

Witness and Student Empathy: Perspectives from USC Shoah Foundation Master Teachers

by

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Dedication

This manuscript is dedicated to my family, without you it would have been impossible to succeed. To Ethan, you are my true hero. You have demonstrated more courage in the face of adversity than you will ever realize. You are my inspiration and I love you. To Liam, you are our light in the darkness. You always have a way of making me laugh when I need it most and your constant joy helped to urge me along when times were difficult. I love you. To my best friend, wife, and my angel, Mel. You will never know how much I appreciate your constant and unwavering support. You keep me grounded, calm me when things are chaotic, and push me when I need it most. More importantly, you are an amazing mother and I cannot thank you enough for being a part of my life. I could not have done this without you. I love you.

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Abstract

This qualitative interview study explores the perceptions of five USC Shoah Foundation Master Teachers who integrate *IWitness* in teaching about the Holocaust. The study focused on the perceptions of teachers as their students interact with survivor and witness testimony in *IWitness* as well as how *IWitness* provides a framework for moral education in comparison to other primary sources. Data gleaned from this study demonstrates the influence of personalized learning through testimony-based education on the development of empathy in secondary students. As *IWitness* is a new resource that engages students with Holocaust survivor testimony in innovative ways, this study fills a gap by analyzing teacher perception of a resource that places students at the intersection of multi-literacies and citizenship education.

Findings of this study suggest that the personalized nature of engaging with testimony in *IWitness* promotes student development of empathy through the interpersonal connections that students form with survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust. Participants suggest that by engaging students on the affective continuum of historical empathy, students demonstrate greater historical understanding and levels of care for the content and for people in society.

Chapter One: A Personal Reflection

As I write this, I am awaiting a meeting in the lobby of the Illinois Museum of the Holocaust. A brightly lit area that opens up following the conclusion of the permanent exhibition that is a stark contrast to the portion of the exhibit that depicts the camps. Crammed into the lobby is a gaggle of high school students who have just toured the main exhibit. Looking around, I wonder what affected them most as they went through. Reflecting, I wish I could have tailed their tour group to observe their interaction with the museum. What stood out? What resonated with them? What will stick with them as they leave here and continue their school year and ultimately move on into the world where, we hope that they become active and engaged citizens? Questions such as these emanate in my mind such that I wish I had access to their thoughts in real-time.

Their overall mood as they wait for the bus is not somber, as mine is after reflecting on the exhibit and the power of the testimony and artifacts designed to lead the visitor through the museum. Instead, their demeanor is light and jovial, at least on the surface, as one would expect from high school students ending a field trip. I admit, looking back on my youth, I was not affected by such material on the same level that I am today. The last time that I was at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), I walked through ahead of my family and sat down to read *Jurassic Park*. I had no idea what an amazing institution I was missing out on. Such was the mentality of an eighth grade student who had never been properly taught about the Holocaust. This memory is one that I am embarrassed by and have difficulty in recording it here. Upon further reflection, I realize that this may have been for the best. I was not prepared

for a trip into such complex content. No teachers had guided me through an introduction to the Holocaust. Had I truly comprehended the scope of what surrounded me in the museum, I am unsure of how I would have reacted. This episode illustrates the naiveté of many, if not most, adolescents who are not adequately prepared on the topic. In fact, the only mention that I remember during my education to that point was the reading of the play “Diary of Anne Frank” in literature class. The experience, however, was not properly contextualized and the deeper meanings contained in the diary were lost on me.

However, as I think about my journey through the exhibit today, I realize that the pain of the Holocaust, and my inability to fathom why the Holocaust happened, continues to be a driving force for me to help others learn lessons from this history. As a student of the atrocity for the past decade, I understand the historical implications of how the Nazis implemented the Holocaust. I see that it was not inevitable, but instead it was a planned event furthered by the choices and actions of those who were present. Except it is much more than that. As I walk through the museum and take in the artifacts, I listen to the clips of testimony that are playing somberly throughout the museum in a thoughtful layout of complementing the artifacts, pictures, films, and other information. I feel as though I am swimming in a sea of darkness. I walk through the exhibit and see and hear of the murder of innocent children and I cannot help but think about my role as a father and the endless lengths that I would go to in order to protect my children. I feel a pull deep in the pit of my stomach summoning me to action. What can I do? I want to do more and, yet, I know that as an educator I am introducing students to content that countless people have never been properly educated on. Nevertheless, I still cannot understand it all. One of the most profound moments of my tour was seeing the railcar. The first time as an adult that I have been confronted with an authentic railway car that carried countless people to

their death and torture in the camps. To say that going inside the car was profound would be an injustice. I turned on the flashlight on my iPhone, a part of life in a first-world country that is not lost on me in respect to the fact that I am standing inside a railcar used during the Holocaust, and I beamed it on the walls near the door. I see scrape marks. My heart breaks again in that instant. I am lost again...

I felt this way during my first real introduction to the Holocaust, during my final year of my undergraduate studies in history. I took a course on Nazi Germany that captivated me. Over the course of that semester, my disbelief with the Holocaust began. Every week I would go to Panera Bread, find a good table or comfortable chair, and sit down with my weekly readings and a big cup of coffee. The way that the Nazis permeated society left me awestruck. What was more was how they used this to carry out one of the most heinous acts in history. As I began learning about the Holocaust, my heart broke for the senseless loss of life stemming from hatred and bigotry. When putting it down on paper, it seems much less complex than it is. But the distressing aspect of the Holocaust is not only the destruction of life carried out against so many innocent people, but the complex levels of involvement. How can one stand by and watch this happen without a word? Worse yet, how can someone take part in these events of their own volition? Simon Wiesenthal, in the *Sunflower (1976)*, discusses his experience with a Nazi soldier who, as he lay dying, asks for forgiveness from a Jew. He goes on to recount the rounding up of Jews and locking them inside a house that was then set ablaze. Anyone who jumped out of the windows was shot. I do not understand these choices. What confounds me still is that these were just that, choices. Choices that people made out of hatred led to the murder of millions of children and adults alike.

Holocaust education is an area that I remain passionate about. I firmly believe that studying the Holocaust opens students up to the inhumanity of man and the power of choice. The study of the event is rooted in the history, however, there is much that can be learned and applied to other aspects of life. The complex levels of involvement and implication of choices and consequences provide ample opportunity for historical analysis, as well as critical and moral thinking.

IWitness, in my opinion, is a dynamic resource for engaging students in a study of the Holocaust. Through IWitness, students are able to hear the voices of those who survived and witnessed the event firsthand. While testimony is available through various avenues, I hold high regard for the individualized nature of IWitness. Students become more engaged in content when they encounter material that is of interest to them on a personal level. Through the search capabilities and wide range of experience groups, they have endless opportunity for investigation.

In the past, I served as the Senior Trainer and Content Specialist for the USC Shoah Foundation. My role was to train teachers on the use of testimony, IWitness, and to develop content for testimony based lessons, both within and independent of IWitness. During my tenure, I saw the excitement that teachers yielded following exposure and hands-on exploration of IWitness. Teachers, on multiple occasions, admitted that IWitness would help them change the way they were teaching about the Holocaust. However, response was not always so jovial. There were some teachers who were less enamored by IWitness for various reasons. Some did not feel comfortable with the technology, while others felt that their schools lacked the proper infrastructure to support its integration. This reaction was in the minority, however, as the vast majority were excited with the potential that IWitness brought to their teaching

Chapter Two: Introduction to Study

Introduction

In today's society, students are constantly connected via computer, cell phone or tablet. In a recent study, the Pew Research Center (2013) found that approximately three in four teenagers, ages 12-17, say that they access the internet on a cellular phone or other mobile device at least occasionally, while one in four access the internet predominantly from a cellular phone. Further, teenagers are continuing to share substantial amounts of personal information via the web and social media sites (Pew Research Center, 2013). With the evolution in connectivity, the world has shifted from local to a global society. In an era of fostering 21st century skills, it is necessary for teachers to engage students in the spaces that they are already occupying and by building on skills that they use daily. Social studies courses provide myriad opportunities for the development of these skills through the use of various resources and teaching strategies.

Unfortunately, many students fail to find relevance in many history courses. VanSickle (1990) points out that "most students in the United States, at all grade levels, find social studies to be one of the least interesting, most irrelevant subjects in the school curriculum" (p. 23). However, Alchediak (2001) noted that through the use of oral histories, the students became more interested and engaged in her United States history course.

With many new teacher evaluation systems being implemented across the United States, it would behoove teachers to ensure that students are engaged in ways that promote finding relevance in social studies as well as addressing academic standards. Through the use of multiple resources, this can be attained. More specifically, the literature suggests that the use of oral history in the secondary classroom has the power to bring relevance to secondary students

studying history, benefiting all students, including those considered “at risk” (Alchediak, 2001; Murray, 2005). The student, in fact, is his/her own “agent, learning only what he/she is motivated to learn” (Alchediak, 2001, p.11). This coincides with Noddings’ (1992) argument that the schools are not the best environment for intellectual stimulation. It is, therefore, important that teachers make wise decisions on the curriculum and resources to implement in their courses. By choosing resources that resonate with students in myriad ways, teachers are able to provide students with the best opportunity for success.

Rationale

In an era of reform, it is necessary to identify effective pedagogy. As a content area that until recently, has been traditionally neglected by the affairs of high stakes testing officials, social studies has had an autonomous position in the curriculum to successfully employ various strategies in the classroom. With the introduction of Common Core standards nationally and state mandated end-of-course examinations in Civics courses and U.S. History being a perennial examination, it is important to continue identifying methods to enhance academic success as well as overall well-being for students in order to entice teachers to continue integrating new and cutting edge resources into their curriculum.

After reviewing the outcome of the first National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) history test, Ravitch and Finn (1987) bemoaned the lack of historical knowledge of 17-year-old students. This pattern would continue for years to come (Hammack, 1990; Williams, 1994) including the 2010 NAEP results that indicate that less than twenty-five percent of students are proficient in U.S. History (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2010). It is necessary, then, to successfully engage students in a curriculum through which they can make a connection that fosters greater historical understanding.

In order to gain a deeper knowledge of a given event or topic, it is necessary for students to study it through multiple lenses. Only then can students construct a fuller understanding of what has occurred, based on the mindset and circumstances of the period. This construction of knowledge through myriad sources is known as historical empathy (Davis, 2001). Yeager and Foster (2001) discuss empathy as a four-step process that is central to studying history. This idea is supported by a number of studies that demonstrate the applicability of using empathy as a means of developing historical understanding (Grauerholz & Scuteri, 1999; Kobrin, Abbott, Ellinwood, & Horton, 1993; Klages, 1999; Romer, 2011; Schweber, 2004). As the Holocaust is one of the most well documented events in history (Totten, 2001), it is an ideal topic for studying the use of developing empathy for historical understanding. Since the emergence of Holocaust related curriculum in the 1970s and early 1990s (Fallace, 2008; Mintz, 2001), its importance among educational leaders has been demonstrated by its inclusion in curriculum and in some cases, such as Florida, state legislation (Florida State Legislature, 2004).

Purpose

Yeager and Foster (2001) point out that the literature contains elements of empathy as an “outcome and process” (p. 15). The purpose, then, of this study was twofold. First, it sought to uncover themes related to the outcomes of classroom integration of *IWitness*. Secondly, this study explored teacher perception of the development of empathy in secondary students through the use of digital Holocaust survivor testimony in learning about the Holocaust.

Students engaged in testimony-based education and interacted with digital testimony through the use of the USC Shoah Foundation’s *IWitness*, a Web 2.0 application that houses over 1,300 visual history testimonies of Holocaust Survivors and other witnesses. *IWitness* allows students to search through testimony and narrow down their interests in various manners.

Students can search by the survivors' experience, origins, beliefs, etc. They are also able to do keyword searches that guide them directly to the moment in testimony in which the survivor is discussing their topic of interest. In addition to the search capabilities, there are built-in activities and a video editor. The video editor allows students to manipulate testimony and construct topical multimedia essays featuring the clips and outside resources, while also providing tutorials on ethical use of testimony. This level of engagement with the content and the testimony aims to provide transformative experiences in which they connect with the interviewee and undergo a change that affects their worldview and behavior leading them to become a more engaged and caring global citizen.

Transformative learning includes "one's reflection on old ways of understanding and one's acting on insight derived from a transformed meaning perspective" (Freire, 1993, p. 162). Meaning perspective refers to the way that an individual interprets an experience (Carlberg, 2008). In the case of the current study, the experience is the engagement with testimony via *IWitness*. Throughout activities in *IWitness*, students can find relevance to their own lives and communities. One activity, the *IWitness* Challenge, encourages students to become inspired by testimony and do acts of good in their community. This activity was recently made into a contest that coincides with the Shoah Foundation's 20th anniversary and received submissions from students who published a children's book, helped collect food and clothing for needy in their community, and helped empower the less fortunate by taking the time to talk with them about their goals and ambitions, despite their current situation. Other teachers have created projects as well. One such teacher in southern California created a project resulting in the example video "Wash Rinse, Don't Repeat," in which students connected the racial laws of Nazi Germany to modern day racial profiling in their community. Through their project, students were able to help

educate citizens of the ills faced by this community. Early research from the USC Shoah Foundation indicates that students demonstrate a dramatic increase in their awareness of social action, especially in situations of stereotyping and racism (USC Shoah Foundation, 2013).

Through the use of digital testimony, teacher participants engaged students in a study of the Holocaust and observed their historical understanding as well as any emotional connection with the content. My interest lay in the exploration of teacher perceptions regarding empathy that are developed through visual-history testimony in students studying the Holocaust.

Theoretical Framework

In discussing empathy, there is often a misguided use of the term. Often, people confuse empathy for sympathy (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Davis, 2001) due to the affective nature, which deals with emotion. Yet empathy is not solely an emotional response. In fact, it is a fairly complex idea that intermingles historical thinking, perspective, and emotion (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Yeager & Foster, 2001). As such, the current study is centered on a framework that comprises two parts of empathy: historical empathy and caring. With regard to the historical empathy component, the affective element remains central to this study.

Historical empathy, is a means of analyzing past events in a manner which takes into account the situations, preferences, and culture of the time in which the event occurred, rather than through a contemporary lens. According to Barton & Levstik (2004), “Time, culture, and individual preferences and experiences produce fundamentally different worldviews” (p. 206). Barton and Levstik (2004) use the term “perspective recognition” (p. 207) to describe this as this particular term avoids the notion of adopting the perspectives of others as one’s own. Endacott and Brooks (2013) argue that the idea of perspective taking, however, lends itself to the cognitive component more so than the affective element in historical empathy. They contend

that, in order to make sense of events of the past, it is necessary to recognize “how the perspectives of people in the past may have differed from our own” (Barton & Levstik, 2004, p. 207). In order to achieve the necessary understanding, it is important for students to explore multiple resources and perspectives surrounding an event, have an understanding of chronology, and take into account the historical context (Yeager & Foster, 2001). Empathy also goes beyond the analysis and understanding of historical events; there is a level of care that is associated with it (Barton & Levstik, 2004).

If one is to reflect on the meaning of the word “care,” they will likely think first about the care of human beings towards one another. Yet this is not the only type of care, although it is an essential one for our purposes. When studying historical events, there are various elements of caring which are necessary for students to develop empathy. Barton and Levstik (2004) point out that in order to have meaningful conversations regarding the events under study, students must care about them for the perspectives of those involved. It is this care that serves as the “mechanism for rendering history meaningful,” and “by which students...make personal connections to history” (p. 241). These connections give students reason to study the historical topics and make meaning of them, as well as applying this new knowledge to current issues in society (Barton & Levstik, 2004). This application lends itself to Noddings’ “Ethics of Care” (1984).

According to Noddings (1984), caring is a state of consciousness by the carer which is characterized by engrossment, or the openness to the needs of others, and motivational displacement, or need/desire to think about and help others. “Engrossment and motivational displacement do not tell us what to do; they merely characterize our consciousness when we care,” or, more simply, “we are seized by the needs of another” (Noddings, 1992, p. 16). The

current study analyzed teacher perceptions of student engrossment and motivational displacement as a result of engaging with testimony in *IWitness*.

Noddings (1992) suggests that caring encounters need not be long lasting relationships, but they are specific instances, “a way of being in a relation, not a set of specific behaviors” (p. 17). This statement acknowledges that each person is different. Noddings (1992) contends that people “have various capacities for caring-that is, for entering into caring relations” (p. 18).

Through *IWitness*, the interviewee begins as the carer, sharing their intimate experiences, and the student viewing the testimony as the cared for. However, over the course of the learning experience, the role of carer is, theoretically, transferred to the students so that they further experience engrossment and motivational displacement. This is what the USC Shoah Foundation calls a “transformative experience” (USC Shoah Foundation, 2012).

Currently, teachers have much control over what takes place within the confines of their classroom on a daily basis. While prescribed curriculum dictates an outline that must be followed, teachers have leeway in determining the exact strategies and resources that will be utilized in their classroom. Care is an important non-academic factor related to the happenings of the classroom. For example, the relationship between student and teacher is a prime example of a caring relation. Further, teachers have the responsibility to facilitate the development of their students’ capacity to care (Noddings, 1992). This is no small task. Noddings (1992) argues that “our schools are not intellectually stimulating places, even for many students who are intellectually oriented” (p. 19).

Qualitative Research Questions

The study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What factors do teachers attribute to the development of empathy, in themselves and in students?
2. How does engagement with digital testimony through *IWitness* compare/contrast to other primary sources, especially in the development of empathy?
3. How does this medium add value in learning without desensitizing students?
4. How does interacting with *IWitness* facilitate a moral framework for developing empathy?

Definition of Terms

IWitness is a Web 2.0 application developed by the USC Shoah Foundation-the Institute for Visual History and Education and designed for middle and secondary classroom implementation. It is an educational medium that allows students to learn through testimony in student-directed inquiry. “Secondary school students and teachers may search, watch, and interact with testimonies to construct multimedia projects in a secure, password-protected space” (Haas, Berson, & Berson, 2015, p. 107). The technology makes use of the institute’s Visual History Archive that contains the testimonies of approximately 53,000 Holocaust survivors, among other witnesses and survivors of the genocide in Rwanda, Armenia, and the Nanjing Massacre. *IWitness* houses over 1,350 of these visual-history testimonies, each averaging two-and-a-half hours in length. Each testimony is catalogued and indexed into one-minute clips using over 9,000 keywords. *IWitness*, therefore, allows students to search through testimony and narrow down their interests in various manners. Students can search by the survivors’ experience, origins, beliefs, etc. They are also able to do keyword searches that guide them directly to the moment in testimony in which the survivor is discussing their topic of interest. In addition to the search capabilities, there are built in activities and a video editor. The video

editor allows students to manipulate testimony and create topical video-essays using the clips and outside resources, while also providing tutorials on ethical use of testimony. Each activity is built on the 4 Cs Framework: Consider, Collect, Construct, and Communicate. It is widely accepted that in order to responsibly teach about the Holocaust, the first step is to help your students build a context for learning. In a resource such as *IWitness*, with all of the raw testimonies and ability for students to search through the testimony, it is imperative that students have a means of gaining context of the lesson prior to diving into the testimony. This is the function of “Consider” in *IWitness*. Through various resources, including text, maps, testimony, and other primary and secondary resources, students begin to develop an understanding of the context surrounding the topic they will be engaging with. Once they move on to the “Collect” and “Construct” portions, students are researching and saving clips of testimony and other resources to construct their video-essay. In “Communicate,” students view and discuss the projects of their classmates. This provides for the growth of understanding through multiple perspectives and discussion-centered learning.

The Holocaust is often taught in social studies and English/literature courses. However, these are not the only applicable subjects to use *IWitness*; as it is situated at the intersection of digital citizenship and multi-literacies, it is appropriate to myriad subjects and topics. Through *IWitness*, students have the opportunity to interact with digital testimony. Interact, for purposes of this study, is defined as participants searching through testimony for specific clips relevant to their topic under study, using a built in video-editor to edit and save testimony, and the construction of video-essays using the survivor testimony as well as other resources.

Throughout this paper, students’ use of *IWitness* and the testimony within is referred to as “engage” or “interact.” These terms describe the use of *IWitness* and testimony that is beyond

that of simply watching. Students have the ability to watch testimonies in their entirety or to search through multiple clips that seem interesting based on the catalog of indexing terms. Further, students will choose clips that resonate with them to save in their project, as they build a collection of clips that hold personal meaning. These clips can then be edited into a video project in which students are able to infuse outside materials, voiceover, and even personal footage, to construct meaning through a project that demonstrates their new knowledge. It is the process of watching, listening, analyzing, reflecting, and constructing that constitutes the definition of “interact” or “engage” for the purposes of this study. And during this process, as stated by one teacher user of testimony, the “DNA of the student and the DNA of the testimony, they mix” leading to a potentially profound experience (USC Shoah Foundation, 2013).

In order for any topic to become truly meaningful to secondary students, it is necessary that they have a thorough understanding. The term “empathy” in this study refers to the affective component of historical empathy as well as empathy as caring (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Noddings, 1984). The development of empathy is central to historical understanding. Davis (2001) notes that, “Too commonly, people misunderstand historical “empathy” as sympathy or a kind of appreciative sentiment” (p. 3). Barton and Levstik (2004) contend that empathy as caring has varying levels. There is caring about, caring for, and caring to. “Caring about” refers to the personal interest to learn about the topic. “Caring for” suggests that students have a desire to act on events of the past, while they understand that it is impossible to do so. And, lastly, “caring to,” which is the desire of students to apply this new knowledge to the present world. It is here that the notion of empathy as caring lends itself to the work of Noddings (1984, 1992) and her description of caring relations. Therefore, a definition of empathy must be provided for the current study. I define empathy as a perspective that one reaches after examining the

evidence, which allows them to form an understanding based on the context and circumstances of the actors and events in question; this perspective advances the desire to learn about the topic, and related lessons, in order to apply this knowledge to present day issues. The theoretical framework used for this study places these two aspects of empathy on a continuum that allows students to continue their learning and application of knowledge.

Importance of Study

This study is relevant to the field of education and Holocaust education in two ways. First, in the realm of Holocaust education there exists a very important question that has yet to be answered: What happens when the last survivor of the Holocaust passes away? Because “there is a tendency to recall the past selectively and to erase painful memories, nations...seek to dismiss or distort inglorious historical episodes” (Schwartz, 1990, p. 96), the questions of how the Holocaust will be remembered and/or portrayed to future generations of students is a valid one. With the evolution of technology, and the USC Shoah Foundation’s Visual History Archive, the stories of those who witness the atrocities will be preserved in perpetuity, thereby allowing future generations to hear what happened from those who experienced it first-hand. Students will have a chance to listen to these stories in a way that one could describe as an intimate conversation. By providing students with this opportunity, teachers can build on the need to create ways for students to develop a greater sense of empathy and historical understanding. This study also contributes evidence of the impact of interaction with digital testimony to the research base.

Until now, most studies on the development of historical empathy have been focused on elementary and middle school students (Ashby & Lee, 1987; Downey, 1995; Levstik & Barton, 1997); little has been done with a focus on secondary students. In addition, as the

implementation of Web 2.0 in the classroom is a recent development, using it as a means to study the Holocaust is ideal. Pairing this concept with the USC Shoah Foundation's *IWitness* application has only recently become a possibility as *IWitness* became available to the public in January 2012.

Conclusion

As students continue to invest large amounts of time and energy in online and digital spaces, it is important to gain an understanding of how interaction in these spaces can influence student behavior and their role as a responsible citizens, both in the real and digital world. The current study aims to explore how teachers perceive the effects of student interaction with visual history testimony, specifically on their sense of empathy. Through this study, five teachers were interviewed using a semi-structured approach in order to structure a narrative on their perceptions of the effects of using *IWitness* and the meanings associated with it as an instructional tool.

Chapter Three: Review of the Literature

Introduction

This literature review will help to frame the discussion regarding the opportunity for Holocaust Education to augment the development of empathy among secondary students. Here, I will provide a rationale for teaching the Holocaust as a means of developing empathy.

The Holocaust represents a unique event in world history. While this argument is made from a historical viewpoint (Baum, 1997; Fallace, 2008; Friedlander, 1979; Parsons & Totten, 1993; Totten & Feinberg, 1995), I am speaking here of the implications for the secondary classroom. While there are many events similar in nature to the Holocaust, in terms of being emotionally charged and sometimes controversial (e.g., slavery, the Trail of Tears, etc.), no others have as strong of a constituency supporting the inclusion in the curriculum. An event of this nature is suitable across content areas, yet finds itself most discussed in history or literature courses. Regardless of the course, the question “Why study the Holocaust?” is one that educators and students are often asked. The answers vary in their simplicity and focus. Michael Berenbaum, former project director for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), believes the undergirding reason is simple, “Because it happened” (as cited in Hogan, 2007, p. 10). While Parsons and Totten (1993) note in the *Guidelines for teaching the Holocaust*, “The Holocaust provides one of the most effective subjects for examination of basic moral issues,” as well as stating that, “Study of the event also addresses one of the central mandates of education in the United States, which is to examine what it means to be a

responsible citizen” (Parsons and Totten, 1993). Totten and Feinberg (1995) list a number of the other thought provoking rationales, a few of which are:

- To gain a unique and valuable opportunity to study human behavior
- To gain an understanding of concepts such as prejudice, discrimination, anti-Semitism, stereotyping, obedience, loyalty, conflict, conflict resolution, decision making, and justice
- To come to appreciate that silence and indifference toward the victimization of any person or group encourages the efforts of the perpetrator
- To gain insights into why the Holocaust and, thus, other genocidal acts are *not* inevitable.

While the majority of these deal with the development of moral and/or civic ideals, there remains a debate over the teaching of the Holocaust for these purposes or through a historical lens; in fact, many of the resources intertwine the two beliefs.

Teaching for historical understanding involves the use of multiple sources, especially primary sources, in providing students with the opportunity to make connections and develop deep comprehension of an event or time period. Through this process, students can gain a better insight into the conditions of the event or topic of study, in this case, the Holocaust. The process that students must undergo to reach this point is central to doing history; thereby, developing a sense of historical empathy. I define empathy as the formation of ideas and conclusions through the investigation of a topic by analyzing multiple sources and developing understanding of the historical events while remaining cognizant that the ideas, beliefs, and circumstances of the time are not your own. Davis (2001) argues that while empathy is “mostly intellectual in nature, it may include emotional dimensions” (p.3). As Totten (2001) points out, the Holocaust “is one of

the most--if not the most--well-documented events in history, providing an abundance of resources for teaching.” For these reasons, this paper seeks to demonstrate that the Holocaust provides a rich avenue for students to develop their sense of empathy.

The History of Holocaust Education in America

Following the Holocaust, the inclusion of this event in American schools was not an immediate reaction. Introduction into the mainstream curriculum was not to happen for over 20 years. Initially, it was Jewish educators who took up the charge of teaching about the Holocaust; hence, beginning the debate over the uniqueness of the Holocaust which will be discussed later in this paper. “The term “genocide” did not exist before 1944, although Raphael Lemkin did discuss the idea of it in earlier writing. It is a very specific term, referring to violent crimes committed against groups with the intent to destroy the existence of the group” (Parsons & Totten, 1993). While definitions vary, an official definition of the term was recorded in the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948) and reads as follows:

Any of a number of acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group, and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group (United Nations, 1948).

It would not be until a series of events beginning in the 1960s that the term Holocaust would be used to describe the crimes perpetrated by Nazi Germany under the reign of Adolph Hitler. In fact, it was during this period that the word *Holocaust* would be adopted by American and Israeli

Jews, as well as being predominant in the writings of Elie Weisel, as a means of describing the atrocity (Fallace, 2008). Mintz (2001) recognizes the social upheaval in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s as a pivotal time in the American psyche. Americans became more aware of the depths of human cruelty and began to study them. A few key events in bringing the Holocaust from the margins to the center of public consciousness: *the Diary of Anne Frank*, in all three media formats, the trial of Adolf Eichmann, the Six-Day War, the 1978 television mini-series *Holocaust*, and the founding of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1993 (Mintz, 2001; Fallace, 2008). It was over the span of these events that Holocaust education became more prevalent in American schools. Curriculum and educational resources were developed, leading today to a treasure trove of lessons and resources available for educators to examine. Over time, Holocaust education became part of the standards and curriculum in most states and/or districts.

Published in English in 1952, Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl* became a powerful resource in promoting awareness of the Holocaust:

The power of the diary lay in its ability to do what no political event had done: to create an empathic connection, even identification, between the fate of European Jewry and ordinary American readers who had no ethnic or religious link to the victims and often no knowledge whatsoever of the event itself (Mintz, 2001, p. 17).

Likewise, the diary, though fashioned around the events of the Holocaust, was written prior to Anne's capture and subsequent imprisonment and death at Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen, thereby, removing an element of the realities surrounding the horrors of the Holocaust. Anne's voice, especially that of her Jewish identity and understanding of the hazards of living under Nazi rule are present in the diary. Yet, these aspects are downplayed in the stage and film

versions of the diary (Mintz, 2001), thus paving the way for the debate of Americanizing the Holocaust (Fallace, 2008; Mintz, 2001; Spector & Jones, 2007). Spector and Jones (2007) recognize the status of Anne Frank as an American icon of “optimistic thinking and individual triumph” (p. 36). Anne’s contention that people are good-natured, despite the events of the Holocaust, encapsulates this identity (Frank, 1994). Anne Frank’s *Diary of a Young Girl* was published nine years prior to the arrest and trial of Adolph Eichmann, the man considered to be the architect of the Final Solution.

Over the course of Eichmann’s very public trial, many people became interested in the Holocaust. However, none of the aforementioned events was as influential as the 1978 NBC miniseries, *Holocaust*, which brought the events of the Holocaust into the forefront of 120 million Americans’ minds (Fallace, 2008). The attention generated by this miniseries led to an influx of educational materials centered on the Holocaust. The focus and scope of these materials varied as much as the organizations that were submitting them. It was here that the pedagogy of the Holocaust became an important focus. Teaching the Holocaust became central, but what was to be taught and how should teachers go about teaching it? Before discussing pedagogy and curricula, it is important to note another major step in the creation of a framework on Holocaust education: politicians became involved. Peter Novick (1999) argues that one of the most prominent reasons that the Holocaust has become a central topic in education is not only its importance as a watershed event, but also its powerful community of advocates.

In 1979, President Carter announced that he would form the President’s Commission on the Holocaust. President Carter selected Elie Wiesel, Holocaust survivor and humanitarian, to serve as chair of the committee. The commission would ultimately be responsible for initializing the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, which would open in 1993, the same year that

Steven Spielberg released *Schindler's List*. Although the two events were separate, their simultaneous openings made 1993 a pivotal year in Holocaust education.

Due to the plethora of Holocaust curricula in existence by the early 1990s, it was determined that the museum did not need an official curriculum. Instead, William Parsons and Samuel Totten were given the Museum's mission statement, including the definition of the Holocaust on which to base their materials. The Museum's definition of the Holocaust reads:

The Holocaust was the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Jews were the primary victims — six million were murdered; Gypsies, the handicapped and Poles were also targeted for destruction or decimation for racial, ethnic, or national reasons. Millions more, including homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war and political dissidents, also suffered grievous oppression and death under Nazi tyranny (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum [USHMM], 1993).

Parsons and Totten were tasked, then, to write the *Guidelines for Teaching the Holocaust*, published in 1993, and now available free of charge on the Museum's website. It was a critique of the pre-existing Holocaust materials and pedagogy in the field in the form of advice on teaching the Holocaust. The Museum was created as "A living memorial to the Holocaust, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum inspires citizens and leaders worldwide to confront hatred, prevent genocide, and promote human dignity" (USHMM, 1993). The museum's permanent exhibition, entitled "The Holocaust," is divided into 3 sections: "Nazi Assault," "Final Solution," and "Last Chapter." It spans three floors and contains an extensive collection of artifacts (USHMM, 1993). Upon dedication in 1993, Bill Clinton (1993) said:

This museum will touch the life of everyone who enters and leave everyone forever changed -- a place of deep sadness and a sanctuary of bright hope; an ally of education against ignorance, of humility against arrogance, an investment in a secure future against whatever insanity lurks ahead. If this museum can mobilize morality, then those who have perished will thereby gain a measure of immortality.

His quote reflects the heart of the museum's mission.

The opening of the museum was not the only major event in Holocaust education in 1993. As previously mentioned, Steven Spielberg released *Schindler's List*. The film was a major adaptation of the story of war-industrialist turned rescuer, Oskar Schindler. Spielberg later stated that his main goal in making *Schindler's List* was education (Fallace, 2008); he would go on to promote the film as a means to educate people about the Holocaust. Many secondary schools in the United States and England would receive a copy of the film, along with educational materials (Fallace, 2008). To date, to maintain identity as being about far more than entertainment, Spielberg does not autograph materials related to the film out of respect not to place a monetary value on the film's message.

It was during the many conversations with survivors throughout filming, that Spielberg "understood that the greatest teachers of the Holocaust are the ones who have lived through it" (Riesland, 2010, p. 2). He went on to found *the Survivors of the Shoah Foundation* in 1994. The foundation undertook the mission of recording survivor and witness testimony and between 1994 and 1999. Currently, the Visual History Archive houses 52,000 survivor testimonies gathered in 58 countries (USC Shoah Foundation, 2014). Totalling over 100,000 hours of footage, Spielberg considers this project to be the most important work of his life (Moll, 1998). In 2006, he would transfer the rights of the foundation to the University of Southern California in order to continue

their work and to preserve the testimonies in perpetuity. Following the opening of the museum and success of *Schindler's List*, Holocaust education continued to flourish. In the mid-1990s, New Jersey and Florida began adding Holocaust education to curriculum and state legislation.

Over time, Holocaust education became infused into the standards and curricula in most states and/or districts. However, it stands out in that it has been recognized by twenty-four states, to date, that have seen fit to pass specific legislation pertaining to the teaching of and establishment of task forces on Holocaust education and remembrance (USHMM, 2013). New Jersey and Florida were the first two states to pass legislation requiring that the Holocaust be taught in all public schools, both in 1994 (Fallace, 2008; USHMM). Mintz (2001) states that the idea of mandating the Holocaust in education continued to gain traction because it was “a point of moral consensus between the right and left” (p. 33).

There are significant differences in the wording of the pieces of legislation. Shoemaker (2003) points out that, “Some states “require” or “mandate” the inclusion of the Holocaust in the classroom, while others “encourage” or “recommend.” Some states have merely established Holocaust education commissions that “provide assistance” to state-wide schools, and many of these commissions function independently of the state’s Department of Education.” The implications are clear; the Holocaust is an important topic that needs to be studied by America’s youth as it offers endless opportunity for development. However, the debate over Holocaust curriculum is a fierce one. While there is widespread agreement that the Holocaust should be taught, disagreement exists over how to do so.

Holocaust Pedagogy and Curriculum

The debate over Holocaust pedagogy runs parallel to the debate over the Holocaust as an event of suffering. In fact, Davies (2000) states:

Perhaps the most difficult of the pedagogical issues relates to the choice that teachers have to make in deciding how to present the Holocaust and what sort of educational aims are valid. There are many points wrapped with what could be generally described as the difficulty of placing the Holocaust appropriately on some sort of affective-cognitive continuum. Teachers rightly do not want to see the Holocaust only in intellectual or academic terms, and yet emotion is in itself not enough. There has to be a clear rational thought as well as an emotional response (p. 5).

Totten and Feinberg (1995) describe the concern and provide advice for educators to consider prior to beginning a unit of study on the Holocaust. It is vital that the teacher closely analyze their rationale and resources. It is no question that one can never fully comprehend the horror that victims were put through, teachers should inspire students to “avoid simplistic explanations,” use “powerful opening and closing lessons,” choose “appropriate sources of information,” and “personalize the Holocaust” (Totten & Feinberg, 1995). In addition, educators must strive to avoid the pitfalls such as the over-use of graphic imagery or using simulations for students to “experience” the Holocaust (Totten & Feinberg, 1995).

“In Holocaust education, for which a common theoretical basis has yet to emerge, the whole may not yet be more than the sum of its parts, but the parts are nevertheless rich indeed” (Stevick & Gross, 2014, p 64). Schweber (2004), in a prominent field study of Holocaust education in high school classrooms, identifies three lenses that Holocaust units could be taught through: particular to universal, insular to expanded, and tragic to redemptive (Schweber, 2004).

“Particular” or “universal” and “insular” or “expansive” are somewhat intertwined on the larger scale of the debate, which deals with the uniqueness of the Holocaust. Those who are considered particular prefer to emphasize the uniqueness of Jewish suffering and anti-Semitism

prevalent during the Nazi regime. Elie Wiesel, leading author and humanitarian, contends that the focus of the Holocaust should be centered on the Jewish suffering, but acknowledges its universal implications. It is this viewpoint that Wiesel continues to champion in the discussion over the Holocaust. In regards to the creation of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial, Wiesel commented on the inability to properly display something that was almost impossible to speak of (Fallace, 2008). It was this viewpoint that would receive criticisms from those who saw the universal moral lessons developed by Holocaust education.

The universalists, on the other hand, prefer that the Holocaust be taught as representative of the universal nature of pain, suffering, and the lessons inherent within. They see the Holocaust as an opportunity to build a universal moral framework (Davies, 2000; Facing History and Ourselves, 2011; Parsons & Totten, 1993). Davies (2000) argues that the fact that just because one cannot fully comprehend the atrocities of the Holocaust, that is not justification to ignore its opportunity for education across the spectrum of human rights and other moral issues.

This power-struggle, similar to the struggle over how history should be taught in schools, comes through in the curricula on the Holocaust; namely the difference between the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum's approach and that of Facing History and Ourselves. Although the United States Holocaust Memorial never introduced an "official" curriculum, the *Guidelines* (Parsons & Totten, 1993) focus on the Holocaust through a historical lens. Dan Napolitano, in Shoemaker (2003), explains that the Museum promotes the thorough teaching of the events surrounding Nazi Germany, 1933-1945, and then relates topics to that study while FHO concentrates on tolerance and individual choice through a case-study of the Holocaust, thereby, concentrating on the moral and ethical lessons of the Holocaust (Shoemaker, 2003). A

downloadable resource book from FHAO, *Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior*, describes their goals.

Facing History seeks to:

- develop an educational model that helps students move from thought to judgment to participation as they confront the moral questions inherent in a study of violence, racism, anti-Semitism, and bigotry;
- reveal the universal connections of history through a rigorous examination of a particular history;
- further a commitment to adolescents as the moral philosophers of our society and help them build a “civil society” through an understanding that turning neighbor against neighbor leads to violence (Facing History and Ourselves, 2011, p. xxiii).

Chuck Meyers of FHAO further describes the organization’s emphasis in stating that “the abundance of history is choice-driven and ... those choices are sometimes within our domain” (as cited in Shoemaker, 2003, p. 194). While Napolitano notes the discrepancies between the approaches, he also acknowledges the similarities of the overall goals:

Fundamentally, education is about developing an individual, and we certainly think and hope and expect that exposure to this kind of discipline, this kind of information, will foster intelligent reflection on what it means to be a human being, what it means to live in society (as quoted in Shoemaker, 2003, p. 194).

And though not focused directly on historical understanding, in a recent report FHAO shows that “students gave detailed responses that spotlighted historical understanding” (Romer, 2011, p. 4).

In addition, the debate of “particular vs. universal,” is the “insular vs. expansive question. Should the Holocaust be taught as historically unique, thereby, refraining from using the event to parallel other genocides? Or, should it be used *as* a parallel to other acts of genocide and human rights violations as it is, in any case, the source for the definition of genocide and the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” developed by the United Nations.

Totten (2001) notes the universal implications of the Holocaust, but goes a step further. Totten points out Eisner’s “null curriculum” theory and that there is as much to be said about the lack of other genocides in public school curriculum as there is about including them. He notes that there are a host of issues with not teaching about other genocides, which include, but are not limited to:

- Students are unlikely to appreciate that genocide is not simply a curse of the past, but one that haunts contemporary society.
- Students will not come to understand the role that the international community has played in regard to “allowing” genocide to take place (e.g. in Rwanda) or, conversely, how it has staunched incipient actions possibly slouching towards genocide (e.g., East Timor).
- Students are not likely to appreciate that genocide is not inevitable, but that what impedes the intervention and prevention of genocide is largely the will of the international community (Totten, 2001).

Within his article, Totten expounds on the idea that educators must go beyond the Holocaust, as there are important lessons to be learned from other genocides as well.

As we near a time when Holocaust survivors will be with us no longer, the use of recorded testimony has become an integral part of Holocaust education. The Anti-Defamation League

(2005), in conjunction with the USC Shoah Foundation and Yad Vashem created *Echoes and Reflections: Leaders in Holocaust Education* (2005). Their mission with this resource is to educate teachers to effectively teach the Holocaust as well as related moral and civic lessons. The curriculum contains primary resources divided into 10 lessons. In addition to the primary documents, each lesson contains specific testimony clips from the Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive. ADL recommends teaching the Holocaust through an individualized (Schweber, 2004) framework in order to convey the message that this happened to real people, who lived lives just like the students (Echoes and Reflections, 2005).

New resources utilizing technology are being developed for teaching the Holocaust in a digital age. The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive is a trove for researchers of the Holocaust, but with limited accessibility from outside of the campus of the University of Southern California, the classroom application of this resource is difficult for secondary teachers. The USC Shoah Foundation has solved this issue by moving into the digital realm with *IWitness*, a Web 2.0 application that provides access to over 1,350 testimonies of Holocaust witnesses and survivors, as well as survivors of the Rwandan genocide, to secondary teachers and students. "Its purpose is to provide access to a part of the Institute's complete archive of 52,000 testimonies in an educationally responsible manner" (Riesland, 2010, p. 2).

IWitness is designed with secondary education teachers and students in mind. Focusing on 21st Century Skills, *IWitness* will engage students at the intersection of digital citizenship education and multi-literacies. Students using *IWitness* will be able to employ a search engine that uses over 9,000 keywords to catalog the testimonies by one-minute increments. This allows students to view multiple testimonies that are relevant to their interest in a short period of time. Students will be able to watch, search, construct, and share testimonies through *IWitness*; the

only necessary equipment is a computer with Internet access. By utilizing the built-in video editor, students will construct video projects that employ testimony, photos, voice-over, and more. Early pilot studies of IWitness suggest that it allows students to build a personal connection with the survivor and the testimony (USC Shoah Foundation, 2011), providing a new and revolutionary tool for students to interact with Holocaust testimony in historical inquiry.

Empathy

Empathy in respect to the secondary classroom is a complex, abstract construct. The term has different meanings in different fields and even different meanings within fields. For the purposes of this paper, I will discuss empathy for historical understanding as a process and an outcome of coming to an understanding of historical events in the social studies classroom as well as a level of caring for the material and one's fellow man. For purposes in this paper, "empathy" and "historical empathy" are used synonymously.

Empathy for Historical Understanding. Empathy is paramount to historical understanding. While many believe that empathy is about walking a mile in someone else's shoes, it is argued that this is impossible. Lather (2009) recognizes that to claim empathy is to reduce one's experience to that which can be communicated and understood. Davis (2001) points out "historical empathy is often confused with sympathy" (p.3), which suggests that empathy is not only an end-goal, but a process as well. Yet, Yeager and Foster (2001) note that the literature base does not adequately nor definitively decipher if historical empathy should be considered a process or an outcome. Much of the literature notes that it has elements of both (Ashby & Lee, 1987; Portal, 1987; Yeager & Foster, 2001).

Yeager and Foster (2001) argue for the centrality of empathy in historical understanding as historians must employ it incessantly in their analysis of the past. Empathy as a process encompasses four interrelated phases:

1. Introduction of an historical event necessitating the analysis of human action
2. Understanding of historical context and chronology
3. The analysis of a variety of historical evidence and interpretations
4. The construction of a narrative framework through which historical conclusions are reached (p. 14).

Pate (1999) contends that empathy “characterizes historical thinking that yields enriched understanding with context” (as cited in Davis, 2001, p. 3). This makes the term “perspective taking” a fitting alternative to “empathy” (Davis, 2001; Downey, 1995; Yeager & Foster, 2001) and a similar term “perspective recognition” is offered by Barton and Levstik (2004, p. 207). Students must be offered a means of gaining perspective through learning history. Klages’ (1999) study on the use of oral history for understanding of the Great Depression notes that students’ level of historical understanding evolves as a result of “questioning history and becoming actively involved in history,” as well as using oral histories (p. 168). She recommends that more research on historical thinking is warranted and should be conducted using various media types (Klages, 1999).

It is the process of doing history that allows students to gain the necessary knowledge that allows for the development of empathy. Davis (2001) argues that in order for students to engage in empathy in historical thinking, they must have a certain level of knowledge; therefore, the more history they know, the better equipped they are to engage empathy in historical thinking.

Ashby and Lee (1987) argue for empathy as an achievement rather than a process; one that is attained when the student is able to recreate the worldview of those in history. Yeager and Foster (2001) state “historical empathy combines the adductive and logical thinking associated with the use of evidence and the inferential and appropriately creative skills that seek to bridge the gap between what is known and what may be inferred from history” (p. 15). “Progress is not all or nothing. We try to give students more powerful ideas than the ones they start out with”(Ashby & Lee, 1987, p. 25). As with all classroom objectives, students will construct historical empathy at various rates as it is a process (Salmon, 1902). With regard to the Holocaust, empathy must be adequately defined. Misunderstanding in the intended scope of the term will undoubtedly lead to confusion of the study’s intended focus for analysis. While we “cannot recreate history in the classroom, a level of historical empathy can be reached” (Klages, 1999, p. 168).

As previously mentioned, the goals and various curricula surrounding the Holocaust lend to it seamlessly being utilized to teach for historical understanding through the engagement of empathy. It is necessary for a teacher to be diligent in their preparation of the objectives, especially in teaching sensitive material.

Teaching History

Much research has been done on the teaching of history and the ability of students to engage in historical inquiry and historical thinking (Ashby & Lee, 1987; Foster & Padgett, 1999; Levstik & Barton, 1997; Thornton & Vukelich, 1988; VanSledright, 2004). It is generally accepted that an effective means of teaching history is through the use of primary sources. In addition, primary sources provide insight into the time period under study. Grauerholz and Scuteri (1989) point out that using primary sources, especially journals and diaries, from the

group under study was instrumental in students' construction of different perspectives and in understanding the issues at hand.

Kobrin, Abbott, Ellinwood, and Horton (1993) conducted a study of the use of primary sources where they encouraged students to become the historian. They discuss the need to give students control over "definition and interpretation that professional historians have always claimed for themselves" (Kobrin et al., 1993, p. 39). Students in the study remarked their enjoyment of working in groups and having "time to think without some teacher immediately telling him he was right or wrong" (p. 41). Through this study, students affirmed the importance of active learning. Newman, Marks, and Gamoran (1996) list a wide variety of active learning activities including small group discussions, cooperative learning tasks, use of computer and video technology, and community based projects such as oral histories. The students in one study also noted, through journaling, that:

Seeing the importance of who created history helped them understand the intellectual responsibilities of young adults in a democratic community. They expressed a growing confidence in their ability to master new challenges and a more active empathy with events of the past (Kobrin et al., 1993, p. 41).

It is necessary that students gain a sense of understanding of the role of the historian. Only then will they be able to successfully analyze the need and importance of analyzing various sources for multiple perspectives.

Grauerholz and Scuteri (1989) describe a study by Burr, Leigh, Day, & Constantine (1979) in which students learn role-taking through the use of primary source documents and journaling. They describe role-taking as "imagining or perceiving what is in the mind of the other person" (as cited in Grauerholz and Scuteri, 1989, p. 480), which coincides with the idea of

empathy or perspective taking as previously defined. While the use of the word “imagining” may lead to the connection of a simulation and, thus, trivialization, it seems that the purpose of this strategy was to challenge students to study the past through a lens of the time in question, rather than a contemporary one. This suggestion is furthered by the assertion that through journaling, students were able to take on the role of others “with impressive degrees of empathy and understanding” (Grauerholz and Scuteri, 1989, p. 481). Grauerholz and Scuteri also reported that:

students frequently become most deeply involved and give the most thoughtful responses when thinking about extremely sensitive issues. The journals can be cathartic for students, helping them to release anxiety about an issue. By doing so they become more open to exploring the issue and to their own feelings about it (p. 481).

These findings further link the appropriateness of studying the Holocaust through authentic historical inquiry. In addition, the use of oral histories in the secondary classroom has demonstrated effectiveness in promoting personal connections to historical content.

A pertinent place to begin a brief discussion of oral history in the classroom is with Eliot Wiggington’s *Foxfire* project (1966). As a means to engage his secondary English classes in Rabun Gap, Georgia, Wiggington began an oral history project through which students would record oral histories of older local residents of the community. Students engaged in the collection of cultural stories and anecdotes as recounted by residents across the region. Over the course of the project, students became highly engaged and began a magazine that would continue for decades, as well as spawning 12 anthologies and multiple books, which have sold over 9 million copies (Starnes & Carone, 2002). Wiggington’s believed that “students can do-and must be allowed to do- far more than has been traditionally expected of them in our schools”

(Wigginton, 1972, p. 276). While students were not necessarily collecting full oral histories, *Foxfire* demonstrates the power of oral history in the classroom as well as the implications of constructivist learning strategies to engage students. The *Foxfire* project has since become a model for many teachers who wish to attempt similar projects and has provided a source of learning for teachers and students for decades.

Alchediak (2001) conducted a study in which her secondary students in United States history conducted oral histories of their family members throughout the course. Her study finds that the student participants became more engaged and interested in the content as a result of the personal connections that they were able to make with the content through the various projects. Likewise, Murray (2005) used oral histories in a study that explored the use of active teaching strategies for at-risk students in a course on the history of the Vietnam War. Over the course of the study, students were paired with a veteran of the Vietnam War whom they interviewed to create an oral history. He found that the students, who were typically unengaged, became engaged in the topic as they made connections with the veterans who they were paired with. He noted that both student and veteran “felt it was important to help the other person,” and through the course of the relationship “the mutual respect builds” (p. 163). The literature demonstrates that the effective use of oral histories can be a powerful resource. Steven Spielberg felt the same power of testimony during the making of *Schindler’s List*, prompting him to create the USC Shoah Foundation-The Institute for Visual History and Education and ultimately set the stage for the preservation of nearly 52,000 testimonies in perpetuity for the purpose of education.

The study of the Holocaust, genocide, and other human rights violations are, by their very nature, sensitive topics. Foster and Padgett (1999) point out that historical inquiry allows students to “appreciate that their personal histories are linked to the broader story of the human

condition” (p. 357). They continue to discuss the goals for historical inquiry as equipping “students with the tools to examine the human experience, to make sense of competing perspectives, to evaluate arguments based on available evidence, and to reach informed decisions” (Foster & Padgett, 1999, p. 358). Because the Holocaust is so well documented (Totten, 2001), it fits into the framework of historical empathy as a process put forth by Yeager and Foster (2001).

The benefit lies in the construction of knowledge. Wineburg (1991) argues that teaching students more facts is not likely to add much to the development of historical understanding “when they remain ignorant of the basic heuristics used to create historical interpretations, when they cannot distinguish among different types of historical evidence, and when they look to a textbook for the “answer” to historical questions” (p. 84). It is necessary for students to comprehend the role of the historian, who works from the position of possessing the “solution, but must reconstruct the goal and state of the world from it” (Wilensky, 1983, p. 10). Crocco (1998) points out that when doing oral histories, students become the historians working directly with primary source material while developing critical thinking skills as a result. Further, they are balancing the “panoramic version of history contained in their textbooks” (Crocco, 1998, p.19).

Conclusions. When preparing a unit, or course of study, on the Holocaust, one can see that there is much to consider and even more to know. However, through due diligence, teachers can provide their students with an opportunity of inquiry-based learning in order to develop a sense of historical empathy. By following guidelines laid out for teachers (Parsons & Totten, 1993; Totten & Feinberg, 1995) and evaluating resources that suit sound pedagogical practice, it is possible to construct a unit of study that allows students to develop an understanding of the

Holocaust on a deeper level, one that allows students to gain some insight into the ideas, beliefs, and circumstances present in Nazi Germany between 1933-1945. Schweber (2004) describes the positive potential for student learning of empathy, moral lessons, and historical understanding through the study of the Holocaust.

As we move further into the 21st century and continue to become more connected digitally, it is important to focus the conversation on the effective use digital resources in historical inquiry. More immediately, there is an opportunity for research to study the impact of digital resources, especially digital testimony, on the development of empathy for historical understanding (Klages, 1999). The unveiling of IWitness, by the USC Shoah Foundation, in January 2012 provides a new opportunity for students to interact with digital Holocaust survivor testimony as a major part of their investigation into the Holocaust. Interaction with digital testimony stands at the forefront of this recommendation for research, due to the relatively short amount of time we have left to spend with survivors of the Holocaust.

Chapter Four: Methods

Methodological Perspective

Gone are the days when only prominent members of society are interviewed for documentation of the times. In our current society, “All voices have the potential to be documented” (Janesick, 2010, p. 4). It is from the stories of human beings that people construct meaning as they engage with the world that they are interpreting (Crotty, 1998). “Interpretation is essential to an understanding of experience and the experience includes interpretation” (Patton, 2002, p. 106). Through interpretation, people develop a framework through which they view the world. At the core of a qualitative interview study is the joint exploration of a particular topic by two people who are co-constructing meaning (Janesick, 2010). This qualitative interview study explores teacher perceptions of how students respond to the use of digital Holocaust survivor testimony via IWitness and the sense of empathy that is invoked in them through interactions with testimony.

Context

This study was conducted through a network of teachers that make up the USC Shoah Foundation Master Teacher Program. The Master Teacher Program is part of the flagship professional development offered by the USC Shoah Foundation known as *Teaching with Testimony*. Begun with the first of three cohorts in 2009, the program brought together teachers from across the United States for a one-week intensive training in testimony-based education. Over the course of the week, participants gained understanding of the use of testimony across disciplines, constructivist-learning theory, and began to develop a testimony based lesson plan,

either designed for *IWitness* or a traditional lesson. For these lessons, teachers were given access to the full Visual History Archive, containing 52,000 testimonies and had no limits to topic of study. Teachers were mentored throughout the year and piloted their lesson. The following summer, they returned for a three day follow up workshop to debrief their experiences and share what they had learned. In 2012, following the debrief of the third cohort from 2011, which I was a participant in, all three cohorts came together for a two-day “Best Practices” workshop.

The Shoah Foundation Master Teacher Program was selected for its training of the individuals in the use of digital testimony in the classroom. While the Shoah Foundation is located at the University of Southern California, the teachers involved with the program span the nation. This allowed for a sample inclusive of educators who teach in varied locations, political and socio-economic climates, as well as different local cultures, all of which can impact the worldview of both teacher and student. It was decided that the focus of this research would be on teacher perceptions because other research is currently underway at the USC Shoah Foundation with student populations and topics include empathy and historical understanding. Further, high school students may have encountered emotional responses that they were unprepared for or do not know how to articulate. In this case, the teachers’ perceptions and experiences provide a more detailed description of how students react outwardly through any assignments related to their *IWitness* experience.

Participants

Participants of this study consist of five educators all of whom have implemented *IWitness* in their classroom. Preference was given to those Shoah Foundation Master Teacher program graduates who teach social studies or English courses and have used *IWitness* in their classroom. These educators have been trained in-depth on how to effectively use testimony in

instruction. Due to the detailed nature of qualitative research, a small sample size is warranted, focusing on selecting “information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry” (Patton, 2002, p. 230). A small sample size is justified, according to Creswell (1998) and Morse (1994), when the study involves participants who will provide in-depth, rich data sets of information for the study. Due to the elite nature of the training undergone by the Master Teacher participants, a small sample size is suitable because they were able to provide rich details regarding the use of testimony and IWitness. The participants had previously expressed interest in my study and were willing to participate when the official invitation to participate was received. Following the fulfillment of the initial criteria, purposeful case sampling was used to select participants in areas of analytical interest of grade, subject area, and student socioeconomic status from the pool of volunteers. This resulted in the selection of the five participants in this study.

Data Collection

Over the course of the study, data was collected through the use of qualitative interviewing, which allows the researcher to understand experiences and reconstruct events of the participant (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Two semi-structured interviews with each participant were conducted via Skype at times that were convenient for the participants as well as the researcher. Each interview call was recorded with the use of E Camm Call Recorder and transcribed using a professional transcription service. Because a transcription service was used, participants provided their consent prior to the service receiving their recordings. The recordings of the interviews are stored on my password-protected personal computer and will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study. Participants were provided a set of interview

questions one week prior to the scheduled interview in order to familiarize themselves with the topic and begin to construct responses. As the nature of semi-structured interviews is to allow the conversation to flow naturally, each participant was not asked all questions in the protocol.

The interviews lasted approximately sixty minutes each, which allowed plenty of time for the conversation to develop. Rubin and Rubin describe qualitative interviews, “Conversations in which a researcher gently guides a conversational partner in an extended discussion” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p.4). This approach allowed me to ask follow up and probing questions as well as giving a sense of control over the amount of detail, length of given responses to questions, and clarifications that I felt necessary during the interview, all the while ensuring that the interview remained on topic (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

In a couple of instances, the technology did interrupt by freezing or disconnecting. Upon further reflection, I noticed that after reconnecting, we had changed direction slightly. I see this as the nature of using technology in data collection of this sort. While the conversation did continue, the flow and line of thought that the participants were in suffered interruption, which I believe resulted in a slight change in the conversation. During each interview, the participants and I explored their background and how their experience led to a career in education. As the conversation progressed, we examined their views on Holocaust education and its importance. Every participant’s view and approach varied due to their personal history and values. Each interview then began the discussion of empathy, the use of testimony, and IWitness. Every conversation varied to a degree in order to allow the participant to articulate their experience and perceptions in the way that was most natural to them.

In an introductory email (Appendix I), prospective participants were briefed about the study, interview process, and editing process. Interested participants submitted an informed

consent form (Appendix III). As compensation for their time, participants were given a \$10 gift card for each interview and \$10 for the verification of transcripts and narratives or a \$30 gift card at the end of the data collection and analysis process. Ongoing informed consent was part of the process and participants were surveyed for questions or concerns at the beginning of each communication with me. They were also reminded that they could withdraw from the study at any time for any reason.

Interview One. Interview one began to structure an individual narrative about each participant's past experience leading up to their experience with using IWitness in the classroom. Interviews were scheduled in advance in order to accommodate participants' schedules. A list of open-ended questions was prepared for the interview and provided to each participant one week prior to the scheduled interview. Questions were tailored to each participant in free flowing conversation; therefore, they were not asked all questions.

Preliminary questions focused on reasons that the participant became interested in the Holocaust. From here, questions shifted to how the participant became a teacher and, more specifically, their experience in teaching about the Holocaust and goals for students in these lessons. Participants were then asked to describe their beliefs on the usage of digital testimony and Web 2.0 in the classroom. The last focus of interview one was the participants' personal definition of empathy and its value in the classroom.

Interview Two. Interview two focused on asking participants to reconstruct their experience using IWitness in the classroom and to reflect on their perceptions of student outcomes. During this interview, questions allowed the participants to reconstruct the details of the experience. This allows them to use these details in order to formulate opinions on the effects of digital testimony on student empathy (Seidman, 1998).

Interview two took place following interview one, but prior to any in-depth analysis. Scheduling time between interviews varied by participant and was set up based on their availability. Since participants needed to be comfortable with sharing their feelings and viewpoints surrounding the Holocaust, I wanted to be sure that a level of rapport had been established. This interview asked participants to reflect on their viewpoint regarding the outcomes of digital testimony on student empathy through their personal definition of empathy, as well as my definition. Participants also reflected on the meaning that the experience holds for them in their teaching practice. Questions were open-ended and in an attempt to produce rich detail of the experience within the context and the addition of probing questions sought to elicit further details and anecdotes that the participant feels are relevant. In addition, I provided transcripts to participants to perform member checks from both interviews.

Data analysis

Data analysis commenced during data collection, rather than following it (Dey, 1993). Over the course of the interviews, I used two-column notes in order to keep track of pertinent ideas and thoughts that occurred during the interview process. The left column was for notes to myself, thoughts, questions, etc., while the right column focused on observations made during the specific interview. By keeping notes during the interview, I was able to begin generating themes as they emerged, which assisted in formulating questions for the second interview pertaining to these themes. Following the interviews, transcription, and member-checking process, I began analyzing the data for emergent codes and themes using inductive analysis.

Inductive analysis allows the researcher to pull out emergent themes found in the raw data “without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies” (Thomas, 2006, p. 238). Using Rubin & Rubin’s (2005) five-step process for data analysis, I attempted to identify codes

and themes that are relevant to teacher perception of student empathy. I first read through the transcripts of interviews looking for specific instances of understanding and identification with testimony for the individual. Next, I developed a set of codes and began analyzing for themes across interviews.

Triangulation

The use of interview data/field notes, a researcher reflective journal, and member checking of transcripts and narratives provided for triangulation of data and analysis for recurring themes while allowing for cross-data validity checks (Patton, 2002).

Following the interviews, member checks were performed, thereby, “Transferring the validity process to the study’s participants” (Creswell, 2000, p. 127). Participants were provided a copy of their typed transcripts for approval. They had the option of hard copy or electronic copy and given the choice to arrange a Skype call or speaking over the telephone. During the member checks, participants were asked to verify the accuracy of their transcripts and if there were any aspects that they would like to clarify, elaborate on, or omit. Member checks are a critical strategy in establishing credibility (Creswell, 2000).

Once the data was analyzed and coded, I used investigator triangulation in order to further establish reliability to the coding of data. I employed a method known as *peer review* (Merriam, 2009), to review the analysis and coding for inter-rater reliability. “Using multiple analysts working independently to analyze the same data set and comparing the findings allows for the reduction of certain biases” (Patton, 1999, p. 1195). For this process, I collaborated with two doctoral candidates, each doing their own studies involving qualitative research. Regina, is currently working to complete her dissertation by December and currently teaches social studies at the middle school level in the Tampa area. Her study is also uses qualitative interviewing as a

data collection method. Abby is currently working on a proposal for her qualitative study and teaches high school social studies in the Tampa area. Further, Abby regularly integrates personal narrative in her teaching as a means of providing depth for her students' study of history. Each of the participants has experience with IWitness, as they took part in an IWitness pilot that analyzed the resource for its potential as a technological tool in the social studies.

The collaborating colleagues were given a list of codes and a short description of each. They were also given excerpts from the various transcripts and the code list in order to independently code the material. I compared their set of coding with my own; their match verified that my coding of the data is reliable. In addition, the peer reviewer aided in providing multiple perspectives to the transcript, thereby checking my assumptions and subjectivities in the research. This step also gave rise to one of the themes between participants, long-term affects.

Since the researcher is the primary instrument in qualitative research (Janesick, 2004), reflecting on the experience will further the triangulation process. By keeping a researcher reflective journal, I created a data set of my reflections, understanding, observations, and questions as an ongoing process. By making journaling an ongoing practice over the course of the study, I refined my understanding of participant conversations as well as my own thinking. I used Day One, an app-based journaling tool, as my researcher reflective journal. Through the use of Day One, I could sync my journal across my computer and password protected mobile devices so that I could add to the journal as new thoughts or ideas populated.

Reflecting on my own experience helped me to address subjectivity as a moving target. Subjectivity is based on experience and experience is always changing. In order to give voice to participants, I have to take into account my ever-changing subjectivity based on my own experience with IWitness and Holocaust education. Participants may have encountered incidents

surrounding the Holocaust that touch them on a deeper level, something that I may, or may not, identify with. Their views and feelings towards the Holocaust and Holocaust education vary from my own, yet it is my job as a researcher to report their stories while recognizing my own experience and attitude towards Holocaust education. In order to further provide for the voice of my participants, I tell their story through narrative.

Narrative allows for the participants' experience with using digital testimony in the classroom to be expressed. By discussing my own experience with IWitness and Holocaust education at the beginning of this manuscript, I explicitly inserted myself into the narrative in such a way as to acknowledge my bias and subjectivity so that the reader can differentiate them.

Ethical Considerations

Over the course of this study, it was necessary that participants feel at ease with their participation in the study. It is vital that a relationship built on equality and trust be established in a narrative line of inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). As such, I see the research process as collaboration between my participants and myself as I engaged in a role of actively and meticulously listening, recording, and reporting their experience.

Participant understanding and confidentiality are essential aspects to any research study. I briefed participants through an email invitation to participate in the study and again over the phone or by Skype to ensure that they fully comprehend the purpose and goals of the study. They were informed that the research was to be used for my dissertation and related articles, but for no other reason. Prior to the first interview, each participant submitted a signed consent form. In order to maintain anonymity, participants are identified using a pseudonym of their choosing. They were also provided with copies of their transcripts, narratives, and reminded that they may withdraw from the study at any time for any reason. Lastly, all recordings of interviews are

stored on a password-protected computer and will be destroyed five years after the conclusion of the study.

Conclusion

Five teachers from across the United States participated in this qualitative interview study that explores teacher perceptions of having students engage with visual history testimony in *IWitness*. This has allowed me to gain insight into how they perceive the outcomes of student interaction with testimony in regards to developing empathy. It has also provided awareness of how this resource differs from other primary source materials often used in secondary classrooms.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to construct narratives of the teachers' experience with integration of visual history testimony through *IWitness*. Themes were developed within, and across, narratives through the use of two-column notes. Member checks insured validity of the interview transcripts and an expert panel of colleagues assisted in determining validity of the coding system.

Chapter Five: Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate teacher perception on the impact of testimony-based education through the educational resource *IWitness*. The central focus is the development of moral empathy in students. I created the following research questions for investigation in this study:

1. What factors do teachers attribute to the development of empathy in themselves and in students?
2. How does engagement with digital testimony through *IWitness* compare/contrast to other primary sources, especially in the development of empathy?
3. How does this medium add value in learning without desensitizing students?
4. How does interacting with *IWitness* facilitate a moral framework for developing empathy?

In this chapter, I will present the findings related to the research questions using data garnered from interviews. This study was comprised of two semi-structured interviews conducted via Skype. During the study, I employed purposeful sampling to select five participants who are USC Shoah Foundation Master Teachers who teach secondary Social Studies or English courses and have implemented an *IWitness* activity in their classroom. I have compiled a narrative for each participant in order to provide context of his or her background, teaching philosophy, and views on Holocaust education.

Leonard

As the participants gathered as a group for the first time over coffee and a smorgasbord of breakfast pastries, I eagerly awaited hearing from the strangers present in this room. Little did I know of what connections were to come. The room was set up with tables arranged like three sides of a square. The square opened to my right, where the projector screen covered the wall of the small conference room. Leonard sat opposite me on the first day and next to me for the remainder of the week. As a result of our proximity, I got to know Leonard better than most of the other participants, which may be evident in this manuscript. He wore a blue button up oxford-style shirt and had short brown hair and deep, dark eyes that drew me in. As we went around the table introducing ourselves, Leonard held up his hand, as if he were wearing an invisible glove. He described Michigan using the well-known metaphor of a winter mitten, and he pointed to his city in respect to that shape.

His true height, compared to my meager five-foot eight-inch build, was not immediately noticed. Later, I realized that his height correlated to his personality in terms of their size. Now this is not to suggest that he exhibited loud or boisterous behavior, but quite the contrary, he was quiet, sympathetic, and articulate, yet jubilant; as he spoke, thoughtfulness streamed throughout his commentary. When I looked into his eyes, an immediate sense of familiarity overtook me, as if two long lost friends had gotten back together for the first time in years. It was one of the rare times in life when you shake hands with someone new and an aura permeates them, allowing you to sense their good nature and the instant recognition of meeting a genuine and caring soul who will enrich your life from that point forward. That feeling amplified over the course of the week and culminated during our ride to the airport as we chatted about life and our families. As we

wound through downtown Los Angeles towards LAX, I remember sharing details with Leonard that would typically be shared only with my closest friends.

As I got to know Leonard better and began to analyze the transcripts from his interviews, I realized that this experience suited him perfectly. Leonard, now 46, is a family man through and through. It was immediately apparent that friends were family, and family steadfastly occupied the most important space in Leonard's heart. Leonard grew up as part of a large Irish, Catholic family in a rural upper Midwestern town. Leonard's experiences, and path to education, largely resulted from growing up with two parents in service industries. His grandfather, who dropped out of Notre Dame due to the Great Depression, sat awaiting Leonard on a daily basis as he returned home from school. Immediately upon settling in, his grandfather would say, "Teach me something that you learned in school today. Not, what did you do in school, but *teach* me something that you learned. And that was, actually, a brilliant way to make me tell him about my day" (Leonard, Interview, April 9, 2014). This experience followed Leonard, as did the service of his parents, which shaped his aspirations to be the kind of public servants that they were. His path to doing so would be through education.

Leonard teaches high school in a rural town with a strong sense of community. Everybody knows everybody and teachers are held in high regard. This phenomenon adds to the classroom culture that Leonard develops starting from the first bell of the school year. While his students have known and gone to school with one another for their entire lives, there are still aspects of individual experience that Leonard integrates in his class that allows them to dig further into the identities of one another. This also lays a positive foundation for learning.

Leonard embodies the characteristics of a lifelong-learner, a trait that guided him in his journey to choosing education as a career. And while education is a career, Leonard personifies

the very nature of an educator: “I love to learn and part of how I learn is by teaching” (Leonard, Interview, April 9, 2014). Leonard began college with pre-med as his major, and soon came to realize that he always felt the most at home in courses relating to education. The crux of Leonard’s classroom teaching philosophy has always been the joy that comes from sharing information in a community of learners. Nine years into his teaching career, Leonard became the principal at his school with the notion that he would be working with teachers to craft dynamic educational systems. After six years as an administrator, Leonard yearned for the classroom environment in which students and teachers could learn side-by-side, in order to analyze, ponder, and grow together. This calling led Leonard 50 feet down the hallway to his former classroom where he belongs.

Leonard began to use *Night*, by Elie Wiesel, as part of his English curriculum. He recalled to his first reading of this work when, at the age of twenty-one, he discovered a copy of *Night* wedged in a seatback pocket on a flight to Spain. Once Leonard delved into the memoir he was hooked, and finished the book within two hours. Leonard personally connected with the ideas presented in the book. Wiesel was a teenager in the book, something that had powerful implications for Leonard at twenty-one years old. When Leonard returned to the classroom after his hiatus as an administrator, *Night* was a part of the curriculum. Leonard realized twenty years following his first read of that fateful memoir, that he needed to inform himself more on the content in order to help his students make meaning from such a complex topic. At this point Leonard sought out some immersive professional development for deepening his own understanding of the Holocaust. A Holocaust survivor called Leonard to action during an intense, two-week experience at the New York Memorial Library:

It was the first survivor testimony that I've ever witnessed person to person and one [survivor] very powerfully said, "It hurts me to tell you the story again because to tell you the story, I have to see it in front of my eyes and it happens all over, but I'm willing to do it if you'll carry it forward (Leonard, Interview, April 9, 2014).

This mission has driven Leonard ever since. Over the last five years, Leonard entrenched himself in Holocaust content and pedagogy, including coordinating and facilitating a weeklong regional workshop for the Holocaust Educators Network.

Leonard has been captivated by the use of digital storytelling and digital media in personal narrative. As a fellow of the National Writing Project of a nearby university since 1996, he was invited to California to learn about the documentation to dissemination process of personal narrative using digital media. Leonard sees great opportunity for student growth in the power of having students work with their writing in a digital format that. "I call it layered writing because of the multi-layered control that students have over their final project." When students add their voice, various sounds or soundtracks, or even find a space for silence, "it really makes their writing more powerful" (Leonard, Interview, April 9, 2014).

Leonard knew that he had only just begun to delve into the depths of learning and teaching about the Holocaust on the tail end of the Holocaust Educator Network seminar. When he learned of the Master Teacher program and the way that the USC Shoah Foundation innovating the use of videotaped testimony, it seemed a natural fit for where he was professionally and personally on his journey.

The drive to teach about the Holocaust is not a simple and straightforward avenue for Leonard, but more resembles the convergence of traffic at a major intersection. Leonard is primarily concerned with ensuring that his senior high school students are prepared to enter the

world beyond high school, the “real world.” For him, a study of the Holocaust allows students to gain a sense of what the world can look like at its lowest points, when institutions and responsibilities to one another break down. By studying this history, students can be a bit more prepared for what they could encounter on the next leg of their own personal journey. This is a start to the student-driven inquiry process Leonard uses to personalize the learning in his class. Yet, to fully understand the other reasons that teaching the Holocaust is important, it is necessary to have a more pertinent understanding of the makeup of Leonard’s teaching philosophy.

From the opening of the semester, Leonard establishes his classroom as a community for learning, in which students are safe to question, wonder, and reflect. Launching this community from the beginning provides a powerful effect once the class arrives at their Holocaust unit because the respect and level of care is in place. He starts with the idea that we are all different, a powerful starting point for kids who have grown up together. The school is “96% white, probably 98% Christian, middle class and lower-middle class. So, looking around, my students do not recognize difference” (Leonard, Interview, April 9, 2014), so it is a necessary step in learning about community and identity. For example, he begins with a series of questions such as “who celebrates a holiday with a feast that nobody else celebrates? Who calls their grandparents something other than grandma and grandpa? Who puts a glass pickle ornament on the tree at Christmas time?” A discussion of why these things take place ensues and:

“variably what happens is they start to ask questions about well, why do I have the assumptions that I have? What does that have to do with my own identity? I have them self-identify on what I call a cultural mandala, which is eighteen different cultural memberships that we all have, many of which are invisible to us. So we start talking about people and then we start to introduce survivors. Since the Shoah training, we look

at family because family is our first experience of culture” (Leonard, Interview, April 9, 2014).

As students view clips of testimony from survivors discussing stories from their life, or relationships with parents and siblings, the stories begin to resonate:

so by the time we read *Night*, what we are reading is a family story about a boy who grew up in a certain family at a certain time. Some of our kids are deeply religious as Christians growing up in the construct of that family. Empathy, I’m realizing, is one of the most important components of my successful teaching, if I’m successful in what I’m teaching (Leonard, Interview, April 9, 2014).

Leonard defines empathy as:

The ability to put yourself in another’s situation, so that through that person’s eyes you can imagine, or you can make yourself imagine what their experience feels like. I’ve defined it differently in the past, allowing your own psychological mechanisms to be activated by somebody else’s frustration- frustration being negative feelings (Leonard, Interview, April 9, 2014).

The role of identity serves as a primary facet of Leonard’s course, because it is through personal identity that his students explore topics that resonate with them in IWitness. This exercise is deepened by the understanding students have for the notion of individual differences between people. As students develop a stronger awareness of who they are, the ability to connect with experiences of others becomes more apparent possibly leading students to experience a personally difficult moment that Stephen Smith of the USC Shoah Foundation refers to as “a rupture.”

She came to her moment where she could not get her head around it. The entire class is quiet. I am not doing anything other than attending her and being with her, and so is everybody else in the class. We are in that circle that I have described and we are talking. She just gets to this moment where she starts to cry. She puts her hands up over her eyes; she's put together, I don't know how much time she spent on her hair, and here is just completely coming unglued, and we are quiet, and we are there. It's just quiet and respectful for what she's feeling (Leonard, Interview, April, 16, 2014).

The nine months spent creating this type of community pays off, demonstrating that students' moral capacity during the course of this class has increased. While this is not the direct result of IWitness per se, it illuminates the importance of establishing a community when you are working with such sensitive content, as well as the importance of moral empathy in the classroom, which Leonard ties together:

Empathy is pushing kids outside of that 'my identity' construct to see themselves, whether it is just with one other person in a relationship, or in community with others. And I think it's developed mentally and healthy psychologically for students to move beyond just thinking about me, me, me, all of the time. You cannot have community without it. You cannot have community without people really genuinely caring and having concern for the experience of others, and you cannot learn difficult stuff without community. You cannot have a community without safety. You cannot have safety unless other people genuinely have care and concern for the people around them and that does not happen without empathy (Leonard, Interview, April 9, 2014).

When engaged in responsible and personally relevant learning, students have the capacity to cultivate caring relationships, both with the content and with each other.

In Leonard's class, the Holocaust unit begins in the third quarter because it allows plenty of time to establish the learning community and is far enough from the end of the year to shield the unit from student apathy as the summer draws near. The course is structured as a workshop: "which means, I want it to be an open ended [experience,] working on the tasks and skills of knowledge at the speed that is appropriate for them, and so as much as possible, I turn control of my room over to them" (Leonard, Interview, April 11, 2014). This approach continues in Leonard's teaching of the Holocaust. While Leonard believes that the Holocaust readily lends itself to teaching lessons beyond the content, he does not teach to "his lessons"; rather, he lets his students direct their own learning with his guidance. He takes a constructivist approach to learning with his students, knowing up front that their learning will not be complete when they venture from his classroom into the next chapter of their lives.

Leonard recognizes that the Holocaust is "one of the most important blendings of content that I know of in our schools. I cannot be a good teacher of the Holocaust in an English class, without also being a student of the history" (Leonard, Interview, April 9, 2014). As students work through the content, they "do history, history and English, and English. This is all of those things combined and it allows for a deep level of engagement and scholarship on behalf of the student, or on part of the students; that's rare...It's one of the first times in school where we stop pigeonholing a content area into a specific space" (Leonard, Interview, April 9, 2014).

Holocaust material can be traumatic. Part of Leonard's mission is to safely guide his students through their learning. In his seminar for local teachers, they term this "going inside the wire," a phrase that imparts itself to the vulnerability of students working with such emotionally laden content. A chief component of studying the Holocaust is for educators to shepherd students as they work through the material and make new discoveries about the world and

themselves: “a lot of learning comes from discomfort, from the disconnect between what you understand cognitively and what you are feeling emotionally. In that tension comes a lot of the really good and important questions that kids will eventually ask; that becomes our inquiry.”

Leonard describes the need for a guide who is willing to brave the fire with students, which provides a summation of his classroom dedication and practice in teaching the Holocaust:

It’s hard to teach the Holocaust and at the end of my Holocaust unit, now and every year, I am exhausted by it and the scabs are ripped open. I need that to be true for my kids for whom the content is new, I need to take the journey with them. I remember seeing a girl, a smart kid, college bound, in tears and I had to be in tears with her as she was trying to wrap her head around the *how could people do this moment* for her. I teared up and I was right there with her emotionally. I have to stay that fresh, so that she has that companionship as she walks through that realization or epiphany for her (Leonard, Interview, April 11, 2014).

One manner in which Leonard is able to personalize the learning for each student is to integrate IWitness as a resource for student inquiry. Their video projects are a way for students to investigate their questions and explore how the survivors, liberators, and witnesses available in the archive address that topic. As with the rest of his teaching, Leonard does not put a great emphasis on the tidiness of the video. Instead, Leonard emphasizes how the video represents the students’ learning and the point at which they are at the end of their unit. The way in which students connect to individual testimonies is crucial in their learning journey. He points out that some of the videos are not very good, some are great, but many get to the heart of the students’ personal inquiry. This provides them with a stepping stone to new questions, and that is what he seeks through using IWitness. The power of IWitness is the change that occurs when you take

that journey with someone telling their story because after that, “your DNA and the DNA of the testimony, they’re mixed.” President Obama referred to this comment when he discussed the work of the USC Shoah Foundation at the Ambassadors for Humanity Gala in 2014. Leonard continues to describe the most important characteristic of students working in IWitness during his class, the engagement:

You are interacting with a human being, you are interacting with them non-verbally and you are watching as they tell the story, it’s very personal; your empathy signals. You are allowing somebody else’s psychological and physiological responses to their narrative to hit your own...psychology and there’s that interaction, which is not a conscious act. It’s when somebody is tightened up and they are talking and are afraid, you are not consciously going, “oh, I’m afraid.” You are responding as a human being. Or when somebody is crying or when somebody is struggling for words, you find yourself centering and being patient, again not consciously, just humanly engaging with that person. I can’t prepare that experience for my kids (Leonard, Interview, April 11, 2014).

Leonard spends between one and two weeks in the lab with students as they work on answering their questions through the voices of the archive. He remarks on what he witnesses during that period: “It’s quiet the way that 25 eighteen-year-olds cannot be quiet for a week and a half; [that tells me] that they are engaged in their own inquiry. It’s really not about me and that’s a beautiful thing” (Leonard, Interview, April 11, 2014).

Leonard’s experience and perspective is rooted in an approach that allows student questions to drive the learning. He serves as their guide, struggling along side his students, assisting them in reaching their next waypoint in learning about this Holocaust, a journey he hopes they continue on with after the final bell rings for summer break. He believes that

Witness is not the cornerstone of their learning, but it is a resource that humanizes the Holocaust, giving students a much deeper emotional connection as they interact with the survivor testimony. Leonard structures his class as a family and allows students to be comfortable and respectful of one another as they explore their own burning questions and struggle through the material. This creates a learning culture that helps to bring out the affective nature of learning about the Holocaust.

Justice

As I prepared for my interview with Justice, I was nervous and excited. Justice is such an articulate and powerful speaker that the possibilities for collaboration are endless. As a featured speaker at the 2014 USC Shoah Foundation Ambassadors for Humanity Gala she dazzled me, and the rest of the audience with her speech. Opting not to use a teleprompter demonstrates her philosophy of speaking from the heart. More amazing still, Justice controlled the audience and appeared unfazed by the 1,300 people hanging on her every word. The audience included Holocaust survivors and Hollywood A-Listers, not to mention the honoree of the event, President Barack Obama. The emotion behind her spoken-word poetry never ceases to give me the chills; it was that powerful. I remember the strength and passion of behind her spoken-word poem entitled “I Teach,” at the 2012 Master Teacher Best Practices workshop. That poem embodies her spirit as an educator and a shepherd to her students. During that week, the second meeting in the two-year program, I felt blessed to be among such amazing teachers, but witnessing the recital of that poem alone filled me with such energy that I could not wait to get back into the classroom.

Justice is someone who is hard to put into words. Born and raised on the West Coast of the United States, her spirit radiates an unquenchable thirst for life. The first time I met Justice, I

felt a bit intimidated as she exuded an amazing inner strength. At first I was a bit unsettled that I would not cohere with her. As I got to know Justice better, I came to realize that she is an extremely thoughtful and genuine person. Justice is unparalleled as a public speaker, especially when reciting her spoken-word poetry, which sends chills down my spine every single time I hear it. At the *Ambassadors for Humanity Gala*, Justice captivated the room. I could tell her adrenaline pulsed through her veins as she spoke a bit faster than normal, which did nothing to dampen the thunderous impact that she had on the room. Everyone joined in a standing ovation as Justice finished speaking. People immediately rushed to the table we were sitting at with her students just to hear more about her from their perspective.

Justice grew up overcoming difficult situations as a child. Her experience instilled in her the importance of family, hard work, and dedication, all of which she demonstrates on a daily basis. From a young age Justice sought to earn good grades in school to ensure that her mother had one less thing to worry about. Her hard work eventually paid off. During her undergraduate work at the University of California, Justice spent time studying abroad in Chile before teaching English in Japan for two years. During that time, she applied to graduate school and was accepted into Harvard and another branch of the University of California. She chose the University of California for her studies due to proximity to family. By the end of the first semester in graduate school, Justice realized that she wanted to become an educator. During her summers any part-time jobs always included working with children or teaching. However, this proved to be a dilemma since none of her college or graduate work involved education, but Pacific International Affairs. Through a friend, Justice learned of a new charter school that had an international focus and her friend urged her to turn her experience into a teaching position there. So she applied and attempted to convince the school to create a course in International

relations. While the school declined the new course idea, they took a liking to Justice and asked her to teach United States history and Humanities which she happily accepted. She realized that she would learn the content as she prepared her lessons for class. After a couple of years, Justice transferred to a new campus that the school opened.

Justice, now 37, continues teaching at this charter school in a West Coast suburb. The school has adopted a philosophy of project-based learning, meaning that students construct knowledge as they develop projects based on open-ended questions or prompts. This style of learning gives students freedom to explore topics and means of representation that are unique to their personal interests within the larger theme of the unit. For example, Justice taught a unit on the 1920s in the United States, which gives ample opportunity for personalized learning. During certain times of the year, the school opens its doors to parents and the public for student exhibitions and the 1920s unit is one example of that. During this unit, Justice's class used a larger space and transformed it into a speakeasy. As visitors entered the exhibition, student projects flooded their senses because this was no static viewing; it was a fully immersive experience for parents. As students created their projects, they did so based on their own interests. Therefore, students who have a penchant for math ran the gambling tables and had to determine formulas and odds to ensure that the house wins. Musical students wrote and arranged jazz music that was performed throughout the night, while students who enjoyed literature or poetry would step in and read their writing or recite their poems as the band took their well-deserved breaks. Students displayed their 1920's inspired artwork throughout the space. All of this combined to give parents and visitors an understanding of how the learning takes place within the school, superseding simple lectures and quizzes of a traditional classroom. Each year, Justice works on new themes and projects, all of which take on this style of learning, even if

there is not an exhibition for a particular unit. Justice uses a project based and project-oriented learning approach in her classroom:

Project-oriented learning is usually when there is direct instructions and a lot of lead up, and then a final product. Then, [in] project-based learning, the learning is happening as the students are doing the project, so they may not have any front-loading. It can be an essential question and they have to explore that, and the learning happens throughout that whole process (Justice, Interview, May 20, 2014).

These essential questions are typically very open-ended so that students do not feel as though they must arrive at a particular answer, providing the freedom to explore the content deeper. Justice also uses an essential question for her syllabus, providing insight into her goal as a teacher, “How can I get 11th grade students to think critically and act empathetically?”

Justice defines empathy as “the ability to understand and care for the experience of people enough to change something in you or encourage you to act on behalf of someone else.” She points out that this type of caring differs from sympathy because it is “not to feel sorry for or I feel bad for these people,” yet it is important to engage an emotion to trigger the desired change. For each of the projects that Justice implements in her course, there is an expected action that happens after the unit is complete. This action is not necessarily monitored, but is an underlying objective in Justice’s teaching philosophy. Often this action is related to student behavior or civic engagement in some fashion.

While this may seem ambitious, the development of empathy is a major goal within social studies education through facets such as citizenship education, moral education, and teaching for social justice. Furthermore, it provides the opportunity for a transformational experience as Justice mentioned in discussing the value of empathy in the classroom:

if we are just talking for academic content retention, like being able to learn information and have it have an enduring understanding or last over time, so not just I learned it for the test. I think anytime you can connect to some type of emotion, whether its empathy or some type of connection to whatever it is you're teaching, then the outcome is going to be the students will remember whatever that content is...In terms of within the classroom, I want to see them hopefully behaving differently towards each other and also in the community (Justice, Interview, May 20, 2014.)

A transformational experience (USC Shoah Foundation, 2012) is a reaction that results in students having a different viewpoint or behavior following the stimulus, which in this case is engaging with testimony in IWitness during her Holocaust unit.

In order to delve into the Holocaust, or any other topic, it is necessary to create a learning environment where students can feel safe in taking risks and leaving their comfort zone.

“Nothing grows in a comfort zone,” notes Justice as we talk about how she begins each year (Interview, May 20, 2014). She continues in her description of what she calls “CARE-culture” for her classroom:

1. Create an environment of trust and security
2. Allow students to see some of the real you because you are asking to see their real selves- Students see me make mistakes so that they know its ok to make mistakes
3. Respond to students’ interest, passions, and needs- Give assignments that have choice and making the classroom fully inclusive
4. Encourage and expect growth- I don’t want them to feel comfortable where they’re at, always pushing them (Justice, Interview, May 20, 2014).

By establishing this culture of learning early on it becomes easier to do higher risk activities later, such as activities that require students to take a chance and go outside of their comfort zones, where Justice wants them to grow.

Justice engages students in critical and reflective thinking in order to reach some of her learning goals through her unit on the Holocaust. One of Justice's first forays into learning about the Holocaust came when she read *Night* as a teenager during high school. She recalls reading the book, but not doing much else with it in terms of discussion or reflection. Justice further recalls minimal experience with the Holocaust, aside from a few films much later in life. Her decision to revamp her approach to teaching about the Holocaust came about when introducing the unit a few years ago. One student lamented "studying the Holocaust *again*." This suggested a fatigue with the Holocaust that stood out to Justice. The more prominent detail that led to Justice overhauling her teaching of the Holocaust was not the student's comment, but the fact that she accepted it. She considered shortening the unit. Upon further reflection, Justice realized that what was actually needed was a more effective approach to teaching about the Holocaust.

Around this time Justice discovered the USC Shoah Foundation Master Teacher program and sent in her application. During the program Justice recalls "being really exhausted and starting to watch testimony, but then feeling like she needed to watch more, it was a crazy feeling" (Interview, May, 20, 2014). Following the program, Justice knew that she had not finished her own learning and at the urging of Leonard, she attended the New York Memorial Library seminar the following summer. It was here that Justice learned even more about the importance of context when teaching about the Holocaust, "If you only teach your kids about the Holocaust, all they will ever think of Jewish people is that they went through the Holocaust. It's

important to see them as people,” just like anyone else living their day-to-day lives (Justice, Interview, May 20, 2014). Justice worked diligently to reimagine her Holocaust unit last year.

The training received at the USC Shoah Foundation provided the tools for Justice to reimagine her Holocaust unit using testimony-based learning. Justice, not one to sit idle, authors a new IWitness activity each year for her students, based on the theme of the unit, which also varies. In the past, she has done activities on bullying and the Hitler Youth, Social Justice in the community, and refugees coming to America.

During our conversation, Justice described her project from last spring entitled “Empathy in Action.” This was a project for a unit that followed her Holocaust unit and the IWitness project, “From Darkness to Light.” During “From Darkness to Light, students sought clips of testimony and made a video demonstrating survivors’ discussions of experiences where things seemed really dark before eventually arriving to a place of light, which was centered around emigrating to the United States. Immigration is the overarching theme during this unit and students were to be thinking about various reasons for immigration, experiences that immigrating to new places a can lead to, etc. This segues further into the “Empathy in Action” project during which they interviewed teenage refugees from various origins and determined how to best represent their story. Again here, the individual remains at the center, a best practice in Holocaust education. As students collaborated with their refugees, they researched and then presented on their interviewee’s home country. Over time, they heard and spoke with refugees from various places that came into the classroom as guest speakers, so there was an immersive setting that allowed students’ thoughts and learning to percolate as they worked on their final projects.

Final “Empathy in Action” projects were presented at another exhibition, one that stands out to Justice as one of the best. This event was attended by students, their families, as well as the families of the interviewed refugees, making the event very special. Justice’s students displayed their paintings inspired by the interviewees or portraits of them and performed their spoken-word poetry. Their performances, interwoven with teenage refugees sharing their experiences, captivated the audience. This event raised funds for the IRC’s Peacemaker Program; student paintings were auctioned off to donate to this organization to provide scholarship funds for refugees. Through this effort the class raised enough money for two scholarships. The emotions of the refugees and their families were high as they entered the space and saw their portrait painted on huge canvases. It culminated when a few families purchased the paintings in the auction and presented them to the families as gifts, rounding out the beauty of the evening. During this project, Justice noticed some differences in how students approached the project, something that she attributes partially to the use of IWitness during the Holocaust unit because of the human connections that students made with the testimony.

Justice teaches her Holocaust unit from a different perspective each year by designing a new activity for her students. While the focus may vary, there is always an element of teaching for social justice in her projects. Justice wants her students to act empathetically and think about their community, both local and global as they connect their learning of the Holocaust to contemporary issues such as racial profiling. For Justice, the connections made in the testimony sensitize students to develop new ways of thinking about the world and their place in it.

Lauren

During the Master Teacher program, I remember talking with Lauren semi-regularly throughout the week. We had a connection through USF, where her husband earned his Ph.D.

We also share an affinity for WWI, which was one of my major interests during my undergraduate degree in History. I vividly recall my first journey into Hollywood with Lauren and Averiette, both participants of this study. The cab driver seemed intent on taking us the longest route possible since we were undoubtedly not from Los Angeles with Lauren's slight southern drawl and the strong southern accent of Averiette. As our week drew to a close, we all wanted to lay our eyes on the famed Hollywood sign in the mountains, see the Chinese Theater, and the sidewalk stars of some of our favorite Hollywood legends. The streets were packed with people hoping to get a glimpse of Will Ferrell at the premier of his film, *The Campaign*. As we strolled about and finished purchasing souvenirs for our families we chose a pizza place for dinner before taking the subway back to the hotel where we were staying. As we boarded the subway we realized that we could have gotten to our destination in half the time and for one-tenth the cost of the cab ride, but it was all part of the experience.

Lauren, now 45, grew up in a suburb of major city in Virginia where she attended the small independent school where she now teaches. Following high school, she attended the University of Wales for a year before returning home to Christopher Newport University to study English and History. Lauren chose the University of Tennessee for graduate school, earning a Master's degree in English in addition to the required extra hours to gain teaching certification. Since beginning at her current school Lauren has primarily taught courses in English, mostly to sophomores, and has also taught seniors and AP courses. Teaching at her Alma mater provided a surreal feeling for a while, becoming colleagues with her former teachers. Lauren points out that the school is a tight-knit family community and she could not imagine working anywhere else.

Students at her school have grown up together and come from middle and upper-middle class families. The school is an academically competitive college preparatory school. Lauren

notes the likelihood that “probably all of our kids go to college,” with some aiming for prestigious universities and some attending community college.

Lauren’s interest in the Holocaust stems from a deep love of learning about history in general, and European history specifically. Lauren recalls that her interest in history began with a six-hour wait to tour the travelling King Tut exhibit in 1976. A penchant of Lauren’s is her enjoyment of reading about history that goes back to when she was younger:

In sixth grade, I read the diary of Anne Frank and one of my father’s colleagues was a German Jew whose family had escaped in 1933. I remember my parents having a dinner party and I knew his back-story, so I remember talking to him about the book and [telling him that] I want to know how she died because the book just ended. He [said] “you don’t want to know,” and I [said] “yes, I do” (Lauren, Interview, July 1, 2014).

Lauren realized that she needed more content knowledge after reading *Night* and teaching it for the first time. Students asked questions that Lauren did not always have the answers for. This led to a joint inquiry into the Holocaust, a powerful learning experience for both students and teacher. As Lauren worked through that semester she found the research extremely interesting and her fascination blossomed. Lauren’s training in Holocaust education began at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The focus of the museum’s teacher training is centered on the history, but also on “the knowledge that you have all of these numbers, but these are real people and they all had real stories...each person had some type of story” (Lauren, Interview, July 1, 2014). This philosophy lends itself nicely to the use of testimony-based lessons.

Lauren teaches about the Holocaust “because it was this huge watershed event and that students need to learn that it was preventable, it wasn’t inevitable” (Lauren, Interview, July 1, 2014). Lauren is also driven by the quote of Edmund Burke, “The only thing necessary for the

triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” She says “you have to be aware and active, you cannot be passive or apathetic in life” (Lauren, Interview, July 1, 2014), relating her philosophy to civic engagement of students.

“I’ve always taught [the Holocaust] as an English teacher,” says Lauren when asked about her goals in teaching the topic. “Even though I’m an English teacher and so I’m teaching literature, like *Night*, I still want them to have a historical background” (Lauren, Interview, July 1, 2014). Lauren recognizes the interconnectedness of the content areas and studying the Holocaust. She also brings up the origins of literature in relation to history, “you don’t just write something, you’re influenced by whatever is going on around you. It does not exist in a vacuum” (Lauren, Interview, July 1, 2014). There is an affective element as students develop understanding of what occurred in history, which then makes them personally invested in the lesson.

When asked to define empathy, Lauren put it simply, “the ability to recognize and identify with the emotions of others” (Lauren, Interview, July 1, 2014). One reason that the development of empathy is important in the classroom because it:

Relates to bullying. If you really have empathy for people, then you are not going to bully them because you would realize that it’s hurtful. We do service learning projects...and so you need to have a kind of empathy to understand what other people are going through so that it is really going to have meaning to it, rather than just [getting] community service hours (Lauren, Interview, July 1, 2014).

She relates empathy to her teaching about the Holocaust and teaching students to engage in civic behavior. “I think also trying to develop students into citizens that are going to be involved in their community. Again, not just being passive [or] apathetic, but realizing that there are people

in your community that need your help” (Lauren, Interview, July 1, 2014). However, in Holocaust education there is one caveat:

You cannot understand what these people went through because we did not go through it; it is not possible. [But] reading their stories and seeing what emotions they went through, maybe that can help you understand or being more understanding when you have a new student who comes in from South Africa, that she’s coming in from a different culture, different language, and just having empathy for one another (Lauren, Interview, July 1, 2014).

In order to accomplish these goals, teachers should be cognizant of “making good choices with what literature is used, since I’m speaking as an English teacher. For example, in *Night* [Elie Wiesel], he talks a lot about his emotions.” In using testimony:

You’re getting the stories of the people and so I think that makes even better connections with empathy when it is not just reading about the story. I think that helps even more when they see the person that they can make the connection easier (Interview, July 14, 2014).

I asked Lauren why she perceives of students having an easier time connecting with testimony:

Because I think we’re so used to looking and watching and seeing pictures and videos. I think it just makes it more real to them maybe. This is this person. This is what they went through, how they survived, and their memories. It’s another connection; it’s a voice. They can see their body language [and] these other non-verbal cues that they can pick up on (Lauren, Interview, July 14, 2014).

These connections extend the learning beyond what is typically measured through traditional assessment. For Lauren, traditional assessment in teaching about the Holocaust is

looking at the literature used in class and determining if students have done the work and engaged with the content. “But I think for the larger goals, the “do you really understand” is much more through discussion, there are a lot of student discussions and Socratic seminars in my classes.” When asked how she can tell if students do understand, Lauren said:

There is some type of realization on their part. A lot of times it is not that day, but maybe they come back to me when they are seniors. A lot come back to tell me that when they go to college, they wanted to take a class because they wanted to learn even more about it. Or if they see something on the news, or a movie, that is related, they will come back and tell me about it. So sometimes it may not always be just right that day or that week, but maybe even a couple of years later (Lauren, Interview, July 14, 2014).

This is just one crux of teaching. While we aim to reach as many students as possible, sometimes we end the year without knowing the full depth of our reach. There are some students who, for varying reasons, do not connect in your room. However, teachers understand that many students are affected by our teaching, even if not for some time. This reasoning provides motivation to select resources that will stick with students as Lauren pointed out.

The appeal of using IWitness starts with the nature of the program offering “something very different for my students to do. It would be something that they could use some more technology skills and a lot of different skills to put together their presentation” (Lauren, Interview, July 14, 2014). While she sought out something distinctive, it still needed to fit the scope of her AP Literature course. Therefore, Lauren selected the testimony of Lotte Kramer because Ms. Kramer is also a poet. Some of her poetry is influenced by her experience as a member of the Kindertransport during the Holocaust. The IWitness activity designed by Lauren, titled *Writing in Exile*, had students analyze her poems using a poetry analysis sheet to pull out

themes. Next, they searched for another testimony that reflected their theme and compose a corresponding poem. This activity, and the unit on the Holocaust, is situated within a larger unit on poetry and literature that deals with war.

One element that stood out to Lauren was the level of ownership that students took of this project:

I gave them a list of some themes and some videos that [they] can watch. I was surprised at how many of them went beyond that rather than taking the easy path of using exactly what I had provided. They looked for ones that they connected with (Lauren, Interview, July 14, 2014).

In discussing themes chosen by students, Lauren said that many “focused on family and leaving family. I do not know if that is because they were seniors and they were already getting ready to go off to college and leaving their family; maybe subconsciously that was in their minds.” Throughout the project, one student stood out to Lauren:

One student who studies music in college, she’s a very talented musician, composed and performed music to go along with her video. That was really important to her, finding the perfect music to go along with the mood of the video that they were making (Lauren, Interview, July 14, 2014).

She went on in discussing her perceptions of the project and she continued:

When they were presenting them in class, they were really focused. They were really interested in what their classmates felt and what movies they made. A lot of times you have somebody who is trying to do physics homework or secretly text, but this project they really genuinely seemed interested (Lauren, Interview, July 14, 2014).

This observation was meaningful because at the end of the second semester, it is challenging to keep students engaged, especially seniors who are on the verge of heading to college. This level of intellectual and emotional engagement demonstrates how students were reacting to the project. During this unit, students work with poetry from the American Civil War, World War I, and other literature from World War I and Vietnam. The units on the Holocaust and IWitness differ as the use of testimony illuminates student learning:

I think it is neat to hear how she reads it, her inflection. When she looks up at the camera at one point, it's a little like, wow! I think it just gives them a better sense of what the poet really has to say. Because you can really hear how she's saying it and what she's emphasizing. Then, it's her voice reading the poem and I think it just gives you another level or layer of interpretation and understanding for them (Lauren, Interview, July 14, 2014).

In thinking about empathy, Lauren ventures to discuss her takeaway from watching students work through the project in IWitness:

a lot of the value comes from watching, hearing, and listening to the testimony. I guess the realization about other people having struggles that maybe you wouldn't know about firsthand. They're getting ready to go off to college where they're going to meet all these people. They've been together, most of them, since they were in kindergarten if not earlier and they know everybody's family. But now they're getting ready to go off somewhere where they don't have that background knowledge and so maybe that'll help them with their future and relationships (Lauren, Interview, July 14, 2014).

One of Lauren's favorite aspects of using IWitness is the incorporation of multiple literacy skills as students begin creating their projects. This part of the conversation led us to the

discussion of the ethical use of testimony and ethical editing. She perceived that many students had not even had the thought of manipulating the testimony to convey a message other than the survivors had intended, while others may be savvy enough to think about it, they did not come across as though it would be an issue. However, IWitness provided the opportunity to have that discussion with students. This conversation with students gives them pause to think about the immoral implications associated with that type of action (Lauren, Interview, July 14, 2014).

The technology, while often a blessing for students to use, can be a hurdle. For those who are not technologically adept, any video editing can be stressful and require more guidance. As students begin to assist one another, without prompting, elements of citizenship and student-directed learning are exhibited, which is truly a key aspect of the 21st Century classroom. The level of student engagement during the project sustained throughout student presentations, something that Lauren noted is atypical. Students continued to demonstrate a sense of respect for the content, survivors, and each other, even more so than during other projects (Lauren, Interview, July 14, 2014).

In using IWitness, Lauren appreciates the multi-dimensional skill building that comes along with the site. Activities are designed in a fluid manner through which students gained content knowledge, built vocabulary, and developed myriad other skills as they research within a series of reputable resources. While discussing various resources, the question of whether or not IWitness needed to be placed within a larger unit came up. Lauren contends that IWitness can be a stand-alone resource because of the sound nature of the activities design. Each one provides context for the topic, critical thinking, and access to other reputable resources. This does not mean that she uses it in isolation, however, as she always pairs outside resources to further scaffold student learning. For her, it is a phenomenal resource to engage students in a cross-

disciplinary study of the Holocaust that also includes a strong affective element as they listen to personal experiences. This connects the beauty of poetry and literature to the larger event as students can begin to see how various factors influence these works and students can connect with the individuals as they listen to their experience.

Charles

During the Master Teacher program at USC, Charles was someone who stood out to me from the first round-table introductions. He was articulate, thoughtful, and loves movies. In fact, many times throughout the workshop he would be telling stories or chatting and would often add quotations from movies in, something that I have done since I was a teenager and my love of movies began. One of my favorite stories he told was how he saw Sylvester Stallone in CVS and sent his five-year old son up to say hello. Charles then recounted their exchange, doing a great Stallone impression. However, his love of film far exceeds my own, reminding me of Agent DiNozzo on NCIS who knows all of the classics like the back of his hand. In fact, acting brought Charles to the Los Angeles area where he currently lives and teaches. Years ago, after shooting a commercial, Charles, now 53 years old, sat at the beach reflecting on whether or not he wanted to pursue a different career:

These three dolphins cut through this emerald wave and they were just tremendous and I thought I should devote my time to trying to seek beauty. And I thought about it and there is nothing more attractive than people when they are concentrating. Where do you see that? And I figured kids, studying, when they are engaged in something. So I decided there to go back to school and get a teaching license. I've been teaching on and off for twenty years all told (Charles, Interview, June 25, 2014).

Charles' interest in history began much earlier, during his service in the Marines while he was stationed in Haiti. He met a diplomat named Pat, who after a short conversation became his dive instructor. Pat later convinced Charles to pursue a college degree after his service was completed. She began to teach him about "the importance of reading, which I had never been really interested in as a kid" (Charles, Interview, June 25, 2014). An amazing influence on Charles, Pat suggested that he sign up to take the SAT, regardless of his age. Now a 22-year old Marine sergeant, Charles decided to take her advice and showed up to the American school in Haiti and sat for his SATs surrounded by a group of high school students.

"Through conversations with Pat, who recommended books, my love for history, I think, really started." Later, a friend of Pat's would start Charles down his path of learning about the Holocaust through their many discussions about culture and assimilation. Then, while spending time in the Czech Republic, Charles asked a friend, "what is it now that you are no longer communist?" Charles recalled the memorable response, "I think that all we have done is changed our tunics, but underneath we are still communist." That began a line of inquiry about anti-Semitism, "what happened with all of this anti-Semitism and this zealous indoctrination that people bought into? Where does it go? How does it manifest today? What do people do when they change their tunics?" This line of thinking that captivates much of Charles' interest in survivors' lives after the war. Since the Master Teacher program, Charles has become close friends with survivor Renee Firestone, who shares a birthday with his son. Renee visits Charles' class regularly and Charles drops by Renee's home, unannounced, for visits and he is always fascinated by her experience after the war. The relationship with Renee cultivated over the last few years after they met at the Master Teacher program. She has continued to grow closer to his

family and now is a grandmother figure to his children. This connection, just a few years old, shapes Charles' teaching as well as his daily life.

Charles' interest in the Holocaust, and concepts emerging from its study, blend into his personal life. He has a great interest in the fight against injustice that "really revolves around people who are innocent and need protection." He is also interested in how we teach our children to be upstanding citizens. When I asked about the importance of teaching the Holocaust, Charles responded:

I can't think of anything more important because there is this interesting thing that I often hear, "don't judge." And I'm [saying] please judge. We should judge, these guys were wrong. They murdered innocent children, it's wrong. There is a right and wrong and I think that the moral core of those that are charged to educate our masses, our children, is essential (Charles, Interview, June 25, 2014).

The idea of our "moral core" would come up repeatedly throughout our conversations, either directly referring to it or as a central theme in the discussion.

Charles recently completed his Ph.D. and also used participants from the USC Shoah Foundation Master Teacher program. His study involved an analysis of Master Teacher values in Holocaust education. "That's what my dissertation was about, how do you deconstruct the Holocaust and then reconstruct it for your charges?" His findings were that their goals are similar, "it is about trying to teach people to be good people and that they all had their visceral value attached to it. So I think that it's enormously important" (Charles, Interview, July 22, 2014). When talking with survivor Renee Firestone for his dissertation, Charles refers to her discussion of the need to be vigilant, something that he discusses with his students as well. For Charles, vigilance means that we are watching for those being wronged or targeted for

persecution. Targeted groups can shift based on people deciding that a certain group “doesn’t fit in” for whatever reason they come up with (Charles, Interview, June 25, 2014). Charles discussed issues that can be seen in proposed legislation throughout the United States, as he talked about current issues related to violence against people who are transgender.

Charles teaches at a charter school in the Los Angeles area. He describes the area as “kind of rough” (Interview, June 25, 2014). The school’s enrollment hovers around 400 students and is 97% Latino. There are around 15 teachers in the school, all who fully support the mission and culture of the school. They work in four-person teams allowing for greater collaboration between teachers. The electronics policy is described as “unplugged,” as students are only permitted to use their devices when they are not in class. Periodically they host an exhibition night with a big red-carpet event when seniors display some of their work. Charles teaches seniors, with economics during the first semester followed by government. In addition to these core courses, he occasionally teaches other courses such as screenwriting and Holocaust studies.

Within the classroom, Charles’ philosophy is “culture before content.” He explains this as the need:

To generate a culture in the classroom that is based on reciprocity and respect, even before you go anywhere near the algebra, or the English, or whatever. If you don’t have that culture leading the way, then you cannot teach anything. So I think that by putting culture before content, what you’ve really done is another exercise in empathy (Charles, Interview, June 25, 2014).

Charles returns to the idea of protection when discussing empathy. He suggests that empathy is “an emotion that blocks primal behavior” and allows human beings to relate to the needs of

others. It is about “sharing with people who you do not have a love relationship with” (Interview, June 25, 2014). Charles “cannot separate empathy from responsibility,” meaning the responsibility that we have to our fellow human beings. This suggests that one might “act as a guard for people who need others to be there” (Interview, June 25, 2014). As I read through Charles’ transcripts, I come to realize that this is highly reflective of his philosophy on teaching the Holocaust.

Charles’ goals in educating students about the Holocaust are to address the fact that “these are real people; the victims of evil are somebody’s mother and somebody’s son, and somebody’s dad.” This approach allows students to begin thinking about the topic in relation to other human beings. He approaches the Holocaust through “faith-based teachings, which is to say having faith in humanity,” rather than religious faith. In taking this approach, Charles allows students to see that “you can eke out the good,” but “in eking out the good, you have to recognize that you are going to brush up against the bad” (Interview, July 22, 2014). I continued along this vein and followed up with a question on how to teach this through the choices that people made, which ultimately resulted in the Holocaust, and Charles said that:

The teacher taps into what their core values are and then you have an opportunity to teach from a place where things need to be taught from. I think that it shouldn’t be objective, because how is it? The way we choose [what to teach] is we align it with our standards, but we also align it with our values. And if we are not letting our teachers decide what is important, who is going to do it (Charles, Interview, June 25, 2014)?

Charles believes in giving students room to work through the material in their own way with ample room for choice. Sometimes that choice allows students to simply reflect. In discussing how he determines whether his objectives are met, Charles responded:

There are all sorts of things that I attempted to steer clear of. Scripted rubrics and all of these kind of traditional ways [to assess]. One of them that we talked about was the closure project. After they are exposed to the content, they have relational projects. [Students] don't even have to do them, but if they want to, they can and I get amazing stuff from students (Charles, Interview, July 22, 2014).

Charles also advocates for giving students time to ponder some of the content as it resonates with them in whatever way they wish, or not at all. He relates this belief to his own experience with a Holocaust survivor whom he had as a college professor. Some time after he had completed his work in the course, Charles went to see a film about his old professor and another survivor. In talking with someone at the theater, they suggested that Charles introduce the film. Charles accepted and spent some time telling some personal stories about his professor. He continued:

The point being that the most important takeaway and use for experiencing those times, was to introduce the film. It never made it into the academic stuff, but there was a place for it that was significant. So the measurements are very important to get out of the way of (Charles, Interview, June 25, 2014).

This is a very important aspect because Charles' unit on the Holocaust is shaped based on his beliefs, formulated by a vast set of experiences from across the globe. When talking about the inability to wrap one's mind around the Holocaust, he said:

One of the things about mysteries, to me, is that they remain mysteries. There is not a conclusion. And, for the Holocaust, a lot of it is mysterious. There is the dark heart of evil, but still pure human good. I don't know how you assess that; I think you just invite room to think about it (Charles, Interview, June 25, 2014).

Yet, as teachers we must assess and determine whether or not our goals are met and students are grasping the concepts. As we continued to talk about assessing students and the drive in our reform era to assess constantly, Charles pointed out, “Assessments measure *a thing*, but they do not answer *everything*” (Charles, Interview, July 22, 2014). Such a simple statement really illuminates Charles’ teaching philosophy. As we pressed on, it was necessary to determine what Charles seeks from his students. He responded that “what matters to me is when it has manifested and is made clear that it has mattered to the students and that often comes out in their artwork or their conversation, when you are creating” (Charles, Interview, July 22, 2014).

Charles became affiliated with the Master Teacher Program through an email about the program. After a bit of research, and knowing that Steven Spielberg was the founder of the USC Shoah Foundation, Charles’ interest gained traction. He has a great interest in learning through film, a natural fit for testimony-based education. As a testament to his character, Charles hand-delivered his application to USC so that he could meet a couple of the people. He felt “seduced by the energy” as he dropped off the application, going the extra mile for the personal interaction, which he designates as a key element of IWitness.

As discussed earlier in this paper, Charles believes in personalizing Holocaust education and allowing students space to reflect on the content:

The reason for using IWitness was, more than anything else, it seemed like this extraordinary opportunity as a research tool so that when students discovered whatever it was that was interesting to them...they could then follow it up and see if there was somebody who had some kind of response. It seemed like a trove that did not have to be directed by me, they were able to break it down on their own. (Charles, Interview, June 22, 2014).

Charles philosophy is to “be as non-prescriptive as possible,” allowing students to follow their own paths (Interview, July 22, 2014). In their final project, students must demonstrate closure and their most profound takeaway from the course. On another occasion, the focus was on the testimony and listening. Charles said that he “felt thrilled to let students follow what is completely of interest to them and then do something with it or do nothing with it because there’s an impact” (Interview, July 22, 2014). I followed up with a question on how he determines the success of this project. Charles told me that in the course reflections that students write, “there was consistently an appreciation for the opportunity to sit with a survivor and listen to what they had to say and not be bothered by *what is my deliverable*” (Interview, July 22, 2014)? Herein lies the power of IWitness for Charles, giving students space to reflect on issues that are prevalent to them. He believes in using the platform as a research tool, but in a sense, it is also a networking tool for students to get to know the survivors and their stories. They can then internalize their learning for the moment when the effects become most apparent to them.

Averiette

Averiette, from the very beginning of the Master Teacher program, radiated with the charm of a southern belle. With her introduction she became lovingly known within the group as Miss Alabama, hailing from a rural town in central region of the state. It is a term of endearment still used today. Averiette embodies the characteristics of small-town hospitality and kindness. This characteristic is a key aspect of her identity. While residing in various places throughout her life, she found herself missing the tradition and strong sense of community associated with small town living, something that she values to this day.

Growing up in the Deep South, Averiette comes from “old money, so old that it’s gone,” she jokes during our conversation. This upbringing gave her confidence growing up, one that

she reflects on and wonders if she had an air of superiority when she was “young and stupid” (Averiette, Interview, July, 22, 2014). The family history in the area runs deep, and Averiette attended schools with students of the same last name, but who were African-American. Their great grandfather was her great grandfather’s butler. Through family discussions, Averiette was assured that it was commendable working relationship. Nonetheless, it provided an interesting dynamic for her to begin an early reflection on some of the ideas that she would eventually become passionate teaching. The family history is deeply rooted in there as well. Averiette’s great grandparents donated the land in Talladega County that is home to Averiette’s high school, providing a strong sense of belonging to the area.

Throughout Averiette’s schooling she never heard of neither the Holocaust, nor the Civil Rights Movement. She not introduced to Malcolm X or Martin Luther King Junior until she went to college. As a result, Averiette entered a major research university in the region and felt blindsided by such topics. This is one of the downsides to growing up in such a community she recounts, “People tend to be closed minded and I think that’s probably the most frustrating for me. It was not cool or acceptable to be open-minded and talk openly about difficult subjects” (Averiette, Interview, July, 22, 2014). Given her spunk, this fact was not lost on her and has provided a backdrop for Averiette’s mission of ensuring that her students do not suffer her fate when they venture off to college. She notes this is a much easier task today. Due to media and the information age, students can find information about such topics and historical figures readily available online, establishing a more extensive background knowledge for many students.

Averiette seemed destined for a career in education. Coming from a family of educators, her mother was a kindergarten teacher and father was a high school principal, it was not surprising that she was connected to education early on. Averiette took a job in a program that

taught high school students various job skills, such as resume writing. One day an English teacher dramatically stormed out of the school, throwing her grade-book at the principal as she vanished through the door, never to be heard from again. Averiette's boss inquired about her English degree and then told her, "You're going to have to teach" (Averiette, Interview, July, 22, 2014). Alas, she became an English teacher in a very hostile environment, planning one day ahead of the students until winter break arrived and she was able to put some plans together. She went on to get a dual Master's degree in English and Secondary Arts and has been in her ideal profession ever since.

Averiette began teaching in a middle school, but a neighboring high school that was on the verge of failing recruited her because of her reputation. When the district administration decided to hire an entirely new faculty for the school, they sought out teachers who had distinguished reputations and were eager to use technology. Now at 42 years young, Averiette teaches in a one-to-one laptop school located in a suburb with a high minority population, approximately 70% African-American, and low socio-economic status with nearly 76% of students receiving free and reduced lunch. Averiette currently teaches English and has taught her share of courses including junior English, AP Language and Composition, and presently teaches senior English and AP Literature.

Averiette lived in west Florida for a spell and it was during this period that she developed an interest in the Holocaust. When given her choice of sessions at a professional study day, Averiette randomly chose a session that focused on teaching the Holocaust and the book *Number the Stars*. She recalled that the presenter was a local teacher who considered herself a "Holocaust educator," a term that Averiette applies to herself now, years later. During the session, the facilitator discussed how when teaching about the Holocaust, she assigned students a

character in the book to follow closely and a USHMM bio. As they progressed through their study, students created butterflies on which they wrote messages and thoughts as well as coloring them before hanging them on the ceiling. By the time they completed the unit of study, the students would know the fate of their characters as well as their assigned biography. Averiette recalls the description of how students forged a deeper connection with the content during this unit. Following this workshop, she sought to revitalize her teaching and find ways to engage students on such an emotional level. When Averiette implemented this project in her own classroom she discovered that when students make personal connections their learning surpasses anything else. This is because students develop a keen interest that drives their own line of inquiry. She said that over the course of the unit, “Students asked so many questions and a lot of them kept reading about the Holocaust” (Averiette, Interview, July 22, 2014). She continued saying, “I don’t want to sound trite, but it made some of them lifelong learners and they continued on with it” (Averiette, Interview, July 22, 2014).

Averiette began her journey of learning the pedagogy of teaching the Holocaust, she realized that she “was doing some stuff wrong.” Many teachers who become interested in teaching and learning about the Holocaust often do, myself included. This realization came at the Belfer Conference for teaching the Holocaust, held annually at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The Belfer Conference provides teachers with a week of working through the foundations of how to safely and effectively teach about the Holocaust. Averiette discusses the importance of teaching this topic:

You have to talk about the hard stuff because it’s the hard stuff that will hurt society.

Even if you do not want to think about it as society, your school or classroom is better if people inside understand that discrimination [or] oppression is just wrong on a very basic

level. If we create more empathetic students, society is better as a whole (Averiette, Interview, July, 22, 2014).

Averiette's definition of empathy contains an element of perspective taking, "if that happened to me, how would I feel." This statement demonstrates the cognitive element of historical empathy. However, it is not the notion of putting yourself in someone else's shoes because, especially with the Holocaust, that cannot be done. She continues in saying that it is about "making them aware of other people and other people's feelings and problems. It makes them not so self-centered" (Averiette, Interview, July 22, 2014). In order to accomplish this in the classroom, there needs to exist a culture where "students treat each other with respect, and you have to model that" (Averiette, Interview, July 22, 2014).

Averiette strives to select course readings based on her goals to help students become better people in the world, something that she tries to do for "every single level." We did our interview while Averiette was attending the AP conference for her AP Literature course. She sought to select books and other resources that

Not only will help my students learn the skills that they need, but will make them think about what kind of people they are, what kind of people they want to be, what are their values, and how will their values shape their life (Averiette, Interview, July 22, 2014).

Averiette begins each year with the true colors personality test and she takes it along with her students. She is very transparent with her students and shares her life with them as a way to open the lines of communication and breed a sense of trust. Averiette and her students begin to learn about one another through their discussion of the personality test results. They pay special attention to the section devoted to learning and communication. She is not shy about sharing her personal life, but in a responsible way. It helps her establish the caring relationship with her

students. Recently, Averiette's husband passed away from a bout with cancer. Whenever she was absent, her students would email or contact her to check in on her, send their prayers, and to assure her that there was nothing to worry about at school because they "had it under control." This is one of many ways that you can decipher who is a great teacher, by the acts of caring from their students. This relationship set the stage for Averiette's teaching philosophy, "Once they figure out that you care about them, and they have to believe that, they're going to do anything for you. If they think that you don't care about them, then you won't really touch them" (Averiette, Interview, July 22, 2014).

Averiette approaches her teaching of the Holocaust with a belief that there are much larger lessons that can extend from the learning of the content. Students often ask questions such as "How could this just happen?" She attempts to make modern day connections for students to relate the content to their life and times. For example, she mentions the French ban on burkas in public schools which just occurred a few years ago. She ties in the fact that while we never compare pain and suffering, there are many types of injustice that affect the way people live their lives. By creating this awareness in students they hopefully open their eyes and engage in the conversation and eventually the fight against such actions. "Part of why I like teaching this so much is that we want to complicate their thinking, it's not about making it easy," Averiette states (Interview, July 22, 2014).

In planning for the unit on the Holocaust, Averiette has a set of specific goals for her students. First, she uses testimony in IWitness because her "first goal is that the students make a personal connection with the survivor." Her second objective is that students' understand what happened. History becomes central to their understanding and ability to make the personal connection. Averiette always takes care to select meaningful resources for the literature side of

her courses and she follows that same practice here, selecting reputable resources to help her students understand the context of the Holocaust. She uses material from *Echoes and Reflections* as well as *Facing History and Ourselves' Holocaust and Human Behavior* to help them gain perspective. *IWitness* provides context for each activity as the beginning steps. She recognizes the importance of cross-content learning that is essential in helping students construct meaning from the Holocaust. Her last objective is that students learn something from their study, "That somehow the survivor's experience plus understanding how the survivor's oppression began, even if they weren't born yet, will help them to learn a lesson." She falls distinctly into the notion that what we can learn from the Holocaust far surpasses just the history of the event. You cannot approach this topic in a manner:

Where you learn it for the test [alone], you cannot teach that way anymore. You can learn any history and that's fine. But in a vacuum, it doesn't mean anything and learning has to mean something or they are not going to remember it (Averiette, Interview, July 22, 2014).

A couple of years following the Belfer Conference at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Averiette came to a crossroads of what the next step should be. One option was to return to USHMM and become a Teacher Fellow, another option was sent to her via email by a friend at the Birmingham Holocaust Education Center. The latter invitation included information on the USC Shoah Foundation Master Teacher Program. After little deliberation, Averiette thought, "well who doesn't love the Trojans?" and applied thinking that "a little country girl from Alabama" would never get in because "I didn't think that they wanted my opinion" (Interview, July 22, 2014). In discussing the program, Averiette points out that this program changed her teaching through access to "the tools to use in my classroom that I had not

really had before because through the Belfer Conference you don't necessarily get access to any testimony" (Averiette, Interview, July 22, 2014). At USC, the testimony-based education was crucial because it provided an element that was less attainable through other resources. The addition of testimony to the other resources Averiette uses gave her teaching a new dimension.

For Averiette, the choice to use IWitness was simple. When asked about her decision to use IWitness with students, Averiette discussed how IWitness "did not just change my teaching, it changed the way that my students approached it." Teaching in a one-to-one classroom provided ample opportunity for students to watch testimony and work on projects at their own pace, a necessary piece as students work at varying speeds and with different focus. Having this technology also provided students the opportunity to work through multiple IWitness activities throughout the unit. Averiette authored one of the key activities that her students completed. It is titled *Hope is the Thing with Feathers*. This paired a novel about a teenage girl from the wrong side of the tracks, with the poem *Hope* by Emily Dickinson. These two resources were related to testimony about people whose hope was the only thing that they did not lose during the Holocaust. Students searched the archive to find survivors whose stories resonated with them and embodied a sense of hope. During our conversation, Averiette revisited some of the student videos from this activity. Averiette said that these represented "some of the most thoughtful work that they've created all year because they got upset" (Averiette, Interview, July 23, 2014). In watching the testimony, students connected with the stories of survivors and forged caring relationships (Noddings, 2003), tapping into their affective learning. The goal is to make them "really think about life and think about their own humanity" (Averiette, Interview, July 23, 2014).

Over the past few years, Averiette was able to work in IWitness with students in eighth grade as well as juniors and seniors in high school, giving her some insight into how students process the use of testimony at different ages.

In some ways the eighth graders are more engaged, but the eleventh and twelfth graders have a different understanding. My eighth graders were very curious and they would just want to ask questions and more questions, almost as if they were hoping that eventually the answer would be, no that did not really happen. It makes the older kids a little bit more raw because I think they see [they are] about to go out into the world and the world is a terrible place (Averiette, Interview, July, 23, 2014).

The goal is not to frighten students, but to prepare them for what lies ahead and to be able to think deeply through things that take place in the world.

Averiette covets the self-paced, constructivist nature of IWitness. She discusses using “All But My Life” by Gerda Weissman Klein, a well-known memoir that students respond positively to. The problem with using the documentary on Ms. Klein is that they have to stop the documentary to discuss and write about various sections:

I feel like IWitness is much better at creating a seamless lesson because when you are teaching, if you lose them for a half-second, you are not going to get them back. In IWitness, there is no “let’s stop the documentary and write about this” (Averiette, Interview, July, 23, 2014).

According to Averiette, the credibility of IWitness keeps students from being apathetic to the topic:

I think that the key thing about IWitness is that it’s actually the people that [the Holocaust] happened to and they’re talking about this happening to them. We get this

first-person account of how all this went down. And it keeps them from being desensitized because it's like sitting in the room with the person; you cannot help but have compassion for them (Averiette, Interview, July, 23, 2014).

Towards the end of the unit, disbelief was evident in the class. Some of Averiette's students ventured towards the idea that "it couldn't happen again." In keeping with making more recent connections, Averiette put together a case study on the Tutsi genocide in Rwanda. They began this unit of study with an IWitness activity titled "The Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda" in order to give proper context to the new unit and to allow students to gain a better understanding about the genocide. This was paired with further personal accounts from the book *We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families*. The combination of these resources following the unit on the Holocaust struck a chord. Students responded with, "How can this happen?" Averiette, therefore, had students analyze and discuss the *Eight Stages of Genocide*. "I want them to be able to stand up and say, "you can't do that, that's wrong!"

In the course of the interview, we continued to discuss how the personal connections were evident in the class. One of her classes was inspired to make class shirts. The chosen design was very simple, black shirts with the word "REMEMBER" printed on them. Averiette relayed students experience in wearing their shirts outside of school when people would ask "remember what?" This gave students an opportunity to share some of their learning by talking with people in their community about the importance of remembering the Holocaust. It also further united the class as a community. Averiette also discussed one student who was working on his IWitness project:

One kid was very testosterone driven and nothing ever bothers him; he got so mad. I remember him out in the hall trying to take his student response video and his words were

getting all twisted, but then he finally just slapped his thigh and said “I’m just mad about this. Can I say that?” [He] had a very emotional reaction to it (Averiette, Interview, July 23, 2014).

Averiette noticed that many of the boys in her class took a step back to think though things in a deeper manner:

Teenagers in general do not have a lot of foresight, but I think that boys are so busy being tough that they do not stop to think in a compassionate way. It really affected my black boys from low socioeconomic homes because I think it gave them an outlet to say, “that’s not right, that is not fair; I’m angry about that” (Averiette, Interview, July, 23, 2014).

Through IWitness, students saw that injustice has occurred throughout history and they could relate this to issues faced in their daily lives, leading to a transformative learning experience.

Averiette’s experience using IWitness with multiple grade levels provides great insight. Her goals of having students engage with the survivors and come away learning something new is central to her use. It is when they are free to begin their own exploration of the testimony that the true transformation occurs. At this juncture, students are not hindered by the class as a whole and are able to construct their own knowledge. As agents of their learning, students discover testimony that is relevant to their situation in life, which is where they truly blossom.

Conclusion of Narratives

Participants of the study each discussed the importance of students making personal connections with other people as the central tenet of IWitness. These connections were the most evident factor in students’ development of empathy based on the perception of participants.

Leonard's philosophy on teaching the Holocaust is to provide students with the necessary guidance to investigate their own questions as well as establishing a sound community of learning. In his course, the student-driven learning was priority. He believes that by allowing students to control their own learning, they become inherently more engaged in the content, thereby opening them up to deeper learning experiences.

Justice's main themes reverberated around the power of the individual identity, empathy, and critical thinking. In her project-oriented course, IWitness serves as a way for students to engage emotionally for a better understanding of the Holocaust. The learning environment constructed by Justice entices students to take chances, think outside the box, and apply what they learn to the world around them.

Lauren's key themes illuminated the necessity of history in studying the Holocaust and how this history impacts related literature and poetry. She believes in the importance of teaching the Holocaust so that students can avoid becoming apathetic. She seeks to teach students to be moral thinkers who understand the need for people to be open-minded.

Averiette demonstrated a strong desire for providing students with resources that encourage them to think about the person that they want to be, as they move toward adulthood. One of her main themes was awareness. She believes in making sure that students are aware of what has occurred in the world as well as some of the issues that face the world today. Emotional engagement was an important factor in her narratives because it helps students to forge the relationships in IWitness, but also because it motivates them to look at what is wrong with the world and to stand up for it.

Charles thinks on very similar lines as Leonard, as his goals with using IWitness seek to promote the development of engaged citizens with a strong moral compass. He contends that it

is the personal nature of testimony that allows students to internalize what they are learning for a time when it will best serve them. He also values the role of IWitness as a research tool for students to investigate a vast archive of stories to find those that resonate.

The next section will discuss dominant themes that were evident between participants.

Themes Between Participants

Participants' experience with IWitness varied greatly in relation to the manner in which they integrated it within their courses. Each participant was adamant about the importance of Holocaust education and brought their own personal goals to its teaching. In each case, the use of IWitness and testimony was vital to the outcomes that were observed. In some situations, the use of IWitness was synonymous with testimony-based education, which became a focus of the conversation. In other circumstances it was the technological makeup of IWitness that set it apart from other resources. This was due to the sound pedagogical design of the activities within IWitness as well as the student-driven nature.

While the central focus of this study is teacher perception of empathy, the key driving force that quickly emerged between participants was the establishment of personal connection between students and survivors. The affective nature of this connection was evident across all themes and played an essential role in achieving the goals set forth in participants' units on the Holocaust. Furthermore, human connection and respect within the classroom was a significant theme that emerged. Participants spoke at length about the need for an inclusive and respectful classroom environment to allow student learning to flourish.

Teaching for Moral Empathy

Prior to discussing IWitness, the participants equated empathy as a necessary goal within the secondary classroom. Empathy is an essential emotional quality that allows students to

successfully engage with our global society through an understanding that every person has their own story, their own perspective, and everyone has feelings based on their experience. As a result, it is necessary that students be in touch with their emotions in order to utilize this understanding as they move beyond the secondary classroom.

Definition. As the narratives focused on the concept of empathy, participants were asked to articulate their definition of the term, previously noted in the individual narratives. They were also asked to explain its role in the classroom, and more notably in learning about the Holocaust. The concept of empathy was garnered from participant definitions and was saturated in the transcripts, much of which filtered through the idea of establishing human connections and reaction to the use of testimony. Participants defined empathy as an awareness and level of care for the experience and emotions of people whom you may have no loving relationship with, and one's ability to identify with their situation. This definition was formed through the compilation of salient features from each participant's individual definition. Participants recognized that empathy, in regards to learning about the Holocaust, is reliant on an affective reaction to content that is related to the cognitive response through historical analysis of a situation. Each participant talked of the study of the Holocaust beginning with the history. Coupled with various resources that provide strong context, empathy begins to take shape with the connection to the content and, more specifically the personal nature of searching and listening to testimony from the survivors themselves.

Importance in the Classroom. The need for empathy in the secondary classroom is paramount due to their process of determining who they are and what they want their role in the world to be. Teachers should present material that allows students to explore a deeper sense of self and their feelings on myriad topics as to provide ample opportunity for growth. Leonard,

who believes in developmental theory, points out that children “are in identity development for most of their teen years and that means that they are the biggest narcissist in the world” (Interview, April 9, 2014). He recounts the poem by T.S. Elliot (1920), *Gerontion*, in which he penned the phrase “wilderness of mirrors,” and likens it to the world of teenagers. Leonard’s perception is an apt description as teens begin their preparation to leave home and begin their own quest in the world. It is fitting to provide content and resources that allow for this exploration to occur under the guidance of a dedicated teacher.

Justice adds that there are different values associated with empathy. “In terms of academic content retention, I think that anytime you can connect to some type of emotion, students will remember the content more” (Interview, May 20, 2014). However, beyond content retention Justice saw a greater sense of application in subsequent units when her class studied Vietnam and modern day refugees. “Many of them made these connections to survivor testimony or what we learned in the Holocaust unit in ways that have never happened before” (Justice, Interview, May 22, 2014). Even prior to this occurrence, Justice has attributed the use of IWitness in students applying ideas learned in IWitness to the communities that they live in today. She discusses one such project, entitled *Wash, Rinse, Don’t Repeat*:

“The whole point was for them to look through survivor testimony at instances of human rights abuses and then look in our current society and see if those abuses are being committed. Then, [there is] this whole idea that instead of standing by, like so many people did during the Holocaust, finding out a way to speak up against the present day human rights abuses (Justice, Interview, May 20, 2014).

One group completed a project on racial profiling, a topic that Justice believes they would not have addressed had it not been for IWitness. This assignment prompted students to reflect on

their community and think about some parallels from the testimony that students had listened to. By searching for clips related to profiling, students were able to establish a connection to racial profiling of Latinos in California. The final product was a very powerful video that demonstrated a great learning experience.

Charles and Lauren stressed the development of students into responsible human beings. Charles noted, “For me, I cannot separate empathy from responsibility,” meaning one’s duty to his fellow man. His perception is that the power of empathy lies in the development of caring citizens who understand right and wrong and are willing to watch out for one another. This responsibility can manifest in many ways. Lauren makes a connection to bullying, a current issue in schools and society. “Part of it relates back to bullying. If you really have empathy for people, then you are not going to bully them because you realize it is mean and hurtful.” (Interview, July 1, 2014). As bullying has become a central issue in schools, any educational resource that combats it would be appealing.

Segueing into a broader topic, Lauren stated, “You need to have empathy to understand what other people are going through” (Interview, July 1, 2014), giving way to service learning. In service learning projects, Lauren points out that developing empathy is significant in giving meaning to the work, rather than students engaging in the activity without understanding the reasons for doing such endeavors (Interview, July 1, 2014).

Leonard provided a nice summation of these ideas:

Empathy is pushing kids outside of that “my identity” construct to see themselves, whether it’s just with one other person in a relationship or in a community with others. I think it’s developmentally healthy for students to move beyond just thinking about me, me, me, all of the time. (Leonard, Interview, April 9, 2014).

Instead, students begin to think outside of this narcissistic box and develop care for other people's situations.

Establishing a caring relation allows students to personalize their learning and make connections to their own lives. Some invariably ask themselves "what if I was in her shoes" (Averiette, Interview, July 23, 2014)? This is not a goal, however. Each participant pointed out the reality that nobody can fully comprehend the level of survivors' suffering and students must understand this. This is a point that I have witnessed within my own classroom. A former student was pulled deeply into the testimony as his father experienced turbulent times in Hungary. For this particular student, learning about the Holocaust and working in IWitness was very personal as he was attempting to make meaning of his heritage through their experience. Students have a tendency to project themselves into the experience of the survivor as they attempt to make sense of what they are hearing.

It is essential when teaching about the Holocaust and genocide that we have conversations relating to the phenomenon of perspective taking. The continued occurrence of perspective taking suggests that students are attempting to come to terms with something that we simply cannot fully grasp. There are other implications for this phenomenon. Noddings' (2003) explanation of a caring relationship and Barton and Levstik's (2004) description of historical empathy can both be applied to this situation. Students have developed a caring relationship with the survivor whose testimony they have connected with. Furthermore, students fit Barton and Levstik's component of historical empathy. This element has a crucial affective element where one demonstrates a level of caring and desire to help, while remaining cognizant of time and space. This understanding roots students in the present through recognition that they cannot

realistically provide such support. The key element in this case is the desire to help as it signals the connection with another human being.

Establishing Human Connections

Human connection, while significant in and of itself, acts as the thread connecting all of the themes. These connections are the foundation of how IWitness facilitates a moral framework for the development of empathy. This demonstrates the power of individual relationships as a factor in how we live our lives and the choices that people make. This phenomenon is exemplified in Charles' foray into history. His first encounter in Haiti was with the person who would become a mentor to him. The evening that he arrived in the country, he met her, "She had big hoopy earrings, a big glass of wine in one hand, a cigarette in the other, and she said, "in Haiti, we dive," and she became my dive instructor" (Charles, Interview, June 25, 2014). From there on, she was a mentor to Charles and taught him the beauty of reading and learning. Without that personal relationship, his path may have led in a very different direction, demonstrating the importance of individual connections in our lives.

Personal Interaction. Personal interaction is a fundamental element in our daily lives and is applicable in every aspect of life. Leonard told me of his experience with a Holocaust survivor that set him on his mission, "When you sit across the table and you look into somebody's eyes, you take the journey with them and when you're done, you are changed" (Leonard, April 9, 2014). This suggests that learning through testimony-based education is an ideal pedagogical tool for teaching about the Holocaust as well as myriad other topics, because you are emotionally bound to the person with whom you have connected. Leonard adds to the value of using testimony in the classroom:

Testimony is the human, one-on-one human experience. Each testimony is personal and each person's experience of it was different, based on his or her experiences, context, etc., and that's in the testimony. So what testimony does is gives that human connection to this and, of course, it's all happening within the framework that we are studying in the class of what was the Holocaust (Leonard, Interview, April 9, 2014).

He expands on this by discussing the use of story. When using story to exemplify content in the secondary classroom, there is the prospect of expanding students' understanding, but there are pitfalls as well. In the social studies it is imperative to bring in multiple perspectives on any given topic.

If I could show one, it would be powerful. [But,] that would be different than the testimonies being available in the archive or IWitness. It's the sheer volume and the cross-referencing; it takes out the danger of one story (Leonard, Interview, April 9, 2014).

"For so many people, still, the Holocaust is Auschwitz" (Leonard, Interview, April 9, 2014). However, further contextualization is necessary for a well-rounded understanding of the events surrounding the Holocaust. And so, assuming that one goal is to expose students to accurate context and multiple perspectives as every participant discussed, IWitness provides that path to explore. Yet due to the nature of memory, using testimony can provide challenges. Students must be vigilant consumers as they attempt to piece together an understanding of the Holocaust.

I believe 100% that, as Holocaust educators, we have a responsibility to accurate history and the responsible use of history that is authentic and that is fact checked. Even testimonies sometimes are factually inaccurate and we know that memory is a funny

thing, but it's in the survivor testimony where people make the human connection. Kids can get that from testimony through IWitness (Leonard, Interview, April 9, 2014).

Modern education contends that students need to find relevance in their coursework. By providing relatable material, students are given a wider net to catch something that will resonate with them, thereby making it significant. Justice describes this as an opportunity to create meaning:

I want it to be this personal experience in that they realize that what occurred happened to individual people and it was done by individual people. It wasn't just a random event that happened. And so if we can see the Holocaust in that light then we can understand more about our own individual choices and responsibility in regards to other human beings (Justice, Interview, May, 20, 2014).

As students begin to make personal connections with the survivors in IWitness, they forge caring relationships that yield a deeper understanding and appreciation for the content. This type of learning engages an affective element that is powerful because “anytime you can connect to some type of emotion, then the outcome is going to be that the students will remember that content (Justice, Interview, May 20, 2014).

While reading memoirs and other first hand accounts provides students with multiple representations of concepts, the difference here seems to lie in the variation between generations. The millennial generation has been raised on video. In fact, an early exercise that I use in my course on the Holocaust asks students, “What kinds of proofs do you find more powerful, written proofs or visual evidence” (Facing History, 2012)? Of sixty students polled, only one did not side with visual evidence. Their reasoning was that visuals activate multiple senses and make it easier to remember. This being said, each participant linked the use of literature and other

resources to their use of IWitness. Its complementary nature allows for students to make connections with the content and the personal side of things as they get to see and hear the person, rather than wondering what the author looks and sounds like, which may place the story more at a distance.

It is the ability to look the person in the eye, so to speak, and take this journey with them as they divulge their experience in such a raw and unfiltered manner that allows students to start connecting to larger ideas. Leonard discussed one of his goals for his senior class being to sensitize students to what the world is capable of. Through this goal, he seeks to expose them to humanity by subjecting them to personal experience:

I see my students more tuned into what mankind is capable of in the negative, but also the positive; and it really opens kids up. IWitness is a critical part of that because it's their own personal journey in the testimony towards their inquiry questions. The week and a half of IWitness is a human connective journey. It's the human that makes it powerful (Leonard, Interview, April 9, 2014).

By keeping the individual at the center of learning, students are able to overcome the issues of time and space to analyze and reflect on some of the overarching concerns derived from the Holocaust. What emerges from testimony-based education is a sensitization of students to the situation of people.

Justice talked about the power of realizing the "impact on the education of the student after the fact," (Interview, May 22, 2014) being where the true impact of teaching lies. It is how students can learn to see connections between the past and present:

When they were looking at racial profiling in terms of the Star of David, and then looking at racial profiling happening in their own community, if it hadn't had been for this project

or hearing survivors talk about it in IWitness, I don't know if they would have thought about racial profiling or thought to even explore it in their own communities to see if it existed (Justice, Interview, May 22, 2014).

This was central in Justice's subsequent use of IWitness and the projects that she assigned afterwards. When students interviewed a teenage refugee, it made them more open to talking with these refugees and wanting to hear their stories because now they understand the power of story (Justice, Interview, May 22, 2014). Prior to beginning the refugee project, "they had no idea what high school-aged refugees have to go through" (Justice, Interview, May 22, 2014).

Therefore:

The empathy that I needed them to have for the refugee project that came after, [while] there is no way to really know this, I feel like the level of respect and care with which they treated that project built off of what they learned during the Holocaust unit. I think it would have been a difficult transition had we not had the IWitness experience first (Justice, Interview, May 22, 2014).

Students in various participants' courses seemed to identify with the testimony, based on the interviews conducted. They also seemed to make stronger connections that would come back to them when the experience would be the most influential to them.

Long-Term Effects. As teachers we know that we will not reach every student in such a way that changes their lives forever, although we try. It is a reality that we live with, similar to doctors knowing that they cannot save every patient who comes under their care. What we can do for each student is to provide him or her the opportunity to engage with information that can be meaningful in whatever way they choose to apply it to their lives. While there are times where one may never know how any particular aspect of your class affected students, there is

typically enough evidence to gain some perspective. Sometimes these instances do not arise until long after the final bell rings in your class during any given year.

Testimony is a personalized learning experience and yet it continues along the same path that some are more affected by it than others. However, there are nearly always individual cases that stand out in our mind. Leonard recalls one such event when a student came back to visit nearly a year after graduating:

He was on spring break from Michigan State. He came in and said, I want you know this happened, Mr. Harbaugh. I was in my room and heard noise, a commotion outside. I looked outside and there were two kids in a fistfight. There was a group of people around them. This was as I was teaching my Holocaust unit; he was on spring break. He said, I looked and all of a sudden I just went, I can't be a bystander. I ran in and I broke it up, and the whole time I was thinking "don't be a bystander." These are seeds that are planted in our Holocaust work and IWitness is human and that's a really important piece of that (Leonard, Interview, April 11, 2014).

Justice had a similar case in contact from a student nearly a year after they finished their project on IWitness. In her case, the student was still at the school in her senior year:

She emailed me a year after she had my class and told me the connection of a project that she was doing during her senior year that really made her think about some of the lessons that she learned from the IWitness project a year before (Justice, Interview, May 22, 2014).

Charles, a very contemplative individual, builds time for reflection into his course on a large scale. While he assesses students in traditional and non-traditional ways, he is also sure to give students plenty of time for reflection. He recognizes that this material will not always have

immediate personal meaning for them, but that having the experience to draw from makes it a valuable learning experience. He recounted a movie screening about a former professor and the opportunity to introduce the film while telling stories about his former professor. Charles related to the notion of long-term effects because he pointed out that until that moment of introducing the film, all of his experience that he had with his professor was in his memory, but did not have the same meaning (Charles, Interview, July 22, 2014). He believes that working with testimony and IWitness is a natural fit for this philosophy. He asks students to watch and listen and internalize what they are hearing but he does not always believe that there must be a traditional assessment. He went on to discuss the unimaginable nature of the Holocaust and the conflict of those who dared to resist or rescue and those who chose to perpetrate:

One of the things about mysteries, to me, is that they remain mysteries. There is not a conclusion. And, so for the Holocaust, a lot of it is mysterious because it was the dark heart of evil, but it's still pure human good. Often both things operate sometimes in the same character. So, I don't know how you assess that. I think you just invite room to think about it (Charles, Interview, June 22, 2014).

In the above excerpt Charles is referring to those who rescued and took chances to stand up for others as the "pure human good." Following this conversation, I began to wonder how we could assess the long-term effects of working with testimony. I mean as a classroom teacher rather than the implementation of a longitudinal study as an academic. However, my thinking soon took a new form. Instead of thinking if we could assess it, I began to wonder if we *should* assess it. While there are benefits to collecting grades, I am beginning to believe that it is more beneficial periodically for the student to not to focus on the assessment. Charles suggested that we give them the opportunity to "do something with it or do nothing with it" (Charles, Interview,

June 25, 2014). While “doing nothing” is not the ideal outcome, I see his point in simply giving them the opportunity to make meaning when it is their time to do so. This would seem to be the long term purpose of constructivist learning.

All participants observed an affective connection established between students and the survivors whose testimonies they were engaging with. Participants attributed this connection to students’ reactions with IWitness following the completion of the unit, and in some cases up to a year later. This demonstrates the ability of students to see beyond the screen and make connections to humanity, which can lead to a transformative experience for the students.

Holocaust Education

The Holocaust provides the backdrop for the study’s investigation of student empathy. As discussed in Chapter three, there rages a debate over the primary objectives in teaching about the Holocaust. The participants in this study overwhelmingly sided with the idea of teaching about the Holocaust and applying larger lessons from it to other aspects of life. Each participant noted the importance of situating the larger goals and lessons within a responsible historical investigation of the event.

Purpose. Participants in the study were asked to articulate the importance of teaching about the Holocaust. I asked them *if* they believe teaching the Holocaust is important. Their teaching and professional development agendas clearly demonstrated agreement that the Holocaust is a topic of utmost importance; so did each participant’s response.

Charles, in his recently completed dissertation drew a conclusion that as teachers we attach our own core values into our teaching. In teaching the Holocaust: “the way it gets taught effectively is when the teacher taps into what his or her core values are. Then you have an opportunity to teach from a place where things need to be taught from” (Charles, Interview, July

22, 2014). This is not specific to the Holocaust, but does provide some insight into Charles' perception of teaching sensitive topics.

Leonard believes a major role of his is to “get them ready to leave high school” (Interview, April 9, 2014). He believes that in order to achieve a level of preparation for students to become fully functioning and engaged members of society they need to have an understanding of where the world has been. Of what the worst side of humanity can do if it goes unchecked. Key outcomes for this goal include student understanding of “what happens when our sense of responsibility to one another, personally, culturally and in the community, breaks down” (Leonard, Interview, April 9, 2014).

Charles, while maintaining a similar goal frames it differently: “I have this super protective posture that, in a way, revolves around the Holocaust. But really it revolves around people who are innocent and need protection” (Charles, Interview, June 25, 2014). This is encompassed by the larger goal of teaching his students to be responsible to each other. He aims to make students think about social justice and engaging them in the classroom, community, or beyond when the time comes to do so. Lauren agreed, mentioning the quote from Edmund Burke, who said: “The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing.” For her, teaching the Holocaust is about teaching students that it was preventable. You cannot lead a life of apathy, but instead you must engage with the world in positive ways.

Views put forth on Holocaust education all favored the idea that students can learn about the Holocaust and apply lessons from it to other aspects of life; the knowledge and understanding should not be pigeonholed in application. Not one of the participants believed that teaching and learning about the Holocaust was to be only focused on the historical study, nor the experience of any particular targets of the Nazi persecution. Instead they value themes that emerge from the

content such as social justice or bullying. Averiette said, “I think that’s really important that they understand that it’s not okay to be quiet. If they see an injustice, they cannot be bystanders” (Averiette, Interview, July 23, 2014). This learning must be situated within the study of the history. Lauren and Leonard were both very adamant that as English teachers teaching the Holocaust they still have a responsibility to accurate history. They each sought out to have students make broader connections with the content and their lives today. While Charles primary point of discussion was that we, as teachers, need to align it with our core values as we teach students to become upstanding individuals who know right from wrong (Charles, Interview, June 25, 2014). For Charles, the Holocaust is a case study in the battle between right and wrong. It was unanimous that what sets this learning opportunity apart from other topics is the wealth of knowledge available through the USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive and IWitness and the opportunity for students to engage with those willing to share their experience with the world.

Gatekeeping

Teachers in the study demonstrated the practice of curricular gatekeeping discussed by Thornton (2005). Teachers’ duty is to select quality resources and put into practice through sound pedagogy. Curricular gatekeeping was an unintended theme that arose from the study that, initially, did not seem important for student empathy. However, as I began to reflect on the topic I came to realize that there is a significant element related to this idea that yields students’ opportunity to develop moral empathy. As teachers determined how their Holocaust units would be designed, they carefully selected testimony and activities that complement their objectives and teaching philosophy. For example, Leonard pointedly stated, “I have a responsibility to my keep my kids safe...I make responsible choices.” Averiette spoke along a similar line, “I think

the lessons that you choose, the readings that you choose can all be chosen specifically keeping in mind that you want your students to be better people” (Interview, July 22, 2014).

Keeping these points in mind allows teachers to shape their instruction around best practices for Holocaust education, such as limiting the use of graphic imagery (Echoes and Reflections, 2005). Continuing on about responsible selection of content, Leonard points out that he does not “use graphic images in [his] classroom. Students who want to see those images will seek them out as they look to their own questions” (Leonard, Interview, April 11, 2014). Charles echoed this sentiment in that he restricts student projects from including anything of this nature because it detracts from his goals. He does not see students using IWitness and becoming frustrated at the lack of explicit imagery. He says that it is the absence of these images that keeps students from becoming desensitized to the content. Instead of this overwhelming imagery, students become entranced in the story and as a result, they want to hear more testimony (Charles, Interview, July 22, 2014).

Leonard mentioned how a characteristic of students today, “There aren’t as many blank spots in their prior knowledge” (Interview, May 20, 2014). The myriad of resources on the Holocaust provide for this change. Seventy years post liberation, students have access to Holocaust memorials in person and online. There is a wide selection of films that situate themselves in the Holocaust and this results in more prior knowledge by the time that they enter classrooms where they will learn about the topic. This point is exemplified by Averiette, “I think it keeps them from being desensitized because it’s like sitting in the room with the person. You can’t help but have compassion for them” (Averiette, Interview, July 23, 2014).

One interesting fact that arose is that teachers’ perception that IWitness activities are consistent in these qualities, whether a teacher was integrating activities authored by them or

activities authored by the USC Shoah Foundation. The design of activities using the 4 Cs approach ensures that each lesson will provide a sound approach to the topic under study, an important fact when analyzing the data for effectiveness. This gave teachers the comfort that they could assign any activity in IWitness, or create their own and have similar outcomes.

Pedagogy

“It didn’t just change my teaching, it changed the way that my students approached it” (Averiette, Interview, July 23, 2014). This may be one of the most profound statements made by any of the participants in the study as it gets to the heart of what is possible with IWitness, based on perceptions of my participants. This demonstrates the current practice of student-centered learning and constructivist pedagogy. In terms of general pedagogy, this can have a monumental effect on teachers and student achievement. For Holocaust education, it provides the necessary tools for teachers who may not feel confident with content knowledge to create a learning environment in which students and teachers learn together. In discussing his use of IWitness, Leonard pointed out that the learning done with IWitness allows students to completely personalize their experience based on individual interests. This is pointed out by multiple participants and is central to the objectives of Averiette and Leonard, whose course is driven by students’ burning questions.

Keeping the Individual at the Center. As the preparation for the Master Teacher program, we were given the assignment of watching the entire testimony of Renee Firestone, finding individual clips that resonated with us, and thinking through why that particular clip was a powerful learning experience for us. As we viewed and discussed each participant’s choice, I noticed that no two clips were duplicated. It was my first foray into the individualized nature of testimony. Leonard recalls his experience in this exercise “it only took a minute or two before I

was no longer staring at the screen, I was looking at a human being telling her story. There was no filter between a woman telling her story and me” (Leonard, Interview, April 9, 2014). It was instantly clear to me, as well as each participant in the study, that IWitness was a formidable resource for students.

This anecdote represents the best practice in Holocaust education of keeping the individual at the center (Echoes and Reflections, 2014). “History counts its dead in round numbers, one-thousand and one remains one-thousand, as though the one had never existed” (Echoes and Reflections, 2014). Through a focus on individual people and stories, students can avoid the trap of overgeneralizations as illustrated by this quote.

Within the testimony there “are things kids cue into. Also, there are these seemingly innocuous offerings in the testimony, but that is what sticks in their head and that is what pulls them in” (Charles, Interview, June 25, 2014). In an interview with the USC Shoah Foundation, Leonard said, “Something happens when you watch testimony. It’s like your DNA and the DNA of the testimony, they mix, and it changes you” (USC Shoah Foundation, 2012). Students are able to concentrate on this phenomenon at a micro-level by avoiding the abstract notion of six million people and what that really means:

By humanizing the Holocaust, by putting a face to it, a face of a person who experienced the Holocaust, the kids can articulate that story... the ability to take the whole and let it play out on the face of the individual seems, ultimately, to give them an opportunity to make some sense of what the Holocaust was (Charles, Interview, June 25, 2014).

Leonard echoed this notion in pointing out that “each one is its own curriculum” (Interview, April 11, 2014). The participants pointed out that IWitness allows them to introduce testimony-based education as a complement to other carefully selected resources.

As students begin working with IWitness, searching and listening to testimony, “It really hits them on an emotional level. The real empathy, for them, came in when they were searching for survivors on their own” (Averiette, Interview, July 23, 2014). Multiple participants talked of this and the power of IWitness connecting with their students during this phase. Leonard believes that “the most important piece of that is that you are interacting with a human being. You are interacting with them nonverbally and you are watching as they tell the story. It’s made very personal, it’s individualized” (Interview, April 11, 2014). Averiette said:

The key thing about IWitness is that it’s actually the people that it happened to and they’re talking about this happening to them. And I think part of the beauty of IWitness is that we get this first person account of how all this went down, you know, how it all happened. (Averiette, Interview, May 23, 2014).

Lauren agreed and went on to discuss students interacting with testimony in IWitness in comparison to other resources, which plays a role in engaging the affective element:

You’re getting the stories of the people and so I think that makes even better connections with empathy when it’s not just reading about the story. That why you can see, years, decades later, when somebody is telling about the diamond necklace or whatever. I think it helps even more when they see the person, they can make that connection. I think that’s easier than you’re just reading about it in a book (Lauren, Interview, July 14, 2014).

Justice agreed in pointing out, “The kids have said this too, it’s so different when you’re looking into a person’s eyes or looking at a person actually telling you the story of what *they* have experienced” (Interview, May 22, 2014).

Classroom Culture. Each semester, teachers carefully select resources that will introduce students to their class and the expectations that will govern the course. The first couple of days are crucial for teachers to establish a culture of learning where students feel safe to explore ideas, ask questions, and voice opinions that may contradict other opinions in the room. While the first few days of class are crucial to this endeavor, forging this environment will be a journey that extends beyond the first week. In regards to a class that will undertake a study of the Holocaust, it becomes even more important due to the sensitive nature of the content. This exchange is what drew Leonard to teaching, “I just love the exchange in the community of learning” (Interview, April 9, 2014). Within the walls of these classrooms students grow. Something that I took from the first spoken-word poem that I ever heard Justice recite was that great teachers “care more about student growth than grades.” This was one of the most impactful statements of my professional life and it transformed the way that I think about teaching. The grades and assessments are important, but those come through expanding students’ understanding of the world. Nowhere does this happen more than in a classroom in which they feel safe taking risks. The establishment of such a classroom culture became evident within the first couple of interviews with participants, most notably Leonard, Justice, and Charles.

The theme of classroom culture was wholly unexpected. While it dominated a portion of the interview for Leonard, Justice, and Charles, I was unsure how it related to the study. As I reflected on it with the research questions, I began to realize that it is the classroom culture that gives students comfort to explore and take chances in their learning. Further, I realized that what each teacher was achieving was to forge the connections, which have been a major facet in this study, between students in their classes. By fashioning these relationships in person, students are

more open to the conditions of others, thereby opening them up to establish connections with survivors in IWitness.

In each classroom the teachers began with their own personal approach to establishing this culture. It starts from the first day of class, “I call my students sir or miss, right from day one” (Charles, Interview, June 25, 2014). Charles once received a graduation thank-you card from a girl who discussed how she felt he was wrong in that practice because it was only the beginning of the class, she wrote “and then I came to realize why you were not” (Charles, Interview, June 25, 2014). He still uses that letter to discuss respecting one another and the importance of that relationship in the classroom. For Charles, his classroom culture, as well as the school culture, is centered on morals, watching out for each other, and treating one another with respect. Through this they learn and grow together.

Each of the participants recognized the importance of mutual respect in the classroom to foster a higher level of engagement and achievement. My own method is similar to Leonard’s approach which begins with an analysis of identity. Who are we, where does our identity originate? Leonard explains, “looking around, my students do not recognize difference...a lot of difference is invisible unless you start to get to know a person”(Leonard, April 9, 2014). As they begin asking more and more questions about each other, “Invariably, what happens is that they start to ask questions about why do I have the assumptions that I have? What does that have to do with my own identity” (Leonard, Interview, April 9, 2014)? In adopting this tactic, Leonard demonstrates that, “It isn’t about saying to them let’s talk about these different people, it is saying let’s talk about you and how you live your life. And then let's talk about people and connect our lives to theirs” (Leonard, Interview, April 9, 2014). It is after this connection that students are introduced to people who experienced the Holocaust.

Justice begins the year with exercises that help to develop what she calls “CARE-culture: The 'C' stands for Create an environment of trust and security. The 'A' is allow students to see some of the real you. If you're asking them to be their real selves, then I want them to see when I make a mistake or see when I'm struggling with something so that they see that it's okay to have that same experience. The 'R' is to respond to students' interests, passions and needs, so making sure my projects have a lot of choice in them; it's not just me dictating what they're doing, And then the needs part is because we're full inclusion, making sure I'm supporting or scaffolding things for students who need more support. The 'E' stands for encourage and expect growth. I don't want them to ever feel comfortable where they are, just always pushing them (Justice, Interview, May 22, 2014).

Justice establishes this culture from the beginning, which allows her students to engage in activities that are well outside of their comfort zone. For example, early on her students have to choreograph, and perform, a dance based on their learning about the Declaration of Independence, which is “uncomfortable and unfamiliar” to everyone, and this allows them to take a chance on something new. “Doing that early on, makes it easier to do some of the higher risk projects later in the year” (Interview, May 22, 2014).

In establishing this environment, students are at peace with one another and with the learning that will take place in the classroom. When you remove the stigma of making a mistake or taking a risk, students are able to immerse themselves in the learning, allowing meaningful connections.

Film. Due to the nature of video testimony, the use of film as a resource came up repeatedly in the interviews. The philosophy of using film varied widely between participants, yet it was agreed upon that film can be a valuable asset if properly integrated. Leonard has an

optional screening of *Schindler's List*, done outside of school hours, which he typically experiences a high attendance rate for a Sunday night, the typical screening night. It should be noted that *Schindler's List* is known for its authentic treatment of the event. *Schindler's List* survivor Rena Finder, in a conversation we had with a group of teachers, said that when she first saw the film, "It was like I was re-living my life" (Phone Conversation, December 1, 2014). This demonstrates how this film stands apart from many others that students are familiar with. Leonard pointed out, "There are pieces of Holocaust narrative that did not exist before," (Interview, April 9, 2014) referencing the "myriad Holocaust movies that are out," (Interview, July 22, 2014) as Averiette described it.

The comparison of Hollywood versus documentary was also addressed. Lauren and Justice each referred to a documentary, also produced by Steven Spielberg, entitled *The Last Days*. Each uses the documentary and pointed out that students react very favorably to it. This is notable as the film focuses on five survivors who, for the first time, return to the ghettos and camps where they were incarcerated, so there is a testimony-based element to it. In fact *The Last Days* is the only film that Lauren uses with her classes; she does not believe in representing the Holocaust through Hollywood film. However, Charles points out that with film, either Hollywood or documentary:

It's a movie and you can't help but approach movies in ways, even documentaries, where there's that big screen charisma, where it's distant and it's somehow wonderful. No matter what the topic is. I don't know how to get away from that. And then you get away from that with testimony because you're, you are not using atrocity footage and you're not defaulting to the cinema (Interview, July 22, 2014).

He continues on to relate the use of testimony as film to the affective connections that students make with the survivors because testimony provides an element of human interaction missing from other types of film:

Instead, you have the whole human play on that person's face and, so there's something that happens, emphatic communication where you're completely, or as completely as one can be at one with the guy, or with the woman, and the processing that goes on with is like any other intimate conversation (Interview, July 22, 2014).

This aspect of film is critical in student understanding for the millennial generation. They have been raised on film and with the popularity of YouTube, it remains an engaging way to draw students in.

Literature. Leonard and Justice both recalled their first foray into the learning about the Holocaust through their journey with Elie Wiesel, lost within the pages of *Night*. While film and image is a central resource for the millennial generation, the connections one makes with literature can never be replaced. Holocaust memoir allows the reader to become engaged in the experience of the author, while putting their imagination to work in picturing the story as told by the author. Literature allows for students to relate and testimony adds another layer to that learning.

What Averiette enjoys is the seamless nature of IWitness activities. Instead of having to stop and discuss or write, students can seamlessly work through IWitness and their writing is infused into the activity. Her activities are paired with literature, much the way that Lauren's activity was. In her activity, *Hope is the Thing with Feathers*, she suggests by integrating Emily Dickinson's poetry and a young-adult novel by Jacqueline Woodson with IWitness by having students seek clips of testimony where people discuss having hope, they are exposed to more

than viewpoints from only the poem and novel. Instead, they are personalizing their inquiry and hearing multiple perspectives of what gave people hope during the Holocaust. Averiette was looking back at students' projects as we talked. She remarked, "This was some of the most thoughtful work that they've created all year" (Averiette, Interview, July 23, 2014).

Lauren likes to pair IWitness with literature because of the nature of story. She prefers not to use fiction when teaching about the Holocaust, "There are so many good stories, there's no need to make them up" (Lauren, Interview, July 1, 2014). She believes that testimony allows students to make the connection to the person easier than only reading from a book, "Because I think we're so used to looking and watching and seeing pictures and videos; I think it just makes it more real to them...there are other non-verbal cues that they can pick up on" (Lauren, Interview, July 1, 2014).

Justice combines Humanities and United States History into a single course, and uses poetry and literature as a means of student reflection in learning about the Holocaust. Within the Holocaust unit, she gives students choices from myriad poems and literature from Jewish authors to create an understanding that the victims of the Holocaust were individuals and to demonstrate poetry as a means of expression. Throughout the unit, they write response poems and found poems from testimony to creatively synthesize what they have learned from Holocaust survivors who share their experience.

The use of testimony to augment the study of the Holocaust in English classes helps to deepen and diversify student learning. For Lauren, it gives her reason to teach the Holocaust, "Poetry was kind of my excuse to do the Holocaust. I really wanted them to know about the Holocaust...I just wanted them to actually have some content knowledge as well as have the

literary aspect” (Lauren, July 14, 2014). This comment further relates to Leonard’s point that the Holocaust provides one of the greatest opportunities for cross-content learning.

Conclusion

Participants in the study communicated a complex understanding of the power that testimony-based education can have on students. Much of the conversations were focused on the role of testimony and IWitness in promoting a sense of moral empathy. They defined empathy as an awareness and level of care for the experience and emotions of people, whom you may have no loving relationship with, and one’s ability to identify with their situation. In each person’s perception, empathy was derived from two main aspects, personal connections with individuals and the personalized nature of searching in IWitness.

Personal interaction and connections is the central theme that cuts across all other themes that emerged in the transcripts. Participants often referred to their students’ affective engagement as being a central reason for the effectiveness of IWitness. I would add to their perception that there was a substantial presence of establishing a culture of learning where they had students making personal connections with one another. I believe that this also generates an understanding that engaging with your emotions is acceptable as you work through such difficult content.

Another significant factor that resonated with me was that the perceptions of the five teachers did not vary greatly between those who teach English and those who teach Social Studies. While I had not presumed that there would be a large variation, it was a question in the back of my mind in the early stages of analysis. This lends itself to the cross-content nature of Holocaust education by teachers put forth the effort to design meaningful instruction. The implications of these themes and the findings will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter Six: Discussion

This study focused on how teachers perceived the effects of *IWitness* on the development of empathy, specifically the affective domain of historical empathy in their students during a study of the Holocaust. The study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What factors do teachers attribute to the development of empathy, in themselves and in students?
2. How does engagement with digital testimony through *IWitness* compare/contrast to other primary sources, especially in the development of empathy?
3. How does this medium add value in learning without desensitizing students?
4. How does interacting with *IWitness* facilitate a moral framework for developing empathy?

Teacher's perceived that through *IWitness* and the use of testimony, students are able to couple the historical context with the life-experience of survivors of the Holocaust. As a result, students forged connections with the human beings who shared their stories in *IWitness*.

In teaching about the Holocaust 70 years post liberation, the question of how the Holocaust ought to be taught still remains an active discussion. Interest on the international level has begun to traverse new heights. UNESCO (2014) points out that there remains a focus in those regions where the Holocaust was perpetrated, but a higher level of interest in other regions has surfaced as well. In various areas around the globe, it has become more commonplace to “recognize the history of the Holocaust as an effective means to teach about mass violence and to promote human rights and civic duty, testifying to the emergence of this pivotal historical event

as a universal frame of reference” (UNESCO, 2014, p. 10). The difficulty of providing students the opportunity to make sense of and connect with the Shoah, especially if the teacher is not a Holocaust educator, is still a complex matter for many due to varying approaches and philosophies.

Testimony

It was not until the 1970s that oral traditions became a topic of study as a methodology, regardless of the fact that it had been used as source material for generations (Vansina, 1985). When one thinks of any major written work or ancient text, it is easily overlooked that it was at one time passed along orally. Vansina (1985) points out that one of the great wonders in our world are the thoughts and ideas that emanate from these oral traditions as succinctly put, “Ancient things are today” (p.xii). It is the past as represented in the present. Oral history is a source that historians ought always consider when attempting to reconstruct the past. This is not to suggest that oral traditions should be used in lieu of written sources, but in conjunction with them to assemble a fuller picture of an event. By giving students occasion to research the experience of survivors, hearing directly from them while also witnessing the non-verbal cues, a path to personal connection is established. Each participant in this study discussed at length the effect of 1) visual history testimony, and 2) the personalized nature of finding stories that resonate with each individual student.

Oral history has been successfully demonstrated as an important primary source in the social studies for decades (Wigginton, 1972; Alchediak, 2001; Murray, 2005). Across this study the term testimony has been used in reference to the actual testimony being used within IWitness. It is necessary to point out that nature of learning testimony within IWitness differs from the traditional use of testimony and oral histories that are independent of IWitness. The

technological capabilities of IWitness allow for a more personalized experience. Students today are raised on video and technology. By using clips of testimony to build video-essays, students are bringing pieces of themselves into their final product. Students constructed their own understanding of the content, and their personal inquiry, through the construction of the final project, yielding powerful results (Haas, Berson, & Berson, 2015). “Storytelling has always been the most important way of teaching about history and traditions as well as recalling, shaping, and even creating memories, provoking emotions, motivating actions, and even teaching skills” (Clabough *et al*, 2014, p. 131). Leonard pointed out that IWitness is digital storytelling. He and Lauren both discussed individual stories of students who became focused on the various elements that make digital storytelling so impacting in a social studies classroom. Digital storytelling takes oral tradition and enhances it, through technology, by adding visual and aural elements (Clabough *et al*, 2014). Either through the addition of photographs or music, the use of visual clips of testimony layered with individual creativity of their students provided a powerful medium through which learners could convey their own understanding.

Empathy

As we become more distanced from the event itself, and those who survived or bear witness continue to leave this world, it is necessary to connect students with the history in ways that will engage them on the dual-domain construct of cognitive-affective learning. Kohlmeier (2006) defines historical empathy as “a complex balance between considering the perspectives of and connecting with people in the past” (p. 37). Endacott (2010) points out this definition substantiates Barton and Levstik’s (2004) consideration that historical empathy may involve a connection with historical figures, which is both cognitive and affective. For students to truly learn something from their study of the Holocaust, teachers must select lessons and resources

that situate students in a position for the personal engagement that has been a central thread of this study. The Holocaust is a prime example of content that is suitable for this type of connection as students struggle with understanding the “why” of the event. Data gleaned from this study suggests that IWitness provides students with the historical context necessary for the cognitive construct, and it also provides for the affective connection by facilitating a link between human-beings and the plight of their situation. Endacott and Brooks (2013) mention Eisenberg (2000) and Hoffman (1984) in stating, “Engaging in empathy with our contemporaries in the here-and-now involves an affective connection to the situation faced by another person, which is shaped by our cognitive understanding of the person’s perspective and the extenuating circumstances surrounding it” (p. 42). In this study, participants discussed students gaining understanding of the interviewees’ experience, situated in the time of the Holocaust, which had many complex factors at work. It is necessary for students to more fully comprehend of the roles that vying factors have on a person at any given moment in time. As students ponder this in historical figures, and come to understand that human perspective is “rooted in the social, political, economic, and cultural context of the time,” they will also come to realize how the context of the present effects our own perspectives (Barton & Levstik, 2004). Endacott (2013) points out that this understanding provides students the advantage to further “analyze and evaluate their own beliefs and actions and those of others they encounter in the present” (p. 45).

This notion is the transformative experience previously mentioned that is a cornerstone of IWitness. Data in this study points to IWitness as being central to students’ affective connections during their units of studying the Holocaust, as well as the Tutsi genocide in Rwanda, as mentioned by Averiette. It is through in-depth and responsible historical analysis

that students begin to develop a sense of historical contextualization. Endacott and Brooks (2013) define historical contextualization as:

A temporal sense of difference that includes deep understanding of the social, political, and cultural norms of the time period under investigation as well as knowledge of the events leading up to the historical situation and other relevant events that are happening concurrently (p. 43).

Any responsible study of the Holocaust is initiated from a study of the history, as noted by each participant in this study and supported by the literature (Echoes and Reflections, 2014; Totten & Feinberg, 1995; USHMM, 1993).

The most prominent facet of this study that can be used to inform other social studies courses and learning about the Holocaust is the impact of testimony-based education. Moreover, this study is supported by Noddings' (1992) philosophy of caring relations. As students begin working with survivor testimony in a constructivist-learning environment, the learning gains are unparalleled as evidenced by experiences of Leonard and Justice. Connections and discoveries made during these units were recognizable by teachers in subsequent units of study as denoted by Justice, as well as in later applications of their lives as students revisited lessons learned during their study of the Holocaust as described by Justice and Leonard. While it cannot be definitively stated that IWitness is a complete solution to properly educating students about the Holocaust, participants agreed that their students' learning was greatly enhanced by IWitness as a resource for deeper investigation into the content.

Noddings (1992) points out that it remains important to be cognizant of the effects that developing caring relationships may have on those not cared for. There opens a door to lay blame to a group, in the case of the Holocaust it is the Nazis. However, some resources use the

term Germans (Carrier, Fuchs, & Messinger, 2015) to label those responsible for the Holocaust. In this example, it is important to take care that students not cause unintended or unknown pain for a group that they are coining as responsible for the suffering of the cared for due to the complexities of involvement. Students typically adopt varying viewpoints regarding how to assess guilt of perpetrators, collaborators, and bystanders. Analyzing different actions, or inaction, during the Holocaust can provide students opportunity for critical analysis of complex content. One current example of this is a discussion recently held about the current trial in Germany of the 93-year old man who worked in Auschwitz. His job was in the sorting room, where prisoners' goods were sorted upon arrival. Students disagreed about the level of guilt to assign this individual. This is one area that the varying factors which lead to people's perspectives and choices plays a central role, the importance of historical context as described in the literature (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Endacott & Brooks 2013; Yeager & Foster, 2001;). It must be noted here that none of the participants mentioned this phenomenon among their students, but is an important point for discussion regarding empathy due to the cognitive element that is coupled with the affective component.

As noted with Justice, her students adopted greater care in their unit on teenage refugees, which she attributed to the foundation that was built during their unit on the Holocaust. This goes to suggest that students would benefit from testimony-based education on a wide array of topics. As discussed in chapter two, students working with oral histories made greater connection to the material under study, thereby extending their engagement with the historical study. This provided for a greater understanding of the history, as well as transferring into their lives as students began to apply these lessons to their lives. This example suits Endacott and Brooks' (2013) formula, in which students are gaining context, investigating primary source

material, reflecting on the material, and then applying it to their current lives. This example is only one of the few that Justice discussed in which she witnessed this phenomenon in her classroom.

Implications for Holocaust Education

What emerges from the data is the need to end the debate over how to approach the Holocaust as discussed earlier in this manuscript. It becomes clear that what is needed in Holocaust education for the 21st Century, now 70 years past the liberation of Auschwitz and end of the war, is an approach to teaching about the Holocaust that emphasizes learning the history of the event, while simultaneously providing an avenue for an analysis of larger issues of human behavior, choice, stereotyping, bullying, and prejudice. As students and teachers begin to use history as a foundation for case studies on the present, students will grow beyond what can be measured by high stakes tests. They will engage in controversial discussions, which Hahn (2001) points out as one of the most effective means of engaging students in the social studies ultimately providing them with real-world opportunities for evidence based learning and discussion. It also gives students the chance to begin formulating their worldview based on history and present day. For example, students can transition from learning about stereotyping, violence, and injustice associated with the Holocaust to a timely study of Ferguson, Syria, or the Ukraine. This is not to suggest comparisons of pain, but rather to enlist students in learning about current issues and how the past has shaped them, especially considering one of the most repeated explanations for studying history given by students is, “So that we will not repeat it.” Since we know from experience that history does, in fact repeat itself, why not procure students in relating the behavior of the historical figures associated with each event to their lives today.

Totten and Feinberg (1995) argue for the need to personalize the Holocaust when teaching a unit on it. The experience of all participants of this study bear witness to the importance of personalizing the learning of this content for their students, both through the careful selection of materials and readings for all ages, as Averiette stated, to the use of IWitness in allowing students to seek out testimony that resonates with them.

The study built on the strong foundational importance of selecting quality materials that are suitable for your goals, the content, and are developmentally appropriate as suggested by Totten and Feinberg (1995). The use of graphic material should be limited as it serves a purpose with older students, if used properly, but should not be integrated in excess. Charles and Leonard choose not use graphic material in their courses and see similar outcomes as those who do include it. I believe that after a deep enough study, students in high school are ready and able to view the realities of the camps in limited quantity, yet it is by no means a necessary aspect. Neither do I think that this is appropriate in courses with short units on the Holocaust (Totten & Feinberg, 1995).

The use of film in learning about the Holocaust is central to this study as testimony is video. Hollywood films are a complex resource to tackle and have become a go to when teachers get to World War II or the Holocaust. I have students regularly ask about watching *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*. I then take the time to explain why that film should only be shown if you are analyzing literary themes or themes of friendship and innocence. Many teachers show this as a historical film, which can be problematic in a study of the Holocaust. *Schindler's List* (1993) is another film that students occasionally mention. This may well be the best Holocaust film ever made because Steven Spielberg took great care to make the film with education in mind. It was never intended to be a for profit film and, in turn, it launched what is now the USC

Shoah Foundation. However, students have reported watching the film as young as eighth grade after a cursory study of the Holocaust. Some students have opted out of watching the film at such a young age, while others have admitted to me that they did not understand the film, nor the topic. With the continued release of films situated during the Holocaust such as *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* and *Inglorious Bastards*, it becomes even more necessary that students have an understanding of historical fiction. When teachers do not contextualize the purpose for a given film the results can be problematic. Charles discussed this problem with films as they all have an element about them that is difficult to overcome even with documentary. A benefit of IWitness, as Charles discussed, is that it distances itself from the realm of film as seen in documentaries and Hollywood film. Lauren's experience was parallel to this view as she noted that when you have such rich and detailed stories from those who experienced it firsthand, why would you substitute fictional representations. The raw nature of testimony in IWitness pairs students with the human being whose experience they are learning from, rather than the cinematic arts that play such a heavy role in theatrical films.

Implications for Social Studies Education

The purpose of studying of history can be a fickle concept as evidenced by the age-old debate of the social studies vs. history education. At its very core, the study of history is an investigation of the past. It is widely recognized that an acceptable means of teaching history in K-12 schools is through the use of multiple perspectives. Multiple perspectives provide voice to various groups that experienced the same events in history. These varying viewpoints have rich implications for student learning. By designing lessons that provide these varying viewpoints on events in history, we can begin to avoid the danger of one story as Leonard described. This moves us from a myopic view of history towards a pluralistic approach. Furthermore, it is

necessary to go beyond the overarching history of a group and begin an analysis of the individual experience of a given event. This tactic allows students to begin engaging with the nuances of history and make meaning of the impact of various factors such as politics, social behavior, and economics. Endacott (2010) points out, “Indications are that the affective approach to empathy is not unlike the cognitive approach widely used in history education. We are similar, and yet at the same time, we are different” (p. 9). This point is commonly accepted as means of teaching any social studies topic in a student-centered classroom. It provides that students analyze specific situations and individuals in the past as well as their own lives in order to make connections and create relevance for themselves.

This study suggests that the power of testimony-based education allows students to make affective-cognitive connections with the content in a manner that fosters empathy, historical thinking, and citizenship ideals through engagement with IWitness. Participants in this study provided plentiful examples of how students’ personalized learning in IWitness benefited from multiple-perspectives of testimonies. Averiette’s experience was that the strongest effects occurred during the time that students had to explore testimony in IWitness. It was this portion of their unit where the affective connections were made because she witnessed students’ fascination with the stories of the individuals. While some would jump between testimonies for different perspectives, some students would remain rooted in one survivor’s testimony for the entire time. When I spoke with Averiette, I asked how she could tell when a student makes this personal connection. One part of each reply stood out to me. They both discussed how students ceased mentioning “the video,” and instead referred to the survivor in statements such as “Renee said ...” or “She told me...” For students to go beyond the technology in casual reference to the

source of their learning suggests that they are no longer viewing this as material that has no meaning to their lives, but instead they have a stake in it.

As the social studies begins its descent from atop of the mountain to the bottom where high stakes tests lurk, it is necessary to keep social studies pedagogy rooted in timely discussions that will guide student growth into well-rounded citizens, rather than those who will merely perform on a single test. Examples from participants paint a picture of how focusing on the individual story leads to a less apathetic populace. Real history happens in the homes and the streets of the world. It is carried out by the rich and powerful as well as the middle class and the poor. There is a reason why Hollywood often takes discrete stories of individuals to fashion blockbusters. Individual stories are what gives social studies courses the excitement that students yearn for. By coupling these stories with cross-content resources that supplement testimony such as that from IWitness, the content becomes extremely rich.

Lauren, Leonard, Averiette, and Justice all discussed the use of literature and poetry to enhance the study of the content and the ability of the testimonies to augment the impact of literature by providing deeper context and detail to the origins of various resources. One key factor to consider is that this pedagogical strategy need not pertain only to the Holocaust, just as learning about the Holocaust cannot be pigeonholed into a single content area or learning objective. The use of testimony is applicable to a vast array of topics in the social studies, including wars of the 20th century, 9/11, and recent social issues such as Ferguson to name a few. The possibilities go far beyond simply utilizing testimony in teaching about the Holocaust. The importance lies in the engaging nature of IWitness to build context, provide opportunity for personalized learning, and the multi-literacy skills that are integrated into IWitness activities. Furthermore, this does not necessitate having a one-to-one classroom or computer lab available.

Students working with IWitness are able to have this experience in a one-computer classroom so long as the learning activity allows students to make connections to their own lives.

As most resources, IWitness should be paired with other high quality curricular resources in learning about the Holocaust. Through the use of resources such as Echoes and Reflections, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's online encyclopedia, and Facing History and Ourselves' Holocaust and Human Behavior teachers can provide a strong foundation for a study of the Holocaust. Each of the participants in this study discussed other resources that they pair with their Holocaust units that augment the experience of the students.

Technology in the Social Studies. Technology as a "Sleeping Giant" in the social studies curriculum (Martorella, 1997) remains a tricky and multifaceted tool as we progress further into the twenty-first century. Each year more students are taking online courses or participating in Bring Your Own Device, or BYOD, school lessons as a means of technology integration. Percy (2013) points out that students will no longer be enamored by technologies that have become commonplace during the last decade. Yet the absence of this wow factor does not mean that technology ceases to be useful or innovative in its effects on learning. Technology is a tool that offers innumerable opportunities to enhance social studies education. However, it remains just that, a tool. Technology is a fairly abstract term and so we must define our expression a bit more. Technology in this manuscript refers to computer technology, the Internet, Web 2.0 capabilities, and mobile technology. What other resources have been introduced into education in the past 20 years that have opened as many doors as current technology? In this day and age, a vast number of students have mobile technology, either smartphones or tablets, giving them constant access to information. While one-to-one computers are still not the norm, students with mobile tech solves a number of issues and there are far too many creative uses for the

classroom than can be listed here. Practitioners must remember that technology is only as effective as the lesson in which it is applied. It is here that the content fits into the use of technology by grounding it within the larger lesson. Teachers still must have sound goals, select reputable resources, and have a working understanding of how the resources further student learning.

Let us turn to an analogy, Achilles and the Trojan War. Can we argue that technology is the equivalent of the great warrior, all but guaranteeing victory whenever he dons his armor? I would argue that it is a strong ally. In the case of IWitness and the development of empathy, there is a definite value to using the technology as I have outlined in this study. First, students are able to work self-paced, without having to wait for others to finish before moving on to the next question or clip, which Averiette discussed as one of the most salient features in allowing students to flow with the material and their own abilities. This provides immense benefits when working to insure an inclusive classroom where we know that tall student work at varying speeds and learn in different ways. The level of engagement in working in IWitness is unparalleled, predominantly because students are able to search for topics that resonate with them personally. Second, IWitness connects students to individual stories, thereby putting them in touch with humanity in a way that most other resources cannot or do not. By engaging their emotion, we have the potential for transformative experiences that will linger long after they have left our classrooms and moved on to the next phase of their lives. This phenomenon was pointed out by Leonard and Justice's students who returned well after their courses ended to discuss the impact it had on them.

Now, Achilles had a weakness, his heel. I believe that technology's Achilles heel is responsible implementation and the digital divide. Teachers must have an understanding of how

technology will enhance the learning in their classroom and not approach its integration with a mindset that technology can assist students in constructing meaning. Technology does not replace the teacher as curricular gatekeeper and class facilitator, but gives an opportunity to deepen learning through resources that are unobtainable without it. However, it remains a tool. Returning to the sleeping giant analogy, I would argue that it is in fact a sleeping giant and as more classrooms topple the issue of access and the digital divide, via BYOD policies or the lowering cost of technology, the giant will finally begin to stir.

In the way of technology, teachers need to ask themselves a few questions. What are my objectives? What is the purpose of using technology over paper and pencil? They must then understand the technology on a basic level. Without an understanding of the functionality of a resource, little will be accomplished. In the case of IWitness, this may simply be an understanding of setting up classes and working through to the video editor feature. This is not to suggest that teachers must be technologically adept in order to institute IWitness or similar activities within their classroom. In turning away from the “Sage on the Stage” approach of teaching we must be willing to turn over control to our students. This may mean that rather than having a complete understanding of the technology, we know which of our students are highly capable with technology and ask them to serve as “experts” in the class, thereby building on their knowledge and skills. Sometimes the greatest learning is the collateral learning, as Dewey (1938) describes it. Collateral learning is the learning that takes place beyond the learning objectives. In this case, an expert or any student offering help to another has learned a lesson in teaching others, which is as valuable as the content itself. This is not meant to suggest that teachers need not understand IWitness to implement its use. As with any resource, one must have an understanding of what can be achieved with the resource.

Amidst all of the possibilities of using IWitness, it is not without its tribulations. The user interface is fairly user-friendly, however, those who are uncomfortable with technology it may take some time to become acclimated. Charles mentioned that this could be an issue for some teachers but believed that overcoming it was worth the effort. However, someone less dedicated to Holocaust education could become disillusioned, especially if they cannot become adept in using the video-editor. As with any technology, the video-editor has some nuances that users must finesse in order to become truly proficient.

My study suggests that teachers need to know their own personal philosophy of education. One's beliefs for the purpose for using technology will be a part of this philosophy. In the case of my participants, each has a very distinct approach within their classroom and their implementation of IWitness reflects their larger goals as teachers, rather than simply being a self-contained lesson on the Holocaust or genocide.

Digital Visual Literacy. Literacy has continued to be a priority in K-12 schools, a fact that is exacerbated with the changing curricular tides brought along by Common Core. Waters and Russell (2014) discuss the importance of traditional literacy skills within the social studies classroom. They also point out the impetus of Digital Visual Literacy as a crucial 21st century skill as a result of the “vastly expanded scope of what it means to be a literate citizen in the technological age of today’s society” (Waters & Russell, 2014, p. 7). They describe Digital visual literacy as “an expanding area of literacy that focuses on the ability to understand, evaluate, and create meaning from visual materials generated or modified using computer technology” (Waters & Russell, 2014, p. 8). It cannot be ignored that computer technology in today’s society is mobile and accessible to vast numbers of people. Social media sites such as

Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook are prime examples of the constantly connected nature of our world.

When using testimony, teachers must be cognizant of the source's reliability, in order to protect students and provide the most dependable sources. Because students are so connected, they are quick to find information from the most readily available source, often without considering its trustworthiness. One can find testimony through any search engine or scattered across YouTube, but determining trustworthiness is an important factor for teachers in selecting resources. In using IWitness, as noted by Charles, Lauren, and Leonard, the organization is reputable. This provides a sense of security when your students are working in IWitness or any of the resources linked from there as this aids in providing a shield from Holocaust denial sites. Students often ask, "How can people deny that this happened?" By explaining the need for reputable sources of information and how deniers navigate to instill a sense of doubt, teachers are able to arm students with awareness that will hopefully transfer into their lives.

Velders (1999) points out that visual history dates back to ancient cave paintings, yet the term is relatively young. In differentiating instruction, visual learning is one area that regularly stands out to social studies teachers. As previously mentioned in this manuscript, an assignment from my course on the Holocaust asks students if pictures are more powerful than words. The answer is always an overwhelming yes with only a few students preferring the written form. As cell phones today are ubiquitous in their inclusion of a built-in camera, a cursory glance in a public place or on social media demonstrates the human fascination with the visual. As such, the current study provides ample examples of the benefits of using visual history to build digital literacy skills. Lauren's experience with students reacting to the poetry read by the survivor who authored it provided depth as they heard her prose and saw her expressions as she read.

Diversity/Inclusivity. The current study demonstrates that power of utilizing personal narratives as a means of engaging students with the content of the Holocaust, and by extension, other connections that students make on a personal basis. Connections between survivors, liberators, and witnesses of the Holocaust resonate with students for personal reasons, as each individual must make sense of his or her own experience. A recent study by Vezzali *et al* (2014) suggests that the use of story can reduce prejudice for students who identify with positive characters and misidentify with negative characters. Their study used the Harry Potter series to investigate students' attitudes towards out-groups. After reading the well-known stories of the boy wizard who has a diverse group of friends, most of whom come from varied backgrounds, rather than the homogenous backgrounds of nefarious characters, students displayed a more accepting view of diversity in society. Justice's experience with teenage refugees as a marginalized group, and the care with which her students treated the project, was largely due to IWitness according to Justice's perspective, thereby demonstrating this phenomenon in action. This further relates to the current study as multiple participants use literature to make similar points. More importantly, findings in this study suggest that the testimonials of real people provide rich stories for students to make similar connections. Participants of the study all referred to the rich nature of these stories and the added connection that students make with the person who experienced the story, rather than that of an actor or fictional character.

Pilot studies from the USC Shoah Foundation found that students who would be termed "at-risk" often benefit greatly from the use of IWitness due to the experience of survivors and their own personal struggles. Testimony-based education provides a gateway for students to hear from people who may be persecuted for various reasons, many of which are relevant in society today. Race and sexuality are two current issues that students may be struggling with that can be

addressed through testimony, allowing students to see and hear how prejudice and stereotyping affect real people.

Implications for practicing teachers

Practicing social studies teachers need not fear the implementation of IWitness, testimony-based education, or technology into their classrooms to further their learning objectives. This study suggests that students have the ability to engage in a soundly designed activity and obtain the necessary information. Research from the USC Shoah Foundation (Wiedeman, Carnes, & Street, 2013) demonstrates that students using IWitness have a firmer understanding of genocide after engaging with IWitness. This study was completed in classrooms from varied locations and student populations in Chicago, Los Angeles, Italy, and Rwanda. These studies were not piloted by Master Teachers, as the participants in this study, rather by teachers who attended a standard three-hour training session on the use of IWitness, as is readily available to interested teachers. The combined results of these studies give credence to the desired outcomes, as implemented by the teachers, of engaging students with IWitness.

According to the participants, students were able to make sense and work through activities in IWitness with little technological difficulty. Further, it is demonstrated by Charles that technological expertise is unnecessary in the classroom use of IWitness. Charles defines himself as a non-techie. However, he regularly and successfully implements IWitness into his classes.

Reflection of self. The best teachers are those who devote themselves to their work and use their own experience to enrich their courses. This is not to suggest that one teaches to an agenda, but quite the contrary, teachers love to learn and share that passion. Because of this, we tend to go into a school year with objectives that stem from our identity. The role of identity is a

truly important factor in learning about the Holocaust as demonstrated through Facing History and Ourselves (2011), one that each of the participants mentioned in some scope of our conversations and it was a major focus for a couple, including my own approach to teaching. As such, it is suitable that identity play a pivotal role in shaping the classroom practices of teachers, as an outgrowth of curricular gatekeeping. Part of that teaching identity comes from our experience and continued learning as professionals. Each of our participants is deeply passionate about teaching, and more specifically teaching about the Holocaust in a sound and engaging manner. Participants of this study have taken the liberty to seek professional development, which can then be integrated into their own classrooms for the benefit of their students. This is important as situations where teachers are neither using sound pedagogy, nor reliable resources, continue to occur. The recent case of Rialto, CA is one example. There a group of teachers created a lesson in which students were to determine whether or not the Holocaust ever occurred. This is not the first assignment of this nature to make headlines, but is a recent example of the need for a sound understanding of Holocaust pedagogy and reputable resources.

Recommendations for Social Studies Teacher Education

Social studies is beginning to feel the brunt of high stakes testing in states such as Florida where the U.S. History End of Course Exam is in effect at the high school level and a Civics exam takes place in the middle school level. Gone are the completely autonomous days of delving into a study of history and social studies without any fear of tests adding undue pressure on students and teachers to discuss, and catalog any fact that test authors may deem important in a given year. In spite of the goals of education and teacher evaluation systems to promote the student-centered model of education, we see teaching to the test becoming a norm in the field. With the shackling of teacher compensation to value-added models of determining effectiveness,

it is no wonder that classroom teachers begin to shy away from the creative and thoughtful work through which students can grow. Instead, teachers attempt to disseminate as much content on a shallow basis as possible as dictated by high stakes tests. Regardless of whether they are state mandated or countywide final exams.

Pre-service teachers should have opportunities to engage with complex material themselves, as well as grappling with how they would address it in their future classrooms. As Charles said, much of how we teach this material comes from our own experience and core values. This necessitates learning objectives for pre-service teachers to have occasion to fully reflect on their own philosophies as a precursor for their teaching philosophy. These steps will allow pre-service teachers to enter the field more prepared to educate the whole child, rather than prepping them for the test. This can be a difficult distinction to make as so much relies on successful testing.

Duplass (2011) argues that Character education is a central goal of social studies education at the elementary level. I would add that this is a crucial focus of the social studies at the secondary level as well. Leonard discussed the developmental progression of teenagers and their narcissistic tendencies. Participants in this study suggest that the implementation of testimony-based education, and the personalized nature of IWitness, facilitates development of moral qualities. These qualities allow students to focus on the plight of others in addition to how they will situate their own identity and place in the world. The facilitation of empathy allows students to begin identifying with the experiences of others, both in history and in the present, and apply their own understanding and experience.

Personal Reflections

This topic was not selected at random. Studying the Holocaust, for me, is akin to going down the rabbit hole. The more I study it, the more questions, frustration, and understanding I have. I do not claim to fully understand the Holocaust. In fact I would consider this all but impossible. But through investigation of the event, we can ascertain some semblance of understanding of the world in which we live in today, one that remains full of violence and intolerance. As a teacher of the Holocaust, I have witnessed the impact that its study has on students. I have witnessed what standardized tests and final exams do not measure, namely student growth. Not a semester passes when I do not have parents talk with me at conference night, their students ranging on the grading spectrum, telling me how interested their child is in the course. They discuss family conversations that stem from the content and dilemmas that we work through in class. Testimony is always a component of my course, but I also give students room to think about these things in ways that are relevant for them.

It is no secret that I am a champion for IWitness. I have a firm belief that it is an innovative manner to add depth to teaching about the Holocaust with the opportunity to foster a stronger sense of empathy in students. I believed this when I was first introduced to IWitness, my sentiment continued to grow stronger through the Master Teacher program and my role as the Senior Trainer for the USC Shoah Foundation. However, this study allowed an in-depth look at other teachers' perceptions of IWitness. Granted, my participant pool is made up of people who have an affinity for Holocaust education. As mentioned previously I regularly conversed with practicing teachers who told me that IWitness would change their teaching. These were not "Holocaust educators," but practicing teachers who sought out a 3-hour professional development program to enhance their teaching. I believe that the possibilities of IWitness and

similar resources that venture beyond the Holocaust and genocide are limitless. Giving students control of their learning, allowing them to search and find what resonates, and providing a creative outlet for their learning to manifest is revolutionary for social studies education. The added ability for students to feel connected to another human being's experiences, no longer separated by time and space, that fosters a stronger sense of moral empathy and historical understanding is a realm worth exploring.

Suggestions for Further Research

While on the whole, this study presents IWitness in a positive light, there are some questions that result from it. Many teachers and textbooks cover the Holocaust in a cursory manner, only briefly discussing certain aspects and neglecting the true complexity of the event. Because IWitness is not designed to be a curriculum, but rather a supplementary resource, its use in the classroom needs to be further investigated. Lauren's experience suggests that IWitness can stand alone due to the sound nature of activities to provide context for their given focus. However, it would be worth examining teacher perception of using IWitness in classrooms that have a very limited amount of time to study the Holocaust and the outcomes, both on affective and cognitive domains.

With regards to Holocaust education, the growing field and potentially problematic designs of online learning tools and courses has come to my attention as an area with a gap in the literature. McBride, Haas, and Berson (2014) have begun to address this issue, offering suggestions on how to effectively approach an online study of the Holocaust, but this remains an area that will need to have further analysis with regards to how we can safely and effectively teach students about the Holocaust and genocide in a setting that has little to no face-to-face interaction. For example, one online high school course assigns students a journal entry as if they

are a prisoner in a concentration camp, based on a single image. This is problematic for a number of reasons including the possible trivialization of victims' experience, lack of multiple perspectives, and lack of varied resources that provide a strong context for the Holocaust. Additionally, this provides opportunity to study the development of empathy through the study of the Holocaust in online learning platforms as all of the participants in this study teach in traditional classrooms allowing.

UNESCO's (2015) recently released international analysis of the Holocaust in curricula and textbooks demonstrates that in the United States, mentions of the Holocaust lack depth, and the curriculum focus is on what, rather than the why, how, or connections that can be drawn from such a study. An exploration of how the Holocaust, and other social studies content standards and curriculum provide for affective learning would be beneficial for both practicing and pre-service teachers.

The participants of this study are self-proclaimed Holocaust educators, champions for the cause. It must be pointed out that they are part of an elite group of teachers who can bare the title of USC Shoah Foundation Master Teachers. Additional investigation would prove beneficial to broaden the participant pool in the future research of IWitness to include teachers with less training in Holocaust pedagogy. Similarly, the field would benefit from a study undertaken with teachers who have had minimal or no formal training in the use of testimony-based education and IWitness.

Moving beyond the Holocaust and genocide, this study opens potential doors for the examination of using testimony-based education, with or without technological aspects, on the development of empathy emanating from other topics such as 9/11, Ferguson, Civil Rights, wars of the 20th and 21st Century, and LGBTQ issues to name just a few possibilities.

Conclusion

I entered the process of undertaking this study with certain assumptions about IWitness and the nature of what I would uncover through discussions with Master Teachers. To be fully transparent, I believe that IWitness is an innovative tool for teaching about the Holocaust. While many of my assumptions were based on prior experience with the teachers, my findings transcended what was anticipated. The various themes uncovered by this study, especially the potential of testimony-based education on fostering empathy through connections with human beings, invigorates me as an educator and as a teacher educator. Beyond simply thinking about testimony to engage students with a study of the Holocaust and genocide, my mind began to search for other prospective topics and resources that can engage students on the affective side of historical empathy, which strengthens the cognitive side and yields deeper understanding. The most recent NAEP report (2015) suggested that there has been no change in student performance in history courses since the 2010 report. This provides ample reasoning to integrate tools such as IWitness in order to engage students with content in a manner that makes history relevant to their lives.

Participants in the study were kept apprised throughout the process and were provided copies of their narratives for approval. Their acceptance of the narratives, member checking of transcripts, and peer review of coding strengthen the findings of this study through triangulation. An expansion of sample size and teacher experience would further increase the reliability of the findings. In addition, further investigation of how teachers facilitate the development of empathy and how technology can assist in this would bolster the literature base for those seeking

to extend engagement of their students on an affective continuum as it is coupled with the cognitive element.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Email Invitation to Participants

Dear _____,

I am a doctoral candidate in Social Science Education at the University of South Florida in Tampa, Florida. I am pursuing my doctorate by conducting research on secondary teachers and their experiences with students engaging with visual history testimony via IWitness. Your participation is requested in this research, [IRB Study # 00016648](#), involving the development of stories about lived experiences in a class-based society. As compensation for your time and participation in the study you will receive a \$10.00 gift certificate to _____ at the completing of each interview and a \$10.00 gift certificate for verification of each interview script. For completing the entire research process you will receive a \$30.00 gift certificate.

Participation in the study will require about two one-hour interviews and one hour of verifying transcripts and themes. With your permission, the interviews will be taped and transcribed. To maintain confidentiality, you will be given a pseudonym in all transcriptions and you will not be identified by name on the tape. Transcription software and/or a professional transcriptionist may be used to transcribe the audio files. The audio files will be locked at my house. Each participant will be offered a copy of their audio files and a copy of their transcription. The participants and I will be the only ones with access to the audio files. The master audio file will remain in my possession and will be destroyed five years after the publication of the dissertation.

The two interviews will be arranged via Skype at a time and date that is convenient for you. The first interview will occur early Spring 2014 (January-March) and the second interview will take place late Spring or early Summer 2014 (March-April). Transcripts for the first interview will be made available for participant review before the second interview. Transcripts from the second interview will be made available by the end of July, 2012. I appreciate your thoughtful consideration of my request. Please contact me at the email or phone number listed below if you would like to participate in this voluntary research.

Sincerely,

Brandon J. Haas
Doctoral Candidate
Social Science Education
University of South Florida
4202 E. Fowler Avenue
EDU 162
Tampa, FL 33620
bjhaas@mail.usf.edu
ph 813.277.6477

Appendix II: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Name _____

1. How did you become interested in the Holocaust?
2. How did you decide to become a teacher?
3. Do you believe that teaching about the Holocaust is important? Why?
4. When you teach about the Holocaust, what are your goals? How do you measure whether or not your goals have been met?
5. How would you define ‘empathy?’ What is the value of empathy in the classroom?
6. How did you become affiliated with the Shoah Foundation?
7. Tell me about your community, school, and class(es).
8. Tell me about your decision to use IWitness.
9. Describe your class project. Tell me about the goals, premise, purpose, and context of the class.
10. Tell me about the process of implementing your project
11. What outcomes did you notice? What were student reactions? Did any students stand out? Have students shared the impact of *IWitness* with you?
12. You previously defined empathy as _____. Based on your project, can you describe your perceptions of students’ sense of empathy as a result of using *IWitness*?
13. How do you project the future of *IWitness* in your classroom?
14. Do you believe that *IWitness* will remain a valuable resource for developing a sense of empathy in students? What makes you say this?

Appendix III: Informed Consent Form



Informed Consent to Participate in Research Information to Consider Before Taking Part in this Research Study

IRB Study # 00016648

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Research studies include only people who choose to take part. This document is called an informed consent form. Please read this information carefully and take your time making your decision. Ask the researcher or study staff to discuss this consent form with you, please ask him/her to explain any words or information you do not clearly understand. We encourage you to talk with your family and friends before you decide to take part in this research study. The nature of the study, risks, inconveniences, discomforts, and other important information about the study are listed below.

We are asking you to take part in a research study called:

Teacher Perception of Engaging with Testimony for Development of Empathy

The person who is in charge of this research study is Brandon Haas.- This person is called the Principal Investigator. However, other research staff may be involved and can act on behalf of the person in charge. He is being guided in this research by Dr. Michael J. Berson. Mr. Haas can be contacted at 813.277.6477 or bjhaas@mail.usf.edu

The two research interviews will be conducted via Skype at a time that is convenient for you.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to:

- Describe the perceptions of secondary school teachers on students' sense of empathy by engaging with visual history testimony through IWitness.
- Describe the perceptions of secondary school teachers on utilizing Web 2.0 technology in comparison to traditional primary resources.
- This study is being conducted by a graduate student for completion of a doctoral dissertation

Study Procedures

If you take part in this study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in two one-hour semi-structured interviews and approximately one hour of verifying transcripts and themes.
- With your permission the interviews will be recorded and transcribed. To maintain confidentiality, you will be given a pseudonym in all transcriptions and you will not be identified by name on the tape. Transcription software and/or a professional transcriptionist may be used to transcribe the audio files.
- The audio files will be locked in Mr. Haas' house. Each participant will be offered a copy of their own audio files and a copy of their own transcription. The participants and principle investigator will be the only ones with access to the audio files. The master audio file will remain in Mr. Haas' possession and will be destroyed five years after the publication of the dissertation.
- The two interviews will be arranged via Skype at a time of the participants' convenience. The first interview will occur early Spring 2014 (January-March) and the second interview will take place late Spring or early summer 2014 (March-April).
- Transcripts for the first interview will be made available for participant review before the second interview. Transcripts from the second interview will be made available by the end of July, 2014.

Total Number of Participants

Up to five individuals will take part in this study.

Alternatives

You do not have to participate in this research study

Benefits

We are unsure if you will receive any benefits by taking part in this research study.

Risks or Discomfort

This research is considered to be minimal risk. That means that the risks associated with this study are the same as what you face every day. There are no known additional risks to those who take part in this study.

Compensation

You will be compensated \$30 Gift Card if you complete all the scheduled interviews and transcript verifications. If you withdraw for any reason from the study before completion you will be paid \$10 for each complete interview and \$5 for each transcript verification.

Cost

There will be no additional costs to you as a result of being in this study.

Privacy and Confidentiality

We will keep your study records private and confidential. Certain people may need to see your study records. By law, anyone who looks at your records must keep them completely confidential. The only people who will be allowed to see these records are:

- The research team, including the Principal Investigator and all other research staff.
- Certain government and university people who need to know more about the study. For example, individuals who provide oversight on this study may need to look at your records. This is done to make sure that we are doing the study in the right way. They also need to make sure that we are protecting your rights and your safety.
- Any agency of the federal, state, or local government that regulates this research. This includes the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Florida Department of Health, and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP).
- The USF Institutional Review Board (IRB) and its related staff who have oversight responsibilities for this study, staff in the USF Office of Research and Innovation, USF Division of Research Integrity and Compliance, and other USF offices who oversee this research.

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not include your name. We will not publish anything that would let people know who you are.

Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal

You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop

taking part in this study.

New information about the study

During the course of this study, we may find more information that could be important to you. This includes information that, once learned, might cause you to change your mind about being in the study. We will notify you as soon as possible if such information becomes available.

You can get the answers to your questions, concerns, or complaints

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, general questions, or have complaints, concerns or issues you want to discuss with someone outside the research, call the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638.

Consent to Take Part in this Research Study

It is up to you to decide whether you want to take part in this study. If you want to take part, please sign the form, if the following statements are true.

I freely give my consent to take part in this study and authorize that my health information as agreed above, be collected/disclosed in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

Signature of Person Taking Part in Study

Date

Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study

Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect from their participation. I hereby certify that when this person signs this form, to the best of my knowledge, he/ she understands:

- What the study is about;
- What procedures/interventions/investigational drugs or devices will be used;
- What the potential benefits might be; and
- What the known risks might be.

I can confirm that this research subject speaks the language that was used to explain this research and is receiving an informed consent form in the appropriate language. Additionally, this subject reads well enough to understand this document or, if not, this person is able to hear and understand when the form is read to him or her. This subject does not have a medical/psychological problem that would compromise comprehension and therefore makes it hard to understand what is being explained and can, therefore, give legally effective informed consent. This subject is not under any type of anesthesia or analgesic that may cloud their judgment or make it hard to understand what is being explained and, therefore, can be considered competent to give informed consent.

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent / Research Authorization

Date

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent / Research Authorization

Date

Appendix IV: Certificate of Completion of Education in Human Subjects Protection

Certificate of Completion

Brandon Haas

Has Successfully Completed the Course in

CITI Social & Behavioral Investigators and Key Personnel

On

Sunday, November 30, 2014



5/25/2015 12:00:37 PM

Appendix V: IRB Approval Letter

RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE
Institutional Review Boards, FWA No. 00001669
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 • Tampa, FL 33612-4799
(813) 974-5638 • FAX (813) 974-7091

April 1, 2014

Brandon Haas
Secondary Education
Tampa, FL 33612

RE: Expedited Approval for Initial Review

IRB#: Pro00016648

Title: IWitness and Student Empathy: Reflections from USC Shoah Foundation Master Teachers

Study Approval Period: 4/1/2014 to 4/1/2015

Dear Dr. Haas:

On 4/1/2014, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and **APPROVED** the above application and all documents outlined below.

Approved Item(s):

Protocol Document(s):

[IWitness and Student Empathy Haas](#)

Consent/Assent Document(s)*:

[Informed Consent Haas.pdf.pdf](#)

*Please use only the official IRB stamped informed consent/assent document(s) found under the "Attachments" tab. Please note, these consent/assent document(s) are only valid during the approval period indicated at the top of the form(s).

It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. The research proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review category:

(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval by an amendment.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kristen Salomon', followed by a horizontal line.

Kristen Salomon, Ph.D., Vice Chairperson
USF Institutional Review Board