

GIVE ME YOUR TIRED, YOUR POOR...TEACHING ABOUT DISCRIMINATION  
THROUGH  
AN EXPERIENTIAL IMMIGRATION UNIT

by

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## ABSTRACT

“You never really know a man until you understand things from his point of view, until you climb into his skin and walk around in it” (Lee, 1960). Empathy is the ability to share someone else’s feelings and create an emotional connection with another human being (Brown, 2013). History will become relevant when its participants create connections with people of the past rather than view history as merely a collection of dead people and dates. Students must learn from mistakes in history in order to make positive changes in the future. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1963, p. 2) said in his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” Historical mistakes, such as the disenfranchisement of others, are still current issues in today’s society. Exposing students to authentic experiences with discrimination is one way to teach empathy for the marginalized.

This dissertation examines how an experiential immigration unit about discrimination affected student empathy, how students applied and transferred new learning to future situations, and how students demonstrated motivation, engagement, and ownership of their learning. It followed three fifth-grade classes in an academic magnet school as students participated in an experiential immigration unit about discrimination. The dissertation examines student impressions as they participated in activities such as role-play, simulations, and decision-making. Coded data collected included interviews, reflections, diaries, work samples, and the researcher’s journal. The qualitative approach for this study was phenomenological and naturalistic inquiry. Students experienced a phenomenon together through an immigration unit. The researcher looked for common themes as they developed from the participants’ data.

The extensive data set revealed a substantial understanding that when students immersed themselves in their learning through experiential activities such as simulations, they were able to empathize with historical figures and connect the meaningful experiences into their everyday lives; and when students are engaged in their learning, they place a higher value on the knowledge and become active participants in their education. A surprising aspect emerged from the student voices: openly structured debriefing and reflective activities were essential to the learning process.

*Keywords:* experiential education, empathy, immigration, discrimination, and student engagement, student voice

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## CHAPTER ONE:

### INTRODUCTION

“Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,  
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;  
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand  
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame  
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name  
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand  
Glowes worldwide welcome; her mild eyes command  
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.  
“Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she  
With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”  
(Lazarus, E., 1883)

#### Researcher’s Context

As a history teacher in an upper elementary classroom, I have observed the degree of importance in teaching social studies, and student’s level of disconnect with the material decrease. For example, over the last five years while teaching a Civil War unit, I showed Matthew Brady’s Battle of Gettysburg pictures. Photograph after photograph of dead soldiers appeared before the eyes of the students with no visual or audible response. The next picture displayed was of dead horses on the battlefield, to which they gasped and outwardly responded that they were appalled. I was amazed at their silence and apparent apathy for dead soldiers, yet exclaimed and gestured great concern for the dead horses. I immediately pondered why the students responded more for the horses than for the soldiers. In that moment, realization set in that the horse was real to the students while the soldiers were merely characters in a picture or actors in a movie. I began to wonder how educators could change a student’s level of empathy from viewing history as a

memorized collection of facts on dead people and dates to experiencing history and connecting it to their day-to-day lives.

In order to determine what would increase a student's level of empathy, I analyzed my own connections to history. My father created a love of history in me as a young child through his passion, storytelling, and experiences he afforded me. He took me to historical sites, encouraged me to watch documentaries and movies, and took me relic-hunting with him. On one of those relic-hunting excursions, I had a defining moment that shaped the way I connect with history and ultimately was the reason I became a history teacher.

As a typical ten-year-old, I did not relish the idea of spending my Saturday in a cow pasture digging up rusty bottle caps or nails. As my brother and I were playing, my dad called me over to help dig up a Civil War bullet. As we unearthed the buried treasure, I stared at the bullet in awe. I can still remember the weight of it in my hand, and envisioning a Civil War soldier holding the very same bullet more than a hundred years before me. At first, I began wondering how the soldier lost the bullet, but soon my thoughts shifted to thinking about the actual soldier and his life. I imagined his age, physical attributes, and if he was a Confederate or a Federal. When the soldier's story changed from surface-level facts to thinking about his family, I began to compare his life with that of my own. I wondered if he had a loving family back home that missed him terribly and worried for his safety everyday. Did he have any children? Did he have a daughter like me? How would I feel if my dad went to war? Finally, I wondered if he survived the war. I was suddenly forlorn thinking the soldier might have died. Slowly, the bullet held a new meaning. It no longer bore superficial facts, but rather it illustrated a

story of a man's life that meant something to the people who loved him. I connected with history at that moment, and that has stuck with me more than thirty years later.

When I finally went to middle school and enrolled in a history class, I expected to hear riveting stories of history. My excitement faded as I listened to my history teacher's lackluster lecture recalling facts rather than affording the class with authentic historical experiences. In those classes, I learned that history was irrelevant and uninteresting. The spark of excitement I learned from my father's passion for history stayed with me despite the monotonous history classes I endured.

### **Researcher's voice**

The first section of this dissertation examined the researcher's prior experiences that shaped her historical pedagogy. She felt it was an integral piece for reader context and provided a sound rationale for the purpose of this study. To replicate authenticity, the researcher used first person when setting the stage for this dissertation. From this point forward, the researcher will refer to herself in third person.

## **What? So What? Now What?**

“The insistence that the oppressed engage in reflection on their concrete situation is not a call to armchair revolution. On the contrary, reflection – true reflection – leads to action.”

Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970, pg. 13)

### **What?**

Engaging students in history requires giving them authentic experiences with the material. If students are to see historical figures as more than just characters from a book or a video game, they must connect with people from the past and view them as real people (Clabough & Yancie, 2016). The premise of this dissertation developed from the idea that when educators provide students with opportunities to experience history from other points of view, they will begin to empathize with people from the past and apply it to their future. The work of this dissertation will examine how an experiential immigration unit about discrimination affects student empathy, its application in future situations, and students’ ability to take initiative and ownership in their learning.

### **So what?**

At the very cornerstone of any sound historical curriculum is the preparation of students as future productive leaders who are able to make informed decisions and become an active member in society. Stearns (1998) quotes Thomas Jefferson:

Citizens are not born capable of ruling. They must be educated to rule wisely and fairly. They must be drawn out of the egotism of childhood and the privacy of their homes into the public world of democratic reasoning, deliberation, and consensus. This requires not only civility, but knowledge and skill. (p. 3)

Thomas Jefferson knew that knowledge was power and that being civically illiterate was dangerous.

Cultivating empathy through the curriculum is crucial in producing a crop of students who will become more tolerant and less likely to marginalize the oppressed in the future. This outcome is not automatic and must be encouraged through authentic empathic experiences in the classroom. (Zakin, 2012, p. 11)

### **Now what?**

This dissertation seeks to find how teaching an experiential immigration unit about discrimination will affect students' empathy, if students will apply this learning to future situations, and how the unit affects a student's engagement and initiative of their own learning. The potential impact of heightening students' empathic responses may create a safer and kinder world. An empathic society will lead to a greater connection with other people and will reduce bigotry. Teaching empathy through role-play activities can reduce the crime rate in teens. When the seeds of social justice and peace are cultivated through experiential opportunities that lead to empathic responses, the potential impact on the future society is immense (Posick, Rocoque, & Rafter, 2014, p. 11).

## **Problem Statement**

### **Learning to have empathy for others**

Racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination are searing topics of debate in the twenty-first century. One cannot turn on the nightly news without at least one of those topics at the forefront. Whether it is Michael Brown's civil unrest case in Ferguson, Missouri (Davey & Bosman, 2014), a popular fraternity at the University of Oklahoma's racial slurs (Blow, 2015), or an Alabama school's refusal to enroll a Hispanic student (Robertson, 2011), discrimination is still an important issue. It is not only an issue in today's society, but it was also present in history. Discrimination is a common thread in all societies, including the United States of America. In American History classes, the curriculum topics include slavery, the genocide of Native Americans, discrimination against immigrants, and treating women as second-rate citizens.

The history of the country has not always been a happily-ever-after story. If history is such gloom and doom, then why study it? Burke (1790), a political theorist, said, "In history, a great volume is unrolled for the instruction, drawing the materials of future wisdom from the past errors and infirmities of mankind" (Rooney, 2013, p. 36). Students must accept the responsibility for preventing the mistakes of the past through studying difficult subject matter in the impressionable stages of adolescence. Ignorance is the most common cause of prejudice. The only way to overcome ignorance is through education and contact (Garcia, 2011, p.78).

Empathy is the ability to share someone else's feelings (Merriam Webster, 2015), and, "Historical empathy is the ability to perceive history from the perspectives of those

in the past” (Colby, 2008, p. 60). Teaching students to empathize with people from the past may lead to empathic citizens in the future. “Expressing care for others is not an innate ability present more naturally in some people than others, but rather a skill that can be taught and nurtured through a supportive educational environment” (McLennan, 2008, p. 451).

### **Empathy on the decline**

Empathy has seen a substantial decline in the last ten years. A recent study out of the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor found that the level of empathy in students is decreasing (Konrath, O’Brien, Hsing, 2011, p. 180-198). This research, led by Sara H. Konrath, et al., found that college students’ self-reported level of empathy has dropped over the past thirty years. After collecting over fourteen thousand self-reported empathy scores from students, Konrath found almost seventy-five percent of students today rate themselves as less empathic than the average student thirty years ago. One cause suggested for the regression was social isolation. The next generation is increasingly relying on cyber communication rather than face-to-face contact. In addition, people are more likely to live alone and less likely to join a group such as a sports team or club (Zaki, 2010, para. “What’s to Blame”).

Sensory overload may be another cause of empathic decline. Adolescents and young adults receive multiple texts, emails, alerts, and notifications per day. Filtering of information becomes a necessity for the brain, and elimination of difficult or sensitive material is often the first cut. Survival mode takes over, and the brain subconsciously protects itself from uncomfortable material (Klorer, 2009, p. 80).

### **The need to teach empathy**

During a 2006 commencement speech at Northwestern University, former Senator Barack Obama said that the nation had an empathy deficit. He described America's culture as one that fostered selfish aspirations. This type of behavior is counterproductive in an empathetic culture. Senator Obama stated emphatically that empathy is an obligation. He urged his audience to broaden their range of concern (Obama, 2006, "The World Doesn't Just Revolve Around You").

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) noted that physical, verbal, and cyber bullying, and teen suicides are on the rise in schools (CDC, 2014, p. 3). Emotional literacy programs, such as teaching empathy, might be one way to increase empathy while decreasing bullying and suicide. Kindness is an action generally motivated by the feeling of empathy. For instance, a student may say a kind word or defend a victim of bullying because he or she knows the unpleasant feeling first-hand (Anderson, 2010, para. 5).

In the article, "Empathy: The Most Important Back to School Supply," Tavangar (2014) said, "Empathy is a key step in understanding perspectives that differ from your own." She states that it is not just a polite thing to do, but teaching empathy is a vital and necessary skill. Tavangar goes on to say, "Empathy is foundational to embracing differences, building relationships, gaining a global perspective, conducting richer and deeper analysis, and communicating more effectively." Empathy is like a muscle that grows and develops with exercise. When children develop a strong sense of empathy, they are more willing to stand up for the marginalized (para. What's the Big Deal About Empathy?).

One way to cultivate empathy is by guiding students to learn lessons from the past and application for the future. Memorizing a rigid set of facts and dates does not heighten empathy. Students must connect with the trials and triumphs of historical figures and relate those emotions to their own. Empathy engages students in thinking critically about history by investigating the lives of people who lived it (Stripling, 2011, p. 75).

### **The need for teaching immigration**

Immigration is a common theme taught across many disciplines, grade-levels, and school systems. It appears in the curricula of American History, World History, Geography, European History, and Ancient Civilizations. Immigration is more than an issue of the past; it is a debated subject in national and international news. The study of immigration allows students to discuss relevant issues in an educational environment (McBee, Bone, Mossop, & Owens, 1998, p. 417).

Jesse Jackson's (cited by Sullivan, 1993) Democratic Convention Speech (1988), *Common Ground, Common Sense*, stated America was not a blanket. The founding fathers' did not tailor a blanket from one colorless piece of cloth with similar texture and size. He said that America was a many-piece quilt of assorted colors, sizes, all woven together by a common thread (p. 1). McBee, Bone, Mossop, and Owens (1998) cited Sandler's (1995) analogous sentiment from his book, *Immigrants: A Library of Congress Book*, by saying the following:

We are a nation of nations, a collection of people from many lands who, from pre-colonial times to the present, have settled in the portion of the Americas we call the United States. (p. 417)

### **Purpose of teaching history**

The National Council of Social Studies (2009) defines the purpose of teaching history as, “The purpose of elementary school social studies is to enable students to understand, participate in, and make informed decisions about their world” (para. “The Purpose of Elementary Social Studies”). One of the goals of an educator is to produce an independent citizen capable of acting productively. Social studies is as fundamental for success as reading, writing, math, and science. Social studies content knowledge is necessary in fostering a future civic-minded citizen capable of maintaining the democratic values in which the country was established. If these skills are not cultivated in elementary school, it will be unlikely middle and high school teachers will be effective in preparing future citizens capable of making informed decisions (NCSS, 1988, para. 4).

Bestselling author Loewen (2010) noted four compelling reasons why history is an important course. The first is that history enables students to understand how society runs. The second is history helps students become critical thinkers. The third is history empowers students to become citizens who form ideologies about how to run a society. Loewen calls this using “history as a weapon.” The last reason students should learn history is that it helps them become less ethnocentric. Ethnocentrism is the belief that a person’s culture is the best and that other societies and cultures rank highly only to the degree that they resemble theirs. History also assists with understanding and identifying with people from the past, which leads to historical empathy (p. 11).

### **History: the most boring subject?**

The Department of Education published the 2010 National Assessment of Educational Progress, and found only 12% of graduating high school students have a conceptual understanding of American history, and only an astounding two percent could understand the magnitude of the groundbreaking court case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. World-renowned Pulitzer Prize winner and best-selling author of such biographies as *John Adams* and *Truman*, James McCullough stated, "We're raising young people who are, by and large, historically illiterate." For the past twenty years, he has witnessed first-hand the shortage of historical literacy. He stated that one of the reasons for this decline is a lack of teacher knowledge, utilizing boring history textbooks, and the student's ability to relate to history on a personal level (Bolduc, 2011, para. 1).

Loewen (2010) states one reason for the marginalization of history is due to what he calls "the tyranny of coverage." United States History textbooks can hold up to 1,150 pages, several 100 main ideas, and thousands of terms and names to memorize. Teachers cannot make history relevant or interesting by trying to cover all of those topics with fidelity (p. 32). The tendency of curriculum overload in schools is strong and is crippling to school improvement. Teachers simply have too many standards to teach and not enough time to adequately teach. To avoid this curriculum chaos, educators must focus teaching on quality rather than quantity (Schmoker & Marzano, 1999, p. 19).

If students view history as boring and irrelevant, how do social studies educators increase engagement and retention? Neurologist and middle schoolteacher, Judy Willis has conducted research claiming that when educators teach a subject through multiple experiences, it would activate numerous dendritic pathways for retrieval. Giving students

authentic experiences with history is one way to increase retention and engagement. The aim is to provide experiences that empower students to connect with information that awakens their senses and emotions, and relates the new information with prior knowledge and interests (Willis, 2007, p. 16).

### **Rote learning to experiential education**

Early interest in the experiential education movement in the United States signified an effort to move from prescribed rote learning, where teachers bestow knowledge onto the students, to a more experience-based approach (Lewis & William, 1994, p. 5). Rote learning, or verbatim memorization, means the learner has not created a real connection to the learned material and memorized information (Driscoll, 2005, p. 124). In contrast, there is the following idea:

Experiential education is a philosophy and methodology in which educators purposefully engage with students in a direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities. (Association for Experiential Education, 2014, para 1)

Teachers should strive to aid the intellectual development of all students so they will think for themselves, build knowledge, make meaning, and learn respect for themselves and others. The teacher then becomes a learner-enabler rather than a depositor of information (Garcia, 2011, p. 113).

### **Importance and Significance of the Study**

Although each classroom teacher does not have the luxury of taking weeklong field trips to historical sites, there are strategies within the classroom and school property that will build excitement and retention in the unit and have broader implications for understanding the struggles and emotions historical figures have experienced. This study is unique in the fact that it combines experiential education in the field of American history. By learning the struggles of those who came before, children will develop patience and persistence as they render decisions in making the future a desired destination (Hollingsworth, Didelot, & Smith, 2003, p. 149).

### **Connection to Program**

The researcher writing this dissertation is enrolled in the program Assessment, Learning, and School Improvement at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. The topic of the dissertation relates to the learning aspect of this program. The noted learning theorist John Dewey advocated experiential activities that were applicable to a student's life. He stated, "All principles, by themselves are abstract. They become concrete only in the consequences which result from their application" (Dewey, 1938, p. 6).

### **Intellectual Merit**

After conducting multiple searches in databases such as EBSCO, JSTOR, Google Scholar, and ProQuest on topics such as "teaching social studies through experiential education" and "teaching a social studies unit on discrimination through experiential

education,” zero matches were generated; however, there are numerous articles about teaching moral development through experiential education to law students, medical professionals, and college students. Not only does little research exist on the effect of teaching discrimination to elementary students, but also, virtually, no research exists on experiential education in an elementary social studies classroom. The proposed research will demonstrate how learning through an experiential immigration unit on discrimination affects student empathy, its applicability, and the impact it has on student engagement and ownership of their learning.

### **Broader Impact**

This dissertation has the potential to benefit the field of education by showing alternative ways to teach social studies that will not only engage students, but will afford them an authentic, first-hand experience with the negative aspects of discrimination. It is the hope of the researcher to create a deeper level of empathy for the marginalized and to apply it to their everyday lives. Empathy is a skill that can help adolescents become more productive and cooperative workers in a global economy. Understanding and identifying with the perspectives and experiences of others contributes to competent leadership (Townsend, 2012, para 9).

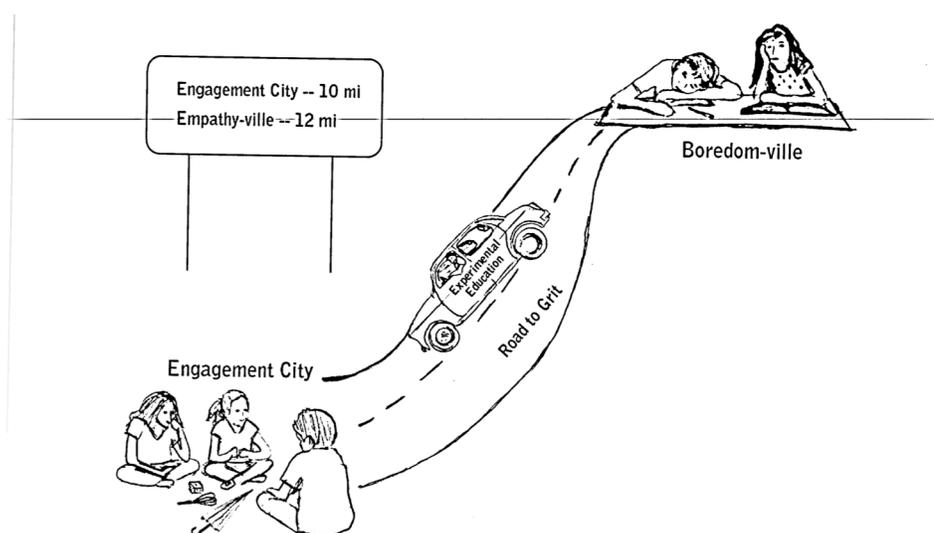
### **Research Questions**

- How was student empathy affected throughout participation in an experiential immigration unit about discrimination?
- How did students transfer and apply new learning throughout participation in an experiential immigration unit about discrimination?
- How did motivation and engagement affect student ownership of learning throughout participation in an experiential immigration unit about discrimination?

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

“Were all instructors to realize that the quality of mental process, not the production of correct answers...”

(John Dewey, 1916, p. 207)



*Figure 2.1: The Road to Empathy (Dishno, 2016)*

### Introduction

Educators around the world are called to equip students with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and communication skills. These skills are essential in preparing students to enter the world as responsible citizens who are able to make informed decisions (Wagner, 2008). Leading executive and head of one of the

world's largest and most successful bank, Alan November, is frequently asked to list the most important 21<sup>st</sup> century skill. When asked, November states that empathy or perspective-taking is the greatest skill educators should be imparting to their students. He maintains unequivocally that empathy will take on a heightened role in the current global information age. In order to prepare students for a rapidly changing world with a global understanding, empathy must be a priority in schools (McKenzie, 2011, cited in Association for the Supervision of Curriculum and Development, para. 1).

Martin Luther King, Jr. (1947) wrote that the purpose of education was not merely equipping students to think critically and intensively but character education as well. In his paper "The Purpose of Education," King said that the true purpose of education was to teach the whole child. He stated,

We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education. The complete education gives one not only power of concentration, but worthy objectives upon which to concentrate (pg. 1).

Finally, King warns teachers, "that educating the mind without the body and spirit may produce a group of closed-minded, unscientific, illogical propagandists, consumed with immoral acts" (King, 1947, p. 1).

Empathy, like other emotional skills, needs reiteration to become second nature (Lahey, Loeber, Burke, & Applegate, 2005, pg. 389-99, Garner, 2007, p. 31).

Experiential education taught through storytelling, role-playing, and simulations is one way to teach empathy to students. For example, a medical school professor taught empathy to his students by simulating patients with cataracts and asking them to wear goggles with transparent tape over them and heavy rubber gloves to simulate poor motor

control. After experiencing personally the sensation their patients felt, the medical students were able to empathize and therefore hold even a minor understanding of what it was like to have this ailment (Varkey, Chutka, & Lesnick, 2006, pp. 224-229). Likewise, students who have experiences with different opinions or situations other than their own are more likely to transfer empathy in the future.

Figure 2.1 demonstrates the road students must travel in their quest for motivation, engagement, and eventually empathy, and experiential education is the vehicle to take them there. Students take the wheel and drive to educational excellence. Student initiative in their learning is necessary for authentic learning to occur, and motivation is a direct link to student engagement. When students are engaged in learning, an increase in participation, effort, and perseverance will occur (Schunk, 1985, pp. 281-303).

The main topics addressed in this chapter are empathy, immigration at the turn of the century, experiential education, and student motivation, engagement, and ownership. The first section of this chapter synthesizes the components of empathy as it relates to an upper elementary classroom. The subsections perform the following functions: 1) define empathy and explain the differences between empathy, sympathy, and apathy, 2) paint a picture of the current decreasing level of empathic students, 3) describe the importance of teaching empathy, 4) list ways to foster empathy, 5) convey the importance of educating the whole child, 6) define historical empathy, 7) teach empathy to decrease discrimination, and 8) teach immigration to promote tolerance.

The second section of this chapter provides background knowledge of life in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. The researcher summarizes 1) the

reasons immigrants emigrated to America, 2) explains why the *Titanic* is an iconic subject, 3) portrays the vast differences between the rich and the poor, 4) the era of child labor, 5) describes the progressive reforms muckrakers such as Theodore Roosevelt created, and 6) teaching historical empathy through experiential education.

The third section analyzes the pedagogies of teaching through experiential education. The subsections discuss 1) the history of experiential education, 2) experiential education and Paulo Freire, 3) experiential education and John Dewey, and 4) experiential education and cognitive learning. The next subsection defines the learning theories associated with some aspect of experiential education. They are 1) constructivism, 2) cognitive constructivism and Jean Piaget, 3) social constructivism and Lev Vygotsky, 4) discover learning and Jerome Bruner, 5) The experiential model and David Kolb, 6) expeditionary learning and Kurt Hahn, and 7) The experiential education community.

The final section of this chapter illustrates Student Motivation, Engagement, and Ownership of Learning. This subsection begins by explaining 1) the importance of student motivation, 2) the importance of student engagement and efficacy, 3) the importance of student ownership of learning, 5) student choice, and 6) ways in which to facilitate student self-efficacy and ownership of learning.

### **Research Questions**

- How was student empathy affected throughout participation in an experiential immigration unit about discrimination?

- How did students transfer and apply new learning throughout participation in an experiential immigration unit about discrimination?
- How did motivation and engagement affect student ownership of learning throughout participation in an experiential immigration unit about discrimination?

### **Empathy**

“Empathy is about finding echoes of another person in yourself”

Mohsin Hamid, 2012 (Leysdon, 2012, para. 3)

### **Empathy, sympathy, and apathy**

People often use empathy and sympathy synonymously; however, they hold very different qualities. DeWaal (1996) states that empathy is the anchor of human morality (p. 20). Brenè Brown (2010, p. 42) defines empathy as the ability to share someone else’s feelings and create an emotional connection with another human being. Sympathy is feeling pity for someone else’s misfortune without the reciprocal feeling (Merriam-Webster, 2015). Zahn- Waxler, Robinson, and Emde (1992), said the following:

Empathy refers to the experience of others' emotional, physical, or psychological states. It has both cognitive and affective components reflecting the capacity to understand, imagine, and affectively share the other's state (p. 1038).

When someone feels with a person, it is empathy, and when the person feels for the troubled person, it is sympathy. Brenè Brown (2013, cited from video Brenè Brown on Empathy) describes empathy as the ability to create an emotional connection with another human being. She states empathy fuels a connection, and sympathy drives a

disconnection. Brown also said that empathy is a connection with something in oneself that knows the feeling others are going through.

Wiseman (1996, pp. 1162-1167) listed four qualities of empathy. The first is perspective-taking and recognizing their perspective as truth. The second is refraining from judging. The third is recognizing emotion in other people. The last quality of empathy is communicating emotion with people.

The definition of apathy is a person who displays little emotion or interest (Merriam-Webster, 2015). A person is apathetic by exhibiting an absence of pleasure or interest and indifference for one's emotional and social welfare. A strong connection exists between apathy and mental disorders such as depression and schizophrenia (Encyclopedia of Mental Disorders, 2016, para. Description).

### **Kids today!**

The following is a scenario to illustrate the problem:

An older woman was at the grocery store doing her routine shopping for the week when a teenager, who was looking at her phone and not paying attention, bumped into her. The older woman exclaimed, "Excuse me, young lady!" but the teenager never heard her because she was wearing headphones. In fact, the teenager was so engrossed in her phone that she did not notice that she had even bumped into the older woman. As the teenager was walking away, the older woman exasperatedly said, "Kids today! We did not act that way," and walked off. Did the teenager purposely hit the older woman and ignore her, or was she so self involved that her only concern was what was right in front of her?

Konrath et al. (Konrath, O'Brien, Hsing, 2011, pp. 180-198) and Twenge's (2009, pp. 338-340) groundbreaking meta-analysis studies researched the very issue the older woman from the grocery store observed. Konrath led a study on empathy over the last thirty years (1979-2009). Her findings observed a 40% decrease in college students' self-reported level of empathy. Another dimension of this study noted the steepest drop transpired over the last ten years.

Twenge (2009, p. 338-340) conducted a study on narcissism, or a grandiose feeling of self-importance, spanning twenty-four years (1982-2006), with over 16,000 college students around the United States. She reported a 30% increase in students' self-reported level of narcissism. Is it a coincidence both empathy and narcissistic behaviors changed? If not, what produced such a change?

Konrath et al. (2009) and Twenge (2009) have varying theories for the changes. Konrath points to social isolation as a possible cause. People are more likely to live alone and less likely to join organizations. Both cite social media as a likely reason for the change. Twenge (Gentile, Twenge, Freeman, & Campbell, 2012, p. 1929-1933) explains that in the age of selfies, social networking, and determining one's self-worth by how many "likes" a post received may have led to the increase in narcissistic behaviors. Is there hope for the next generation of young people? Both Konrath and Twenge maintain that if social behaviors are leading factors in the negative change, it stands to reason that social behaviors may affect a positive change as well.

### **The importance of teaching empathy in the classroom**

Over 2,000 years ago, Plato succinctly stated education must have an emotional component, but it is only recently that neuroscientists have concluded that intellectual learning and emotion are interlinked. “If schools are involved in intellectual development, they are inherently involved in emotional development” (Hinton, Miyamoto, & Della-Chiesa, 2008, p. 90). Teachers have the job of teaching the subject standards and fostering emotional development. Empathy is a dual activity where educators must model empathy with their students, and teach them to become empathic individuals. “Empathy is not a natural quality, but it can be a learned skill taught through a nurturing and supportive environment” (McLennan, 2008, p. 454).

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (2009) found that children as young as a toddler can learn to have empathy for others (p. 13). Children continue to develop this skill throughout adolescence. Empathy can be cultivated by giving children experiences with perspective taking and debriefing activities such as having meaningful discussions centered on their emotions (Etxebarria, Apodaka, & Eceiza, p. 410).

### **Fostering empathy**

Is empathy a result of nature, nurture, or both? Over the last few years, studies conducted on young children have shown that empathy is a result of both nature and nurture. For example, toddlers have an empathetic response to a friend crying by either sharing a toy or also crying. Other species studied have also displayed empathy. Masson and McCarthy’s (1995) book *When Elephant’s Weep* found that animals felt joy, sorrow,

and empathy for others (p. 606). For example, they note an adult elephant uncharacteristically saving a baby rhinoceros trapped in mud despite the fact that its mother was charging. These examples favor the argument that empathy is innate; however, can empathy also be a learned characteristic?

Dr. Greenspan, a clinical professor of psychiatry and pediatrics at George Washington University School of Medicine, stated that empathy is an essential ingredient of a civilized society. He also said that fostering empathy through recognition and expression of ones' feelings aids an environment of safety. He said when children are in touch with their own feelings; they will recognize emotions in others and therefore empathize with them (Brody, 2010, "Start Early"). This example favors the argument that nurturing and encouraging feelings heightens empathy.

Krzanaric (2014, p. xv) stated there are six habits consistent in people that are highly empathic. They are as follows:

1. Switch on the empathic brain: When humans view distress in another person, the brains' mirror neurons recall an experience where they have also felt distress and are therefore empathic to the person in distress. Having an awareness of empathic feelings in oneself and others will lead to recognition and duplication.
2. Make the imaginative leap: Placing oneself in the proverbial shoes of others is just one way to accomplish this. Another way to achieve this is to simply listen to others and see things from their point of view.
3. Seek experiential adventures: The Native American proverb, "Walk a mile in his moccasins before criticizing him," is at the forefront of this habit. Role-play

and simulations are just some of the ways with which perspective taking is accomplished.

4. Practice the craft of conversation: This habit involves stepping outside of ones' social circle and investing in people. Become curious about the real people sitting on the bus or standing in the grocery line. Seeing people from different lifestyles is just one way to increase one's level of empathy.
5. Travel from the armchair: Reading books, watching movies, viewing pictures or artwork, or listening to music can create a sense of empathy for others. For example, students may read the book *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio and see the main character August, who has Treacher Collins Syndrome, is a regular person with similar qualities.
6. Inspire a revolution: Studying difficult subject matter from the past and comparing it to present or future inequalities is one way to accomplish this habit. When students see injustice happening around them, they will recall Martin Luther King's (1963, p. 2) words from his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" when he said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Fostering these habits at home and school will create a more empathetic student and later global citizen.

### **Educating the whole child**

Teachers who educate the whole child know that students cannot meet academic goals until meeting their more basic human needs physically and emotionally. They work under the principle that, "You cannot teach the mind until the heart has been reached"

(Wolpow, Johnson, Hertel, & Kincaid, 2009, p. 69). In an interview with Robert Cole (Levin, 1989) entitled “Learning by Doing through Public Service,” he said that teachers have an obligation to offer certain instruction, but they are also moral and philosophical guides. The eyes of all students are on them, and with that, opportunity comes great responsibility (p.165).

Nel Noddings stated in her book *Education and Democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (2013) that treating one another with respect and care establishes the environment of safety required for learning. Administrators expect teachers to have a standardized learning objective for each lesson and have measurable questions in which students can bubble in the correct answer; however, not everything an educator teaches is measureable by a high stakes test. When educating the whole child is a primary focus, moral education will be a focus. The objective then becomes to establish a climate in which natural caring flourishes by helping students develop the ability to care for themselves as well as others (Noddings, 2013, Chapter Nine).

### **Historical empathy**

Student’s engagement with historical information connects to their ability to make sense of the past and develop their own historical understanding. Historical empathy is the ability to understand the past by valuing the mindsets, frames of reference, viewpoints, principles, goals, and actions of historical figures using a variety of historical evidence (Yilmaz, 2007, p. 410). When students recognize a commonality with the diversity of people who created history, authentic historical empathy has transpired (Stripling, 2011, p. 204).

“The critical leap from one's own feelings to the feelings of others requires the exercise of moral imagination” (McCollough, 1991, p. 7). Exercises in historical empathy, such as moral imagination, can help students learn to establish connections between the past and the present. The process of forming emotional connections to the past enables students to view historical figures as human beings who faced hard decisions and obstacles and overcame such adversities. When students identify themselves with historical figures as average people who achieved extraordinary deeds, they are more willing to become change agents in the future (Endacott & Brooks, 2013, p. 53).

Teaching empathy through history creates a deeper understanding of historical content. Barton and Levstik (2004) identify five elements of historical empathy: 1) an appreciation for a sense of otherness of historical figures, 2) the shared normalcy of the past, 3) the effects of historical context, 4) the diversity of historical perspectives, and 5) the application of these elements to the context of the present (pp. 210-221).

Implementation of a variety of experiences is essential in order to accomplish this goal. Examples of empathic experiences include: games, simulations, re-enactments, reconstructing past scenes, plays, dramas, role-playing, and reading historical novels (Dicamillo & Gradwell, 2013, p. 155).

Student engagement or boredom is dependent on the teacher's choice of activities. Teachers should provide students with opportunities for in-depth exploration of ideas that challenge and enhance analytical skills. When students engage in their learning, they will exhibit a curiosity and imagination investigating topics, asking analytical questions, and develop critical thinking skills. Student engagement is required for perseverance in challenging learning. Rigorous social studies instruction includes experiential exercises

such as debates, role-play, simulations, and project-based learning that require application of critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Caram & Davis, 2005, p. 20).

Engaging social studies teachers understand their role as a guide on the students' journey to historical exploration. Teachers should engage children in the kind of questions that rouse decision-making, problem solving, and analytical thinking. Activities such as simulations and role-play engage students and are an avenue to historical empathy (Brooks, 2009, p. 220).

### **Teaching empathy to decrease discrimination**

Kristen Monroe (2006) says, "Prejudice and discrimination are ugly cousins, haunting humankind like the evil fairy who appears unbidden to curse the young princess" (p. 58). In this scenario, Monroe describes education as the good fairy imparting valuable tools to overcome this curse. The psychological literature on prejudice indicates that seeing the world through multiple perspectives is a fundamental element in overcoming discrimination.

Garcia (2011) stated, "Ignorance is the most common cause of prejudice" (p. 78). People who demonstrate prejudice and discrimination are typically those who do not have personal relationships with people of different races, cultures, and genders; however, when a relationship and connections form, the walls of discrimination begin to crumble through diverse contact, education, and experiences with diverse people.

History teachers face the dilemma of trying to cover an overwhelming amount of standards and preparing for a standardized test. Loewen (2010) describes the effect of this coverage by saying, "Reasons that seem sound have led many teachers to try to cover

everything. These forces push teachers toward staying in the traditional textbook-dominated rut” (p. 32).

One problem with exclusively relying on textbooks as a source of covering the enormity of history state standards is that textbooks can be inadvertently prejudice. While textbooks do not deliberately encourage students to be racist, sexist, or discriminatory, they do exemplify a dominant race and sex of primarily white males. This predominance gives the impressions that certain groups did not have a role in history. When broken down statistically, most textbooks mention eight white males for every one African American, women, Jew, and a variety of minority groups (Ferroni, 2012, para 2). For this reason alone, it is important for educators to teach students about a wide mixture of races, sexes, cultures, and religions.

### **Teaching immigration to promote tolerance**

Immigration is a topic that transcends countries, cultures, and generations. It is a topic of debate not only in the country but also across the world. The United States is a nation of immigrants who searched for economic, religious, and political freedoms. The majority of people living in America are here because someone in the last 400 years emigrated from another country. The United States is a mosaic of cultures created by immigrants. They are the fabric of life and learning about different cultures opens students’ eyes to the beauty of diversity (Costello, 2011, “Imagining the Lives of Others”).

In 2013, the United States Census Bureau reported immigrants totaled thirteen percent, 41.3 million people, of the nation’s population. The United States is a popular

destination for immigrants attracting over 20% of emigrating people (Zong & Batalova, 2015, para 1). In 2007, the Census Bureau recorded 10.8 million school-age immigrant children in the United States, and if the trend continues, that number will continue to rise (Bersh, 2013, p. 49).

Due to the rise in school-age immigrants, there is an increasing need to provide educators and therefore students with effective resources needed to foster an awareness and appreciation for other cultures. Lamme, Fu, and Lowery (2004) said that children who see others culturally diverse but emotionally alike, create connections and understanding. Teaching diversity is a fundamental stepping-stone in preventing intolerance, prejudice, isolation, segregation, and other factors that are a breeding ground for school violence (Bersh, 2013, p. 50).

### **Immigration at the Turn of the Century**

The United States is a country steeped in immigration history. It is a land of immigrants whether they are new to the country or have ancestors dating back to the earliest immigrants. As far back as 15<sup>th</sup> century exploration, the United States has experienced an influx of immigrants at different times and from different places.

The United States experienced a rapid increase in immigration between 1880 and 1920 with more than 20 million immigrants. The peak of immigration was in 1907 with over 1.3 million immigrants. Ellis Island, an immigration port in New York City, received immigrants mainly from Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe, while Angel Island, an immigration port in San Francisco, obtained immigrants mainly from China (Guzda, 1986, p. 30).

## **Reasons for immigration**

Rapid industrialization and urbanization at the turn of the century brought millions of immigrants to the United States. The hope for economic advancement, political and religious freedom, and a chance to own land appealed to people across the world. For example, over two million Jews fled Europe between 1880-1920 to escape persecution. Many believed that their dreams would come true after moving to America. Some did realize their dreams, while most came to America to find discrimination, harsh working conditions, and not the life they imagined (King & Ruggles, 1990, p. 347). The following sections highlight significant events and figures from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries that provide a historical framework for immigration.

### ***Titanic***

The Royal Mail Steamer (R.M.S.) *Titanic* is one of the most notable maritime disasters of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It serves as a cautionary tale of human arrogance and the need for maritime reform. The R.M.S. *Titanic* was a passenger ship traveling on its maiden voyage from Southampton, England to New York City. Table 2.1 disaggregates the 2,240 passengers and crew aboard.

*Table 2.1: Titanic Passenger Count by Class*

<b>Class</b>	<b>Number</b>
1 <sup>st</sup>	324
2 <sup>nd</sup>	285
3 <sup>rd</sup>	708
Crew	923

The *Titanic* set sail on April 10, 1912 out of Southampton, England stopping to pick up passengers in Cherbourg, France and Queenstown, Ireland. It met peril on the night of April 14, 1912 when it hit an iceberg. More than 1,500 souls perished in this disaster making it one of the greatest maritime disasters of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Yu, 2012, p. 1).

The *Titanic* has captivated the world's imagination throughout the years; however, it is certainly not the only fatal maritime disaster. The *Sultana* (1865) exploded and sank killing more than 1,500, the *Lusitania* (1915) killed 1,200 and was one of the catalysts in bringing the United States in the Great War, and the *Eastland* (1915) sank, killing 840, so why is the *Titanic* such a fascinating subject? (Cox, 2012, para. 6).

The *Titanic* has been the subject of countless movies and books, and has drawn the attention of the young and the old. Over the years, the *Titanic* became a cultural icon because of the vast difference between first-class and third-class passengers. These differences symbolized the striking differences between the haves and the have-nots of

America. For example, the most famous and rich passenger aboard was John Jacob Astor IV. He was returning from a honeymoon world tour of more than six months. In striking contrast, most third class passengers sold all their belongings to immigrate to America for the chance of having a better life. This is just one of the glaring differences of the class system aboard this ship, and it parallels the class *defacto* in the United States (Zani, 2003, p. 126).

### ***How the Other Half Lives versus the Gilded Age***

Mark Twain (1871) published an article in the *New York Tribune* in response to corruption he observed. He stated the following:

What is the chief end of man?—to get rich. In what way?—dishonestly if we can; honestly if we must. Who is God, the one only and true? Money is God. God and Greenbacks and Stock--father, son, and the ghost of same--three persons in one; these are the true and only God, mighty and supreme. (September 27, 1871, "The Revised Catechism")

At the height of the industrial revolution and turn of the century immigration, every man was waiting to become the next Andrew Carnegie, a self-made millionaire. These robber barons, people who tried to gain wealth in a dishonest way, were rampant at the turn of the century (Merriam-Webster, 2015). In New York, in particular, people flaunted their wealth at every turn. For example, one wealthy woman threw an extravagant party for her dog that arrived donning a \$15,000 diamond necklace. While the rich were clothed in extravagance, there were families in the same neighborhood struggling to put food on the table earning a meager average of \$400 a year (Schweikart & Pierson, 2010, Chapter

Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous-1800s-Style; Public Broadcast System, 2015). The Gilded Age was an era in the United States between the Civil War and the Great War where economic growth, opulence, and political corruption were abundant (Merriam-Webster, 2015). Many Americans lived in ignorance of how the other half lived until Jacob Riis exposed the truths.

Jacob Riis arrived as a poor immigrant to New York in 1870. In 1877, he began working for the *New York Tribune* and in 1888 for the *New York Evening Sun*. As a reporter, he witnessed the destitution happening in his city. Dirty tenements, or run-down apartments, crime, and filth were the norm in parts of New York City. Riis was a muckraker, or a person who sets out to expose corruption (Merriam-Webster, 2015).

Using powder flash, Riis was able to take photographs of the shoddy windowless tenements and living conditions of the poor and exposing corruption. These pictures shocked middle and upper class people. In 1890, he published these and other like pictures in his book *How the Other Half Lives*. Riis's commitment to social reform gained the attention of the public and politicians, and a public outcry for change led to the passage of many progressive reforms (Roberts, 2015, "Jacob Riis Photographs Still Revealing New York's Other Half"). Riis's pictures exposed the truths of how the other half lived and created empathy for his audience. This empathy created change in laws and prevented future tragedies.

### **Child labor**

One such progressive reform that Jacob Riis and other muckrakers exposed was child labor. Lewis Hines, like Riis, exposed the tragedy of child labor through

photojournalism. Using his camera as a tool for social reform, Hines exposed the hidden truths of child labor. Working for the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC), Hines went undercover in factories, mills, and mines to expose the brutal truths of child labor. These pictures exposed the reality and created empathy for the childhoods lost to greed. The NCLC used his photos as a catalyst to lobby Congress in an effort to end child labor (Freedman, 1994, p. 94).

### **Teddy Roosevelt: the reformer**

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat. (Roosevelt, 1910, Excerpt from speech: "Citizenship in a Republic")

Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919), the 26<sup>th</sup> president of the United States of America, was one of the greatest reformers of the twentieth century. Before he was the leader of the nation, he was making waves in his role as New York City's Civil Service Commissioner and then president of the New York Police

Commission. In his position, he met others muckrakers such as Jacob Riis and Upton Sinclair and was able to make lasting reformations in not only New York City but also the nation as a whole.

During his tenure as president, Roosevelt was able to pass several reformations such as The Pure Food and Drug Act (FDA), Anti-Trust Laws, and the Meat Inspection Act (MIA). After reading Upton Sinclair's book, *The Jungle* (1906), Roosevelt called for radical action to take place in the meat-packing industry. As a leading force in the Progressive Era, Theodore Roosevelt not only cleaned up the muck and corruption in the nation, but he helped preserve the nation's greatest environmental treasures through his national parks initiative. By daring greatly, he was truly a steward of the people (The White House, 2015; Griggs, 2013, "Citizenship, Character, and Leadership: Guidance from the Words of Theodore Roosevelt").



Figure 2.2: *Teddy Roosevelt the Muckraker* (Utica Saturday Globe, 1906)

### **Teaching empathy through experiential education**

Teaching empathy entails a different kind of learning one in which teaching only from a textbook will not suffice. Educating students to become more empathic is possible with experiential education (Blatner & Blatner, 1997, pp. 3-4). The natural vehicle for teaching empathy is through role-play. Role-play utilizes imagination, flexibility, critical thinking, and spontaneity. This is in complete contrast to traditional education where memorization and other didactical skills are a norm. Medical students across the country are practicing empathic activities such as role-play to build compassion for their future patients. Being able to place themselves in the preverbal shoes of their patients is a vital role for all practitioners in the medical field. Dr. Adam Blatner (1992), a professor in psychiatry who specializes in empathy, states that a significant challenge he has with today's medical students is the development of intrapersonal skills or as the medical profession calls it a "good bedside manner." He believes one reason for this challenge is that traditional schools are quelling empathic producing activities such as role-play in favor of more testable skills. Blatner feels schools must teach students the skills of emotional problem-solving, self-awareness, and empathy experientially through role-play, and students must be given chances to practice until they attain a gratifying sense of mastery (American Psychiatric Association Annual Meeting).

## Experiential Education

“The teacher is of course an artist, but being an artist does not mean that he or she can make the profile, can shape the students. What the educator does in teaching is to make it possible for the students to become themselves.”

— Paulo Freire (1990, p. 181), *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change*

### The history of experiential education

Many current educational concepts date back to the philosophers of Ancient Greece, where the learning method was restricted to reciting ideas on topics by way of theory. Socrates, in fourth century B.C.E., started the first educational revolution through questioning instead of reciting answers. Participation of the learners became important for the first time. Aristotle started a revolution in learning when he said using language, as a source of knowledge was not a guarantee they actually possess it. By this statement, Aristotle maintains that theory is contingent to a person’s ability for application. When students are able to have a real experience with history, they will retain the information (Garcia-Carbonell, Watts & Fleta, 2004, p. 3).

Experiential education is the belief and methodology in which educators purposefully engage with students in guided experiences and meaningful reflection in order to enhance understanding, acquire skills, and illuminate values (Association for Experiential Education, 2014, para 1). It is the oldest form of education in the Western world. Native American customs of storytelling, oral traditions, and training the young by the more experienced are examples of experiential education.

Exploration of the “New World” meant the spread of European customs and traditions. As the need to educate children grew, so did the attendance rate of public schools. More students denoted finding an efficient way to transmit knowledge. This along with the invention of the printing press meant publishing a standardized school curriculum. As a result, children were educated in an assembly line fashion where students attained knowledge educators deemed as important social values (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2002).

At the turn of the twentieth century, progressivists, such as John Dewey, Paulo Freire, and Kurt Hahn, vehemently disagreed with the industrial model of education. They believed educational systems should not teach subject matter in isolation, but rather give students an experience that will broaden their knowledge. Dewey believed that educators should plan a well thought-out experience with the end in mind, and it must connect with the student’s prior knowledge. This mindset laid the groundwork for the present-day understandings of experiential education (Breunig, 2008, p. 81).

### **Experiential Education and Paulo Freire**

Paulo Freire (1970 & 1990) stated that the educational system has deteriorated to a state of systematic oppression. Standardization of policies and practice has taken away teacher autonomy. Educators must cover the standards in preparation for state standardized tests at the sacrifice of sound pedagogy. Freire believed that lecture promoted a regurgitation of facts; instead he believed in giving students the freedom to form their own thoughts and not just the thoughts of the educator. The authoritarianism of

systematic teaching pedagogy led to the downfall of the education system (Chapter 2 & p. 62)

In his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire (1970) defines the banking method of learning as, “Knowledge being a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing.” Freire condemned rote teaching where students are merely receptacles for which teachers are to deposit information. Freire asserts that the solution to this type of rote memorization of facts or didactic teaching is giving students authentic experiences in which to learn (Freire, 1970, Chapter 2).

Experiential education implements multisensory activities through learning explorations and then transforming it into real-world application (Kolb, 1984). Experiential education also allows students to construct their own knowledge based on their experiences. Students are intrinsically motivated to learn and have the capacity to learn much on their own, without adult involvement (Frank, 2013, p. 28 & 35).

### **Experiential Education and John Dewey**

John Dewey (1859-1952) was a progressive educational reformer in the early twentieth century. At the turn of the century, public schools were becoming vocational due to the rapid rise in industrialization and the growing demand for factory workers. High schools adopted the assembly-line model by going to the two-track system where one liberal arts track was for the upper and middle class students, and the other industrial track was for lower class students. Typically, the liberal arts track was comprised of predominately white natural-born American students, whereas, and the industrial track

included Southeast European immigrants or people of color. This mass production model of education prepared students for either white- or blue-collar labor. John Dewey was vehemently against this type of social hierarchy in education. He believed all children should have the same opportunity to a good education no matter their socioeconomic status (Garcia, 2011, p.41).

As the father of experiential education, John Dewey stated, “Give the pupils something to do, not something to learn; and the doing is of such a nature as to demand thinking; learning naturally results.” He advocated for a student-centered approach to education. Dewey felt that learning occurred when students were actively involved and find the material relevant and attractive in some way (Frank, 2013, p. 31). Dewey believed learning does not stop at the experience but in reflection. He stated the significance of learning should be active and relevant to the student, and followed by a period of reflection where knowledge is applied to students’ everyday lives and to future experiences. The ultimate goal of education is application, action, and challenging what they have discovered in the future (Shellman, 2014, p. 19).

Dewey’s work in experiential education began in 1896 when he was a professor at the University of Chicago. While there, he founded the University of Chicago Laboratory School that later became known as the Dewey School. The school’s two main goals were the development of the school as a cooperative community that would meet the social needs of the students, and an education where conscious, purposeful, and informed activities enhance the intellectual development of the children (Frank, 2013, p. 31).

## **Experiential education and cognitive learning**

In Experiential Education, an educator implements an intentional activity and allows the students to construct their own knowledge to obtain a standard. Experiential Education incorporates physical and multisensory movement, intrinsic motivation, and meaningful reflections. When students have authentic, tangible, and meaningful experiences, student retention is 65% compared to 10% through lecture or didactic learning (Bannerman, 2009, p.1; Garner, 2007, p. 31).

Experiential learning utilizes physical activities, such as simulations, case studies, role-plays, and drama performances, in the learning process. Amplified real-life simulation can also increase the applications of learning. Students tend to remember much more when learning is associated with a field trip, performance, disaster, guest speaker, complex project, or novel study locations (Jensen, 2008, p. 160).

Experiential education also gives learners an opportunity to evaluate information, make decisions, judgments, and emotional engagement with information (Garner, 2007, p. 138). In experiential activities, students engage all five senses to register an event in their brain. By attaching strong emotion to a purposely-designed activity, it encodes the learning in more complex neural networks (Jensen, 2008, p. 159). No experience is complete without thought-provoking reflection. Giving students downtime to process their thinking and incorporate journal writing and other forms of personal reflection, is at the heart of experiential education (Kolb, 1984).

## **The learning theories associated with experiential education**

Learning is at the very core of education and is one of the most important activities in which individuals engage. For thousands of years, philosophers and psychologists have sought to understand the essence of learning, how it occurs, and how one person can influence the learning of another person through teaching. Creation of various learning theories has occurred over the years, and these theories differ for a range of reasons. Learning theories reflect hypotheses that explain how the subjects process the material in which is being taught (Shuell, 2013, p. 4).

John Dewey (1902) said the following:

The child and the curriculum are simply two limits which define a single process. Just as two points define a straight line, so the present standpoint of the child and the facts and truths of studies define instruction. (p. 16)

Defining learning theories, or an attempt in explaining how one acquires knowledge, can be a daunting task. They can be subjective and aspects of each may overlap. It is important to understand the different learning theories that may be associated with experiential education to frame this study with the researcher's understanding, based on the literature. In the context of this study, when the researcher refers to a learning theory, it will signify how information is processed, and when she discusses the term learning approach, it will indicate pedagogical strategies (Woolfolk, Davis, & Anderman, 2013, p. 10).

Two learning theorists at the forefront of pioneering educational reforms were Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky. Piaget's Cognitive Constructivism Learning Theory and Lev Vygotsky's Social Constructivism Theory were revolutionary in the field of child

development. The researcher will also describe Jerome Bruner's Discovery Learning, David Kolb's Experiential Learning, and Kurt Hahn's Expeditionary Learning as learning approaches rather than theories; however, she notes that the distinction between the two terms in these cases are minimal.

### **Constructivism**

The following illustration is an example of how the researcher taught her fifth graders the causes of the Dust Bowl from a constructivist approach.

A group of rowdy fifth graders slowly lined up to go outside. They were excited to participate in something active rather than sit in their desk listening to a monotonous lecture. The teacher's only instructions were to pull the weeds and their roots in the school's garden, and to shake the weed's excess dirt from the roots. After five minutes of hard labor, the teacher stopped them and asked what they noticed. She did not immediately validate or contradict any answer.

Eventually, the students noticed the displacement of the dirt. Next, the teacher handed the students a straw and instructed them blow the recently displaced soil. After guiding them through questions, she asked the students to think about the recent lesson on the Great Depression and how harshly it affected farmers. Next, she asked the students to go back inside and draw a diagram in their journals.

Figure 2.3 illustrates an answer key of the diagram the teacher asked the students to draw:



*Figure 2.3: Dust Bowl Example Diagram*

The illustration briefing demonstrates the theory of constructivism. In a constructivist classroom, the learner actively builds knowledge from his or her experiences with the world and makes connections with their learning through meaningful reflections. Students will construct new meaning in relation to previous knowledge (Bruning, Schraw, & Ronning, 1999). Rather than the teacher lecturing on the Dust Bowl causes, she gave the students an opportunity to pull the weeds and investigate the damage it caused relating it to farmers in the Great Depression. Instead of ending the lesson after the experience, the students brought meaning to the lesson through a reflection.

This approach to knowledge applies the strategies of cooperative learning, investigation, and relevant material in which the students find meaning on their own through active learning (Bruner, Goodnow, & Austin, 1956). The role of the educators then changes from a teacher who gives didactic lectures to cover a standard, to facilitators who guide students to their own learning pathway (Odom & Bell, 2013, p. 87). Key theorists or followers of constructivism are Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, Jerome Bruner, and Kurt Hahn.

### **Cognitive constructivism and Jean Piaget**

Jean Piaget (1896-1980) pioneered an epistemological basis for cognitive development in children in the early and mid twentieth century that focused on the biological development of the child as a controlling factor for cognitive development. He believed that a person gained his or her knowledge through the continuous process of self-construction, or constructivism. Piaget stated that children actively approach their surroundings and obtain knowledge through physical or mental actions (Driscoll, 2005, p. 195).

Piaget's main body of work centers on a child's cognitive stages of development. The stages are sensorimotor (birth to approximately age two), preoperational (two to seven years old), concrete operational (seven to eleven years old), and formal operational (eleven years old and onward) (Piaget, 1964, p. 20-21; Driscoll, 2005, p. 197). Piaget's theory influenced educational practices and affected an educator's selection of developmentally appropriate learning material. He said that a child learns first by encountering and exploring an object or idea, and then assimilates new information into his or her existing schema. When one encounters a new experience, reconstruction of prior knowledge will occur. Experiential educators facilitate student learning through purposeful experiences, and students construct their own knowledge through prior knowledge (Steiner, 1974, p. 891-899).

Piaget's epistemological research on child development was trailblazing; however, criticisms of his work exist. Vygotsky and Bruner challenged the notion a child's cognitive development was solely determined by a set of biological stages. They

surmised environmental stimuli were also a determining factor in stages of child development (Vygotsky, 2012, pg. 92; Bruner, 1956, p. 39; Driscoll, 2005, p. 200).

Piaget's learning theory connects to experiential education's pedagogical premise that a learner builds his or her own knowledge from the experience rather than the instructor depositing information; however, experiential educators believe a child's environment is a determining factor in cognitive development.

### **Social constructivists and Lev Vygotsky**

Russian Psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) is the founding father of social constructivism. Social constructivism is related to cognitive constructivism that stresses the importance of collaborative learning. Vygotsky said knowledge is co-constructed when individuals interact with dialogue to construct meaning and is stored in the student's memory for future retrieval. When collaboration and social interaction are incorporated in the learning process, it is beneficial and a highly effective teaching method (Vygotsky, 2011; p. 209; Churcher, Downs, & Tewksburg, 2014, p. 35).

Vygotsky's chief body of work focused on what he described as Zone of Proximal Development, or ZPD. ZPD is the gap between what a student achieves independently and the student's learning that is attained with guidance (Powell & Kalina, 2009, p. 246). Vygotsky created three zones of proximal development. The first zone is the developed capabilities or what a child can do unassisted, the second is the developing capabilities or what the child can do with assistance, and third is the undeveloped capabilities or what the child cannot do yet (Vygotsky, 2011, p. 209; Driscoll, 2005, p. 253). The principles of

Experiential Education closely aligns to Social Constructivism Learning Theory where students build their own knowledge through dialogue to construct meaning. Experiential educators also believe students learn best when they are appropriately challenged or learning is in their ZPD.

### **Discovery learning and Jerome Bruner**

Jerome Bruner (1915- present) is a psychologist noted for his contribution in the discovery learning approach. He believes that learning comes from well thought-out experiences that implement higher order thinking skills. Bruner proposed three systems by which people structure their understanding of the world. He developed three modes of representation called enactive representation, iconic representation, and symbolic representation. Enactive is the most elementary and symbolic requires higher levels of understanding such as analysis or application. Unlike Piaget's theory of sequential stages set by biology, Bruner believed a child's stages of development was pliable and determined by other factors such as environment. Bruner said children were not passive learners responding to stimuli but are actively reconstructing knowledge based on experiences (Bruner, 1956, p. 39; Driscoll, 2005, p. 240).

Bruner considered experience an essential component and the foundation of intellectual development. Experiential learning can enhance and promote the learning process, assist in achievement of course objectives, and provide a link between theory and practice (Garrett, 1997, p. 134). Bruner said that discovery teaching involves guiding students to discover their environment as well as their own subconscious (Bruner, 1956; p. 21; Driscoll, 1995, p. 244). The philosophies of experiential education align with

discovery learning in that students acquire knowledge through a well thought out experience, and the reflection process embodies the three modes of representation in debriefing exercises.

### **David Kolb and experiential learning**

Building upon the work of John Dewey, David Kolb (1939- present) created the experiential learning cycle to aid in the rich reflection vital in experiential education. He said the student creates knowledge through the process of the experience and the meaningful reflection that follows (Kolb, 1984). Kolb's learning cycle begins with a concrete experience, advances to a reflective observation, evolves to an abstract hypothesis, and finally moves to active testing (Kolb, 2005, p. 194). Examples of concrete experiences range from experiential simulations, hands-on, active learning, service learning, expeditionary learning, to project-based learning (Association for Experiential Education, 2014, para. 1).

Asking the important questions during reflection is crucial. Sharing and reflecting the experience through discussion is first. Students reflect on their experience and share their reactions, observations, and discuss emotions generated by the experience. The second part of reflection processes and analyzes or asks what was important about this experience. Students relate new learning with their existing schema and discuss themes that emerged as well as problems that existed. This step includes connecting the experience with real-world examples, and finding trends or common truths. The last step in reflection is the application or asking students, "Now what?" Students apply higher order thinking skills by analyzing this situation and applying it to the future. Kolb's

model of reflection is at the root of Experiential Education. The experience itself is not enough; in order to make significance of the activity, meaningful reflection must take place (Kolb, 1984; Frank, 2013).

### **Expeditionary learning and Kurt Hahn**

Kurt Hahn (1886-1974), an educational reformer, created Expeditionary Learning and Outward Bound. Expeditionary Learning is an educational philosophy where students learn moral values as well as intellectual content. It specializes in actively challenging students through adventure education. Expeditionary Learning connects academic learning to adventure and service. Hahn (as cited by Frank, 2013) said,

I regard it as the foremost task of education to insure the survival of these qualities, an enterprising curiosity, an undefeatable spirit, tenacity in pursuit, readiness for sensible self-denial, and above all, compassion. (p. 33)

In 1941, Hahn established Outward Bound as a solution to the broken education system he experienced. Outward Bound's design began as a way to instill moral education, service for others, leadership, and rigorous academic standards (Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound, nd). Hahn believed children were inherently good people but as they grow older, corruption seeped into their moral fibers. He thought that by educating the youth's character development and personal leadership through outdoor adventure, it would produce empathic adults (Breunig, 2008, p. 81).

In 1992, the United States Outward Bound extended its program to include a K-12 school-based program. Expeditionary Learning Schools have grown to more than 160 schools and mentored thousands of teachers and students across the globe. Expeditionary

Learning School's ten principles are centered around the educational values and philosophies of Kurt Hahn, founder of Outward Bound (Expeditionary Learning Schools, 2015). They are:

1. The primacy of self-discovery-This principle embraces the challenge of pushing oneself to reach their goals alongside a support team.
2. The having of wonderful ideas-This principle cultivates creativity and the freedom to make choices.
3. The responsibility of learning-This principle promotes self-efficacy in students through individual and group learning activities.
4. Empathy and caring-This principle centers around the idea that learning occurs best when students feel valued and safe.
5. Success and failure-This principle acknowledges the value in struggling and obtaining success as well as learning from mistakes.
6. Collaboration and competition-This principle relies heavily on working in groups and teamwork as well as challenging oneself.
7. Diversity and inclusion-This principle fosters an environment of embracing one's differences while realizing human sameness.
8. The natural world-This principle encourages students to see the beauty of nature and therefore drive a need to protect it.
9. Solitude and reflection-This principle nurtures a need for connection to oneself as well as others. Quiet time is essential in making meaning.
10. Service and Compassion-This principle strives to instill service for others mindset and treating others the way in which one would want to be treated.

These ten principles not only work for the greater good of the schools in which they serve, but when utilized, can serve the world.

Expeditionary Learning and Experiential Education principles closely align; however, Experiential Education does not mandate adventure, service, and moral education. Although it is not mandatory, it is a common practice to embed all three of these into an experience.

Table 2.2 compares and contrast the qualities of the previously mentioned learning theories/approaches with experiential education.

*Table 2.2: Alignment of Theories and Approaches to Experiential Education*

<b>Learning</b>	<b>Learning Approach</b>	<b>Constructs own knowledge of the material</b>	<b>Student-Centered</b>	<b>Higher Order Thinking Skills</b>	<b>Purposeful experience</b>	<b>Meaningful Reflection</b>	<b>Real World Application</b>	<b>Moral Education</b>	<b>Adventure</b>	<b>Service</b>
	Experiential Education- Dewey	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always	Sometimes	Sometimes	Sometimes
	Discovery Learning- Bruner	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always	Sometimes	Sometimes	Sometimes
	Expeditionary Learning- Hahn	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always
	Experiential Learning- Kolb	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always	Sometimes	Sometimes	Sometimes
Cognitive Constructivism- Piaget		Always	Always	Always	Sometimes	Sometimes	Always	Sometimes	Sometimes	Sometimes
Social Constructivism- Vygotsky		Always	Always	Always	Sometimes	Always	Always	Sometimes	Sometimes	Sometimes

## **A community of experiential educators**

The Association for Experiential Education (AEE) exists to connect a global community of educators and practitioners and expand their capacity to enrich lives through Experiential Education. AEE's core beliefs closely align to Expeditionary Learning. While it holds many of the same philosophies and principles, it appeals to a wider clientele. For example, AEE members are Outward Bound employees, but also, school counselors, teachers, social workers, and administrators. The principles they hold are similar to Expeditionary Learning with few differences. AEE's guiding principles are (AEE, 2014):

1. Experiential learning occurs when carefully chosen experiences are supported by reflection, critical analysis and synthesis.
2. Experiences are structured to require the learner to take initiative, make decisions, and be accountable for results.
3. Throughout the experiential learning process, the learner<sup>2</sup> is actively engaged in posing questions, investigating, experimenting, being curious, solving problems, assuming responsibility, being creative, and constructing meaning.
4. Learners are engaged intellectually, emotionally, socially, soulfully, and/or physically. This involvement produces a perception that the learning task is authentic.
5. The results of the learning are personal and form the basis for future experience and learning.
6. Relationships are developed and nurtured: learner to self, learner to others and learner to the world at large.

7. The educator and learner may experience success, failure, adventure, risk-taking and uncertainty, because the outcomes of experience cannot totally be predicted.
8. Opportunities are nurtured for learners and educators to explore and examine their own values.
9. The educator's primary roles include setting suitable experiences, posing problems, setting boundaries, supporting learners, insuring physical and emotional safety, and facilitating the learning process.
10. The educator recognizes and encourages spontaneous opportunities for learning.
11. Educators strive to be aware of their biases, judgments and pre-conceptions, and how these influence the learner.
12. The design of the learning experience includes the possibility to learn from natural consequences, mistakes and successes.

AEE is a nonprofit, member-based, professional association devoted to experiential education. It provides professional development, skill building, information resources, standards, and best practices. AEE's mission is, "To develop and promote experiential education through commitments to supporting professional development, theoretical advancement, and the evaluation of experiential education worldwide."

This unique professional learning community is dedicated to providing educators with up-to-date research on experiential education. Through the support of AEE, experiential educators have an outlet for resources and support (Warren, Mitten, & Loeffler, 2008).

## **Student Motivation, Engagement, and Ownership of their Learning**

### **Student motivation**

Students who are intrinsically motivated in their learning have a greater rate of academic success. Intrinsic motivation is an innate ambition that drives one to their goals. This drive is not contingent on external motivators such as rewards, punishments, and grades but rather student choice and self-initiation (Crumpton & Gregory, 2011, p. 43). A constructivist's believes that when students have control over their learning and environment, it will facilitate motivation and confidence (Palmer, 2005, p. 1857). External motivators such as excessive praise can be detrimental to motivation. This praise can have the opposite effect by the receiver due to an increased pressure to perform. Instead, teachers should encourage intrinsic motivation by promoting a growth mindset. This is accomplished by validating the effort involved, providing students with guided choices in education, and promoting curiosity and real-world relevance (Dweck, 2006; Jensen, 2008, p. 117).

### **Student engagement and efficacy**

No matter what learning philosophy or theory an educator chooses, the main goal is student achievement. Teaching styles and educator philosophies are only part of the big picture. A direct link to student motivation is engagement. When students are engaged in their learning, their academic success, classroom behavior, and belief in their abilities will increase (Froiland & Worell, 2016, p. 321).

Another aspect of academic success is student attitude. Student beliefs about their capabilities to learn and perform behaviors with a desired outcome define self-efficacy

(Bandura, 1986, 1997). Self-efficacy affects student motivation, engagement, and eventually academic success (Pajares, 1996). It influences a student's task choice, effort, perseverance, flexibility, and achievement. When student efficacy is high, they will work harder, push through difficult challenges, and achieve at higher levels (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 1995, 2012).

### **Student ownership of learning**

If students learn at deep levels, they must think, question, pursue, create, and take ownership of their learning. When students show initiative in their learning, they will become skilled learners in and out of school, and they are better equipped to succeed in academics and in 21st century soft skills (Briceño, 2013, para. 2). Student ownership is a way to increase self-determination or a person's intrinsic need to accomplish goals without external influences. Students who are self-determined set academic goals and monitor their progress. Empowering students to take ownership of their learning requires educators to gradually transfer control to the learner. Teachers may facilitate ownership by allowing students to construct his or her own knowledge for relevance, developing a safe classroom climate where students feel freedom to fail, and guiding students to have choice in their education (Chan, et.al, 2014, p. 106).

### **Student choice**

Student engagement is a major contributor in high achievement. Educators constantly search for motivating strategies to use in the classroom. An overlooked motivational strategy for engagement is student choice. When teachers guide students in

controlling their own educational path, student choice is essential. When students have a voice in their education, they will feel a sense of control, purpose, competence, and autonomy over their learning (Perks, 2010, p. 3).

Student choice means adjusting the educational path from an authoritarian rule to a partnership between all stakeholders to make instruction more effective (Geis, 1972, p. 5). When teachers allow students to have choice in their education, not only will motivation and engagement strengthen, but also student achievement will increase and disruptive classroom behavior will decrease.

Teacher-student relationships must be strong in a student choice environment. The teacher must give up some control and guide the students in making informed educational decisions. The teacher and student must work together in order to balance the fine line between the teacher's responsibility to ensure students adequately master academic standards, and allowing students to have an influence in their own learning (Taber-Doughty, 2005, p. 413 & 427).

### **Facilitating student engagement and ownership**

Although teachers cannot force students to take ownership of their learning, there are strategies to facilitate it. In order for students to control their learning, teachers may incorporate activities that utilize student-centered and self-directed learning methods such as real-world projects, problem-based learning, and experiential education (Briceño, 2013). Eleanor Duckworth (1999) said that facilitating student efficacy requires educators who allow the learners to experience the subject matter for themselves rather than memorization of facts regurgitated from the teacher or textbook. She said that the teacher

should listen to what the students think and bring in new angles whenever necessary. Duckworth finally states that teaching students through the educator's set of learning sequences fails on two accounts. One the learner is bored, and two it does not correspond to the way the student internalizes the material (Hatton, 2005). When teachers encourage student efficacy, the learner is the creator of meaning as a stakeholder and a change agent (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012).

### **Summary**

Educating the whole child ministers to the mind, body, and spirit. A holistic approach in education means supporting a student's affective and academic needs. Educators guide students in becoming productive and independent citizens with the knowledge and ability to become an informed citizen (Nodding, 2013).

Immigration and discrimination are searing 21<sup>st</sup> century topics of debate. Empathetic exercises such as perspective-taking experiential simulations give students a tiny glimpse into the hardships and discrimination of the marginalized. When students connect or empathize with others, they will become tolerant citizen who will fight for social justice (Zakin, 2012, p. 11; Hollingsworth, Didelot, & Smith, 2003, p. 144).

Social constructivists accept that the most engaging activities occur when students interact with others in the process of building their own knowledge. Motivation and engagement increase when students have authentic experiences where they are actively involved in the learning process. Activities such as simulations engage students by weaving current learning with prior knowledge making it impactful. When students feel

empowered for their learning, ownership will be a byproduct (Learning Theories, 2014, p. 28).

A student's motivation facilitates engagement, initiative, and ownership of their learning. When pupils participate in student-centered learning activities such as experiential simulations, they will take charge of their learning. By allowing students the freedom and choice to direct their own pathway for learning, students will demonstrate ownership of their learning (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 1995, 2012).

### **Research Questions**

- How was student empathy affected throughout participation in an experiential immigration unit about discrimination?
- How did students transfer and apply new learning throughout participation in an experiential immigration unit about discrimination?
- How did motivation and engagement affect student ownership of learning throughout participation in an experiential immigration unit about discrimination?

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

“There is no burden of proof. There is only the world to experience and understand. Shed the burden of proof to lighten the load for the journey of experience.”

Michael Quinn Patton (2015, p. 1)

### Frame of Reference

Michael Quinn Patton (2015, p. 1) said in his book, *Qualitative Research and Evaluations Methods*:

Innovators are told, ‘Think outside the box.’ Qualitative scholars tell their students, Study the box. Observe it. Inside. Outside. From inside to outside, and from outside to inside. Where is it? How did it get there? What’s around it? Who says it’s a ‘box’? What do they mean? Why does it matter? Or does it? What is *not* a ‘box’? Ask the box questions. Question other about the box. What’s the perspective from inside? From outside? Study diagrams of the box. Find documents related to the box. What does *thinking* have to do with the box anyway? Understand *this* box. Study another box. And another. Understand *box*. Understand. Then, you can think inside *and* outside the box. Perhaps. For awhile. Until it changes. Until you change. Until outside becomes inside—again. Then, start over. Study the box.

Qualitative research is intimate. He or she becomes a storyteller encapsulating a person’s perspectives and experiences, illuminates meaning, studies how and why things work,

and reveals the significances to the world. The researcher explores and interprets documents in order to make sense of the situation. The researcher is merely a tool of inquiry. They seek to understand the background of how and why the phenomena matters, identify unintended consequences, and often discover important patterns and themes across cases (Patton, 2015, pp. 1-5).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine how learning through an experiential immigration unit about discrimination affected student empathy, whether new learning was applied and transferred into future situations, and how students demonstrated motivation, engagement, and ownership of their learning. In this study, the teacher and the students proceeded through the curriculum unit, *Give Me Your Tired; Your Poor...Teaching Discrimination through an Experiential Immigration Unit* and informed the researcher of the participants' impressions.

This research was a phenomenological study and utilized a grounded theory approach to construct meaning. Creswell (2013) stated a study was a phenomenological and grounded theory when participants had a shared experience, and the researcher tried to find the common meaning (pp. 76-77). In this study, the researcher examined the essence of the shared experience shared by the participants, and how this affected student empathy, its application and transferability into future situations, and the level of engagement students demonstrated in their learning. The researcher utilized multiple data sources such as students' interviews, reflections, journals, and artwork to find a shared meaning of the experience. Additionally, the researcher documented data throughout the unit in a researcher's journal.

The researcher coded the data sets to look for common and emerging categories and

themes of the shared experience and formulated a theory to illuminate students' understandings of the experiential immigration unit (Creswell, 2013, p. 184). The interpretive framework for this phenomenological and grounded theory study was a constructivist belief that students hold all of the knowledge, and it is the researcher's job to gather information from the participants (Bransford, 1999, Chapter 3; Schunk, 2012).

Constructivism is at the heart of experiential education. Experiential education is deeply rooted in Vygotsky's Social Constructivism Learning Theory where the student constructs the learning through a purposeful experience followed by a meaningful reflection. In this environment, the teacher is purely a guide on the educational journey (Breunig, 2005, p. 114; 2008).

The researcher's constructivist approach promoted student-centered, discovery learning where students used their prior knowledge in order to acquire new learning. Teachers in a constructivist classroom guide students toward building meaningful and relevant learning (Alesandrini & Larson, 2002, pp. 119-121; Bruning, Schraw & Ronning, 1999; Bruner, Goodnow, & Austin, 1956). John Creswell (2013) states social constructivists think students seek meaning and application from the world in which they live. The researcher's belief of social constructivism influenced the philosophical assumptions acquired in this research (pp. 24-25).

### **Minimizing Biases**

While it was impossible to eliminate all biases in this research, the researcher took multiple steps to minimize them. This study analyzed over 604 pieces of student and researcher data. The size of this study's data set provided grounds for multiple levels of

triangulation. Through a deep and rich description of the data set, the researcher paints a vivid picture of student learning throughout this study (Creswell, 2013, p. 252). The researcher minimized her biases by:

1. Triangulation of data: Student interviews were a random sampling of the participants. Random samplings of a research population negate charges of researcher bias in the selection of participants and ensure reliability. A random sampling provides highest assurance that those selected are a representative sample of the larger group (Creswell, 2013, p. 251; Shento, 2004, p. 65). Student selection was determined using a random generator, random.org. To provide extra assurance of impartiality, the researcher asked a colleague to generate the interviewees. The uniformity of the interview questions also provided a measure of trustworthiness in this study. If students needed additional explanation of the standardized question, the researcher noted this in her transcription of the interviews.
2. Committee Review: The dissertation committee members read and reviewed all data analyses. Debriefing exercises with the researcher's committee members, provided a peripheral safeguard that added to the reliability of this qualitative study. Through rich discussions, the committee members expounded the researcher's vision to illuminate alternative pathways and bring attention to flaws (Creswell, 2013, p. 251; Shento, 2004, p. 67).
3. The researcher analyzed all participating students' data to avoid cherry picking the outcomes. Cherry-picking is a threat to validity, and the researcher avoided this risk by analyzing all seventy-five participants.

4. Breadth of data sets- In order to minimize biases, the researcher collected 604 pieces of student and researcher data from multiple sources to communicate student understandings.
  - a. Prior and Post Interviews (18 x 2= 36 interviews)
  - b. *Titanic* Simulation Portfolio Design (66 portfolios)
  - c. *Titanic* Simulation Journals (3 journal entries each x 66= 198 entries)
  - d. *Titanic* and Tenement Simulation Reflections (69 + 72=141 simulation reflections)
  - e. Unit Overview Metaphor Reflections (75 metaphor reflections)
  - f. Unit Overview Reflection (72 unit overview reflections)
  - g. Researcher's Journal (16 entries)

### **Connection to the Processes**

Experts in the field of qualitative research, Patton (2015) and Creswell (2013) guided the researcher's philosophical assumptions throughout this study.

This study's ontological assumption observed the reality of truths learned by students through many different perspectives. The researcher believed the truths she was seeking to find would not come in one place or person but through numerous perspectives. Using a variety of data sources, the researcher derived meaning from reflections, artwork, diaries, journals, and interviews.

This study's epistemological assumption was that although there were multiple realities, the truths came from the participants. The researcher was also the teacher and

therefore engaged in a participatory role.

The axiological assumption of this study was acknowledgement of the researcher's belief in the importance of teaching social studies in elementary schools. She also held the belief that having an empathic society would make the world a more peaceful place as supported in the works of Brown (2013), Gordon (2005), Krznaric (2014), and Rifkin (2014).

This study's methodological assumption was that the researcher formulated the theory from the students' data sets. The researcher was open to finding emerging theories from the data sets.

### **Research Plan/Design**

The qualitative approach for this study was phenomenological and naturalistic inquiry. Students experienced a phenomenon together through an immigration unit. The researcher looked for common themes as they developed from the participants' data.

The naturalistic inquiry used in this study looked at real world situations as they unfolded instinctively. It was non-manipulative, non-controlling, and was open to whatever emerged from the data (Patton, 2015). The researcher presented the essence of student learning through an analysis of the data collected. Using Saldaña's and Creswell's model for coding, the researcher analyzed the information to identify codes, categories, themes, and formulated theories explaining how an experiential education unit impacted student empathy and the students' levels of engagement (Saldaña, 2008, Chapter 1; Creswell, 2013, pp. 86-87).

### Description of Participants

The research site was a magnet school in southeastern United States. The magnet school focused on academic acceleration. The school's requirements for admission were an entrance exam, letters of recommendation, and state standardized test scores. There were 385 students in kindergarten through fifth grade, and the student attrition rate was two percent. Twelve out of 385 (3.11%) students qualified for Free and Reduced Meals.

Tables 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 display the demographics of the researched school (2015), researched population, and the researched school's state and system with the most recent information available to the researcher (2011-2012). 336 out of 385 (87.27%) students were Caucasian, 21 out of 385 (5.45%) were African American, 19 out of 385 (4.93%) were Asian, eight out of 385 (2.08%) were Hispanic, and one out of 385 (.26%) were Indian students.

*Table 3.1: Demographics of Researched School in 2015*

<b>Race</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Percent of Population</b>
Caucasian	336	87.27 %
African American	21	5.45 %
Asian	19	4.93 %
Hispanic	8	2.08 %
Indian	1	.26 %

*\*Percent of Population does not add up to 100 due to rounding*

*Table 3.2: Demographics of Researched Population in 2015*

<b>Race</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Percent of Population</b>
Caucasian	68	91%
African American	3	4%
Asian	4	5%
Hispanic	0	0%
Indian	0	0%

*Table 3.3: Demographics of Researched School's State and System in 2011-2012*

<b>Race</b>	<b>State Number of Students</b>	<b>State Percent of Population</b>	<b>System Number of Students</b>	<b>System Percent of Population</b>
Caucasian	662, 045	67.8 %	26, 998	69.5 %
African American	230, 556	23.6 %	6, 360	16.4 %
Asian	17, 533	1.8 %	1, 683	4.3 %
Hispanic	64, 886	6.6 %	3, 760	9.7 %
Indian	1, 835	.2 %	65	.2 %

Approximately seventy-five fifth graders participated in this research. Table 3.4 illustrates the departmentalization of the fourth and fifth graders at the researched school. The fourth and fifth grades at this magnet school departmentalized four core subjects in a six-person team: English and Language Arts (ELA), math, science, and social studies. Students rotated among classrooms and teachers for the core subjects. The fourth grade had one ELA and one math teacher, and the fifth grade had one ELA and one math teacher. The ELA and math teachers each taught three 90-minute classes of twenty-five students (75 total students). The school has one science teacher for fourth and fifth grade and one social studies teacher for fourth and fifth grade. The science and social studies teachers each taught six 45-minute classes of twenty-five students (150 total students). The researcher taught three fourth grade and three fifth grade social studies classes; however, this study only focused on three social studies classes totaling 75 fifth grade students. Note: A few data sets did not equal 75 due to absenteeism.

*Table 3.4: Fourth and Fifth Grade Departmentalization*

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Grade Level(s)</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Class Time</b>
English and Language Arts	4 <sup>th</sup>	75	90 minutes
English and Language Arts	5 <sup>th</sup>	75	90 minutes
Math	4 <sup>th</sup>	75	90 minutes
Science	4 <sup>th</sup> and 5 <sup>th</sup>	150	45 minutes
Social Studies	4 <sup>th</sup> and 5 <sup>th</sup>	150	45 minutes

### **Researcher's Context**

The researcher has taught this immigration unit for the past ten years. While she made adjustments to lessons throughout the years, the major concepts are the same. The first step in this process was an open communication with the administration, parents, and students about the specifics of the unit. All participants knew up front that discrimination was not only a possibility but was very likely. The teacher explained the process to the students before beginning the unit. Parents received a letter (See Appendix E ) before the beginning of the unit to communicate the process. Parents could have chosen to opt out their child from this unit with no penalty. Opt out students would have been given an alternate assignments to cover the state standards taught throughout this unit; however, no parents chose this option.

### **Research Questions**

- How was student empathy affected throughout participation in an experiential immigration unit about discrimination?
- How did students transfer and apply new learning throughout participation in an experiential immigration unit about discrimination?
- How did motivation and engagement affect student ownership of learning throughout participation in an experiential immigration unit about discrimination?

### Data Collection

Tables 3.5 and 3.6 present the data collection, analysis, rationale, and research questions it answered throughout the study and culmination of the unit.

*Table 3.5: Throughout the Study-Research Data Chart*

<b>Student Data</b>	<b>Analysis</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Research Question</b>
<i>Titanic</i> Simulation Suitcase/Portfolio Design	Coding/Pictures	Student choice in their artistic expression fostered student motivation, engagement, and ownership of their own learning.	3
<i>Titanic</i> Simulation Journal	Coding	Students were able to transport themselves into the roles of their character and feel the emotions passengers felt	1, 2, and 3
<i>Titanic</i> Simulation Reflection	Coding	Gain a deeper understanding for what immigrants experienced and transfer new learning into future situations.	1, 2, and 3
Tenement Simulation Reflection	Coding	Gain a deeper understanding for what immigrants experienced and transfer that new learning into future situations	1, 2, and 3

Table 3.6: Summative Research Data

<b>Student Data</b>	<b>Analysis</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Research Questions</b>
Unit Overview Reflection	Coding	Gain a deeper understanding of how empathy, application of new learning, and motivation, engagement, and ownership of student learning throughout participation in an experiential immigration unit.	1, 2, and 3
Unit Overview Metaphor Reflection	Rubric	Students demonstrated their level of motivation, engagement, and ownership of student learning in this higher order thinking activity.	3
Interviews (Prior and Post)	Coding	Gain a deeper understanding of how empathy, application of new learning, and motivation, engagement, and ownership of student learning was affected throughout participation in an experiential immigration unit.	1, 2, and 3
Researcher's Journal	Coding	Students expressed empathy or excitement through their daily interactions with each other as well as the researcher.	1, 2, and 3

### **Descriptions of Activities Used to Generate Data**

#### **Coding**

Qualitative research is by its very nature personal. The openness and inductive nature of qualitative research allowed the researcher to have close contact with the participants. The researcher communicated the ideas of the participants through observations, activities, interviews, journaling, and reflections (Patton, 2015). The researcher collected, analyzed, assigned codes, and generated theories based on the data. She analyzed the data using Saldaña's (2013) protocol described in *The Coding Manual*

*for Qualitative Researchers*. From a grounded theory perspective, the researcher remained open to whatever truths emerged from the student data set (Chapter 1). The researcher took special precautions to ensure validity by incorporating her co-researcher. The researchers met each week to discuss the development of the coding process to ensure validity of data interpretations. If there was a question concerning a particular word or phrase a student used, she utilized this weekly meeting to seek guidance from the co-researcher. Creswell (2013) states this regulatory element in analyzing data is the most crucial technique in establishing credibility (p. 252).

### **Interviews**

Patton (2015) stated that qualitative researchers have substantial freedom to creatively adapt qualitative methods to specific situations and purposes exercising anything that comes to mind and works as a way to enter into the world and worldview of others. He explained that conversational interviews or ethnographic interviewing relied on a natural creation of questions in the natural flow of an interaction. Data gathered from conversational interviews would be different for each person interviewed depending on what questions may arise (Patton, 2015).

For this study, interviews consisted of 18 randomly selected student samples of nine females and nine males representative of the complete student population. The researcher eliminated three students, two boys, and one girl. One male student was the researcher's son. The remaining two students were new to the school. The new students had not built an adequate teacher-student relationship; however, the eliminated students participated in all other data sources.

Student interviews transpired both before and after completion of the unit. The researcher employed a semi-structured interview protocol. The interviewer asked a uniform set of five questions as a springboard for conversational interviews (See Appendix C). Questions emerged from the uniform questions, and the researcher inquired about them in the natural course of the conversation.

The interviews were approximately five to seven minutes in length and occurred following school. After the interviews, the researcher transcribed the recordings, and coded the conversation to find common words or phrases predominately used by students. A frequency table was included in the analysis as a means of determining the category, theme, and eventually a theory.

### **Suitcase assignment**

The first set of data collected from the entire participant population was student portfolios; the students refer to the portfolio as an immigrant suitcase. Students decorated their suitcase to mimic the style of the time. The researcher digitally photographed the portfolio/suitcases to have visual documentation for coding as well as the actual artifact. Saldaña (2013) stated that products created by individuals embody their personalities and therefore were a valid data set. The rationale for collecting this as data was to determine student motivation, excitement, and ownership of their learning. The researcher's journal documented student behavior during this activity. She looked for demonstrations of how students took an active role in their learning (p. 54-55).

***Titanic* simulation journals**

During the *Titanic* simulation, students randomly drew boat tickets to determine whether they are first, second, or third class. According to the class drawn, students learned the corresponding *Titanic* passenger, basic biographies, and pictures before embarkment.

Students produced data in the form of three diary entries from the perspectives of their historical identity. The first diary entry was April 9, 1912; one day before setting sail and the second diary entry was on the boat, April 14, 1912, the day before sinking. The third diary entry was from their perspective if they lived, or in the perspective of a family member learning of their death. The researcher analyzed the journal entries using a rubric to determine students' empathetic responses and ownership of their learning (See Appendix D).

Data collection occurred before, during, and after the *Titanic* simulation. During the *Titanic* Simulation experience, the researcher's journal documented student behavior observed.

**Ellis Island simulation reflections**

Students participated in an Ellis Island simulation where they role-played late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century immigrants. Students first prepared for the journey by acquiring a letter of recommendation, a mock passport, and immunization card in which they earned 'shots' based on answering instructional questions prior to emigration. The day of the simulation, students made their passage through four inspections points: Initial Documentation, Physical Ability, Health Check, and Educational Proficiency Stations.

Students tried to pass fourteen checkpoints to meet certain criteria such as demonstrate job skills by making their beds each day or create a map of their journey. As students made their way through the stations, they endured discrimination (chosen through a random draw) with actions such as wearing a blindfold while shooting a free throw or writing with their non-dominant hand.

It was the intention of the researcher to administer an Ellis Island Reflection as a data source; however, due to time constraints a written reflection did not occur. She instead she brought closure to the simulation with an oral debriefing exercise. Although this simulation does not have a separate reflection, students illustrated its impact in their unit overviews: metaphor activity, reflection, and post interviews.

### **Tenement simulation**

After studying how immigrants came to the United States at the turn of the century to seek economic, religious, and political freedom, students learned that America was not always the place where dreams came true. Hardships, discrimination, and competition forced many immigrants to seek cheap housing called tenements. Dirty tenements, or run-down apartments, crime, and filth were the norm in parts of New York City. Many Americans lived in ignorance of how the other half lived until Jacob Riis exposed the truths. Using powder flash, Riis (1890) was able to take photographs of the shoddy windowless tenements and living conditions of the poor. These pictures shocked the middle and upper class people. In 1890, he published these and other like pictures in his book *How the Other Half Lives*. Riis's commitment to social reform gained the attention of the public and politicians. His muckraking led to the passage of many

progressive reforms (Riis, 1890, p. 11; Public Broadcasting System, 2015). Riis's pictures exposed the truths of how the other half lived and created empathy for his audience. This empathy led to a public outcry for social reform.

Students read an excerpt of *How the Other Half Lives (1890)* where Riis described a tenement with twelve adults sleeping in a ten by thirteen feet room. To simulate this, the teacher taped off two ten by thirteen tenements on the blacktop outside. Students drew cards to find out their character information such as name, age, and work status. The simulation started with only six people per tenement, the Heisenberg (Germany) and the Valentino's (Italy). The researcher drew one bed, a table, stove, and door inside the windowless tenements.

Students simulated going to bed, getting ready for work, and eating breakfast. Five of the six people, including children, in each tenement had to work to afford rent and necessary supplies. Even children as young as ten had to forgo an education to get a job. The immigrant parents left their six-year-old son at home while they went to work.

A tragedy occurred at work when the Heisenberg's father died in a steel mill accident, and a textile mill accident injured the Valentino's mom. The Valentino's mother could not work, and did not receive the medical care she needed. In order to compensate for the loss of income, the families had to rent to boarders. The Heisenberg family rented a space to the Schmidt (Germany) family consisting of a mom, dad, newborn, and three children under the age of six. Similarly, the Valentino family rented to boarders to offset the mom's medical bills and loss of pay. They rented to the Micelli (Italy) family comprised of a mom, dad, newborn, and three children under the age of ten. Students then experienced how crowded tenements were, and experienced babies crying in the

middle of the night. Then, other tragedies befall the families such as those listed in Table 3.7. Each family had to draw one card (*Table 3.7*) that determined their fate.

*Table 3.7: Tenement Conditions*

One child has dysentery from unsafe living conditions and dies.	The doctor amputated the Valentino mom's arm. Effective medical care would have saved her arm.	One child works third shift
Child dies from typhoid fever due to poor hygiene habits.	The property owner increased the rent. This forces the family members to work an extra hour a day.	Samuel Gompers wanted you to go on strike to get better pay. Do you do this?

**Reflection: *Titanic* simulation, tenement simulation, and unit completion**

After the *Titanic* and Tenement Simulations, students were asked the three experiential reflection questions: what, so what, and now what. What did they experience, so what are the implications, and now that they have learned the information how did it change their thinking? The researcher coded all participants' reflections in order to determine common categories and themes. A frequency chart projected common words or phrases expressed by the students in their reflections. These were used to determine categories, themes, and eventually a theory (See Appendix F).

**Metaphor unit overview activity**

Students participated in a summative higher order thinking debriefing activity. They began by sitting in a circle where the teacher placed 40 random objects such as a whisk or a remote control. Students selected an object they felt represented something they learned from the unit. After selecting the object, students silently reflected for one minute how their object related to some aspect of their learning. After the minute was complete, they wrote a sentence describing their metaphor, and then shared them with the class. The researcher gave students the option to write a second metaphor if they desired; however, student were not required. Using a rubric, the researcher determined whether students were active in their learning (See p. 142).

**Researcher's journal**

The researcher kept a journal to document observations and not collected data as it occurred throughout the unit. She wrote 16 interactions throughout the unit to reveal student learning not shown in the other forms of data. Students expressed empathy or excitement through their day-to-day collaborations with each other as well as the researcher.

**Ethical Issues**

The researcher strived to remain neutral throughout the unit; however, neutrality does not mean detachment. Detachment could hinder the researcher's openness and understanding of the very nature of what she was studying. Patton (2015) provided

insight into the domain of qualitative inquiry, empathy, and bias. Researchers should not confuse empathy with bias. This qualitative research was dependent on the researcher's intimate experience with the participants' learning throughout the unit. This included learning through empathy. Empathy in this study meant creating a connection with the participants to facilitate her understanding of student learning (Patton, 2015). Emotions were not barriers to scientific inquiry about the human experience; rather, the capacity for empathy enhanced, enriched, and deepened human understanding (Brooks, 2009, p. 225).

It was impossible to remain unbiased throughout research; however, there were times when researchers appropriately used bias in their research. Scriven (1993) commented on the common fallacy of defining bias as a lack of belief in or concern about something. He stated that preference and commitment do not necessitate biases. There was a difference between the definition of bias as having a sense of prejudice, which could negatively affect the research outcome, and a sense of preference, support, endorsement, acceptance, and favoring of one side of an issue. The second section of the definition was appropriate bias (Scriven, 1993, p. 79). For example, the researcher was also the subjects' teacher and therefore, would always encourage her students to take an active role in their learning. This was an example of an appropriate bias.

This study was observational and not an experiment. Therefore, the researcher did not manipulate the variables. The data came from the students' work samples and interviews. It was consistent with naturalistic inquiry based upon observational descriptions of what the researcher observed and reports of her students.

The researcher has taught this immigration unit for more than ten years and strived to improve her practice and sensitivity to students this year as she has conducted

each year. The major difference in this implementation was the collection of data, coding, and developing categories, themes, and theories.

### **Limitations of Study**

As with most naturalistic inquiries, replication becomes challenging, at best. This study focused on this school and this group of students. The reader should note that the researcher had an established rapport with the students in this study. One explanation for the high rapport is that she taught the same set of students for fourth grade social studies. The researcher has built a trusting relationship with her students, and they generally desire to please her. Having a strong student-teacher relationship affects student achievement and therefore this data. John Hattie (2009) described the effect of a strong student-teacher relationship in his book *Visible Learning*. Hattie developed a way of ranking 138 influences in different meta-analyses according to their effect size on student achievement. He studied six areas that contribute to learning including student, parents, school, home, curriculum, and teaching and learning approaches. Hattie determined that the average effect size of all the factors tested was .4. Student-teacher relationship had an effect size of .72. It ranked eleventh out of 138 influences.

The reader of results in this dissertation should note this consideration when determining the outcome they might expect. The same results may not occur in a classroom where there was not a strong student-teacher relationship.

## Summary

The researcher analyzed data to find what student learning occurred during an experiential immigration unit about discrimination. The research questions driving the data were:

- How was student empathy affected throughout participation in an experiential immigration unit about discrimination?
- How did students transfer and apply new learning throughout participation in an experiential immigration unit about discrimination?
- How did motivation and engagement affect student ownership of learning throughout participation in an experiential immigration unit about discrimination?

Students experienced a phenomenon or essence of the common simulations. The research measured empathy, engagement, and application of an experiential education immigration unit about discrimination.

The researcher took steps to remain transparent throughout the dissertation by triangulating the data. A multitude of data in the form of reflections, artwork, journal entries, photographs, debriefing activities, and prior and post interviews was gathered.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

### **Overview**

History has consistently ranked among students as one of the most boring and irrelevant subjects. Students view history as merely a memorization of dead people and dates. This dissertation strived to find ways to not only make history relevant and interesting, but also facilitate students in finding a connection with history through experiential exercises such as role-playing or simulations. Experiential activities create meaningful and exciting lessons, and when implemented, aids in a heightened sense of empathy (Krznicaric, 2014).

When students create empathetic connections with history, they begin to view the world differently. It adds a new layer in their understanding that transfers to the future and leads to perspective-taking in other situations (Endacott & Brooks, 2013, p. 42). This dissertation attempted to find how an experiential immigration unit about discrimination affected student empathy, how new learning was applied and transferred to future situations, and how student motivation, engagement, and ownership of their learning was affected. The researcher examined the data, including prior and post interviews, student artifacts, reflections, journals, work samples, and the researcher's journal, to find the common meaning of the shared experience. The breadth of this data answered the three research questions, and exposed new unexpected student truths. *Table 4.1* displays all the data sources collected. The researcher collected 588 pieces of data to determine the learning that occurred for students.

### Research Questions

- How was student empathy affected throughout participation in an experiential immigration unit about discrimination?
- How did students transfer and apply new learning throughout participation in an experiential immigration unit about discrimination?
- How did motivation and engagement affect student ownership of learning throughout participation in an experiential immigration unit about discrimination?

### Overview of Data

*Table 4.1: Overview of Data*

<b>Data Sources</b>	<b>Pieces of Data</b>
Prior to Unit Interviews	18
Post Unit Interviews	18
Suitcases Artwork	66
Titanic Simulation Journals (3 per student)	198
Titanic Simulation Reflections	69
Tenement Simulation Reflection	72
Unit Overview Metaphor Activity	75
Unit Overview Reflection	72
<b>Total Pieces of Data from Eight Sources</b>	<b>588</b>

The enormity of the data established the validity of this study through its wide variety of data sources, amount of analyzed documents, and the number of participants. This study analyzed 588 pieces of student data from eight different sources for an average of 70 students in order to interpret student meaning. The variety of data sources, magnitude of analyzed data, and large subject pool creates a valid and compelling study. Some data sources were naturally more conducive to in-depth exploration of student meaning. For example, student interviews with pointed questions were easier to discern meaning than the more analytical open-ended reflections where students answered questions such as: What did they learn? What was the purpose of learning this?, and How might they use this information in the future? The researcher planned for this occurrence by presenting a wide data pool.

After analyzing all 588 sources of student data, the researcher identified only one (98.7%) student out of an average of 70 students that failed to consistently demonstrate a personal academic or affective connection to the intended learning (See Chapter 5 to view further evidence).

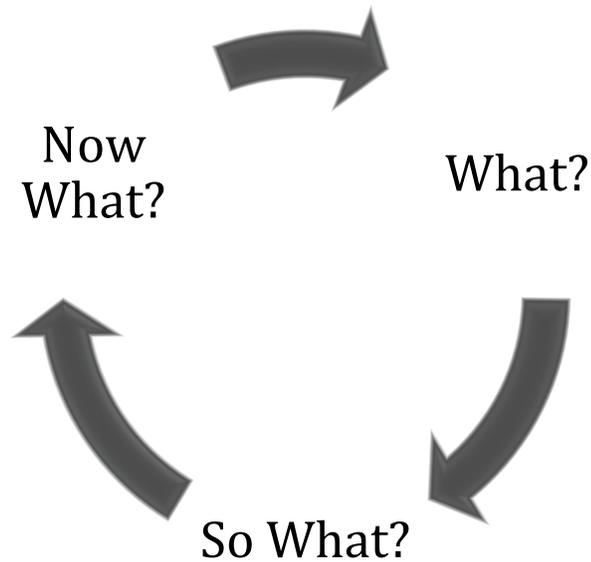
Experiential education is an effective tool used for student engagement with curriculum standards and character education. Marzano (2013) said that engagement is a necessity for student achievement, and the activities a teacher chooses have a tremendous impact on student responsiveness (p. 82). Table 4.2 describes the data collected and which component of the research questions relate.

Table 4.2: Data Matrix

Type of Data	Experiential Education	Application of Empathy and Discrimination	Student Engagement/Ownership
Interviews	X	X	X
Suitcases or Portfolios			X
<i>Titanic</i> Simulation Journals		X	X
<i>Titanic</i> Simulation Reflections	X	X	X
Tenement Simulation Reflections	X	X	X
Unit Overview Metaphor Activity			X
Unit Overview Reflection	X	X	X

### Experiential Reflection Cycle

Based on David Kolb's (1984) reflection model, many experiential educators utilize his representation by first completing a concrete experience, then advancing to a reflective observation (What?), abstracting a hypothesis (So What?), and finally to actively testing (Now What?). *Figure 4.1* displays Kolb's continuous reflection model. This open-ended type of questioning promotes a constructivist approach to learning. It was challenging at times to ascertain aspects of the researcher questions through this type of questioning; however, it was important to the researcher to leave the questions open in order to determine a student's construction of his or her learning. These challenges allowed the researcher and her dissertation chair an opportunity to chart new understandings in the field of qualitative research.



*Figure 4.1: (adapted) Kolb Experiential Reflection Model*

### **Experiential Education**

The researcher analyzed interviews, *Titanic* Simulation Reflections, Tenement Simulation Reflections, and Unit Overview Reflections to determine how an experiential immigration unit about discrimination affects student empathy, whether new learning was applicable in future situations, and if students demonstrated engagement and ownership in their learning. Student achievement for all students is one goal all educators strive to reach. One aspect of this research was to examine and give creditability to student voices. The researcher asked the students to describe an exciting history class versus a boring

history class. One participant in this research said, “An exciting history class has to grab my attention because if it is not interesting, no one will listen to it” (Question 3). This research strived to define student understandings of what is interesting and just as important, what is not. *Tables 4.3* and *4.4* display the common codes, categories, themes, and theories analyzed from student data. Although not specifically asked in the research questions, the researcher, based on student data, noted several common experiential codes.

\*The reader should note that a lower percentage does not necessarily denote a negative or positive facet. Due to the open-ended aspects of the questions, students had the freedom to generate any number of responses. If the researcher had pointedly asked students fixed questions with predetermined outcomes, the essence of a qualitative Grounded Theory Approach would be lost. The fact students mentioned aspects of a subject in their open responses out of endless options, demonstrated the impact this study had on the students.

### Experiential education: codes, categories, theme, and theory

*Table 4.3: Student Perceived Characteristics of Boring Classroom Practices-  
Codes, Categories, Theme, and Theory*

<b>Codes:</b>	<b>Categories:</b>	<b>Theme:</b>	<b>Theory:</b>
Lecture	Sources of Information	Boring History Characteristics	Student learning is diminished when they do not actively engage in learning because they are assigned inactive roles in the acquisition of knowledge, at least in part because they perceive these passive roles as “boring”.
Textbooks/Articles			
Notes			
Worksheets			
Silence	Physical Attributes		
Sitting			
Tone of Voice			
Desks in a Straight Row	Activities		
A Lot of Test/Reviews			

*Table 4.4: Experiential Education Codes, Categories, Theme, and Theory*

<b>Codes:</b>	<b>Categories:</b>	<b>Theme:</b>	<b>Theory:</b>
Guest Speaker	Sources of Information	Exciting History Characteristics	Student learning and engagement strengthen when they participate in experiential activities such as simulations. The students stated active learning increases their retention rate because they had fun and were learning at the same time.
Field Trips			
Videos/Apple TV			
Guest Speaker			
Visuals			
Acronyms			
Interactive PowerPoints			
Aesthetically Pleasing Classroom	Physical Attributes		
Teacher Self-Efficacy			
Less Grades			
Teacher Uses Humor			
Teacher Walks Around the Room			

Table 4.4 (cont.)

Simulations	Activities		
Physical Activities			
Role-Play, Plays, Dressing Up As a Historical Figure			
Hands-On/Get Involved			
Hand Motions			
Projects			
Songs	Activities		
Dance			
Scavenger Hunt			
Peer Teaching			
Holding Artifacts			

### **Experiential education: interviews**

Eighteen randomly sampled students engaged in prior to teaching the unit and after the unit or post interviews to express their opinions on the qualities of a boring history class versus an exciting history class. The researcher transcribed the data and read them once looking for common words or codes commonly expressed. Then she read the interviews again this time color-coding the common words in order to determine codes, categories, themes, and theories.

Students seem to come into this project with a self-awareness of what they perceived as a boring history class. For the most part, students did not deter from their responses both prior and post interviews. The students' opinions presented a rich description of classroom practices they considered exciting and boring. This random sampling represents the entire student population's opinion. 16 out of 18 (88.8%) of prior

interviewees and 18 out of 18 (100%) of post interviewees overwhelmingly declared that textbooks and lectures were dull and uninteresting, and did not advance student learning.

For example, one student said,

When you read that stuff out of a textbook, you are bored. When you are bored, you do not remember the information. When you have it in a song, a dance, or hand movements, you have some way to remember that (Research Question 3).

Students articulated qualities they believed embodied an interesting history class. Simulations, role-play, and other hands-on experiential activities ranked high on both the prior, 11 out of 18 (61.1%), and post, 18 out of 18 (100%), interviews as qualities of an exciting history class. One student described their favorite lesson from the previous year in their prior interview by saying, “I liked when we did the Boston Massacre last year. It felt like I was actually there. It felt realistic” (Research Question 1 and 3).

Both prior to and post unit instruction interviewees expressed a \*Seven out of 18 (38.8%) dislike for sitting too long in their seats and not moving around. Students also pointed out various components that create an environment of excitement such as the aesthetics of the room, humor, music, and the teacher’s tone of voice.

### **Experiential education: *Titanic* simulation reflection**

One major component of the experiential process is reflection. The researcher asked the students the three commonly used experiential education reflection questions (Kolb, 1984). The researcher coded sixty-nine reflections in order to determine a common theme. A frequency chart was created with common words or phrases articulated by the students in their reflections. These words or phrases established

common themes and theories.

The teacher asked the students what was learned through the *Titanic* simulation, why did it matter, and how will they use this information in the future. Although not explicitly asked, students did express experiential components. In the *Titanic* Simulation Reflection Activity, \*34 of the 69 (49.3%) students wrote how the *Titanic* experiential simulation promoted perspective-taking empathic emotions. For example, one student wrote, “I think every school should do this simulation because it really opens your eyes to what the immigrants felt” (Research Questions 1 and 3).

The students also expressed how experiential activities facilitate in retention. A student described this by stating, “This lesson helps us understand the *Titanic* better. If we act it out, then it will help us remember it longer” (Research Question 2). The student’s metacognitive statement illustrates how one may transfer learning in future study skills.

### **Experiential education: tenement simulation reflection**

After studying how immigrants came to the United States at the turn of the century to seek economic, religious, and political freedom, students learned that America was not always the place in which they had hoped. Hardships, discrimination, and competition forced many immigrants to seek cheap housing called tenements. Dirty tenements, or run-down apartments, crime, and filth were the norm in parts of New York City. To illustrate the poor conditions, students participated in a tenement simulation. First, the researcher taped off two ten by thirteen rectangles. Then she placed twelve

students into each tenement where they encountered various obstacles to overcome such as steel mill explosions, textile mill accidents, disease, and more.

After the simulation, students responded to the three commonly asked experiential reflection questions. By asking the students what they learned from the tenement simulation, experiential education was not a natural response. The current standardization of school curriculum and testing have conditioned students to only focus on content standards with shallow thinking. Narrow and rigid answers are a direct result of the questions asked (Kohn, 2001). The fact students mentioned experiential education, even though not asked, is a telling sign of the simulation's impact.

After coding and categorizing the tenement reflections, \*24 of the 72 (33.3%) students specified that experiential simulations like the tenement simulation promoted engagement and retention better than lecture, worksheets, and textbooks. For instance, one student said, "Mrs. Moore took us outside, and I think it worked better because in those fifteen to twenty minutes, I learned more than I would have otherwise" (Research Questions 2 and 3). Another student stated, "I think Mrs. Moore let us do this simulation so it would actually have an impact rather than reading it out of a book" (Research Questions 2 and 3). Students walked away from this experience knowing, at least briefly, some of the hardships immigrants faced. Experiencing the actual size of a tenement was a powerful realization for the students. Students confirmed this statement by responding with things like,

I think Mrs. Moore took us outside to do the tenement thing because if we were in the classroom we would not have gotten the chance to see how big those

tenements really were and to actually feel how horrible they were. (Research Questions 1, 2, and 3)

Another student responded, “If we had just talked about it and did a worksheet, we would not really know what it felt like to live like that” (Research Questions 1 and 3).

Many students were able to apply the lesson by expressing outrage that the immigrants’ houses were about the same size as their bathroom. Without physically experiencing the size of the tenements, the meaning behind twelve students living in a ten by thirteen room would have been lost.

### **Experiential unit overview reflection**

After completion of the entire experiential immigration unit about discrimination and the three simulations *Titanic*, Ellis Island, and Tenement, students reflected on what ideas or concepts were learned, their aha moments, and how they may apply this knowledge in the future. Although not specifically asked, \*28 of 72 (38.8%) students explained that experiential exercises such as simulations and role-play were exciting activities, and engaged them in their own learning and facilitated in retention of educational standards. This example of a student’s metacognitive reflection and application would not have occurred without this experiential simulation. She said,

When I read things out of a book about one-fourth of the time, I do not get it, or I do not try to understand it because it can be boring. This simulation really intrigued me. After spending thirty minutes in first class and then only ten minutes in third class, I realized that when I was in first class, I did not even think about the third class people. All I was thinking about

was how much fun I was having. After going to third class, I realized that on the real *Titanic* there were people who had it worse than what the simulation. (Research Questions 1, 2, and 3)

One honest student bluntly stated,

When we did the *Titanic* simulation, I thought it was a waste of learning time.

When I experienced first class, I realized I learned more from the simulation than a textbook or newspaper (Research Questions 2 and 3).

When students come to their own understanding and application through common experiences, it becomes a powerful tool in teacher practices (Briceño, 2013, para. 2).

### **Empathy and Discrimination**

The researcher analyzed interviews, *Titanic* Simulation Journals, *Titanic* Simulation Reflections, Tenement Simulation Reflections, and Unit Overview Reflections to determine how an experiential immigration unit about discrimination affects student empathy and whether the new learning was applied and transferable. Empathy, or the ability to feel with someone or perspective taking, is fundamental in accepting differences, developing relationships, gaining a worldwide perspective, and encouraging communication. Empathy is similar to a muscle that flourishes and matures with implementation and exercise. When children develop a strong sense of empathy, they are more willing to take a stand against those whom marginalize others (Tavanger, 2014).

This research strived to define student understandings and application of empathy and discrimination. The researcher utilized student interviews, simulation journals, and

reflections to determine their ability to understand and apply empathic responses in an experiential immigration unit about discrimination. *Table 4.5* displays common codes, categories, theme, and a theory examined from student data.

### **Empathy and discrimination: codes, categories, themes, and theories**

*Table 4.5: Empathy and Discrimination -Codes, Categories, Themes, and Theories*

<b>Codes:</b>	<b>Categories:</b>	<b>Theme:</b>	<b>Theory:</b>
Brenè Brown on Empathy Video	Sources of Information	Application of Empathy	Student participation in experiential activities such as simulations and role-play is conducive to empathetic responses in the participants. When students take part in perspective-taking activities such as role-play, they are able to transfer those emotions to their own lives and see historical figures as people not unlike themselves.
Storytelling			
Role Play			
Simulations			
Feels With	Physical Attributes		
Scared			
Bad			
Sad			
Hopes/Wishes			
Hate			
Low self-esteem			
Upset	Physical Attributes		
Disappointed			
Selfish			
Blessed			
Different from my life			
Angry			
Kindness			
Perspective-Taking	Activities	Application of Empathy	
Want to Help			
Relating to Own Life			
Comfort Them			
Connections			
Application			

Table 4.5 (cont.)

<b>Codes:</b>	<b>Categories:</b>	<b>Theme:</b>	<b>Theory:</b>
<i>Titanic</i> Simulation	Sources of Information	Application of Discrimination	When students participate in experiential perspective-taking activities about discrimination such as role-play, they are able to feel with historical figures and apply those feelings to their own lives.
Tenement Simulation			
Ellis Island Simulation			
Role-Play			
Mean	Physical Attributes		
Hurtful			
Screaming			
Disrespectful			
Unfair/Not Equal			
Hate			
Abusive			
Rude			
Injustice			
Feel Like Crying			
Feel Terrible	Activities		
Undeserving			
Poor			
Different Than Me			
Judging			
Bullied			
Racism			
3 <sup>rd</sup> Class			
Segregation			
Immigration			
Elizabeth Eckford Picture	Application of Discrimination		
Martin Luther King, Jr.			
Slavery			

### **Empathy and discrimination: interviews**

The researcher administered prior and post interviews to eighteen randomly selected students to explore if participating in an experiential immigration unit on discrimination would affect student empathy. The researcher asked the students to define empathy and discrimination, and then apply it in a Lewis Hines (1908) child labor photo or give an example of discrimination in history. After transcribing the interviews, the researcher coded the data searching for common words or phrases to create categories, themes, and theories. To help her with this task, she created a frequency chart.

Before the unit, only three out of 18 (16.6%) of the students interviewed could define empathy and apply it to the picture. Likewise, two out of 18 (11.1%) knew the meaning and application of the term discrimination. This is in stark contrast to the post interview. Students not only gained a working definition of the terms, but could also apply them in situations. Application of both empathy and discrimination rose to 18 out of 18 (100%) in the post interviews. As a case in point, one student's application of empathy and discrimination was demonstrated when they said,

Like that picture you showed us (Elizabeth Eckford, one of the Little Rock Nine, integrating an Arkansas high school) where this African American girl is going to school, and this woman is yelling behind her. People are crowding around her and screaming at her. The African American woman does not look happy. She does not have a smile on her face like I do when I come to school each day. I feel bad for her and if that happened to me, I would not want to smile (Research Questions 1 and 2).

Students were also able to place themselves in the shoes of the little girl looking out a factory window forced to work instead of playing with her friends or going to school. They expressed their empathy and application by stating,

I feel bad for her, but I also have empathy for her. Like if I am home from school one day when I am sick, and I see my neighbors playing outside after school when I normally go out and play with them, but I cannot because I am laying in my bed sick. I can have empathy for that girl because I know how she feels. (Research Questions 1 and 2)

### **Empathy and discrimination: *Titanic* simulation journals**

The Gilded Age at the turn of the century exemplified the caste system prevalent in America. To dramatize the sheer differences between the haves and the have not's, students participated in a *Titanic* Simulation. Students randomly drew boat tickets to establish if they were first, second, or third class. According to the class drawn, students learned the corresponding *Titanic* passenger, basic biographies, and pictures before embarkment.

Students generated data in the form of three diary entries from the perspectives of their historical passengers. The first diary entry was April 9, 1912; one day before setting sail and the second diary entry was on the boat, April 14, 1912, the day of sinking. The third diary entry was from their perspective if they lived, or in the perspective of a family member learning of their death. The researcher coded all student journal entries. She generated a rubric (See Appendix D) to determine whether student journals displayed characteristics that could be categorized as high, high average, average, and low. Students

demonstrated high empathic qualities in their journals with details and adjectives that reflected their ability to place themselves in their passenger's shoes. Forty-four of 66 (66.6%) students either scored high or high average and only 22 of 66 (33.76%) students either scored average or low average on the rubric that determined their ability to display empathy. *Table 4.6* demonstrates two student examples from this activity: high to high average and average to low.

*Table 4.6: Titanic Simulation Journals*

	<b>High to High Average</b>	<b>Average to Low</b>
Example 1	<p>“The R.M.S. <i>Titanic</i> has sunk, Joseph is dead, and I am too upset to speak. It was all like a nightmare. People were screaming and children were crying. The last words that Joseph said to me were awful, “My skin is too dark to get upon the deck.” Still crying, Louise, Simmone, and I climbed aboard lifeboat 14. To the devil with the men who refused to take Joseph to the lifeboats” (Research Question 1).</p>	<p>“I have just heard about George’s death...I wanted to see his face one last time, but they couldn’t find his body. He made a great sacrifice for the other people he saved. Our family is speechless” (Research Question 1).</p>

Table 4.6 (cont.)

Example 2	(Explored the ship) “Over all it was still a good day, until the knock at our door. As I am writing a crew member tells us from the hallway, we need to move to the 2 <sup>nd</sup> class floor. I sit up and put my feet down on the floor and stand, realizing the water is already up to my ankles. This can’t be good” (Research Question 1).	“I am so excited to go to America. I wonder how wonderful this new land will be? Will I pass the immigration test? Will I have to be deported to my homeland? Will I be separated from my family? Will they have bacon and donuts? I will miss my homeland, but I know God has so many plans for me in America” (Research Question 1).
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Students were able to show perspective taking, and were able to embed their *Titanic* passenger’s biographical information into their journals. Students were able to immerse themselves into the lives of their characters with detail through their journals.

### **Empathy and discrimination: *Titanic* simulation reflection**

After the *Titanic* simulation, the researcher administered debriefing activities in order to make meaning from the activity. She asked the students what they learned through the experience, so what are the implications, and now that they have learned the information, how will it change their thinking?

The researcher coded the *Titanic* reflections, researcher’s journal, and photographs of the simulation, to determine categories, a theme, and a theory. 61 out of 69 (88.4%) of students were able to identify and apply empathy and discrimination in

history. Examples include students verbalizing, “I am so glad that we were taught through a simulation other than out of a textbook because you got to feel how people actually felt on the *Titanic*” (Research Question 1, and 2). Another example, “I think we did this activity to show that many children were fatherless and women were husbandless” (Research Question 1).

The researcher recorded one student’s response with a photograph. The researcher could not be present in all three classes in the *Titanic* simulation, therefore, she asked a parent to photograph the experience. Later when reviewing the photos, she noticed a picture of second-class students praying. The child leading the prayer was portraying the passenger, Father Thomas Byles. Before sharing their meal together, this child initiated a prayer. According to the parent photographer, he asked that God would watch over their travels and bless them in the New World (Research Questions 1, 2, and 3).

Another student’s passenger was a three-year-old boy. He was so into his passenger that he never broke character all day, even when the simulation was complete (Research Question 3).

Students also expressed outrage at the discrimination demonstrated in the Gilded Age. The researcher journal and photographs reveal evidence of their outrage. For example, one student said, “This made me want to not discriminate against the people who have less money than I do” (Research Questions 1 and 2). Another example, “I can help stop discrimination from happening again. We should help the poor instead of shutting them down” (Research Questions 1 and 2).

The researcher caught another angry moment in a photograph. As the researcher was debriefing the students after the simulation, they were complaining that creating the

paper chain in third class was difficult. A few of the students even stated that they felt sorry for their parents who have to work all day long. The researcher asserted that although third class was difficult, the students only had to endure it for thirty minutes, and some immigrants had to live in terrible conditions their whole life. A first class student surprisingly said, “Thirty minutes! That only seemed like ten minutes.”

A third class student standing right next to the researcher angrily attested to that statement by saying, “You only thought it was ten minutes because you were living the high life in first class while the rest of us were working ourselves to the bones in third class” (Research Question 1, 2, and 3).

The researcher had her cell phone in her pocket and was able to capture that moment with a picture. This illustrated how passionately students were able to step into the shoes and roles of their selected passenger and experience a piece of what those who lived through the incident must have felt.

### **Empathy and discrimination: tenement simulation reflection**

After experiencing the hardships living in a tenement, or small filthy apartments, held for early twentieth century immigrants coming to America, students demonstrated application of empathy and discrimination through their reflections. 64 of the 72 (88.8%) participating students were able to show empathy for immigrants. Experiencing this simulation forced the students to be more empathic towards immigrants, and they applied it to today by realizing they should not complain and be thankful for what they have. Students were able to put themselves in the immigrants’ shoes, and realize the hardships they went through. Students were also able to apply this simulation to their own lives.

For example, students expressed empathy with statements such as,

I had a big aha moment when I was laying down to go to sleep (in the simulation).

It was like I was feeling what they were feeling and then I realized it would be really hard to live back then (Research Questions 1, 2, and 3).

Another student said,

I could not imagine having to live like this. Everyone living in one room, there would be so much snoring and can you imagine the smells? I really do not think I would survive during those times (Research Questions 1, 2, and 3).

The empathic responses displayed by students manifested into thankfulness and application in their futures. For instances, students reflected and compared the simulations to their own lives by statements such as,

This lesson will help me with growing up. Sometimes when I do not get my way, I will think back to the kids my age who were working and would rather be at school. I will think about this when I whine about going to school (Research Questions 1, 2, and 3).

Another student said, “What I can take away from this is that life isn’t always going to be fair. You just have to roll with it” (Research Question 2).

Students also grasped the meaning behind discrimination when they expressed things like, “There are so many homeless people in the world right now, and they deserve to be treated like you or me. Everyone is the same on the inside” (Research Questions 1 and 2).

They were also able to apply this discriminatory activity to other instances in history such as, “This simulation is like slavery because immigrants were treated

similarly” (Research Question 2). Students understood that immigrants were just people, and that they are all the same on the inside and did not deserve to be treated differently.

### **Empathy and discrimination: unit overview reflections**

After completion of the *Titanic*, Ellis Island, and Tenement simulations, students participated in the metacognitive exercise of reflecting on their own learning. Simulations and role-play activities gave the students opportunities for empathic responses that carried over in future situations. Students were able to empathize with immigrants and apply these emotions in their own lives. 71 of the 72 (98.6%) students displayed empathic qualities in their writing by expressing such emotions as,

I had my aha moment when we started the simulations, and I felt that I was stepping into the history. Once I stepped in the classroom, it was just a non-stop movie of historical events, people, and wars. All of it was just an arm length away, and I could just feel for those people (Research Questions 1 and 3).

Another student wrote,

When we got completely involved and in character, it was easier to be that person. Then you realized, “Oh, I am being just like that person.” When everyone got into character, it felt like you were really on the *Titanic* (Research Questions 1 and 3).

49 out of 72 (68.05%) of students were also able to apply empathy in future situations such as,

I realize even though I am just one person, I can still make a difference. You were not born a racist; you were born to spread joy to the world. I want to live out my

Savior's name and spread joy and happiness to others (Research Questions 1 and 2).

Another student wrote,

This simulation will really get me to break out of my shell. That means to not just look at my life, but also look at all the people around me. Look at all of the hurting people in the world and do something about it (Research Question 2).

Students were able to recognize discrimination and expressed a need for it to stop.

45 of the 72 (62.5%) students voiced their outrage and passion for ending discrimination by stating,

I want to stop discrimination. No, we need to stop discrimination. Someone said, 'You do not need to do it all, you need to do all you can.' This means that every little thing counts. We are the next generation. We are the change (Research Question 2).

Another student said,

Discrimination was not just in the past, but it still happens everyday, and that is why we are here to help stop discrimination and spread joy, love, and happiness to people who live in poverty (Research Question 1 and 2).

Teaching students to have empathy for the marginalized or oppressed and be the change they wish to see in the world is an essential goal for twenty-first century students.

They are the next generation that will be future change agents.

### **Student Motivation, Engagement, and Ownership**

The researcher analyzed interviews, *Titanic* Simulation Portfolios, *Titanic* Simulation Journals, *Titanic* Simulation Reflections, Tenement Simulation Reflections, Unit Overview Metaphor Activity, and Unit Overview Reflections to determine how an experiential immigration unit about discrimination affected student motivation, engagement, and ownership of their learning. Student ownership of their learning requires a growth mindset where students exhibit grit and acceptance of failure as a process towards reaching their goals. When a student has efficacy for his or her own learning, one outcome is academic excellence (Pajares, 1996). This is not a taught skill, but rather teachers can facilitate it by creating an environment where students have choice and failure is encouraged as a means to learn from their mistakes (Briceño, 2013). *Table 4.7* displays common codes, categories, a theme, and a theory from the student data in order to determine student motivation, engagement, and ownership.

### Student ownership: codes, categories, theme, and theory

*Table 4.7: Student Motivation, Engagement, and Ownership: Codes, Categories, Theme, and Theory*

<b>Codes:</b>	<b>Categories:</b>	<b>Theme:</b>	<b>Theory:</b>
Pay Attention	Student Behaviors	Attributes of Student Ownership	Participation in experiential activities such as simulations, create student engagement and therefore produces pride and initiative in their work. Students have a stake in their own learning when they take an active role in their learning. When students have freedom to determine their own learning path, they become intrinsic learners who take ownership in their education.
Test Taking Strategies			
Studying			
Listening			
Not Procrastinating			
Take Notes			
Organized			
Check Over Work			
Do Not Watch the Clock			
Personal Responsibility in Displaying Excellence			
Asking Questions			
Going Above What Was Asked			
Self-Reliance			
Self-Motivation			
Pride			
Initiative			
Motivation to Learn			

### Student ownership: interviews

Interviews before beginning the unit revealed that students did not understand the meaning of student agency. The researcher had to explain the question further to get a response. She asked, “What does it mean to take ownership of your learning?” After the researcher transcribed the interviews, she coded common words or phrases. Next, the

researcher created a frequency chart in order to determine common categories, a theme, and a theory.

In the interviews before the study, five of the 18 (27.7%) students thought taking ownership of their learning meant to complete their homework, and nine of the 18 (50%) students thought ownership meant studying for test. This was a typical response from students before the beginning of the unit, “Having ownership in your own learning means to study, take notes, and try your best on a test.”

In contrast, after the research unit, 13 of the 18 (72.2%) students stated that taking initiative and pride of their learning showed ownership. For example, one student said, “Ownership means keeping up with your own stuff. It also means not just doing it for good grades but to learn, too” (Research Question 3).

Another student said,

You can take pride in your learning. You can study without your parents having to tell you. You can take responsibility in what your grade is, and listening and paying attention during class (Research Question 3).

When the researcher asked one boy how he takes ownership of his learning, he quoted a poster hanging in the school called, P.R.I.D.E or Personal Responsibility in Displaying Excellence. This poster has been hanging in the school for years; however, the student did not mention it in the prior interviews. It was only after the research unit that this student noticed it and applied it to this question (Research Question 3).

### Student ownership: suitcase portfolio design

The researcher gave students an immigrant suitcase or portfolio to display their work throughout the unit. The contents included an inspection card, passport, immunization card, reference letter, map of journey, boat ticket, life skills card, boot camp notes, and journals. Saldaña (2013) maintains that artifacts made by individuals personify whom they are and therefore qualitative researchers can use them as a data set. The researcher only asked students to decorate the front of the portfolio; however, it was optional to decorate the back and inside if, they so desired. Student choice in how they decorated the suitcase was an opportunity to demonstrate student engagement and therefore student ownership of their learning. Students had over one week to complete; however, most students finished it early and proudly brought it in to share with their teacher. This demonstrates how student choice may aid in facilitation of student engagement and ownership (Research Question 3).

The researcher assessed students using the following rubric to evaluate student motivation, engagement, and ownership. Table 4.8 demonstrates how the researcher evaluated student suitcase designs.

Table 4.8: Suitcase Design Rubric

High	High Average	Average	Low
Students design went above expectations- Possessed <b>four</b> qualities- Time consuming, lots of effort, pride in their work, neat, creative, and did more than was expected	Students design went above expectations- Possessed <b>two</b> qualities- Time consuming, lots of effort, pride in their work, neat, creative, and did more than was expected	Student did exactly what expected and <b>no more</b>	Their work possessed at <b>least two</b> qualities- messy, <b>lack</b> of effort, very <b>little time</b> was given to this project, or showed a <b>lack</b> of creativity

The researcher scored students' suitcases or portfolios either high, high average, average, and low. She evaluated the suitcases or portfolios looking for common themes that emerged. Student engagement and ownership of their learning was determined if the student went above expectations by decorating more than was asked, the time and effort put into the design, and creativity and neatness. After analyzing the data, the researcher placed the suitcases or portfolios in the four categories of either high, high average, average, or low. The researcher asked an outside evaluator to analyze the suitcases. She asked them to place the portfolios into the same four categories using the rubric for evaluation. The outside evaluator and the researcher's opinions were almost consistent. The researcher and the other evaluator reassessed and discussed those that were not consistent to come to a common decision.

Students displayed engagement and ownership of their learning through this aspect of the *Titanic*/Ellis Island experiential unit. Students took initiative in their work by going beyond expectations, and they showed pride in their work with the time it took to create their artifact. Students were so pleased with their work that they completed the assignment early and proudly brought it in to share with the teacher. Students were so excited about the upcoming unit and their *Titanic* passenger, that they readily exhibited ownership of their learning by the work's quality. The researcher journal noted students completing their suitcases before the due date and excitedly sharing them with the researcher.

Fifty-six of the 66 (84.78%) students scored high or high average on this project exemplifying outstanding student motivation, engagement, and ownership of their learning (Research Question 3).

**Student ownership: *Titanic* simulation reflection**

After completion of the *Titanic* simulation, the researcher asked students to reflect on their experience. By asking what they learned through the *Titanic* unit, the question did not naturally lend itself to determining student ownership; however, the researcher felt it important to maintain the essence of experiential reflections. \*Ten of the 69 (14.4%) students demonstrated student initiative through their writing by citing,

I think with this information I'm going to research more about the *Titanic*. I want to find out what really happened the night of April 15, 1912. I think it would be amazing to go down to the wreckage and see the biggest moving object at the time. (Research Questions 3)

The researcher noted other examples of student motivation and engagement in her researcher's journal. For example, two different parents emailed the researcher stating after their children begged and pleaded, they had to take them to the *Titanic* Museum in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee over fall break. One of those students emailed the researcher a photograph of her in front of the *Titanic* model. The other student brought back two books to donate to the class library from their trip (Research Question 3).

Students also demonstrated engagement and assumed ownership of their learning by telling the researcher they checked out books from the library or watching documentaries on the subject (Research Question 3). 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills such as initiative, assessing, and analyzing information are just one of the benefits when students take ownership for their learning (Wagner, 2008).

**Student ownership: *Titanic* simulation journal**

The researcher asked students to write three journal entries from the perspectives of their chosen passengers. Forty-four of the 66 (66.6%) students scored high or high average in their ability to display ownership of their learning in their *Titanic* journals by going above expectations and writing more than was required. Only four of the 66 (6.06%) students were below expectations.

**Student ownership: tenement simulation reflection**

After completion of the tenement simulation, students were asked three experiential reflection questions: what, so what, and now what. The researcher coded the reflections for common words or phrases. Instances of engagement and ownership of their learning included students expressing motivation for continuation of learning outside of the classroom. As a case in point, one student answered the now what portion of their reflection with,

I would want to research this more because I might could make a blog or make something people can see and they can know more about it and research it and tell their friends (Research Questions 2 and 3).

\*Six of the 72 (8.3%) students expressed ownership of their learning through their reflection. The researcher also recorded other examples of students taking an active role in their learning through her researcher journal. An example included,

A student went to New York City over fall break and went to the Tenement Museum on the lower eastside. She also went to Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty. Her mom told the researcher the only reason they were going to these

was because she was so excited by the projects we did in class, she insisted on going there for fall break (Research Questions 1, 2, and 3).

Students were excited about this activity and were motivated to take their education into their own hands by researching and learning more about immigration.

### **Student ownership: unit overview metaphor activity**

Students took part in a summative higher order thinking debriefing activity. They started by sitting in a circle where the teacher placed approximately 40 random objects in the middle. Students chose an object they felt signified something they learned from the immigration/discrimination unit. After selecting the object, students silently reflected for one minute how their object related to some aspect of their learning. After the minute ended, they wrote a sentence describing their metaphor, and then shared them with the class. The researcher gave students the option to write an alternate metaphor using an object they wanted, but another student chose first. Using a rubric, the researcher determined student engagement, application of new learning, and taking initiative in their own learning from the experiential immigration unit. *Table 4.9* displays the rubric the researcher used to determine student retention, creativity, higher-order thinking skills, and student initiative.

Table 4.9: Unit Overview Metaphor Rubric

<b>Trait:</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Key Knowledge</b>	Student work demonstrated a <i>deep</i> understanding of the content taught.	Student work demonstrated an <i>adequate</i> understanding of the content taught.	Student work demonstrated a <i>vague</i> understanding of the content taught.	Student work <i>failed</i> to demonstrate knowledge of the content taught.
<b>Creativity</b>	Student work showed <i>high</i> levels of creativity and originality	Student work showed <i>adequate</i> creativity and originality	Student work showed <i>minimal</i> creativity and originality	Student work showed <i>no</i> creativity and originality
<b>Thinking</b>	Student work demonstrated the ability to <i>synthesize</i> information <i>figuratively</i>	Student work demonstrated the ability to <i>apply</i> information <i>figuratively</i>	Student work demonstrated their ability to <i>comprehend</i> the information <i>literally</i>	Student work demonstrated the ability to <i>recall</i> facts <i>literally</i> that were previously learned.
<b>Student Initiative</b>	Student work demonstrated <i>more than was expected and wrote at least two metaphors</i>	Student work demonstrated <i>more than was expected or wrote at least two metaphors.</i>	Student work demonstrated <i>exactly what was expected and only wrote one metaphor.</i>	Student work demonstrated <i>less than what was expected and only wrote one metaphor.</i>

This metaphoric activity required students to demonstrate higher order thinking skills, and gave them the opportunity to stretch and grow their thinking. Students were allowed critical time to reflect and mediate on their learning. Students gathered in a circle and took turns describing their metaphor. The rules of the activity state that students not sharing and the teacher are not allowed to give any positive or negative feedback during circle time. An environment of safety where students feel comfortable to expose their vulnerability is necessary for this exercise. The teacher/researcher gave students the space

to share their metaphors with no judgment in front of their peers. Even if some students' responses were not equivalent to others, they were able to listen and participate in the metacognitive activity of evaluating other metaphors to their own.

Students were only required to write one metaphor; however, they were given the option to write an additional one on the back with an object they did not get the opportunity to choose the first time. 70 out of 75 (93.3%) of students chose to complete a second metaphor and went above expectations although they were not required. Students were motivated to display ownership in their learning in this activity (Research Question 2 and 3). Table 4.10 display student averages on the four components of the rubric, the overall averages, and the standard deviation of each. Table 4.11 illustrates student examples from the metaphor activity that were all fours, between three and four, and between three and two. No student scored below two.

*Table 4.10: Student Motivation, Engagement, and Ownership Unit Overview*

*Metaphor Results*

<b>Out of 4</b>	<b>Key Knowledge</b>	<b>Creativity</b>	<b>Higher Order Thinking</b>	<b>Student Initiative</b>	<b>Overall Average</b>
X=	3.65	3.47	3.28	3.72	3.54
$\sigma=$	.557	.622	.745	.508	.53

*Table 4.11: Unit Overview Metaphor Examples*

<b>All 4s</b>	<b>Between 3-4</b>	<b>Between 3-2</b>
Umbrella-The rich people in the Gilded Age were under the umbrella and couldn't see the poor people on top. The rich people didn't get wet and don't notice anything is wrong. They don't see the poor getting wet and soggy from discrimination.	Wisk-When immigrants are discriminated; it makes people have hard emotions. It stirs up their feelings.	Pill Bottle-When immigrants were sick, they didn't get the medicine or treatment they needed.
Flashlight-Jacob Riis shined a light on discrimination with his pictures of tenements and the poor immigrants.	Puzzle-The monopolist didn't get all the pieces of how child labor was wrong.	Bird Feather-Parents always say that if there's a bird feather on the ground, it has diseases. It represents all the diseases immigrants got.
Bird Feather-When a bird loses a feather; it can never be taken back. Just like when a person discriminates against another person; even if they say they are sorry, it will never be back to like it was before.	Soap-When someone is mean to you, they squirt you out over and over until you feel like there's nothing left to squirt out.	Magic Wand-People got sent back to their home country because they did not have something they needed. The wand was poofing them away.

### **Student ownership: overview unit reflection**

Students participated in a traditional experiential reflection summative activity.

The researcher asked student open ended questions: "What did they learn throughout this

unit, what was their aha moment, and how will they use this information in the future?”

\*Nine of the 72 (12.5%) students displayed traits of ownership of their learning in their reflections. Students stated, “Mrs. Moore showed us that you only get out what you put into it,” or “We can have a more peaceful place if we can teach others how to connect with other people even if we do not know them” (Research Questions 2 and 3).

The researcher journal demonstrates student engagement by the excitement students showed day to day throughout the unit. The pride in their learning was evident through the photographs taken as well. Students invested in their passengers by dressing and acting the part. For example, one girl showed engagement and ownership in her learning by creating French francs and journal because her passenger was emigrating from France, or another girl bringing two dolls with her to the *Titanic* simulation because her passenger had two babies (Research Questions 1 and 3). These examples illustrate the impact this unit had on students.

## **Student Surprises**

### **Student voice**

Student voice is a vital aspect in sound educational pedagogy (Chapman, 20013). Students are the recipients of the knowledge educators seek to impart. Participants of this study taught the researcher that it is crucial to simply give students a voice to express methods in which he or she best learns. By simply taking the time to sit and interview a sampling of the participants in this dissertation, the researcher learned essential information.

Students know what they want and do not want in a school. When asked what their favorite lesson was over the course of two years, one student replied,

Student: “My favorite lesson was the Ellis Island simulation.”

Teacher: “Why was this your favorite? Weren’t you yelled at and discriminated against?”

Student: “Yes, I was mistreated but it was way more fun than reading an article about Ellis Island.”

This student’s statement made the researcher realize this type of dialogue should be a commonplace in every classroom.

### **Need for reflection**

The most obvious aspect that emerged from the data was the need for reflection. For example, after the tenement reflections, the researcher noticed many students expressing things like, “I am so grateful to live in this time period and have beautiful houses. The world has changed so much,” or “I will never forget how much life is easier today and how easy people today have it.” The researcher assumed students knew people still lived in conditions such as tenements today. If it had not been for the reflections, the researcher would have never known the misconception the students held. Immediately, after reading this data, she brought in a podcast about migrant workers in the United States living in terrible conditions. In the podcast, it referenced a migrant worker having to sleep in the bathtub because there was no more space for him to sleep elsewhere (Glass, 2015). This was an eye-opening experience for both the students and the researcher.

One child went to the Dominican Republic over fall break on a mission trip. She was one of the students to express how thankful she was that people did not live like this anymore. After returning, she brought back pictures and stories of poor living conditions there.

Reflections were important to the researcher, but students also expressed a need for it. One student illustrated this by saying,

If I could do this activity again, I would take it more seriously. I was laughing and playing around, but now that I am writing it out, I see how much of a problem it was and still is today in other countries (Research Questions 1, 2, and 3).

The impact of the simulation would have been lost had a reflection not taken place. One example was when the researcher asked one of the interviewed students what discrimination meant. He did not answer for what seemed several minutes. Many times during those awkward minutes, the researcher was tempted to move to another question; however, she did not. Finally, he literally had an aha moment and stated, "Slavery! Yes, slavery. That was an obvious choice because of their skin color they were made slaves." Had the researcher not waited, the student would not have had his aha moment. Many times educators feel such immense pressure to cover the standards that they move on without giving the students valuable wait time.

### **Summary**

Through the series of interviews, art pieces, diary entries, higher order thinking activities, and reflection, the researcher saw empathic responses, application of new

learning, and student ownership of their learning emerge but other unintended data as well. When a teacher structures a learning experience by immersing students into history through simulations, they were able to demonstrate empathy, create meaningful realizations about empathy, and take ownership of their learning. The researcher also learned that student voice is a vital component in student achievement as well as the need for student reflection in order to make meaning.

## **CHAPTER FIVE:**

### **DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

It is not the critic that counts; not the man who stumbles... The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; ... if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly (Roosevelt, T., 1910).

Theodore Roosevelt delivered this speech in Paris, France in 1910. Little did he know challenging times were ahead for all of Europe. In just four short years, much of the world would be engaged in the Great War. His prolific words not only inspired the listeners that day, but also they have relevance in today's educational system.

Roosevelt's speech encourages tenacity and grit. Teachers must move into the role of gladiators stepping into the educational arena to fight for the instruction of the whole child. In this process, educators' may have trials and tribulations, but it is crucial that they enter.

We must set sail into a sea of uncertainty, knowing full well that storms and rough seas lie ahead. But we must set sail, simply because the stakes are so high. These are our children, our future. They deserve to be educated at high levels, not merely required to attend school. (Eaker & Keating, p. 2012)

Teaching to the whole child means ministering to both their emotional and academic needs. Educators must embed ethical characteristics into all instructional

decisions. This includes facilitating empathy in order for students to connect with history (Noddings, 2005, p. 11).

Teaching students to connect with historically diverse yet emotionally similar people who immigrated to the country and faced discrimination, builds a sense of empathy that will guide them in future decisions. These students are the future generation that will prevent discriminatory discords and promote a more empathetic world (Bersh, 2013, p. 50).

Experiential activities such as simulations and role-play are vehicles that take students from educational apathy to engagement on the road to empathy (Waldo, Hermanns, & Lily, 2014). When students are engaged in their learning, their self-efficacy will increase, and they will ultimately take ownership of their learning. Students that drive their own educational vehicle will have autonomy in their learning and therefore have higher academic success (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003).

This dissertation examined how an experiential immigration unit about discrimination affected students' empathy, how they applied and transferred new learning, and the effect it had on motivation, engagement, and ownership of their learning. This study followed three fifth grade classes at a public magnet school in order to determine the impact and potential influences of participating in an experiential immigration unit about discrimination. The extensiveness of the data set established the validity of the study, while at the same time; revealed the richness of student learning throughout the unit.

## **Purpose**

After discovering that students did not connect with historical figures or view them as people with similar qualities as themselves, the researcher searched for ways to make history relevant and increase students' empathy. The purpose of this study was to gain insight into how experiential activities such as role-play and simulations provide meaningful experiences for students and contribute to engaging opportunities that facilitate empathic responses. When students participate in simulations, they are more prone to have empathic responses and form connections with others (Endacott & Brooks, 2013, p. 53).

One of the purposes of history is to develop curriculum civic-minded citizens with the ability to make informed decisions. Teaching students to become empathic to the plight of historical figures, the hardships they faced, and how they persevered obstacles, models the fortitude and grit needed in becoming progressive reformers (McLennan, 2008, p. 451). When students cultivate their empathic responses, they will have a greater tendency to intervene when they see injustice for the marginalized leading to a more empathetic society in the future (Tavanger, 2014).

This dissertation also explored the effect an experiential immigration unit about discrimination had on a student's motivation, engagement, and ownership of their learning. When students take pride in their work, they will be motivated to achieve academic excellence. Student ownership of their learning is not something an educator or a parent can force upon a child. Students control their intrinsic motivation; however, educators may foster this by creating an environment that encourages a growth mindset

and the teacher becomes a learning partner rather than a depositor (Tomlinson & Murphy, 2015, Chapter 1; Dweck, 2006; Jensen, 2008, p. 117).

One way to expedite this process is through experiential education. Experiential education allows students to find their own route to a goal rather than forcing one pathway to learning (Frank, 2013, p. 31). It also creates an environment where failure is not only acceptable, but a means to accomplishing one's goals. When students fight through the struggles and challenges of learning, they take ownership in their successes (Duckworth, A. & Seligman, 2005, p. 942).

### **What? Key Findings**

This dissertation provides insight to the following research questions:

- How was student empathy affected throughout participation in an experiential immigration unit about discrimination?
- How did students transfer and apply new learning throughout participation in an experiential immigration unit about discrimination?
- How did motivation and engagement affect student ownership of learning throughout participation in an experiential immigration unit about discrimination?

### **Empathy**

The extensiveness of this dissertation's data revealed that experiential exercises such as role-play and simulations positively affected a student's sense of empathy.

Students expressed empathetic responses with historical figures and were able to connect

with them on a personal level. Not only were students able to define empathy, they were also able to apply and transfer the new learning into alternate situations. The broad range of the data set indicated that students immersed in history and invested in the outcomes of people, perspective taking, or empathy, was a natural outcome.

### **Applying and transferring new learning to future situations**

Once students felt empathy for a historical situation or person, the students' eyes opened to the plight of others. For example, students were outraged after they were shown a picture of Elizabeth Eckford, one of the Little Rock Nine who integrated a segregated school in 1957, walking into a crowd of angry civilians whose hatred of her was based merely on the color of her skin. They also were able to empathize with her by stating,

There is this white woman yelling behind the African American woman. People are crowding around her and screaming at her. The African American woman does not look happy. She does not have a smile on her face like I do when I come to school each day. I feel bad for her and if that happened to me, I would not want to smile.

Another example occurred after studying slavery. One student stated,

I have empathy for slaves, so when your mom tells you to clean your room, you may get mad or upset with her, but slaves had to work all day cleaning and picking cotton.

### **Demonstrating student engagement and ownership**

Students demonstrated engagement and ownership in the creations of their portfolios, the metaphor game, and their mindsets by exceeding expectations. They exhibited their enthusiasm with their ability to totally immerse themselves into their roles as immigrants. The students also displayed grit and perseverance when faced with simulated discrimination and were able to apply the feeling of discomfort to even a fraction of what immigrants must have felt.

### **Additional Findings**

In Chapter 4 (p. 102), the researcher noted only one student failed to consistently demonstrate a personal academic or affective connection to the intended learning. Recently, the student wrote an essay assignment in his English and language arts class. His teacher assigned the class to write an essay of someone who has inspired them. Out of the multitude of possibilities, the same student who repeatedly failed to show a connection with the unit wrote about the researcher who was also his social studies teacher. In the essay, the student said that the teacher inspired him to love social studies and school by being caring, humorous, and creative. He goes on to say,

Mrs. Moore is very creative. She always likes to try new things with us. Mrs.

Moore is always thinking “outside of the box”. She always gives us awesome projects to do. Mrs. Moore always does really fun and great simulations.

He also said,

Mrs. Moore has inspired me to love school and history because she is hilarious, she is very caring, and she is very creative. This is why she is the most inspiring and my favorite teacher.

In light of this evidence, the researcher can conclude all students connected with the research. Although the researcher/teacher received the essay five months after the end of the unit, it is clear the simulation was engaging for him. His immediate lack of connection with the research did not indicate the absence of learning but rather just a need for additional time to let the ideas ruminate and develop.

### **So What? Interpretation of the Findings**

#### **Empathy**

Empathy, or the ability to feel with someone, is an essential skill for students that must be cultivated in a nurturing environment such as a classroom. Teachers must model empathic responses for their students and plan activities where it may be developed. Empathy is a skill educators can encourage and reiterate to become second nature (Lahey, Loeber, Burke, & Applegate, 2005, p. 389-399; McLennan, 2008, p. 454). Activities such as simulations, role-play, and debates become a stepping-stone in reaching historical empathy (Brooks, 2009, p. 220). This research confirms the notion that fostering empathy through meaningful experiential activities heightens empathy. Students were able to exhibit empathic responses throughout the unit. For example, after the *Titanic* simulation, one student wrote, “The purpose of this was to give us the experience of what these lost souls went through that used to not have a story, but we now gave them one.” Another student confirmed this by saying,

I think we studied this because it is one thing to just learn about it, but when you put yourself in history in a real person's place and see what it is like to be that person it can be terrifying or amazing.

Konrath et al. (Konrath, O'Brien, Hsing, 2011, p. 180-198) led a study that revealed a 40% decrease in college students' self-reported levels of empathy over the last thirty years. They point to social isolation as a possible cause. The results of this study provide evidence of an increase in student empathetic responses. The research in this study illuminates a new element in Konrath's study. First, it extends the age of the participants. Second, it confirms Konrath's assertion that when students make connections with other people, their level of empathy will increase. If social isolation was a probable cause of the decrease, it is plausible that social togetherness would have the opposite effect.

Students were also able to connect with historical figures through experiential exercises such as simulations. When students inspect history with a new lens and view them as people with similarities, true historical empathy has occurred (Stripling, 2011, p. 75; Endacott & Brooks, 2013, p. 53). The results of this study confirmed the idea that when students participate in experiential simulations they will naturally compare and contrast the dichotomy with the historical group studied. For example, one student related the tenement simulation to her own life by saying,

I felt so sorry for all the family members to be sleeping in the same room. Can you imagine listening to family members snoring or babies crying or having to sleep on the ground? I would never go to sleep.

### **Application and transferring new learning**

At the beginning of this study, the researcher noted that students outwardly expressed emotions when viewing a Civil War picture of a dead horse, yet appeared apathetic when seeing dead soldiers. She discovered students saw historical figures as characters from a movie or a video game. The critical leap between fact and fiction is for students to have authentic experiences with history. When students connect with history, it no longer seems like an irrelevant collection of dead people and dates. They view historical figures as real people who struggled and overcame obstacles (Clabough & Yancie, 2016). This research confirms these ideas with examples such as, “I learned that the people who died on the Titanic were real people. They weren’t from a comic book series or a TV show”, or as another student bluntly stated, “I learned that this was not just a little old story, but these were real people and not just made up characters, so I will take this seriously.”

Teaching students about the struggles of diverse people, both past and present, is an instrument educators can use in preparation for present day society. Education and contact are two methods of overcoming prejudices and discrimination. When students see social injustices in the world, they will recall Martin Luther King Jr.’s (1963) words, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere (p. 2).” Fostering student empathy will inspire the future generations to fight for inequalities they see in the future (Bersh, 2013, p. 50; Krzanaric, 2014). This dissertation confirmed these ideas by students saying,

Now that I have known what it was like on the Titanic, I will not think of people bad if they are homeless or not as wealthy as me.

Another student confirmed the research by saying,

This experience will help me be more fair to everyone because I know that the people that worked the most, got the least. It makes me want to care for others.

### **Student motivation, engagement, and ownership of learning**

Student motivation and engagement are key components in academic success. When a student's belief in their abilities is high, they will persevere through obstacles, strive harder to meet goals, and will soar to new heights (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 1995, 2012). Students who are engaged in their learning and have a high self-efficacy will take control of their own education. When they take ownership of their learning, they will step into the driver's seat in their educational journey (Briceño, 2013, para. 2). Students in this study displayed engagement and ownership of their learning by their actions and work they displayed. For example, after the completion of the unit, students were able to express the attributes a person who has ownership embodied. Their student portfolios, *Titanic* journals, and metaphor activity all confirmed the idea that when students are engaged in their learning, they will exceed expectations and begin taking control for their own learning.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Readers of this dissertation should consider several limitations when reviewing the results. This study is subject to the following four limitations.

- 1) The limitations described in chapter three are still relevant. A strong student-teacher relationship affects academic progress. Replication of this research in another situation may not yield the same results. The researcher's classroom

climate is one of trust where students feel comfortable being vulnerable. The researcher has also taught this same set of students for two years. These factors may have influenced the results of this research.

2) An additional limitation was the timing (See Time Frame) and the nature of the reflection questions. In order to complete the Titanic reflection before a weeklong break, the reflection was rushed. The opportunity to reflect and time on the task should allow student enough time to process their own meaning.

3) Another limiting factor of this type of study is the amount of time it takes to adequately facilitate a simulation followed by a meaningful reflection.

4) The last limitation is the narrowness of this study's participant demographics. For example, over 87% of the school's population is Caucasian, 3% qualify for Free and Reduced Meals, and the school's attrition rate is less than 2%. Although this is not necessarily a limitation, it may have impacted the outcome of the research.

### **Time Frame and Limitations**

The time frame for this unit was twenty-five instructional days. The researcher conducted the study simultaneously with her regular state mandated curriculum standards. The researcher taught eight state standards throughout this unit. Table 5.1 summarizes the state standards taught throughout the unit (tn.gov, 2015). While this represents approximately 10% (8 of 74) of the state standards and utilized 14% (25 of 180) of the time, the researcher's expertise with the content knowledge allowed her to compact many state standards with immigration. For example, the disenfranchisement of

immigrants transfers to other marginalized groups such as women and African Americans. Quality instruction with curricular depth, higher order critical thinking, problem solving, and analytical skills was a goal for the researcher rather than shallow attempts to ‘cover’ the standards.

*Table 5.1: State Standards Taught Through This Unit*

<b>Standard Number:</b>	<b>Standard Objective:</b>
5.28	Map the sources of new immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe, China, and Japan, and interpret narratives and excerpts from informational text describing the role that Chinese and Irish laborers played in the development of the Transcontinental Railroad.
5.29	Summarize why the United States was viewed as the land of opportunity by immigrants versus a growing sense of protectionism and nativism by American citizens.
5.31	Analyze the appeal of the Great Plains to settlers and immigrants, including geographical factors, railroads, homesteading rights, and the absence of American Indians.
5.33	Write a short piece with concrete words, phrases, and sensory details of the life on the Great Plains from the viewpoint of a particular immigrant or migrant group.
5.34	Engage in a collaborative discussion to explore the ideas and events of the Gilded Age and determine the significance, including: • political machines • major scandals • economic disparity • industrial capitalists
5.35	Describe child labor and working conditions in factories.
5.36	Analyze the role of Samuel Gompers and the American Federation of Labor in changing standards for working conditions.
	<b>Primary Documents and Supporting Texts to Read:</b> excerpts from <i>Twenty Years at Hull House</i> , Jane Addams; excerpts from <i>How the Other Half Lives</i> , Jacob Riis; excerpts from <i>The Jungle</i> , Upton Sinclair

One limitation in this study occurred in the timing of the research. For example, the Titanic simulation was on the last three days before the district/school's one-week fall break. Many students left early or did not attend the last day. In the future, the researcher recommends conducting this aspect of the research at the beginning of the week making sure no outside factors may impede the data collection.

### **Now What? Part I: Recommendations for Future Studies**

The results of this study provided a wealth of data sources and examples; however, the researcher cited four recommendations for future studies. They were:

- 1) A recommendation to extend this research is to conduct a longitudinal study to determine the long-term retention and application of an empathy study. For example, an extension of this study might be a Holocaust and a Civil Rights unit. Both of these topics not only deal with discrimination, but also are commonly part of an American History curriculum. This would give additional information and credibility on the long-term effects a study on empathy may have.
- 2) Another recommendation may be to interview all participants in the study. The researcher attained valuable information by the interviewees and adding the whole population would provide important feedback. In addition, if a researcher conducted a longitudinal study, interviewing a sample population throughout the year would provide invaluable information in ascertaining student learning throughout the year.
- 3) Reflection is a vital aspect in any sound lesson. If students do not attach meaning to a simulation, a lost opportunity for rich learning will be lost.

Reflection is the heart and soul of experiential education. A recommendation for future studies would be to allow plenty of time for incubation of thoughts. Taking students on a quiet short walk allows time for meaning to formulate.

In this study, students expressed a need for reflection in order to make meaning. Without student reflection in the tenement simulation, the researcher would have assumed information that was not accurate.

4) The last recommendation is for educators to start small when trying to implement this unit. The researcher has conducted this unit for over ten years. Each year, she adds a few aspects to each component of the unit. Starting small will make it manageable. The tenement simulation is an easy exercise in which to begin.

### **Now What? Part II: Implications for Practice and Research**

This qualitative study produced important findings in the field to experiential education, empathy, social studies, and student engagement. The following lists three implications for practice and research:

1) Little research exists for elementary and middle school social studies educators on the subject of an experiential unit that affects student empathy. History has the reputation of being a subject that is irrelevant and boring. Fostering historical empathy is one way to engage students while at the same time helps students connect with historical figures. When students are able to relate to historical figures and see them as individual with similar qualities, true historical empathy and engagement with history has taken place.

2) Departmentalized schedules, like the researcher's school, must be flexible and therefore other disciplined teachers need to be involved. One forty-five minute class period is not enough time to complete the simulation and facilitate a purposeful reflection. This unit can be cross-curricular, but it will take the whole team's cooperation.

3) This research also brings validity to qualitative research in the enormity of the data set. Qualitative research is gaining creditability in the past two decades. Action research where the researcher is also the teacher has the potential of adding another dimension in research. When the researcher embeds themselves into the study, he or she may gain valuable information an outside researcher may not. Human subjects have many facets in which a researcher may observe. Defining them with a one-dimensional number only shows on side. Grounded theorists observe all sides of a subject.

### **Researcher's Voice**

The first section of this dissertation examined the researcher's prior experiences that shaped her historical pedagogy. She felt it was an integral piece for reader context and provided a sound rationale for the purpose of this study. To replicate authenticity, the researcher used first person when setting the stage for this dissertation. At the end of the dissertation journey it only seemed fitting that she switched voice from third person to first in order to close with statements close to her heart.

## Conclusion

Martin Luther King Jr. has always been one of my idols, however flawed he may have been. As a little girl, I remember hearing his magnanimous voice. At the time, I did not know the premise behind what he was saying, but I felt a deep sense of admiration and resonance with his message. Today, it has the same effect on me. Although I have heard and taught this speech multiple times, it still stirs something in me that needs to fight for injustice.

The following conclusion is my adaptation of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s (1963), "I Have a Dream" speech.

Four score and twenty years ago, a great educator, in whose shadow we emulate, completed his book, *Democracy and Education*. This momentous book came as a great beacon of light and hope to millions of educators and students who had been seared in the flames of standardization. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of educational captivity.

But, one hundred years later, the teacher and student is still not free. One hundred years later, the manacles of uniformity and the chains of standardized testing still sadly cripple the life of the students and teachers. When the architect of experiential education wrote the magnificent words in *Democracy and Education*, he was signing a promissory note to which every educator was to fall heir. This note promised all students, yes, poor students as well as rich students, would be guaranteed the "unalienable rights" of a meaningful and active education, reflection, and relevance to the student's life. It is obvious the educational system has defaulted on this promissory note.

We must not overlook the urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the ideals of Dewey. Some may say, "Our educational system is good enough. When will you be satisfied?" We must never be satisfied until there are no more illiteracy, failing schools, drop out rates, and punitive test scores. No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until "justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream."

I have a dream that one day on the rolling hills of Tennessee, the General Assembly policy makers and educators will be able to sit down together at the table of educational solidarity knowing they both want the best for students.

I have a dream that educators will not be constrained by the state test and are able to teach to the whole child.

I have a dream that my two children will be able to obtain an education where they will not be judged using the same measure for all, but an individualized plan meeting their needs. I have a dream today.

This is our hope, and this is the faith that I go back to the classroom with. With this faith, we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith, we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our schools into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith, we will be able to work together, to plan together, to struggle together, and to stand up for students together.

And when this happens, we will allow students the freedom to pave their own educational paths. We will allow freedom in every school and district, every county and state. We will be able to speed up that day when all of our children, poor and rich, white

and black, Muslim and Protestant, will be able to join hands and chant the words of the old educational philosopher Aristotle: Educating the mind without educating the heart... is no education at all.”

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**APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
APPROVAL**IRB**

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**  
Office of Research Compliance,  
010A Sam Ingram Building,  
2269 Middle Tennessee Blvd  
Murfreesboro, TN 37129

**EXPEDITED PROTOCOL APPROVAL NOTICE**

7/22/2015

Investigator(s): Christy Shannon Moore (PI) and Rick Vanosdall  
Investigator(s) Email: csm2p@mtmail.mtsu.edu; rick.vanosdall@mtsu.edu  
Department: College of Education in Assessment, Learning and School Improvement  
Protocol Title: "Give me your tired, your poor .. Teaching about discrimination through an experiential immigration unit "  
Protocol ID: 15-354

Dear Investigator(s),

The MTSU Institutional Review Board (IRB), or its' representative, has reviewed the research proposal identified above. The MTSU IRB or its representative has determined that the study poses minimal risk to participants and qualifies for an **EXPEDITED** review under 45 CFR 46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110 within the category (7) *Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior*. This approval is valid for one year from the date of this letter **for 75 (SEVENTY FIVE) participants** and it expires on **7/22/2016**.

Any unanticipated harms to participants or adverse events must be reported to the Office of Compliance at (615) 494-8918 within 48 hours of the incident. Any change(s) to this protocol must be approved by the IRB. The MTSU HRP defines a "researcher" as someone who works with data or has contact with participants. Anyone meeting this definition needs to be listed on the protocol and needs to complete the required training. New researchers can be amended to this protocol by submitting an Addendum request researchers to the Office of Compliance before they begin to work on the project.

Completion of this protocol **MUST** be notified to the Office of Compliance. A "completed research" refers to a protocol in which no further data collection or analysis is carried out. This protocol can be continued up to **THREE** years by submitting annual Progress Reports prior to expiration. Failure to request for continuation will automatically result in cancellation of this protocol and you will not be able to collect or use any new data.

All research materials must be retained by the PI or the faculty advisor (if the PI is a student) for at least three (3) years after study completion. Subsequently, the researcher may destroy the data in a manner that maintains confidentiality and anonymity. IRB reserves the right to modify, change or cancel the terms of this letter without prior notice. Be advised that IRB also reserves the right to inspect or audit your records if needed.

Sincerely,

Institutional Review Board  
Middle Tennessee State University

APPENDIX B: MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL  
REVIEW BOARD  
PARENTAL INFORMED CONSENT AND ASSENT DOCUMENT FOR RESEARCH

Middle Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board  
Parental Informed Consent Document for Research

Principal Investigator: Christy Shannon Moore  
Study Title: Give Me Your Tired, Your Poor... Teaching About Discrimination through  
an Experiential Immigration Unit  
Institution: Middle Tennessee State University

Name of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

The following information is provided to inform you about the research project and your child's participation in it. Please read this form carefully and feel free to ask any questions you may have about this study and the information given below. You will be given an opportunity to ask questions, and your questions will be answered. Also, you will be given a copy of this consent form.

Your child's participation in this research study is voluntary. He or she is also free to withdraw from this study at any time. In the event new information becomes available that may affect the risks or benefits associated with this research study or your willingness to participate in it, you will be notified so that you can make an informed decision whether or not to continue your participation in this study.

For additional information about giving consent or your rights as a participant in this study, please feel free to contact the MTSU Office of Compliance at (615) 494-8918.

**1. Purpose of the study:**

You never really know a man until you understand things from his point of view, until you climb into his skin and walk around in it" (Lee, 1960). The ability to share someone else's feelings is called empathy (Merriam Webster, 2015). Historical Empathy is the ability to perceive history from the perspectives of those in the past (Colby, 2008). History must become more than dead people and dates for children to grasp the importance of learning from our past. Mistakes of the past must be learned in order for those in the future not to repeat them. Discrimination is not only embedded in history, but it is an important issue in today's world. Exposing students to authentic experiences with discrimination is one way to teach diversity. This dissertation follows three fifth grade classes as they learn about discrimination in history through an experiential immigration unit and how it impacts student empathy through role-playing, simulations, decision-making, and reflections. It will examine student discoveries both during and after the unit's completion. Data collected includes diaries, work samples, researcher's journal, and interviews.

2. Description of procedures to be followed and approximate duration of the study:

The prospective participants will be provided the opportunity to participate in this research after they have completed the informed assent document, and their parents have completed the informed consent document. Each participant will be involved in the course curriculum and all data collected will be part of the standard assessment practices. Interview participants (18 of the 75 participants) will be interviewed twice; the initial interview will be prior to the start of the curriculum unit, and the final interview will take place after the curriculum unit is complete. Interviews will take place after school in the researcher's classroom. Participants (and parents/guardians) will be asked for permission to record the interviews. Information obtained from the audio recording will be transcribed and sent to the participant as a member check (the participant is provided with the opportunity to review, revise, augment, and/or delete information from their interview transcript to insure the participants' perspectives are accurately represented in the transcript). After the member check is complete, personally identifiable information will be deleted from the transcript, and the original transcript and the audio recording of the interview will be securely shredded and securely erased, respectively. Final transcripts will be coded to develop categories and themes following the protocols described by Johnny Saldana in *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (2012). The interviews will occur during the fall semester of 2015, after receiving IRB approval. The semi-structured and standardized questions consist of a series of open-ended questions (see attached). Additionally, all transcripts, interview notes, consent forms and relevant project correspondence will be secured by faculty advisor, Dr. Rick Vanosdall in university secured storage and/or locked in this campus office until the summer of 2019 for security and privacy purposes. Documents will then be shredded and destroyed. Other data collected for research purposes is also used as part of the standard assessment practices for the course. Artifacts will be photographed and/or copied, and secured during the coding process and the originals will be returned to students/parents as part of the standard education practices.

3. Expected costs: None

4. Description of the discomforts, inconveniences, and/or possible risks that can be reasonably expected as a result of participation in this study: None

5. Compensation in case of study-related injury: None

6. Anticipated benefits from this study:

This study will give the researcher-teacher an understanding of how an experiential education unit on immigration and discrimination affects student empathy and agency now and in the future. There are no monetary benefits to the participants, but the researcher will share the results with the participants at the conclusion of the research for school improvements.

7. Alternative treatments available: Students may opt out at any point with no repercussions. Students will be given an alternative assignment to cover the Tennessee State Standards covered in this unit.
  8. Compensation for participation: none
  9. Circumstances under which the Principal Investigator may withdraw you from study participation: Parent or Student request
  10. What happens if you choose to withdraw from study participation:  
Alternative treatments available: Students may opt out at any point with no repercussions. Students will be given an alternative assignment to cover the Tennessee State Standards covered in this unit.
1. Contact Information. If you should have any questions about this research study or possibly injury, please feel free to contact (Christy S. Moore ) at (csm2p@mtmail.mtsu.edu) or my Faculty Advisor, ( Dr. Rick Vanosdall ) at (rick.vanosdall.mtsu.edu).
  2. Confidentiality. All efforts, within reason, will be made to keep the personal information in your child's research record private but total privacy cannot be promised. Your information may be shared with MTSU or the government, such as the Middle Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board, Federal Government Office for Human Research Protections, *if* you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.

STATEMENT BY PERSON AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I have read this informed consent document and the material contained in it has been explained to me verbally. I understand each part of the document, all my questions have been answered, and I give permission for my child to participate in the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of patient/volunteer

Consent obtained by:

7-1-15

\_\_\_\_\_  
Christy S. Moore

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Christy S. Moore, Doctoral Student

Middle Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board  
 Proposal for Research Using Human Participants  
 Assent Document for Research Study

PI: Christy S. Moore

Title of Study: Give Me Your Tired, Your Poor... Teaching About Discrimination through an Experiential Immigration Unit

Institution/Hospital: Middle Tennessee State University

This assent document applies to: Children ages 7-12

Name of participant Age

Below are the answers to some of the questions you may have. If you have any questions about what is written below or have any other questions about this research, please ask them. You will be given a copy of this consent form.

1. Why are you doing this research? This study will give the researcher-teacher an understanding of how an experiential education unit on immigration and discrimination affects student empathy and agency now and in the future. There are no monetary benefits to the participants, but the researcher will share the results final research findings with the participants at the conclusion of the research for school improvements.
2. What will I do and how long will it take? The unit will may take place across approximately four months, August through December. During the course of this unit, students will participate in standard assessment practices such as written and verbal reflections, creating artifacts (classwork and other written and drawings, etc.), pictures, and interviews (if selected).
3. Do I have to be in this research study and can I stop if I want to? Students are not required to participate in the research; however, they will be responsible for mastering Tennessee State Standards taught through this unit. Any student or parent who requests an alternative assignment will be given another assignment to cover those same state standards skills. Students may stop the study at anytime without repercussions or any penalty.
4. Will anyone know that I am in this research study?  
 What you tell me will not be shared with (your school/your parents) unless you or someone else is in danger.
5. How will this research help me or other people? This study will inform current and future educators how student empathy is seen during the role an experiential education unit on immigration and discrimination. has on student empathy.
6. Can I do something else instead of this research? If I don't want to participate in the research, I can request that any data from my participation is not included in the data analyzed as part of the research. Additionally, if I don't want to participate in a

particular part of the unit, I can receive aAn alternative assignment will be given covering the Tennessee State Standards taught in the particular activity or in this unit.

- 7. Who do I talk to if I have questions? You can talk to yourThe teacher, principal, or guidance counselor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of patient/volunteer

Consent obtained by: \_\_\_\_\_Christy S. Moore\_\_\_\_\_Doctoral  
Student/Teacher \_\_\_\_\_Signature  
Printed Name and Title

APPENDIX C: SEMI-STRUCTURED STUDENT INTERVIEW (STANDARDIZED QUESTIONS AND CONVERSATIONAL INTERVIEWS (Patton, 2015)

Standardized Questions will be used as a springboard for conversational interviews both prior and post the taught unit.

1. What do you think is the difference between a boring history class and an exciting history class?
2. What is empathy, and what does it look like to you?
3. What does discrimination mean and when does it occur?
4. What does it mean to take ownership in your learning?
5. What do you notice in this picture?

(Hines, L, National Child Labor Committee, 1908)



## APPENDIX D: LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear Parents,

Today we began our immigration unit. As many of you know, I am in the midst of completing my doctorate at MTSU. As part of my graduation requirement, I must complete research and analyze it in my dissertation. I am completing my dissertation on my Titanic unit. This is my eleventh year to complete this unit with my fifth grade class. My dissertation title is: Give Me Your Tired, Your Poor... Teaching About Discrimination through an Experiential Immigration Unit

My research questions are:

- How was student empathy affected throughout participation in an experiential immigration unit about discrimination?
- How did students transfer and apply new learning throughout participation in an experiential immigration unit about discrimination?
- How did motivation and engagement affect student ownership of learning throughout participation in an experiential immigration unit about discrimination?

For those who approve (See consent form), I will use your child's work as data. As the researcher, I will keep all student names and information anonymous. If you do not want your child to participate, the researcher will not penalize their grade. All students must participate in the unit. I just will not use that child's data in my study. Data to be collected:

- Journals
- Reflections

- Suitcases
- Audio Recorded-Interviews (Anonymous and recording will be deleted after transcription)- The researcher will only interview a random sampling of the student population.
- The researcher will lock all data in a secure spot at MTSU under lock and key.

**Basic Information:**

Today your child will come home with a suitcase full of information. Basic Training Notes, Passport, Boat Ticket (not given yet), Map of Journey (completed at school), Immunization Record (behavior chart completed at school), and Letter of Reference (see below), and a Life Skills Card (see below). The suitcase will need to be decorated by Sept. 21<sup>st</sup>.

Completed at Home:

- Decorating suitcase-due Monday
- Life Skills Card- -For the next two weeks, you will check off your child's job by mastering: Clean their room, clears the table, gets their agendas signed, puts things away, and uses manners
- Letter of Reference- Students will need to get an adult (non relative) to write a letter of reference. Example of things the letter can include: This immigrant is smart, well mannered, disease free, worked for me in my cobbler shop back in Poland, etc.... It can be fantasy or fact.

Students will randomly draw a Titanic Class -1<sup>st</sup> (8 people), 2<sup>nd</sup> (8 people), and 3<sup>rd</sup> Class (9 people)- Once they receive their class, they will ‘buy’ their Titanic tickets. Each ticket will have an actual name of a Titanic passenger to match the class they drew. The researcher will provide the passenger information before setting sail. Please encourage the students to not research it any further. **I do not want them to know the status of their passenger’s fate until later.**

Boat Ride-Students will take a “boat ride” to America. I am asking for parent help with that. I need decorations (to be returned), supplies (not to be returned), and parent help.

Next students will participate in an Ellis Island simulation where they will role-play late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century immigrants. The day of the simulation, students will make their passage through four inspections points: Initial Documentation, Physical Ability, Health Check, and Educational Proficiency Stations. Students will try to pass fourteen checkpoints to meet certain criteria such as demonstrate job skills by making their beds each day or create a map of their journey. As students make their way through the stations, they will endure discrimination (chosen through a random draw) with actions such as wearing a blindfold while shooting a free throw or writing with their nondominant hand.

Sadly, not all immigrants will make it to the country. The purpose of this assignment is to build empathy for what immigrants went through and not necessarily to “make it into the country”.

**Ellis Island Simulation:**

1. Initial Documentation: To be completed at school-Pass or Fail (Must have a 3 out of 4 to pass)
  - a. Immunization Record (Must have 4 stickers to pass)-This is a participation chart where students can earn stickers throughout the “Boot Camp” (state standards taught in class).
  - b. Passport –Must fill out completely at home with a picture ID
  - c. Map of Journey –Must document where they boarded the Titanic to New York City-done in class
  - d. Boat Ticket-I will give this in class
2. Physical Ability Test: To be completed in Physical Education Class- Pass or Fail (Must have a 3 out of 4 to pass)-Completed in Regular PE Time
  - a. Jump Rope 30 times in 30 sec.
  - b. Free Throw (Make 5 out of 10)
  - c. Sprints (Run to  $\frac{1}{4}$ , back,  $\frac{1}{2}$ , back,  $\frac{3}{4}$ , back, opposite side, back) in 40 sec.
  - d. Endurance Run (10 laps around the gym)
3. Health Station: -To Be Completed At School- Pass or Fail (Must meet 1/2 to pass)
  - a. Health Questionnaire (Must meet 8 out of 10)-This is a quiz to see how health conscience your child is.
  - b. Physical Examination (Nurse will determine if you pass)-Just like the immigrants at Ellis Island received chalk marks with their medical

information, your child will be marked for things like can't hula hoop, Simon Says, brain teasers, and other things.

4. Education Proficiency: To Be Completed At School/Home-Pass or Fail (Must meet 3 out of 4 to pass)
  - a. Lifeskills Report Card-To be completed at home-How responsible is your child? Do they complete their chores
  - b. Letter of Reference-To be completed at home-A letter of reference from a nonrelative stating the immigrant is of upstanding character
  - c. Spelling Sample (Must spell 4 out of 5 correctly)-This is done at school-it is not something that can be studied for at home.
  - d. Immigration Test (Must make an 85 or better to pass)-This is the real summative assessment we will take after going through Boot Camp.

## APPENDIX E: TITANIC SIMULATION JOURNAL RUBRIC

### Titanic Simulation Journals:

<b>High</b>	<b>High Average</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Low</b>
Went above and beyond expectations in both empathy and student agency-Used lots of details, adjectives, and perspective-taking-Wrote more than was expected	Went above and beyond expectations in either empathy or student agency-Either used lots of details, adjectives, and perspective-taking or Wrote more than was expected	Performed at expectations in both empathy and student agency-Used some details and adjectives and wrote exactly what was expected.	Did not meet expectations in both empathy and student agency-Did not put a lot of effort into their journals and wrote less than was expected.

**APPENDIX F: 2015 WRITING SCORES OF RESEARCHED  
PARTICIPANTS**

	<b>Development</b>	<b>Focus and Organization</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Convention</b>
<b>Researcher's School</b>	1.89	1.83	2.45	2.55
<b>Researcher's District</b>	1.45	1.39	1.67	1.76
<b>Researcher's State</b>	1.33	1.29	1.53	1.62

**\*Out of a 4 point scale-See Rubric on page 171**

**TCAP/WA Informational/Explanatory Rubric** **Tennessee Department of Education**

Score:	Focus/Organization	Support/Elaboration	Language/Style	Conventions
<b>4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The writer introduces the topic clearly and provides an observation and focus.</li> <li>The writer effectively selects, organizes, and analyzes content, demonstrating insightful understanding of the stimulus material.</li> <li>The writer organizes and logically groups complex ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories to create a unified whole.</li> <li>The writer provides an effective concluding statement or section related to the focus, information, and explanation presented.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The writer's facts, ideas, and concepts clearly support the focus, information, and explanation presented and affirm the audience's knowledge of the topic.</li> <li>The writer provides thorough development and elaboration drawn from the stimulus material by using relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.</li> <li>The writer explains and elaborates on the facts, clearly connecting them to the focus, information, or explanation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The writer provides precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, and literary techniques to inform about or explain the topic.</li> <li>The writer demonstrates syntactic variety by expanding, combining, and reducing sentences.</li> <li>The writer provides sophisticated, varied transitions to clearly link the major sections of the text and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts resulting in a strong, fluent, cohesive response.</li> <li>The writer establishes and maintains a formal style and objective tone.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The writer demonstrates complete control of the conventions of standard written English for sentence structure, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.</li> <li>The writer may make a few errors, but they do not interfere with meaning.</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The writer introduces the topic and provides sufficient observation and focus.</li> <li>The writer selects, organizes, and analyzes content, demonstrating sufficient understanding of the stimulus material.</li> <li>The writer sufficiently organizes and groups ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories.</li> <li>The writer provides a concluding statement or section related to the focus, information, and explanation presented.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The writer's facts, ideas, and concepts sufficiently support the focus, information, and explanation presented and are appropriate to the audience.</li> <li>The writer provides sufficient development and elaboration drawn from the stimulus material by using facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.</li> <li>The writer sufficiently explains and elaborates on the facts, connecting them to the focus, information, and explanation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The writer provides appropriate language, domain-specific vocabulary, and literary techniques to inform about or explain the topic.</li> <li>The writer demonstrates sufficient syntactic variety.</li> <li>The writer provides appropriate, varied transitions to link the major sections of the text and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts resulting in a cohesive response.</li> <li>The writer sufficiently establishes and maintains a formal style and objective tone.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The writer demonstrates sufficient control of the conventions of standard written English for sentence structure, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.</li> <li>The writer may make occasional errors, but they do not interfere materially with meaning.</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The writer insufficiently introduces the topic and provides limited observation and focus.</li> <li>The writer weakly selects, organizes, and analyzes content, demonstrating insufficient understanding of the stimulus material.</li> <li>The writer insufficiently organizes ideas, concepts, and information. The response may have gaps or ideas may be hard to follow.</li> <li>The writer provides a weak concluding statement or section related to the focus, information, and explanation presented.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The writer's facts, ideas, and concepts insufficiently support the focus, information, and explanation presented and may not always be appropriate to the audience.</li> <li>The writer provides insufficient development and elaboration drawn from the stimulus material related to the topic.</li> <li>The writer's facts may be somewhat incorrect, repetitious, irrelevant, or simply listed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The writer provides insufficient, basic language, domain-specific vocabulary, and literary techniques to inform about or explain the topic.</li> <li>The writer demonstrates insufficient syntactic variety.</li> <li>The writer provides insufficient transitions resulting in a lack of cohesion and relationship among ideas and concepts.</li> <li>The writer establishes insufficient, inconsistent, or somewhat inappropriate style and tone.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The writer demonstrates insufficient control of the conventions of standard written English for sentence structure, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.</li> <li>The writer makes errors that detract materially from meaning.</li> </ul>
<b>1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The writer provides little to no introduction to the topic and provides little to no observation and focus.</li> <li>The writer selects, organizes, and analyzes little to no content, demonstrating limited to no understanding of the stimulus material.</li> <li>The writer creates little to no organization of ideas, concepts, and information.</li> <li>The writer provides little to no concluding statement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The writer's ideas and concepts seldom support the focus, information, and explanations presented and are inappropriate to the audience.</li> <li>The writer provides little to no development and elaboration drawn from the stimulus material related to the topic or the writer only uses personal knowledge.</li> <li>The writer's facts are incorrect, repetitious, irrelevant, simply listed, or based solely on personal knowledge.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The writer provides little to no appropriate language, domain-specific vocabulary, and literary technique.</li> <li>The writer demonstrates little to no syntactic variety.</li> <li>The writer rarely, if ever, provides transitions.</li> <li>The writer demonstrates very inconsistent or inappropriate style and tone.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The writer demonstrates little to no control of the conventions of standard written English for sentence structure, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.</li> <li>The writer makes persistent errors that seriously impede meaning.</li> </ul>