Reimagining the Past/Changing the Present: Teachers Adapting History Curriculum for Cultural Encounters

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Background/Context: *How students develop a capacity to examine and imagine the past impacts how they think about the present and imagine the future. This study contributes to research about teachers' beliefs and practices about teaching United States history through cultural encounters and nontraditional historical narratives. Although there is a small but growing body of research concerning teachers' beliefs and practices regarding historical thinking and inquiry, little research exists on teachers' beliefs and practices about history teaching from a cultural encounters perspective.*

Purpose/Objective/Research Question/Focus of Study*: The study examined teachers' perspectives of a professional development effort designed to promote their students' historical thinking within a cultural encounters curriculum. This curriculum emphasized the role of perspective and historical narrative. The research questions were: (1) What were the K–12 participants' specific examples of lessons and units related to historical cultural encounters? (2) How did they conceptualize their teaching for historical cultural encounters? (3) How did they begin to reconceptualize their views about a cultural encounters history curriculum?*

Research Design: *The study used a qualitative design to examine perceptions of 21 K–12 teachers. A conceptual framework about history teacher thinking and reconceptualization informed the design. Three forms of data— surveys, individual interviews, and lesson plans—were collected about teachers' perceptions of practice and their applications of those perceptions in their classrooms. The surveys were administered throughout the 3-year program cycle and at the final evening colloquium. Interviews were conducted with the 21 teachers approximately 3 months after the end of the project. Lesson plans that teachers constructed at different points in the professional development project were analyzed after its conclusion.*

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Conclusions/Recommendations: *The teachers in this study were each situated differently in their perceptions of a cultural encounters approach to teaching history. Their conceptual frameworks toward history, grounded in their own professional knowledge and teaching expertise, were an important factor in how they reconceptualized their views of curriculum. In addition, their discussions of both intended and enacted teaching provided a forum within which to experiment and try to solve emergent challenges and dilemmas that grew from their perceived changes in their views of practice. As they examined and in some cases began to teach history through often-excluded historical stories and voices, they confronted in differing ways their own stories and narratives in relation to traditional U.S. history.*

> The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims have been born of struggle. . . . If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. The struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. — Frederick Douglass, 1857

Frederick Douglass (1857/1960) spoke these words to persuade African Americans and others not to fight in the imminent Civil War without first being promised citizenship in the United States. But Douglass's words also hold resonance for educators in the 21st century. Teachers' inclusion of the conflicts and the narratives of resistance lived by Douglass and others offers students a possible curriculum of cultural inclusion, hope, and democracy. The struggles that Douglass described, along with other integral civil rights struggles in American history, are rarely discussed in U.S. history classes despite numerous arguments for their inclusion. However, curriculum focused on historical cultural encounters offers the possibility that more students may find images of themselves in history (and the classroom). Students' active inquiry into these historical events promotes a multicultural curriculum, a vision of democracy grounded in the lives and actions of people, historical thinking, and a dynamic perspective of curriculum itself.

The following study examined a professional development effort designed to promote 21 K–12 teachers' adaptation of their history curriculum to promote historical thinking within a cultural encounters curriculum. The goal of the project was to increase the participants'

knowledge of historical thinking and their capacity to imagine and gain new narrative understandings of American history.

The project sought to impact not only how the teachers viewed history but also how they viewed curriculum and what they thought their responsibility was in teaching history. The goal was not merely to contradict the dominant historical narrative, but rather, by complicating and engaging it, to facilitate the participants' reconceptualization of curriculum.

HISTORICAL THINKING AND HISTORICAL IMAGINATION

Historical thinking in general emphasizes interpretive skills. Going beyond "the view of historical thinking as the memorization and recall of the historical events laid out in purportedly objective or realistic accounts" (VanSledright, 1997–1998, p. 2), historical thinking represents a range of activities and thought processes. It involves "learning to question sources, sift and evaluate competing or contradictory perspectives and information, make and critique evidentiary arguments, and understand the importance of context and all habits of historical thinking that prepare . . . people for participation in civic life" (Martin, 2005, p. 1). Furthermore, historical thinking

> requires opportunities for learners to work with various forms of evidence, deal with issues of interpretation, ask and adjudicate questions about the relative significance of events and the nature of historical agency, and cultivate a thoughtful, context-sensitive imagination to fill gaps in evidence trails when they arise. Strategic knowledge dispositions necessary for the development of historical understanding include the capacity to (a) corroborate sources by evaluating them intertextually; (b) make sense of a source author's position in a historical account while also taking into account how investigators themselves impose their own views on what they read; and, (c) construct contextualized and evidence-based interpretations. (VanSledright, 2002, p. 1092)

Awareness of significance, continuity and change, progress and decline, historical agency, empathy and moral judgment, and epistemology and evidence expands the notion of historical thinking (Seixas, 1999). Engaged in historical empathy, teachers can "view history through the eyes of those who lived it, while understanding the limitations of trying to do so" (Fallace, Biscoe, & Perry, 2007, p. 45).

Historical imagination plays a central role in deepening historical thinking, allowing historians to begin to perceive events within an

expanded worldview. Referring to Lee (1984), VanSledright (1997–1998) stated, "In learning to think historically . . . historians are required to imagine the lives and contexts of historical agents under study in order to make sense of their actions and choices. Only then could the historian piece together a sensible narrative that explained events" (p. 4).

Historical imagination contributes to historical thinking. "The historical arts" help students address different questions than traditional print sources" in ways that can focus on an insider's perspective (Levstik & Barton, 2001, p. 173). Examining drawings of Sioux Indians, students can ask what it was like to actually be a Sioux. Through the arts, students can be jolted from a current perspective to a new, different one as they identify with a historical narrative:

> When the arts are an integral part of historical study, students are surrounded by a rich array of images that let them see what things looked like, what people did, how they did them, how people saw themselves or were seen by others. Art is studied as a product of human intention through which an artist or artists create alternate worlds and respond to the worlds created around them. (Levstik & Barton, 2001, p. 181)

The arts also allow students to develop their communicative skills related to the interpretation of historical events through their construction of artistic/aesthetic representations of historical events (Turner-Bisset, 2001).

FINDING NEW HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

In a traditional version of American history, there is a seemingly inevitable march toward freedom and economic prosperity for the majority. As Levstik (1997) stated, "School history often ignores fundamental aspects of historical thinking, presenting a unitary story that emphasizes origin myths over interpretation and consensus over controversy" (p. 48). Minorities are often presented through stereotypes or "brief, heroic sketches of individual members . . . whose role it is to represent [the] entire group" (Miller, 1998, p. 77). Although recognizing a "melting pot" America, this narrative is framed by a Western European perspective and rarely includes the words of others who fought for inclusion. If the slave rebellions, women's suffrage, or Wobbly class struggles are presented in textbooks, they represent proof of the inextricable march of democracy rather than being markers of the uncertain nature of grassroots democracy. Paraphrasing Marable (2007), this traditional version of American

history, codified in textbooks and setting the boundaries of civic discourse, suggests the inevitable conquest of land and people. It stresses "that our history's underlying core democratic values can be transported and adopted by other peoples in distant lands, thereby enhancing the quality of their lives. . . . To become 'American' is to accept the legitimacy of this master narrative" (p. 2).

Students, however, may find new historical narratives by taking a perspectival approach to history. In such an approach, teachers can ask students to consider the cultural uses of history through a number of questions: "Why are some voices heard and not others? How is the past manipulated for present purposes? How might different historical voices help us make better sense, not just out of the past, but out of the present?" (Levstik, 1997, p. 49).

By examining these and other questions from multiple cultural perspectives, we can begin to reimagine our past in ways that can have a profound impact on our present lives. As Marable (2007) stated, "The process of frank reevaluation of a shared past of suffering and struggle may prompt a rededication to enduring democratic values and policies, which will bring at long last all elements of our fragmented nation into a common civic project" (p. xxi). This approach recognizes that the form and content of historical inquiry frame the way people view the present, either validating taken-for-granted views of the world or offering a democratizing critique to it. Marable reminded us that "the darkest aspects of American history have often been hidden from plain view because of the power of the past—or at least the power of the popularly perceived past—to shape the realities of our daily lives" (p. 3).

The omission also applies to how democracy remains viable through the ongoing collective action and critique of people. If students do not study this collective action, it may not exist in their minds. Levstik (1997) asked what sort of collective memory a democracy requires and how best to engage students with a critical and diverse exposure to the study of history. She stated, "Some people—especially some public policy makers—seem to believe in the possibility that a collective memory is just the facts—information about the past unencumbered by interpretation and free of 'revisionism'" (p. 48). She called for an ongoing interpretation and revision of history, for "hearing new voices, rethinking old assumptions, and searching for more complete evidence" (p. 48).

TEACHER RECONCEPTUALIZATION OF PRACTICE

There is a small but growing body of research about teachers' beliefs and practices regarding historical thinking and inquiry. Although there has

been considerable research concerning teaching history, "understanding the experiences of teachers who aim to teach students the methods and problematic nature of history is still elusive" (Martin, 2005, p. 3). It is thought that teachers' beliefs about history as a discipline frame their work with students (Mayer, 2006) and how they see the relationship between those beliefs and their changing practice (Goodman & Adler, 1985). Furthermore, teachers' knowledge schemes for their disciplines and how they have been socialized within their discipline impact how they teach history (Grossman & Stodolsky, 1994; Stodolsky & Grossman, 2000). As Yeager and Wilson (1997) stated, citing Downey and Levstik, (1991), "Teachers' understandings of the discipline of history and of historical thinking enable them to be more sensitive to the issues of historical interpretation, to multiple causation, and to the importance of seeing events in a broad context" (p. 121).

Teacher purpose and orientation in teaching history can be powerful contexts for practice (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Van Hover & Yeager, 2007). For example, in a case study of a second-year history teacher, Van Hover and Yeager discovered that this teacher's notion of her teaching purpose was more important to her practice than the notion of historical thinking, with which she was familiar: "her practices were consistent with her purpose; and she controlled her class to accomplish that purpose" (p. 670). This teacher's personal moral values played a decisive role in her practice with classroom curriculum.

How teachers think students learn history is central to how they teach history (Goodman & Adler, 1985). Quinlan (1999) has characterized a dichotomy in teachers' views of students as either "producers" or "consumers" of historical understandings. Teachers who view students as producers seek to have them use the tools of historiography and act as history detectives. Teachers who view students as consumers of history might indoctrinate students in an approach to learning history that ignores historical thinking and emphasizes "origin myths over interpretation and consensus over controversy" (Levstik, 1997, p.48). Even if teachers wish to begin to teach history through multiple cultural perspectives, they often simply lack the knowledge to do so.

Not only can contradictions in purpose and beliefs cause dilemmas for teachers, but so can changes in their practice (Wills, 2007). Some of these stem from the shifting notion of state educational standards and accountability requirements in relation to history (Van Hover, Hicks, & Irwin, 2007; Wills). Additional dilemmas may stem from the "paradox of interpretation" that results from the rejection of an authoritative version of the past, highlighting the "limits [to] our ability to know about the past with any resolute certainty" (VanSledright, 2002, p. 1102). Instead of

facts, there are only "traces and residues, which must be interpreted. In the process of interpretation we bring our own temporal positions to bear on these residues, in ways that require the imposition of a host of present-day assumptions not shared by our predecessors" (VanSledright, 2002, p. 1102).

METHODOLOGY

The following study examined 21 K–12 teachers from a total of approximately 300 who were involved in a large-scale professional development project. The 21 teachers in this study were all living in a section of a Western state undergoing a shift in demographics. Predominantly European American as recently 10 years ago, this state has become increasingly diverse. Over the past 5 years, the region has seen a dramatic increase in its Hispanic, Russian, and Asian populations, both foreign- and native born. Motivated by a wish to be responsive to this changing demographic, the teachers volunteered to be part of this professional development effort to learn to teach in more diverse ways. Before this study, few of these teachers had significant exposure to multicultural education and about half of them to teaching history through historical thinking. In this professional development effort, they took part in a cultural encounters approach to history and a collaborative approach to curriculum development.

This professional development project, the American History Project,[1] included both elementary and secondary teachers. Funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, three primary institutions partnered to develop and implement the professional development effort. Wishing to build on mutual expertise, the partners were the college of liberal arts at a large research university, the college of education at the same university, and an educational service district, an umbrella organization that coordinated a number of smaller school districts. The partners sought to build on the distributed nature of the unique knowledge and expertise of one another. For example, the historians brought in knowledge of historiography, diverse contributions to American history, cultural encounters in America, and specific—and rich—historical content. The college of education supplied knowledge of educational partnerships, multicultural education, learning-centered and authentic approaches to history, learning communities, and forms of situated teacher professional development. Over the course of 3 years, project participants took part in a range of activities, including up to fifteen 3-hour colloquia and two weeklong summer institutes. In the summer workshops, teachers discussed ways that history could be taught in K–12

classrooms using the actual methodologies that historians use in their work researching history from a cultural encounters perspective.

At the colloquia, historians were paired with experts in pedagogy. There was a range of historians. Ronald Takaki presented multicultural theory; Sherry Smith, U.S. army officers' perceptions of Native Americans in the American West; Liping Zhu, the Chinese immigrant experience in the Northwest; Daryl Milner, early African Americans' experience in the Northwest; and Jaclyn Peterson, interaction between Jesuits and Indians in the Northwest. Some of the experts in pedagogy, often local teachers, presented a number of topics. These included how to use document-based questions, oral histories as classroom methodologies, online sources of primary source documents, readers' theater in history, and dramatic role-playing in history. Each of these colloquia was organized to give the teachers time to use the methodology and to engage in small-group planning and discussion. At the summer institutes, participants had more time for planning, discussion, and engaging in experiential activities, such as hearing oral histories in a local international district and engaging in artifact analysis at a historic reserve.

The project's theoretical framework combined historical perceptions, procedures, and meanings within a situated professional development approach. Drawing from the early work of Becker (1931, 1966), the project sought to reduce the divide between history and everyday life. Becker (1931) argued,

> Mr. Everyman would be astonished to learn that he is an historian. . . . In the realm of consciousness he has been doing that fundamental thing which enables man alone to have, properly speaking, a history: he has been re-enforcing and enriching his immediate perceptions to the end that he may live in a world of semblance more spacious and satisfying than is to be found within the narrow confines of the fleeting present moment. (pp. 139–140)

Specifically, it is this world of semblance that the project aimed to expand. The project was also premised on the assumption that adult learning is both situated and experiential. Situated learning suggests that knowledge is located within the particular physical and social contexts of learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1993). Situated learning perspectives emphasize teacher agency and the relationships they make between personal meanings, work, and acquisition of new ways of teaching (Sawyer, 2004). Collaborating with peers, learners distribute knowledge and skills among themselves, ideally creating a learning context in

which the collective learning is equivalent to more than the sum of the individual parts. Advocating the importance of a situated perspective to teacher professional development, Borko (2004) found that teacher knowledge can change through intensive professional development programs located in classrooms, school communities, and professional development courses or workshops.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

This study examined three research questions: (1) What were the K–12 participants' specific examples of lessons and units related to historical cultural encounters? (2) How did the participants conceptualize their teaching for historical cultural encounters? (3) How did the participants begin to reconceptualize their views concerning a cultural encounters history curriculum? The combination of these questions presents a framework for analyzing teacher thinking and reconceptualization that is grounded in practice.

Three forms of data were collected: surveys, individual interviews, and lesson plans. Both the surveys and interviews were constructed around four major themes: the teachers' (1) historical content knowledge, (2) teaching practice, (3) perceptions of cultural contacts, and (4) perceptions of student learning and achievement. The surveys were administered throughout the 3-year program cycle and at the final evening colloquium. The surveys specifically allowed researchers to examine teachers' changing beliefs. Follow-up interviews were conducted with the 21 teachers approximately 3 months after the end of the project. This date was selected to decrease a possible contextual bias that may have been found in interviews conducted during or immediately after the professional development sessions.

The interview data were analyzed in a three-step process that took the form of a series of compressions of the data (Huberman, 1995). The data moved from edited initial interview to a secondary coding table with low-inference snippets from the interviews, and then to a primary coding table with larger, overarching themes. The three research questions guided the analysis (Yin, 1984). After the primary codes were assigned, the secondary tables were studied again to identify additional and possibly stronger examples of emergent themes and patterns and to search for irregularities and contradictory cases (Huberman; Merriam, 1988).

The study had a few limitations. The first was that the study's participants generated the data in the form of self-reports during their interviews concerning conceptions of history and teaching practice. To overcome this limitation, lesson plans were added to the study to broaden

its scope and add possibly conflicting data. In addition, interviews were constructed with internal triangulation, in which questions were asked from differing perspectives. The second limitation was that the authors of this article were organizers of the professional development project. With three exceptions, however, they did not personally know the participants. Furthermore, in an attempt to encourage more candid responses from the participants, interviews were primarily conducted by graduate students who were not involved in the professional development segment of the project.

EXAMPLES OF PRACTICE: CHALLENGING THE DOMINANT NARRATIVE

To ground more concretely the subsequent discussion of how our participants conceptualized their practice, the following section offers a few examples of lessons that teachers in the history project wrote with each other. It is important to note that these examples only include those lessons explicitly discussed as having been taught. Although the specific lessons varied from teacher to teacher, the following themes in relation to cultural narratives emerged.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW CULTURAL NARRATIVES

Nine participants involved students in investigations of lesser known American historical narratives. For example, elementary school teachers had their students investigate Asian history through women's letters; the lives of 19th-century American children through diaries; and the Japanese American experience during World War II through oral histories.

In a variation on this theme, teachers integrated art into their curriculum to promote their students' engagement in these historical investigations. One fourth-grade teacher described a musical that she and her students crafted, mentioning that she had students learn about history as they "edited the musical to include new perspectives …[It was] the westward movement modified." In these activities, teachers sought to have students develop narratives of the "other" America, examining how different groups continued to progress and contribute to the American experience even while experiencing adversity.

CRITIQUING THE TRADITIONAL NARRATIVE

Seven teachers examined the traditional narrative in U.S. history in their

classes while at the same time critiquing and problematizing it. For example, these teachers had their students examine the U.S. Constitution in relation to the issue of slavery, investigate World War II through journal entries written by Japanese soldiers, examine how historical perspectives vary according to the time of investigation, and examine the Constitution through a voting rights lens. One high school teacher described how his class performed a "reenactment of the Andersonville trial. [His students] were Captain Henry Wertz, the judge, the jury, and all the witnesses. [They were] in the middle of the trial, arguing, cross-examining, that sort of stuff. [Students could find] what it looked like from the prisoners' perspective or the Confederate perspective." As the students in this and other classes explored history, they constructed new understandings while deconstructing more conventional representations of the events, using contrasting and opposing perspectives.

TEACHERS' CONCEPTIONS OF PRACTICE

An examination of these lessons raises the question concerning what patterns emerged as teachers conceptualized their teaching for historical cultural encounters. As teachers wrote their lesson and unit plans, what were they thinking with regard to history, cultural narratives, and pedagogy? The following list of six themes identifies how these participants thought about their curriculum from a cultural encounters perspective. The themes are listed in hierarchical order, from the highest number of teachers discussing each theme to the lowest; the number following the theme indicates how many teachers discussed it.

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF HISTORICAL CONTENT IN TEACHING HISTORY (21 TEACHERS)

> I learned a ton about history. …When Bill Bigelow . . . came and we had his book, *Rethinking Columbus*, I did that. Kids loved . . . the fact that there is another story to Columbus. . . . After reading *Rethinking Columbus*, it made me, as a teacher, always go more towards primary documents.

Another elementary teacher mentioned, "[I am] learning to see history from multiple perspectives, including the legacy of conquest and peoples who were already here. This gives me teaching insights."

Although all the teachers in this study discussed content in relation to their classes and students, a dichotomy emerged between those teachers who examined historical content through a pedagogical lens, as these

two teachers did, and those who examined content as the primary focus, with teaching a secondary focus. One middle school teacher said, “There was some dividedness in my group, between teachers who were there to just be there for their intellectual growth and teachers who were there to gather ideas for the classroom.”

In terms of a pedagogical lens, 16 teachers made explicit connections to their students as they discussed the importance of learning new historical ideas. For example, 5 teachers mentioned the topic of immigration as a bridge between history and the lives of their students through specific classroom activities. One high school teacher expanded on this theme:

> What I really enjoyed were the talks about immigration. . . . It’s kind of like everyone has got something historical to share and you know, it made me look at history a little differently and I think apply it a little more to myself. You know, like where did my family come from?

Eleven of these teachers sought ways to use in their classrooms some of the historical methodologies they themselves had learned. Nancy, a high school teacher, stated, “[My students] have a better understanding of primary sources because they’d actually gone through that process themselves as a historian.” Perhaps indicating a previous emphasis on classroom activities over historical content in her class, she came to realize the importance of historical content: “One of the six major themes that we cover is gender structure and social structure; [what was] cool was when [a presenter] enlightened me to all these different sources that I wouldn’t have even thought of—about content—wow!” She continued, “I’ve changed the way I’ve taught from 3 years ago . . . where history is more interactive versus just reading a textbook. I use a textbook more as supplemental material now, whereas before it was kind of the main source of the class.”

In contrast to those 16 teachers who explicitly used pedagogy as a lens, 5 other teachers were more focused on historical content. Although 3 of these teachers also mentioned teaching, for them, the pedagogy application was secondary to the discussion of the value of historical content. For example, analyzing why content is so important, Don, a high school teacher, said:

> [It’s] the recognition of the power of content . . . the question of [knowing what] you’re talking about. That’s true, because we were talking about the reality of Chinese life in America. We were

> talking about the reality of these women's lives working in the mills in New England. We were talking about the reality of all these kinds of things . . . [and how] people . . . and events are used over time to support the prejudices of a particular moment in time.

This theme resonated with these 5 teachers. Erin, a middle school teacher, stated, "If I understand the topic more deeply as their teacher, then I have a lot in my arsenal to draw from to try to get them [her students] to think more deeply." She continued,

> You can cherry-pick in social studies, and you know the facts are so slippery because they are somebody's narrative, somebody's story. That's why you have to be so careful with them. The more you know, the more likely I think it is that you are going to have some semblance of "truth" come forth for students.

Two teachers discussed the history content independent of pedagogy, stressing the intellectual value of learning a more complex version of history. For example, an elementary teacher shared these thoughts:

> I've come to realize how brutal the European dominance in the United States has been. . . . Whether it was Spain, France, [or] England . . . they came in and conquered and brought diseases, and they dominated and they manipulated and destroyed. In many ways it was not a pleasant history; it was kind of an ugly history. And then because we were the conquerors, and when I say "we" again, European colonists, we kind of supplemented or shoved down the history of all these indigenous cultures, or we just ignored them.

All the teachers noted how learning new historical content was important. In terms of specific content, they mentioned a number of historical events and documents, including the Constitution, immigration, slavery, civil rights, wars, Lewis and Clark, Native Americans, the legacy of conquest, and the dynamic mix of cultures in any specific place.

2. THE VALUE OF AN AESTHETIC/IMAGINATIVE HISTORY CURRICULUM (20 TEACHERS)

> [With multigenre aesthetic representations] you're challenging your preconceived notions of how it was, and I think that that's

> where I'd like to go a little bit more with kids—with multigenre, because you can see . . . where some students [are] with their writing, they just echo the same old "crap." It would be cool if they could have these discoveries: "Oh what I thought would be true, wasn't really [true]! I was just reiterating and reinforcing the old idea that all slaves were paralyzed and all they could do was run away. Well, that's not true. Frederick Douglass slapped his owner in the face and lived to tell the story."

In a multigenre representation of an event, students explore (and often construct) the meaning of a situation through various media. For example, following this history project, this teacher, Erin, let one student select as a topic of investigation Northwest Indian schools in the late 19th and early 20th centuries; basically, these were boarding schools founded to resocialize Native American children to Western culture. This student represented the experience of the Native American children through letters, tea party invitations, diaries, and newspaper accounts. Erin initiated this project to conduct her own investigation into how multigenre representations of an event can allow students to examine more critically how events change in meaning based on their form of representation.

Significantly, the majority of participants discussed the importance of an aesthetic/imaginative curriculum in relation to teaching history. Of the 21 participants, 20 of thought that an aesthetic/imaginative curriculum could promote student learning. None discussed the aesthetic component as being valid on its own terms, that is, art for art's sake. Instead, they considered the use of this curriculum as one way to deepen, or allow students access to, different perspectives of history—the hidden meanings and unfamiliar narratives of people, culture, and place. Jody, a high school teacher, exemplified this complexity while discussing the use of Bill Bigelow's text, *Rethinking Columbus* (1998):

> It's more like the emotional, aesthetic experience within the text, as opposed to having this other perspective. . . . [I liked] the whole analyzing the source itself, and the bias. . . . And I really liked the idea of looking at different textbooks . . . comparing how . . . they told the story [of Columbus]. And then I . . . applied that to video. I brought in a couple of video clips about Columbus landing on the island. And we looked at two different video clips and looked at how the director portrayed it.

Six teachers mentioned how their students incorporated the use of art as they generated document-based questions (DBQs). In DBQ activities,

students examine historical documents, raising questions from these documents to use as a lens for further inquiry. For example, Rita, a high school teacher, stated,

> I am starting a storyline next week. . . . I'll use the primary documents with the DBQs. We'll be doing some role-playing and acting, so we'll use drama too. I know that history isn't a set of facts that you deliver to kids. Instead of worrying about preparing students for the tests—if we ask for DBQs and we expect them to read with understanding, they are going to.

Ten teachers described how they used art in their classes as a means to promote their students' imaginative capacity and emotional connections to history as the students examined new primary sources. In this sense, students used various media as a way to position themselves in unfamiliar and multiple historical perspectives. For example, one middle school teacher considered how she intended to have her students connect art to a historical timeline:

> I think it would be great [to show what] colonies looked like. Have the students draw a picture of what someone was farming in the South, in the middle, in the North and just how different that would be . . . having those big images popping out from a little map I think would be really powerful.

Three participants mentioned using pictures from the Bigelow (1998) text to have their students see unfamiliar, counterintuitive images.

Seven of the teachers talked about engaging their students in mock trials or performing role-plays to experience conflicting dialogues, but in a structured and relatively safe way. Rita discussed using mock trials: "[I'm trying to use] more hands-on learning, mock trials, mock treaties, a lot more discussion. . . . I lecture less, let the kids figure things out. . . . Mock trials require research skills, content knowledge, [and] communication skills."

3. THE DYNAMIC NATURE OF HISTORY CURRICULUM (20 TEACHERS)

> There are new things being discovered all the time that are altering the story line, and so you have an immense amount of power as a social studies or history teacher. You have to be careful because—think about those teachers who get up and they are right about

> everything . . . I like the idea of apprenticing students who get the skills of doing research and look at it from the standpoint that we are going to try to put something together here. . . . It's tricky, but I think that's also why people who teach social studies come under fire: "You're teaching my kids—that's not the truth I know. Do you mean Columbus wasn't a hero?"

As Erin's words suggest, she and other teachers in this study recognized the dynamic and contested nature of historical events. However, as the teachers began to challenge the standard story of American history, they also gained a new appreciation for how fluid, dynamic, and open history as subject matter can be (Stodolsky & Grossman, 1995). Rather than understanding subject matter as defined and fixed—with the correct answers found within a text—20 teachers began to see that history can be understood through its uncertain nature, that is, through the study of multiple and often little-recognized perspectives. Thinking about teaching from a cultural encounters perspective, these teachers' understanding of curriculum changed (even though their explicit articulation of curriculum as a concept may not have changed).

Many specific examples of this change in pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) (Grossman & Stodolsky, 1994; Shulman, 1986; Stodolsky, 1993) were closely related to newer and more authentic ways in which these participants interacted with history content and knowledge. As they began to construct a reading of history based on their use of primary-source documents, either in person (for example, at an archeological dig) or in digitized form (from the Internet), these teachers began to conceptualize something similar for their students. Although initially only 6 teachers viewed content as isolated book knowledge, at the end of the project, none of them did so. Instead, their notion of historical content in their classrooms was a blend of more primary forms of historical representations and active ways of student learning.

Although none of the teachers in this study discussed his or her teaching in terms of curriculum theory—in fact, teachers only used the word *curriculum* in relation to prescribed content—their notion of PCK can be surmised. For example, Lavern, an elementary teacher, discussed her new conception of teaching this way: "I would have stuck strictly with the textbook, which is very limited, and I wouldn't even have thought so. . . . Now I'm saying, 'Man, that book is just an outline.'" Instead, Lavern mentioned teaching with a story-line approach and having the students "bring history alive through enactments."

This notion of bringing history alive was grounded in the need for these teachers to explore firsthand new and previously unimagined

cultural perspectives. In changing their notion about how to interact with history through the examination of culturally focused primary-source documents, these teachers replaced a packaged textbook interpretation, often with an authoritarian voice (Wineburg, 2001), with one that could be understood in its telling—by the students.

Seven teachers began to realize the inadequacy of textbooks. As Rita explained, "Our history textbooks are way off target. It is not that we don't want to teach about cultural diversity; it's having the resources to actually teach those things when we are given textbooks that don't give those perspectives."

4. THE POLITICAL AND TRANSFORMATIVE NATURE OF HISTORY CURRICULUM (17 TEACHERS)

> We [the teachers] were looking at images. . . . It was on the cold war and the 50s . . . and the whole aesthetic of the time . . . things that kids would watch in school about hygiene and how things were really geared toward, if you stuck one little toe out of line, you were a communist . . . and things were scary. [We were] just using pop culture . . . from pictures to magazine covers to you know those pulp fiction covers of those little novels to movies. . . . And lots of these images were recognized and recognizable. . . . People were having a lot of "aha" experiences.

Erin stated that some of the images from popular culture that she and other participants observed resonated strongly with them. What resonated deeply for these teachers, as can be seen from this particular quote, was not just what the image meant to them, but rather how it had played a role in their own personal indoctrination into a version of the U.S. story.

Most of these political dimensions were not so much about formal politics or war, but rather about efforts by various groups to achieve equitable and democratic treatment in this country. On the historical level, the political dimension focused often on the teller of events: Whose voices in history are included and whose are excluded? Who is privileged as a historical agent and who is not? Whose knowledge is valued, and whose knowledge is not valued? What do different events look like from different perspectives? Teachers saw a range of events, such as slavery/freedom, voting rights, immigration rights, social/civil rights, and more formal political rights (e.g., the McCarthy hearings) as incorporating a political dimension. For example, one teacher sought to "empower students [by examining] the House Un-American Activities Committee

and compar[ing] it with the Patriot Act."

Furthermore, the participants wondered about the manipulation of images, as Don did here about York, the African American who accompanied Lewis and Clark on their famous journey along the Oregon Trail: "How York had been differently portrayed by various authors for different reasons. How sort of every generation had a different reinvention of York for whatever its own agenda was." Or, as Rita put it, "I am really more conscious about who is telling the story from whose eyes. It's made me look at the materials I have available for my kids."

In addition, at least one participant, Erin, found a complex classroom level to the political dimension. She mentioned that many of her teenage students who may have been alienated previously from the study of more traditional U.S. history gained a new level of access to historical inquiry as they examined more diverse historical stories and representations:

> There is something a little different when a female author/historian goes after those stories. Maybe you can't fully understand the perspective of someone from the past, but when you're crossing gender lines, ethnic lines, wherever the lines are. . . the more lines you have to cross, the more removed you are from your subject.

Erin then suggested that when students found a greater personal connection to the subject matter, they began to see themselves differently as well: "I have female students tell me they want to be history teachers [now]. That's a big change."

The political dimension also involved the teachers' consideration concerning how students could become more empowered by learning how people have stood up for their rights throughout history, as evidenced by units considering civil rights and voting rights. In this sense, a cultural encounters approach became a humanizing curriculum, giving students voice and inspiration.

5. THE CULTURAL NATURE OF HISTORY CURRICULUM (16 TEACHERS)

All the teachers knew before they took part in this study that teaching and learning ultimately connect to real-world events. Still, 6 of them taught history in a decontextualized way, organized more by chronology than by theme. As these teachers began to consider teaching and, in some cases, began to teach by having their students explore the interplay of cultural encounters, they began to realize that the cultural landscape

of the United States has always evolved in relational ways. For example, Lavern described this change in her perceptions:

> You can't just say "Native America" because think about how many tribes there are. Even in the Pacific Northwest . . . it's just broken down so you can't just say "the Indians." You can't lump all American Indians into "Indians" because the tribes fought each other. . . . You don't just look at the incoming Europeans; you look at the trappers that were there, the Native Americans, the missionaries, the women, the poor, the rich. . . . You look at the blending of cultures in one place.

Another teacher stated, "The biggest thing I learned was there were different perspectives of history . . . that [you need] to be more critical about teaching history as far as resources and perspective . . . I kind of knew that, but not at the forefront."

In contrast to teaching history in a decontextualized way, 11 teachers began to discuss culture not as an abstraction but as a manifestation of, and a context for, lives.

6. THE INTERSECTION OF HISTORY CURRICULUM AND LIVES (11 TEACHERS)

Eleven participants made explicit connections between the study of history and their own or their students' lives. For example, an elementary teacher stated,

> Well, it really supported my belief . . . that we try to objectify history and make it dates and periods and epochs and facts, but [I now] realize that it's about people. It's about people. It's nice to have that way to compartmentalize and linearize history, but history is, number one, not that convenient, and number two, it's much bigger than that. That's nice for making it a science, I suppose, but history is the stories and the people and the encounters.

Only 4 of the participants, though, explicitly discussed how the process of interpretation linked past lives with the current lives of their students (and themselves). For example, Erin's earlier statement about how historical data become more abstract based on the number of identity lines one crosses (gender, ethnicity) speaks to a dilemma in this intersection of narratives: Identity similarities allow access but can create identification and limit perspective.

Twelve of the participants made connections between a cultural encounters approach and their own social and educational histories. Among these teachers, however, variations existed in how they viewed these intersections. On one end of the spectrum was Eric, a high school teacher who previously had a strong European American focus to his teaching. He began to experience a sense of near cognitive dissonance—at least initially—when considering a cultural encounters approach in his classrooms. He stated,

> I examin[ed] my sense of how I have held onto my story of America. I have tried really hard not to make it the basal reader kind of mainstream history. I've tried to incorporate the varying viewpoints and honor the diverse prospects of history, but it just became clear to me how many there are and how there's validity in more viewpoints than one. . . . We often think that because we are in the West and because it's largely an Anglo population except for the Native Americans and Asians, that there wasn't racism directed towards African Americans. You can imagine my surprise when I heard participants . . . saying that_____ was the worst city in America to be Black and unemployed. I had no idea.

On the other end of the spectrum, the dissonance that Elizabeth, an African American teacher, experienced came not from learning about a cultural encounters approach to teaching. Rather, her dissonance came from her previous attempts to teach history from a dominant-narrative approach. The change led to a greater sense of liberation, not dissonance: "It gives me the freedom to tell the truth. . . . I can tell the truth about Columbus and know what I'm talking about this year." Elizabeth suggested that although she knew that a story existed different from the dominant cultural narrative she used to teach, she found it difficult to allow her students in an upper-middle-class and primarily European American suburb to explore history through multiple cultural encounters. After working with other teachers in this project, however, Elizabeth felt liberated to teach in ways that she considered honest.

As mentioned, 9 of the teachers did not make personal connections with a cultural encounters approach in their discussions of teaching. For example, one elementary teacher stated, "When I have children in my classroom from different cultures, we try to learn specific things about what they do. We can't talk a lot about religion in class, but that comes out, too . . . I have to be careful about how I answer questions." In addition, some of the teachers mentioned that they were worried about the impact that a cultural encounters curriculum might have on their

students. One mentioned that she experienced a "dilemma in knowing how to teach multiculturalism without appearing to 'bash the White guy.'"

TEACHERS' RECONCEPTUALIZATION OF THEIR PRACTICE

Elizabeth's words about finding truth in a cultural encounters curriculum suggest that each teacher in this study was situated differently in his or her approach to history. To begin to examine these differences among the teachers in relation to their thinking about teaching historical thinking within a cultural encounters curriculum, teachers were sorted according to where they stood—both before and after the program—on a two-dimensional matrix. On this matrix, one axis included their conceptions of historical thinking, and the other their conceptions of a cultural encounters curriculum. With little awareness about one end of the spectrum and considerable awareness on the other end for both dimensions, a four-cell matrix was developed (both limited, both considerable, and two mixed). Separately, teachers who entered the program with fairly sophisticated conceptual knowledge about teaching history, but not related to cultural encounters, were indicated.

Consistent patterns emerged. First, 12 teachers entered the program with a relatively conventional purpose for teaching history, viewing students more as consumers of history. Of these 12, 9 had a clear emergent or relatively well-developed framework related to teaching for cultural encounters after the program. For example, Eric stated what he thought prior to the project:

> [I thought that] to be a competent or proficient teacher, you merely needed to understand the course of American history and . . . be able to give the whole lesson, lecture, from recital . . . just like a concert pianist goes to the concert, sits down, plays the whole concerto from memory. You have this comfortable sense of history in mind and it may not be the real deal. . . . It forced me to reexamine my version.

An elementary teacher said, "History as it was taught to me tended to be pretty myopic, I guess, so I love this new revisiting history and opening it up." After the program, these 9 teachers also discussed lessons that they had used, which included teaching for historical thinking. They appeared to talk about teaching for cultural encounters and historical thinking in tandem. It was among this group that the most dramatic change toward the inclusion of historical thinking and cultural encounters in the discussion of lessons was noted. It was almost as if their new

purpose in (or beliefs about) teaching history scaffolded their views about teaching for historical thinking.

None of the additional 3 teachers who basically remained in the low conceptual group throughout the program eventually articulated explicit lessons that engaged students in historical thinking. Rather, these teachers discussed teaching with historical thinking in a relatively superficial, generic way. One of these teachers may have begun to problematize a cultural encounters approach, as evidenced in the "not wanting to 'bash the White guy'" statement. Another of these participants stated, "There was a tremendous amount of information on Lewis and Clark." When asked to discuss changes in her conceptions of history that resulted from the program, she responded, "Not much; I loved history before the program."

Second, and somewhat conversely, all the teachers who at the end of the program described lessons with an explicit historical thinking component demonstrated a relatively well-articulated conceptual framework for teaching history. This group included the 9 teachers mentioned previously, as well as an additional 9 who entered the program with a conceptual purpose for teaching history already in place (e.g., teaching for social justice/awareness, civics, constitutional issues, and student critical thinking). For example, Erin aimed for her students to develop civic-mindedness, Jody for critical thinking, and Nancy for social awareness, if not social justice. These teachers saw their students as producers of history—with their curriculum situated within a meaningful social context. They did not teach historical thinking skills in a vacuum. Interestingly, those who began the program with a preexisting conceptual framework not related to cultural encounters eventually did incorporate a cultural encounters curriculum into their conceptual framework. However, the notion of cultural encounters was assimilated into their existing conceptual frameworks, which remained fairly consistent throughout the program. The only exception was Jody, whose initial orientation was more toward her students developing a critical perspective toward history. She continued that approach, but subsumed it within a cultural encounters curriculum and added a range of historical thinking approaches.

The 9 teachers who entered the project with a clear framework mentioned that the project provided them with new intellectual tools to aid in existing teaching goals. For example, Erin had just begun wondering about how to have her students use multigenre texts to represent different perspectives of historical events and individuals. And although this project did not focus on the use of multigenre teaching, it did have an imaginative component. Erin said,

> I actually used this [in class]. . . . There was a . . . person [presenter Catherine Franklin] who brought in an activity where we used a bunch of primary sources that reflected different perceptions on the issue of women's voting rights. . . . People would read their primary source and they would stand up and speak from that perspective and it was fascinating. There were the suffragettes who were represented and there were more critical voices. . . . There were two other groups. . . . One was more in support and one was not. Actually that would have been a good warm-up for a multigenre project—thinking about perspective. The question would have been—can we fully understand from one primary source, can we fully understand the person? You're guessing. . . . It stuck with me.

Furthermore, these 15 participants stressed learning about content as a way to deepen and make more complex their understanding of competing voices in history. Jody, a high school teacher, stated,

> the biggest thing I learned was about the different perspectives of history, and the need to be more critical about teaching history as far as using resources and what perspective I'm teaching it from. . . I kind of knew that, but . . . it wasn't brought to the forefront for me.

Don stated,

> the project exposed us to . . . women working in factories during the colonial period. That's an important area and a weak area for me. I mean I had known that but to make that connection that early in history where we so often think about women in the workplace [in a way that is] new and different.

Another teacher mentioned how the project helped her to expand and clarify her notion of how to teach history: "It kind of all fit together. It made more sense. And I could understand things that happened in the past and be able to talk about what possibly could be happening now. It just seemed to help me pull everything together."

Last, only one teacher, Elizabeth, who started with a complex awareness of a cultural encounters approach to history, was not initially describing lessons involving historical thinking. After her sense of validation regarding the importance of a cultural encounters curriculum, Elizabeth began

to see her students as more critical producers of knowledge and described ways to engage them in historical thinking and inquiry.

DISCUSSION: TEACHER THINKING AND CURRICULUM THAT REIMAGINES THE PAST

As the participants reconceptualized their views of curriculum in relation to a cultural encounters approach to history, they did so in ways that were not "cookie cutter," but rather that grew from their own professional knowledge and expertise in the classroom. Consistent with other research, it was found that their teaching practices were mediated by their beliefs, views of students, and perceptions of curriculum (Van Hover et al., 2007). This professional knowledge interacted with the new historical content to which they were exposed. Fifteen teachers recognized the importance of teachers having a rich understanding of history and historical thinking to be able to teach historical thinking to their students (Mayer, 2006).

As they devised curriculum for their students, most of these teachers identified tools that their students could use to work as historians in learning history. However, there was a large range in depth and purpose among the teachers concerning how they thought about integrating historical thinking into a cultural encounters curriculum. The 9 teachers with a more deeply developed orientation to the underlying belief in the value of teaching for historical thinking, often toward a particular type of curriculum (civics, cultural), more consistently developed lessons and talked about history as a dynamic and interpretive endeavor for their students.

However, even after completing the project, 7 teachers continued to exhibit a relatively generic and instrumental view of teaching for historical thinking. When considering new knowledge about content and pedagogy, foremost for some of these teachers was their students—and often their cultural backgrounds. An elementary teacher stated, for example, that her "specific work with [her] students took precedence over historical textbook theory or 'what's the accepted norm for that period to teach.'" She and the other 6 teachers in this study whose perspective changed little in terms of teaching for historical thinking viewed teaching through their initial classroom context. The limited success of the professional development effort for these teachers suggests that teacher professional development needs to be structured strategically to engage teachers' deep-seated beliefs within the context of their practice (Fehn & Koeppen, 1998).

Teaching history can be fraught with dilemmas for teachers (Wills,

2007). Seven teachers in this study explicitly raised dilemmas as they considered how they might engage students as active learners of history. Erin, for example, wondered how students would react to history given its often conflicting nature. She also wondered about how to teach her students to be critical as they construct their own interpretations. Underscoring VanSledright's (2002) notion concerning the "paradox of interpretation," Erin asked about whether her students had the capacity to understand how they are positioned in relation to their interpretation of a past event. Erin also worried about leaving her students with a sense of ambiguity from the lack of a definitive version of an event. Erin and 5 other teachers, however, approached their dilemmas as a "pedagogical opportunity" (VanSledright, 2002)—that is, to engage their students in learning to evaluate biases within sources of information, in examining how the source colors the interpretation, and in examining how their identities frame their interpretation.

Thirteen other teachers discussed how their use of aesthetics and imagination helped to create a human and humanizing way for their students to learn about the unfamiliar and sometimes horrific aspects of the past. Echoing Marable's (2007) work, these teachers used artistic and diverse representations of history as a way to build student capacity to more deeply imagine the past. To this end, these teachers sought to integrate art into their curriculum as a way to destabilize their students' familiar ways of knowing and give them an opening into the uniqueness of unfamiliar cultural images. Through art, these teachers sought—in the words of Wineburg (2001)—to have their students learn about those "aspects [of the past] that might startle us into reconsidering what it means to be human" (p. 17). Through the use of drama, role-playing, story line, and other approaches, these teachers also discussed ways to create a pedagogical scaffold of both safety and destabilization. These 13 teachers who referred to an aesthetic-imaginative curriculum for diverse cultural historical content explored a form of pedagogical content knowledge that is paradoxical—one that both expands and limits, challenges and protects.

CONCLUSION

A cultural encounters curriculum—with representations of the agency of nondominant groups, often in relation to more dominant groups—offers the necessary honesty for students to learn from history to better perceive the future. Marable (2007) described this need for honesty and integrity in studying Black American history: "For me, being true to black history . . . means accepting and interpreting its totality. The historian's

task is to preserve everything that has substantive significance and to resist the temptation of imposing our own latter-day perceptions on the content of our subjects" (p. xix).

Spread fairly evenly across the K–12 spectrum, the 21 teachers participating in this study did change—in differing degrees—to teach in more culturally expressive ways. They worked together to shift the margins of the "historical page" as they wrote history curriculum together to emphasize a cultural encounters approach. They worked together to plan curriculum "in a new key." The aspects of the professional development effort that resonated best with them were narratives of resistance in which people struggled for freedom. As teachers, they recognized the political nature of such curriculum to challenge contemporary oppression and promise hope for our collective work together as a nation.

The teachers did not so much promote their students "learning" history, as their "living" it. The teachers did not just expose their students to new historical content, but rather had them interact with that content in a way that allowed them to replace comfortable ways of understanding the past with new and sometimes more uncomfortable ways. These encounters may inspire students, showing them courage under oppression and agency in the face of tyranny. Including students in a more complex and, at times, more disturbing view of American history, history teachers arguably provide their students with the tools and understandings of the past in order to enter into a more honest dialogue to promote democracy, change, and a capacity for complex ways of understanding.

Note

1. All names in this paper are pseudonyms.

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