about the medium both before and after their use. The questions were used to determine how much information the students retained from the medium. Additionally, I audio recorded my interactions with the students to supplement my field notes as to confirm triangulation of the study.

Data Analysis

The data collected for this study was analyzed and categorized in a very specific and orderly fashion. First, each of the group interviews and the teacher interview were transcribed and the original recordings were destroyed to preserve anonymity. The next step was to do an initial reading of all of the interviews and information sheets that were submitted by the students and was followed up by a reading of the teacher interview transcript. Next I worked to code all of the transcripts and answer sheets. The coding process began with an initial read through of all of the papers and transcripts in order to ascertain what the information looked like as a whole. During the initial reading, I took brief notes about common words phrases that appeared. The next step in the coding process was to do a secondary read through where the common words and phrases that were identified in the primary read through were given a code to identify what type of theme they fit best with. The themes that emerged during this process were multimodality, re-reading and historical empathy. During the second reading, while coding the data, the phrases and passages that were coded were identified as pieces of data that would assist in building and supplementing my findings. Finally, I performed a third read through to sort for any disconfirming information. This read through produced very little disconfirming data. Consequently, I was able to procure more data that supported my initially coded data. Other codes that weren't pervasive enough in the data were included, but were not limited to the following: historical inquiry, historical thinking, and technology. These categories were derived from two sources: terms encountered in the literature review and terms that are pervasive in social studies education.

Findings and Discussion

Through the study of data for this paper, I have discovered three themes that exist within and across the data. In this section, I will discuss my findings as they relate to my thesis and study. The purpose of introducing an event where the students had very little to no background knowledge was for the explicit purpose of determining how different media affect how students perceive the importance and relevance of a historical event. Through the use of this control, I was able to determine three different themes based on my framework that gave me more insight into how students think about and react to different types of media as well as their ability to interact with and learn from these different modes of information transmission. The themes are Multimodal Presentation, the practice of historical empathy, and rereading as a self-monitoring skill. These themes presented themselves through qualitative data analysis.

Multimodal Presentation of Information Increases Student Engagement in Material

The way in which information is presented to students has a direct, correlative impact on how students engage with and learn the new information. Through the use of qualitative analysis, I discovered that the students were incredibly perceptive to how information was presented to them. More importantly, the students made this correlation very clear and distinct through the use of common language found in their question responses. Furthermore, the teacher presented me with information on his views on how to present information to students that correlated with what his students told me. Multimodal presentation of information can be understood as the presentation of information through the use of different types of media in order to demonstrate the

validity of certain, important information through different means, as well as to assist in

piquing the interest and engagement of as many students in the class as possible.

The following section was based off of the second of the four dimensions of

critical literacy as defined by Lewison, Flint and Sluys (2002), which is interrogating

multiple viewpoints. Through the use of this lens, I sought to determine how different

viewpoints of the students and teacher as to how they felt about the way in which

information is presented and transmitted in the classroom. Through an interview with the

teacher, Mr. Sozio and anecdotal interviews with the students, the concept of multimodal

presentation of information appeared to be a major idea that appears to be a very

important part of social studies education. Mr. Sozio stated that "I like to hit the student

up three different ways to get it across to them" …in order to make sure that they engage

with the material and so that I make sure I present the information to them in a variety of

ways (Personal Interview, 3/7/2013). What could be determined by this claim is that Mr.

Sozio has determined that through the use of different types of media, he feels that his

students initially learn and retain the information presented in class more effectively then

if presented in only one way. Presenting information in this manner may help students

who otherwise might not have much interest or reason to engage with the information,

because they have an interest in the medium that is being used to teach the information.

This line of thought is supported by Nokes's (2010) whose claim that when teachers do

not spend enough time working outside of textbooks or even disregard work outside of

textbooks, limits how engaged students can become with the material. This lack of

engagement, therefore, will limit the ability for the student to connect at a personal level

with the material. When asked if she liked using textbooks in class, Julie informed me

that, "Um, I think it's boring reading through it. If there's pictures of the events in there I

don't mind it but other than that, I really don't like it" (Group 3 Pre-Assessment 2

Interview, 3/7/2013). Her statement reinforces the notion stressed by Mr. Sozio that

students need to get information in a multitude of ways in order to fully understand, learn

and appreciate the information. Rachael, when answering the questionnaire for the video,

responded to the initial question about what is the most important part of learning from a

video, stating that "I look at the pictures, videos because they help me understand the

event better" (Video Assessment Packet, 3/7/2013). What can be inferred from these

statements is that while the written or heard information is seen as being important by the

students, adding visuals to the lesson and learning may be more valuable due to the

ability of the students to retain more information by making visual connections with it.

Drawing from Staples (2008) who claimed that educators need to be able to help student

forge connections with texts beyond the traditional means such as reading and writing,

we can begin to ascertain that students need to be able to draw from multiple platforms

(such as pictures, videos, symbols, etc…) in order to facilitate meaning making with the

text and information involved. When able to make meaning through the use of multiple

viewpoints pertaining to an event or set of information about an event, it appears that the

students are able to use skills acquired outside of class to make meaning of the

information presented to them in a multitude of ways.

Another important point of the idea of multimodality in the presentation of

information and material in social studies education is the notion of time in teaching an

event. According to Mr. Sozio, when asked about how students learn now as opposed to

when he began, he replied that

This is the instant gratification generation. You've got about two-three minutes to

hit them with the important stuff [and] hopefully they pick up on it. I give it to

them and it's got to be short little clips at a time. (Personal Interview, 3/7/2013)

Mr. Sozio claims that students need to receive information in a very precise manner and

in a short time due to their inability to pay attention to a single idea over a long course of

time. Furthermore, he also spoke about the necessity and importance technology to his

teaching. He stated that "…we have Elmos, every classroom has a SmartBoard, [and]

projectors" (Personal Interview, 3/7/2013) meaning that Mr. Sozio, as a teacher,

recognizes the importance of technology in the classroom to his students and their ability

to learn. This notion was confirmed in the *Student Background Information* sheet where

each student was asked about what sites he or she uses on the Internet. Each student

responded differently except for one site, Youtube. Youtube is a site built upon short

clips of information presented in video form. The students all claimed to use this site as a

main source of information on the Internet. Drawing form Manfra and Lee (2008) who

claim that digital technologies have been found to be useful for the purpose of engaging

students in being able to practice history, we can come to an understanding that students

need to be exposed to history from a variety of platforms in order to understand the

meaning behind the words and actions talked about in historical contexts. When exposed

to history from only one avenue, it appears that students may question the relevance of

the information. This reasoning and research supports the practice by Mr. Sozio of

introducing the information in a variety of ways, including keeping the interest of the

students on topic and demonstrating the relevance of the information to the students.

One other area pertaining to multimodality that I wished to explore was how students view textbooks as a general place to retrieve information. Opinions from the students through group interviews and responses on the *Textbook Assessment* sheet ranged from hatred toward textbooks to more of an affinity for them. James, who stated "They bore the heck out of me. I hate them. I don't really have patience for them. I'll use them if I have to but I don't like to use them" (Group 2 Textbook Pre-Assessment, March 7, 2013) gave the most poignant sentiment described by the students toward textbook use in class. What he is describing demonstrates the need for teachers to be multimodal in their instruction because students need to see information portrayed in a variety of platforms in order to both engage the students and to reinforce the importance of the information. James's sentiments are supported by the findings of Schleppegrell et. al. (2008) who determined that as students use more and different texts that they begin to understand how the texts and information can assist them in learning. When students are prompted to use more and different texts or media in order to facilitate greater learning and understanding, they will be able to expand on their learning because they will be more actively engaged in the learning due to the presentation of the text.

Historical Empathy as a Tool for Engagement in Social Studies Learning

Getting students to genuinely care about material in social studies classes is a major barrier in getting them to learn the information. Many students most likely feel disconnected from the material as they have littler direct connection to the event and information, or they may not see any genuine reason for them to spend the time learning about history. In order to develop a relationship with historical information, teachers must strive for their students to develop historical empathy. Historical empathy is defined by

Kohlmeier (2006) as a complex balance between considering the perspectives of and connecting with people in the past. When students are practicing or at least understand the importance of historical empathy, they will begin to show understanding of how these historical lessons can help them. Historical empathy is important to social studies education for the fact that it deals with the students putting themselves into the situation they are learning about in order to become more fully immersed and connected to the event. All of the students were asked if they could define what a historical event was. Julie responded that a historical event is "Something that's really important that can help us in the future" (Group 3 Pre-Assessment 1, March 7, 2013). Her sentiments were repeated by other groups as well and lead me to believe that the students are very aware of how history impacts them, or at the very least, understand what from history, they are supposed to understand from history. Findings here coincide with Hall (2011) whose findings indicate that students' interactions with text build personal meaning with text through the incorporation of popular elements. Expanding upon this notion of building meaning and engagement through the use of popular culture, Mr. Sozio spoke about the weekly current event activity that his students do:

> One way I do it in my classroom is through the newspaper and current events where every week the kids have to bring in a current event article. The last question of the activity is the most important, where they have to relate the topic to the current unit of study…It's usually tough at first but once they figure it out they begin to use the economy or whatever else. They also have to cite specific examples from now on and in the past and hopefully by doing that, they will

create connections and importance of the event. (Personal Interview, March 7,

2013)

What Mr. Sozio describes above is a very strong activity that he uses to help the students

create connections to the text and their lives. He asks the students to look for an event

today that they can talk about an asks them to relate what they know or what they have

experienced to the event and back to class as well. This activity can forge genuine

learning and historical empathy through the use of PCNs, or popular culture narratives.

PCNs, again are defined by Staples (2008) as a tool that allows teachers to understand

what students can bring to the classroom via their popular culture knowledge. These are a

valuable tool for the fact that they can be used to bridge in class learning and knowledge

with out of school knowledge and connections. This finding relates back to Lewison,

Flint and Van Sluys's' (2002) second, third and fourth dimensions of literacy, which are

interrogating multiple viewpoints, focusing on sociopolitical issues and taking action and

promoting social justice. These three dimensions relate to both PCNs and Mr. Sozio's

statement in that these types of activities focus the attention of students to look at an

event from both a historical viewpoint as well as through a current lens from the world in

which they live. Second, many of the issues at play in the media today deal with

sociopolitical issues, which reverberate throughout United States history, which allows

the students to connect historical events to events and knowledge today. Finally, the

promoting of social justice can be practiced and observed though this activity by having

the students respond back how they feel or connect to events through this activity with

their responses at the conclusion of the assignment and hopefully they can be moved to

leave a positive impact on the world.

Another avenue in which I recorded students' practice and understanding of historical empathy was through the use of another medium of an audio recording of President John F. Kennedy reporting to congress about the missiles on Cuba. James responded to this audio in an interesting fashion. When asked if responding to the questions and listening to the audio recording of JFK, he stated "I thought it was kind of hard to do" (Group 2 Audio Post-Assessment, 3/7/2013) because of how he talked. His statement demonstrates the necessity of presenting information to students in a variety of ways in order to make sure that the students obtained the information on their own in one way or another. The continuity in answers pertaining to a single resource demonstrates that the students are on the same level when practicing historical empathy with a primary document. Flores-Koulish (2006) findings understanding of the ideas about students practicing historical empathy through the idea of conscientization, in which the teacher is the main contributor to how they can help students properly analyze and understand historical artifacts in order to obtain the proper information and value from the text itself.

Building upon the idea of historical empathy and its importance to social studies classroom is the effect of a personal connection coming through the document or resource and assisting the students in connecting to the text in a personal way. Hanna responded in the *Primary Resource Assessment* packet to the question pertaining to Resident Kennedy's voice in the recording and how it affected her perception of the event by stating that "It was cool listening to someone who had a large part in the event. It gave me new information and made me realize how bad it could be if the missiles struck the U.S." (March 7, 2013). Her statement demonstrates the power that a primary document such as this can have in helping students to develop their practice of historical empathy.

The impact that hearing a voice or seeing someone or something demonstrate the new

information seems to be what helps students connect to new information and helps to

make the new information important and pertinent to them. If we refer back to the notion

of PCNs and their ability to allow students to connect their real world life skills to in-

class learning, the need to recognize our students' ability to connect with voices and

people through different type of media. Though the students struggled at times to obtain

all of the information from the audio recording, the tone of the speaker allowed the

students to obtain a real sense of just how important this event was based on who they

heard and how the speaker sounded, which may be just as valuable to their learning about

the event as obtaining all the information on its own as this type of learning is the main

point of how historical empathy works and why it is so valuable to a social studies

classroom setting. Drawing from the findings of Walker (2009) who claimed that social

studies classrooms are the best place to practice multi-literacies that extend beyond

decoding and printed word by working toward the goals of cultural and critical literacies,

we can begin to understand the power of using a text such as an audio recording to teach

and inform student about an event. By providing a human voice to a historical event it

may allow the students to forge a connection to the text that reading the words alone

cannot provide. When teachers provide their students with the ability to hear the spoken

word in the context that the words were used, those words have the ability to take on a

whole new meaning as the students hear them being used in context and can relate times

when they have spoken in a similar manner. James commented after using the textbooks

that he thought that the book had "an interesting passage, but I'd rather listen to someone

talk or work with something. That seems more real to me" (Group 2 Textbook Post-

Assessment, March 7, 2013). This evidence further refutes the students' interests in how they perceive the media that they use for learning as well as what they like to use to learn and interact with in a classroom.

The Negative Impact of Using Multimedia Resources in Classroom Instruction

Though students tend to enjoy using multimedia as they can relate to the technology in a tremendously positive fashion, an issue with the use of technology with a whole class presented a drawback that was unexpected. With as much as students like to be able to use technology in a classroom to assist in their learning, the students in this study claimed that they struggled at times with some of the media for the fact that they couldn't go back and reread or re-watch a video if they missed information. Rereading emerged in this that many of the students reiterated as a skill they would practice with the textbook multiple times throughout the study. Rereading was a skill I wasn't expecting to encounter as a tool that the students would use or know to rely on as much as they informed me. Thomas stated [about the audio] "I guess, I couldn't understand him sometimes. I thought if it was longer that you could get more information. I'm still not entirely sure what he was talking about" (Group 2 Textbook Post-Assessment, March 7, 2013). Thomas was referring to the accent of the President in this clip. He felt that while there was most likely good information being presented, because he had trouble understanding the words, he was unable to learn from the clip. Opposite of the clip, the textbook proved to be a popular This statement was reiterated by Douglas, who claimed about the textbook, as well, "I actually liked it a little bit better than a video because if you missed something, you can go back and reread it" (Group 3 Textbook Pre-

Assessment, March 7, 2013). Another student also cast his support for textbooks in the

classroom. Thomas claimed that

> I liked it the best because the information was just right there. Like, compared to
>
> the video, if I forgot something, I couldn't just go back and watch it again with
>
> the class, but with the textbook, I could go back every time and look up
>
> information. The teacher wont rewind the video so unless you get it the first time,
>
> it's hard to get every piece of information in a video. (Group 2 Textbook Post-
>
> Assessment, March 7, 2013)

These statements are valid points to have an understanding of for the fact that students

seem to be very aware of how valuable books and physical text can be to learning at ones

own pace. Rereading is a skill that these students rely upon in order to make meaning of

things they read about, fail to understand at first, and read again to fill in the blanks. The

evidence presented here comes at odds with Yang (2009) whose work stated that stated

that students engaged more actively through the use of technology in the classroom. What

should be noted is that while the students failed to understand the audio, they weren't

necessarily disengaged from the material. These students demonstrated that they both

enjoy, and heavily rely upon more formal means of information transmission than

previously mentioned. While Yang focused on identifying how much more her subjects

engaged with technology, my study seemed to come to a conclusion at odds with her

findings at times with the reoccurrence of rereading for comprehension when dealing

with textbooks. This information was a surprising finding that dealt with all three of the

mediums. Rachael, when asked if she enjoys learning from a textbook, stated "I can read

about the event and then go back and reread something if I was unsure [of the meaning]"

(Textbook Pre-Assessment Packet, March, 7, 2013). The trend here points to students understanding the necessity for comprehension in a classroom setting and what skills and techniques to use in order to acquire the full meaning of the texts that they encounter.

Further questioning revealed that some of the students understood their own struggles when it came to different types of media in the classroom. Julie stated " I like videos in social studies but not the long ones. It's easier to get distracted and by the end of it you get distracted and I know I don't remember much of it" (Group 3 Video Pre-Assessment, March, 7, 2013). Her statement reflects the idea that not all students enjoy videos in classes and the videos aren't a substitute for physical materials in class. What her statement points to is the idea that if teacher are to present their students with an in-class video, there should be a provision in place for them to access information if they miss it initially, outside of obtaining it from other students, Furthermore, her statement presents the idea that videos shouldn't be whole class activities but rather short activities that bridge sections of class and learning.

Implications and Conclusions

Given that students are presented daily with many different mediums in which information is presented to them both in school and out of school, this action research project asks, how does the medium through which students receive information affects their ability to engage with and understand the information as well as how students preconceived notions of the medium affect their ability to interact with the medium? Throughout this research, I have discovered three distinct themes corresponding to this question. They are how the multimodal presentation of information increases student engagement in material, how historical empathy can be a tool for engagement in social

studies learning, and that there exists a negative impact of using multimedia resources in classroom instruction. The four dimensions of critical literacy as presented by Lewison, Flint and Sluys (2002) provided me with a solid frame of reference for this study as they advocated heavily for the use of multiple viewpoints, focusing on sociopolitical issues and disrupting the commonplace, which were themes that were taken into consideration when designing this study as I deemed it was important to explore how students interacted, identified, and connect with different types of media used for learning. I derived from focusing on sociopolitical issues and taking action by identifying how students reinforce their own learning and relating what they learn about the event to the issues that the teacher is attempting to get them to connect with and learn from.

Throughout the study, I have been able gain a much fuller understanding of how students interact with different types of media, what the students think of the different type of media that were used in this study, and most importantly, what and which types of media work the best to engage and help the students learn when in used in conjunction with one another. The students in this study, it seems, still liked to have a somewhat physical connection to the material they were interacting with. While using video is engaging for short periods of time and can present a vast amount of information over a short time to an entire class, when students miss information that they feel is pertinent to their understanding of the topic at hand, unless the video is something they can go home and watch online, there really is no way for the students to get the information on their own other than asking others in the class. This limitation to obtaining pertinent information as a whole class demonstrates why information that students need to learn from multiple viewpoints and sources in order to make sure that they have an opportunity

to get the information and so that they can learn in a way at least once that they truly

enjoy.

One implication of this study indicates that teachers must work to present

information in a variety of ways to their students in order to give them the best chance at

connecting with the material. The evidence in this study seems to point toward the idea

that if we approach teaching history utilizing a mixture of traditional and modern media,

that we will be able to more effectively not just get the information to our students, but,

more importantly, that we will be able to get them to care about what they are learning

and how important the lessons can be to their lives. Students want to know that what they

are learning has value to their lives and not just to school as a sole entity. As Barbre

(2010) claimed, one criterion that impacts the validity of the text being explored is the

culture of text itself. How this statement can assist us in our understanding of the issue is

that the teacher must create an atmosphere within the classroom that fosters creativity and

understanding for not just the information being taught, but for the different types of

media being used. Furthermore, if the culture of text, or medium such as a textbook,

video, or an audio recording is misunderstood or disliked by the students, then the

students may find that the information presented by that medium itself is invalid and

therefore not worth concerning oneself over. This sentiment was reiterated by some of the

students during the group interviews and reflected an attitude of understanding of the

importance of some of the historical events they learn about in their classes. As teachers,

we need to make the best effort possible to demonstrate the validity and importance of

the information and the means through which we are expressing this information.

A second implication from this study stems from the conclusion that students tend to want to physically interact with the medium in some form. What can be inferred from the students' claims is that they like watching videos in class because the nature of the video appeals to them. It has moving pictures, voices, and creates a picture that they can relate to because they grew up learning outside of school in this manner. But there is a shortfall to materials such as these. The students, when they missed information, wanted the ability to go back and re-learn what they had missed. With a whole class activity, the students were unable to rediscover information. Another way we can understand this implication is by looking at how the student reacted to textbooks versus an audio recording. The findings of Fox and Exely (2009), where student worked in a multimodal fashion to create knowledge through the use of both traditional and non-traditional exercises (i.e textbooks and websites) supports the idea that students want to work with both web-based technology as well as real-world physical texts. Though the audio recording presented an actual human voice, because the students couldn't interact with the audio in a personal manner like they could with the textbook, the students seemed to be less engaged with the audio, and therefore would be less engaged with the information presented by the audio. The catch with this type of learning seemed to relate to the fact that the students didn't like the fact that they couldn't look back for information like they could if they were doing either a solo activity like reading.

The research conducted here has allowed me to grow as an educator in a variety of ways. Due to my findings, I now am beginning to understand in a much more concrete fashion, how to present information to my students and how that presentation can affect how the students could potentially react to the new information or ideas based on the way

that I teach the new material. If they find the medium boring or confusing, the impact of

the lesson could be lost on them. The issue here isn't necessarily the information being

taught, but rather how one teaches it and the methods they use to implement it. As a

teacher, if you can make the information as accessible to as many of your students as

possible, you can and will get your point across.

  A second impact on my teaching that I have acquired from this study is to never

underestimate the power of physical paper and ink on students' learning. One of the

unexpected findings of this study was that students, for as technologically advanced and

independent as they are, still like to have the power to read and reread on their own. The

students all seemed to enjoy using the video in this study and connected with the voice of

President Kennedy when they heard him. But when it came to the textbook passage, the

students clearly enjoyed having the independence to be able to learn at their own pace. I

think that this is an undervalued right the students need in the classroom and that teachers

need to be cognizant of. Students want to be independent and by giving them the ability

to go back and look up information on their own only empowers them more and allows

them to practice life-long learning. As a teacher, I will try to focus on allowing my

students to practice their own learning as much as possible, because this action of

discovering information and making connections on your own should be the goal of all of

our students.

  A study that has explored many different avenues in search of information

relevant to is question inherently will produce both answers and questions pertinent to its

field and the question at hand. While I obtained critical information to becoming a more

efficient and differentiated instructor, my study revealed that there is more I need to

answer. First, this study is far from comprehensive. The time spent at the school totaled

one school day. The limited amount of time permitted to me leads me to ask what would

more data from a longer period of time look like? Could there be yet another trend that I

have stumbled upon in this investigation that I don't have enough data to see yet? Did I

ask the right questions? How would students respond to another event, presented in the

same types of media, that they have already covered extensively in class? Did their lack

of outside information prohibit them from fully understanding the questions at hand?

From a more general perspective, a few questions that arose for me dealt with

education as a whole. First, have we as educators started to become so focused on using

new technologies in classrooms for everyday instruction, that we completely undervalue

the use of a textbook as a resource for our students? Textbooks, though biased by

publishers and editors, contain a plethora of information that students at the very least can

carry around and use to discover information in a general form. Second, if educators

decide to keep using more and more technology to drive their instruction, what physical

interaction with history can and should teachers provide their students in order to foster

engagement with the information and lessons? Do we as educators even still feel that

physical nature is essential to learning in a digital environment? These are a few of the

questions that presented themselves to me during this study. As for my learning, I feel

that I am a more empowered and knowledgeable educator after completing this action

research project.

By conducting this action research project, I have come to the conclusion that

students learn most effectively when they have a chance to learn in a way that they want

and feel most comfortable. Presenting students with information in a variety of ways is

the most effective method teachers can use to make sure that the majority of their students can learn in a way that they enjoy and that they will truly be able to learn because they like the medium being used. Teachers should take note of what their students like and not just assume that they would all enjoy something Internet or technology based because they are young and growing up in an increasingly technology driven world. Understanding what your students want to work on or interact with is key to getting new information through to your students in a meaningful way that can hopefully leave a lasting impact on their education and more importantly, their lives.

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Appendix A

Name (First Name, Last Initial) _____

Current Grade Level _____Grade

How old are you?

How many siblings do you have?

Do your parents own books? If so, how many?

How many TV's do you have in your home?

How many computers/tablets/Smartphones does your family own?

What types of books have you read in the past two weeks and were any of them read electronically (on a computer or tablet device)?

How often do you use the Internet as a source of information for schoolwork? What types of sites do you visit for information?

What type of a learner do you think you are (watching something new, doing something new, reading about something new)?

How often do you do something educational on the Internet (such as going to Wikipedia to learn about something)?

Does your family get the newspaper delivered to your home?

Do you watch TV with your parents? If so, what types of shows do they watch with you? If not, what do you do with your parents?

What do you like about reading and what do you dislike about reading?

How reliable do you think the Internet is for accurate information and why?

Would you rather have a real book to read from or an electronic book to read from and why?

Do you think videos in class teach you a lot about a subject or no? Why?

Do you ever watch videos online that teach you about something you learned about in school? If so, what did you watch and what did it teach you? If not, do you ever try to find out more about what you learned in class on your own?

What else should I know about how you like to learn that you think is important for a teacher to understand when it comes to presenting information to you in the classroom?