

The Introduction and Development of Historical Argumentation in an Eighth Grade U.S.  
History Classroom

By

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine how students used the elements of a historical argument to interpret how equality and opportunity affected marginalized groups in a given historical era. To do this, 150 eighth grade students wrote thirteen historical arguments, and submitted a written portfolio of their work at the end of the school year. Since these students had not written a historical argument before, they had a scaffolding system in place to guide them with the increasingly complex tasks they faced when writing their historical argument. Students were given a historical argument to write once every two weeks, with a one-week deadline to complete the assignment. Students were expected to use a historical argumentation rubric that was created for the purpose of this study. The rubric is largely based upon the research of Monte-Sano (2010). There were typically seven to eight students in each discussion group, with each discussion group in the same section of the social studies class.

The analysis of each discussion group fell into two discrete groups: a met expectations group, which met the basic standards of the writing assignments according to the historical argumentation rubric, and the exceeded expectations groups, which typically used the rubric to write more complex historical arguments. One student was selected at random as a representative of each group to examine how they approached the writing process. The work from each representative student's discussion group was also analyzed to understand how well students interpreted the elements of a historical argument, their understanding of equality and opportunity, and how they used feedback to improve their historical arguments.

The findings revealed that students could use the elements of a historical argument to discuss equality and opportunity, but with varying degrees of success. Students in the met expectations groups struggled with the more advanced tasks in the scaffolding process, while the students in the exceeded expectations groups were able to perform most of these tasks by the end of the school year. Students in both groups struggled with contextualizing evidence in a historical argument, which was the most difficult task in the scaffolding process. Students in both groups could discuss how well they understood the elements of a historical argument, equality and opportunity, and how they used feedback to improve their historical arguments, but with varying degrees of success. The findings indicate that students in both groups struggled to offer the level of reflection needed in their written portfolio. The students in the met expectations groups typically did not offer the level of reflection that the students in the exceeded expectations groups provided.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### **Introduction**

Engaging students in the study of historical argumentation within the social curriculum is achievable and essential (De La Paz et al, 2012). Historical argumentation involves a form of intra- and inter- textual considerations with the content where individuals in a class consider claims, evidence, and multiple perspectives to make reasonable conclusions (Monte-Sano, 2008; Wissinger, 2012). Historical argumentation allows for students to engage the curriculum by using claims, historical evidence, counterclaims, and holistic measures to explore history as part of an ongoing discourse about democratic principles, which requires the evaluation and interpretation of multiple, often conflicting, sources of historical information (De La Paz et al, 2012). Educators and researchers have often addressed the importance of using primary and secondary sources, as well as inquiry-based instruction in history classes (Bain, 2006; Wineburg, 2001, Monte-Sano et al, 2014). This approach of using both primary and secondary sources allows for reliance upon historical ways of reading, writing, and thinking about social studies content (Monte-Sano, et al, 2014). Historical argumentation relies on analysis of sources and arriving at conclusions in writing, particularly in ways that are embedded in historical study (De La Paz & Wissinger, 2015). Conceptualizing history is grounded in analysis. Therefore, in order for one to understand history, the skills of historical reasoning and argumentation must be developed (Monte-Sano, 2011). Historical arguments are grounded in strategies and standards that are used by those involved in social studies that allow learners to construct a well positioned argument on historical matters (Ferretti & De La Paz, 2011; De La Paz, et al, 2012). As students

progress through the social studies curriculum, literacy and content learning become interrelated, thus making academic progress increasingly dependent on the acquisition of discipline specific knowledge and skills (Ferretti & De La Paz, 2011; Monte-Sano & De La Paz, 2012, De La Paz et al, 2012). Students are expected to argue and write like disciplinary experts in social studies (De La Paz, 2005; Ferretti & Okolo, 1996; Monte-Sano, 2008; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008, De La Paz et al, 2012, p. 414). Students need to develop historical argumentation skills to consider multiple perspectives of a historical issue, analyze primary and secondary sources, and offer a rational justification for the position they chose in their writing.

However, there have been few instances of research on the topic of historical argumentation in middle school classrooms. Middle school teachers need to stress the importance of learning social studies within a meaningful and authentic context by having students explore the use of historical arguments throughout the curriculum (Monte-Sano et al, 2014). The use of historical inquiry to investigate how marginalized groups make for a meaningful and authentic context provides an avenue to research how middle school students could write about historical argumentation. The written historical arguments that the students constructed during this study were centered on equality and opportunity within the framework of the eighth grade social studies curriculum. The specific curriculum is explained in further detail in Chapter Three. The study specifically focused on how various groups of people struggled with equality and opportunity in a given historical era.

Another key element of instruction for the purpose of this study is the collaborative, co-constructed nature of student work, which can be done in an online

environment (De La Paz and Felton, 2010; Asterhan and Eisenmann, 2011). Students used collaborative work in an online environment to enhance the fostering of historical argumentation. Students wrote their responses individually, and then submitted their work together in small groups, before attempting to apply the revisions to their work alone (De la Paz and Felton, 2010). Throughout the course of the school year, students studied various investigations and submitted written historical arguments in an online setting as they explored equality and opportunity. A more detailed explanation of this will be further explained in Chapter Three.

The ability to use synchronous online discussions offers opportunities that allow for the use of feedback when writing argumentative pieces (Asterhan and Eisenmann, 2011). The discussions are textual, lack non-verbal cues, provide the ability for students to revisit and revise individual contributions, and do not require turn taking in smaller discussion groups when discussing content and argumentation for feedback purposes (Asterhan and Eisenmann, 2011). As students respond to one another's individual writings in small-group online discussions, the feedback they received on their initial written historical argument allowed them to revise and improve their written historical arguments. As a result of their revisions, the students produced a stronger written historical argument (Asterhan and Eisenmann, 2011; De la Paz et al, 2012). It has also been argued that the ability to re-read and revise contributions – both before as well as after posting contributions – encouraged reflection (Guiller, Durndell, & Ross, 2008; Kim, Anderson, Nguyen-Jahiel, & Archodidou, 2007, Asterhan and Eisenmann, 2011). When students were to receive feedback on their work, it provided them an opportunity

to revise and resubmit a stronger written historical argument on equality and opportunity, which led to a greater understanding of the historical content being taught.

The use of written historical argumentation is needed to engage in argumentative discourse within the social studies curriculum (Wissinger, 2012). By using an online platform as a meeting place to discuss their written historical argument with smaller discussion groups, students could obtain feedback from their peers to create a stronger product (Asterhan and Eisenmann, 2011). Within the context of the curriculum, the study participants explored equality and opportunity when creating their written historical arguments. While there have been previous argumentation models (Toulmin, 1958; Monte-Sano, De La Paz & Felton, 2014), Monte-Sano's (2012) research on the elements of a written historical argument seemed to best describe the elements of a historical argument, while building upon sound theory from previous research.

There had been prior research conducted on the use of historical argumentation in high school classrooms that were geared toward advanced level students. Additionally, research was conducted on the use of synchronous online discussions. However, a gap existed in the research in combining the two topics together. There were also few studies conducted on how middle school students composed historical arguments. This study seeks to determine if middle grades students could write historical arguments, and use online discussions to revise and improve the quality of their work.

### **Goals and Objectives**

The primary goal of the investigation was to examine how historical argumentation (Monte-Sano, 2012) could help students understand equality and opportunity in a middle school classroom. An earlier work by Monte-Sano (2008)

established the key elements of constructing a written historical argument. She later designed and validated a rubric for high school students (2012) to incorporate the key elements of a historical argument. The rubric, however, did not draw qualitative distinctions within the historical elements, which made scoring a student's work difficult. Moreover, middle school students had trouble understanding what the elements of a historical argument were before attempting to write their responses.

In response to these problems, I adapted the elements from Monte-Sano's research on historical argumentation to better qualitatively distinguish student performance within each element, as well as to better clarify them to meet the needs of middle school students. The students in this study learned to write a claim and a counterclaim in their historical argument, and used historical evidence to support them. I go into greater detail on the elements of a historical argument in Chapter Two of this study.

To evaluate the potential utility of Monte-Sano's (2012) framework, sixty-four students from two middle school classrooms were asked to participate in a semester-long study that featured the following: (a) examining alternate perspectives on historical events related to the democratic principles of equality and opportunity, (b) using primary and secondary source documents about those events, (c) using evidence gained from these sources to draft a written historical argument, and (d) revising this draft argument by its author in response to student and teacher feedback on their personal work (Wissinger, 2012).

I chose to embed aspects of Wissinger's work into a pilot study using elements of Monte-Sano's research. During the 2015-2016 school year, I created a pilot study based upon Wissinger and Monte-Sano's studies. Its purpose was to see how eighth grade

students at a middle school in the Midwest could create a historical argument based upon this framework. Given the limitations of this rubric, I made two changes. First, I determined that the language in the rubric was too advanced for middle school students and thus required simplification. Second, the principal investigator discovered that Monte-Sano's rubric (2012) did not allow teachers to show how students progressed as they wrote their historical arguments. It simply stated that a student either did or did not meet the elements of a historical argument. For teachers working within a K-12 environment, a more qualitative measure had to be available to adequately measure student progress as they created written historical arguments throughout the school year. Therefore, a new scale that detailed what students needed to do in order to write a satisfactory written historical argument was created. I decided that a gap existed in the research, and a qualitative measure needed to be created to promote the existing literature. I chose to create a rubric on historical argumentation for middle school students. I explain this rubric in additional detail in Chapter Three, and a complete copy of the rubric can be found in Appendix A.

I hypothesized that providing students with the opportunity to create written historical arguments would facilitate better understanding of equality and opportunity in my social studies classroom. I go into greater detail on equality and opportunity in Chapter 2 of this study. I believed that having students present their written historical arguments in small, online discussion groups would help them by providing feedback from other group members. This in turn would be used to revise their work to create a stronger argument. Another hypothesis was the anticipation of a holistic increase in written historical arguments over the course of the school year.



The study included two research questions: First was how do the participants in the study use the elements of a written historical argument to interpret how various groups of people struggled with equality and opportunity. Second was how do students discuss and reflect upon their own growth in writing historical arguments on equality and opportunity over the course of the school year.

### **Historical Argumentation**

Monte-Sano (2012) identified the key elements of historical argumentation: factual and interpretive accuracy, persuasiveness of evidence, evidence source, corroboration of evidence, and contextualizing of evidence. According to De La Paz, Monte-Sano found that approaching writing from a disciplinary stance required students to credibly select and situate evidence in a historical context (De La Paz et al, 2012). In 2008, Monte-Sano suggested that writing a convincing historical argument involved more than knowledge about the writing process. It also involved conceptual understanding of the content and procedural understanding of historical analysis (De La Paz et al, 2012). According to Monte-Sano, there were five elements in making a valid written historical argument. The first was factual and historical accuracy, which required the students to interpret documentary evidence accurately. Written historical arguments also grounded interpretive claims in evidence drawn from the text (Lewis & Ferretti, 2011; Newell, Beach, Smith, & VanDerHeide, 2011, De la Paz et al, 2012). The second element in making a valid written historical argument was persuasiveness of evidence (Monte-Sano, 2012). This allowed students to back up a claim with evidence that was relevant, significant, and specific. The third element was the sourcing of evidence (Monte-Sano, 2012; Wineburg, 2001). Students were expected to source their credible evidence

correctly. The fourth element was the corroboration of evidence (Monte-Sano, 2012). This allowed for students making the claim to use multiple pieces of evidence in order to support the claim they were making. The final element to make a valid written historical argument was contextualizing the evidence in order to make a claim (Monte-Sano, 2012). Students used sources in an appropriate manner, and with the correct context. In order to create strong disciplinary writing in social studies, educators had to adhere to using these key elements that define the elements.

### **Student Difficulties in Creating a Historical Argument**

While making academic progress is increasingly dependent on the acquisition of discipline specific knowledge and skills (Ferretti & De La Paz, 2011; Monte-Sano & De La Paz, 2012, De La Paz et al, 2012), research indicates how students struggle with using multiple, conflicting sources to create an argument (Wissinger & De La Paz, 2016) and with historically contextualizing people of the past (Husbands, 1996; Shemilt, 1983). Students often have had little experience in working with multiple pieces of historical evidence to create a written historical argument. Prior research suggests that without proper instruction, students face significant challenges when asked to write historical arguments from primary sources (De La Paz et al, 2012). This is either because they lacked knowledge of specific historical contexts (Halldén, 1997; Van Drie & Van Boxtel, 2008) or because they judged past actors and actions by present standards (VanSledright, 2002, De La Paz et al, 2012). Students need to be able to read multiple pieces of historical evidence from different perspectives to create a written historical argument that is firmly based on equality and opportunity.

Novice and struggling readers of historical evidence are more likely to have trouble making inferences, or recognizing subtext and thus are less likely to consider documents as evidence (Monte-Sano, et al, 2014). Specifically, the introduction of secondary sources allows students to better comprehend the reading material for the participants selected for this study, since the reading level of these documents was easier to read than the vernacular of primary sources. Since contextualization of evidence is a key element in a written historical argument (Monte-Sano, 2012), the use of secondary sources is validated and meets the needs of the participants of the study, who are writing historical arguments for the first time in their academic careers. Secondary sources were necessary to use for middle school students, because they might not be able to comprehend most primary sources. Secondary sources were simpler for middle school students to read and analyze when they selected their historical evidence for their arguments.

### **Use of Historical Inquiry to Introduce Equality and Opportunity**

Monte-Sano (2011) suggested that educators present historical inquiry in the classroom by posing central questions around a historical argument that can be answered in multiple ways. Educators and researchers have long called for teaching with primary sources and inquiry methods in history classes (Bain, 2006; Wineburg, 2001, De La Paz et al, 2014). Any question related to historical evidence is directed toward trying to understand the meaning of the evidence as it relates to the inquiry process (Monte-Sano, 2008). Particular approaches to historical texts facilitate this reasoning process. As Wineburg (2001) discovered, historians source, corroborate, and contextualize evidence as they make sense of the past. Sourcing involves noting authors of historical documents

as well as their intentions and assumptions. Contextualization includes situating a historical document in the time and place in which it was created. Corroboration involves comparing multiple historical documents to facilitate sense making and determine acceptable facts. The process of moving between these kinds of questions and evidence eventually leads historians to make a case for a particular interpretation of the past (Monte-Sano, 2008). As learners explore the past, they must pay attention not only to the products of historical inquiry, but also to the inquiry process itself around central questions (VanSledright, 2002). Developing historical thinking and understanding requires opportunities for learners to work with various forms of evidence, deal with issues of interpretation, and ask questions about the relative significance of events and the nature of historical agency (VanSledright, 2002). The process of inquiry lends itself to a humanistic study of history and to a participatory democracy (Barton & Levstik, 2004, p. 188). For the purposes of this study, historical inquiry was used to create written historical arguments on the democratic principles of equality and opportunity.

As the students proceeded to create their written historical arguments, they were expected to apply their newfound knowledge as a result of the inquiry throughout their response. For example, the students were expected to support their written historical claim with examples of equality and opportunity as they studied different historical eras over the context of the curriculum. In addition, students were allowed to introduce written historical claims on equality and opportunity and received feedback from fellow discussion group members.

### **Equality and Opportunity for the Purpose of this Study**

It is becoming increasingly important to establish how equality and opportunity have affected the American narrative when teaching social studies (VanSledright, 2002). History texts read by students in the United States may now include accounts of diverse Americans and the acknowledgments of their contributions to the country's history and culture (Tunnell & Ammon, 1996; VanSledright & Kelly, 1998, Afflerbach & VanSledright, 2001). Paralleling the inclusion of multiple historical perspectives and experiences is the call for increasing diversity in the types of historical texts that students read (McGowan, Erickson, & Neufeld, 1996; National Center for History in the Schools, 1994, Afflerbach & VanSledright, 2001). For example, students may encounter personal letters, newspapers, broadsides, and diary excerpts, and historical interviews in their U.S. history textbook, or they may read other books or articles whose content is germane to a particular historical era (Afflerbach & VanSledright, 2001).

For our nation to develop and sustain a functioning civic democracy, education should promote a "cultural democracy" that considers the learners perspectives via their experiences, background, and ethnic values (Banks, 2008). However, given the narrowed, prescriptive, and Eurocentric scope of social studies curricula (Bohn & Sleeter, 2000; Cornbleth & Waugh, 1995; Crocco, 1998, Fitchett et al, 2012), this is not often the case. Therefore, in order to establish a social studies curriculum intent on including multiple perspectives, one must consider the democratic principles of equality and opportunity from a thematic perspective when teaching social studies. For the purpose of this study, these principles were taught thematically in order to consider how various groups had their equality and opportunity interpreted. As students created their written historical arguments, they had to consider equality and opportunity in their response. A further

discussion on quality and opportunity is reflected in the writing rubric that appears in Chapter Three.

### **Use of Online Discussion for the Purpose of this Study**

The purpose of using online discussion in this study was to promote a place for students not only to use historical inquiry, but also to collaborate in order to receive feedback on their written historical arguments. Online historical inquiry activities are designed to provide students with the opportunities to act as historians (Sexias, 2001; Li & Lim, 2008). The idea of using inquiry method in history education was developed from the investigation into the nature of history from multiple perspectives (Cantu & Warren, 2003; Li & Lim, 2008). The cognitive tools embedded in the online environment provide learners with more experience of knowledge construction, self-directed inquiry, and collaborative learning (Jonassen et al, 1995; Guo et al, 2014). At present, historical inquiry activities can easily access we-based materials on the Internet in secondary schools (Rogers & Swan, 2004; Li & Lim, 2008). Social studies educators believe that doing inquiry in the online environment has a great potential in history teaching and learning (Li & Lim, 2008).

With the advent of online discussion forums, students are more easily provided access to historical documents such as oral recordings, pictures and animations and other primary and secondary sources, which differ from the traditional textbooks (Lee, 2003; Li & Lim, 2008). Online inquiry learning allows for students' positive participation, rich collaboration, and feedback (Lim, 2004, p. 629; Li & Lim, 2008). Students can receive instantaneous online feedback in the form of two specific support mechanisms: peers and teachers (Guasch et al, 2013). Feedback is understood as a dialogic interaction between

students and instructors or students among themselves focused on the whole process, including how feedback is both received and utilized (Carless, Salter, Yang, & Lam, 2011; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006, Guasch et al, 2013). Peer assessment/feedback is a method where students engage in reflective criticism of other students' writing and provide feedback, usually using previously defined criteria in rubrics (Falchikov, 1986; Prins, Sluijsmans, Kirschner, & Strijbos, 2005, Guasch et al, 2013). This process may consist of a series of instances where students supply feedback on increasingly polished versions of each other's work (Guasch et al, 2013).

Teacher feedback is typically more complex than peer feedback and usually is interpreted by the learner as more reliable and effective. Teachers also bring expertise in judgment from experience on similar tasks, giving them valuable perspectives into various ways to solve the assignment and in the difficulties previous learners encountered (Gielen et al, 2010). The use of online discussions help to introduce other methods of social studies content from differing perspectives, and to provide a forum for students to receive feedback on their written historical argument.

### **Overview of Methodology**

The participants in the study were members of the eighth grade class at a middle school in the Midwest. The middle school is located in an affluent suburb of a large metropolitan area. There were 151 students in the eighth grade at the school during the 2016-2017 school year. These students were selected for participation in this study because I am also currently employed as the eighth grade social studies teacher at this school.

One method of data collection, in this study was the analysis of each participant's writing. All participants submitted their historical writing assignments to their discussion group members prior to the commencement of the online discussion. I analyzed the assignments by using the historical argumentation rubric. All participants were provided a copy of the rubric so they could incorporate the key elements of a written historical argument on equality and opportunity in their writing.

A second method of data collection for the purpose of this study was based on the written portfolios collected at the end of the school year. I reviewed them to gain insight into how students explained their comprehension of the writing process. In their portfolios, students elaborated upon their understanding of the elements of a historical argument: claim, counterclaim, and the use of historical evidence to accurately source both elements. They mentioned how the elements of a historical argument helped support their understanding of equality and opportunity and reflected on how the feedback that they received throughout the writing process helped them to improve on their historical arguments.

### **My Role in the Research**

My role in the research was central to the success of the study. In addition to conducting and analyzing the research, I was also the eighth grade social studies teacher where they study took place. Therefore, I worked with all research participants on a daily basis. I chose Edmodo as the online tool where the synchronous online discussions were conducted. I created the necessary historical prompts for participants, and created online discussion groups that encouraged them to participate on a greater basis in a smaller chat environment. The historical prompts were validated from primary and secondary sources



that are derived from both government and educational sources. Each historical prompt had a minimum of two possible claims to make when the study participants created their responses, which in turn allowed each student to use the other material to create a counterclaim in their writing. While I remained an observer while the online synchronous discussion was in session, I could act as a facilitator if needed to keep the discussion moving by suggesting improvements related to the students' written historical arguments, with the expectation that the students involved would revise their work based upon my comments. I created the basis for the writing portfolio the students completed, reflecting the elements of a written historical argument, their understanding of equality and opportunity over the course of the school year, as well as the feedback that they received to improve their written historical argument

**Assumptions:**

Prior to commencement of the study, I had made some assumptions concerning how the research unfolded. I believed that the study participants would initially struggle to use the historical argumentation rubric to create a written historical argument because they had not been exposed to creating detailed written historical arguments at this point in their academic career. I also believed that students would encounter difficulty in maintaining an online discussion for the entirety of a forty-five minute class. Students might experience frustration with their discussion group members when receiving feedback. Although the discussion group members were required to reference the rubric when providing appropriate feedback, the study participants might want more instantaneous feedback from their discussion group members, as well as myself.

However, it was also my belief that students were more accustomed to interacting with one another online in other settings outside of the academic world. Consequently, I felt that the study participants could experience a greater success in providing and receiving feedback on their discussion group members' writing than in writing their own written historical arguments. However, as the students became more acclimated to using the writing rubric when creating their written historical argument, they could see their rubric scores improve over the course of the study. This in turn could lead to the students providing better feedback to their discussion group members on the Edmodo website.

**Definition of key terminology:**

Historical Argument: The ability to define and frame a question within the social studies curriculum. A historical argument is supported by factual evidence to support a claim.

Persuasive writing: A piece of work in which the writer creates a document in order to assert that the writer's opinion is correct with regards to an issue. For the purposes of this study, the persuasive writing will take place in the context of the social studies domain.

Synchronous online discussion: A classroom discussion that takes place online where every student in the class is taking part in the task at the same time.

Historical inquiry: A process by which students investigate a topic in a history classroom. This method involves viewing primary and secondary sources in an attempt to consider avenues to answer issues associated with historical events.

Presentism: An adherence to viewing historical events through present-day attitudes and perspectives. It relies on interpreting past events in terms of modern values and concepts, and ignores why certain events occurred in the manner they did.

Scaffolding: A teaching method that allows students to solve a problem or learn a skill gradually.

Asynchronous online discussion: A classroom discussion that takes place online where students in the class take part in the discussion at their own time and pace.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP): A plan in place that helps students in special education receive services. These students can receive assistance in reading and writing goals, modifications to assignments and tests, and extension deadlines on assignments and projects. In the state of Kansas, gifted students are also served under an IEP.

However, not every state designates gifted students as requiring an IEP.

Edmodo: This is an educational website. While it can be used for multiple purposes, one of the primary uses of Edmodo for this study was the discussion feature. Another main feature was the ability to link social studies content from other sites that students would not be able to access in a traditional, face-to-face classroom setting. One of Edmodo's main features was the use of a discussion site for students to meet online in a secure environment to discuss particular topics in a teacher's curriculum. On the Midwestern school district's website, Edmodo had its own portal which allowed students to connect to it securely through the district website.

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

The study is explained in greater detail in subsequent chapters. Chapter Two discusses the literature review and provides a synthesis of relevant literature. Chapter Three contains the methodology of the study in greater detail. The chapter includes the research setting and sample as well as the data collection and analysis methods used. The study design and procedures are mentioned in greater detail. Chapter Four presents the

study's main findings, as well as the qualitative data from a representative student in both groups. For research question two, students offer their reflections on their understanding of how to write a historical argument in their writing portfolios. Chapter Five offers the main takeaways of the study's findings in light of the research questions, literature review, and conceptual framework. Furthermore, any limitations of the study, as well as considerations for future research are mentioned in this section.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

#### **Purpose Statement**

My study is grounded in three ideas that were essential for this study. First, it was important to examine research that focused on written historical argumentation. Second, it was vital to examine research on equality and opportunity. Since the study participants discussed equality and opportunity in their written historical arguments, it helped to examine how to introduce these concepts to middle school social studies students. Third, it was important to consider the use of online discussions as a method of receiving feedback on the participants' written historical arguments. Since the participants in the study used an online component to provide feedback and improve their historical arguments, it was necessary to review research that focused on this topic.

Although this review is not exhaustive, my goal was to highlight research that impacted social studies instruction about historical argumentation with middle and secondary high school learners. The research targeted domain specific strategies that helped to develop historical argumentation. I also focused on research that offered ideas to introduce multiple perspectives to the participants of this study. By implementing such ideas, it was hoped that students would better understand equality and opportunity. I also hunted for research into how online discussions could influence the development of the understanding of social studies. I specifically looked for research into how online discussions could influence the development of the historical argumentation process.

#### **The Development of Argumentation**

One of the earliest major contributors to the concept of argumentation itself was Stephen Toulmin, who authored *The Uses of Argument* in 1958. The Toulmin model has been a constant reference for those seeking to use the concept of argumentation from a theoretical standpoint. His model identified the elements of argumentation: claim, data, warrant, backing, rebuttal/reservation and qualification. A brief explanation of these terms can be helpful. Claim represents the purpose of the argument that has to be defended. Data were the reasons, grounds or evidence used to support the claim. Warrant referred to the principle, or inference that linked the data to the claim. Backing was the justification that enforced the warrant. Sometimes the claim made may have had exceptions and these are rendered through what Toulmin called rebuttals or reservations. The final piece of this model of argumentation is the qualification that specified the limits to claim, warrant, and backing (Toulmin 1958; Hutiu, 2013).

Rex, Thomas, and Engel (2010) modified Toulmin's model for use in teaching persuasive writing in a school setting. They narrowed the framework from six to three components: stance, evidence, and warrant (Rex, Thomas, & Engel 2010). Writing an argument begins with taking a stance, which Toulmin (1958) referred to as a claim, toward something for a particular purpose and for specific readers (Rex et al, 2010). To be powerful, reasoning required ideas and information, or evidence, purposefully selected to fit the claim regarding equality and opportunity (Rex et al, 2010). With stance, purpose, and a reading audience in mind, the writer selected the most powerful evidence and, with it, warranted, or justified, the stance being made (Rex et al, 2010). Effective warrants persuade readers of the connection between the claim being made and the evidence being used. The work by Rex et al. was appropriate for developing a generic

argument; research in historical thinking suggested the need for further adaptation of their work on historical argumentation. For example, the lack of multiple perspectives might be due to the use of Toulmin's Argument Pattern (Driver et al., 2000; Jonassen and Kim, 2010, Wissinger, 2012). Toulmin did not consider using multiple perspectives in his argumentation model, which was a shortcoming of his research.

Historical argumentation evolved from conventional argumentation. While the model developed by Rex et al. comprised a stance or claim, evidence to support the claim, and warrants that explain how the evidence supported the claim (Toulmin, 1958; Monte-Sano, 2012), based on her research on historical argumentation, Monte-Sano (2012) included the development of using a counterclaim that was also backed with historical evidence (De La Paz et al., 2014). Use of a counterclaim aligned with research from Monte-Sano (2012) and De La Paz et al (2014) on corroboration and the importance of examining multiple perspectives. Historical argumentation has primarily evolved to using accurately sourced historical evidence to develop claims and counterclaims in order to examine multiple perspectives.

### **Justification of the Use of Historical Argumentation**

According to Crowell and Kuhn (2014), skill in writing written arguments was critical to academic success. One setting where students have the opportunity to develop written argumentation skills was in the study of history (Wissinger, 2012). According to VanSledright (2013), students viewed textbooks as an authoritative version of the past. History instruction had to be about constructing arguments and considering multiple explanations for the events and controversies of the past (Wissinger, 2012). Therefore, Wissinger's research on multiple perspectives must be utilized to have students consider

non-dominant voices that may not be in history textbooks which VanSledright (2013) addressed in his work.

The need for discipline-based writing instruction was particularly evident in the history classroom (De La Paz and Felton, 2010). In the case of historical argumentation, the relevance of the evidence was established by warrants that linked the evidence to the artifacts' sources, the perspectives of the artifacts' creators, and the historical contexts within which the artifacts were created (Hexter, 1971; Mink 1987, De La Paz et al, 2012). Given that historians prioritized argumentation over other writing forms (Bain, 2006; Collingwood, 1946, De La Paz et al, 2012), it was necessary to explore how novices use evidence and construct arguments about important concepts. It was also vital to know how these skills developed in response to instruction (De La Paz et al, 2012). The characteristics of a written historical argument included factual and interpretive accuracy, persuasiveness of evidence, accurate sourcing of evidence, corroboration of historical evidence, and contextualization of historical evidence (Monte-Sano, 2012).

As young adolescents prepare for the demands of high school and college classrooms, they must learn to read and write increasingly complex and specialized forms of text (De La Paz and Felton, 2010). Students struggled with writing tasks that require structured responses to analytical or argumentative prompts, precisely the types of disciplinary writing emphasized in secondary, post-secondary and professional settings (De La Paz and Felton, 2010). As a result, the need for content-based writing instruction is particularly evident in the history classroom (Monte-Sano, 2011). Over the past twenty years, the history curriculum has undergone significant reform, placing a greater emphasis on reading primary source documents and afterward writing responses that



either advance an interpretation of events or advocate a position based on information available to decision-makers at the time (De La Paz and Felton, 2010). In their writing, students rarely acknowledge opposing viewpoints, the merits of different positions on historical topics, or the need to systematically respond to alternative perspectives (Ferretti, Lewis, & Andrews-Weckerly, 2009). As a result, there appeared to be a gap in the research between how to introduce disciplinary reading and writing strategies in social studies. The research indicated that writing in social studies relied on recounting historical events from primary sources instead of using an argumentative framework to consider different perspectives on why historical events occurred. Perhaps for these reasons, the K–12 Common Standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010) mandated that students become proficient in “logical arguments based on substantive claims, sound reasoning, and relevant evidence” (Asterhan and Eisenmann, 2011).

Middle school students are often asked to write persuasive essays, requiring them to use evidence to support their claims and persuade an audience (Dobbs, 2013). Thus, the ability to acquire argumentative writing strategies and practices represents a key component of recent curricular reforms in schools and universities throughout the United States and the world (Newell et al, 2011). While research conducted by Newell et al. (2011) indicated that steps were being taken to address argumentative writing strategies, Ferretti, Lewis, and Andrews-Weckerly’s work (2009) suggested that students still had problems in writing a proper argument. The ability to identify an underlying argument in reading, its claims, warrants, and evidence, and the ability to compose a high-quality argument, its claims, warrants, and evidence in writing, are critical skills for academic success in various disciplines (Graff, 2003; Hillocks, 2010, 2011; Kuhn, 2005, Newell, et

al, 2011). Therefore, it is understood that middle school teachers in core disciplines other than English language (social studies, math, and science) must also work toward achieving the writing standards that the Common Core (2010) indicates. For social studies teachers, historical argumentation remained the best way to address these standards.

### **Factors that Comprise a Historical Argument**

Given the importance in grounding their interpretive work in historical evidence (Monte-Sano and Harris, 2012), historians construct arguments from multiple, sometime conflicting sources of evidence (Wissinger and De La Paz, 2016). To do so, writers must compare and evaluate documents based on the merits of competing claims and evidence (Britt, et al; 1994; Kuhn, Weinstock, & Flaton, 1994, Wissinger and De La Paz, 2016) in order to make the case for a particular interpretation of a claim (Mink, 1987). Moreover, historical interpretation relies on examples, details, and sourcing of evidence to substantiate claims (Collingwood, 1946; Hexter, 1971, Wissinger and De La Paz, 2016).

A disciplinary approach to history involves investigation into the past and the construction of historical arguments from evidence that has been questioned, pieced together, and interpreted. Teaching history this way often involves analysis of historical sources, comparison of sources, discussion, and deliberation (Bain, 2006; Monte-Sano, 2008, 2011a; VanSledright, 2002; Wineburg, 2001, Monte-Sano and Harris, 2012). Consequently, stating where historical evidence is sourced allows others to understand and evaluate the basis for one's claim (Monte-Sano and De La Paz, 2012).

When making a historical argument, counterclaims or counterevidence is also recognized (Monte-Sano et al, 2014). When teaching students who to write a

counterclaim, it allows adolescents to consider different perspectives of a historical argument when writing to develop sophisticated claims by explaining the relevance of a quote. It is then discussed, illustrated with examples, or used to counter an opposing claim (Monte-Sano et al, 2014). The reason for using a counterclaim in a historical argument is that one must account for the available evidence (Hexter, 1971) that might dictate changing one's stance to accommodate contradictory evidence (Wissinger and De La Paz, 2016). For the purpose of this study, students eventually composed historical arguments that had the elements of both claims and counterclaims that were sourced with historical evidence to support both elements of a historical argument.

### **Writing from Primary and Secondary Sources**

The task of creating historical arguments involves the reconstruction and interpretation of past events, risking controversy, through multiple perspectives about what actually occurred (Barton and Levstik, 1998; VanSledright, 2002; Wineburg, 1991, Wissinger 2012). Therefore, it is mandatory to include multiple primary resources such as legal transcripts, journals, historical cartoons, and written accounts to provide accurate accounts of a given historical era (De La Paz and Felton, 2010; Monte-Sano, 2008).

The literature on history instruction directly implies that educators should teach history as an interpretation of events based on evidence from multiple perspectives (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008, Wissinger, 2012). In order to accomplish this goal, students must be able to access primary and secondary resources such as diary accounts, newspaper articles, legal documents, maps, and historical timelines (De La Paz and Felton, 2010; Monte-Sano, 2008). From this evidence students can become actively engaged in discussing their historical arguments about disciplinary ideas and events

(Monte-Sano, 2008; VanSledright, 2002; Young & Leinhardt, 1998, Wissinger, 2012).

When presented with evidence from primary and secondary resources, teachers must then have students act as authors themselves in constructing their own evidence-based historical arguments, while offering guided as well as independent and regular feedback on their writing (De La Paz, 2005; De La Paz and Felton, 2010; Young & Leinhardt, 1998, Wissinger, 2012).

### **Historical Arguments in Creating Democratic Citizens**

Social studies educators need to provide students with a forum to learn about and to make historical arguments so that they can become participatory citizens (Hess, 2011). Making and practicing historical arguments are best accomplished in an inquiry approach to history (Monte-Sano, 2008), one in which students discuss multiple perspectives on matters of importance in a given historical era to a democratic society (Hess, 2011). When using primary and secondary resources, students can be more open-minded about the historical content, which allows them to piece together historical events from multiple sources of information (Wissinger, 2012). Journell (2011) suggested that considering multiple perspectives of others is essential in social studies in order to create a citizen willing to participate within a democratic society. Knowledge of citizenship entails insight into the functioning of a democratic society and includes knowledge of the government, civil rights, and different cultures (e.g., Hicks, 2001; Kerr, 2010). Attitudes pertain primarily to respect for each other, tolerance of different views, responsibility, involvement in society, and appreciation of differences between people (e.g., Cogan and Morris, 2002; Grant, 1996).

Among the skills to be mastered are those needed to communicate effectively and consider different perspectives (e.g., Battistoni, 1997; Beane, 2002). Students who engage in discussions learn how to make and defend an argument and analyze others' positions in constructive ways (Hess, 2011). Such discussion requires and produces intellectual rigor (Hess, 2011). Engaging students in classroom deliberation is important for the development of democratic dispositions in which people see each other as political equals rather than rivals. They value other points of view, weigh evidence, and become more informed about the political issues they will confront in the public sphere (McAvoy and Hess, 2013). When engaging in deliberation, students seek to make a decision about a problem that they face in common (Parker, 2005). The main action during a deliberation is weighing alternatives with others in order to decide on the best course of action. Creating historical argumentation within a middle social studies classroom is effective in teaching curriculum but also in promoting the concept of citizenship (McAvoy and Hess, 2013).

An understanding of equality and opportunity is the willingness to not only consider it in a historical argument, but to actively engage with it in a classroom environment. Students ultimately need to discuss historical argumentation to develop their understanding of democratic principles. The ability of any one individual to have a direct impact on society is necessarily limited, but democracy depends on the collective action of many individuals. As young people think about their own ability to influence society, they need to understand that such collective efforts have always been an important component of history (Barton, 2012). When taking the perspective of a democratic citizen studying history (Barton, 2005), students must use historical evidence

drawn selectively from primary and secondary source documents to write well-structured and well-substantiated arguments on the democratic principles of citizenship (De La Paz and Felton, 2010). Historical argumentation can provide students with an avenue to consider multiple perspectives that can be applied to becoming a more enlightened citizen.

### **Social Studies Education Regarding Equality and Opportunity from Multiple Perspectives**

Historical understanding involves a number of facets, such as the ability to think historically, analyze and interpret the past, and to conduct historical research (National Center for History in the Schools, 1994; VanSledright & Kelly, 1998). It also involves the ability to take the perspectives of marginalized people from the past (Levstik 1989; Shemilt, 1984) and situate what is learned in its historical context (Brophy, VanSledright, & Bredin, 1993; Dickinson & Lee, 1984, VanSledright and Kelly, 1998). History texts read by students in the U.S. may now include accounts of diverse Americans and acknowledge their contributions to American history and culture (Tunnell & Ammon, 1996; VanSledright & Kelly, 1998, Afflerbach and VanSledright, 2001). Paralleling the inclusion of diverse historical perspectives and experiences is the call for increasing diversity in the types of historical texts that students read (McGowan, Erickson, & Neufeld, 1996; National Center for History in the Schools, 1994, Afflerbach and VanSledright, 2001). The analysis of multiple perspectives therefore can play a key role in fostering transfer of knowledge across multiple contexts (Engeström, 2009; Newell, et al, 2011).

Since the ethnic revitalization movements of the 1960s and 1970s, marginalized, racial, ethnic, and language groups have argued that they should have the right to maintain important aspects of their cultures and languages while participating fully in education (Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967; B. M. , Gordon, 2001; Sizemore, 1973, Banks, 2008). Successful readers of history are aware of the multiple perspectives in history and are adept at noting conflicting accounts, reconciling contrasting views, and synthesizing information from complementary sources (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995; Afflerbach and VanSledright, 2001). These readers' experiences with reading history promote strategy development for understanding the special vocabulary, genre, and multiple perspectives that innovative history texts comprise (Afflerbach and VanSledright, 2001). Historical readings on a variety of issues such as equity, cooperation and conflict, racism, culture and identity, civic rights and responsibility, and citizenship (Nerdc & Ubec, 2007, Salako et al, 2013) could foster critical thinking in learners and development in social studies classrooms (Bennet, 2007; Reed and Black 2006, Salako et al 2013). The use of the elements of historical argumentation allows for students to consider multiple perspectives when writing about equality and opportunity.

### **Writing Feedback**

Research over the last several decades suggests that feedback is an effective means to the improvement of student writing in multiple disciplines (Ferris, 1997; Lizzio & Wilson, 2008, Zumbrunn et al, 2015). For instance, we know that feedback can significantly improve student motivation for writing tasks (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Pajares, 2003; Schunk & Swartz, 1992, Zumbrunn et al, 2015). Findings from a few existing studies suggest that students' perceptions of writing feedback may be related

to self-writing motivation, self-regulation, and achievement (Ekholm et al, 2015; Magno & Amarles, 2011; Zumbrunn et al., 2013, Zumbrunn et al, 2015). Given the importance of writing for students and the challenges writing can present, it is important to understand how feedback can be used to improve student writing (Zumbrunn et al, 2015).

While writing is generally acknowledged to be a solitary activity, in real world contexts, collaborative writing is far from unusual. In higher education contexts, learners are frequently required to work in pairs or groups to complete written assignments, although research examining the implications of this assessment process is limited (Wigglesworth and Storch, 2012). Consequently, feedback has proved to be valuable for increasing students' writing performance (Nicolaidou, 2013). While feedback has been commonly used in the realm of English Language Arts (ELA), there has been little research done on feedback on historical arguments in the middle school social studies classroom. Furthermore, research is also lacking on online feedback regarding historical argumentation.

### **Writing Portfolios**

Writing portfolios has become a widely accepted method that focuses on process over product, often assessing written proficiency over a span of time (Blair & Takayoshi, 1997; Nicolaidou, 2013). A shift from product to process approaches in teaching writing in ELA, which led to a shift from indirect to direct improvements in evaluating writing ability (Nicolaidou, 2013). According to Wyatt and Looper (1999), when the writing portfolio was introduced in the ELA field, it became a huge success. During this time, “the portfolio for assessment was dominant at basically all levels of English education from early elementary through higher education” (Wyatt & Looper, 1999, p. 6). Writing



portfolios was seen as a way of “enhancement of performance through evaluative feedback and reflection” (Lucas, 1992, p. 1, Nicolaidou, 2013) and has been widely used in the United States in the ELA curriculum (Herman & Winters, 1994; Purves, 1996; Zubizarreta, 2004, Nicolaidou, 2013).

The implementation of peer feedback was an instructional strategy that was also used, in collaboration with portfolios, to affect the student writing process positively (Nicolaidou, 2013). Previous research on peer feedback showed that it can be valuable for increasing students’ writing performance, both in traditional classrooms (Gennip, Segers, & Tillema, 2009; Gielen, Tops, Dochy, Onghena, & Smeets, 2010; Li, Liu, & Zhou, 2012; Olson, 1990; Yu & Wu, 2013) and in the context of portfolios (Barbera, 2009; Barrett, 2007; Chang, Liang, & Chen, 2013; Chang, Tseng, Chou, & Chen, 2011; Chang, Tseng, & Lou, 2012; Ellison & Wu, 2008; Liu, Zhuo, & Yoan, 2004), Nicolaidou, 2013), even though these studies concentrated on secondary and higher education rather than on young writers in elementary classrooms. There are indications that e-portfolios, or electronic submissions of one’s writing over a given period of time, can support the development of students’ writing process (Meyer, Abrami, Wade, Aslan, & Deault, 2010; Reidel, Tomaszewski, & Weaver, 2003). They also show that peer feedback can positively affect students’ writing performance (Gennip et al, 2009; Gielen et al, 2010; Li et al, 2012; Olson, 1990; Yu & Wu, 2013) and that e-portfolios can support students’ peer feedback skills in higher education (Barbera, 2009; Ellison & Wu, 2008; Liu et al, 2004) and secondary education (Barrett, 2007; Chang et al, 2011, 2012, 2013, Nicolaidou, 2013). Empirical research associating e-portfolios, writing performance and peer feedback is limited and mostly comes from the context and

perspectives of secondary and higher education (Nicolaidou, 2013). While the use of portfolios is extensive in ELA, the use of portfolios, particularly e-portfolios, has limited research in social studies when developing written historical arguments. In this study, the participants created a writing portfolio towards the end of the data collection period.

More information on this data collection method is found in Chapter Three.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The intent of the conceptual framework for the purpose of this study is to weave historical argumentation, equality and opportunity, and the use of feedback in order to implement this study. The methodology of the study is further detailed in the next chapter. The analysis of the data and conclusions drawn from that analysis are provided in subsequent chapters.

Historical argumentation is a significant concept for students to comprehend in order to become competent writers in social studies. According to Monte-Sano (2012), students must be able to interpret historical information, and subsequently write a claim to support their evidence. To present a sufficient argument, they must provide their own interpretation of the data to include a counterclaim of their historical argument (Monte-Sano, 2012). The need for discipline-based writing instruction is particularly evident in the history classroom. Over the past fifteen years, the history curriculum has undergone significant reform, placing greater emphasis on reading and writing from primary and secondary source documents. Students must read first-hand and second-hand accounts of events in history before writing essays that either advance an interpretation of events or advocate a position based on information available to decision-makers at the time (De La Paz and Felton, 2010). However, students who write at or barely above a basic level

often struggle to provide adequate support for their positions when completing increasingly complex writing tasks (De La Paz and Felton, 2010).

Historical argumentation was used for the purpose of this study because a student must be able to use the elements of a historical argument in order to examine the multiple perspectives of a historical event. This suggests that for students to become college and career ready (Common Core Standards, 2010), they must be able to have extensive practice in creating persuasive writing to develop a valid historical argument. The participants in this study had ample opportunities to write historical arguments that allowed them to discuss equality and opportunity from multiple perspectives given a historical event.

Historical argumentation embraces historical inquiry at its core (Monte-Sano, 2008). Classrooms that embrace the use of historical inquiry often focus on analyzing evidence, developing arguments, and conveying interpretations in writing (Bain, 2000; Holt, 1995; Levstik & Barton, 2000; VanSledright, 2002, Monte-Sano, 2008). According to Monte-Sano's research, the elements of historical argumentation are essential to the use of historical inquiry. Because the approach of historical inquiry encourages analysis and interpretation of historical texts, it naturally leads to an emphasis on reading, writing, and thinking about social studies to a greater degree than a conventional school history might (Monte-Sano, 2008). These studies suggested that giving students the opportunities to engage with conflicting historical sources promotes the development of historical inquiry (Monte-Sano, 2008). Given the contested nature of equality in U.S. history, learning about this principle enables students to engage with multiple perspectives and discuss equality and opportunity in their written historical arguments.

While learning about the elements of historical argumentation and applying their learning to historical evidence about equality and opportunity from multiple perspectives in a given historical era, students use an online discussion platform both in and outside the classroom. When students used the Edmodo portal, they accessed social studies materials that were not available in their textbooks. One reason for using the online platform was that while historical inquiry learning activities once relied on printed materials as the major source of information (Li and Lim, 2008), but currently such activities and historical documents can be easily accessed via the Internet in secondary schools (Rogers & Swan, 2004; Li and Lim, 2008). Students in this study had the opportunity to peruse primary sources, videos, historical data, political cartoons, and historical images and photographs that provided them historical evidence unavailable in the classroom. Social studies educators strongly encourage doing inquiry in the online environment, since it evidences great potential in history teaching and learning (Li and Lim, 2008). As a result, students have the opportunity to respond to a writing prompt that allows them to use the elements of historical argumentation within the framework of historical inquiry in an online environment.

Students in this study began each historical writing assignment by reading the selected evidence in order to answer the writing prompt. They chose a claim once they had read the available historical evidence in order to begin their writing prompt. Their claim was backed by use of accurate, appropriate historical evidence (Monte-Sano, 2012).

Students then wrote a counterclaim to their argument. By doing so, this allowed them to use argument and reasoning (Monte-Sano, 2012) to further strengthen their

overall written historical argument. Students also sourced their counterclaim with accurate historical evidence. At the end of this process they returned to their original claim in their conclusion by explaining why they had chosen this particular argument over their counterclaim.

The students submitted their initial writing on the Edmodo website to both myself and their discussion group members for review. During this discussion, it was expected that students were referencing their historical argumentation rubric while providing feedback on the elements of historical argumentation to further advance the writing process. Students were able to corroborate their historical argument with their discussion group members and had the opportunity to revise their written historical argument (Monte-Sano, 2012). Students read multiple comments from their discussion group members that guided them during the writing process. It should be noted that discussions in online environments is fluid as participants take and contribute different things depending on individual interests, experiences, and needs (Krutka et al, 2014). During the revision process of their written historical argument, students were expected to further revise their writing to include more detailed support for their position. The use of a synchronous online discussion allowed students to submit and revise their written historical arguments in real time as they engaged with multiple peer perspectives for the benefit of discussing equality and opportunity.

### **Rationale for the Study**

The overall goal of this study was to have students use the elements of a historical argument to interpret equality and opportunity as a way to examine multiple perspectives on a given historical era. A review of the literature indicates that the ability to write a

historical argument is essential to learning social studies. So far, research in this area has been rather limited. The quest to find measureable rubrics on the elements that compose a historical argument was narrowed down to Monte-Sano's rubric on the elements of historical argumentation (2012). To clarify the terminology and make it more meaningful to younger students, I modified this rubric to have students write a claim and a counterclaim, both backed with historical evidence, to interpret how a historical event could be viewed from different points of view. For the purpose of the study, I felt it best to combine the elements of a historical argument and the view of multiple perspectives when discussing equality and opportunity in order to bring a thematic lens to the social studies curriculum that I taught.

In addition to the research done on historical argumentation, I found it important to include research on both synchronous and asynchronous online discussions. For the purpose of this study, an online component was employed in order to discuss historical argumentation in smaller group settings online. The participants in the study used components of both asynchronous and synchronous discussions in composing their written historical arguments. This decision was made because research has shown that asynchronous components of a discussion allowed for reflection and research of content (Asterhan and Eisenmann, 2011). In my study, the participants read the historical evidence associated with a given writing prompt on a historical argument. They subsequently wrote their initial draft of their historical argument and submitted it online.

For the synchronous component of online discussions, students offered feedback on their discussion group members' written historical arguments. In turn, the students were required to use the feedback that they had received to revise their original historical

argument. Research indicates that students are more likely to participate to a greater extent in real time and offer feedback to other members in their discussion group on their written historical arguments (Asterhan and Eisenmann, 2011).

I decided to include research on writing feedback which indicates that receiving proper feedback is a proven method to improve the quality of writing. Therefore, I felt it imperative to include research regarding the use of feedback within the context of creating a historical argument. The feedback that the participants received occurred during the synchronous online discussion. Towards the end of the study, students were required to create a portfolio of their work on their historical arguments to demonstrate the effectiveness of the feedback that they had received (Nicolaidau, 2013). The purpose of including the topic of feedback in the writing portfolio was to have the participants of the study reflect on their work as they received direct feedback from the members of their discussion group.

### **Conclusion of the Literature Review**

The literature review for this study is an overview of the work of a multitude of educational theorists, both recent and modern, who have helped to shape the fields of historical argumentation, historical inquiry, equality and opportunity, online discussions, and feedback in the writing process. The purpose of the research helped to frame the research questions for this study.

Research Question 1: How do the participants in the study use the elements of a written historical argument to interpret how various groups of people struggled with equality and opportunity over time?

Research Question 2: How do students discuss and reflect upon their own growth in writing historical arguments on equality and opportunity over the course of the school year?



## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

This study was conducted as a descriptive case study. The chapter starts with an explanation of and justification for the research design of this study and a description and selection of the study's population and a discussion of the types of data collected. After this, the instructional model is presented. The next sections include a description of the procedure to analyze the data, a discussion of the types of data collected, and the theoretical grounding of the online discussion. Next the procedure for analyzing the data is presented, followed by a section on Edmodo as the tool used for the synchronous online discussion. The limitations of the study and the role and trustworthiness of the researcher, are followed by a conclusion of this study.

#### **Explanation of and Justification of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to research students' use of the elements of a written historical argument to discuss equality and opportunity. Historical argumentation integrates multiple goals for students in middle school social studies, such as historical thinking, disciplinary ways of reading and writing, and argumentation (De la Paz et al, 2014). There is a growing need to include historical argumentation in social studies (De la Paz, et al, 2014). Empirical evidence though shows that students are ineffective in using argumentative strategies and adapting them to the communicative circumstances (Felton & Kuhn, 2001). Nor are they proficient in crafting convincing written historical arguments. Therefore, educators must consider creating assignments that focus upon students using written historical arguments within the social studies curriculum. Monte-Sano (2010) created a rubric in order to isolate and explain the key elements that

compose a historical argument. The rubric that I created based on Monte-Sano's (2010) work builds upon the existing literature and research by discreetly introducing during the school year the elements of written historical argumentation that she created. While her research was an ideal framework for the elements of a historical argument, it would have been difficult for students to adequately evaluate their work over time. There was a need to evaluate student growth over time when combining historical argumentation as a means to better comprehend equality and opportunity. Therefore, the rubric created for this study allowed students to rate their work based on the indicators from Monte-Sano's research. The rubric also had simpler language that would be easier to understand for middle school students. I explained the rubric in greater detail in later in Chapter Three. The full rubric is available in Appendix A.

### **Selection of the Population for the Purpose of the Study**

The population sample for this study consisted of 151 eighth grade students at a middle school in a school district in an affluent suburb of a metro area of the Midwest. The population of the school was approximately 85% white during the 2016-2017 school year. Very few students at this school were receiving free or reduced lunch. The school district in this study is considered to be one of the top-performing academically in the Midwest. This school is also my place of employment as an eighth grade social studies teacher. The eighth grade students at this school were chosen to participate in this study since I worked with them on a daily basis. While all students participated in the instructional model of the study, two representative classes of students were selected at random to collect data for this study. The classes had a mixture of students that received special education services, as well as those who did not. Therefore, it was imperative that

the questions proposed for examination by the group were not only beneficial to the high achieving students, but were also easily modified so that students who needed additional support could achieve success in completing the historical writing assignments. Prior to conducting the study, approval was granted by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Kansas, and the school district where the study was conducted.

After initially reviewing the data, I planned to select groups that were representative of different levels of progress toward meeting the expectations in the historical argumentation rubric. Overall, there were twenty discussion groups from all sections of my social studies classes. Two distinct trends emerged within these groups regarding the data collected from the written historical arguments. The first group consistently met the expectations as defined in the historical argumentation rubric, while the second consistently exceeded the expectations from the same document. I identified nine of the discussion groups as met expectations groups (MEG), and eight discussion groups as those who consistently exceeded expectations (EEG). The remaining three groups either consistently did not meet the expectations set forth in the rubric, or did not agree to participate in this study.

Once the two groups had been identified, I selected three students at random from each group. Student A was from the MEG. Her writing was consistent with meeting the primary expectations of every writing assignment. Students one and two were also from the MEG. They were selected to demonstrate that Student A's work was representative of the MEG. Student B was the representative of the EEG, which consistently offered a greater level of comprehension of the writing process. Students three and four were also from the EEG. They were selected to demonstrate that Student B's work was

representative of the EEG. Student B habitually wrote historical arguments that scored in the highest section of the rubric.

For research question one, I used both students' written historical arguments to interpret how they wrote on the elements of a historical argument as they reasoned with their explanation of equality and opportunity. I read each student's initial version of their written historical arguments as they pertained to the first research question. In Chapter Four, I provide additional evidence of how both students progressed in writing a historical argument over the course of the school year.

For research question two, it was necessary to include the discussion group members that each student interacted with during their synchronous online discussion. The primary reason for including them was to ascertain how they provided feedback to one another when discussing the elements of a historical argument. It was necessary to assess how students from both groups comprehended the elements of historical argumentation, their progression of understanding of equality and opportunity, and the feedback that each discussion group provided to one another. For research question two, the members of Student A's discussion group are classified as the MEG, while Student B's group members are identified as the EEG.

### **Type of Study**

This qualitative study sought to describe the students' ability to utilize and discuss the elements of a written historical argument on equality and opportunity. The type of qualitative study was a case study, in which students participated in the instructional model five times during the fall 2016 semester. During the 2015-2016 school year, I had created a pilot study on the elements of a written historical argument on equality and

opportunity. Its purpose was to fine-tune the instructional model for this study. The reason that a qualitative case study design was chosen for the research methodology was because of the finite time frame in which to collect the material (Merriam, 2002). The substance of a case study was needed in order to be able to satisfactorily answer the research questions within the requisite amount of time with the students during the fall semester 2016 data collection period and the 2017 spring semester analysis and interpretation period.

### **Theoretical Grounding For the Historical Argumentation Rubric**

As mentioned in the literature review of this study, there are certain critical elements that compose a valid historical argument. Toulmin's model of argumentation has been a model for social studies educators and researchers alike (De La Paz, et al, 2014). Although his work is referenced throughout this study, not all of his elements are applicable to argumentation as it pertains to the social studies discipline. For example, "Stevens, Wineburg, Herrenkohl, and Bell (2005) posit that effective argumentation differs across disciplines because the epistemological criteria for judging claims are discipline specific"(De La Paz, et al, 2012, p. 414). The two main foci from Toulmin's argumentation model for the purpose of this study are claim and data. While his model provides researchers with a concept to approach the elements to create an argument, the elements need to be modified when considering content specific disciplines like social studies. According to Toulmin, claim represents the position one takes and must be defended, while data is the evidence used to support the claim (1958). However, the social studies discipline further expands these parameters by stating that "the ability to generate arguments that make thoughtful contributions to historical discourse requires

evaluation and interpretation of multiple sources of information, often with conflicting perspectives, in essence reflecting one's capacity for critical thinking" (De La Paz, et al, 2012, p. 414). Both elements must be used when describing what constitutes a historical argument when discussing equality and opportunity.

When discussing what indicators composed a quality historical argument, Monte-Sano and Harris (2012) stated that analysis of historical sources, discussion, and deliberation on the topic were essential. Contemporary history instruction emphasizes reading and writing from historical documents that required specific analysis from students (Monte-Sano and De La Paz, 2012). For the purpose of this study, students had to analyze first- and second-hand accounts of events in history and write a historical argument that discusses equality and opportunity (Monte-Sano and De La Paz, 2012). The historical content was focused on how marginalized groups struggled with equality and opportunity in a given era.

One final key element that constitutes the definition of historical argumentation is the student reasoning on the argument being made with the social studies content. During the course of the study, students needed to consider alternate positions on historical topics, or acknowledge alternate perspectives on how certain historical topics are viewed (Ferretti, Lewis, and Andrews-Weckerly, 2009). Therefore, students had to become proficient in making sound, logical arguments that were based upon substantive claims, used sound reasoning, and were backed by accurate and relevant evidence (Asterhan and Eisenmann, 2011). This validated Monte-Sano's research (2008) that allowed students to use the elements of a historical argument to discuss equality and opportunity.

The claim selected during a historical argument and the evidence used to support it were critical elements in historical argumentative writing. The nature of the data and the warrants—that is, the evidence and the connection between evidence and claim—is particular to the social studies discipline (Monte-Sano, 2010; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008, De La Paz et al, 2012). In the case of historical argumentation, the relevance and significance of the evidence are established by warrants that link the evidence to the artifacts' sources, and the historical contexts within which the artifacts were created (Hexter, 1971; Mink 1987, De La Paz et al, 2012). Given that historians privilege argumentation over other writing forms (Bain, 2006; Collingwood, 1946, De La Paz, 2012), it is imperative to explore how students use evidence to construct arguments about controversial issues and how these skills develop in response to instruction (De La Paz, 2012).

Monte-Sano (2010) created a rubric that best explained the indicators that constitute a valid historical argument. In 2010 she primarily focused on the use of historical evidence when creating a historical argument. According to De La Paz, Monte-Sano found that approaching writing from a disciplinary stance required students to credibly select and situate evidence in a historical context that further clarified its significance and that writing a convincing historical argument involved more than knowledge about the writing process. It also involved a conceptual understanding of the historical topic, procedural understanding of historical analysis, and background content knowledge (De La Paz et al, 2012).

The first element in making a valid historical claim is factual and historical accuracy, which required the students in my study to interpret documentary evidence

accurately. The second element is persuasiveness of evidence. Students needed to support a claim with evidence that was relevant, significant, and specific. The third indicator in creating an authentic historical claim is the sourcing of evidence. Students were required to cite their historical evidence throughout the writing process. Another indicator of a well-founded claim in a historical argument is the ability to corroborate historical evidence. This allowed the student making the claim to use multiple pieces of evidence in order to support their claim. The final indicator, according to Monte-Sano's research (2012) was to use contextualization in a historical argument. Students were expected to use sources appropriately and to place them within the correct context. While Monte-Sano created a rubric that discussed the principal elements of a historical argument, it did not specifically account for equality and opportunity. The inclusion of equality and opportunity is also an indicator in the historical argumentation rubric, which is located in Appendix A.

### **Key Indicators of the Historical Argumentation Rubric**

The historical argumentation rubric created for this study sought to fill in the gaps in the existing research. It graded all students on a four-point scale. A score of four represented that it exceeded the standard for this writing assignment. A score of three indicated that students met the standard. A score of two demonstrated that the element was below the standard. A score of one suggested that the element was addressed was unsatisfactory, while a score of zero proved no attempt to address it. By affixing a point total to the rubric, it addresses a shortcoming in Monte-Sano's work. In her rubric, Monte-Sano (2008) suggested that students either met an indicator in her rubric, or they



did not meet the requirement. In the following boxes, I listed the key indicators from the exceeded standard section of the rubric. The entire rubric is located in Appendix A.

The key indicators for claim were:

- The students had a claim that was clear to the reader.
- The claim was evident in the opening sentence and conclusion.
- The claim was fully supported throughout the response.
- The claim was backed up with accurate historical evidence.
- There was evidence of a return to the original claim after making a counterclaim.

The key indicators for historical evidence were:

- The students used multiple, accurate pieces of historical evidence to back up the claim and counterclaim throughout the response.
- All citations were correct throughout the response.

The key indicators for argument and reasoning were:

- The student response demonstrated strong argument and reasoning when making their response.
- The students considered a counterclaim on historical evidence presented in their material.
- The counterclaim was clear and easy to understand.
- The counterclaim was backed with accurate historical evidence.

Monte-Sano’s research did not discuss the topics of equality and opportunity. I had to create a section in the historical argumentation rubric to address this gap in the research.

The indicators for equality and opportunity were:

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equality and opportunity were clearly evident throughout the response.</li> <li>• Equality and opportunity were mentioned in both the opening sentence and conclusion that the reader could clearly understand.</li> <li>• Equality and opportunity were referenced by accurate historical evidence.</li> </ul> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**Theoretical Grounding of Online Discussions for the Instructional Model**

Kanuka, Rourke, and Laflamme (2007) wrote an article that illustrated the key elements of an online discussion. They created a table that highlighted the key indicators of an online discussion that I analyzed for this study.

*Theoretical Model of Online Discussions*

Phase 1: Triggering Event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student activities begin with a triggering event (Phase 1), followed by problem definition, (Phase 2).</li> <li>• There is evidence of directed and purposeful thinking, with a focus on the problem that is introduced as the triggering event.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is evidence of learners defining and redefining the problem presented.</li> <li>• A critical spirit and intellectual autonomy are present, whereby learners critically assess the issues explored and are open to alternative explorations.</li> </ul>
Phase 2: Exploration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is evidence that learners are searching for explanations of the problem presented and are exploring relevant ideas.</li> <li>• In addition to a critical attitude and expansive thinking, learners are divergently seeking for solutions; this is important in the development of critical thinking and problem solving, as ideas organize and make sense of contingent facts.</li> </ul>
Phase 3: Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is evidence of a conceptualization of the problem presented.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thinking is reflective and private, although reflection is socially shared.</li> <li>• There is evidence of judgments and decisions being made and focused on an idea or emerging hypothesis.</li> </ul>
Phase 4: Resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The idea or hypothesis is tested. The testing begins with an initial process of sharing the idea or hypothesis with peers, who, in turn, provide insights.</li> <li>• Learners become ready to act upon their understanding; if there is confirmation of the problem solution for resolution, understanding will result.</li> <li>• An unsatisfactory resolution will trigger a renewed search and the process will begin anew.</li> </ul>

A successful synchronous online discussion in a group setting would be able to satisfactorily answer the four phases regarding the research that Kanuka Rourke, and

Laflamme (2007) mentioned in their table. However, this table needed to be modified to account for the discussion of equality and opportunity. The historical argumentation rubric had to be written so that both groups could comprehend what was expected of them. I acknowledge that it took one or two experiences with the two groups using Edmodo in order to get students to engage with discussing the elements in the rubric. It also was an expectation that students mentioned the historical evidence on equality and opportunity provided to their discussion groups. Prior to entering the eighth grade, both groups were unfamiliar with performing tasks on historical argumentation. Therefore, I understood that having students consider their historical arguments as they pertained to equality and opportunity would be a considerably more complex activity than both groups were accustomed to from their previous middle school experience.

### **Instructional Model for the Study**

I based my model on Kanuka, Rourke, and Laflamme's (2007) research. The instructional model in this study was two-tiered. The first tier identified what happened when both groups in the study discuss the elements of a written historical argument on equality and opportunity over time. The second tier had participants discussing the elements of a written historical argument on equality and opportunity within each individual discussion.

Approximately every two weeks, students received notification from me that their written historical argument was ready for them to complete online. They logged into the Edmodo website on their own time outside of class and read the writing prompt for the assignment. The students had one week to complete the assignment before the online discussion commenced. A week was allowed so that students who did not have access to

the Internet at home could finish the assignment elsewhere. This timeframe also provided students with the opportunity to adequately source and corroborate the reading material (De La Paz and Felton, 2010). Over the course of the week, students wrote their historical arguments after reading the writing prompt, which asked them to make a claim on an era in social studies from a point in the social studies curriculum.

I had created a pilot study on the elements of a written historical argument on equality and opportunity. Its purpose was to fine-tune the instructional model for this study. Problems were encountered during the pilot study held in the 2015-2016 school year. I determined that students had difficulty creating a claim on their own since they had no prior experience with historical argumentation. This discovery led me to revise the indicators in Monte-Sano's rubric to better meet the needs of middle school students. Instructionally, I realized that students required multiple options on a claim presented to them in their historical arguments. I had to design my instructional model that provided different choices when selecting a claim. Students also commented that the online discussions were difficult to follow to improve the quality of their work. Therefore, I determined that there was a need to create discussion groups for this study so students could be afforded a better opportunity to provide and receive feedback from their peers. These discussion groups were composed of seven to eight students each, depending on the size of each class.

I also researched the historical evidence for each written historical argument. From a practitioner perspective, I observed during the pilot study that middle school students experienced difficulty in researching historical evidence on their own. They simply lacked the proper research skills to locate quality, reliable historical evidence to

write their arguments. Therefore, I researched the validity of the historical evidence that was available for students so that they had access to reliable sourcing for their historical arguments.

Once participants in the study began writing a historical argument, they entered the integration section of Kanuka, Rourke, and Laflamme's (2007) research. After the students had written their historical argument, they posted it in two places: the assignment tab on the Edmodo website, which went directly to me, and their respective discussion group members in both groups so they could read their responses during the online discussion of the assignment.

Every online discussion on Edmodo was an intra-class discussion. Students from different sections in my social studies classes could not communicate with one another. In order to ensure that intra-class discussions were occurring, each of the five classes had a unique, secure passcode that allowed them access only to their social studies class. For example, students in the first hour class only had the passcode for the first hour class. I locked each class code so that no extra person could enroll in the class.

After a week, each of the five social studies classes visited one of the three computer labs at the middle school to complete the synchronous online discussion portion of the assignment. The participants were participating in the resolution section of Kanuka, Rourke, and Laflamme's (2007) research. Given this set-up, a natural next step was to discuss and justify inquiry questions and relevant historical sources in small groups. Discussion provided students with a chance to think through the available historical evidence to develop their own interpretation of historical events (Monte-Sano, 2012). Furthermore, this study sought to use Monte-Sano's (2012) assertion that the

discussion involved how to interpret a set of texts around a central question that had students inquire how to set about making a historical argument. In the event that a student did not complete the assignment within the week time frame, they were not allowed to participate in the online discussion until the initial assignment was completed. Although it was understood that it would be unlikely that the student could contribute to the synchronous discussion, it was also the reason why I created discussion groups large enough to withstand the temporary loss of a member to such a circumstance.

During the course of the synchronous discussion, the students posted their initial prompt to their discussion group. Each member of the met or exceeded expectations group examined the other members' responses. Students considered their group members' written historical arguments and provided feedback for each group member. The feedback was given via the historical argumentation rubric that students used when creating their own individual work. During these synchronous online discussions, students engaged with their peers by using the rubric to provide feedback. All were expected to comment on responses from their group members on their own initial writing submission, which was intended to steer the conversation from their argument to offer a deeper discussion of the historical era.

As the school year progressed, students were expected to further clarify their claim in their written historical argument discussing it in more depth with their respective discussion group members. The participants were required to strengthen their written historical argument by making any necessary revisions via the feedback they received. As students became more comfortable with the synchronous online discussion model,



they were more apt to make write historical arguments that consistently demonstrated the mastery of the key elements that compose a historical argument.

Kanuka, Rourke, and Laflamme (2007) illustrated the key elements of an online discussion. They highlighted the main indicators that would be analyzed for this study. Their work identified four key elements needed for a successful online discussion. The first element in an online discussion, a triggering event, allowed for student activities to begin with a problem definition. Students focused on the problem that was introduced as the triggering event, which gave me the opportunity to analyze student evidence in their written historical arguments on equality and opportunity. Intellectual freedom was present, which allowed learners to explore alternative perspectives on the triggering event. The second key element in an online discussion was exploration. In this element, there was evidence that learners were searching for relevant ideas to the problem being presented. Students also considered solutions on how to solve problems as they made sense of the evidence presented. The third key element was integration. In this element, thinking was considered to be reflective and private, but reflection was shared socially with evidence of the individual making sense of the information presented during the exploration phase. The fourth element was resolution. Students were ready to act upon their understanding of the material presented by sharing their claims with their discussion group members, who provided their insights into their work.

A successful synchronous online discussion can satisfactorily answer the four sections that Kanuka Rourke, and Laflamme (2007) discussed in their table. However, it needed to be modified to account for the discussion of equality and opportunity. Therefore, a rubric that was better understood by both groups of this study was required. I

acknowledge that it took one or two experiences with using the Edmodo platform to get students to properly use the historical argumentation rubric in the online discussions. For example, it was an expectation that all students specifically mentioned the historical evidence that was provided within their discussion groups. However, they were not yet familiar with performing such a task at this point in their academic careers. I had to acknowledge that the discussion of equality and opportunity across multiple historical texts within the online discussion groups was part of the learning process throughout the course of the school year. While I followed the basis of Kanuka, Rourke, and Laflamme’s research (2007), I had to modify their model to fit the needs of a middle school social studies classroom.

*Instructional Model for Historical Argumentation Discussions*

Step 1: Introduction to historical question	The participatory group received notification from me that their Edmodo assignment was available. They had one week to complete the assignment.
Step 2: Conduct historical research and write initial response to historical question (historical argument)	Students conducted research by visiting the websites on Edmodo for each writing prompt. Students completed the writing assignment according to the writing rubric that they received.
Step 3: Submission of initial student work online of the historical question.	The students submitted their written historical argument online to me, and to their discussion group for feedback.

<p>Step 4: Online synchronous small group discussion and feedback on the historical question.</p>	<p>After one week had elapsed, the students participated in a synchronous online discussion on their work. Each individual conversed with their discussion group members about their work in a small online group setting. Each member received feedback from their discussion group members on their work, as well as feedback from myself.</p>
<p>Step 5: Online revision of individual student work on the historical question.</p>	<p>Each individual in the participatory group began revising their work based upon the feedback they received. Each student was expected to submit a revised version of their written historical argument to me.</p>
<p>Step 6: Assessment of the historical question.</p>	<p>I assigned grades for the overall assignment on the historical question. One ten-point grade was issued for the written assignment, while another ten-point grade was given for the synchronous online discussion.</p>

Over the course of the year, students were introduced to elements of a historical argument that led to the expectation of creating more complex historical arguments.

During the first writing prompt, students were not graded on the elements of a historical argument based on the historical argumentation rubric, as they were writing a historical argument on equality and opportunity for the first time. As the school year progressed, the students were expected to write responses that better met the expectations of the rubric. For example, students in both groups were expected to cite multiple pieces of evidence in their later writing assignments. This also applied to the synchronous online discussion. Initially, students were expected to address other students in their discussion group to offer feedback on their responses by using the rubric and to edit their own writing to create a stronger argument. The purpose for scaffolding over the course of the school year was to create stronger written historical arguments as they pertained to equality and opportunity. As students became more acquainted with the synchronous online discussion model, the students became more accustomed to referencing the historical argumentation rubric to offer suggestions of improvement to their discussion group members on their written historical arguments.

### **Collection of Data**

The first piece of data that was collected for this study was the initial student submissions to the historical argument writing prompts. I interpreted the data based upon the rubric that was created from Monte-Sano's research (2010). I specifically evaluated the students' written historical argument to determine how well they applied the elements of historical argumentation, with respect to their understanding of equality and opportunity for each written historical argument.

As the writing assignments progressed, students were graded on their ability to use the elements of a written historical argument. I considered the student's ability to

write a proper claim. As students became more attuned to the writing process, they were scrutinized on the accuracy of their claims, as well as their ability to return to their claim in the conclusion of their written historical argument. I also observed how students in the two groups used historical evidence to support their claim in their written arguments. I checked for the accuracy of the evidence, the appropriateness of it to support each student claim, how it connected the evidence to the claim, and the use of in text citations when presenting historical evidence to support a claim in a written historical argument. By the end of the writing process, the participants in the study had to write a claim with multiple pieces of accurate historical information that was sourced from historical evidence.

I had to determine how well the students used argument and reasoning in their written historical argument. For example, I had to figure out how well students used the concept of counterclaim. As students became more familiar with the writing process, I had to judge the quality of the counterclaim being made in their written historical arguments, as well as their ability to support their counterclaims with accurate historical evidence.

Finally, I had to consider how students in both groups understood equality and opportunity with respect to the use of the elements of a historical argument. As students become more accustomed to writing on equality and opportunity, I had to interpret whether or not their written historical argument included a greater understanding of these principles when they considered multiple perspectives from given historical eras.

The second data set was the analysis of the chat transcripts generated during the online discussions. I had to evaluate how students revised their written historical arguments after receiving feedback from their discussion group members. The feedback

that each student received was based upon the information that was in the historical argumentation rubric in Monte-Sano's research (2010). I read each chat transcript to determine how students used the rubric to provide feedback to their discussion group members. In turn, I also analyzed how students interpreted the comments from their discussion group members and used that feedback to improve their written historical argument.

The final method of data collection was the submission of a writing portfolio based upon the final version of the written historical arguments from all students. Over the course of the school year, students wrote thirteen historical arguments. Students had three written historical arguments that they selected for their writing portfolio. I required that their first and final historical arguments be included in their portfolio. The students were allowed to select the final sample from the remaining historical arguments. Each participant wrote a reflection on each section in their portfolio to determine their understanding of the elements of an argument in relation to their comprehension of equality and opportunity. I determined the validity of their portfolio from the rubric as they explained their understanding of the elements of a written historical argument. The purpose for using these criteria validated the creation of the rubric based on Monte-Sano's (2010) research that students used when they created their written historical arguments. A copy of Monte-Sano's criteria (2010) is listed on the next page.

Table 1. Benchmarks and Indicators of Evidence Use In Students' Written Historical Arguments

Characteristic	Benchmark	Indicators
<b>Factual and Interpretive accuracy</b>	Interprets the documentary evidence accurately—appropriate interpretation. Fair representation of people, issues, events as opposed to misinterpretation or misunderstanding. Factual details and chronology are also accurate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Got the facts straight (e.g., chronology of events, which countries were allied or enemies, etc.)</li> <li>• Comprehended the information in the documents used</li> <li>• Interpreted documents historically, noting subtext and context</li> </ul>
<b>Persuasiveness of evidence</b>	The essay substantiates the claim with evidence that is relevant, significant, and specific. The weight of the evidence is sufficient—even compelling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporated evidence to support the claim</li> <li>• Selected specific evidence that included precise historical details or quotations from documents</li> <li>• Selected relevant evidence that related to the argument</li> <li>• Selected evidence that was historically significant, given the topic</li> <li>• Integrated multiple pieces of evidence in support of the claim</li> </ul>
<b>Sourcing of evidence</b>	The essay notes authors of documents or other sources of evidence used to make the argument. The use of evidence recognizes perspectives inherent in sources cited. Evidence is balanced and credible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Made reference to documents or cited documents that were relevant to the argument</li> <li>• Recognized or referred to the authors of documents cited</li> <li>• Attributed authorship to the correct person—recognized that a person who is discussed in a document was not always the author</li> <li>• Recognized perspectives of authors or commented on credibility of evidence</li> </ul>
<b>Corroboration of evidence</b>	The claim responds to and accounts for the available evidence. The essay synthesizes multiple pieces of evidence that work together to support the claim. The essay recognizes and addresses conflicting/counter evidence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognized where documents might support the claim</li> <li>• Used more than one document to support the claim</li> <li>• Recognized and responded to counter-evidence</li> </ul>
<b>Contextualization of evidence</b>	Contextual knowledge is used to situate and evaluate the evidence available. In contextualizing evidence and topic, the essay recognizes historical perspectives and demonstrates an understanding of causation. The essay uses sources in a manner that is consistent with the contemporary meaning of the sources for the original audience at the time and place of their creation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Established the historical context and perspectives relevant to the topic</li> <li>• Established clear, correct cause-effect relationships</li> <li>• Established the correct chronology</li> <li>• Connected excerpts of documents to their historical context—Or, grounded and situated documents in their original context</li> <li>• Used documents in a manner that was consistent with their original, historical meaning</li> </ul>

### Use of Edmodo for the Study

Edmodo is a learning management system used for the synchronous online discussion of this study when students engage in their intra class online discussion. It was selected for use in this study when students would be engaged in an intra-class online discussion. Edmodo was chosen because my students were familiar with the website. The students had worked with it on a limited basis in their sixth and seventh grade years at their middle school. I had used Edmodo as a means to facilitate online communication among eighth grade students in previous school years.

What was different for the eighth grade students in this study was the overall setup of the Edmodo discussions. Students had commented to me during the pilot study that whole class discussions were difficult to follow and led to confusing and misleading class discussions on equality and opportunity. It was hoped that the inclusion of discussion groups using Edmodo would solve these problems.

There are many uses of this system in the school setting. Edmodo is a free, safe, and secure educational tool. Teachers use it in discussions on topics in their content discipline. Educators can post assignments and links, create smaller discussion groups, and archive those discussions (Anderson, 2010). Therefore, Edmodo can be used as an educational tool for students to have intra-class online discussions in a secure online environment. For the purpose of this study, it was used as an educational tool to give and receive student feedback to improve their historical arguments.

The purpose of Edmodo was as a district-approved learning management system (LMS) for the students to review historical evidence, submit their written historical argument, and offer and receive feedback to improve their written historical arguments. The eighth grade students in this study participated in synchronous online group discussions on Edmodo. Each group typically had seven to eight students. The purpose of each group was to allow commenting on one another's work. Depending on the size of the class, there were four discussion groups per class in this study.

### **Limitations Prior to Conducting the Study**

There were some obstacles that had to be identified and overcome at the school in order to properly collect data in a timely fashion for the purpose of this study. For example, since other faculty members at the school frequently signed up for the computer



labs and portable laptop stations, I had to plan ahead to reserve lab time weeks or even months in advance. Moreover, MAP testing and state assessments required the use of these computer labs. As a result, scheduling an Edmodo activity was sometimes difficult and therefore problematic during portions of the fall and spring semesters. Another limitation to the study was the issue of scaffolding to create more complex responses for the initial posts on the Edmodo website. Students needed to gain familiarity with the framework in which to create provide feedback to discussion group members. Each individual student also gained an understanding of the writing process at different points throughout the school year. As a result, students had progressed at different rates in mastering the writing process, which led to the creation of two groups that were analyzed for this study.

### **Trustworthiness and Role of Researcher**

The individual students who participated in this study also had me as their social studies instructor for the 2016--2017 school year. It was up to me to ensure that certain measures were in place to create a learning environment for validity issues regarding the collection of data. It was also of critical importance to create an atmosphere of trust between the students and myself.

Edmodo had been previously approved as a learning management system (LMS) by the school district several years before by the educational services department in the district office. In fact, there was a secure link to Edmodo from its district login page that students were required to use to for a connection to the website. Each class had a secure login code. Once all the students had registered on the class website, I locked the code

for each section so that no one could participate in another class. This also ensured that all participants in this study were treated ethically.

The school district required that students completed and signed a document stating that they would not abuse their Internet privileges while on at school. Students and their parents signed this document prior to enrolling in school. Without proper documentation, students were not allowed to participate in online assignments. In order to satisfy the district requirement regarding Internet usage, I spoke with students about how they would interact with one another during a synchronous online discussion. No student was allowed to leave the Edmodo site during a discussion unless they were viewing historical documents for the purpose of improving their written historical argument. The historical documents in question for each assignment were linked to each writing prompt on the Edmodo website.

I also explained how students conducted their behavior online with students from both groups prior to conducting our first online discussion. The students were told that it while it would be acceptable to disagree with their discussion group members from time to time regarding their written historical arguments, they must discuss each issue appropriately and respectfully. They were not allowed to engage in insults, verbal abuse, or otherwise inappropriate behavior online. I had to monitor each synchronous online discussion on Edmodo to ensure that each participant remained respectful to others and stayed on task.

I also had to maintain student anonymity throughout the course of the study. I removed any names or signifying information that could determine the identity of the individual students who participated in this study. The hour of each class and the

corresponding discussion groups were randomized so that a reader could not directly uncover any identity. I constantly reviewed the data collection procedures to ensure that this study was conducted ethically according to the regulations set forth by the dissertation committee of this study, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Kansas, and the school district.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Results

In Chapter Four, I explain my use of the instructional model as presented in Chapter Three to clarify how I used scaffolding to teach my students the elements of a written historical argument. Scaffolding also provided an overview of how students wrote their historical arguments related to equality and opportunity during different periods in U.S. history. After introducing the instructional model, I began to analyze student writing in order to answer the two research questions. Included are writing samples from Student A and Student B, who represent students from the MEG and EEG, respectively. Students 1 and 2 were from the MEG. These students had their comments represented to validate why Student A was chosen as a representative of the MEG. Students 3 and 4 were from the EEG. These students had their comments represented to validate Student B as a representative of the EEG. All students were randomly chosen. Segments from the final portfolio of their written historical arguments are available from the MEG that included Student A, as well as the EEG that included Student B. The writing portfolio is discussed in further detail in research question two later in the chapter. Examples of the writing prompts are available in Appendix B and C of this study. I conclude the chapter by providing evidence on how the research questions impacted each another throughout the data collection process.

#### **Overview of the Instructional Model for the Study**

As I considered how to create the instructional model for this study, I kept referring back to Monte-Sano's research on historical argumentation (2010) and the rubric that resulted from it. I wanted my students to be able to write a strong claim and a

counterclaim, and furthermore to justify both using accurate and appropriate historical evidence. It was important that they would be able to offer a brief justification as to why their claim was more important than their counterclaim.

My students completed a total of thirteen historical argumentation assignments during the school year, and created a portfolio of their work as a culminating project. They were assessed on how well they used the concepts of claim, historical evidence, counterclaim, and equality and opportunity in their writing. The students in both groups then used the elements of a historical argument to discuss how equality and opportunity affected marginalized groups in a historical era.

This chapter presents the results of students from the 2016-2017 school year, who represented both groups in this study. Each of the two groups was randomly assigned members across six sections of social studies taught during the school year. Each group had approximately seven people, and the groups did not change members for the duration of the study. Each of the historical arguments was issued to all participants simultaneously at the same point in the social studies curriculum.

The students received the writing assignments at appropriate intervals in the curriculum, typically, once every two weeks. I had provided my students with enough prior knowledge on each historical event, that they would have some understanding of the content they were asked to explore. The eighth graders had a week to complete their written historical arguments online. After reading the writing prompts and historical evidence that were provided, they wrote their historical arguments. They submitted their initial work online to me and shared a copy of their work with their discussion group members. When the assignment was due, my classes went into one of the computer labs

to have an online discussion dealing with their historical arguments. The students had to read the work of their discussion group members and offer appropriate feedback so that all could improve their writing. Students from both groups were expected to reference the historical argumentation rubric when providing feedback. Each student was also expected to revise their writing based off the comments that they received from their discussion group members. I also sometimes provided written feedback to students on their historical arguments, but I primarily remained as an observer of the online discussions. Evidence and analysis of the online discussions will be discussed later in this chapter. Figure 1 provides an explanation of the scaffolding method that I used for my instructional model, highlights which indicators that were used from Monte-Sano’s research, and comments on the scaffolding measures introduced each quarter.

*Figure 1: Historical Argumentation Instructional Model*

Number of Assignments	Indicators Introduced	Scaffolding Measures
<p>The following indicators were introduced from assignments one through three:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Got the facts straight (e.g. chronology of events).</li> <li>• Comprehended the information in the documents used</li> <li>• Interpreted documents historically, noting subtext and context.</li> <li>• Incorporated evidence to support the claim.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introducing the use of a claim:</li> <li>• I provided the prompt to each historical argumentation assignment, as well as possible options for students to take when writing their claim.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selected evidence that was historically significant, given the topic.</li>   <li>• Recognized where documents might support the claim.</li>   <li>• Made reference to documents or documents that was relevant to the argument.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using historical evidence to back up a claim: I provided my students with valid, credible evidence in order for my students to use accurate historical evidence to support their claim.</li>   <li>• Learning to cite historical evidence: I provided a basic citation rule for students to use when citing evidence.</li>   <li>• Introducing writing a clear claim, evident in the opening sentence and conclusion.</li>   <li>• Using appropriate evidence that pertained to the historical argument (e.g. did the evidence make sense).</li>   <li>• Introducing the use of a counterclaim. Some students attempted this.</li> </ul>
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<p>The following indicators were assigned from assignments four through six:</p>	<p>Students worked on previous skills introduced, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selected specific evidence that included precise historical details or quotations from documents.</li> <li>• Select evidence that related to the argument.</li> <li>• Recognized and responded to counter evidence.</li> <li>• Recognized or referred to the authors or documents used.</li> <li>• Selected evidence that was historically significant, given the topic.</li> </ul>	<p>Students worked on previous skills introduced, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using the counterclaim. Some students had attempted it previously.</li> <li>• Using accurate historical evidence in both the claim and the counterclaim.</li> <li>• Citing evidence in the counterclaim.</li> <li>• Introducing comparing the claim and counterclaim. Some students attempted this.</li> </ul>
<p>The following indicators were introduced from assignments seven through eleven:</p>	<p>Students worked on previous skills introduced, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated multiple pieces of evidence in support of the claim.</li> </ul>	<p>Students worked on previous skills introduced, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explaining in the argument why the claim was more important than the counterclaim.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used more than one document to support the claim.</li> <li>• Established the historical context and perspectives related to the topic.</li> <li>• Used documents in a manner consistent with their original, historical meaning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using more than one piece of evidence in the claim.</li> <li>• Introducing the use of historical context and perspectives related to the topic.</li> </ul>
<p>The following indicators were introduced from assignments twelve through thirteen:</p>	<p>Students worked on previous skills introduced, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Established clear, correct cause-effect relationships.</li> <li>• Connected excerpts of documents to their historical context.</li> <li>• Grounded and situated documents in their historical context</li> </ul>	<p>Students worked on previous skills introduced, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using historical evidence in the proper context.</li> <li>• Using multiple pieces of evidence in the counterclaim.</li> <li>• Looking at different perspectives of a given historical event.</li> <li>• Showing use of mastery of the elements of a historical argument (portfolio).</li> </ul>

**Description of the Implementation of the Instructional Model**

For the first three writing assignments, the students were told to follow the historical argumentation rubric, but to focus mainly on writing a claim and supporting it with evidence. Feedback was presented on their writing, and a completion grade was attached to the writing. Students received ten points (on a ten-point scale) for simply completing the assignment and ten points (on a ten-point scale) for providing feedback to their discussion group members. Starting with the third writing assignment, the use of claim began to be graded by using the indicators in the historical argumentation rubric. During the fourth and fifth writing assignments, the use of historical evidence to back up a claim began to be graded according to the indicators in the rubric. Students could lose two to three points if they did not have a claim that was clear to the reader, did not use accurate historical evidence to back up their claim, or used historical evidence that was not properly sourced. As the second quarter began, I started asking my students to include a counterclaim under the argument and reasoning section of the historical argumentation rubric. Two to three points could be deducted if students did not provide a transition to a counterclaim, did not use historical evidence to back up their counterclaim, or failed to consider multiple perspectives when making a counterclaim, which are all indicators in the historical argumentation rubric.

By the beginning of the spring semester, students in both groups were expected to be able write a conclusion that justified why their claim was more important than their counterclaim. This was in addition to writing a claim, using historical evidence, and presenting a counterclaim in their written historical argument.

In the fourth quarter of the school year, students were asked to begin contextualizing the historical evidence used into their historical argument so they could

start to relate historical figures to the given the time period they were studying. In March 2017, the culminating project on their use of historical argumentation was introduced, which was a portfolio of selected written historical arguments from various points of the school year.

### **Selection of Student Groups**

Overall, I had twenty student discussion groups to choose from when selecting groups to use as my research subjects. Several factors eliminated some from inclusion. Of the twenty, three groups had students who consistently did not meet the expectations of the writing assignments. Three or four members of these discussion groups frequently did not turn in their writing assignments. There were other instances in the three groups where the students did not write enough in their historical argument to properly address the key elements of a historical argument that I was looking for based on the historical argumentation rubric. Some students were being served on an individualized education plan (IEP) or did not perform well in class. One or two students in these lower performing groups did not turn in their signed waiver granting me access to include their work in this study. For these reasons, I could not include these three groups in the analysis of data.

Of the remaining seventeen groups, I had nine groups who consistently met the expectations of the writing assignments. They frequently addressed the use of historical evidence to discuss equality and opportunity in a given historical era. The remaining seven groups usually exceeded expectations of the writing assignments. The students in the met expectations group were general education students who typically did well in class. The students in the EEG were typically a combination of academically high

performing general education students, and those being served on a gifted IEP. I chose to randomly analyze the writing assignments of one met expectations group, as well as one exceeded expectations group for this study.

### **Examples of The Use of Claim in a Historical Argument**

For the first three writing assignments on historical argumentation, students were asked to address the topic of claim. They were expected to take a position on the written prompt on a given historical era presented and write a claim that was clear to the reader, and backed by accurate historical evidence. By the end of the third writing assignment, I observed my students composing a clear and accurate claim that was evident throughout their historical argument and making some reference to historical evidence.

For the first written historical argument, I chose a broad range of three different historical eras in which marginalized groups had their equality and opportunity violated. While the three topics varied widely in historical eras, this assignment introduced my students to writing a historical argument and creating a baseline to analyze their later written historical arguments. Although the research supports the difficulty of students contextualizing historical people and events, I wanted to see how my students would respond in writing and supporting a claim. Each one wrote their historical arguments using all of the elements from the first writing assignment. The purpose of this was to provide a baseline, so that I could determine each student's relative strengths in writing. All the following are initial student submissions prior to review by their peers. I chose one representative student from the met expectations group and one from the exceeded expectations group. In addition, I selected two students from the met expectations group, and two more from the exceeded expectations group to validate the selections of the two

representative students. While all of the students were randomly selected, these students consistently represented the characteristics of their respective groups.

Student A represented the met expectations group. Her writing submissions, as well as the writing prompts, are found in Appendix B. Students one and two also represented the met expectations group. Their writing submissions, as well as their writing prompts, are found in Appendix C and D, respectively. The italicized quotes in the following sections are representative of the student's own words in their writing assignments.

In her first paragraph, I saw that Student A tried to adequately write a claim but needed further development of the accuracy of her claim. She attempted to use the historical argumentation rubric in her writing assignment, but had difficulty in applying it to her writing. She wrote, "*The Japanese-Americans had their equality and opportunity violated. As Japanese-Americans became United States citizens, they were suddenly thrown in prison. Over 127,000 Japanese-American citizens were imprisoned during World War II, after 'President Roosevelt signed an executive order in February 1942 ordering the relocation of all Americans of Japanese ancestry to concentration camps' (Japanese-American 1)*". This began Student A's historical argument. She made a claim, but then directly attempted to back it up with historical evidence without providing any reasoning about why she selected her claim before backing it with evidence. Student A needed to provide further explanation of the relationship between her claim and the reasons why she chose the historical evidence in this writing assignment. Student A's claim was also not supported throughout her historical argument.

For the first writing assignment, student one wrote, “*African-Americans had their equality and opportunity violated. For example, a young African-American motorcyclist named Marquette Frye, was pulled over and arrested in 1965, for suspicion of intoxication while driving (Civil Rights Digital Library).*” Student one also wrote a similar opening to her historical argument. Student one selected a claim, but did not provide any reasoning into why she selected her claim. Instead, she began to support her claim with historical evidence. The analysis of her writing assignment also showed that student failed to support her claim with accurate historical evidence.

Student two wrote, “*On May 28, 1830 the Native American’s had their equality and opportunity violated, when President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act. This gave the U.S. all of the unsettled land west of the Mississippi River. According to the Library of Congress Web Site many of the tribes caused riots and disobeyed the new act although, some of the tribes went peacefully and caused no trouble*”. According to the rubric, student two did not create a claim that was clear and accurate to the reader. He began his writing assignment by discussing Native Americans, but I had to read through his writing multiple times to better understand what he tried to state in his claim. Student two also did not support his claim with accurate, historical evidence. In fact, student two failed to provide proper citations of his sourcing for his evidence.

After the first writing assignment, I noticed that students in the MEG struggled explain the reasons why they selected their claim. These students also did not use accurate historical evidence to back up their claim. Since none of my students had written a historical argument before, I had to remind students to refer back to the rubric when they wrote historical arguments later in the school year. These writing assignments

were typical of the students in the MEG in that they struggled with writing a claim that was clear to the reader, and providing accurate historical evidence that supported their claim.

Student B represented the exceeded expectations group. Her historical arguments, along with the corresponding writing prompts, are located in Appendix E. Students three and four also represented the exceeded expectations group. Their full writing assignments can be found in Appendix F and G, respectively. The italicized quotes below directly referenced their writing.

In the first writing assignment, Student B presented a more developed and nuanced claim as compared to Student A from the met expectations group. Student B wrote, *“African-Americans had their equality and opportunity violated. Contrary to Thomas Jefferson’s statement in the Declaration of Independence that, ‘All men are created equal’, many examples throughout American History show that this statement has not always been true for African-Americans. The Watts Riots, which occurred in an impoverished African-American community, was a prime illustration of this offense.”* While it may seem similar to the first example of writing from the met expectations group, this student provided a level of complexity in her claim that was clearer to the reader. For example, Student B attempted to justify her claim with supporting details before supporting her claim with historical evidence, while Student A merely began presenting historical evidence immediately after writing her claim. While she exceeded expectations on her claim, Student B could use some improvement on selecting evidence that was more historically accurate to support that claim that she made.

Student three wrote, *“The Japanese - Americans had their equality and opportunity violated. As the Japanese - Americans were becoming citizens over 127,000 were being imprisoned for being of Japanese ancestry. For example, it says “Succumbing to bad advice and popular option, President Roosevelt signed an executive order in February 1942 ordering the relocation of all Americans of Japanese ancestry to concentration camps”* (Japanese American 1). Student three had some similarities to Student B in this writing assignment. Student three wrote a claim that was clear to the reader. She satisfied the exceeded expectations section of the rubric by adding in a supporting sentence to better clarify the selection of her claim. However, student three also struggled with selecting accurate historical evidence to fully support her claim. Student three needed to provide the reader with the context of the historical era to fully support the bridge between the claim and the historical evidence that she presented.

Student four wrote, *“Japanese-Americans had their personal rights and associated opportunities that result from being free violated in World War II. During this time, America was at war with Japan”*. Student four struggled to develop a claim that was clear to the reader. Student four provided a statement of historical fact instead of providing evidence that supported her claim. Student four also did not provide historical evidence to support her claim until later in her historical argument.

After the first writing assignment, I observed that students in the EEG were writing claims that were clearer than those in the MEG. The key indicator that supported this observation was that students from the EEG tended to offer supporting detail that made their claim more understandable to the reader.



By the third assignment, I saw an improvement in the development of a claim by all students. I observed that Student A had improved from her first attempts at writing a claim by the third historical argument. For example, I saw evidence of a greater comprehension as to why she chose her claim in her two sentences. She wrote, “*On December 30, 1830, the Indians were officially moved off their land to make way for white settlers. A treaty was structured to have the Indians move off mid-western land if the settlers agreed to pay for the new land even further west. Most of the Native Americans disagreed with this treaty like the Cherokee tribe, who refused to move off their property.*” She tried to clarify the deal that was made between the Cherokee Nation and the American government, which was not something that she attempted to do in her first writing assignment. Student A attempted to support the claim fully throughout the response, which was an indicator in the rubric. After her rationale, she provided stronger evidence to support her claim. While her claim could still be improved with time, it was evident that this student had a greater idea of how to better introduce and support a claim that is clear, accurate, and supported with stronger evidence.

Student one wrote, “*The Native Americans had their equality and opportunity violated when they were forced out of their own homes by Andrew Jackson in the Indian Removal Act of 1830. Jackson was the president at the time of devastation for the Cherokee Indians, when a peace treaty and the supreme courts orders were disobeyed and Jackson’s army moved the Indians to Oklahoma*”. Student one wrote a better claim, since she provided support for it throughout her response. However, her selection of historical evidence to support her claim needs further development. Student one did include historical evidence to support her claim, but it was not appropriate for her

argument. For example, her evidence referenced the amount of Native Americans who died along the Trail of Tears. Student one should have considered using evidence from the Indian Removal Act, since she directly referenced it in her claim. The inclusion of historical evidence from the Indian Removal Act would have satisfied the historical accuracy indicator in the rubric.

Student two wrote, *“Native Americans had their equality and opportunity violated by Andrew Jackson in 1830. That day he signed a document named the Indian Removal Act which forced the Native Americans from their home into Indian Territory, which is now known as present day Oklahoma. “President Andrew Jackson's military command and almost certainly his life were saved thanks to the aid of 500 Cherokee allies at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend in 1814”*. Student two satisfied the rubric by making his claim clear to the reader by offering supporting details that justified his selection of his claim. However, he did not back up his claim with accurate historical evidence. While he did attempt to satisfy the indicator in the rubric to provide historical evidence, he sourced evidence that indicated that the Native Americans saved Andrew Jackson’s life from an earlier battle in his career. Since student two was discussing the Indian Removal Act in historical argument, the evidence that he provided did not accurately support his claim.

The students in the MEG could write a better claim by the end of the third writing assignment. However, they still struggled with selecting historical evidence that fully supported their claim. Students still struggled with the difficulty of selecting accurate historical evidence to support the claim that they made. This was typical of students in the MEG at this point in the study.

Student B also improved upon her overall claim by the third historical argument as she considered how equality and opportunity related to her claim. *“Because the new territory was unknown many people joined together all in the hope for the same thing; new opportunities. The new settlers ran into Native Americans who had already been living there and felt the need to remove them from what was now the settlers’ land”*.

While she briefly mentioned that Native Americans were not considered in the spirit of Manifest Destiny, she concluded that it was for the overall betterment of the country.

While her claim was improved from her first effort, it was still apparent that she needed to rely less upon lengthy citations of historical evidence and only include evidence that was accurate and pertinent to her argument.

Student three wrote, *“The Native Americans had their equality and opportunity violated. After the creation and passage of the original Cherokee Nation constitution and establishment of a Cherokee Supreme Court, the Cherokee had come upon a pinnacle which followed in the discovery in gold in northern Georgia. Overcome with “gold fever” and a want for expansion lots of the white communities turned on their Cherokee neighbors”*. Student three wrote an improved claim that was clearer to the reader, and provided supporting detail to clarify why she selected her claim. Student three also improved on her use of historical evidence in her writing assignment, but it could have been more accurate to better support her claim. She wrote, *“Under orders from President Jackson the U.S. Army began enforcement of the Removal Act. The Cherokee were rounded up in the summer of 1838 and loaded onto boats that traveled the Tennessee, Ohio, Mississippi and Arkansas Rivers into Indian Territory”*. The historical evidence suggested supporting a claim over the Indian Removal Act, but she did not explain that in

her claim. She suggests that Native Americans were forced to move as a result of gold being discovered in Georgia, but there were other determining factors that led to the passage of the Indian Removal Act. Student three needed to write a more concise historical argument that showed better development on how her selection of historical evidence related to her claim.

Student four wrote, *“When the Indian Removal Act was signed in the 1830s, Native Americans had their equality and opportunity violated. The stated purpose of this act was to move Indians east of the Mississippi River in to Indian Territory so that settlers could migrate onto their current lands”*. Student four wrote a claim that was clear to the reader. The claim was fully supported at the beginning of her historical argument. Her historical evidence needed to better support the claim that she made. She wrote, *“An estimated 4,000 died from hunger, exposure, and disease”*. The statement made in her claim was not supported by the statistic that she presented in her historical argument. While student four developed a claim that was clear, she needed to provide more accurate historical evidence in her writing assignment.

By the third writing assignment, the students from the EEG were writing claims that were noticeably clearer than students who were in the MEG. However, both groups still lacked proficiency in providing accurate historical evidence to support their claims. While both groups were using historical evidence to support their claims, they still needed to provide more accurate and appropriate evidence that truly supported the claim that they selected in their writing assignments.

Over the course of the school year, these students continually improved the quality of their claims as they wrote more historical arguments. This makes sense, as

these students composed more claims than any other element of a historical argument over the course of the school year. The student examples that I have presented in this chapter were consistent with the student submissions that I received throughout the first quarter of the school year. The MEG submitted work that was consistent with Student A, while the EEG submitted work that was consistent with Student B.

### **Examples of Counterclaim Analysis in a Historical Argument**

Starting with the fourth written historical argument, students were asked to develop a counterclaim in their historical arguments. The students were expected to follow the rubric to compose a counterclaim that was clear to the reader, but also supported with accurate historical evidence.

Student A's attempt at a counterclaim in this exercise needed improvement, as its argument was not well developed at this point in the writing process. She wrote, "*Many people can believe that abolitionists fighting against slavery had greater issues in achieving equality and opportunity than women's rights. At first abolitionists were harassed by many people but their voices grew louder toward the Civil War.*" Student A's counterclaim was clear and easy to understand, which was one of the indicators in the rubric. Her opening sentences in her counterclaim demonstrated an indication of strong reasoning when making her response, which is also a key component in the counterclaim section of the rubric. However, her selection of historical evidence to support her counterclaim was lacking in the accuracy needed to support it. She wrote, "*...as antislavery sentiment began to appear in politics, abolitionists also began disagreeing among themselves.*" This particular phrase contradicts her initial reasoning in her counterclaim. Ultimately, she could have accurately sourced historical evidence to back

up her counterclaim in order to make it a stronger, more compelling argument (Wineburg, 2001, De La Paz and Felton, 2010).

Student one wrote, “*Some argue that abolitionists fighting against slavery had greater issues in achieving equality and opportunity for their group. As the abolitionists’ voices grew louder, their safety became at risk.*” Student one provided evidence of a reasonable argument in her response. Her argument in her counterclaim suggested that abolitionists were often targets of physical violence, which was supported by the historical evidence that she selected in her counterclaim. She wrote, “*...especially the 1837 murder of abolitionist editor Elijah Lovejoy, led many northerners, fearful for their own civil liberties, to vote for antislavery politicians and brought important converts such as Wendell Phillips, Gerrit Smith, and Edmund Quincy to the cause.*” Student one did offer accurate historical evidence to support the counterclaim that she selected.

Student two wrote, “*Some people may say people fighting for women’s rights had greater issues in achieving equality and opportunity for their group. These people feel that it was harder for the women to get rights than the African American slaves that were being tortured and overworked.*” Student two wrote a counterclaim that was not clarified throughout their response, which indicated that his counterclaim was below the standard in the rubric. His supporting sentence suggested that African-Americans struggled more than women, since they “were being tortured and overworked”. Student two had selected the abolitionist option for his claim, and had injected bias into his counterclaim. The result was an unclear counterclaim for the reader. Student two had also used historical evidence that did not support the counterclaim that he made. He wrote, “*...national woman’s rights conventions were held annually, providing an important focus for the*

*growing women's suffrage movement, and finally the 19th Amendment was adopted in 1920, granting American women the constitutionally protected right to vote*" Student two had made an attempt at writing a counterclaim but it was below the standard of the rubric since he used inaccurate historical evidence to support his response.

The MEG struggled initially to write a counterclaim. These students labored in considering the perspectives of differing points of view in writing a historical argument. Student A wrote a clear counterclaim, but struggled to support it with accurate historical evidence. Student one initially grappled with writing a clear counterclaim, but backed it with accurate historical evidence. Student two struggled to understand why a counterclaim was needed in his argument, since he had selected the abolitionist movement as his claim. These problems were representative of both groups.

Student B had difficulty in writing a counterclaim. She assumed that abolitionists had their views more widely known than women suffragists of the time. While she may have been correct, the historical evidence that she used to reinforce her counterclaim did not support this statement. Student B also lacked the complexity in her counterclaim that was evident in her claim. Student B wrote, "*Although some may disagree and claim that abolitionists fighting against slavery had greater issues in achieving equality and opportunity for their group, this assumption is false because their ideas were more widely known*". According to the rubric, her counterclaim was unsatisfactory, since she lacked any attempt at a counterclaim in her response. While Student B did select an option for a counterclaim, she immediately dismissed it as an incorrect statement. The result transformed her historical argument into a persuasive writing exercise. She also did not offer any supporting evidence in her attempt in writing a counterclaim.

Student three wrote, “...others may say that people fighting for women’s rights had greater issue achieving equality and opportunity. Women had been fighting to get more social, civil, religious conditions and rights for women.” She wrote a counterclaim that was clear and understandable to the reader. Student three’s historical evidence does support her counterclaim. She wrote, “After years of struggle, the 19th Amendment was adopted in 1920, granting American women the constitutionally protected right to vote.” Student three quoted legislation that had been passed to support women’s suffrage. While student three did acknowledge that suffragettes struggled in getting the nineteenth amendment passed, there could have been more supporting details that better supported her selection of historical evidence in her counterclaim.

Student four wrote, “On the other hand, some people believe that the abolitionists had to fight harder for freedom than women did for equality. Abolitionists wanted an immediate end to slavery. They were willing to be violent and unrealistic if it got their point across; however, this behavior lead to consequences.” According to the rubric, she showed evidence of a reasonable argument to support her counterclaim in her response. While the argument she made in her counterclaim does have merit, the use of her historical evidence was not accurate. Student four wrote, “...the 1837 murder of abolitionist editor Elijah Lovejoy, led many northerners, fearful for their own civil liberties, to vote for antislavery politicians. An abolitionist fought so hard he was murdered.” She seemed to suggest that the editor of the newspaper used violence to get his points on slavery across to his viewers, but that was factually inaccurate. Therefore, the historical evidence that she presented in her counterclaim did not support what she had written.



While students from both groups were struggling over the selection of accurate historical evidence to support their counterclaim, the students from the EEG were able to present stronger arguments and reasoning when they attempted to write a historical argument from a different perspective. The EEG presented alternative viewpoints that were consistently more understandable than from students in the MEG.

For the sixth writing assignment, I saw an improvement in the development of a counterclaim from students in both groups. At this point, all students had written at least three attempts of a counterclaim in their historical arguments.

Student A's counterclaim needed additional improvement. She wrote, "*Some people may think that The Compromise of 1850 made the Civil War unavoidable because of the treatment of African-Americans regarding their equality and opportunity but at a lesser extent. Henry Clay created a compromise to seek peace from the North and South, but every time his compromise was assessed it did not receive a majority.*" Student A selected a counterclaim in her historical argument, but she failed to support it. While she attempted to explain the events involving the Compromise of 1850, her selection of historical evidence could have been better sourced. Student A attempted to synthesize towards the end of her historical argument with the following statement: "*...in many ways, Bleeding Kansas was like a mini Civil War leading up to the big one*". Student A began to sense that these events were connected in a way that indeed led to the Civil War.

Student one wrote, "*Other people think that the Compromise of 1850 led to Civil War, because it granted the south the Fugitive Slave Act, which is where the southerners could travel north and recapture freed slaves. This violated African-American's equality and opportunity because now they could become slaves, regardless if they were already*

*free and it infuriated northerners.*” According to the rubric, she demonstrated strong argument and reasoning when making their response. Student one wrote a clear and concise counterclaim. She also used supporting details to reinforce her counterclaim. Student one also supported her counterclaim with accurate historical evidence. She wrote, *“The flagrant violation of the Fugitive Slave Law set the scene for the tempest that emerged later in the decade.”* Student one’s counterclaim exceeded the standard for this historical argument.

Student two wrote, *“Some people believe that the Missouri Compromise had a greater impact on the start of the Civil War. The Missouri Compromise was made because Missouri wanted to come into the Union as a slave state but that would upset the balance so they had Maine come in as a free state so the balance would be equal.”* From the rubric, student two exceeded the standard of supporting a counterclaim with a reasonable argument in their response. The evidence that he used to support his counterclaim made his supporting statements considerably stronger. He wrote, *“The Missouri Compromise was criticized by many southerners because it established the principle that Congress could make laws regarding slavery; northerners, on the other hand, condemned it for acquiescing in the expansion of slavery”*. Student two’s selection of historical evidence strongly supported the counterclaim that he made in his historical argument, which exceeded the standard for this assignment.

The MEG had improved in writing a counterclaim by the sixth writing assignment. While students one and two wrote counterclaims that exceeded the standard for this assignment, it was atypical for most of the MEG. Those students wrote historical arguments similar to Student A. Most of the students in the MEG still needed to improve

on writing counterclaims that needed historical evidence that was accurate to support this section of their historical argument.

Student B contradicted her counterclaim in her opening sentence of this historical argument. She wrote, “*Although some may think the Compromise of 1850 made the Civil War unavoidable, that assumption is false because it actually was a successful plan and gave the nation balance.*” From the rubric, Student B met the standard of the historical argument by supporting it with accurate historical evidence and reasoning. However, she immediately dismissed her counterclaim as false. As a result, her opening statement read like a persuasive writing assignment. However, student B seemingly had a greater understanding of how to better support her counterclaim with historical evidence than Student A at this point in the writing process. While her counterclaim lacked enough true depth to warrant the entire scope of the argument, Student B provided accurately sourced historical evidence to support her counterclaim. “*Though most blacks and abolitionists strongly opposed the Compromise, the majority of Americans embraced it, believing that it offered a final, workable solution to the slavery question. This compromise gave balance to U.S. because it meant that entering California as free state, they were admitting Southwest Territories who allowed slavery which satisfied both the Northerners and the Southerners*”. The last two sentences provided a presentation of accurate historical evidence in her counterclaim, although she needed to work on a concluding this section of her historical argument. Student B needed to offer more supporting evidence and details to better augment her counterclaim in this historical writing assignment.

Student three wrote, “...others may think that the Missouri Compromise made the Civil War unavoidable because of the treatment of African-Americans regarding their equality and opportunity. The Missouri Compromise happened because of slavery.” She made an insightful connection between the passage of the Missouri Compromise and how slavery was viewed in America at this point in American history. She exceeded the standard by using strong reasoning in her historical argument. Student three also selected historical evidence that supported her reasoning. She wrote, “*The Missouri Compromise was criticized by many southerners because it established the principle that Congress could make laws regarding slavery; northerners, on the other hand, condemned it for acquiescing in the expansion of slavery.*” She sourced historical evidence that accurately supported her counterclaim. When comparing her writing to the rubric, student three wrote a counterclaim that exceeded the standard for this assignment.

Student four wrote, “*On the other hand, some people believe that the Dred Scott Decision made the Civil War inevitable because of the treatment of slaves regarding their equality and opportunity. The court’s conclusion denied Dred Scott of his equality.*” She showed evidence of a reasonable argument to support her counterclaim in her response. While student four did offer supporting details that explained her selection of her counterclaim, her reasoning could have been stronger. An example of this would be the historical evidence that she selected for her counterclaim. She wrote, “*Northerners who were not abolitionists, or even necessarily anti-slavery, protested the pro-Southern bias of the decision.*” Her historical evidence accurately supported her counterclaim, but did not explain the full understanding of the event itself. Student four could have explained how the southern states viewed the Dred Scott decision when she selected her historical

evidence. Had student four done this, she would have exceeded expectations for this assignment according to the indicators in the rubric.

At this point in the process, I saw an improvement as to how students in both groups wrote a counterclaim. When my students first attempted to write a counterclaim, they struggled with this process. Students in both groups had difficulty in supporting a different perspective that they did not believe to be correct. By the sixth writing assignment, they began to increase support of their counterclaim with improved accurate historical evidence that further developed their counterclaim. When the counterclaim was introduced to my students in both groups, they initially struggled with writing from the perspective of an opposing viewpoint. This supported Monte-Sano's research (2010) that the development of a counterclaim was a more complex task in the historical writing process. By the sixth writing assignment, my students seemed to be more accustomed to writing a counterclaim. Students A and B were indicative of the majority of their group members who wrote historical arguments in that they struggled with writing a counterclaim initially, but steadily improved with this element of historical argumentation over time.

### **Examples of Evidence and Persuasion For Claim and Counterclaim**

For the evidence and persuasion section, I had students in both groups write a conclusion that provided justification as to why their claim was more important than their counterclaim. They had to source historical evidence that more accurately supported both their claim and counterclaim. They also needed to compare the claim and related evidence to their counterclaim and related evidence, which meant that the use of historically appropriate evidence was increasingly necessary. I expected to read

supporting statements that concurred with their belief that their claim was more important than their counterclaim. The following selections were taken from the seventh writing assignment. Italicized statements are quotes of student's work.

In this writing assignment, Student A wrote a conclusion that met the standards of the claim and argument and reasoning sections. She wrote, *“In conclusion, the 13th Amendment benefited African-Americans more than the 15th amendment during Reconstruction because the 13th amendment was the building block for both the 14th and 15th amendments. Also, the 15th amendment was not completely effective because it took the Voting Rights Act of 1965 before the majority of African Americans became registered to vote.”* From the indicator in the claim section of the rubric, there was evidence that showed a return to the original claim after a counterclaim was made. She reasoned that the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment helped to lead to the passage of the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment, while also arguing that the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment did not become effective for African-Americans until a century later. Student A exceeded the standard for this writing assignment.

Student one wrote, *“When the 13th amendment was passed, it gave freedom to nearly 700,000 African-Americans who deserved equal treatment and opportunity, which proves that the 13th amendment was the most beneficial during reconstruction.”*

According to the rubric, she made vague mention of a return to her claim in her historical argument. Student one referenced her claim at the end of her writing assignment, but did not justify why it was more important than her counterclaim. Therefore, she met the standard for this writing assignment.

Student two wrote, “*Although ratified on February 3, 1870, the promise of the 15th Amendment would not be fully realized for almost a century. This proves that it was not recognized for a long time and it did nothing during the period of Reconstruction. In conclusion, the 14th amendment benefited African-Americans most during the period of Reconstruction because it strengthened the rights of all African-American citizens by law.*” According to the rubric, he did provide evidence of a return to his original claim in his historical argument. Student two made a justifiable explanation of why his claim was more important than his counterclaim. However, the historical evidence that he used to support his conclusion was also tied to his counterclaim. In this instance, the historical evidence that he selected did not fit both elements of a historical argument. While student two did write a conclusion that exceeded expectations, the lack of appropriate historical evidence in his counterclaim led his overall argument to be below the standard for this assignment.

Overall, Student A wrote a stronger conclusion than most students in the MEG. While she could have written a conclusion that provided more insight, she provided enough evidence of returning to her original claim in her conclusion. Most students in the MEG returned to their original claim, but did not fully explain why their claim was more important than their counterclaim.

Student B wrote, “*African-American’s equality and opportunity improved the most because of the 14th amendment. The 15th amendment gave them more freedoms that they never would have gotten if it were not for the 14th amendment. Therefore this expanded their opportunity to gain more freedoms and under law gave them equality.*” Student B met the indicator in the rubric. There was evidence of a return to her original

claim after making a counterclaim in her argument. Her response was similar to Student A in that there needed more detail to support the reasoning that she made in her historical argument. Nevertheless, Student B exceeded the standard for this writing assignment.

Student three wrote, “...*the thirteenth amendment benefited African - Americans with their equality and opportunity the most during Reconstruction, because it gave both men and women the same equality and opportunity and opened up new options for them, unlike the fifteenth amendment which only benefited the men.*” Student three also returned to her original claim in her conclusion. Her reasoning was stronger than Student B. Student three suggested that the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment provided equal opportunity under the law, while the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment did not allow for women’s suffrage. Her reasoning provided evidence of a stronger, more nuanced conclusion than Student B for this assignment.

Student four wrote, “...*The 14th amendment advanced African-American’s rights. Although the 15th amendment granted every male African-American with the right to vote, this law only helped men who were citizens. The 14th amendment gave Blacks their citizenship and, unlike the 15th amendment, improved Black women’s rights.*” Student four also returned to her original claim in her conclusion. She made a similar argument in her conclusion to student three. Since student three provided clear evidence of supporting her original claim in her conclusion, she exceeded the standard in this assignment.

The students in the EEG wrote conclusions that provided stronger reasoning than a typical student in the MEG. While most students in the MEG offered a return to their



claim in their conclusion, they did not always offer a solid explanation of why their claim was more important than their counterclaim.

By the ninth writing assignment, students in both groups seemed to better understand how to return to their claim in their conclusion, and justified that their claim was more important than their counterclaim.

Student A wrote, “*Chinese Americans struggled more to achieve equality and opportunity after immigrating to America than the Italian immigrants since the Chinese were not allowed to come freely into the U.S. Italian immigrants were able to have and do more things without being heavily discriminated against; unlike the Chinese who were forced to take the worst jobs, get paid low wages...*” She demonstrated stronger reasoning when she returned to her claim at the end of this historical argument. Student A chose to compare the experiences of the two groups in her conclusion. She shows evidence that she weighed both perspectives before ultimately arriving at her conclusion. According to the rubric, Student A met the indicator of exceeding the standard for this writing assignment.

Student one wrote, “*the Chinese-Americans struggled the most to achieve equality and opportunity after immigrating to America because their only chances of income were hard working, back breaking jobs with little pay.*” Student one did provide evidence of returning to her claim in the conclusion of her writing assignment. She did provide reasoning that demonstrated that she weighed the experiences of the groups that she selected for her claim and her counterclaim. However, student one’s reasoning in this assignment is not as strong as Student A’s. Student one did not choose to compare both of her groups in her counterclaim. While she met the indicator in the rubric of returning

to her claim in her conclusion, there was no evidence of how she weighed her claim against her counterclaim at the end of her historical argument.

Student two wrote, *“the Italians were treated unfairly but the Chinese-Americans were treated as if they were inferior and didn’t mean anything in the world. This took much more of their equality and opportunity than the Italians.”* Student two also provided evidence that he met the indicator of returning to his claim at the end of his historical argument. He reasoned that the Chinese were treated as inferior to the Italian Americans. While student two did not provide enough evidence in his conclusion as Student A, it provided enough detail to meet the standard for this writing assignment.

The MEG were able to demonstrate improved reasoning in their conclusions by the ninth writing assignment. The growth of the students in the MEG was typical across all groups at this point in the writing process.

Student B wrote, *“the Chinese immigrants were heavily discriminated against, and the restriction put on immigration in 1882 was followed by a chain of events that affected many others as well. Chinese immigrants were largely affected, and strictly limited the opportunity and equality of these immigrants by capping the number of immigrants allowed into the U.S. For these reasons both the Chinese-Americans’ equality, and opportunity were jeopardized.”* Student B offered evidence that she returned to her original claim in this writing assignment. She also used valid and accurate examples to explain her thinking. According to the rubric, she met the indicator that had her return to her original claim at the end of her historical argument. Overall, I determined that Student B’s conclusion supported her claim, but the lack of mentioning the Irish Americans in her conclusion left the end of her historical argument a bit flat. A

comparison of the two groups might have offered a better conclusion to her historical argument.

Student three wrote, *“the Chinese-Americans had a harder time achieving equality and opportunity after immigrating to America, because the Chinese Exclusion Act did not allow them to become U.S. citizens or get jobs, whereas the Italians were allowed to do both.”* Student three returned to her claim at the end of her historical argument. She used the Chinese Exclusion Act as her evidence to support her claim, and compared both perspectives in her conclusion. According to the rubric, student three exceeded the standard for this assignment.

Student four wrote, *“Both Irish and Italian immigrants died from the harsh work in America. That being said, the Italian-Americans were also discriminated, stolen from, and mistreated. Therefore, it is evident that after immigrating to America, Italian-Americans struggled the most to achieve equality and opportunity.”* Student four also returned to her claim in her conclusion of her historical argument. While student four did compare the two perspectives in her conclusion, it could be argued that both immigrant groups that she chose went through similar issues. The historical evidence that she provided did not support her conclusion. Therefore, student four met the standard for this writing assignment.

At this point in the school year, most students in both groups explained why their claim was more important than their counterclaim in their conclusion. By the end of assignment nine, students in both groups knew how to write a conclusion and provided accurately sourced historical evidence to support it. A minority of students lacked the motivation required to support their conclusion in sufficient detail. Those students, who

were primarily from the MEG, felt that they did not need to elaborate on their conclusion at the end of their historical argument. I had to explain to them that should they further develop their conclusion, it would make for a better justification of their claim over their counterclaim at the end of their historical argument. Those students still performed below the standard for their writing assignments for this particular indicator. However, students from both groups demonstrated that they could exceed the standard in the rubric regarding a return to their claim in their conclusions.

### **Evidence of Understanding Contextualization**

For the tenth writing assignment on historical argumentation, students from both groups were instructed not only put together an entire historical argument, but also to provide evidence if they comprehended how marginalized groups may have reacted during a given historical era. This writing prompt dealt with how certain groups of immigrants handled the various issues they faced as they arrived in America through Ellis Island or Angel Island.

For this assignment, I did not provide my students with written options for a claim. At this point in the writing process, my students had enough experience with writing a claim and a counterclaim so I wanted to see evidence from both groups that they could do so for the purposes of writing a historical argument. Students from both groups were expected to contribute evidence that would contextualize the direct experience of the immigrants who had experienced come to America.

While both Student A's claim and counterclaim met the expectations of the historical argumentation rubric, she lacked comprehension of the context of the argument. While she noted that "*I got enough to eat because I don't remember being*

*hungry. Mommy worried about us getting out. Sometimes she couldn't eat because she was so worried*” in her historical evidence, she did not consider how immigrants located at Angel Island struggled with the stress of living in a detained area as children. For instance, a high school student may have been able to infer that the young girl at Angel Island did not go hungry because her mother provided her with her adequate food to eat. This may have had to do with Student A’s own personal experiences. Most of my students come from wealthy households. This situation may have been hard for them to contextualize, since many students in both groups have not experienced instances in their own lives where they would go hungry for an extended period of time. Student A’s choice of historical evidence suggested that she was not able to empathize with what the immigrants experienced during this historical era.

Student one wrote, *“Though this seems harsh, several other immigrants who went through Angel Island describe the island having a playground and never being hungry. At Ellis Island the conditions were not as pleasant because like Vera, many immigrants got diseases or frostbite.”* While student one met the indicators of this writing assignment, she did not provide enough proper context to demonstrate an understanding of what immigrants encountered at either immigration center. For example, student one did not consider that the historical evidence used was taken from the perspective of a small child at Angel Island, and could have an altered perspective of historical events. Student one had difficulty contextualizing her historical evidence for this writing assignment.

Student two wrote, *“They would send kids older than 12 back to where they came from with no guidance and protection from others. These acts restricted the opportunity*

*for little kids. Also, on the way to Ellis Island immigrants were treated with immense disrespect.”* Student two provided historical evidence that showed a better understanding of the context of the historical era. He wrote that children who were deported from Ellis Island had to fend for themselves if they were over twelve years of age. He reasoned that it would be difficult to return to one’s home country in that particular situation. Student two also met the indicators of the rubric in this historical argument.

The students in the MEG encountered difficulties in relating to an immigrant’s personal experiences as they came to America. Many of the students could not relate to having a lack of basic necessities to sustain life. This made contextualizing the historical evidence for this writing assignment more difficult. While students in the MEG had become more proficient in writing a historical argument, they had trouble relating to individuals who were largely dissimilar to themselves.

Student B had a similar experience with this writing assignment. Student B did not seem to place the struggles of the immigrants in the proper context, particularly as they went through Angel Island. She focused on immigrant accounts that discussed the plight of the Chinese immigrants who were housed there, but could not interpret how individuals at Angel Island struggled to survive there. While Student B’s historical argument is solid overall, she provided a superficial account of the immigrant experience at Angel Island during this historical era.

Student three wrote, *“Her hardships compared to the Angel Island hardships were not bad. The Chinese had to sneak food and went through prolonged questioning. Along with that, the European immigrants lived in better conditions and were not detained for several hours.”* While student three addressed the indicators in the rubric that exceeded

the standard for this assignment, she had difficulty in understanding the context of the historical era. While she compared the two groups and the conditions they faced, she could not comprehend the struggles of the Chinese immigrants who faced food shortages at Angel Island. Like many students in this study, student three came from an affluent upbringing, which might have affected her capacity to contextualize the historical era being addressed.

Student four wrote, “...*the government was violating the civil rights of the Chinese people. At Angel Island, the people were not ethically treated, as a result they experienced a great lack of equality and opportunity*”. Student four exceeded the standard for this writing assignment according to the indicators in the rubric, but also had difficulty in putting the historical evidence into its proper context. She mentioned that the Chinese immigrants at Angel Island were incarcerated, but struggled to go into detail about how their civil rights were deprived. For example, she could have demonstrated a greater understanding of the context by providing details of daily life at Angel Island. While student four wrote a historical argument that exceeded the standard, she lacked the details to contextualize the historical evidence provided.

Students in both groups had problems contextualizing information in their historical arguments. Since students in this study come from affluent neighborhoods, they might have had difficulty in understanding what immigrants experienced during this historical era. It is likely that students in both groups did not know what it was like to go hungry for an extended period of time, or have had family members who were imprisoned. As a result, this may have precluded students from being able to empathize and contextualize the information that they selected in their historical arguments.

The thirteenth written historical argument was the final writing assignment. While this did not deal with equality, it did discuss the different perspectives that led the United States into war with Spain.

Student A wrote a claim that was clear and convincing to the reader, which exceeded the indicator in the rubric. She provided context for the reasons why the United States was not justified in going to war with Spain. She even went so far as to provide a hypothesis of what might have occurred on the *U.S.S. Maine* after the fact: “*In 1976, a team of American naval investigators concluded that the Maine explosion was likely caused by a fire that ignited its ammunition stocks, not by a Spanish mine or act of sabotage.*” Overall, Student A provided better context her historical argument when compared to assignment ten. However, she still needed to progress to further develop this skill.

Student one wrote, “*...the American people assumed Spain was responsible without actual proof. A lot of people believe the U.S. government conducted the explosion and blamed it on Spain to have a reason to go to war knowing they would win.*” She was able to provide insightful reasoning to explain why the United States was not justified in going to war with Spain. By exploring the historical evidence in a deeper way, she was able to consider that the Spanish might not be responsible for the explosion on the *U.S.S. Maine*. As a result, she was able to present her argument in the proper context.

Student two wrote, “*The US thought the explosion was caused by a mine from Spain, who ruled Cuba at the time. It would be later figured out that Spain was doing everything it could to avoid a war with the United States.*” Student two also improved his understanding of contextualizing information in his historical argument. He reasoned



that while the United States wanted to go to war, Spain had diplomatically attempted to find any avenue to avoid conflict. His understanding of the historical era helped him to produce a historical argument that exceeded the standard for this writing assignment.

The students in the MEG largely had considerable trouble in placing events into their proper historical context. The three examples provided are exceptions of what was submitted during the data collection process.

Student B wrote, “*Therefore America took advantage of the opportunity given to them and started the Spanish American War for a valid reason, so their actions were justified*”. Student B’s final sentence in her historical argument served as her context for her historical argument. In addition, she did not really try to take a different perspective to consider what each side experienced during this historical event. While the main elements of this historical argument were met according to the historical argumentation rubric, Student B’s final assignment lacked any true context of the historical era being discussed.

Student three wrote, “*At the time the U.S. had no right in going to war with Spain over this destruction the U.S. had caused themselves. In addition, the U.S. thought that if they went to war with Spain they would be able to gain more land.*” While student three provided improved context from assignment ten, her contextualization was in conflict with the historical evidence provided. She reasoned that the United States had caused the explosion of the *U.S.S. Maine*, but provided no evidence to support her statement. However, she astutely noted that the United States stood to gain territory in the event that they went to war with Spain. Student three improved on providing context in her

historical argument, but needed to offer insightful information that was not in conflict with other statements made in her historical argument.

Student four wrote, “...*the United States was only guessing that Spain had caused the explosion. At the time that Spain was blamed, there was no certainty that they had purposely sabotaged America; it was only a guess.*” She reasoned that the United States hypothesized that Spain had caused the explosion, but then could not provide concrete evidence to prove it. While her statements did have merit, she needed to provide historical evidence that better supported her thinking. Student four did exceed the other indicators in her historical argument for this writing assignment, but lacked in providing the context in what she wrote.

### **Summary of Scaffolding Model**

By the end of the school year, I observed evidence that suggested that students from both groups had improved on selecting a claim and supporting it with accurate historical evidence. De La Paz and Felton (2010) found that the use of multiple examples of primary sources lend credibility to a historical argument. This also supported Wineburg’s view (2001) that historians needed to source and corroborate research to make sense of the past. The majority of students in both groups were using multiple citations from the same source of historical evidence when writing their claims. A few students in both groups used multiple pieces of historical evidence from different sources of historical evidence when writing a claim.

They were able to show a similar level of mastery when writing a counterclaim in their historical argument. Students in both the groups quoted multiple pieces of historical evidence from one source. However, few students considered citing multiple sources of

historical evidence in their counterclaim. Towards the end of the writing process, most of my students understood how to explain why their claim was more important than their counterclaim. This was true in both groups. Most students struggled with this part of the writing process when I first asked them to complete it. The results supported De La Paz and Felton's (2010) research stating that students struggle with increasingly complex tasks in writing a historical argument. I felt that students in the MEG experienced greater difficulty in this portion of the writing process more than students in the MEG did, but they eventually were able to provide evidence of writing a stronger counterclaim towards the end of the school year.

When students actually tried to contextualize how marginalized groups felt, nearly all were unable to complete this task. Monte-Sano (2012) noted that putting historical events into their proper context was a rather complex task for secondary students. There were only a handful of students from the MEG who could accomplish this task at a basic level. Even in the EEG, this finding held true. Among the more accomplished writers in the EEG, very few could begin to personally consider how marginalized groups struggled with equality and opportunity. One factor that might have contributed to this would be the environment in which the students were raised. Since nearly all of these students came from affluent homes, it was difficult for them to consider the plight of marginalized groups from a personal perspective. The students could not imagine living in poverty-level conditions that they were asked to consider. As a result, students in both groups struggled to place the struggles of marginalized groups in a given historical era

As the data began to be compiled, it became clear that the students struggled writing a claim and supporting it with accurate historical evidence during the first quarter. After considering what needed to be revised from the instructional model in the pilot study, I began to scaffold the historical arguments to build their skills, as well as their confidence level in writing a historical argument. I identified the key indicators that each student needed to be able to achieve by the end of each quarter for the 2016--2017 school year. For reference, I created the following that showed how each skill was mastered by students in both groups with regards to the indicators from Monte-Sano's rubric (2012) and the historical element introduced.

*Figure 2: Historical Elements, Indicators, and Student Mastery*

Historical Elements Introduced by Assignment	Indicators	Student Mastery
<p>By the completion of the first three assignments, students were expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write a claim that is clear to the reader</li> <li>• Refer back to the claim at the end of their historical argument</li> <li>• Make some reference to historical evidence after presenting their claim</li> <li>• Present their argument in a paragraph form</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Got the facts straight (e.g. chronology of events).</li> <li>• Comprehended the information in the documents used.</li> <li>• Interpreted documents historically, noting subtext and context.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most of the students could understand how historical events related to one another.</li> <li>• Students continually struggled with this throughout the year. The reading material was advanced for some readers.</li> <li>• The students who comprehended the material could interpret the documents well.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporated evidence to support the claim.</li> <li>• Selected evidence that was historically significant, given the topic.</li> <li>• Recognized where documents might support the claim.</li> <li>• Made reference to documents or sourced documents that was relevant to the argument.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most students were able to use evidence to support their claim.</li> <li>• Some students had difficulty selecting evidence that was historically accurate. This had a lot to do with interpreting the historical documents.</li> <li>• Most of the students had mastered using documents to support the claim.</li> <li>• Students struggled with this at the beginning, but mostly mastered this later in the school year.</li> </ul>
<p>During Assignments 4 – 6, Students worked on the previous skills, and added in the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A better use of historical evidence (i.e. more factually accurate) to support their claim.</li> <li>• The introduction and development of a counterclaim to</li> </ul>	<p>Students worked on previous skills introduced plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selected specific evidence that included precise historical details or quotations from documents.</li> </ul>	<p>Most of the students were able to select specific evidence, and cite the information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This related well to the previous indicator. Most of the students could provide accurate evidence.</li> </ul>

<p>their historical argument.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The introduction and use of historical evidence to support a counterclaim.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select evidence that related to the argument.</li> <li>• Recognized and responded to counter evidence.</li> <li>• Recognized or referred to the authors or documents used</li> <li>• Selected evidence that was historically significant, given the topic.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The concept of a counterclaim was introduced. Students had difficulty in their first attempt, but became better at it as the year progressed.</li> <li>• Some students struggled with this at the beginning. Most students mastered this by the fourth quarter.</li> <li>• My students struggled with this at the beginning of the quarter. However, they improved over the course of the year.</li> </ul>
<p>During assignments 7--9, students worked on previous skills, and added:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Synthesis: The development of why a claim is more important than their counterclaim. This is presented at the end of their historical argument.</li> <li>• Introduction and development of multiple sources to</li> </ul>	<p>Students worked on previous skills introduced plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated multiple pieces of evidence in support of the claim.</li> <li>• Used more than one document to support the claim.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students were able to pick this indicator up quickly. It helped to scaffold using one piece of evidence previously.</li> <li>• My students also had to do this for the counterclaim.</li> </ul>

<p>back up the claim and counterclaim.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Established the historical context and perspectives related to the topic.</li>   <li>• Used documents in a manner consistent with their original, historical meaning</li> </ul>	<p>This added a level of complexity to their argument.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My students really struggled with this, regardless of the group. Students had difficulty contextualizing information.</li>   <li>• My highest performing students could do this on a limited basis. Most students could not do this.</li> </ul>
<p>For assignments 10 – 13, Students worked on the following skills, and added:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contextualization: the ability for students to consider how well they understand what affected groups truly experienced given a historical era.</li> <li>• Portfolio: The ability to show growth of the skills learned during the course of the data collection period in each of the elements that make up a historical argument.</li> </ul>	<p>Students worked on previous skills introduced plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Established clear, correct cause-effect relationships</li>   <li>• Connected excerpts of documents to their historical context.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My students did not write too many historical arguments regarding cause-effect relationships. The one that we did during the fourth quarter did show that my students could demonstrate mastery of this indicator.</li>   <li>• Students struggled to contextualize historical documents. Contextualizing documents is</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grounded and situated documents in their historical context</li> </ul>	<p>probably the domain of the high school student.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My highest performing students could do this on a limited basis. The rest of my students could not achieve this indicator.</li> </ul>
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**Limitations from the Data Collection**

As the data began to be collected, it became increasingly evident that I needed to ask students in both groups to provide more detail to support their claim and counterclaim in their written historical arguments. At the beginning of the school year, they were writing a claim and immediately citing historical evidence without any explanation of what they were trying to present in their historical argument, which indicated that all of them initially struggled with providing supporting details to justify the selection of their claim. According to VanSledright (2002), developing historical thinking and understanding required opportunities for learners to work with various forms of evidence, and deal with issues of interpretation. For eighth grade students, this concept was rather difficult for them to comprehend during their first writing attempts. Most of them did not consider the perspective of why someone wrote a primary source from a certain point of view. While Monte-Sano’s rubric on historical argumentation (2012) implied that contextualization was evident, the idea of explicitly taking a side from a person or group’s perspective simply was not evident in her rubric. I had assumed that my students would provide evidence of perspective taking in their written historical arguments, but



they simply were not advanced enough to do so at the beginning of the school year. As the year progressed, the ones who worked the hardest on their written historical arguments better considered the perspectives of others and why those documents were written in the context provided.

### **Discussion of Results from Research Question One**

Research Question 1: *How do the participants in the study use the elements of a written historical argument to interpret how various groups of people struggled with equality and opportunity over time?*

My overall assessment was that students in both groups demonstrated growth over the school year in their ability to use the elements of a written historical argument to interpret how various groups of people struggled with equality and opportunity over time. During the first quarter of the school year, students from both groups primarily focused on selecting a claim and supporting it with accurately sourced historical evidence. Students who were in both groups had difficulties with the first written historical arguments. The primary reason for their struggles was due to the fact that they were writing a historical argument for the first time in their academic careers, which supported Ferretti, Lewis, and Andrews-Weckerly's (2009) research. However, both groups showed moderate to significant improvement by the end of the first quarter. The MEG understood how to write a claim and back it with historical evidence, while the EEG began to show increased complexity in their written historical arguments by the end of the first quarter.

As the second quarter began, I required my students to add a counterclaim in their written historical arguments. Both groups were unfamiliar with having to consider a

different perspective of an argument. They found difficulty in expressing the perspectives of an event in a given historical era. Their understanding of how to develop a counterclaim and support it with accurate historical evidence improved by the end of the second quarter. The MEG largely encountered obstacles in developing a counterclaim during the first two writing assignments. For some of these students, it took until the third quarter before they provided accurate and appropriate evidence of writing a counterclaim based on the indicators in the historical argumentation rubric. Members of the EEG were typically better able to develop a counterclaim and support it with accurate historical evidence sooner than the met expectations group. Those in the EEG had been able to develop a counterclaim that was clear to the reader by the end of the second quarter.

During the third quarter, students in both groups were able to explain why their claim was more important than their counterclaim. Both groups had to overcome obstacles with this task, which had been introduced at the beginning of the third quarter. Both groups had trouble referring back to their original claim and justifying why it was superior to their counterclaim. The MEG encountered difficulties with this concept for the most of the third quarter. While some students in the MEG did eventually offer proper reasoning as to why their claim was more important than their counterclaim by the end of the third quarter, others did not achieve this until the fourth quarter. However, there were some students in the same group, a small minority, who could not offer perform this task in the writing process by the end of the school year. Most of these students produced little evidence of an explanation as to why their claim was more

important than their counterclaim. They experienced difficulty referring back to their claim at the conclusion of their written historical argument, despite their best attempts.

The EEG eventually produced some analysis in their written historical arguments. They were similar to Student B in their ability to offer a summation of their written historical argument in their conclusion. They offered justification as to why their claim was more important than their counterclaim at the end of their written historical argument. Some members of these groups even went so far as to offer examples of historical evidence in their analysis to further justify their claim over their counterclaim in their written historical argument. By the end of the third quarter, all students in the EEG could offer a justifiable explanation about why their claim was more important than their counterclaim.

Finally, I expected my students to use multiple sources of historical evidence in both their claim and counterclaim, as well as to show understanding of the context that some of the marginalized groups experienced during a given historical era. Both tasks proved to be problematic for these groups. The MEG struggled to introduce multiple sources of historical evidence. Some students in these groups were able to show progress by the end of the school year, while others struggled with the concept overall. Many students in the MEG wanted to use multiple citations from the same piece of historical evidence, although I expected them to use citations from multiple pieces of historical evidence. This may have been a limitation on my part, but I was unable to distinguish between these two concepts in the data collection. In addition, students in the met expectations group could not provide the proper context with the use of the historical evidence that they selected. I realized that both groups had only two writing assignments

during the fourth quarter, but I expected to see evidence of understanding that my students in the MEG were able to consider why a certain group had been affected in a given historical era. The majority of the students in the MEG could not provide the proper perspective taking needed in their analysis, which possibly was an indication that they were not cognitively ready to undertake such a complex task. Developing historical thinking and understanding requires opportunities for learners to work with various forms of evidence, deal with issues of interpretation, and ask questions about the relative significance of events with increasingly complexity (VanSledright, 2002). As young adolescents prepare for the demands of high school and college classrooms, they must learn to read and write increasingly complex and specialized forms of text (De La Paz and Felton, 2010). Students struggled with writing tasks that required structured responses to analytical or argumentative prompts, precisely the types of disciplinary writing emphasized in secondary, post-secondary and professional settings in social studies (De La Paz and Felton, 2010). The research on historical argumentation justifies the student limitations that I experienced during the fourth quarter of my data collection period.

My EEG also experienced setbacks when using multiple sources of historical evidence in presenting their historical arguments during the fourth quarter of the school year. However, many were able to provide evidence during their last writing assignment, as well as in their writing portfolio. It may have helped that some of them began doing this at some point in the third quarter to improve their analysis of their historical arguments. However, many of these students in the EEG could not provide the proper context when given a historical era. Student B's evidence in her portfolio provided an

exception to what I found during data collection from students in her own grouping. Many students in the EEG had simply not progressed to the level of the students that Monte-Sano (2012) might have been accustomed to working with when she created her rubric. While I could show increased evidence of the use of multiple sources from the EEG, I could not find many instances of perspective taking in the analysis from the same students during the fourth quarter.

Overall, I determined that my students could use the elements of a historical argument to discuss equality and opportunity. Both groups could demonstrate how to use a claim, historical evidence, and a counterclaim in their written historical argument, with varying degrees of complexity in their writing to discuss equality and opportunity. As I read student responses from both groups, I observed students changing their definitions of what equality and opportunity meant. The majority of students in both groups could offer evidence that their claim was more important than their counterclaim, though with varying degrees of complexity. Students in both groups struggled with presenting multiple sources in both their claim and counterclaim, as well as understanding the context of what a marginalized group experienced during a given historical era.

For research question one, my primary focus was on the analysis of my students' use of the elements of a historical argument to discuss equality and opportunity during the school year. For the purpose of analyzing research question two, my focus shifted toward how students themselves described their interpretation of the writing process. I reviewed their writing portfolios to determine how well they described their degree of understanding of the elements of a historical argument. Students from both groups were asked to describe their growth in learning how to compose a historical argument and

provide examples from their writing. I also looked at how students in both groups defined equality and opportunity, in addition to how they used the feedback that they received from their discussion group members to the overall quality of their historical argument.

### **Introduction to Research Question Two**

*Research Question Two: How do students discuss and reflect upon their own growth in writing historical arguments on equality and opportunity over the course of the school year?*

Students were told to provide feedback to their discussion group members during a synchronous online discussion that occurred one week after their historical argument had been assigned to them. As a result of this discussion, three points of data were available regarding my second research question: a pre and post version of each students' historical argument, a chat transcript that provided feedback to the students, and the written portfolios of their work that was submitted at the end of the school year.

A coding system had to be developed to properly categorize the data that I collected. I still kept Student A as the representative of the met expectations group and Student B as the representative of the exceeded expectations group. When reading through the chat transcripts, I had to be mindful that their skills on providing feedback were just as limited as their historical argumentation skills at the beginning of the year.

### **Implementation of the Instructional Model for Research Question Two**

Students used their historical argumentation rubric to provide feedback to their peers and then absorb the feedback that they received to produce a revised version of their own historical argument. Prior to the first discussion of their written historical

arguments, I asked them to reference their historical argumentation rubric when providing feedback to their discussion group members. I wanted them to understand that a basic comment such as “good job” was not very for improving the overall quality of their arguments. I wanted them to reference the use of claim, historical evidence, and counterclaim to discuss the holistic argument that the students made on equality and opportunity. The students did not read their fellow discussion group members’ posts prior to the online discussion. Each group member was expected to read the comments that they received on their individual historical argument and revise their historical arguments based upon the feedback. While all students who submitted their written historical argument were expected to participate in the online discussion, some of them did not because they were absent during that discussion. Each student who missed the online discussion was expected to read the comments that the discussion members made on their historical arguments for the purpose of revising their original document.

When reviewing the feedback from the transcripts, the comments from the discussion group members in both groups typically fell into three categories: complimentary statements, conventional suggestions on how to improve grammar and syntax, and feedback using the historical argumentation rubric. Therefore, I had to read through the complimentary and conventional statements to find evidence of students using the rubric. I had to determine if Student A or Student B chose to use that feedback in such a way as to improve their written historical argument. Finally, I had to interpret how the discussion group members in both groups used feedback in the same manner. After reviewing the data from the chat transcripts, I realized that there were few instances where students in the two groups offered substantive comments that helped to improve a

historical argument. I had to make the difficult decision to dismiss most of the data from the chat transcripts, because the majority of the feedback provided by students from both groups did not enable them to improve their historical arguments.

### **Organization of Research Question Two**

In my interpretation of research question two, I observed how members of a discussion group provided their understanding of the elements of a historical argument using the historical argumentation rubric. Students from both selected discussion groups explained their interpretation of how well they understood the concepts of claim, historical evidence, and counterclaim. In addition, they defined how well they used the elements of a historical argument in their writing and elaborated on how their understanding of equality and opportunity had evolved over the course of the school year. My students provided their own understanding of the feedback they had received. The instrument that they used for their own reflection was the writing portfolio of their final work that they submitted at the end of the school year. I had my students complete a section on each segment (claim, historical evidence, counterclaim, equality and opportunity, and feedback) to determine how they individually reflected on their own understanding of the writing process. As a reminder, each student wrote an entire historical argument in order to establish a baseline for how they used each historical element. Student transcripts from the writing portfolios were classified as MEG and EEG, respectively. Student work was segmented from each student response from the MEG and EEG in a given section. Each individual student did not interact with others when writing their own portfolio, as it was not intended to be a group assignment. The only



exception to this was in the feedback section of the portfolio where some members from the MEG and EEG referenced one another in their individual responses.

### **Writing Portfolio**

To get a substantive view of how these reflections went in the writing portfolios, I included the responses from all the discussion group members of Student A in the met expectations group, and those from all the discussion group members of Student B in the exceeded expectations group. I decided to review three areas of emphasis about the data as evidence of how students viewed their own improvement for the study.

1. How students in both groups viewed their own improvement in using the elements of a historical argument. This included the use of claim, counterclaim, and historical evidence in their writing. The students in both groups provided their own perspectives on how they improved in the elements of writing a historical argument during the school year.

2. How students considered how their understanding of equality and opportunity evolved during the school year. They described their own changing perspective on the subject at the beginning of the school year and at the end of the school year.

3. How students interpreted the feedback that they received from their peers in their discussion groups. They reflected upon the feedback and commented on whether it ultimately helped them improve their historical argument.

### **Student Reflections on Claim**

I asked my students to answer this question on claim in their writing portfolio:

How well do you understand the concept of claim at this time than you did at the beginning of the year?

### **MEG Responses on Claim:**

Student A, MEG: At the beginning of the year I knew how to write a claim, but I didn't explain it well with background evidence. When I first started writing, I did not backup my claim with clear evidence. I eventually learned to return back to my claim after the end of my historical argument by backing my claim up with more accurate evidence. I also struggled with proving that my claim is superior to my counterclaim.

Student A felt that she knew how to write a claim, but struggled with the more difficult aspects of writing a claim as the scaffolding process progressed during the school year. She stressed the importance of backing up a claim with accurate historical evidence.

Student One, MEG: In the beginning of the year, my knowledge of claim was scarce. I usually just copy pasted the claim Mr. Cordell gave us, but on one of my writing assignments, I wrote my own. "Immigrants who went through Ellis Island experienced the lack of Jefferson's ideals of equality and opportunity as they started their new life in America more than immigrants at Angel Island did". The fact that I was able to write my own claim shows how much I now understand claim. I can confidently say my understanding of claim has significantly increased over the year, because I can write a claim that is clear to the reader.

Student one placed a priority on explaining that a claim must be clear to the reader. She felt that it was important to make sure that someone reading it must easily understand a historical argument. Student one stressed that she wanted to learn to write her own claims for the writing assignments. Many students in the MEG did not always attempt to do this in their writing assignments.

Student two, MEG: My claim has gotten a lot better since the beginning of the school year. At the beginning of the year my claim just said, "The Japanese-Americans had their equality and opportunity violated". After that it goes straight into historical evidence, it doesn't really tie the claim to the evidence. I had problems proving that my claim was better than my counterclaim. I got better at writing a claim through the year.

Student two was a representative of a lower performing student in this particular MEG. He did not provide much detail overall throughout his writing portfolio. While he mentioned that he felt he had improved his writing a claim throughout the school year, he

did not go into further detail to explain what he meant. His comment on proving that “his claim was better than his counterclaim” made sense, as the scaffolding process in this study called for more complex tasks to be added from one grading period to the next.

Student three, MEG: I understand the concept of claim much better now than I did at the beginning of the year. . In my first writing assignment, I copied the option that was given for my claim. I didn’t expand on the claim to make it better. I later learned to expand and create my own claim. I will continue to grow more and more in claim as I write more historical arguments. My claim for my writing assignments have greatly improved because I can now put multiple ideas or thoughts in the same claim sentence and write about both of them in the assignment. I can now start my writing off much stronger and always return back to my claim at the end.

Student three explained the improvement on her claims throughout the school year. She referenced the fact that she learned to write claims that were more complex. She also wrote that she was able to “return back to my claim at the end,” which showed that she was able to reference this part of the scaffolding process, as well as the rubric used throughout the writing process. Student three was indeed able to return to her claim and explain why it was more important than her counterclaim by the end of the school year.

Student four, MEG: I understand the concept of claim much better than I did before. I have learned many better ways to write a good claim. I have begun to write claims that are easier to understand than when I first started. I have learned through my writing assignments how to write a stronger claim that strengthens the meaning to what I am saying. My claims have gotten longer and filled with more information. Another thing I have gotten better at, in writing my claim, is referring back to it after I stated my historical evidence.

Student four offered a definition of claim, stating that a stronger claim can strengthen his position in a historical argument. He also referenced the scaffolding process as well by stating that he can refer back to his claim and support it over his counterclaim. It seemed that student four attempted to put the language of the rubric into his own words.

Overall, the students in the MEG felt that they improved in writing a claim over time. They referenced improving the clarity of their claim, as well as providing supporting sentences that helped to better use their historical evidence. The level of reflection that each student provided varied. For example, Student A did answer the question, but did not provide much self-awareness into how she improved the quality of writing her claim overall. However, Student one in the MEG provided more reflection on her improvements in writing a claim for a historical argument. While the students did not offer substantive feedback to one another in the discussion section of the instructional model, I observed that students in the MEG put the indicators from the rubric into their own words to provide an explanation of how they developed a claim throughout the writing process.

### **EEG Responses on Claim:**

Student B, EEG: My understanding of claim differs from that than at the beginning of the year because I have a deeper gage on what a good claim should include. I am now aware that a credible claim should be short, simple, direct, and clear.

Student B defined what a claim should be overall. However, there was a lack of evidence on how she improved her claim in her writing assignments over the course of the school year. She should have provided more examples to better explain her growth of claim over time.

Student one, EEG: Since the beginning of the year my concept of claim has grown, because I have acquired a deeper understanding of what adequate claim should include. I am now aware that a good claim should be direct and to the point, but can have some background.

Student one also accurately defined what a claim should look like. Similar to Student B, there was a lack of reflection that could have been provided. Further evidence

was needed to observe how student one improved their claim over the course of the school year.

Student two, EEG: I understand claim a lot more now than I did at the beginning of the year because I understand more of what a claim is because in my first piece my evidence wasn't very good. But later on, in my more previous writings my claim statements have been a lot more thorough. "Immigrants who went through Angel Island experienced the lack of Jefferson's ideals of equality and opportunity as they started their new life in America because Chinese people were treated poorly as they came through Angel Island".

Student two stated that a claim should be more thoroughly defined in a historical argument. An interesting comment was made in the reflection that suggested his use of claim improved when writing more complex claims in his historical arguments as the school year progressed.

Student three, EEG: I understand the concept of claim better at this time than at the beginning of the year because instead on just giving a claim I now back it up with evidence. Now: "The U.S. was justified in going to war with Spain because Spain threatened Cuba, one of the United States allies".

Student three stated that an important aspect of claim was to support it with historical evidence. Although it was not directly stated, Student three learned to write claims that were more complex, his own over the course of the school year.

Student four, EEG: Overall, I feel that my understanding of the concept of claim has grown tremendously since the beginning of the year. I learned that a claim needs to have some support. In April I said, "At the time of the explosion of the U.S.S Maine, the United States was not justified in starting the Spanish American War. In the late 1800's, the U.S.S Maine was built and was soon sailed to Cuba in an act to protect the American people living there. The ship sailed into a port in Havana, a major city in Cuba, and soon after was blown to bits for an unknown reason". This shows major growth over the school year because I explained my claim much more than in September.

Student four also stated that a claim became much stronger in a historical argument when backed with historical evidence. He also felt that by providing evidence

of explaining his claim was an important part of the writing process. He noted that he had grown in this regard during the school year.

Student five, EEG: After writing multiple historical arguments, I feel that my understanding of how to create an effective paper has grown. I understand the concept of claim at this time in the year better than I did in August. I now know how to create a claim that is straightforward and gets my point across in an easily understood way. It is evident that I have grown and learned how to develop a claim that is strong and understandable. As such, I know how to write a distinct, clear claim better than I did in August.

Student five offered that a claim must be clear and easily understood by the reader. Although she explained that she could write a clear, distinct claim at the end of the writing process, she did not provide any concrete evidence of being able to do so. She could have provided direct examples of how her use of claim had grown over the writing process.

The EEG students largely believed that their claim improved over time. Student B and Student one both explained that a claim needed to be clear and direct for the reader. Student two did not really provide much explanation of why his claim improved relative to the other members in this discussion group. However, he did imply that a claim needed to be further developed to be clearer to the reader. Student three needed to provide more perspective in his work. However, he did explain that historical evidence was necessary in order to support a claim. Student four interpreted that a claim needed more support in order to be better than previous efforts. I believe student four's statement meant that a claim needed supporting sentences to make it stronger. Student five echoed both student B and student one in that a claim needed to be more direct and easily understood.

### **Student Reflections on Historical Evidence**

I asked my students to consider this question on historical evidence: How well do you understand the concept of the use of historical evidence at this time than you did at the beginning of the year?

### **MEG Responses on Historical Evidence:**

Student A, MEG: I understand the concept of the use of historical evidence more at the end of the year than the beginning. I did not backup my claim with strong evidence and it was hard for me to talk about how the immigrants equality and opportunity was violated. However, towards the end of the year I got much better backing up my claims with historical evidence. One of the ways that I learned to do this was to start using multiple pieces of evidence in my argument. Over time, I learned to use multiple pieces of evidence in my argument. This helped me to better support what I was saying in both my claim and my counterclaim.

Student A referenced that her early attempts at writing a historical argument were not as well done as they could have been, since she did not use strong evidence to support her claim. She references that she learned to use stronger (more accurate) evidence to support her claim. One way that she improved her historical argument was to introduce multiple sources of historical evidence to improve her writing. Wineburg (2001) noted that historians should to source multiple pieces of historical evidence in order to make an argument stronger. Therefore, it was noteworthy to observe Student A reference this in her section.

Student one, MEG: In the beginning of the year, my historical evidence was very bland and confusing at times. There was never much detail or good content. To be specific, my first Edmodo didn't even have a historical argument. Eventually, I learned to use accurate evidence to back up my claim. This evidence also helped provide knowledgeable background evidence about my counterclaim as well. Towards the end of the year, I learned to use multiple pieces of evidence in my writing. Overall, I came a long way in using historical evidence.

Student one noted that she had grown significantly in her use of historical evidence to write a historical argument. She mentioned that she did not use historical evidence to back up her claims, but she eventually learned to use accurate evidence for

this purpose. De La Paz (2012) stated that novices to writing historical arguments use evidence and construct arguments about important concepts and noted how these skills develop in response to instruction. In addition, Student one also mentioned that she sourced multiple pieces of historical evidence to support her writing.

Student two, MEG: My Historical Evidence has gotten a lot better since the beginning of the year. In my first paper in September, I used “It made no difference that many had never even been to Japan. Even Japanese-American veterans of World War I were forced to leave their homes” (ushistory.org, 2008). First of all, I cited it wrong. Second of all, I could have just said that in different words, I didn’t need to cite that statement. I later learned to source directly and to use accurate evidence.

Student two realized early in the writing process that he needed to learn how to properly cite historical evidence in his argument. Although he explained that he learned to source directly and use accurate evidence, he did not provide any further details.

Student three, MEG: I understand the concept of historical evidence much more now than I did at the beginning of the year, and I can use it a lot more efficiently now. I discussed this in the historical evidence portion of my writing portfolio. At the beginning of the school year on the very first writing assignment I did not know how to write my argument well. I didn’t include any citations for historical evidence in my writing. But since the middle of the school year to the end, I have improved even more. I continue to cite right, and my evidence is even better now than it was a few months ago. In the last writing assignment of the year, my historical evidence was more accurate and I can finally cite evidence that completely supports my claim.

Student three also mentioned her difficulty in writing historical evidence at the beginning of the year. Like student two, she noted an issue with properly citing historical evidence. She determined that her use of using accurate historical evidence in her argument improved over the course of the school year.

Student four, MEG: I understand the concept of historical evidence much better than I did in the beginning of the year. At first I did not even know how to cite my evidence correctly. I have learned how to use accurate information from my evidence. It is important to have accurate evidence to support your claim. This is important because I learned to use accurate historical evidence for not only my claim but for my counterclaim to ensure the credibility of my work. Also, I can now use multiple pieces of evidence



throughout my argument. This is important because I can use multiple pieces of evidence in my argument that shows strength and credibility of the argument itself.

Student four demonstrated much growth in the use of historical evidence over the course of the school year. He noted that he also identified issues with accurately sourcing historical evidence at the beginning of the writing process. He learned to cite historical evidence, and stated that he learned to accurately source multiple pieces of historical evidence to support his argument.

Over time, students in the MEG felt that they grew in their use of historical evidence over the course of the school year. Student A noted that it was difficult for her to back up her claim with strong historical evidence when she first attempted her writing assignments. She sourced the use of multiple pieces of evidence to help her make a stronger, more credible claim. Student one in the MEG wrote that the use of her historical evidence was unclear to the reader. It did not seem to be accurate or useful to her historical argument. However, she learned to provide such evidence in both her claim and her counterclaim. Student two in this group also struggled with citing historical evidence, as well as providing accurate enough evidence to back up his claim. After reviewing his written historical arguments, as well as the portfolio of his work, I determined that he experienced complications with using historical evidence throughout these writing assignments. However, he did improve in this area somewhat over the course of the year.

Student three stated that she also faced difficulties with citing historical evidence appropriately in her writing assignments. She also mentioned that the quality of her writing assignments improved as she began to use more accurate historical evidence in her written historical arguments. Student four also noted the lack of citing of his

historical evidence in their written historical argument. However, he observed that they began to understand how to use historical evidence in both his claim and the counterclaim in order to make a stronger written historical argument. Student four also discussed that his use of multiple pieces of evidence towards the end of the school year helped to make his written historical arguments more credible. From the analysis of their portfolios, I determined that the students in the MEG believed that their use of accurate historical evidence was the most critical piece in improving their historical arguments. However, proper citation of historical evidence and use of multiple pieces of historical evidence were also determined to be credible indicators of improving the use of historical evidence for this group.

#### **EEG Responses on Historical Evidence:**

Student B, EEG: My understanding of the concept of the use of historical evidence differs from that than at the beginning of the year because I am now able to use evidence to back up my statements. When I wrote my first writing assignment, I was able to use evidence to back up only my claim, and then by my second writing assignment I understood how to support my counterclaim with evidence. When I come to a conclusion about a certain event in history, I can make my point seem reasonable through the evidence I provide to back it up.

Student B stated that she understood the need for historical evidence, since it helped to reinforce her historical argument. She observed that once she had decided selected a claim in writing a historical argument, she knew how to provide accurate evidence to support it. Student B could have referenced some of the more complex tasks that she attempted later in the writing process in this portfolio submission.

Student one, EEG: My comprehension of historical evidence is more compelling now than at the beginning of the year. I understand that I need to have stronger evidence in my claim and my counterclaim. In addition, I now know that my evidence has to relate back towards my claim. Since the beginning of the year I have learned to find the strongest pieces of evidence to make my argument strong and valid. At the beginning of the year my historical evidence was valid, but I did not find the strongest pieces for my claim and

counterclaim. By using multiple pieces of evidence helped me conclude my paper and helped me prove my claim was stronger than my counterclaim.

Student one continually referenced the need to use strong evidence to support both a claim and a counterclaim. She continued to reference the rubric, albeit in her own words. De La Paz and Felton (2010) suggested that the need to use increasingly complex tasks in writing was essential to writing a meaningful historical argument. This supports what she reported in her portfolio.

Student 2, EEG: I understand historical evidence more than I did at the beginning of the year because my involvement of different and more understandable historical evidence pieces excelled my writing. Over the year, I learned to show accurate historical evidence in my writing, and to use information from a reliable source. I also learned to use multiple citations in my argument to get my point across better.

Student two referenced the use of sourcing to better explain how he improved the use of historical evidence in his writing assignments. He also implied that the scaffolding process helped to improve his historical argument, since he learned to use multiple pieces of accurate and reliable historical evidence. Student two also directly referenced the rubric by discussing an indicator from it in his portfolio.

Student three, EEG: I understand the concept of historical evidence better at this time than at the beginning of the year because know I can cite my sources correctly and give better evidence to back up my claim and counterclaim. Over the time that we have done our writing assignments, I feel like I have gotten a better understanding of how to use historical evidence. My writing assignment on September 8 was cited incorrectly. This was when we were talking about Native Americans rights. After this citing of the Native Americans, I learned how to do it correctly. My discussion group members and Mr. Cordell helped me. My citing of historical evidence and finding evidence to better support my claim has gotten better over the year because I have learned how correctly cite the evidence and to show a better understanding how to find evidence to support my claim better.

Student three described that accurately selecting and citing evidence were key indicators of improving her historical argument. Although she mentioned it later in the feedback section of her portfolio, she also explained that the use of feedback on an earlier

writing assignment helped to improve her historical argument. She also indirectly referenced the rubric by discussing the indicators in her portfolio.

Student four, EEG: I feel that my understanding of historical evidence has also improved over the period of the school year. I learned that using more accurate and compelling historical evidence will improve your claim. The use of historical evidence was fine in its accuracy, however I learned that if I included more evidence I could improve my claim. I learned to include multiple pieces of historical evidence in my writing, which led to immense improvement because it uses a ton more evidence and support of my claim and counterclaim.

Student four was similar to other students in mentioning that use of accurate and multiple pieces of historical evidence would improve a historical argument. This portfolio entry helped to further reinforce the use of accurate and multiple pieces of historical evidence in a historical argument to support a claim and a counterclaim.

Student five, EEG: I understand the concept of historical evidence at this time in the year better than I did at the start of school. In August, I was confused as to how I should credit the author when I quoted their work. Eventually, I learned to cite the author when using historical evidence. Secondly, I learned to use accurate and strong historical evidence to back up my claim and counterclaim. To do this, I used multiple pieces of evidence in my argument by providing two pieces of evidence in my claim. Before ending my arguments, I had learned to use two quotes to support my claim and one for my counterclaim. Therefore, it is obvious that I used numerous amounts of historical evidence to help justify my argument.

Student five also reflected upon the need to correctly cite and source historical evidence. She realized the need to properly support both a claim and a counterclaim. She also referenced the scaffolding process by stating that she used multiple sources of historical evidence throughout her argument. Like the other students in the EEG, she referenced the rubric in this section of her portfolio.

Overall, the students from the EEG seemed to focus on the concepts of using accurate pieces of evidence, as well as using multiple pieces of historical evidence as the key indicators to focus upon when writing a historical argument. Student B vaguely

referenced using accurate historical evidence, but she did note that it took multiple attempts for her use of historical evidence to improve the quality of her historical argument. Student one noted that she failed to use historical evidence properly in her first writing assignments. She also described using multiple pieces of evidence helped to support her historical argument in a stronger fashion. Towards the end of the school year, she felt that she could confidently state why her claim was more important than her counterclaim. Student two wrote that accurate and multiple pieces of evidence strengthened his writing. Student three suggested that the feedback that he received helped him to learn to cite sources properly. He also made a vague reference to using historical evidence accurately in order to improve the quality of his writing. Student four resembled student two in that he interpreted that accurate and multiple pieces of historical evidence were necessary to improve historical arguments. Student five stated that citing evidence as a struggle for her at first, but her selection of historical evidence became better over the course of the school year. Like students two and four, she explained the use of accurate historical evidence, multiple pieces of evidence in her writing. The EEG and MEG were in agreement that proper citing of evidence, and using multiple pieces of evidence were important in improving the quality of a historical argument. However, the EEG went further by interpreting that the use of accurate historical evidence also contributed to the overall improvement of their written historical arguments.

### **Student Reflections on Counterclaim**

I asked of my students this question regarding counterclaim: How well do you understand the concept of counterclaim than you did at this time than at the beginning of the year?

### **MEG Responses on Counterclaim:**

Student A, MEG: At the beginning of the year, my counterclaims were very short. I did not compare the evidence from my claim to my counterclaim in my earlier writings. Also, I didn't return to my claim after the counterclaim. Although, in my latest writing assignments, I returned to my claim after the counterclaim and I have made them longer. The big thing for me was that I learned to explain enough background information that informs the reader to understand my evidence. Finally, I learned to tell the reader that my claim is superior to my counterclaim.

Student A observed that the length of her counterclaim was not long enough to support what she was trying to say. She suggested that the length of her counterclaim and the use of enough accurate historical evidence helped to improve the clarity of her counterclaim. She also referenced the scaffolding process from the third quarter by stating that she could state why her claim was more important than her counterclaim.

Student one, MEG: I understand the concept of counterclaim very well at this time compared to the beginning of the year. My counterclaim for my first writing assignment was "People believe that the delegates were more driven to create a new nation, than to end slavery" which explained nothing and lacked details. Later on in the year I learned to thoroughly explain my counterclaim. For example, "Some argue that The Homestead Act affected the Native Americans' equality and opportunity more than the transcontinental railroad. People may think this because the Homestead Act made it available for settlers to get very cheap land. A lot of the land that was being sold to settlers was Native land, which affected their way of life. However, this thought is inaccurate because the transcontinental railroad was what brought the settlers to this cheap land, and made it way easier for settlers to get to the west, resulting in great numbers of settlers invading on Native land". The difference in how much detail I provide in the counterclaim between these two assignments shows how I've grown in my understanding of the concept of counterclaim.

Student one offered a lengthy example of a counterclaim from one of her historical arguments to support her understanding of this concept. She mainly echoed the same position as Student A, in that she believed her counterclaims lacked the detail and supporting evidence to support it. She also referenced the indicator in the rubric by explaining how she improved on the use of her counterclaim over time. However, she thought she improved in her use of counterclaim by the end of the school year.

Student two, MEG: My counterclaim has improved since the beginning of the year. At the beginning of the year I just restated another claim then cited evidence. I don't really explain what happened, I just threw some random evidence at the reader. I eventually learned to explain the other side well, but still could return to my side at the end and say why it was better.

Student two explained that he did not comprehend the concept of what a counterclaim was within the context of a historical argument. He simply mentioned that he had to provide a second claim, "then just threw some random evidence at the reader." He did demonstrate some understanding of the scaffolding process by stating that he "could return to my side at the end and say why it was better." Student two demonstrated a lack of understanding how to write a counterclaim, as well as not understanding the indicators in the rubric. It seemed that there was a correlation between his underdeveloped counterclaim and his cognition of the indicators in the rubric with regards to the writing process.

Student three, MEG: I understand the concept of counterclaim a lot more than I did at the beginning of the year. I can now dispute the other opinion well, with evidence and facts from my previously stated claim. By the end of the year, I finally learned how to use more than one strong piece of evidence in my counter claim. This is important because I learned that using more than one source to back up my counterclaim helped it to be stronger and more believable by the reader.

Student three explained that a counterclaim must be backed with evidence and reasoning that might refute the original claim. Newell (2011) stated that "in reading and the ability to compose a high-quality argument, its claims, warrants, and evidence, in writing are critical skills for academic success (p. 274)". By explaining the indicator from the rubric in the portfolio, student three helped to support what Newell's research indicates. This student also referenced the need for multiple sourcing to corroborate a historical argument. While this was demonstrated throughout the second research question, this statement helped to support Wissinger and De La Paz's (2016) notion that

historical argumentation suggested that historians read multiple and often conflicting pieces of historical evidence.

Student four, MEG: I understand the concept of writing a counterclaim much better now than I did in the beginning of the school year. At first I did not even write a counterclaim. I did not know how. At first, I started them off by using a phrase to indicate that I am moving on to the counterclaim. But I have gotten better and can argue the other side of the story. Over time, I learned to use numerous supporting details to further develop my counterclaim.

Student four admitted that he struggled in writing a counterclaim. He suggested that selecting accurate historical evidence and providing sufficient detail were necessary to improve his historical arguments. I observed a lack of evidence from this submission in this written portfolio. He could have provided a greater explanation into how his understanding of how to write a counterclaim evolved over time.

Overall, the students in the MEG suggested that they struggled with writing a counterclaim once they were introduced to it. De La Paz and Felton's (2010) statement that students struggle with writing increasingly complex tasks was supported by the data in this study. This also supported explanations by Student A and student one that their counterclaims were rather short, because they had difficulty in understanding exactly how to write a counterclaim. They noted that their counterclaims became longer and more credible when using historical evidence to back them up. Student two realized that he encountered difficulties in writing counterclaims and he vaguely admitted that he still had a way to go in understanding this concept when writing a historical argument. Student three described that she learned to use multiple, strong pieces of evidence to back up her counterclaim. As a result, she believed that her counterclaims were more clear and credible to the reader. Student four admitted in his reflection to not knowing how to write a counterclaim when first presented with the concept. He stated that using more



details in his counterclaim improved the overall quality of his historical argument. He vaguely mentioned the use of accurate historical evidence to support his counterclaim. The MEG is representative of all of the other MEG in that they struggled in writing counterclaims when they were first introduced. Most of the students in the MEG eventually did understand the concept of writing a counterclaim, and supported it with historical evidence by the end of the school year. However, there were students like student two who did not fully grasp the concept by the end of the school year.

### **EEG Responses on Counterclaim:**

Student B, EEG: My understanding of the concept of counterclaim differs from that than at the beginning of the year because I know now how to properly support my counterclaim with evidence. I am able to make my argument stronger by refuting the opposing side and backing up my thoughts. Eventually I learned to use the transitional phrase, “Some may argue”, which indicates my counterclaim. At the beginning of the year, I did not explain the opposing side to the readers so that they could understand it. Although as the year progressed, my counterclaim became clearer to the reader.

Student B interpreted that the use of accurate supporting evidence helped to better reinforce a counterclaim. She also noted the difficulty at first in writing a counterclaim, but offered insights that as she included more supporting details and accurate historical evidence into her counterclaim, it improved in quality as the school year progressed. She indirectly stated that by improving on exceeding the indicator on argument and reasoning in the rubric, she improved the holistic quality of her counterclaim.

Student one, EEG: My understanding of the concept of counterclaim differs from that at the beginning of the year. I know now how to properly back up my counterclaim with strong evidence while still making my claim seem stronger by refuting with certain evidence. I believe that counterclaims are important in arguments. They not only show the opposing viewpoint, but they also prove that your claim is stronger than your counterclaim. My counterclaim has ameliorated since the beginning of the year. In the beginning of the year my counterclaim was middling. I admit that writing counterclaims have never been my strong suit, but I have improved upon them since the beginning of the year.

Student one also referenced the use of historical evidence to back up her counterclaim. She suggested that her claim became stronger by refuting her counterclaim. This supported the indicator in the claim section of the rubric, which was the primary objective to increase the complexity of her historical argument during the third quarter.

Student two, EEG: I understand the concept of counterclaim more than I did at the beginning of the year because my counterclaims have been very well written and have had good evidence pieces to back it up. I also learned to make my counterclaim clear and easily understood by the reader. I learned to do this by using multiple pieces of evidence throughout my argument.

Student two referenced the need for accurate historical evidence to support his counterclaim. He also made reference of an indicator in the rubric by explaining that multiple sources of historical evidence were used to corroborate his historical argument. This supported Wineburg's (2001) notion of using multiple sources of historical evidence to support a claim or counterclaim.

Student three, EEG: I understand the concept of counterclaim better at this time than at the beginning of the year because I can write a good argument from the other viewpoints, back them up with evidence, and show how the claim is still superior. My counterclaims from my writing assignments have gotten better over the year because I have learned how to write better counterclaims because I understand that they are just as important as your claim.

Student three seemed to suggest the reasons for the counterclaim were an important component of the writing process. He also mentioned of the use of accurate historical evidence to back up a counterclaim, and he also referenced the rubric by reasoning why his claim was more important than his counterclaim.

Student four, EEG: Overall, I feel that I understand the concept of counterclaim more than at the beginning of the year. At the start, I wrote a counterclaim as if it was just a different viewpoint in the argument. However, I learned that you are supposed to attack the counterclaim to make your argument more powerful; I did just this. Over the course of the year, I have learned that a counterclaim is one of the most important parts of your

writing, because it too makes your claim stronger. For example, when you construct this part of writing, in order to make it effective, you must support your evidence with enough accurate details. To me, the most important part of the counterclaim is the use of accurate historical evidence. This makes your counterclaim stronger and clearer to the reader.

Student four also observed that the use of accurate historical evidence to make a counterclaim “stronger and clearer to the reader.” He noted that there needed to be enough detail present in the counterclaim itself to support the historical argument. He referenced two indicators in the rubric that suggested his improvement in writing a counterclaim in his portfolio.

Student five, EEG: I understand the concept of counterclaim at this time in the year better than I did before writing weekly argument papers. I know what a counterclaim should argue and why it is important in my paper. It is clear that I know how to write a counterclaim because I can argue an idea that opposes the claim I initially presented. I use supporting details and evidence to further develop my counterclaim. This relates to the point I am trying to make and proves that I learned how to effectively use historical evidence to back up my counterclaim. At the beginning of the school year, my counterclaim was hard to understand and had evidence that did not relate to my topic. However, after writing many historical arguments, I know how to use supporting details and to develop a strong counterclaim. Finally, I use transitional phrases to indicate that I am writing my counterclaim. Rather than going straight into my counter argument, I used transition words to help the reader realize that I am beginning a new topic.

Student five explained that the use of accurate historical evidence was necessary in order to support a counterclaim. She indicated that a counterclaim needed to have an opposing viewpoint to the original claim so that the argument could be validated. She indirectly referenced the rubric by stating that a historical argument must have differing perspectives to have credibility.

Overall, the EEG explained that they struggled with the concept of writing a counterclaim in their writing portfolios. This supported De La Paz’s (2012) research because students had to select appropriate historical evidence to support conflicting points of view when writing a historical argument, indicating that this was a more

advanced concepts for secondary students. Student B stated that using accurate historical evidence helped improve the quality of her counterclaim. Student one also discussed the significance of using historical evidence in order to improve the quality of a counterclaim. Student two mentioned the significance of historical evidence to back up a counterclaim, but also clarified that his counterclaim helped him to improve his overall historical argument. Student three noted that counterclaims helped him to understand that writing a counterclaim helped him to see an argument from a different perspective. He also stated that using historical evidence helps to reinforce a counterclaim. Student four had a different perspective on the use of counterclaim in a historical argument. He mentioned that a counterclaim must be written differently in order to make one's claim stronger. He also noted the need to use accurate historical evidence to write a strong counterclaim. Student five interpreted the importance of providing enough details and supporting evidence to strengthen her counterclaim. She also made use of transitional phrases to clarify her counterclaim to the reader. While the EEG did have difficulties when first writing counterclaims in their historical arguments, they typically wrote stronger counterclaims than the MEG students. The EEG typically provided transitional phrases at the beginning of their counterclaim to indicate to the reader that a change in the historical argument was taking place. The EEG used more accurate pieces of historical evidence in the writing of their counterclaims than their counterparts in the MEG. As a result, the EEG usually wrote stronger counterclaims.

### **Student Reflection on Equality and Opportunity**

I asked my students to answer a question on equality and opportunity in their writing portfolio: How well do you understand the terms of equality and opportunity, and has your definition of these terms changed over the school year?

### **MEG Responses on Equality and Opportunity:**

Student A, MEG: I started understanding the terms of equality and opportunity through the year. In my first writing assignments I didn't understand the concepts. At first, I thought equality and opportunity meant the disabilities of a person. However, at the end of the year I understood the terms fully and my definition has changed. I now know that equality and opportunity means the disadvantages of equality and opportunity that some groups have.

Student A had a difficult time comprehending the first writing assignments, since she struggled with her initial definition of equality and opportunity. She provided a rather basic definition of what those terms meant by the end of her statement, but it was an improvement from what she initially believed them to mean. She made little mention of the indicators on equality and opportunity from the rubric.

Student one, MEG: My understanding and definition of equality and opportunity has changed so much over the year. In the beginning of the year I didn't comprehend the real meaning of equality and opportunity. Now I know that someone's equality and opportunity is determined by how others treat and provide them with possibilities. I now realize what mistakes I made in my previous assignments, which has helped grow my knowledge and understanding of equality and opportunity today. I know to further explain how groups were affected due to their different treatment.

Student one explained that their definition of equality and opportunity evolved to mean that certain groups were either provided with or did not have the same treatment. This helped to support VanSledright's (2002) research, which stated that developing historical thinking and understanding required opportunities for learners to work with various forms of evidence and to deal with issues of interpretation.

Student two, MEG: My equality and opportunity has improved since the beginning of the year. Equality and Opportunity are two of Jefferson's ideals, and in each of our writing assignments we are supposed to explain why or how what we are talking about

breaks those ideals. I am now able to explain what equality and opportunity really is. I am also able to identify if something is violating those ideals and can explain why.

Student two clarified that he understood equality and opportunity, but he did not provide a reasonable response. He did not provide any concrete examples in his portfolio, nor did he reference any of the indicators in the equality and opportunity section in the rubric.

Student three, MEG: Since the beginning of the school year, I have learned a lot about equality and opportunity. I now understand these terms a lot more than at the beginning. In fact, I failed to even mention it outside of my claim in my first writing assignment. Also, my views on how to define these terms have changed because starting the year off I never really knew exactly quite what they meant. By the end of the year, I have a much better understanding of what equality and opportunity is and how I can argue about the lack or excess of it in any situation.

Student three explained that her understanding of equality and opportunity grew, but failed to explain how the definition of equality and opportunity had changed over time. She also did not reference any of the indicators on equality and opportunity in the rubric.

Student four, MEG: Another thing I have gotten better at throughout the year is writing about equality and opportunity. At first I did not understand the terms well and was not good about writing about them. Over the year my definitions of these two terms have changed greatly over the course of the year. For example, in my early writing assignments I thought I understood the definition well but now I realize, I barely understood it at all. I am now able to explain the reasons that they (dominant groups) contribute to the problem.

Student four explained that he understood the concepts of equality and opportunity better than he did at the beginning of the school year, but did not actually define those terms. He did suggest that dominant groups contributed to certain groups not being able to achieve equality and opportunity. This statement supported VanSledright's (2002) research in that historical events were typically told from a dominant, authoritarian perspective.

Overall, the MEG largely reflected that they understood the concepts of equality and opportunity better than they did at the beginning of the school year. However, the students varied on how well they articulated their points. Student A and student one mentioned that equality and opportunity could apply to certain groups in a historical era with specific advantages, or with obstacles that needed to be overcome. Student two struggled with his definition of equality and opportunity. While he mentioned that he understood the concepts better than he did at the beginning of the school year, he failed to define what the concepts actually meant. Students three and four stated that they understood the concepts of equality and opportunity more than they did at the beginning of the school year. Student three mentioned that she could note the absence or excess of equality and opportunity in a given historical era. Student four explained that dominant groups contributed to the problem of everyone not having equality and the same opportunities. Most students in the MEG had a better knowledge base of the concepts of equality and opportunity than at the beginning of the school year. They fluctuated in how well they could explain them in their writing portfolios. One suggestion for this could be that few students in the MEG referenced any indicators on equality and opportunity from the rubric.

### **EEG Responses on Equality and Opportunity:**

Student B, EEG: My understanding of the terms: equality and opportunity, differs from that than at the beginning of the year because I now comprehend these ideals in detail. In my first writing assignment I had little to no understanding of the true meaning of these ideals. I am now able to determine and analyze situations that deal with both equality and opportunity. My definition of these terms has changed over the course of the year because I now have more of a grasp of true examples and situations where these ideals actually apply.

Student B admitted that she had little inclination about what equality and opportunity meant when she wrote her first historical arguments. She stated that her definitions of the terms changed over time and seemed to understand how groups struggled with equality and opportunity in a given historical era. Unfortunately, Student B did not clarify what her definitions of equality and opportunity were. She understood how groups struggled with equality and opportunity given a historical era in her writing assignments, though she did not articulate that in her writing portfolio. She also made little reference to the indicators on equality and opportunity from the rubric.

Student one, EEG: In the beginning of the year my understanding of equality and opportunity was lousy. When I first started writing my argument papers I barely referred back to equality and opportunity and I did not explain it well enough. As months went by my writing progressed and my understanding improved. At the beginning of the year I thought that the two terms meant very similar things. I now perceive that equality and opportunity are related, but vary in meanings. Now it believe equality is when people are equal and things have been balanced out between people or places and opportunity is when people have the chance to voice their own opinion or attain a goal. At the start of the year I never elaborated about equality and opportunity as much as I did in my later ones. I now have better grasp of these two ideals since the start of the school year.

Student one did provide an explanation on equality and opportunity, and I thought the definitions on equality and opportunity were a nice reflection from her portfolio. This supported Banks' (2008) research in that social studies should consider the perspectives of other marginalized groups within the curriculum taught. Student one provided a detailed reflection on her understanding on these terms, and referenced indicators from the rubric. She was able to consider multiple perspectives in her historical argument, and referenced them directly throughout the examples in her portfolio.

Student two, EEG: I understand equality and opportunity way better than I did at the beginning of the school year, and my definitions of each of them has changed as well. At the beginning, I thought equality was the treatment of people, but later I found out it can be countries, and lots of other things that don't have equality. Also, I thought opportunity was the chance to do something new, but I found out that it can mean that people can



start new things, get a new life, have a chance to change something, and even stop racism.

Student two offered an explanation as to how his definition on equality and opportunity changed. He proposed that equality and opportunity could be applied to a more cosmopolitan point of view to help people globally. This supported Salako's (2013) mention of teaching equality and conflicting accounts to increasing the understanding of other groups within a social studies curriculum. Student two discusses the rubric indirectly by explaining it in his own words in his portfolio by referring to multiple perspectives in his historical arguments referenced in his portfolio.

Student three, EEG: I understand the concept of equality and opportunity better at this time than at the beginning of the year because I thought of equality and opportunity as a way from an 8<sup>th</sup> grader point of view instead of someone who was living in the movement. One way I can prove this is in my first writing assignment I did not back up my understanding of equality and opportunity with evidence or say why it was violated. I now have a better understanding on how equality and opportunity are used and I can explain them to help support my cause (argument).

Student three struggled to grasp the meaning of the concepts of equality and opportunity for most of the school year, and noted that it was hard for him to contextualize the information. He did reference the rubric on argument and reasoning by considering the perspectives of others, but did not elaborate further on what he meant. While this student explained that he better understood equality and opportunity, he did not provide any additional evidence of how his definition had changed by the end of the school year.

Student four, EEG: I feel that I understand the concepts of both equality and opportunity more than I did at the beginning of the year. Therefore, my definitions have also changed. At first I jumped to a conclusion that equality and opportunity were just simple topics that could be defined in just a few words. This is because at first, equality meant that the people were equal to one another, however throughout the school year I have discovered that equality includes the equal opportunity and rights of all people. After understanding this concept, I realized that opportunity was very close to the concept of equality.

Opportunity is “a set of circumstances that makes it possible to do something”, according to Oxford Dictionaries. I also grew in the understanding of this topic. For example, my argument from September included very little about this concept, however, over the course of the year my understanding of this topic has not only changed, but the meaning has too. Over the course of this year I have decided that equality is when all people are treated with equal rights and have what they want as a group of people. Furthermore, opportunity is when a group of people in history are able to achieve their goals with equal rights.

Student four thoroughly explained how his definition of equality and opportunity changed over time. He believed that equality and opportunity were related, and as long as all people were treated equally, people in history should be able to achieve their goals with equal rights. This supported Afflerbach and VanSledright’s research (2001) which stated that teaching historical events from multiple perspectives would foster critical thinking. Student four also indirectly mentions the indicator from the rubric on considering the perspectives of others in his portfolio.

Student five, EEG: I understand the terms equality and opportunity very well. That being said, my definition of these words has changed over the course of the year. At the beginning of the year, I believed that equality and opportunity were a person’s rights. Here, it is clear that I struggled to understand the concepts of equality and opportunity and how they affect all Americans. I give an overwhelming, confusing explanation of the terms in my early writing assignments rather than a thought out, accurate meaning. However, as the year continued and I was exposed to other groups who struggled to find equality and opportunity, my understanding of these words grew. Now, I can recognize that even if a person has the right to equality and opportunity, many times they still have to fight to be treated in that manner by their peers.

Student five observed that she struggled to understand what equality and opportunity meant, but towards the end of the year, she learned that although groups have the rights to equality and opportunity, they still had to fight to achieve these goals. She did not include a definition on equality and opportunity, but she did reference the rubric by interpreting the obstacles that marginalized groups faced in a given historical era. Her

statement proved Monte-Sano's research (2010) in that placing historical events into proper context could be a difficult process for secondary students.

Overall, I felt that the students in the EEG were better able to articulate their understanding of equality and opportunity. As a result of their reflections from their writing portfolios, I concluded that students in the EEG typically understood these concepts to a greater extent than the students in the MEG. Student B in EEG explained that her increased understanding of equality and opportunity could be used in given historical situations in certain settings. She went on to mention that this was a skill that she did not have at the beginning of the school year. Student one provided detail on how her understanding of equality and opportunity changed over the course of the school year. Her insight was well thought out and showed significant growth in these topics over time. She wrote, "At the beginning of the year I thought that the two terms meant very similar things. I now perceive that equality and opportunity are related, but vary in meanings. Now I believe equality is when people are equal and things have been balanced out between people or places and opportunity is when people have the chance to voice their own opinion or attain a goal." I thought that this statement was rather detailed and meaningful reflective statement. Student two also provided his own insights into how his understanding of equality and opportunity grew over the course of the school year. Student three mentioned trying to understand the contextualization of people living in a given historical time period, but did not really go into further detail on how well he grasped the concepts. Students four and five were similar to others students in the EEG in that they went into greater detail on how they grew to define the concepts of equality and opportunity over time. Overall, I felt that the EEG provided a more complex level of

comprehension of equality and opportunity than that of the MEG. While both groups showed an increased understanding in these topics, the EEG provided a greater depth of knowledge on these rather abstract concepts.

### **Student Reflection on Feedback**

I had my students answer this question about feedback in their writing portfolio: Did the feedback that you received on your writing help you to improve your historical argument?

### **MEG Responses on Feedback:**

Student A, MEG: The feedback has really helped me improved my writing. Somebody in my group told me that I needed to list more disadvantages at the end of the paper to make my claim stronger. The feedback that I received from my group helped me to better understand how equality and opportunity worked.

Student A offered a lack of a detailed response on the feedback section in her portfolio. Nevertheless, she did mention that the feedback that she received from her discussion group members did help her to better understand equality and opportunity.

Student one, MEG: The feedback I received on my writings helped me improve my historical argument. After I submitted one of my writing assignments, one of my classmates wrote me this, “The sentence, ‘this strike on the layoff of three workers and fight for rights could have been more effective if everyone participated’ does not make sense. Explain it more”. I always went back to my paper and revised statements that improved my paper. Positive and negative feedback on my papers always helps me improve as a writer overall.

Student one provided better feedback than Student A, and commented on a lack of detailed feedback from her discussion group members. However, she did provide reflection regarding what she did with the feedback that she received. Overall, she felt that the feedback that she was given helped to contribute to her growth as a writer.

Student two, MEG: The way I used feedback on my writing assignments has improved since the beginning of the year. On my first writing assignment I didn’t get many replies, but the one notable one I got really exposed the biggest problem in my first one. “Good details. The one thing I would do is explain more of why the Japanese American were

more violated than the Native Americans” (Student three, MEG). I mainly used feedback to improve talking about equality and opportunity.

Student two did not provide meaningful reflections on the feedback section of his portfolio. However, he did echo Student A in that he stated that the feedback that he received helped him to better discuss equality and opportunity. However, he did not go into provide any additional commentary on how this feedback helped him to improve his historical arguments.

Student three, MEG: The feedback that I received on my writing assignments did help me on writing historical arguments, but not as much as I wish they did. I used the constructive criticism my peers gave me in the discussions to correct my writing assignments. Those were helpful; however, I would have liked to have received more comments from Mr. Cordell about my writing with the grade. This would make me more aware of what I can change next time like the discussion groups did.

Student three had some rather insightful comments about feedback. She noted that she used the feedback that she received to constructively improve her historical arguments. She also explained that she wished that she had received more feedback from me about improving her historical arguments. While I certainly provided feedback at times to students, I wanted to give my students the greatest opportunity to provide feedback to one another to help in the editing and revision process. I may have to rethink how feedback is given on their writing, which is a possibility for future studies.

Student four, MEG: Throughout my experience I have gained a better understanding and skill in changing how I write my historical arguments through my classmate’s feedback. One time I forgot to use a counterclaim in my argument and when I saw that one of my classmate’s said that I went back and wrote one. Therefore, I can use feedback to improve my writing. This is important because I learned to listen to the members in my group and it made my paper better.

Student four provided an insight into how he used student feedback to improve his historical argument. He noted an instance where he was able to improve the quality of his historical argument, and worked on those improvements throughout the school

year. He believed that the feedback that he received improved the quality of his writing throughout this process.

Overall, the students in the MEG needed to provide greater emphasis on their reflections in their feedback section. There was an overall lack of detailed explanations about how the use of peer feedback helped them improve the historical arguments. The MEG students could have provided reflections in greater detail of how they used student feedback in their work.

### **EEG Responses on Feedback:**

Student B, EEG: The feedback I received on my writing helped me to improve my historical argument because it helped me see my argument paper in different ways. With the help of others' feedback I was able to think about my argument in someone else's eyes and understand different sides, as well as strengthen the key components of my paper. At the beginning of the year I received feedback but it was not in depth which made it hard for me to improve my historical argument. For example I received the feedback, "Yours is really good! Just make sure to change your citations to what he showed us" (September 8). While although it is feedback it does not really discuss the problems I had, or give me detailed changes I could make to improve. Later in the year though my group members were able to help me better my argument. For example, "Your counterclaim is really good, but it seems a little stronger than your claim. Overall, great job referring your evidence back to your claim". Mr. Cordell helped me with the "Argument and Reasoning" aspect of my historical argument and taught me how to explain more in-depth what I was claiming in my paper. He told me to add more details backed up with evidence to support my claim and better my argument.

Student B provided extensive commentary on how she interpreted feedback in her writing. She observed that the early feedback that she received did not really help to improve the quality of her historical arguments. I happened to notice that the comments in the chat transcripts were not as detailed as they could have been, which corroborated her statement in her portfolio. Student B explained I was able to help her with developing a counterclaim in her historical arguments. As time progressed in the school year, she used the feedback that she received to improve her written historical arguments.

Student one, EEG: The use of feedback is imperative to improve your writing. I use feedback to improve my writing and I benefit by helping my future papers. Throughout the year my writing has advanced because I have acquired a better understanding of the feedback other people give me. The feedback I received from my peers and Mr. Cordell on my writing really helped me realize what I needed to improve in my historical arguments. With the help from others' I was able to identify the problems I needed to revise.

Student one stated that she used the feedback that she received, but needed to provide more detail how she used the feedback that was offered her. She did not any further evidence to prove that her peers and I helped to improve the quality of her historical arguments.

Student two, EEG: I used my feedback to fix my claim and my paper. I improved my writing using feedback because my writing on my piece from one of my earlier writing assignments, I was told by my classmates that I didn't give enough information in my claim. I quickly changed that and used new evidence to better my claim. The feedback that I received helped me to improve my historical argument because it helped me better my writing and to put it at its full potential. On one of my arguments, Mr. Cordell gave me a grade and a suggestion and I changed that and my argument sounded much better. In one of my later writing assignments, I was told by my fellow classmates that I needed to add quotations marks and use a quote, but I just summarized what the author was saying. Also, I only had one piece of evidence in my claim and I needed two. My use of feedback in my writing has helped on some arguments.

Student two provided better examples than others in the EEG about how he used feedback, but he could have offered more reflection in this section to support what he was saying about using feedback that he received. At the beginning of his response, student two did explain that he used feedback to improve his claim in his writing. However, the reader is unsure as to exactly who provided him with the feedback. He mentioned that I helped him with a suggestion to improve his historical argument, but he never explained at what point in the school year that I helped him. Moreover, I never learned exactly where in the writing process that I provided the feedback to help him improve overall.

Student three, EEG: The feedback that I received from fellow classmates did help me improve my historical writing because they told me to add more evidence to improve the

topic I was arguing for. Over this year, I have a better understanding on how to give and receive feedback because over the year I have learned how to give people better feedback on their writing assignments. At the beginning of the year, the feedback I gave was not that good. During the year, I started to give better feedback to my classmates and they have given me some too.

Student three needed to provide more detail in this section of the writing portfolio regarding the use of feedback. However, he did mention that offering feedback to others helped him to understand how to better use the feedback that he received to improve his own historical arguments. He stated that this process led him to provide better feedback to his discussion group members as he became more acclimated to the writing process.

Student four, EEG: Yes, feedback in my writing somewhat helped me improve my historical arguments. In the first weeks of the writing assignments, I didn't use the feedback to improve my writing. Members of my group would give me a few pointers and fix minor details, but none of this would impact my writing in a significant way. Eventually, I used some of the feedback to improve my writing later on. Most of the time it was just simple mistakes that were corrected, but occasionally I would receive some feedback that would change my argument. This shows that my argument improved slightly from using feedback, but I feel that it didn't help me as much as it could have.

Student four provided some insight here as to why the feedback that he received did not help him with his improving his historical argument. He felt that the feedback was not detailed enough to help him to improve the quality of his historical argument. However, he noted that some of the feedback that he received later in the process helped refine his initial work.

Student five, EEG: Receiving feedback from my peers has helped me to improve my writing. My classmates have helped me to notice mistakes that I did not catch and they remind me of how my paper should be formatted. After receiving constructive criticism, I was able to revise my piece and form a paper with the proper evidence and citations to better support my argument. Overall, while doing the writing assignments, the feedback of my peers has helped me to build a compelling argument. I have used the advice of my classmates, Mr. Cordell, and previous discussions to improve my papers. As a result, I have learned how to properly write historical arguments over the course of the school year.



Student five helped to explain how she used the feedback she received during the writing process to improve her historical arguments. Initially, she mentioned that she used them to improve conventional mistakes, but later feedback prompted her to find better historical evidence to support her argument. While she wrote that she received help from both her discussion group members and me, she could have provided more detail to explain at what points in the writing process the feedback helped her improve the quality of her historical arguments.

Overall, the students in the EEG consistently provided more overall detail on how they used feedback to improve the quality of their historical arguments than those from the MEG. It would have been helpful if students from both groups had noted when they received feedback that prompted a change in their writing process. However, the students from the EEG typically did provide better insights into the use of feedback to improve their historical arguments than the students from the MEG.

### **Conclusion of Research Question Two**

I believe that the students from both groups offered interesting insights into how they viewed learning to write a historical argument. They felt that they understood how to write a claim and support it with accurate historical evidence, which confirmed what I discovered in research question one. However, students in both groups provided limited insight into what they were thinking. For example, both groups mentioned that they struggled with counterclaim at the beginning of the writing process, but improved in developing one over time. This reinforced what I found in my analysis of research question one and two. For the counterclaim section, not all students in the MEG mastered this particular concept. I felt that they struggled to define what equality and opportunity

were in the context of the historical argumentations that they wrote. While students in the MEG felt that they had indeed improved in understanding what equality and opportunity were, they ultimately could not define what their understanding meant when asked to do so. On the other hand, students in the EEG did a much better job in explaining their growth in how equality and opportunity were defined at the end of the writing process. Finally, both groups encountered difficulties with providing quality feedback to their respective discussion groups. While both groups stated that the feedback they received helped them improve the quality of their historical arguments, the chat transcripts indicated otherwise. Most feedback in the chat transcripts was mostly complimentary of an individual student's writing, or suggested improvements to conventions in their historical arguments. Therefore, most feedback that was offered in both groups was not useable by individual students, which is why the data from the chat transcripts could not be used for research question two of this study. The feedback section in the portfolio did offer some individual examples of how feedback helped students in both groups. For example, the feedback that the EEG gave to one another, particularly later in the school year, was more helpful than that of the students in the MEG received.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Conclusion

#### **Restatement for the Purpose of the Study**

The primary objective of this study was to determine if eighth grade students could use an argumentative framework to write historical arguments on equality and opportunity. Students learned to write a claim and counterclaim, and supported both elements with historical evidence to achieve this goal. I postulated that students would be able to write a historical argument by the end of the school year. I reasoned that most of the eighth grade students used the elements of a historical argument to discuss equality and opportunity with varying degrees of success. I hypothesized that as my instructional model increased in difficulty over the course of the school year, students became acclimated with the simpler tasks, but had greater difficulty in the more advanced stages of writing a historical argument.

The secondary objective of this study was to discover if eighth grade students discussed and reflected upon their own growth in writing historical arguments. I reasoned that eighth grade students were proficient in providing feedback to one another, and were comfortable with providing sufficient examples to improve their writing. I was confident that I could read examples of feedback that helped students refine the holistic quality of their historical arguments. These examples were provided from the transcripts of the online chat discussions, and from individual contributions in the student portfolios submitted at the end of the school year.

#### **Summary of Findings on Research Question One**

Instructionally, I scaffolded the writing process of historical argumentation for three purposes: to provide students in the MEG and the EEG with the ability to write a concise claim and counterclaim, to support each with accurate historical evidence, and to draw a connection between a claim and a counterclaim. During the second semester of the study, students in both groups had to explain the reasoning behind why their claim was more important than their counterclaim. All participants in the study were asked to put historical events into the proper context.

Initially, students from both groups had difficulty in learning each element of a historical argument that was introduced during the writing process. For example, students had difficulty at the beginning of the school year in selecting a claim that was clear to the reader. Students in both groups initially reasoned that they did not need to elaborate on why they selected their claim. They chose to support it with historical evidence in the next sentence instead. I hypothesized that students would master the indicators on claim from the rubric, since it was the first item introduced during the writing process. By the end of the first quarter, students from both groups were able to write a claim and support it with accurate historical evidence. I considered my hypothesis to be proven correct, despite the fact that a few individuals from the MEG were unable to meet write a sufficient claim in this time frame.

The hunt for accurate historical evidence was elusive. Students struggled with sourcing and corroborating historical evidence to support their claim and counterclaim. As Wineburg (2001) discovered, historians must source, corroborate, and contextualize evidence as they make sense of past historical events. Sourcing of accurate evidence improved for both of my groups over the course of the school year. There was a more

noticeable improvement in the EEG than the MEG in selecting historically appropriate evidence to support their claim. For example, Student A of the MEG had difficulties in selecting historically appropriate evidence early in the writing process. On her historical argument on women's rights, she selected the following evidence: "The ninth resolution, which declared 'it is the duty of the women of this country to secure themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise,' was one to meet the opposition." Her historical evidence did not sufficiently support her claim, since she chose historical evidence that did not accurately support her it. Students from the MEG encountered similar issues in selecting accurate historical evidence. By the end of the first semester, the EEG were offering historical evidence that supported their claim, and the MEG were typically not reading the historical evidence as closely. The result was that the MEG were typically selecting segments of historical evidence that they hoped would support their claim, as Student A did with women's rights. Young and Leinhardt (1998) suggested that students must act as their own authors when writing historical arguments and considering historical evidence to use to support it. Eventually, students in both groups learned to choose historical evidence that more accurately supported their claim. I anticipated that students in both groups would encounter difficulties in selecting historically appropriate historical evidence. I assumed that both groups would begin using accurate historical evidence to support their claim at the same time period, but this was not the case. The EEG were able to master this task faster than the MEG. However, both groups could select historically appropriate evidence by the sixth writing assignment. Eventually, my hypothesis was proven to be correct, although it took longer for the MEG to master this skill than I originally anticipated.

The next task was to formulate a counterclaim, or an opposing viewpoint of their claim, during the writing process of developing a historical argument. When I read their historical arguments from the second quarter, I observed that students put greater emphasis on writing their claim of their historical argument, but less so in constructing their counterclaim. This was something that I did not consider happening before conducting the study. For example, students wrote two paragraphs on their claim, but only three or four sentences in their counterclaim. According to Hexter (1971) historians must address counterevidence and multiple perspectives rather than cherry-picking evidence that supported their claim. Student A provided evidence of Hexter's research when she attempted to select historical evidence to support her claim. She wrote: "Army began enforcement of the Removal Act. The Cherokee were rounded up in the summer of 1838 and loaded onto boats that traveled the Tennessee, Ohio, Mississippi and Arkansas Rivers into Indian Territory. Many were held in prison camps awaiting their fate". Instead of selecting more historically appropriate evidence, She chose to quote what actually transpired during the Trail of Tears. Students in both groups tended to find one or two pieces of evidence that would support a counterclaim, which further supported Hexter's findings. Since they had not offered the same level of detail in the counterclaim that they did in their claim, they had not considered the perspectives of other groups, at least in their first attempt. Their problems writing a counterclaim might have something to do with their lack of reflections in their writing portfolios. I postulated that students would encounter greater difficulty in writing a counterclaim, since they had to consider an alternative viewpoint. However, I did not reason that students decided to initially ignore the perspectives of others in their first attempts to write a counterclaim. They

simply did not place the emphasis needed to meet the standards for the indicators in the rubric. By the end of the sixth assignment, students from both groups began to address the indicators in the argument and reasoning section of the rubric. Both groups wrote counterclaims that were clear to the reader, and were supported with historical evidence that considered an opposing point of view from their claim. Although I considered that both groups would find it more difficult to write a counterclaim than a claim, I underestimated the time that it would take for most students to be able to meet or exceed the standards set in the rubric. For students in the MEG, some of them did not master this skill until some point in the third quarter. For students in the EEG, they had mastered this skill by the end of the second quarter.

Claim and counterclaim were important factors in the process. When reviewing the conclusions in their arguments, I particularly examined explanations of why the claim was more important than the counterclaim. Both groups encountered obstacles with this, which was expected as the scaffolding process called for increasing the complexity of one's historical argument. By the end of the third quarter, most EEG students could sufficiently explain why their claim was more important than their counterclaim, and the rest of them mastered this task by the end of the school year. While only about one-half to one-third of my students in the MEG were able to accomplish this by the end of the third quarter most were able to do so by the end of the school year. An example of such a student was student two from the MEG in Chapter Four of this study. He was representative of some of my lower performing students, who consistently struggled with the increased complexity of the scaffolding process. It is possible that he, and others in the group who could not perform this task, did not have the ability to complete it during

their middle school careers. According to Monte-Sano (2008), considering a different perspective might prove to be difficult for some secondary students. However, these students might be able to perform this task with enough guidance and structure after they enter their high school. I hypothesized that students in the MEG would have trouble meeting the indicator in the rubric on returning to their original claim in their arguments, but students in the EEG would accomplish this task by the end of the third quarter.

The final and possibly the hardest task involved both groups ability to contextualize on a given historical era. They needed to consider what was happening in a given historical era to understand how different groups of people reacted in a historical event (De La Paz, et al 2017). I hoped to observe my students could understand the viewpoint of others in a given historical era within the context of their historical argument, but I also realized the ability to contextualize historical eras was a rather complex task for middle school students. I chose to include contextualization in my writing because according to De La Paz (2005) and Moje (2008) it appeared to be a promising and sound approach to improving secondary students' writing and understanding of historical events. For the scaffolding process of my instructional model, contextualization was the most difficult task that I asked my students to complete during the writing process. The results from the MEG and EEG reflected the difficulty of the task. Virtually no one from the MEG could articulate why certain groups behaved or reacted in the manner that they did based upon a historical era. Those in the EEG encountered similar problems in contextualizing information. There were only a handful of students able to place a historical era into its proper context by the end of the school year, as Monte-Sano (2008) expected students to be able to contextualize historical



arguments sometime in their high school careers. A predictable outcome from her research proved that MEG students had a more literal understanding of historical evidence, which affected their development of this complex task. By the end of the school year, students in the MEG could read the historical evidence and accurately support it, but they could not fully comprehend what a marginalized group experienced in a given historical era. On the other hand, those in the EEG could better interpret historical evidence better than their counterparts. Some EEG students could begin to place historical evidence in the proper context and write about it accordingly, although most students still struggled with this task. History instruction directly implies that it is rather significant to teach students to approach history as interpreting events based on evidence (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008; Wissinger, 2012). The issues with the MEG understanding contextualization probably stemmed from interpreting historical events based on the historical evidence provided, as Wissinger implied. As a result, students in the EEG were making more appropriate use of the evidence, which revealed glimpses that they could put the information into the context of the historical era sooner than students from the MEG. I contemplated that contextualization would not be achievable for most students in this study. I reasoned that this was the most abstract and most difficult skill to complete in the writing process. Since contextualization was introduced to both groups during the final quarter of the school year, they did not have enough experience to gradually improve this skill. While I figured that many students might not be able to show evidence of contextualization in their work, I was encouraged by the efforts of the EEG that attempted to consider historical events from this perspective.

Perhaps the issue of contextualization was based in perspective taking. Students in both groups had difficulties removing themselves from considering historical events from the lens of the present. For example, the final writing assignment involved students in both groups looking at contextualization from a global perspective. They had to consider whether or not the United States was justified in starting the Spanish-American War. According to Sexias (2006), students had problems in avoiding presentism when offering their justification for their claim. Presentism is the tendency to interpret historical events from modern values and ideas. An example of presentism was how Student B wrote about the Spanish-American War: “The U.S. was justified in going to war with Spain. The United States seized upon the opportunity of the explosion of the *U.S.S. Maine* to start the Spanish American War.” Student B justified Sexias’ research on presentism, while conveniently choosing to ignore the historical evidence that the explosion of the *U.S.S. Maine* might have been an accident. While students were introduced to historical evidence that indicated the United States started the war for reasons other than the explosion of the *U.S.S. Maine*, students from both groups determined that the United States was justified in starting the Spanish-American War. A reason for this may have been that students could not avoid how presentism affected how students viewed the events of the Spanish-American War.

One final discovery from research question one is that students may have thought perspective-taking and contextualization were the same thing. While the two terms are related, they are definitely different when placing them within the context of a historical argument. I believe that my students could view the perspectives of marginalized groups, but struggled when trying to place those perspectives within the context of the historical

era in which they occurred. Students in both groups were asked to consider the perspectives from groups in the past, but typically considered the present day perspective of past historical events.

On the subject of equality and opportunity, I determined that students from both groups encountered difficulties in understanding what these topics meant. I referenced both the individual writing assignments of the MEG and EEG, as well as their portfolios, and noted that students simply threw in these terms as they wrote their historical arguments. Students from both groups admitted in their portfolios that they used the terms of equality and opportunity in an attempt to address the indicators in the rubric. Students from the MEG had a more literal understanding of these terms than those from the EEG. The students in the MEG felt that their understanding of equality and opportunity had evolved over time, but did not provide much evidence to support their claim. Students from the EEG were able to articulate in greater depth of their comprehension of these topics. The portfolios from EEG students showed an evolution of their understanding of these terms. However, they did not articulate how their understanding of equality and opportunity related to putting a historical event into its proper context. While students from the EEG demonstrated that they understood equality and opportunity on a deeper level, they did not disclose the relationship between marginalized groups in the historical era that was covered in a given writing assignment.

Overall, I determined that students could use an argumentative framework to write historical arguments on equality and opportunity. By the end of the school year, students from both groups could write a claim and counterclaim, and support them with accurate historical evidence. Most students in the MEG and all students in the EEG

could explain why their claim was more important than their counterclaim in the conclusion of their historical argument. Both groups had difficulty in comprehending the context of a given historical era. This might have been accomplished had there been more time to improve this skill. Ultimately, the findings of research question one proved that eighth grade students could use the elements of a historical argument to discuss equality and opportunity.

### **Summary of Findings on Research Question Two**

Research question two revealed the lack of ability of both groups to properly reflect on their own writing. As previously mentioned in Chapter Four, students in the MEG and EEG had issues with providing feedback to members of their respective groups that could result in improvement to the overall quality of their historical argument. As I read my students' reflections, it made sense that they struggled to reflect upon their own work. While they did offer examples of evidence of growth in their written responses in the portfolio as I had requested, students had difficulty providing a more detailed reflection in each section of their writing portfolios. As such, I often had to refer back to their original writing submissions to determine what each one meant in their portfolio. Once I went through this process, I realized that my students had offered very little personal reflection about what they learned in the writing process. This contradicted my initial assumptions on how students would provide feedback to each other. I postulated that students from both groups would provide feedback that allowed students to improve the quality of their historical arguments. Unfortunately, this was not proven to be correct. As a result, I had to remove the chat transcripts as a source of data for the study. I had to

rely upon student reflections from their portfolios submitted at the end of the school year to determine if the second goal of this study had been achieved.

The students in both groups stated in their portfolios that they understood how to write a historical argument by the end of the school year. They indicated that the writing process became more difficult as they progressed through the school year. I felt that this was evidence that my scaffolding process was successful. My students felt that they understood the elements of a historical argument and believed that the writing process overall allowed them to write more complex historical arguments as the school year progressed. This also helped to support Monte-Sano's (2008) rubric that I used to create my own historical argumentation rubric. I also felt that my students had shown enough evidence in their portfolios to indicate that both groups had indeed grasped the basics of writing a historical argument.

While my students indicated that their writing on historical argumentation had progressed over time, they still lagged in explaining how well they understood complex ideas. This was evident in the student reflections pertaining to referencing elements from the historical argumentation rubric. Students in the MEG would reference the rubric once or twice in their writing portfolio, while those in the EEG tended to reference it throughout their portfolio. When explaining their understanding of equality and opportunity, MEG and EEG students stumbled in defining how their definitions had changed over time. While those in the EEG provided some evidence of a better understanding of these two terms during the year, MEG students did not. For example, MEG students typically stated that their understanding of equality and opportunity had improved over time. However, that was the extent of their explanation. EEG students

voiced similar findings about improvement in the understanding of these terms, but some of them were able to provide examples of their understanding. I found that students in both groups struggled to explain themselves because of their lack of ability to reflect on what they had learned. I also think that my MEG students achieved greater understanding of equality and opportunity over time, but they were not able to articulate it in their writing portfolios. I had to refer back to their original written historical arguments to see the growth. I determined that students used their portfolios to provide meaningful reflections on their understanding of the process of writing a historical argument. However, students from both groups could have offered more examples of reflection on their understanding of equality and opportunity.

When students discussed how they used feedback during the writing process, it contradicted what I discovered as I analyzed the responses in the chat discussions. Students in the MEG largely concluded that the feedback that they received was adequate for revising their historical arguments. However, their discussion responses suggested otherwise. Most comments centered on complimentary expressions about their writing. Statements like “great job” were very common in both groups throughout the school year. When students received feedback on their historical arguments, it largely centered upon correcting grammar and spelling errors. Few MEG students adequately used the historical argumentation rubric to provide sufficient feedback to improve the quality of a historical argument. Students from the MEG suggested that I should have provided more feedback to them. This topic is something that I considered in the next section of this study. While I felt that I had spent a lot of time creating methods to for students to provide feedback to others, the students’ lack of understanding of how to reflect and comment on someone’s

work may have been a detriment to the feedback that was given during the group discussions. Students in the EEG expressed better feedback to students than those in the MEG, particularly as they went further into the school year.

### **Limitations of this Study**

A limitation of this study involved the ability of my students to write a claim for their historical argument. There were numerous instances throughout the year where they simply copied one of the options as their claim when writing their historical argument, and followed that sentence directly with historical evidence. As a result, there was a lack of student context as to why they had selected their claim. This was evident after reading numerous responses in both groups. As I continued to read these responses, I realized that I was relying solely upon the research to drive my data results. While my students independently learned to write a claim later in the study, I realized that I had assumed my students would offer some explanation of why they selected their claim before introducing historical evidence. Monte-Sano's rubric (2010) did not specifically address this in her indicators to writing a valid historical argument. However, I began to realize that all my students were lacking an explanation of why they selected the claim that they did when writing their historical arguments. All of them came to realize that such an explanation was implied when writing a historical argument. However, had I recognized this sooner when reading their historical arguments, I could have had them write stronger claims based on the indicators in the rubric earlier in the year.

Another limitation of my study involved the use of feedback that my students gave to one another during the discussion portion of the historical argumentation process. According to my instructional model, students had one week to complete a historical

argument once I assigned it to my social studies students, after which they participated in a synchronous online discussion of their work. All students had been assigned to a discussion group and had shared a copy of their work with other members of their group. After reading the work, discussion group members were to then use their historical argumentation rubric in providing peer feedback that would enable revision and resubmission of the historical arguments. However, the feedback was not reliable. After analyzing hundreds of comments from the MEG and EEG, I realized that most feedback fell mostly into complimentary posts. When students did receive constructive feedback from their discussion group members, it was often in the form of conventional corrections, such as fixing spelling or subject/verb agreements. As a result, students in both groups made little use of the historical argumentation rubric to provide quality feedback that was intended to help them improve the overall quality of their historical argument.

One issue that constantly appeared in the study was that both groups struggled to understand how marginalized groups dealt with particular issues in a given historical era. This limitation was probably from the fact that most of my students came from wealthy homes. Most of the students lived in the most affluent sections in a suburban metro area. The majority of my students were white, with at least one parent who had obtained a college degree. Many parents held advanced degrees. Therefore, students from both groups were unlikely to have encountered instances of struggling daily in their own lives. This factor might have been the reason for students in both groups failed to contextualize what marginalized groups faced throughout this study.



One aspect that coincided with the limitations regarding peer review in the online discussion was the way the instructional model was designed. A deficit in my instructional model was that it did not foster quality peer review and proper reflection. Since students had not participated in a peer review before, I could have provided a model for both groups to follow to provide constructive feedback to one another. I also could have offered a scaffolding model for both groups in the online discussions. For example, I could have had my students refrain from participating in the peer review for the first quarter, since they were getting accustomed to the writing process. In the second quarter, I could have had students provide feedback to their group members on their use of claim, using the indicators from the rubric as a guide to offer suggestions for improvement. By the third quarter, students from both groups could have offered feedback on the indicators from the rubric on argument and reasoning. By the fourth quarter, students from both groups could have addressed contextualization and returning to their claim in the conclusion of their historical argument. This model might have provided the MEG and EEG with stronger examples of providing feedback, which would have led a to stronger peer review in the synchronous online discussions.

Since I realized that my students failed to provide proper feedback to one another, it made sense that students in both groups also struggled to reflect upon their own writing. When I read through the writing portfolios of all participants, it was clear that they did not succeed in adequately expressing their growth in their own writing. While they did provide evidence of their growth in their writing portfolios, the necessary reflection and commentary was lacking. In order to achieve the proper reflection that I needed to see among all members of this study, I would have had to spend more time

providing the proper modeling and support it. I simply lacked the time. Had I provided a model for reflecting on student work in my social studies class, it would have taken away from my other teaching duties during the course of the school day and in result likely would have hindered my capacity to fully teach the social studies curriculum.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

The study has opened new avenues for research. One suggestion involves the modeling and use of proper feedback and peer review when writing historical arguments. This area of study is of particular interest to me since I had originally planned on using student feedback from the chat transcripts of the synchronous online discussions as part of my second research question. However, it quickly became evident that my students lacked the capacity to provide sufficient feedback. As a result, my students faltered when asked to reflect on their own writing in their portfolios. I believe that an improved model of peer review would help students provide better feedback to their discussion group members and give them an improved capacity to reflect upon their own writing.

However, I must remember that the need to continuously model what constitutes proper feedback to my students. Through my own personal experience as a middle school educator, I have discovered that middle school students require constant examples of feedback to provide them with the ability to attempt a high level metacognitive process.

One suggestion for the use of proper modeling and feedback for peer review would be students using recording video responses. For example, students could read a classmate's writing and video record their feedback. Since their comments would be captured on video, they might be more mindful about what they say. Flipgrid is an educational application that allows for students to record themselves on technological

devices that have a camera built into them, such as laptops or cellular phones. The school district in this study has invested resources into devices that support Flipgrid and is training faculty and staff to use it in the classroom. The use of Flipgrid as a tool to provide student feedback may prove to be valuable in improving a student's written historical argument. The use of video feedback could be further studied to determine if it could improve the quality of feedback in peer review.

Another avenue for future research involves looking at shifts in perspective-taking to better discuss equality and opportunity. For the purpose of this study, I viewed perspective-taking as more of a third-person approach. As a result, MEG and EEG students tended to remove themselves from what a group of people went through during a given historical era. For my middle school students to consider and understand how marginalized groups may have felt during a given historical era, I may need to provide them with greater context. In addition, I may have to include more primary and secondary sources for them to become more familiar with how others were treated in a given historical era. Examples of primary and secondary sources include the use of photos of affected groups of a given historical era, and political cartoons would suggest how members of a certain group were viewed or treated during the same time frame. The reasoning for the use of greater visual evidence stems from the fact that middle school students may require more to better process the concept of contextualization. Since all students struggled with contextualization, there may be an improvement with it when using more visual cues for better student comprehension.

A final suggestion that I may consider for further study involves students looking at perspective-taking from a first-person point of view. For instance, I could have

students write narratives of what it was like to be affected by something during a given historical era. First-person narratives may also help students more clearly grasp the concepts of equality and opportunity during a school year. While a study of this nature may eliminate portions of the historical argument writing process, it might provide ways for students to better contextualize information in a given historical era. To accomplish this, I would have to provide direct modeling of what such a narrative would include. A study of this nature would certainly involve adjusting my instructional model to allow for personalized perspective-taking to better discuss equality and opportunity that might in turn allow my students to better understand the context of a given time period. This concludes my dissertation study on historical argumentation with eighth grade students in a United States history classroom.

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APPENDIX A – HISTORICAL ARGUMENTATION RUBRIC

Elements	4 – Exceeds Standard	3 – Meets Standard	2 – Below Standard	1 – Unsatisfactory	0 – No Evidence
<b><u>Claim</u></b>	<p>The student has a claim that is clear to the reader.</p> <p>The claim is evident in the opening sentence and conclusion.</p> <p>The claim is fully supported throughout the response.</p> <p>The claim is backed up with historically accurate evidence.</p> <p>There is evidence of a return to the original claim after making a counterclaim.</p>	<p>The student claim is clear to the reader.</p> <p>The claim may have one or two errors when it is not fully supported throughout the response.</p> <p>The claim is backed up with historically accurate evidence, but may have only used one source.</p> <p>There is either vague mention or no evidence of a return to the original claim after making a counterclaim.</p>	<p>The student claim is vague or confusing to the reader.</p> <p>The claim may not be evident in either the opening sentence or conclusion.</p> <p>The claim has little or no evidence to fully support it, or uses historically inaccurate evidence.</p>	<p>The student claim is unclear to the reader.</p> <p>The claim is not backed up with historical evidence.</p>	<p>The student did not attempt to make a claim in their historical argument.</p> <p>The student did not complete the assignment.</p>

<b>Elements</b>	<b>4 – Exceeds Standard</b>	<b>3 – Meets Standard</b>	<b>2 – Below Standard</b>	<b>1 - Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>0 – No Evidence</b>
<b><u>Argument and Reasoning</u></b>	<p>The student response demonstrates strong argument and reasoning when making their response.</p> <p>The student considers alternative viewpoints (a counterclaim) on historical evidence that is presented in their material.</p> <p>The counterclaim is clear and easy to understand.</p> <p>The counterclaim is backed with accurate historical evidence.</p>	<p>The student shows evidence of a reasonable argument to support the counterclaim throughout the response.</p> <p>This includes backing up the argument with historical evidence, but lacks a detailed description of the content provided. The historical evidence may not be accurate. The student attempted to make a counterclaim on the evidence presented, but it was vague to the reader overall.</p>	<p>The student response has not clarified their argument throughout their response.</p> <p>The counterclaim may have been attempted, but it was not fully supported throughout.</p> <p>Inaccurate historical evidence to support the counterclaim is present in the response.</p>	<p>The student response lacks any attempt at a counterclaim in their response.</p> <p>No historical evidence is present to support the counterclaim in the response.</p>	<p>The student did not attempt a counterclaim in the response.</p>

<b>Elements</b>	<b>4 – Exceeds Standard</b>	<b>3 – Meets Standard</b>	<b>2 – Below Standard</b>	<b>1 - Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>0 – No Evidence</b>
<b><u>Historical Evidence</u></b>	The student uses multiple, accurate pieces of historical evidence to back up the claim and counterclaim throughout the response. All citations are correct throughout the response.	<p>The student uses multiple, accurate historical evidence to back up the claim throughout the response.</p> <p>There may be one or two minor errors, including an error in citing the evidence correctly.</p> <p>There may be inaccurate historical evidence to support a counterclaim.</p>	<p>The student uses evidence that does not accurately back up the claim being made in their response.</p> <p>There are errors in the usage of the evidence, including citing the historical evidence correctly.</p> <p>The student only cites one piece of historical evidence in their response.</p>	<p>The student uses evidence that is not accurate relative to the claim being made.</p> <p>The historical evidence is not sourced correctly.</p> <p>Vague mention of historical evidence was used in the response.</p>	<p>There is no evidence of historical evidence used to support the claim.</p> <p>No citations were used in the student response.</p>



Elements	4 – Exceeds Standard	3 – Meets Standard	2 – Below Standard	1 - Unsatisfactory	0 – No Evidence
<b><u>Equality and Opportunity</u></b>	<p>The democratic principles of equality and opportunity are clearly evident throughout the response.</p> <p>The democratic principles of equality and opportunity are mentioned in both the opening sentence and conclusion that the reader can clearly understand.</p> <p>The democratic principles of equality and opportunity are referenced by accurate historical evidence.</p>	<p>The democratic principles of equality and opportunity are evident in the student response, but do not become clear until the entire passage has been read.</p> <p>There may be a lack of mention of the ideals of equality and opportunity in either the opening sentence or conclusion.</p> <p>The democratic principles of equality and opportunity may not be referenced by accurate historical evidence.</p>	<p>The democratic principles of equality and opportunity are vaguely mentioned in the student response.</p> <p>The democratic principles of equality and opportunity are not backed with accurate historical evidence that makes it confusing for the reader to understand.</p>	<p>The democratic principles of equality and opportunity are barely mentioned in the student response.</p> <p>There is no historical evidence to support student understanding of equality and opportunity.</p>	<p>There is no evidence of the democratic principles of equality and opportunity in the student response.</p>

## APPENDIX B: STUDENT A'S HISTORICAL ARGUMENTS

### Appendix B – Student A's Writing Assignments Used in this Study

I have added the writing prompts prior to each written response, so that it would be easier for those reading this study to better understand what Student A wrote over the course of the school year.

#### **Writing Assignment One**

*Were there times in American history when groups of people had their equality and opportunity violated?*

Option 1: African-Americans had their equality and opportunity violated.

Option 2: Native Americans had their equality and opportunity violated.

Option 3: Japanese-Americans had their equality and opportunity violated.

So far, you've studied Jefferson's ideals of opportunity, democracy, rights, liberty, and equality. Your job is to look at several websites regarding how Jefferson's ideals of equality and opportunity were violated at different points in American history. You will study the evidence on several websites regarding which ones of Jefferson's ideals were violated. Please follow the rubric given to you. For your claim, please choose one of the three options.

#### **Student A's Response**

“The Japanese-Americans had their equality and opportunity violated. As Japanese-Americans became United States citizens, they were suddenly thrown in prison. Over 127,000 Japanese-American citizens were imprisoned during World War II, after “President Roosevelt signed an executive order in February 1942 ordering the relocation

of all Americans of Japanese ancestry to concentration camps” (Japanese-American 1). Most of the people in the concentration camps were NIESEI, or Japanese-Americans born in the United States. There were evacuation orders and Japanese-Americans were forced out of their towns. As a result, “Many families sold their homes, their stores, and most of their assets” (Japanese-American 1)... The Japanese-Americans had no opportunity to prosper in their lives, and no equality, because when they were let out of prison their hometowns didn’t want them back. Overall, Japanese-Americans did not have equality and opportunity compared to anyone else”.

### **Writing Assignment Three**

*Did the Indian Removal Act violate the equality and opportunity of Native Americans, or did the spirit of manifest destiny improve the equality and opportunity of those wishing to settle out west?*

Option 1: The Native Americans had their equality and opportunity violated.

Option 2: The spirit of manifest destiny improved the settler’s equality and opportunity.

For this assignment, points will be deducted if you do not follow the rubric on claim. You must back up your claim with accurate historical evidence.

### **Student A’s Response**

“The Native Americans had their equality and opportunity violated. On December 30, 1830 the Indians were officially moved off their land to make way for white settlers. A treaty was structured to have the Indians move off mid-western land if the settlers agreed to pay for the new land even further west. Most of the Native Americans disagreed with this treaty like the Cherokee tribe, who refused to move off their property. Many people like ‘Mr. M,’ who was a friend to the Indians, ultimately turned against

them. A Cherokee states after reading ‘Mr. M’s’ speech, “It contains nothing but exaggerated and unwarrantable assertions. I say unwarranted for of all those who have thought fit to describe our miserable situation, Mr. M. has had the best advantage of knowing our true condition. He has been a neighbor to us, and was, if I mistake not, for a time, a resident merchant in the Nation. But how does he repay us for his stay among us?” (Cherokee Nation, Tennessee House of Representatives Speech). ‘Mr. M’s,’ speech reduced the chances of the Cherokee keeping their land and the opportunity it contained. As a result, “Army began enforcement of the Removal Act. The Cherokee were rounded up in the summer of 1838 and loaded onto boats that traveled the Tennessee, Ohio, Mississippi and Arkansas Rivers into Indian Territory. Many were held in prison camps awaiting their fate” (Cherokee Nation, A Brief History of the Trail of Tears)”.

#### **Fourth Writing Assignment**

Starting with the fourth written historical argument, I began to require students to develop a counterclaim with their historical arguments. Here is the prompt for the fourth writing assignment:

*How did abolitionists and women’s rights supporters struggle to obtain equality and opportunity for their respective groups?*

Option 1: Abolitionists fighting against slavery had greater issues in achieving equality and opportunity for their group.

Option 2: People fighting for women’s rights had greater issues in achieving equality and opportunity for their group.

I will be grading claim, counterclaim, and historical evidence to support both. Please make sure that you do this.

**Student A's Response:**

“People fighting for women’s rights had greater issues in achieving equality and opportunity than abolitionists. Women always had to stay home and take care of their husbands, but when technology advanced they got to work in factories. This was a step up, but not what they wanted, so two abolitionists, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott announced the Seneca Falls Convention. The purpose of the Seneca Falls Convention was the launching point for the women’s suffrage movement. In July 1848, 200 women attended the Convention. It talked about growing women’s rights throughout the states. While the Convention was successful it still had many issues like, “The ninth resolution, which declared ‘it is the duty of the women of this country to secure themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise,’ was one to meet the opposition” (Reformers and Crusaders, Seneca Falls Convention, July 1848). This caused tension between many of the women’s peers. A debate began talking about the importance of female enfranchisement, a law that white women 21 or older could vote. Many women were very scared after this debate because of public ridicule. As a result, “Seneca Falls Convention was subjected to public ridicule, and some backers of women’s rights withdrew their support” (History, Seneca Falls Convention Begins). This violated the equality and opportunity of women’s rights because many women withdrew their support after seeing what happened in court, so the women’s idea couldn’t be stretched to certain supporting states.

Many people can believe that abolitionists fighting against slavery had greater issues in achieving equality and opportunity than women’s rights. At first abolitionists were harassed by many people but their voices grew louder toward the Civil War. “But as

antislavery sentiment began to appear in politics, abolitionists also began disagreeing among themselves. By 1840 Garrison and his followers were convinced that since slavery's influence had corrupted all of society, a revolutionary change in America's spiritual values was required to achieve emancipation" (History, Abolitionists Movement). The abolitionists disagreeing with themselves and the north passing a law that marshals could come back from the South and capture runaway slaves affected their equality and opportunity. Abolitionists were furious over this issue because before the law, slaves could walk right over the border to the North and become free, now walking over the border means nothing".

### **Sixth Writing Assignment**

*Which historical event made the Civil War unavoidable?*

Option 1: The Missouri Compromise made the Civil War unavoidable because of the treatment of African-Americans regarding their equality and opportunity.

Option 2: The Compromise of 1850 made the Civil War unavoidable because of the treatment of African-Americans regarding their equality and opportunity.

Option 3: Bleeding Kansas made the Civil War unavoidable because of the treatment of African-Americans regarding their equality and opportunity.

Option 4: The Dred Scott Decision made the Civil War unavoidable because of the treatment of African Americans regarding their equality and opportunity.

For your claim, please choose one of the options. For your counterclaim, please choose one of the remaining three options. You should not attempt to answer all 4 options. Please make sure to use your rubric when writing your response. For this assignment, I'll be grading for: claim, historical evidence in claim, accuracy of evidence

in claim (does your evidence really support your claim)? I'm also grading counterclaim, historical evidence in your counterclaim, accuracy of evidence in your counterclaim (does your evidence really support your counterclaim)?

**Student A's Response:**

Bleeding Kansas made the Civil War unavoidable because of the treatment of African-Americans regarding their equality and opportunity. On December 1853, Augustus Dodge proposed a bill in the Senate. The bill talked about the organizing of the Nebraska and Western Kansas territory. Stephen Douglas took on the task and chaired the bill. He was a U.S. senator and strongly enforced popular sovereignty. He wanted popular sovereignty to decide if Nebraska and western parts of Kansas were pro slavery or non-slavery "Douglas proposed a bill for organizing Nebraska-Kansas which stated that the slavery question would be decided by popular sovereignty. He assumed that settlers there would never choose slavery, but did not anticipate the vehemence of the Northern response. This bill, if made into law, would repeal the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which said that slavery could not extend above the 36' 30" line. It would open the North to slavery. Northerners were outraged; Southerners were overjoyed" (PBS, Bleeding Kansas). Northerners were furious and Kansas became a battleground for both North and South. The North acted immediately and imported 1,200 New Englanders to Kansas, armed and ready to fight for freedom. Rumors spread throughout the South and they mustered an army. "A fourth convention met at Wyandotte in July 1859, and adopted a free state constitution. Kansas applied for admittance to the Union" (PBS, Bleeding Kansas). This afflicted the equality and opportunity of the African-Americans because pro-slavery forces in the Senate opposed Kansas's free slavery state status and stalled its

admission. Also, The Northerners didn't get a say in deciding if the Nebraska-Kansas act was slave or free which affected the African-Americans because the North was a free state.

Some people may think that The Compromise of 1850 made the Civil War unavoidable because of the treatment of African-Americans regarding their equality and opportunity but at a lesser extent. Henry Clay created a compromise to seek peace from the North and South, but every time his compromise was assessed it did not receive a majority. In July 1850 after President Zachary Taylor died in office, his vice president Millard Fillmore revived the Compromise and he made it a law. Although it was a fair compromise between California, New Mexico, and Texas, it resulted in the fugitive slave act, letting Southerners take the free slaves from the North. "Finally, and most controversially, a fugitive slave law was passed, requiring northerners to return runaway slaves to their owners under penalty of law" (The Independence Hall Association, The Compromise of 1850). This afflicted the equality and opportunity of African Americans because southerners could come into the north and retrieve runaway slaves. In conclusion Bleeding Kansas made the Civil War more unavoidable than The Compromise of 1850 since many people lost their lives in Kansas from all the abolitionist fighting. In essence, because of the violence from the North and South, in many ways, Bleeding Kansas was like a mini Civil War leading up to the big one. This affected the equality and opportunity of slaves because had no say if a state could become a slave state, instead they could only work for their masters and try to escape to the North using the Underground Railroad.

### **Seventh Writing Assignment**



Beginning with the seventh writing assignment, students are expected to address why their claim is more important than their counterclaim in their conclusion. The seventh writing assignment addressed the following prompt and instructions:

*Which piece of legislation that was passed during Reconstruction most benefitted African-Americans with their equality and opportunity during this time period?*

Option 1: The 13th amendment benefitted African-Americans the most during Reconstruction.

Option 2: The 14th amendment benefitted African-Americans the most during Reconstruction.

Option 3: The 15th amendment benefitted African-Americans the most during Reconstruction.

Option 4: The Civil Rights Act of 1866 benefitted African-Americans the most during Reconstruction.

Be sure to read all of the documents before selecting your options. Option #4 has some pretty interesting insight into President Johnson's veto there. Keep in mind that I will be grading all parts of your historical argument going forward. This includes explaining why your claim is more important than your counterclaim. Be sure to follow your rubric as you write.

**Student A's Response:**

The 13th Amendment benefitted African-Americans the most during Reconstruction. Slavery started in 1619 when twenty African Americans were brought to Virginia as indentured servants. Slave plantations began to grow and white men took slaves for themselves. The 13th Amendment was ratified in 1865, abolishing slavery.

“Up to the passing of the 13th Amendment slaves could only escape the bondage of slavery via systems such as the "Underground Railroad" or to spend many years working towards their goal of buying freedom from slavery. (Linda Alchin, 13th Amendment). Now slaves don't have to put their lives endangered and instead they are free. This was beneficial to African Americans equality and opportunity because this also abolished the earlier three-fifths compromise, which counted a slave as only three-fifths of a person. The government now saw slaves as a whole person for the first time.

Some people might say that the 15th amendment is more beneficial to African Americans equality and opportunity during Reconstruction than the 13th Amendment. The 15 Amendment gives African American men the right to vote. “The 15 Amendment to the Constitution granted African American men the right to vote by declaring that the "right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude"(The Library of Congress, 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution). This was beneficial to African Americans equality and opportunity because now they were able to voice their own opinions and choose those who governed them just like their white peers. However, the 15th Amendment gave voting rights to men only, not women. African American women's voting rights didn't follow until the 1920s.

In conclusion, the 13th Amendment benefited African-Americans more than the 15th amendment during Reconstruction because the 13th amendment was the building block for both the 14th and 15th amendments. The 15th amendment was not completely effective because it took the Voting Rights Act of 1965 before the majority of African Americans because registered to vote.

## **Ninth Writing Assignment**

*Which group of immigrants seemed to struggle the greatest to achieve equality and opportunity in America?*

Option 1: Chinese-Americans struggled the most to achieve equality and opportunity after immigrating to America.

Option 2: Irish-Americans struggled the most to achieve equality and opportunity after immigrating to America.

Option 3: Italian-Americans struggled the most to achieve equality and opportunity after immigrating to America

Be sure to include multiple sources in your response to back up your claim.

Remember that evidence whether directly quoted or paraphrased must be sourced. Please restate the question in your opening sentence. For the Smithsonian article, please click on the pictures at the top of the webpage. For the Italian-American and Irish-American discrimination articles, please click “next” in the lower right of the page to continue reading. Make sure to include accurate evidence to support your claim. Also, make sure you include why your claim is better than your counterclaim.

2 questions to ask before submitting:

1. Is my historical evidence accurate to my claim?
2. Did I state that my claim is superior to my counterclaim at the end of my argument?

### **Student A’s Response**

Chinese Americans struggled the most to achieve equality and opportunity after immigrating to America. In 1882, The Chinese Exclusion act was passed. It was one of the first laws that Chinese restricted immigration into the U.S. The excuse? The U.S.

government believed that the Chinese immigrants were racially inferior. “The Chinese Exclusion Act, signed into law on May 6, 1882, by President Chester A. Arthur, effectively halted Chinese immigration for ten years and prohibited Chinese from becoming US citizens” (Chinese Exclusion Act, Harvard College). This affected the equality and opportunity of the Chinese Americans because those who needed money to live were not allowed to work, travel, or make trades in the U.S. simply because of their race. However, when the California Gold Rush began, the Chinese Americans were forced to work on the west coast doing the brutal building of the Central Pacific Railroad a job that many whites did not want. “..the Chinese were drawn to the West Coast as a center of economic opportunity where, for example, they helped build the first transcontinental railroad by working on the Central Pacific from 1864 to 1869” (Chinese Exclusion Act, Harvard College). This affected the Chinese Americans equality and opportunity because they had to take the most excruciating jobs such as blowing up dynamite in areas where the risk of getting attacked by Indians was high, in contrast, other immigrants got to work on the Union Pacific in much safer jobs.

On the other hand, some people may think that Italian immigrants struggled more to achieve equality and opportunity than the Chinese immigrants. Italian immigrants had to confront a wave of strong prejudice and hostility. The Italians were also blamed for a near U.S. economic depression and other national problems. For instance, “Drawings and songs caricaturing the new immigrants as childlike, criminal, or subhuman became sadly commonplace. One 1891 cartoon claimed that ‘If immigration was properly restricted, you would never be troubled with anarchism, socialism, the Mafia and such kindred evils’” (Under Attack, Library of Congress). This highlights that many people were very

rude to the Italians, causing them to have decreasing equality and opportunity of jobs and homes. They were also blamed for many other things they didn't do. For example, "In New Orleans in 1891 the chief of police was found shot to death on a street, the mayor blamed the Italians. Although, they were found not guilty because of the lack of evidence, a mob of 10,000 Americans drove 11 of them out of their cells and lynched them" (Under Attack, Library of Congress).

In conclusion, the Chinese Americans struggled more to achieve equality and opportunity after immigrating to America than the Italian immigrants since the Chinese Americans were not allowed to come freely into the U.S. until 1965. However, the Italian immigrants were able to come to the United States in 1920. Italian immigrants were able to have and do more things without being heavily discriminated against; unlike the Chinese Americans who were forced to take the worst jobs, get paid low wages, and weren't allowed to come freely in the United States until 45 years later.

### **Tenth Writing Assignment**

*How did immigrants who went through Ellis Island or Angel Island experience the lack of Jefferson's ideals of equality and opportunity as they started their new life in America?*

You will need to read each three first person accounts of the immigrants who went through Ellis Island and Angel Island. That's six accounts total. On the Ellis Island website, you can select the audio file and listen to the speaker as you read the transcript if you wish. You will need to select an immigrant at either Ellis Island or Angel Island in your claim. Don't forget to refer back to your claim, and explain why your claim is more important than your counterclaim. For this assignment, I did not provide my students with explicit possibilities for a claim. I felt that my students had enough experience with

writing a claim and a counterclaim at this point that they would be able to create one for themselves.

### **Student A's Response**

Immigrants who went through Ellis Island experienced a greater lack of Jefferson's ideals of equality and opportunity as they started their new life in America than those going through Angel Island. Nelly Ratner Meyers lived in Austria until she was eleven. When the Germans invaded Austria, her family was forced out of Vienna and traveled on a ship for 10 days to the United States. When they arrived they were shipped to Ellis Island by ferry. There was one problem: her family had to stay on Ellis Island for 5 months because they were deaf. Meyers states, "They were afraid that we will depend on the United States financially because they didn't know anything about deafness" (Meyers, *To Be Somebody in America*). Meyers had a lack of equality and opportunity because of something she could not change about herself. She had to stay on Ellis Island for 5 month longer than rest of the immigrants who were able to go into America freely. The U.S. believed that Meyers could not work and that she and her family would take advantage of the U.S. wealth. This did not fit Jefferson's ideals of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Another survivor who had hardships at Ellis Island was Harry Lew. He knew he had to get back to America from China before he turned sixteen or he would not be allowed back in. Lew had to wait a couple months at Ellis Island for the bureaucracy. Many people including Lew at Ellis Island were not able to go outside, lacked activity, and ate excessively. The police officers made Lew answer hard questions to see if they could force him back to China. For example Lew states, "So you write it down on a piece of paper and remember that. So, when the immigration officer asks you

that kind of question, try to tell them exactly what it is. You pick the wrong date, hey, you get sent back to China, see. I mean, it sounds ridiculous” (Lew, To Be Somebody in America). This affected the equality and opportunity of Lew because he only had one shot to answer ridiculous questions and if he answered them wrong he was sent back to China.

The Ellis Island people didn't have access to what Jefferson wanted for the American dream: life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness. They were forced into Ellis Island like prisoners and had to answer questions that were unnecessary and possibly harmful just because of the country from where they came from. On the other hand, many people think that Angel Island experienced more of a lack of Jefferson ideals of equality and opportunity than those on Ellis Island. Angel Island was set up mostly for the Chinese. The U.S. hated the Chinese immigrants because they were willing to work for low wages. Helen Wong Hom was a Chinese immigrant who came to Angel Island. Hom states, “I got enough to eat because I don't remember being hungry. Mommy worried about us getting out. Sometimes she couldn't eat because she was so worried” (Helen Wong Hom, Angel Island). This affected the equality and opportunity of the Chinese because they were always worrying if they were going to be able to be let into America. Jefferson wanted everyone to be happy when they came to America and Hom and her mother never got the chance. Another immigrant at Angel Island was a man named Lester Tom Lee. Lester came from a family that was very poor. When Lee came to Angel Island he said that they treated him like he was a criminal. Lee states, “Sometimes I just wanted to go home because they treated us like criminals. We were only immigrants” (Lester Tom Lee, Angel Island). Lee said that he and his father got the date mixed up

about what time they deported from China, causing Lee to have to stay longer on the island. His father had to use his money and find a lawyer just to get his son out of something he shouldn't have had to deal with. Jefferson wanted the immigrants to have an opportunity of life in America but Lee wasn't able to start his life in America, until Angel Island let him go.

In conclusion, more Ellis Island immigrants experienced the lack of Jefferson ideals of equality and opportunity as they started their new life in America than Angel Island, immigrants because the rules at Ellis Island were much stricter than Angel Island. For example, Ellis Island immigrants were locked behind bars with nothing to do. Some attempted to commit suicide because they were overwhelmed with boredom. Ellis Island also kept people longer than they were supposed to: some people could be on the island for more than six months. For Angel Island, it only took a few weeks to get off of the island.

### **Thirteenth Writing Assignment**

*Did the Cubans have their rights violated at the time of the explosion of the U.S.S. Maine, or did the United States seize upon the opportunity of this event to start the Spanish American War?*

Read through the different textbook perspectives of how other countries perceive what happened with the U.S.S. Maine's explosion. From there, choose your claim, and follow the rubric to write your historical argument. Read through what happened with the explosion of the U.S.S. Maine. Determine why the U.S. was in Cuba. Be sure to read the newspaper article on the Maine, as it is a primary source of the event.

Claim 1: The U.S. was justified in going to war with Spain.



Claim 2: The U.S. violated Cuban rights by going to war with Spain.

Claim 3: The U.S. was not justified in going to war with Spain.

Claim 4: The Philippines version proves that Cuban rights were violated.

### **Student A's Response**

The U.S. was not justified in going to war with Spain. When the American battleship Maine exploded in Cuba's Havana Harbor, chaos broke out between the U.S. and Spain. The U.S. believed it was Spain who caused this explosion since Maine had been sent to Cuba to protect the interests of Americans following a rebellion against Spanish rule in Havana. The explosion killed 260 out of 400 American crew members. Although, we did not know why the ship blew up. "Subsequent diplomatic failures to resolve the Maine matter, coupled with United States indignation over Spain's brutal suppression of the Cuban rebellion and continued losses to American investment, led to the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in April 1898" (History, The Maine Explodes). The Spanish-American War began in April 1898. The war was very winnable for the Americans. Within three months the U.S. had defeated Spanish forces and an August armistice stopped the fighting. On December 12, 1898 the U.S. and Spain signed the Treaty of Paris, officially ending the Spanish-American War. The treaty also granted the U.S. Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines. After the war ended, investigators found out that Spain did not place the Maine mine, and was not responsible for the explosion. This violates Spain's equality and opportunity because the U.S. received Spain's land in the treaty. "In 1976, a team of American naval investigators concluded that the Maine explosion was likely caused by a fire that ignited its ammunition stocks, not by a Spanish mine or act of sabotage" (History, The Main Explodes). This violates

Spain's equality and opportunity because the American's blamed them for something they never did. Just because Spain was having troubles with Cuba shouldn't mean that Americans should blame them.

Some people may think that The U.S. was justified in going to war with Spain. The USS Maine was sent to Cuba on a "courtesy" visit. The Spanish were forced to accept this hidden threat, but in return sent the ship Vizcaya over to New York City. The Spanish also insulted President McKinley. For instance, "The Spanish Minister in Washington wrote a letter which, intercepted by the Cubans and published by Hearst's Journal on February 9, 1898, incited a furor in American public opinion. The Spanish Minister, Enrique Dupuy de Lôme, not only described President McKinley disparagingly, but also questioned the validity of the plan for autonomy" (Jaime de Ojeda, *The Spanish-American War of 1898: a Spanish View*). This evidence shows how Americans were justified in going to war with Spain. Spain's prime minister was being horribly cruel with President McKinley. This affects the U.S. equality and opportunity because their leader was being called rude names when he sent his ship over to Cuba.

In conclusion, the U.S. was not justified in going to war with Spain because when Spain asked naval investigators to investigate more fully to see if it was actually a Spanish mine but, the U.S. refused. The U.S. blamed Spain for something they had nothing to do with and they also earned additional lands from Spain in the Treaty of Paris.

## APPENDIX C: STUDENT ONE'S HISTORICAL ARGUMENTS

### **Writing Assignment One:**

African-Americans had their equality and opportunity violated. For example, a young African-American motorcyclist, named Marquette Frye, was pulled over and arrested in 1965, for suspicion of intoxication while driving (Civil Rights Digital Library). During the arrest a crowd of onlookers gathered around the arrest outraged because Frye had done nothing wrong. This led to outbursts of violence throughout the city of South Central Los Angeles. The riot lasted several days and consisted of people burning cars, and damaging several stores. Thirty-four people were killed and over four thousand arrests were made. Multiple people sent complaints of unfair treatment due to their skin color to the government officials and no changes were made. African-Americans do not get the amount of equality they are promised. They do not have equal opportunity to do everyday things, without some suspicion from police. Though African-Americans are treated unfairly, people believe Native Americans are treated worse. Some evidence to support those beliefs include the Trail of Tears, which was when the government forced Cherokee Indians out of their land to move west. Over four thousand Indians died on this horrific march. Our nation does not give people of color the rights that they deserve.

### **Writing Assignment Three:**

The Native Americans had their equality and opportunity violated when they were forced out of their own homes by Andrew Jackson in the Indian Removal Act of 1830. Jackson was the president at the time of devastation for the Cherokee Indians, when a peace treaty and the supreme courts orders were disobeyed and Jackson's army moved

the Indians to Oklahoma. An example of the hard times several Indian tribes had to face can be found in the article “A Brief History of the Trail of Tears” which states “An estimated 4,000 died from hunger, exposure and disease. The journey became a cultural memory as the ‘trail where they cried’ for the Cherokees and other removed tribes”. The journey the Cherokee Indians traveled to Oklahoma is now known as the Trail of Tears. One of the main reasons that the American government and people wanted to move the Indians was because gold was found in north Georgia where the Cherokee Indians were living. According to the same article as before, after this discovery “The U.S. government ultimately decided it was time for the Cherokees to be "removed"; leaving behind their farms, their land and their homes”. These motives completely violate the Native Americans equality and opportunity by taking them away from their homes and life styles to let new American settlers search for gold. Several people believe that without the Indian Removal Act of 1830, our nation would not have improved the settler’s equality and opportunity. For example, the original Indian Removal Act states, “What good man would prefer a country covered with forests and ranged by a few thousand savages to our extensive Republic, studded with cities, towns, and prosperous farms, embellished with all the improvements which art can devise or industry execute, occupied by more than 12,000,000 happy people, and filled with all the blessings of liberty, civilization, and religion?”. This was saying that the Indian’s lives were not as important as improving the nation. The Indians equality and opportunity were very violated because they were treated as less valuable than the new settlers.

#### **Writing Assignment Four**

People fighting for women's rights had greater issues in achieving equality and opportunity for their group. Back in the 1800's women did not have simple rights, such as voting, owning property, or getting an education. In July of 1848, a group of abolitionists and women met in Seneca Falls to discuss the social, civil, and religious conditions and rights of women. This became known as the Seneca Falls convention. According to the article, *Seneca Falls Convention Begins*, "For proclaiming a women's right to vote, the Seneca Falls Convention was subjected to public ridicule, and some backers of women's rights withdrew their support. However, the resolution marked the beginning of the women's suffrage movement in America" (History.com). Several women fought to give themselves the inalienable rights they deserve. But because they were female, they did not get treated equally and they were not offered the same opportunities as men. Some argue that abolitionists fighting against slavery had greater issues in achieving equality and opportunity for their group. As the abolitionists voices grew louder, their safety became at risk. For example, according to the article *Abolitionist's Movement*, "These developments, and especially the 1837 murder of abolitionist editor Elijah Lovejoy, led many northerners, fearful for their own civil liberties, to vote for antislavery politicians and brought important converts such as Wendell Phillips, Gerrit Smith, and Edmund Quincy to the cause" (James Brewer Stewart). Several abolitionist were physically harmed, but they still had the equality and opportunities that women did not. Women had to meet in secrecy, risking themselves to fight for equality and opportunity that should have already been theirs.

### **Writing Assignment Six**

The Missouri Compromise made the Civil War unavoidable because of the treatment of African-Americans regarding their equality and opportunity. In 1820 the Missouri Compromise was confirmed. According to the article Missouri Compromise “a compromise bill was worked out with the following provisions: (1) Missouri was admitted as a slave state and Maine (formerly part of Massachusetts) as free, and (2) except for Missouri, slavery was to be excluded from the Louisiana Purchase lands north of latitude 36°30’” (History.com Staff). This compromise divided the country into two parts, the north being anti-slavery and the south being pro-slavery. The split worked for over thirty years, though it created high tensions. But the north wanted slavery illegal everywhere to help improve African-American’s equality and opportunity, not just above the compromise line, eventually leading to the Civil War.

Other people think that the Compromise of 1850 led to Civil War, because it granted the south the Fugitive Slave Act, which is where the southerners could travel north and recapture freed slaves. This violated African-American’s equality and opportunity because now they could become slaves, regardless if they were already free and it infuriated northerners. According to the article The Compromise of 1850 “The flagrant violation of the Fugitive Slave Law set the scene for the tempest that emerged later in the decade” (USHistory.org). The Compromise of 1850 was closer to the time the Civil War started, but the Missouri Compromise was primarily what created such a distinct separation within the country. Thus the Missouri Compromise made the Civil War unavoidable due to the northerners constantly fighting to improve the equality and opportunity of African-Americans.

Writing Assignment Seven

The 13th amendment benefited African-Americans the most during Reconstruction. Reconstruction was the period of time right after the Civil War where the country was repairing from all the destruction. For the south to rejoin the Union they had to rewrite their constitution, swear an oath to the United States, and agree to the 13th amendment. The 13th amendment abolished slavery throughout all the country. According to Linda Alchin, who wrote an article on the 13th amendment, this meant “Slavery, or forced labor, may not exist in the United States or any place that belongs to the USA” (Alchin). Africans-Americans were no longer legally allowed to be kept as slaves. This hugely improved their equality and opportunity because they were no longer forced into labor and they now had their freedom.

Some people may argue that 15th amendment benefited African-Americans the most during reconstruction because it gave them the right to vote. This argument is invalid because an African-American having their freedom is more important than being able to vote. Voting is a privilege that comes with having freedom. According to Linda Alchin, “By 1790 the US Census revealed that there are nearly 700,000 slaves in a nation of 3.9 million people. . . . Up to the passing of the 13th Amendment slaves could only escape the bondage of slavery via systems such as the "Underground Railroad" or to spend many years working towards their goal of Buying Freedom from Slavery” (Alchin). When the 13th amendment was passed, it gave freedom to nearly 700,000 African-Americans who deserved equal treatment and opportunity, which proves that the 13th amendment was the most beneficial during reconstruction.

### **Writing Assignment Nine**

Chinese-Americans struggled the most to achieve equality and opportunity after immigrating to America. After the California Gold Rush brought several Chinese immigrants to America in 1849, they helped the economy immensely by helping build the transcontinental railroad. The need for Chinese immigrants to work made American citizens fear as though the Chinese could take their jobs. This fear resulted in the Chinese Exclusion Act. According to Harvard University, “The Chinese Exclusion Act, signed into law on May 6, 1882, by President Chester A. Arthur, effectively halted Chinese immigration for ten years and prohibited Chinese from becoming US citizens. Through the Geary Act of 1892, the law was extended for another ten years before becoming permanent in 1902”. This Act restricted Chinese-Americans from being able to gain basic equality and opportunities in America. As a result, they could not get real jobs, and were defaulted to the hard-working jobs with small pay.

However, some people believe that the Italian Immigrants struggled the most to achieve equality and opportunity after immigrating to America. Some evidence a critic might use to support that inaccurate claim is from the Library of Congress, which states, “Drawings and songs caricaturing the new immigrants as childlike, criminal, or subhuman became sadly commonplace”. This except shows how the Italian-Americans were portrayed to the world, but the Chinese had laws restricting them from their rights, not just labels.

In conclusion, the Chinese-Americans struggled the most to achieve equality and opportunity after immigrating to America because their only chances of income were hard working, back breaking jobs with little pay.

### **Writing Assignment Ten**



Immigrants who went through Ellis Island experienced the lack of Jefferson's ideals of equality and opportunity as they started their new life in America more than immigrants at Angel Island. Millions of immigrants traveled to America and ended up at Ellis Island. All the immigrants who arrived there were inspected, questioned, and some were even detained or deported. One of the immigrant's that was detained was named Vera Clark Ifill. She traveled to America in hopes of leaving her native country, Barbados behind her, and meeting with the rest of her family who lived in America. She described Barbados as "... densely populated, and it has one of the highest rates of literacy in the world, so there is no place to go but out, once you have reached maturity" (Ifill). This shows she was genuinely trying to enter America for the right reasons. After arriving at Ellis Island, she was wrongfully a victim of racism and she was very confused by a lot of the questions she was asked. For example, in her documented questioning she described arriving to the island and seeing "Bewildered, black and white, people who weren't speaking English, couldn't understand each other, but all afraid of each other. And, um, it was just, to me it was just horrible" (Ifill). This shows how it was very difficult to process, and many of the people who were confused were taken advantage of or deported. While at Ellis Island Ifill got frostbite from the terribly cold winters and poor conditions, her father was murdered, and her family became homeless. She was not given the equality and opportunity that Jefferson's ideals promise.

Some critics argue that immigrants who went through Angel Island experienced a larger lack of equality and opportunity than immigrants at Ellis Island. A man named Laster Tom Lee described one of his experiences at Angel Island stating, "We used rice to attract the birds to us. We cleaned the birds in a toilet. Another boy had gotten some

matches, somehow. Someone else had a knife. We gathered branches and we got newspaper and rolled it like wood to make a fire. We barbecued birds that way, when the guards weren't around. It was the only tasty thing we could get" (Lee). The excerpt describes when Lee was at the island him and a few other naturally hungry teenagers would cook birds to get the extra food. Though this seems harsh, several other immigrants who went through Angel Island describe the island having a playground and never being hungry. At Ellis Island the conditions were not as pleasant because like Vera, many immigrants got diseases or frostbite.

In conclusion, there was a much bigger lack of equality and opportunity for immigrants who went through Ellis Island than at Angel Island, due to their treatment, conditions, and experiences during the process.

### **Writing Assignment Thirteen**

The U.S. was not justified in going to war with Spain. The Spanish-American War started after the U.S declared war with Spain in April of 1898 due to an explosion of the U.S battleship Maine, at the Havana harbor, which killed 260 American crew members aboard. There was no actual proof that Spain was responsible for this explosion. According to "The Maine Explodes", "An official U.S. Naval Court of Inquiry ruled in March that the ship was blown up by a mine, without directly placing the blame on Spain. Much of Congress and a majority of the American public expressed little doubt that Spain was responsible and called for a declaration of war" (History.com). This excerpt proves that the American people assumed Spain was responsible without actual proof. A lot of people believe the U.S. government conducted the explosion and blamed it on Spain to have a reason to go to war knowing they would win. The benefits the U.S. would gain

from winning war against Spain were having power in Europe. According to What is History? An Exercise in Deciding upon the Facts, “Besides meeting its old ambitions over Cuba and Puerto Rico, the Philippines and other militarily and economically important possessions could fall into U.S. hands as a result of war with the European country” (Lindaman). Spain’s equality and opportunity was violated in the reasoning of this war.

Some people that the U.S. was justified in going to war with Spain because at the time, Spain and Cuba were in a war. The bombing of the U.S. battleship took place in a Cuban Harbor. According to History.com, “Ostensibly on a friendly visit, the Maine had been sent to Cuba to protect the interests of Americans there after a rebellion against Spanish rule broke out in Havana in January”. This may lead people to believe that since Americans were in Cuban territory, the Spanish bombed the battleship to drive the U.S. out of Cuba, which would justify the U.S. starting war. But, that is not what happened at all. In fact, “Actually Spain was doing everything possible to prevent a war with the United States and was careful not to commit any act of provocation. Hence, the Spaniards were not responsible for the blast” (Lindaman). This proves that the U.S. was not justified in going to war with Spain.

## APPENDIX D: STUDENT TWO'S HISTORICAL ARGUMENTS

### **Writing Assignment One**

Native American's Equality and Opportunity On May 28, 1830 the Native American's had their equality and opportunity violated, when President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act. This gave the U.S. all of the unsettled land west of the Mississippi River. According to the Library of Congress Web Site many of the tribes caused riots and disobeyed the new act although, some of the tribes went peacefully and caused no trouble. In the fall and winter of 1838 and 1839 the Cherokees started moving west and about 4,000 Cherokees died on what is now known as the "Trail of Tears." On April 24, 1830 the Senate voted to agree with the act. Then, on May 26, 1830 the House of Representatives voted to follow through with the act. African American's also had their equality and opportunity violated. They were treated unfairly because of segregation. Some white people thought that African American's weren't humans therefore they shouldn't be treated like they are. According to the Civil Rights Digital Library on August 11, 1965 when Marquette Frye, a young African American motorist, was pulled over and arrested by Lee W. Minikus, a white California Highway Patrolman, for suspicion of driving while intoxicated." This lead to a riot for days because Frye was treated unfairly because he was an African American. In conclusion, there have been many races treated unfairly in the U.S. and still are today.

### **Writing Assignment Three**

Native Americans had their equality and opportunity violated by Andrew Jackson in 1830. That day he signed a document named the Indian Removal Act which forced the Native Americans from their home into Indian Territory, which is now known as present

day Oklahoma. He took advantage over the Native Americans by kicking them off their land and taking them from their homes because of the discovery of gold in northern Georgia even though he would not be alive if it wasn't for the Cherokees. "President Andrew Jackson's military command and almost certainly his life were saved thanks to the aid of 500 Cherokee allies at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend in 1814" (Cherokee Nation). This shows how selfish Andrew Jackson was and that he never cared about the Cherokees. That is where you cross the border of rights and opportunity. The Native Americans had to completely start over and they had the right to stay on their land, "The Reverend Samuel Worcester, missionary to the Cherokees, challenged Georgia's attempt to extinguish Indian title to land in the state, actually winning his case before the Supreme Court" (Cherokee Nation). This proves they had their rights and opportunity violated because even though they won the case they were kicked out. Also in the process of moving the Indians many of them died.

Some people might say that the spirit of manifest destiny improved the equality and opportunity to those wishing to settle out west. These people feel that the westward expansion of America is more important than an entire civilization of Indians. For example, "The tribes which occupied the countries now constituting the eastern states were annihilated or melted away to make room for the whites" (Document A: Andrew Jackson). This shows that Andrew Jackson didn't care about the Native Americans and that expanding the United States was more important. Jackson thought expanding America overpowered the equality and opportunity of the Native Americans.

In conclusion, the Native Americans had their equality and opportunity violated because they were forced to move from their homes and property. This was completely

unconstitutional and there should have been consequences. My claim was more important because the Native American's had their right to stay and the American's violates their rights because they thought it was their destiny to expand west. By moving the Native American's they made an entire human race move to Oklahoma and most died along the way. The Cherokee's were treated way more unfairly and it wasn't worth getting some gold.

#### **Writing Assignment Four**

Abolitionists fighting against slavery had greater issues in achieving equality and opportunity for their group. Abolitionists are people that wanted the immediate emancipation of all slaves. The thought of slavery sickened them and they wanted no racial discrimination or segregation. There were people who thought slavery was bad and wanted it to die out gradually, but those people weren't abolitionists. For example, "From the 1830s until 1870, the abolitionist movement attempted to achieve immediate emancipation of all slaves and the ending of racial segregation and discrimination" (Abolitionist Movement, History.com Staff). This shows that the abolitionists were extremely persistent about getting slavery to end because they tried for forty years! In 1831 a man in Boston started publishing a newspaper called the Liberator which supported free African Americans. In 1833 sixty delegates gathered in Philadelphia to start the Anti-Slavery Society. For example, "All these activities provoked widespread hostile responses from North and South, most notably violent mobs, the burning of mailbags containing abolitionist literature, and the passage in the U.S. House of Representatives of a "gag rule" that banned consideration of antislavery petitions" (Abolitionist Movement, History.com Staff). This is important because it shows that the

abolitionists would risk everything for what they believed in. Abolitionists really had a hard time fighting against the South to end slavery.

Some people may say people fighting for women's rights had greater issues in achieving equality and opportunity for their group. These people feel that it was harder for the women to get rights than the African American slaves that were being tortured and overworked. For example, "Thereafter, national woman's rights conventions were held annually, providing an important focus for the growing women's suffrage movement, and finally the 19th Amendment was adopted in 1920, granting American women the constitutionally protected right to vote" (Seneca Falls Convention begins, History.com Staff). This shows that all the women had to do was hold annual meetings to secure their rights. To get the rights for the African Americans they had not only meetings but the Civil War where many people died. The work for women's rights was still plenty hard but getting the rights for African Americans was a much harder task. In conclusion, the Abolitionists fighting against slavery had greater issues in achieving equality and opportunity for their group because they fought many battles and held many meetings in securing the freedom for the African Americans.

### **Writing Assignment Six**

Bleeding Kansas made the Civil War unavoidable because of the treatment of African-Americans regarding their equality and opportunity. The reason bleeding Kansas took place was because a man named Stephen A. Douglas worked as a politician to have the Kansas-Nebraska Act signed. This allowed the states to vote on whether they wanted to become a free state or a slave state. This made the Northerners extremely angry, but the Southerners were overjoyed that slavery could potentially spread to the North. The

bill was passed on May 30, 1854. Nebraska was far enough north that there was no doubt they would become a free state, although Kansas bordered Missouri (a slave state) and people were worried that it could be voted as a slave state. Because of this risk many anti-slavery people moved to Kansas so they could have a say in the vote. Finally, after the votes were counted they showed Kansas would become a free state! In a fight over beliefs the two sides began to fight with each other. For example, “On May 21, 1856, a group of pro slavery men entered Lawrence, where they burned the Free State Hotel, destroyed two printing presses, and ransacked homes and stores. In retaliation, the fiery abolitionist John Brown led a group of men on an attack at Pottawatomie Creek. The group, which included four of Brown's sons, dragged five pro slavery men from their homes and hacked them to death” (Bleeding Kansas pbs.org). This is important because, it shows that the issue over slavery became extremely violent and the further they argue the more unavoidable the Civil War became.

Some people believe that the Missouri Compromise had a greater impact on the start of the Civil War. The Missouri Compromise was made because Missouri wanted to come into the Union as a slave state but that would upset the balance so they had Maine come in as a free state so the balance would be equal. This was a fair Compromise therefore it didn't lead to hardly any violence or rebellion. “The Missouri Compromise was criticized by many southerners because it established the principle that Congress could make laws regarding slavery; northerners, on the other hand, condemned it for acquiescing in the expansion of slavery (though only south of the compromise line). Nevertheless, the act helped hold the Union together for more than thirty years”



(Missouri Compromise History.com Staff). This shows that there was some argument but not much.

In conclusion, Bleeding Kansas made the Civil War more unavoidable than the Missouri Compromise because of the bloody battles that took place and the amount of people that died. This is because in result of the Kansas-Nebraska Act there were many violent protests and battles that were fought. These battles would unavoidably cause a bigger threat to appear, the Civil War.

### **Writing Assignment Seven**

The 14th amendment benefited African-Americans the most during Reconstruction. The 14th amendment stated that every person born in the U.S. was a citizen which granted African-Americans equal rights as white Americans. The amendment gave equal protection to everyone. For example, "...equal protection rights of all US citizens including those that were part of a minority group" (14th Amendment). This is an example of one of the many ways that African-Americans began to be treated as equals toward white Americans. It shows how Another part of the amendment that equaled the rights between African-Americans and white Americans was that states couldn't make laws reducing equality between people. For example, "States may not make, or enforce, any laws which limit or reduce the privileges and rights of US citizens" (14th Amendment). This strengthens the equality between white and black Americans because they are looked upon as equals by law.

Other people may believe that the 15th amendment benefited African-Americans the most during Reconstruction. This amendment gave African-Americans the right to vote. Although it sounds good it didn't do anything in the period of Reconstruction. The

amendment was carried out later. For example, “Although ratified on February 3, 1870, the promise of the 15th Amendment would not be fully realized for almost a century” (15th Amendment). This proves that it was not recognized for a long time and it did not help during the period of Reconstruction. Therefore, it doesn't help the African-American's equality during Reconstruction so the 14th amendment helped their freedom and equality more. In conclusion, the 14th amendment benefited African-Americans most during the period of Reconstruction because it strengthened the rights of all African-American citizens by law.

### **Writing Assignment Nine**

Chinese-Americans struggled the most to achieve equality and opportunity after immigrating to America. In 1882 there was an act that restricted the rights of Chinese-Americans called the Chinese Exclusion Act. This was the first major law restricting Chinese immigrants to the United States. This law came into play because Chinese-Americans were taking the jobs of naturally born citizens. They felt that the Chinese-Americans were not as good because of their race which played a major role in degrading their equality and opportunity. For example, “It was enacted in response to economic fears, especially on the West Coast, where native-born Americans attributed unemployment and declining wages to Chinese workers whom they also viewed as racially inferior” (Chinese Exclusion Act). This is important because they were being extremely racist towards the Chinese-Americans which especially took more of their rights and equality away. This law eventually led to Chinese-Americans to being banned from becoming U.S. citizens and halted their immigration for a whopping 20 years! These laws could have separated multiple families and led to much inequality and

opportunity. It eventually returned back to full immigration but not for another 60 years! This law went on for 60 years which could potentially be a lifetime that most Chinese immigrants were not allowed to move to the United States.

Although some people believe that the Italian immigrants struggled the most to achieve equality and opportunity after immigrating to America. Many Italians were treated unfairly and were sometimes killed or their property was destroyed. Americans made fun of the Italians religion and burned down their churches. For instance, “Catholic churches and charities were vandalized and burned, and Italians attacked by mobs” (Under Attack). This is important because the Italian’s beliefs were practically burned to the ground. This diminished their equality and opportunity because Italians didn’t have any respect. They were not treated as unfair as the Chinese were though. The Chinese were barely even allowed in the country for 80 years! They were seen as racially inferior. They didn’t even have a chance like the Italians.

In conclusion, the Italians were treated unfairly but the Chinese-Americans were treated as if they were inferior and didn’t mean anything in the world. This took much more of their equality and opportunity than the Italians.

### **Writing Assignment Ten**

Immigrants that went through Ellis Island experienced the lack of Jefferson’s ideals of equality and opportunity as they started their new life in America. Travelers would have to wait days, weeks, or even months at the port for paperwork to be completed or for their train to arrive. This was because the dates of the sail and railroad times were not coordinated with each other. Therefore, families could be split up for large amounts of time. Although, some ports provided shelter. One of the worst things when

coming to America was when the immigrants were traveling here. The voyage conditions were so crowded, dark, foul smelling. These conditions could cause death. For example, “For most immigrants, especially early arrivals, the experience of steerage was like a nightmare (at one time, the average passenger mortality rate was 10 percent per voyage)” (Ellis Island National Monument). This is important because it shows the immigrants equality was in danger because they had to stay in such poor conditions that could potentially kill them. All while America is making \$45,000-\$60,000 a trip. With this money they could increase the opportunity of the immigrants because they would be lowering the death rates on the ships. Also, many immigrants had to endure these awful conditions for week or even months. The stations would also separate a family if a child was sick. If you were discovered to have some sort of illness they could deport you. This could ruin families forever. For instance, “Sick children age 12 or older were sent back to Europe alone and were released in the port from which they had come. Children younger than twelve had to be accompanied by a parent. There were many tearful scenes as families with a sick child decided who would go and who would stay” (Ellis Island National Monument). This is important because twelve year old children would have rough times going back to their home alone. The ban of kids restricted opportunity from the kids that were sick, seeing that they had no parents or money. The stations could have at least tried to cure the kids there because sending a sick person onto a boat filled with other people could spread the virus or disease and possibly kill the person based on how long the bad conditions were. For some immigrants the process had taken months or even years.

Some people may believe that the immigrants that went through Angel Island experienced the lack of Jefferson's ideals of equality and opportunity as they started their new life in America even more than the immigrants from Ellis Island. At Angel Island the workers interrogated many Chinese that wanted to immigrate to the U.S. The workers interrogated the Chinese because they were starting to take jobs since they would work hard for low pay. The officials would try and deport as many Chinese as possible by asking them questions that were difficult to answer. For example, "From 1910-1940, Chinese immigrants were detained and interrogated at Angel Island immigration station in San Francisco Bay. U.S. officials hoped to deport as many as possible by asking obscure questions about Chinese villages and family histories that immigrants would have trouble answering correctly" (Angel Island). This is important because the use of these interrogations restricted the rights of the Chinese.

Although, the equality and opportunity of the Chinese at Angel Island was terrible, the immigrants at Ellis Island were treated more unfairly. This is because the officials working at Ellis Island would separate entire families if one was sick. They would send kids older than 12 back to where they came from with no guidance and protection from others. These acts restricted the opportunity for little kids. Also, on the way to Ellis Island immigrants were treated with immense disrespect. They lived in unbearable living conditions for weeks or even months. Next, they would go through a terribly long process only to have a chance to get sent back where they were originally from.

### **Writing Assignment Thirteen**

The U.S. was not justified in going to war with Spain, having seized the opportunity of the explosion of the USS Maine to start the Spanish American War. "On February 15th 1898 only weeks after the autonomous regime was installed and just before the island's parliamentary elections were held, an event occurred that clearly announced the future; the explosion of the U.S. battleship Maine in Havana Harbor, with a toll of 266 crew members and two officers dead... The "Maine" was an obvious sign that the United States was willing to directly intervene in the Spanish-Cuban war" (Spanish American War Dana Lindaman & Kyle Ward). Said to be on a friendly visit, the USS Maine was in Havana when it suddenly exploded from an unknown cause. The US thought the explosion was caused by a mine from Spain, who ruled Cuba at the time. It would be later figured out that Spain was doing everything it could to avoid a war with the United States. This event led to the Spanish American war, although short lived. "Subsequent diplomatic failures to resolve the Maine matter, coupled with United States indignation over Spain's brutal suppression of the Cuban rebellion and continued losses to American investment, led to the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in April 1898" (The Maine Explodes History.com Staff). The United states used the USS Maine explosion, although killing American troops, as a way to seize upon the opportunity to start the Spanish American War. This was unfair to Spain because they didn't actually participate in any threatening actions toward the United States.

Opponents of this viewpoint may say that The U.S. was justified in going to war with Spain. This is false because the main cause of the war was the explosion of the USS Maine. This explosion was believed to be caused by Spain's intervention, which was not true. " According to a U.S. commission, the explosion had come from outside the ship;

but a Spanish commission found that the blast had occurred inside. Actually Spain was doing everything possible to prevent a war with the United States and was careful not to commit any act of provocation. Hence, the Spaniards were not responsible for the blast. On the contrary, the U.S. authorities were seeking a pretext to wage war against Spain" (Spanish American War Dana Lindaman & Kyle Ward). This proves that it was unnecessary to wage war against Spain for an accident that they didn't cause.

In conclusion, The U.S. was not justified in going to war with Spain, having seized the opportunity of the explosion of the USS Maine to start the Spanish American War. They were not justified because Spain did not cause the explosion of the USS Maine, which was the main reason for the US having waged war.

## APPENDIX E: STUDENT B'S HISTORICAL ARGUMENTS

I have also added the writing prompts prior to each written response, so that those reading this study could better understand what Student B wrote over the course of the school year.

### **Writing Assignment One**

*Were there times in American history when groups of people had their equality and opportunity violated?*

Option 1: African-Americans had their equality and opportunity violated.

Option 2: Native Americans had their equality and opportunity violated.

Option 3: Japanese-Americans had their equality and opportunity violated.

So far, you've studied Jefferson's ideals of opportunity, democracy, rights, liberty, and equality. Your job is to look at several websites regarding how Jefferson's ideals of equality and opportunity were violated at different points in American history. You will study the evidence on several websites regarding which ones of Jefferson's ideals were violated. Please follow the rubric given to you. For your claim, please choose one of the three options.

### **Student B's Response – Exceeded Expectations Group**

“African-Americans had their equality and opportunity violated. Contrary to Thomas Jefferson's statement in the Declaration of Independence that, “All men are created equal”, many examples throughout American History show that this statement has not



always been true for African-Americans. The Watts Riots, which occurred in an impoverished African-American community, was a prime illustration of this offense. The riots started when, according to the Civil Rights Digital Library, "...Marquette Frye, a young African American motorist, was pulled over and arrested by Lee W. Minikus, a white California Highway Patrolman, for suspicion of driving while intoxicated". The riots began because the bystanders felt that Frye was not being treated equally. The damage to the city was immense, "For several days, rioters overturned and burned automobiles and looted and damaged grocery stores, liquor stores, department stores, and pawnshops" (Digital Library of Georgia)... In the Watts situation, there was evidence of unfair treatment due to economic conditions and after the riots finally settled, the governor ordered an investigation and found a long history of complaints from people in the community about unfair treatment and lack of opportunity that had not been addressed. Even after the discovery of these issues, the government made no adjustments to their correct the situation. Overall, this is a clear example of African-Americans not being treated as equals and lacking opportunity".

### **Writing Assignment Three**

*Did the Indian Removal Act violate the equality and opportunity of Native Americans, or did the spirit of manifest destiny improve the equality and opportunity of those wishing to settle out west?*

Option 1: The Native Americans had their equality and opportunity violated.

Option 2: The spirit of manifest destiny improved the settler's equality and opportunity.

For this assignment, points will be deducted if you do not follow the rubric on claim. You must back up your claim with accurate historical evidence.

### **Student B's Response**

“The spirit of manifest destiny improved the settler’s equality and opportunity. Equality is defined by the Declaration of Independence, which states that, “All men are created equal”, although fails to bring up Native Americans. Equality and opportunity are related because certain types of people are not treated the same as others, that creates an environment where there is the potential for some races, genders, groups, tribes, or cultures to receive fewer opportunities. Manifest destiny was the broad concept of westward expansion and meanings of a new way of life. Because the new territory was unknown many people joined together all in the hope for the same thing; new opportunities. The new settlers ran into Native Americans who had already been living there and felt the need to remove them from what was now the settlers’ land. As explained by Andrew Jackson, “The waves of population and civilization are rolling to the westward, and we now propose to acquire the countries occupied by the red men of the South and West by a fair exchange, and, at the expense of the United States, to send them to a land where their existence may be prolonged and perhaps made perpetual” (Jackson, 1). This showed that new prosperous ideas and ways of life were forming in this new population of settlers, who wanted the same opportunities for their families and each other. For example, “...I consider my countrymen, not as mere animals, and to judge of their happiness by their condition as such, which to be sure is bad enough, but as moral beings, to be affected for better or for worse...” (Boudinot, 3). Thus improving their equality, because they felt equal and alike in their quest to capture the opportunity of all the cheap and fertile soil provided in the western territories”.

### **Fourth Writing Assignment**

Starting with the fourth written historical argument, I began to require students to develop a counterclaim with their historical arguments. Here is the prompt for the fourth writing assignment:

*How did abolitionists and women's rights supporters struggle to obtain equality and opportunity for their respective groups?*

Option 1: Abolitionists fighting against slavery had greater issues in achieving equality and opportunity for their group.

Option 2: People fighting for women's rights had greater issues in achieving equality and opportunity for their group.

I will be grading claim, counterclaim, and historical evidence to support both.

Please make sure that you do this.

### **Student B's Response**

“People fighting for women's rights had greater issues in achieving equality and opportunity for their group than abolitionists did. As mentioned in the Declaration of Independence, “All men are created equal” which as many have noticed, does not specifically include women, or their equality. This vague definition allowed for conditions where women were not treated like men. For example, women did not have the right to vote nor were expected to have an education or pursue a career.

Many women and abolitionists, who were people fighting to end slavery, gathered at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, which was described as, “A Convention to discuss the social, civil, and religious condition and rights of women...” ([History.com](#) Staff, 1). The large group of women supporters discussed these topics in which they felt unfairly treated. This limited their job opportunities since they weren't expected to pursue a

career. Men were invited to come on the second day of the convention and many considered the convention a success, “The convention also passed 12 resolutions—11 unanimously—which called for specific equal rights for women” ([History.com](https://www.history.com) Staff, 1). This convention was the start to a large and powerful women’s suffrage and rights movement and became annual.

Although some may disagree and claim that abolitionists fighting against slavery had greater issues in achieving equality and opportunity for their group, this assumption is false because their ideas were more widely known. More people also supported the abolitionists’ ideas, for example, “Abolitionist ideas became increasingly prominent in Northern churches and politics beginning in the 1830s, which contributed to the regional animosity between North and South leading up to the Civil War” (Stewart, 1). This supports the idea that abolitionists were more widely known and had a larger following because of it. The idea that women should be treated equally was not necessarily a common view. Women had a harder time gaining rights because fewer people saw them as "unequal", therefore making it an easier for abolitionists to achieve both opportunity and equality”.

### **Sixth Writing Assignment**

*Which historical event made the Civil War unavoidable?*

Option 1: The Missouri Compromise made the Civil War unavoidable because of the treatment of African-Americans regarding their equality and opportunity.

Option 2: The Compromise of 1850 made the Civil War unavoidable because of the treatment of African-Americans regarding their equality and opportunity.

Option 3: Bleeding Kansas made the Civil War unavoidable because of the treatment of

African-Americans regarding their equality and opportunity.

Option 4: The Dred Scott Decision made the Civil War unavoidable because of the treatment of African Americans regarding their equality and opportunity.

For your claim, please choose one of the options. For your counterclaim, please choose one of the remaining three options. You should not attempt to answer all 4 options. Please make sure to use your rubric when writing your response. For this assignment, I'll be grading for: claim, historical evidence in claim, accuracy of evidence in claim (does your evidence really support your claim)? I'm also grading counterclaim, historical evidence in your counterclaim, accuracy of evidence in your counterclaim (does your evidence really support your counterclaim)?

### **Student B's Response**

The Kansas Nebraska Act, that created the conditions for "Bleeding Kansas" made the Civil War unavoidable because it was a policy that allowed the continued unequal treatment of African-Americans. African-Americans were not treated the same as other races especially white men. The Declaration of Independence states, "All men are created equal". Although this document mentions men, it fails to mention slaves, African-Americans, women, and children. Therefore African-Americans were not treated the same as white men and were thought less of. The Compromise of 1850 was agreed upon throughout the nation but then the Kansas Nebraska Act was passed and crisis broke out. The Kansas Nebraska Act allowed the territory to decide whether it would be a proslavery or antislavery state through popular sovereignty. The territory was above the thirty-six, thirty line, so many people both from the North and South rushed there to become an influence. For example, "The reaction from the North was immediate. Eli

Thayer organized the New England Emigrant Aid Company, which sent settlers to Kansas to secure it as a free territory” (PBS Online, 1). Another example includes, “Rumors had spread through the South that 20,000 Northerners were descending on Kansas, and in November 1854, thousands of armed Southerners, mostly from Missouri, poured over the line to vote for a proslavery congressional delegate” (PBS Online, 2). Both of these examples suggested that the North and South are polar opposites. This created the term “Bleeding Kansas”, and because the both the North and the South each had a strong stance, the Civil War was unavoidable.

Although some may think the Compromise of 1850 made the Civil War unavoidable, that assumption is false because it actually was a successful plan and gave the nation balance. For example, “The Compromise of 1850 brought relative calm to the nation. Though most blacks and abolitionists strongly opposed the Compromise, the majority of Americans embraced it, believing that it offered a final, workable solution to the slavery question” (PBS Online, 1). This compromise gave balance to U.S. because it meant that entering California as free state, they were admitting Southwest Territories who allowed slavery which satisfied both the Northerners and the Southerners.

### **Seventh Writing Assignment**

Beginning with the seventh writing assignment, students are expected to address why their claim is more important than their counterclaim in their conclusion. The seventh writing assignment addressed the following prompt and instructions:

*Which piece of legislation that was passed during Reconstruction most benefitted African-Americans with their equality and opportunity during this time period?*

Option 1: The 13th amendment benefitted African-Americans the most during Reconstruction.

Option 2: The 14th amendment benefitted African-Americans the most during Reconstruction.

Option 3: The 15th amendment benefitted African-Americans the most during Reconstruction.

Option 4: The Civil Rights Act of 1866 benefitted African-Americans the most during Reconstruction.

Be sure to read all of the documents before selecting your options. Option #4 has some pretty interesting insight into President Johnson's veto there. Keep in mind that I will be grading all parts of your historical argument going forward. This includes explaining why your claim is more important than your counterclaim. Be sure to follow your rubric as you write.

### **Ninth Writing Assignment**

*Which group of immigrants seemed to struggle the greatest to achieve equality and opportunity in America?*

Option 1: Chinese-Americans struggled the most to achieve equality and opportunity after immigrating to America.

Option 2: Irish-Americans struggled the most to achieve equality and opportunity after immigrating to America.

Option 3: Italian-Americans struggled the most to achieve equality and opportunity after immigrating to America

Be sure to include multiple sources in your response to back up your claim. Remember that evidence whether directly quoted or paraphrased must have correct citations. Please restate the question in your opening sentence. For the Smithsonian article, please click on the pictures at the top of the webpage. For the Italian-American and Irish-American discrimination articles, please click “next” in the lower right of the page to continue reading. Make sure to include accurate evidence to support your claim. Also, make sure you include why your claim is better than your counterclaim.

2 questions to ask before submitting:

1. Is my historical evidence accurate to my claim?
2. Did I state that my claim is superior to my counterclaim at the end of my argument?

### **Student B’s Response**

The 14th amendment benefited African-Americans the most during Reconstruction. This amendment helped the African-Americans in two ways. This amendment gave equality to all people born in the United States, which included African-Americans who were formerly slaves. Their opportunity was also able to improve by giving these African-Americans citizenship. The 14th amendment was protecting all the rights of U.S. citizens, “The concept and implementation of this addition has formed the basis for all modern civil rights laws, disability acts and other actions designed to protect the rights of minority groups” (Alchin, 1). This clarifies that all people who are either born or accepted into the United States are citizens of the United States, as long as those people are not citizens of another country. This amendment also gave African-Americans the power to affect the turnout of the number of representatives from each state because they were counted as citizens. This means that African-Americans would also be counted



in the Census, thus majorly increasing their equality to white Americans. Linda Alchin also mentions, “One of the key events during his presidency was the ratification of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution” (Alchin, 1). This part of the amendment explains that the government cannot deny any person of their equality. Therefore proving African-Americans equality was improved forcefully.

Though some may argue that the 15th amendment benefited African-Americans the most, this assumption is false because this amendment allowed all United States citizens that were men the right to vote. This shows that one of the qualifications to vote was that the man had to be a citizen. This amendment would mean nothing to African-Americans if they were not given citizenship. An example, “Although ratified on February 3, 1870, the promise of the 15th Amendment would not be fully realized for almost a century” (The Library of Congress, 1). This is showing that it didn’t even take effect immediately.

Altogether African-American’s equality and opportunity improved the most because of the 14th amendment. The 15th amendment gave them more freedoms that they never would have gotten if it were not for the 14th amendment. Therefore this expanded their opportunity to gain more freedoms and under law gave them equality.

### **Student B’s Response**

Chinese-Americans struggled the most to achieve equality and opportunity after immigrating to America. America was a place that immigrants looked upon as full of opportunity and new experiences. The transcontinental railroad was in the process of being built which drew in thousands of immigrants looking for work. America seemed to be a hopeful place in the immigrant's’ eyes. When arriving in this unfamiliar territory

there was a lack of equal treatment or equality for immigrants, especially the Chinese-Americans. In 1849, following the Gold Rush, Chinese-Americans immigrated to California and found opportunity working on the Central Pacific Railroad. “Chinese were drawn to the West Coast as a center of economic opportunity where, for example, they helped build the first transcontinental railroad” (Harvard College, 1). Although they imagined this work as a great beginning, the immigrants were treated harshly, heavily discriminated against, and not paid fairly. Later, in 1882 the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed as law, and to briefly summarize; this law basically paused immigration from China for five years and limited Chinese immigrants from becoming U.S. Citizens. “It was enacted in response to economic fears, especially on the West Coast, where native-born Americans attributed unemployment and declining wages to Chinese workers whom they also viewed as racially inferior” (Harvard College, 1). Most Americans living on the West Coast were concerned that Chinese workers were the cause of their economic crisis. This halt on immigration eventually became permanent, which shows the major lack of equality toward these Chinese immigrants, in spite of their will to work hard.

Some may argue that Irish-Americans struggled the most to achieve equality and opportunity after immigrating to America. These people reason that Irish-Americans suffered the most out the immigrants because of the violence that was caused by their religious beliefs. “Centuries of tension between Protestants and Catholics found their way into United States cities and verbal attacks often led to mob violence... Protestants burned down St. Mary’s Catholic Church in New York City in 1831” (Library of Congress, 5). Even though Irish-Americans withstood conflict and discrimination, so did all of the other immigrants. The Chinese-Americans suffered lack of equality and

opportunity the most because their chances were restricted as opposed to the Irish-Americans. "... many Irish climbed occupational and social ladders through politically appointed positions such as policeman, fireman, and teacher" (Library of Congress, 4). This excerpt shows that Irish-Americans became successful and had more opportunity, which the Chinese-Americans lacked. Although some may see Irish-Americans as being treated with the least equality and suffering from the greatest lack of opportunity, this assumption is false because the Chinese-Americans were limited by laws and regulations. Overall, the Chinese immigrants were heavily discriminated against, and the restriction put on immigration in 1882 was followed by a chain of events that affected many others as well. "The Chinese Exclusion Act foreshadowed the immigration-restriction acts of the 1920s, culminating in the National Origins Act of 1929, which capped overall immigration to the United States at 150,000 per year and barred Asian immigration" (Harvard College, 1). In conclusion this shows how Chinese immigrants were largely affected, and strictly limited the opportunity and equality of these immigrants by capping the number of immigrants allowed into the U.S. For these reasons both the Chinese-Americans' equality, and opportunity were jeopardized.

### **Tenth Writing Assignment**

*How did immigrants who went through Ellis Island or Angel Island experience the lack of Jefferson's ideals of equality and opportunity as they started their new life in America?*

You will need to read each three first person accounts of the immigrants who went through Ellis Island and Angel Island. That's six accounts total. On the Ellis Island website, you can select the audio file and listen to the speaker as you read the transcript if you wish. You will need to select an immigrant at either Ellis Island or Angel Island in

your claim. Don't forget to refer back to your claim, and explain why your claim is more important than your counterclaim.

For this assignment, I did not provide my students with explicit possibilities for a claim. I felt that my students had enough experience with writing a claim and a counterclaim at this point that they would be able to create one for themselves.

### **Student B's Response**

Immigrants who went through Ellis Island experienced a stronger lack of both equality and opportunity, than those traveling through Angel Island; throughout the beginnings of their new life in America. Immigrants came from all over the world in hopes of starting a new life in America. Some escaped from their countries, some came to avoid war, and some came for a new start. Immigrants were looking for new opportunities and a chance to be treated equal along with all the other U.S. citizens. Little did most know the amount of examinations, paper work, and questions that would have to be answered before becoming eligible to enter America.

On Ellis Island, immigrants were neither treated kindly, nor put in the best conditions. It must be kept in mind the extreme amount of people arriving at Ellis Island daily, which had a large affect on how they were treated. "What I remember was that we went in this place and we were herded like we were cattle. I remember that" (Ifill 3). This shows that they were not treated equally because they were not Americans yet, and therefore were thought less of. An immigrant on Ellis Island also mentions, "And we were all in this room and we were like in cages" (Ifill 3). This describes the comparison of immigrants on Ellis Island to animals, rather than human beings. Also immigrants who arrived on the island with special cases such as deafness were not treated equally. These immigrants

were treated poorly and were not trusted by Americans working on Ellis Island. “They were afraid that we would depend on the United States financially because they didn't know anything about deafness” (Meyers 5). This example illustrates the lack of trust and equality shown to those with special circumstances. This took away their opportunity to have the chance to enter America sooner.

Some may argue that immigrants on Angel Island had a tougher time achieving equality and opportunity. They claim that many were mistreated, when in fact that assumption is inaccurate because immigrants expressed their positive memories of Angel Island. “I actually had a really good time at Angel Island...I made friends at the playground” (Gee 1). This describes that immigrants on Angel Island were content with their conditions. Even Beck H. Gee, Ellis Island immigrant, claims, “I bought apricots from the little store... They were so juicy! So golden! I had never eaten anything like it. I haven't found such juicy apricots in the U.S. since then, either”. This quote even demonstrates the pure enjoyment of food provided to such immigrants. They were being given the opportunity to have fun, make friends, and even being granted fresh fruit. Another immigrant from Angel Island states, “I got enough to eat because I don't remember being hungry” (Hom 1). Therefore showing that the immigrants located at Angel Island were granted more equality because they were treated better and were thought more of, as equal to Americans, and not less of, because they came from other countries.

In conclusion, immigrants at Ellis Island were not treated equally nor did they have great amounts of opportunity because the level of trust from interrogators was so low. People on Ellis Island were not treated nicely and upon arrival, based on the

feedback from immigrants who compared their treatment to that of animals being herded and shoved together in large groups. These descriptions support the idea that immigrants had a tougher time achieving equality and opportunity during their stay at Ellis Island.

### **Thirteenth Writing Assignment**

*Did the Cubans have their rights violated at the time of the explosion of the U.S.S. Maine, or did the United States seize upon the opportunity of this event to start the Spanish American War?*

Read through the different textbook perspectives of how other countries perceive what happened with the U.S.S. Maine's explosion. From there, choose your claim, and follow the rubric to write your historical argument. Read through what happened with the explosion of the U.S.S. Maine. Determine why the U.S. was in Cuba. Be sure to read the newspaper article on the Maine, as it is a primary source of the event.

Claim 1: The U.S. was justified in going to war with Spain.

Claim 2: The U.S. violated Cuban rights by going to war with Spain.

Claim 3: The U.S. was not justified in going to war with Spain.

Claim 4: The Philippines version proves that Cuban rights were violated.

### **Student B's Response**

The U.S. was justified in going to war with Spain. The United States seized upon the opportunity of the explosion of the U.S.S. Maine to start the Spanish American War. Opportunity is neither granted, nor received. Opportunity lies everywhere, affecting many Americans daily; this ideal grants people with a chance for something, whether the end results are good or bad. In this case the U.S. took initiative and had a valid reason for

the start of the Spanish American War, which started with the explosion of an American battleship.

Following the event of the U.S.S. Maine's—the American battleship anchored in the harbor of Havana—blow up, a war broke out. The U.S. blamed Cuba as the reason the ship sank and called it an act of pure sabotage. “Much of Congress and a majority of the American public expressed little doubt that Spain was responsible and called for a declaration of war” ([History.com](#) Staff 1). The reason for the ship even being docked in the Havana Harbor was based off of good intentions; the ship was only there to protect Americans. “...on a friendly visit, the Maine had been sent to Cuba to protect the interests of Americans there after a rebellion against Spanish rule broke out in Havana in January” ([History.com](#) Staff 1). This especially shows the positive interest this boat had for being there. It also shows that America was watching out for its citizens, which is something that they should not have had to be worried about. Therefore the tensions were high, and an act of sabotage would be a justified reason to tip them over the edge.

According to some, the U.S. was not justified in going to war with Spain. People claim this because they believe it was a violation of Cuba's rights and that Cuba in fact did not even sink the ship, or try to sabotage. “In 1976, a team of American naval investigators concluded that the Maine explosion was likely caused by a fire that ignited its ammunition stocks...” ([History.com](#) Staff 1). Although some believe this statement to be true, the reasoning behind it is invalid. Even though the Cubans technically did not explode the ship, the winning of the Spanish American War was good for America. “...granting the United States its first overseas empire with the ceding of such former Spanish possessions as Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines” ([History.com](#) Staff 1).

This event in Havana was significant because it gave America a reason to start the war. “And fearing that Cuba would obtain its independence and slip through its fingers, the U.S. needed an incident like that of the Maine” (Lindaman & Ward 1). Therefore America took advantage of the opportunity given to them and started the Spanish American War for a valid reason, so their actions were justified.

#### APPENDIX F: STUDENT THREE’S HISTORICAL ARGUMENTS

##### **Writing Assignment One**

The Japanese - Americans had their equality and opportunity violated. As the Japanese - Americans were becoming citizens over 127,000 were being imprisoned for being of Japanese ancestry. For example, it says “Succumbing to bad advice and popular opinion, President Roosevelt signed an executive order in February 1942 ordering the relocation of all Americans of Japanese ancestry to concentration camps” (Japanese American 1). Even though the Japanese - Americans were citizens of the United States they still were not created equal simply because of their Japanese ancestry. “Many families sold their homes, their stores, and most of their assets. They could not be certain their homes and livelihoods would still be there upon their return. Because of the mad rush to sell, properties and inventories were often sold at a fraction of their true value” (Japanese - Americans 1). As a result, the Japanese - Americans did not have the opportunity to return to their homes after they got back from the concentration camp, because everybody wanted the properties they had. Some people believe the Japanese - Americans had it hard when it came to having their equality and opportunity violated whereas the others believe the Native Americans had it harder. The Indian Removal act was signed by President Andrew Jackson granting him the authorization to grant



unsettled land west of the Mississippi River in exchange for the Indian lands within existing state borders. Even though many of the tribes resisted the relocation policy, “During the fall and winter of 1838 and 1839, the Cherokees were forcibly moved west by the United States government. Approximately 4,000 Cherokees died on this forced march, which became known as the "Trail of Tears” (Indian Removal Act 1). The Trail of Tears is the path where the Cherokee Indians had to walk to the west of the Mississippi and there were many problems that caused death like whooping cough, typhus, dysentery, cholera and starvation. This shows that the Native Americans had no freedom to stay on their land and were forced off. In conclusion, the Japanese - Americans no opportunity to prosper in their lives, and not equality, because they were citizens of the United states yet they still were imprisoned for their Japanese ancestry.

### **Writing Assignment Three**

The Native Americans has their equality and opportunity violated. After the creation and passage of the original Cherokee Nation constitution and establishment of a Cherokee Supreme Court, the Cherokee had come upon a pinnacle which followed in the discovery in gold in northern Georgia. Overcome with “gold fever” and a want for expansion lots of the white communities turned on their Cherokee neighbors. So, as a result the U.S. government decided that the Cherokees should be moved off their land, leaving their farms, lands, and homes. For example, it says, “Under orders from President Jackson the U.S. Army began enforcement of the Removal Act. The Cherokee were rounded up in the summer of 1838 and loaded onto boats that traveled the Tennessee, Ohio, Mississippi and Arkansas Rivers into Indian Territory” (Cherokee Nation Cultural Resource Center). This states that even after the Worcester vs. Georgia case that Jackson

still forced the Indians off their land. Even though the Cherokees went to Supreme Court ruled for Georgia in 1831, in the Worcester vs. Georgia, the court affirmed Cherokee sovereignty. For instance, “President Andrew Jackson arrogantly defied the decision of the court and ordered the removal, an act that established the U.S. government’s precedent for the future removal of many Native Americans from their ancestral homelands” (Cherokee Nation Cultural Resource Center). This meaning that the Cherokees lost their opportunity to stay on their land and their equality as a nation was violated even when they won both cases. Some may agree that Native Americans had their equality and opportunity violated, where others might say that the spirit of manifest destiny improved the settler’s equality and opportunity. When the Native Americans got forced off their land they started on “The Trail of Tears” a route that many Native Americans died on, lost family, and got very sick. Once they moved west and reached an empty area of land to settle on, they then for a second time had to migrate to Indian Territory. For instance, it says, “Some Cherokees, wary of white encroachment, moved west on their own and settled in other areas of the country. A group known as the Old Settlers previously had voluntarily moved in 1817 to lands given them in Arkansas where they established a government and a peaceful way of life. Later, however, they were forced to migrate to Indian Territory” (Cherokee Nation Cultural Resource Center). Even though the Indians got moved some of them got back up on their feet. For example, “Some of them (the Indians) indeed roll in great wealth; but the great mass of what may be called the poorest class, is in the most abject situation to which human beings can possible be” (For the Cherokee Phoenix). This is stating that manifest destiny did let them start over and let some get into great wealth, but still before this they had their

equality and opportunity violated by being forced off their land. In conclusion, even though manifest destiny may have improved the settler's equality and opportunity overall, the Native Americans had their equality and opportunity violated.

#### **Writing Assignment Four**

Abolitionists fighting against slavery had greater issues in achieving equality and opportunity for their group. At the beginning of the abolitionist movement they had decided that they wanted to abolish slavery or end it. This was originally brought up by the fervor of the Second Great Awakening. The abolitionists were trying to stay strong, but then in the 1820's they broke out into a "militant crusade" until the 1830s. Next in the as the antislavery sentiment started to show up in politics and abolitionists were starting to disagree between each other. For example, "But as antislavery sentiment began to appear in politics, abolitionists also began disagreeing among themselves. By 1840 Garrison and his followers were convinced that since slavery's influence had corrupted all of society, a revolutionary change in America's spiritual values was required to achieve emancipation" (James Brewer Stewart, 1). This is showing that because the abolitionists were trying to fight for slaves freedom and equality and opportunity they ended up corrupting society.

Another reason abolitionists fighting against slavery had great issues in achieving equality and opportunity for their group is that they ended up killing people. This made more of an impact, because they killed some innocent people, and caused commotion in both the north and the south. For instance, "All these activities provoked widespread hostile responses from North and South, most notably violent mobs, the burning of mailbags containing abolitionist literature, and the passage in the U.S. House of

Representatives of a “gag rule” that banned consideration of antislavery petitions. These developments, and especially the 1837 murder of abolitionist editor Elijah Lovejoy, led many northerners, fearful for their own civil liberties, to vote for antislavery politicians and brought important converts such as Wendell Phillips, Gerrit Smith, and Edmund Quincy to the cause” (Jaime Brewer Stewart, 1). This proves that as a result of Garrison trying to achieve emancipation the south did not want to lose their slaves so they got angry with the north and some of the abolitionists. Thus, making the abolitionists fight against slavery had greater issues in achieving equality and opportunity for their group. Even though some people may think the abolitionists’ fight against slaver had greater issues in achieving equality and opportunity for their groups, others may say that people fighting for women’s rights had greater issue achieving equality and opportunity. Women had been fighting to get more social, civil, religious conditions and rights for women. Women did struggle for their rights for many years, but they never killed anyone to get what they wanted like the abolitionists did. For example, “After years of struggle, the 19th Amendment was adopted in 1920, granting American women the constitutionally protected right to vote” (A+E Networks, 1). This provost that yes, the women did struggle for many years, but they didn’t have to kill innocent people. Another reason the abolitionists struggled with equality and opportunity more than the women, is because this movement was just a convention whereas the abolitionist movement turned into a fight that later caused a war between the north and the south. For instance, “The announcement, published in the Seneca County Courier on July 14, read, “A Convention to discuss the social, civil, and religious condition and rights of women... The Seneca Falls Convention was followed two weeks later by an even larger meeting in Rochester,

N.Y. Thereafter, national woman's rights conventions were held annually, providing an important focus for the growing women's suffrage movement" (A+E Network, 1). This states that the women had many conventions that may have taken a long time, and they had their equality taken away, but their opportunity to change that was still there. In conclusion, the abolitionists fighting against slavery had a greater issue.

### **Writing Assignment Six**

The Compromise of 1850 made the Civil War unavoidable because of the treatment of African-Americans regarding their equality and opportunity. The civil war was fought between the Northern and Southern states so that the southern states could form their own country in order to protect the institution of slavery. After the Missouri Compromise, the Compromise of 1850 overturned the Missouri Compromise. As a result, the issue of slavery became unsettled. For example, "The Compromise of 1850 overturned the Missouri Compromise and left the overall issue of slavery unsettled" (us history, 1). This made the equality and opportunity of African - Americans more unbalanced, because the fugitive slave law was passed which said the runaway slaves had to return to their owners under the penalty of the law. For instance, "...a Fugitive Slave Law was passed, requiring northerners to return runaway slaves to their owners under penalty of law" (us history, 1). Thus, as a result the northerners were angry at the southerners for making that law that set the scene for argument that emerged later and the African-Americans who were free and in the north had their equality taken away.

While some people think the Compromise of 1850 made the Civil War unavoidable because of the treatment of African-Americans regarding their equality and opportunity others may think that the Missouri Compromise made the Civil War

unavoidable because of the treatment of African-Americans regarding their equality and opportunity. The Missouri Compromise happened because of slavery. The compromise was made to help settle the dispute between pro-slavery and anti-slavery groups, but it didn't help avoid the civil war. For example, "The Missouri Compromise was criticized by many southerners because it established the principle that Congress could make laws regarding slavery; northerners, on the other hand, condemned it for acquiescing in the expansion of slavery (though only south of the compromise line). Nevertheless, the act helped hold the Union together for more than thirty years" (history.com, 1). This proves that the Missouri Compromise didn't end the dispute between the north and the south, it only helped keep the Union together for more than thirty years. This violated the African-Americans equality and opportunity, because it only let the slaves north of the border including Maine be free and slaves south of the border including Missouri not free. This also made the opportunity for slaves in the south to be free non-existent. Even though, this did eventually lead to the Civil War, the Compromise of 1850 was much worse, because it forced the free slaves to go back to their original owners with violated their equality and opportunity and set the scene for an argument that would soon come. In conclusion, the Compromise of 1850 made the Civil War unavoidable because of the treatment of African-Americans regarding their equality and opportunity.

### **Writing Assignment Seven**

The thirteenth amendment benefited African-Americans with their equality and opportunity the most during Reconstruction. After the Civil War ended Andrew Johnson started the Reconstruction of the Union. During the Reconstruction there were three very important amendments passed: the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments. Out of the three the

thirteenth amendment benefited the African - Americans the most during Reconstruction. The thirteenth amendment ended slavery. Once all the slaves were freed former slaves began to move in search of there loved ones, others legally married, and some even got an education. For example, “ The 13th Amendment is one of the most important amendments in the US Constitution. The amendment abolished slavery and it also abolished bond service and peonage which were forms of compulsory service based on a servant's indebtedness to a master ” (Linda Alchin, 1). This explains how important the thirteenth amendment is and what it does. Without the thirteenth amendment none of the slaves would have been able to buy land, legally marry, or get an education. The fourteenth and the fifteenth amendment are important too, but the thirteenth makes the other two possible. For instance in the fourteenth amendment, “ The 14th Amendment is about Citizenship Rights. It is also called the Citizenship Clause or the Liberty Clause. The 14th Amendment was ratified in 1868, during the administration of Andrew Johnson, stating that every person born in the US is a citizen. States must follow due process of law before taking away any citizen's rights or property ” (Linda Alcuin, 1). This explains how you had to follow the due process law before taking away rights or property. They only way you could own property is if you were free, and once the thirteenth amendment was passed slaves were able to own land. The thirteenth amendment benefits all the African - Americans, because they would not have to be slaves anymore. They could go get an education, get married legally, and find their family members. It gave both women and men the same equality and opportunity as the white people.

Even though some people may say that thirteenth amendment benefited African - Americans with their equality and opportunity the most during Reconstruction other may

think that the fifteenth amendment benefited them more. The fifteenth amendment granted African American men the right to vote. For example, “The 15th Amendment to the Constitution granted African American men the right to vote” (Michael Burgan, 1). This gives African - American men the right to vote which gives them equality and opportunity, but it only gave men the right to vote. The fifteenth amendment does not saying anything about allowing women to vote, and that’s because it doesn’t. So this takes away all opportunity for African - American women to vote. And it takes their equality to have the same rights as the men.

In conclusion, the thirteenth amendment benefited African - Americans with their equality and opportunity the most during Reconstruction, because it gave both men and women the same equality and opportunity and opened up new options for them, unlike the fifteenth amendment which only benefited the men.

### **Writing Assignment Nine**

The Chinese-Americans struggled the most to achieve equality and opportunity after immigrating to America. In 1882 the Chinese Exclusion Act was signed by President Chester A. Arthur. This restricted Chinese immigration to the U.S. and put a ten year moratorium on Chinese laborers. This law was later extended for another ten years before it became permanent in 1902. While this law was in place it took away the Chinese-Americans equality and opportunity to immigrate to the U.S. and become a U.S. citizen like everyone else. For example, “The Chinese Exclusion Act was the first major law restricting immigration to the United States” (Harvard University). This is an example of what the Chinese Exclusion Act accomplished. This act affected the Chinese, because it took them over eighty years to accrual the same equality and opportunity as



others. It was a major struggle for Chinese to find jobs, by 1943 the act was still allowed and only 105 Chinese immigrants were allowed into the U.S. each year. For instance, “...the 1943 act still allowed only 105 Chinese immigrants per year, reflecting persisting prejudice against the Chinese in American immigration policy. It was not until the Immigration Act of 1965, which eliminated previous national-origins policy, that large-scale Chinese immigration to the United States was allowed to begin again after a hiatus of over 80 years” (Harvard University). This proves how even though the Chinese were allowed into the U.S. they were still not allowed to become U.S. citizens until the immigration act of 1965 was passed. They had struggled to obtain the same equality and opportunity of having a job and becoming a U.S. citizen as everyone else was allowed to do.

While some people think that the Chinese-Americans struggled the most to achieve equality and opportunity after immigrating to America, others think that the Italian-Americans struggled the most. Many Italian-Americans migrated to America, where they could find jobs where they worked hard to send back to their families. While they worked, one of the hardships was getting attacked by the Ku Klux Klan. For example, “the Ku Klux Klan saw a spike in membership. Catholic churches and charities were vandalized and burned, and Italians attacked by mobs. In the 1890s alone, more than 20 Italians were lynched” (Library of Congress,8). This may prove how the Italians were attacked by the Ku Klux Klan, but it also shows how the Italian-Americans were allowed to immigrate to the U.S. and obtain jobs. They had more opportunity, because they were allowed to have jobs to earn money, whereas the Chinese exclusion act did not allow them to come into America let alone have jobs. Along with that, restrictions on the

Italians immigration was put to an end in the 1920s, this was years before the Chinese Exclusion Act was put to an end. For example, “As the 20th century moved forward, Italian immigrants moved steadily into the main currents of U.S. society. By the 1920s and 30s, the immigrant generation had begun to see their children grow up as Americans—a process that many immigrants viewed with some ambivalence” (Library of Congress, 9). This is an example of how the Italians were allowed to immigrate to America and they were accepted into the society even though some people were still having mixed feelings. The Italians may have had some hardships in achieving equality and opportunity when immigrating the U.S., because they were attacked, but the Chinese had a much harder time than them.

In conclusion, the Chinese-Americans had a harder time achieving equality and opportunity after immigrating to America, because the Chinese Exclusion Act did not allow them to become U.S. citizens or get jobs, whereas the Italians were allowed to do both.

### **Writing Assignment Ten**

The immigrants who went through Angel Island struggled to achieve equality and opportunity as they started their new life in America. Angel Island was an Island where Chinese immigrants were detained and interrogated to decide whether they would become U.S. citizens. This process could last for long periods of time. They lived in filthy conditions and they went through grueling interrogations. Over the course of several hours sometimes days the immigrants would be asked series of questions. The U.S. officers did not want Chinese immigrants entering the U.S. For example, “From 1910-1940, Chinese immigrants were detained and interrogated at Angel Island

immigration station in San Francisco Bay. U.S. officials hoped to deport as many as possible by asking obscure questions about Chinese villages and family histories that immigrants would have trouble answering correctly” (Kurtz). This is an example of how the Chinese equality and opportunity was violated, because the U.S. officers wanted to try a deported them back to where they came from. Their equality to become U.S. citizens was taken away from them, along with their opportunity to start a new life in America. Many people were on the island for at least a month or two. One of those people was Lester Tom Lee. Lee immigrated to the United States in 1935 at the age of sixteen where he almost got deported back to China. For instance, “The main reason I was detained so long was that my father and I gave the inspectors different dates about when I departed China. The Chinese lunar calendar is about a month off from the American calendar! Ay! So my father hired a lawyer to get me out” (Lester). This shows that even the smallest differences would give the U.S. officers a reason to send immigrants back. This was unfair to them, because they were not treated with the same equality and opportunity as Americans were. Their equality to become part of America was taken if they were deported and their opportunity to start a new life was also seized. This was due to officers wanting to send immigrants back to where they came from.

Even though some people may think that immigrants who went through Angel Island struggled more to achieve equality and opportunity others think immigrants who went through Ellis Island had a harder time. Immigrants who went through Ellis Island were mainly Europeans. The immigrants were treated more equally. Each immigrant underwent a sixty second physical examine, and if they passed they would talk to a government inspector. This inspector would ask more reasonable questions than the

inspector at Angel Island. For example, “These questions included, among others: name, age, sex, marital status, occupation, nationality, ability to read or write, race, physical and mental health, last residence, and the name and address of the nearest relative or friend in the immigrant’s country of origin. Immigrants were asked whether they had at least \$25; whether they had ever been in prison, an almshouse, or an institution; or if they were polygamists or anarchists” (Ellis Island Immigration Museum). This proves how much easier their questions were. Their family members were not asked to verify the answer. Vera Clarke Iffil talks about how she thought the experience through Ellis Island was terrible. She says that there were mass numbers of people grouped together. For instance, “What I remember is that we went to this place and were herded like we were cattle” (Iffil). Iffil says this was one of her hardest hardships. Her hardships compared to the Angel Island hardships were not bad. The Chinese had to sneak food and went through prolonged questioning. Along with that, the European immigrants lived in better conditions and were not detained for several hours. They were able to start their lives in America faster than those at Angel Island.

### **Writing Assignment Thirteen**

After the explosion of the U.S.S. Maine, the U.S. was not justified in going to war with Spain. The Maine had originally come to Cuba to protect American citizens while Cuban revolutionaries were fighting to win independence from Spain. The U.S. was in a time of imperialism and had already acquired Hawaii and the Philippines and were looking to acquire the Cuban territory or other Spanish territories. When the U.S.S. Maine had exploded the U.S. immediately thought that it was the Spanish, because it was in a Cuban port. They had no justification in going to war with Spain over this explosion,

because they were not sure it was actually Spain that had caused it. It in fact was a fire that ignited in the ammunition stocks. As evidenced that “In 1976, a team of American naval investigators concluded that the Maine explosion was likely caused by a fire that ignited its ammunition stocks, not by a Spanish mine or act of sabotage” (History, 1). This is proof of how it was not the Spaniards doing of destroying the U.S.S. Maine. At the time the U.S. had no right in going to war with Spain over this destruction the U.S. had caused themselves. In addition, the U.S. thought that if they went to war with Spain they would be able to gain more land. Furthermore, they distributed propaganda and stretched the truth to make it seem as if Spain attacked the U.S. For instance, “Although the Maine had been blown up by American spies in order to provoke the war, the public was not informed of the truth. Instead the American newspapers stirred the war spirit of the Americans and blamed Spain. The cry “Remember the Maine!” swept the United States” (Lindaman and Ward, 1). This proves that the Americans blamed Spain to arouse the war. This destroys the Cuban’s equality to be free. Instead, it started a war between the Spanish and Americans and stole the opportunity for Cuba to gain its independence from Spain, and after the Spanish- American war they were under control of the United States.

Others perceive that the U.S. was justified in going to war with Spain. The prolonged conflict between Cuba and Spain was affecting the U.S. trade. However, before the sinking of the Maine the Spanish had already sunk one of America’s ships. Since the Spanish had struck first retaliation was the natural response. The U.S. wanted everyone to believe that the Spain sunk the U.S.S. Maine so they could stop them from trading with Cuba. At the time the Spanish were treating the Cuban’s like dirt. The U.S.

would have provided the Cubans with much better conditions. In addition, Cuba may have gained its independence if the U.S. did not go to war. For instance, “And fearing that Cuba would obtain its independence and slip through its fingers, the U.S. needed an incident like that of the “Maine.” Consequently, everything points to self-provocation” (Lindaman and Ward, 1). This proves how the U.S. was concerned about themselves. They were worried that they would not gain anything from the Cubans. They were willing to intervene in the Spanish - Cuban war just so they could gain something economically. At the time the Spanish were trying to prevent a war with the United States. Instead, they were trying to maintain peace. As evidenced, “Actually Spain was doing everything possible to prevent a war with the United States and was careful not to commit any act of provocation. Hence, the Spaniards were not responsible for the blast. On the contrary, the U.S. authorities were seeking a pretext” (Lindaman and Ward, 1). This proves that it was not the Spanish who had caused the blast, it was the U.S. Therefore, the United States had not justification in going to war with Spain. Even though they were going to give Cubans better living conditions they took away their equality of being free as well as the Spaniards opportunity to maintain peace with the U.S.

In conclusion, the United States had no justification in going to war with the Spanish after the explosion of the U.S.S. Maine.

## APPENDIX G: STUDENT FOUR'S HISTORICAL ARGUMENTS

### **Writing Assignment One**

Japanese-Americans had their personal rights and associated opportunities that result from being free violated in World War II. During this time, America was at war with Japan. Because of these harsh battles and hatred between the countries, white Americans became skeptical about any Japanese person living in the United States. People viewed their presence as a safety risk and became overly paranoid. "President Roosevelt signed an executive order in February 1942 ordering the relocation of all Americans of Japanese ancestry to concentration camps in the interior of the United States" (Japanese-American Internment, 2016). Japanese-Americans were deprived of their freedom and opportunity to succeed solely because of their ancestors. Secondly, "Almost two-thirds of the interns were Nisei, or Japanese Americans born in the United States" (Japanese-American Internment, 2016). This shows that the majority of the concentration camp prisoners were "natural born citizens". By definition, being a natural born citizen gives you the right to freedom and even becoming President. Therefore, based on the constitution, Japanese citizens during World War II had their equality and chance of future opportunities clearly violated.

Secondly, Native Americans had their right of equal opportunity abused. In the spring of 1880, the Indian Removal Act was signed. This forced Native Americans to leave their homes so the United States could use their land. "Approximately 4,000 Cherokees died on this forced march, which became known as the 'Trail of Tears'" (Indian Removal Act, 2015). Native Americans chance for a healthy and successful

future were denied during this time to allow Americans with different ancestors better future opportunities.

Overall, multiple groups of people throughout America's history have had their opportunity violated. Japanese-Americans and Native Americans are only a few examples that express the overall idea of American inequality.

### **Writing Assignment Three**

When the Indian Removal Act was signed in the 1830s, Native Americans had their equality and opportunity violated. The stated purpose of this act was to move Indians east of the Mississippi River in to Indian Territory so that settlers could migrate onto their current lands. This meant that by law, Native American tribes had to leave their homes, crops, and lifestyle behind and completely rebuild their way of life in Oklahoma. They had no voice in this legislation therefore, their equality and opportunity was violated. To illustrate, "An estimated 4,000 died from hunger, exposure, and disease. The journey became a cultural memory as the "trail where they cried" for the Cherokees and other removed tribes" (Charles Hicks). The path in which the relocating tribes took was known as the Trail of Tears, referring to the immense amount of Indians that died or became ill along the trek to this new territory. Had the Natives just been allowed to stay on their home soil, they could have avoided this deadly outcome completely. Roughly twenty seven percent more Indians would still have been alive and thriving had their homeland not been violated.

Secondly, Native Americans had their rights violated due to settlers. The 1830s was a time of migration to the new lands- the Native Americans' lands. "Possessed by "gold fever" and a thirst for expansion, many white communities turned on their



Cherokee neighbors. The U.S. government ultimately decided it was time for the Cherokees to be “removed”; leaving behind their farms, their land, and their homes” (Charles Hicks). Because settlers were so determined and greedy towards gaining their own riches, they were unfocused on the fact that a different community already possessed their wanted land. Had the settlers simply taken land around the Indians, both groups would have gotten their wish. However, because this did not occur, Indian tribes such as the Cherokees were deprived of the same opportunity as the settlers to mine gold, expand, and modernize due to colonists craving a successful lifestyle.

Although some believe the Native Americans had their rights violated due to the Indian Removal Act, others argue that the spirit of the manifest destiny improved the settler’s equality and opportunity. After the Indian Removal Act was signed in 1830, settlers were free to move westward and claim cheap land there. The concept of new cities, buildings, and landmarks created exciting vibes from settlers traveling west based off of the belief of “manifest destiny”. “The tribes which occupied the countries now constituting the Eastern States were annihilated or have melted away to make room for the whites” (Elias Boudinot 1). Without Indians, the promising land was clear, making it seem as if settlement and the chance to flourish were highly possible. The settler’s belief that it was their destiny to expand westward provided colonists with improved opportunities which they wouldn’t have otherwise pursued.

In conclusion, after the Indian Removal Act was signed, Native Americans had their fair rights violated. Because they were forced to move onto a specified Indian Territory leaving their own lands, many tribe members died, eliminating their chance for success. Also, the inconsiderate mindset of the settlers which compelled Indians to

relocate denied them the chance to pursue the same possibilities and improved circumstances as the settlers. Therefore, it is clear to see that in 1830, Native Americans' equality and opportunity was violated.

#### **Writing Assignment Four**

During the 1800s, people fighting for women's rights had the greatest issues in achieving equality and opportunity for their group. In 1848, a crowd of nearly two-hundred women assembled in Seneca Falls, New York. Here, the ladies discussed how fair rights for women should look and ways in which they could achieve these beliefs. However, because of their gender, they had to battle and campaign for their authority leading to lots of conflict and decades of time. For example, "For those proclaiming a women's right to vote, the Seneca Falls convention was subjected to public ridicule, and some backers of women's rights withdrew their support" (History.com). When the women at the Seneca Falls convention shared their views with the public, the number of fans decreased. Without supporters it was very hard to gain positive recognition and popularity for their desire of equality, making their ideas seem weak. This forced the convention members to work even harder and struggle even more to gain their desired outcome.

Secondly, earning women's equality and opportunity took lots of time. To illustrate, "After years of struggle, the 19th Amendment was adopted in 1920, granting American women the constitutionally protected right to vote" (History.com). From 1848 to 1920, the Seneca Falls convention fought for their beliefs. This means there was no resolution for over seven decades. This proves how women of this generation endured

the greatest hardships because they didn't just spend two or three years debating female importance, but they devoted their life to it.

On the other hand, some people believe that the abolitionists had to fight harder for freedom than women did for equality. Abolitionists wanted an immediate end to slavery. They were willing to be violent and unrealistic if it got their point across; however, this behavior led to consequences. To highlight, "...the 1837 murder of abolitionist editor Elijah Lovejoy, led many northerners, fearful for their own civil liberties, to vote for antislavery politicians" (James Brewer Stewart). An abolitionist fought so hard he was murdered. Although his efforts were in hope that freedoms would be granted to slaves, many civilians did not wish to be involved with murder. Northerners became scared to express their thoughts on slavery and worried about protecting their own freedoms. Thus, support for antislavery views decreased. Somehow abolitionists had to work towards an end to slavery while being feared and neglected. For this reason, many people argue that abolitionists fighting against slavery suffered through the most difficult issues to achieve freedom for their group.

Overall, the 1800s was a time of conflict for many groups. That being said, the women at the Seneca Falls convention worked longer and harder than abolitionists, despite a lack of public support for their ideas, to insure equality and opportunity for all women.

### **Writing Assignment Six**

Bleeding Kansas made the Civil War unavoidable because of the treatment of African-Americans regarding their equality and opportunity. The compromise of 1850 stated that slavery in the territories of Kansas and Nebraska would be decided by popular

sovereignty. This allowed Northerners and Southerners to vote on whether those states would be pro or anti-slavery based on their beliefs and the population. Not only did this lead to the history of Bleeding Kansas, but also it created conflict over African-Americans' rights which caused the Civil War. To illustrate, "There had been several attacks during this time, primarily of proslavery against Free State men. People were tarred and feathered, kidnapped, killed" (PBS 1). The North and the South used popular sovereignty to their advantage to gain a higher population of support for their beliefs. In addition, these people became violent and decided to fight to get their way. Bleeding Kansas was the beginning of large amounts of physical fighting between Northerners and Southerners over the proper rights for African-Americans. Before this occurred there was less action and mainly only verbal tiffs proving how this increased fighting lead to unavoidable warfare.

Secondly, because Kansas could officially become a state, people began to write constitutions for it. While some versions favored slavery, others opposed it. The final result added Kansas to the Union side. Not surprisingly, the Confederacy strongly disagreed with this outcome and "Only in 1861, after the Confederate states seceded, did the constitution gain approval and Kansas became a state" (PBS 1). This proves how Bleeding Kansas made the Civil War unavoidable because the fighting over African-Americans' rights eventually led to the Southern secession. This is significant because the secession, triggered by Bleeding Kansas and the fight over Kansas's constitution, left the United States with no choice other than to go to war over slaves' rights.

On the other hand, some people believe that the Dred Scott Decision made the Civil War inevitable because of the treatment of slaves regarding their equality and opportunity.

Dred Scott was a slave whose master died while he was in a free state. He decided to sue for his freedom in front of the Supreme Court. The court's conclusion denied Dred Scott of his equality. Thus, when the news got out, problems in the North and South arose. For example, "Northerners who were not abolitionists, or even necessarily anti-slavery, protested the pro-Southern bias of the decision" (Missouri State Library 1). This supports how some people believe that the Dred Scott case led to the Civil War because the North and the South began to really take a stance for their beliefs. People who had never been involved in discussions over slavery became encompassed in the arguments over African-Americans deserved freedoms. Therefore, some can argue that the Dred Scott Decision encouraged citizens without an established opinion to engage in the fighting which made the Civil War unpreventable.

In conclusion, many significant events took place in the 1800s. That being said, Bleeding Kansas led to the war because it started the physical fighting between the Union states and the Confederacy, and caused the Southern secession. These outcomes regarding the equality and opportunity of African-Americans ultimately made the Civil War unavoidable.

### **Writing Assignment Seven**

The 14th amendment benefited African-Americans the most during Reconstruction. Once the Civil War ended, Congress began passing laws to enhance the freedoms of Blacks. The 14th amendment called for citizenship to all African-Americans and it ensured fair treatment to all people under the law. To illustrate, "The 14th amendment was ratified in 1868, during the administration of Andrew Johnson, stating that every person born in the US is a citizen" (Linda Alchin). This amendment changed

the lives of thousands of African-Americans. It enabled them to become President of the United States, get a job, and live safely and freely in America. African-Americans had never received such freedoms; therefore, their everyday lives benefited from this amendment more than that of others.

Secondly, this amendment forbids states from taking away African-American's appropriate rights. Whether a state supports the Union or resents it, the 14th amendment establishes permanent freedoms that disapproving states cannot change. For example, "States may not make, or enforce, any laws which limit or reduce the privileges and rights of US citizens" (Linda Alchin). Like many other laws, the 14th amendment secures American freedoms. However, the mandates made in this law specifically are unchangeable to any person or official. Thus, the 14th amendment continuously benefits African-Americans into the future, not only during the period of reconstruction.

On the other hand, some can argue that the 15th amendment benefited African-Americans more than the 14th during reconstruction. The 15th amendment was ratified on February 3, 1870 and gave all African-American men the right to voice their opinions through voting. For example, "The Constitution granted African-American men the right to vote by declaring that the 'right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States'" ( Library of Congress Researchers). The 15th amendment allowed every male citizen to vote. African-Americans went from being treated like garbage to being treated like an American. Therefore, it is easy to see why some believe the 15th amendment benefited African-Americans the most after the Civil War.

In conclusion, the 14th amendment advanced African-American's rights. Although the 15th amendment granted every male African-American with the right to vote, this law only helped men who were citizens. The 14th amendment gave Blacks their citizenship and, unlike the 15th amendment, improved Black women's rights. While both amendments helped, the promises made in the 14th amendment brought more opportunities to all African-Americans and benefited them the most during reconstruction.

### **Writing Assignment Nine**

Italian-Americans struggled the most to achieve equality and opportunity after immigrating to America. Thousands of Italian immigrants moved to the US in hopes of building a life for themselves and their families. However, when they arrived in America seeking a job, they were forced to work in unsanitary areas for very low wages. To illustrate, "Many Italian immigrants, however, found themselves toiling for low pay in unhealthy working conditions. At the turn of the 20th century, southern Italian immigrants were among the lowest-paid workers in the United States" (Library of Congress, 7). Italian-Americans had just moved to the US and with their low salaries, it was extremely difficult for them to build a home, get food, and buy necessities. Eventually, they regained some wealth but they had to undergo years of hunger, sickness, and living in unfavorable conditions to get there.

In addition, the Italian-Americans were highly discriminated against. Americans blamed them for taking their jobs and US citizens found them inferior to themselves. In the late 1800s, a terrorist group known as the Ku Klux Klan beat, killed, and dehumanized the Italians. For example, "Catholic churches and charities were vandalized

and burned, and Italians attacked by mobs. In the 1890s alone, more than 20 Italians were lynched” (Library of Congress, 8). Not only were the Italians working under inhumane conditions, but they were also being bullied by their own neighbors. For thirty years Italian-Americans were continuously harassed, mocked, and tormented because of their background. To better their living situation, this group had to stay strong, fight, and work more than any other group to gain opportunities and equality equal to that of the Americans.

On the other hand, some can argue that the Irish-Americans struggled the most to achieve equality and opportunity after immigrating to America. In the nineteenth century, African-Americans were prohibited from holding dangerous jobs. Therefore, all the life-threatening work was left for the Irish immigrants. For example, “Thousands of Irish lives were lost in the building of the nation's canal and railroad systems” (Library of Congress, 6). For decades, this group of immigrants was put in deadly situations where they were forced to do grueling work. Furthermore, Irish immigrants suffered and were killed in these undesirable conditions because it was the only job available to them. This atrocity supports why some believe Irish-Americans struggled the most to achieve their rights after immigrating to America.

In conclusion, although it can be argued that the Irish experienced the greatest hardships, this statement is invalid. Both Irish and Italian immigrants died from the harsh work in America. That being said, the Italian-Americans were also discriminated, stolen from, and mistreated. Therefore, it is evident that after immigrating to America, Italian-Americans struggled the most to achieve equality and opportunity.

### **Writing Assignment Ten**



In the early 1900's, the Chinese immigrants from Angel Island experienced the greatest lack of Jefferson's ideals of equality and opportunity as they started their new life in America. For example, the immigrants came to America to find new opportunities. Lester Tom Lee, a Chinese immigrant, is a great example of one of these people, "At age 16, Lester Tom Lee immigrated in 1935 by himself to the United States. He was detained at least 2 months at Angel Island. He joined his father in San Francisco and eventually moved to Houston, where he worked as a grocer, a wholesale meat vendor and in real estate. Now 79, Lee is retired" (Angel Island). This is important because it reveals that these immigrants succeeded in their actions after coming to the United States, however, the Chinese had a strikingly troublesome time achieving their equality and opportunity. To illustrate, "American laborers resented the Chinese because the latter were willing to work for cheap wages. Americans accused the Chinese of monopolizing jobs. Stiff immigration laws were passed. Many Chinese immigrants were forced to prove they had a husband or father who was a U. S. citizen or be deported" (Angel Island). This is essential to understanding their struggles of the Chinese, because it reveals that the hatred of their people began before they began their journey in America. In addition, this also shows that these foreigners endured long periods of time with little equality and opportunity when finding their way in America because they were employed with immensely low wages, if they could find a job, and they were a highly disliked group of people by the American due to the fact that they took a small portion of their jobs. Their lack of equality and opportunity is further revealed through Lester Tom Lee's experiences during the immigration process at Angel Island. He says, "We ate vegetables twice a day and some very rough rice, very hard to swallow. I was a growing boy and

hungry... Sometimes I wondered why we all came over here for that kind of treatment. Sometimes I just wanted to go home because they treated us like criminals. We were only immigrants." (Lee) This not only reveals lack in equality and opportunity, but it also shows that the government was violating the civil rights of the Chinese people. At Angel Island, the people were not ethically treated, as a result they experienced a great lack of equality and opportunity.

However, immigrants from Barbados processed through Ellis Island were also notably deprived of their equality and opportunity. Like the Chinese immigrants, the Barbadian immigrants were also brought to America by boat, with little resources, but the biggest difference between the two groups is that the Chinese were forced to follow strict immigration laws, but the Barbadian immigrants were not restricted by these laws, but still lacked equality and opportunity when entering the country. For example, "What I remember was that we went in this place and we were herded like we were cattle. I remember that. And we all felt very indignant about the treatment and whatnot. And there were a mass of people. I don't know where they had come from. And we were all in this room and we were like in cages" (Clarke). This shows that the Barbadian immigrants were not treated with equality because they were "herded like cattle" and the people were feeling "indignant" at the process and their treatment, therefore they were not treated with equality. In conclusion, the Chinese immigrants from Angel Island experienced the most considerable loss of Jefferson's ideals of equality and opportunity as they started their new life in America, due to the fact that they were treated with such hatred when they arrived in America.

### **Writing Assignment Thirteen**

The U.S. was not justified in going to war with Spain but because they did, the Spanish people had their equality and opportunity violated. In the evening of February 15, 1898, a massive explosion took place on the U.S. Battleship Maine. The ship sunk in Cuba's Havana Harbor killing 268 of the 400 Americans aboard. Although the cause of the explosion was never found, the United States declared Spain responsible and began the Spanish American War. In 1898, the U.S. had a strong army that intimidated and scared the Spanish. In fact, it was later discovered that Spain was trying to avoid anything that would trigger America to begin a brutal war. To illustrate, "Actually Spain was doing everything possible to prevent a war with the United States and was careful not to commit any act of provocation" (Dana Lindaman & Kyle Ward, 1). Based off this quote, it is evident that Spain did not want to go to war with America. The United States could have worked out the conflict verbally and peacefully like Spain wanted but instead, they chose to settle the problem by fighting. This act killed many Spanish people and hurt their opportunity to thrive. America could have solved the issue with Spain in a more diplomatic way and were not justified in beginning a harsh war.

In addition, the United States was only guessing that Spain had caused the explosion. At the time that Spain was blamed, there was no certainty that they had purposely sabotaged America; it was only a guess. When experts had a better idea of why the boat caught fire, they decided that the ammunition on the boat caused the problem, not Spain. For example, "In 1976, a team of American naval investigators concluded that the Maine explosion was likely caused by a fire that ignited its ammunition stocks, not by a Spanish mine or act of sabotage" (History.com Staff, 1). The United States blamed Spain for a problem that no person caused. Before they knew if their accusations were

true, they responded drastically with a war that turned out to be unnecessary. Therefore, the United States was not justified in beginning a war that violated Spain's equality and opportunity. At the time they declared war, they had no evidence as to what had caused the explosion and if anyone was to blame and rather than investigating, they went ahead and pursued an aggressive war.

On the other hand, some can argue that the United States was in fact justified in going to war with Spain. The explosion killed hundreds of Americans and it caused a rebellion against the Spanish. Relationships became tense and something had to be done to solve the problem. To highlight, "...the U.S. battleship Maine in Havana Harbor, with a toll of 266 crew members and two officers dead" (Dana Lindaman & Kyle Ward, 1). The U.S. believed that they were under attack so they went to war to protect their country. Although this turned out to be untrue, they were taking what they thought were necessary precautions to insure the safety of all Americans. As such, it is evident why some believe that America was justified in beginning the Spanish American War.

In conclusion, although some can argue that America was justified in going to war, this logic is flawed. The countries' conflict could have been figured out in a peaceful way and Spain had no involvement in the explosion of the U.S. Battleship Maine. Thus, there was absolutely no reason for America to go to war, but by doing so, Spain had its equality and opportunity to live harmoniously violated.

## APPENDIX H – STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE WRITING PORTFOLIO

**Description:** This year, you've used the elements of a historical argument to talk about equality and opportunity. You are going to create a portfolio of your work to show how well you understand the concepts of claim, historical evidence, counterclaim, and equality and opportunity in your work. You're also going to answer questions on how well you used feedback (whether it was from me or your discussion group) to improve your writing.

**Number of pieces in your portfolio:** You must choose a minimum of five different writings in your portfolio. You must choose your first writing assignment on September 8, 2016. You must also include your writing assignment from April 21, 2017. The other writings that you choose (remember, a MINIMUM of five different assignments) must best reflect your growth on claim, historical evidence, counterclaim, and equality and opportunity.

### **What to Include:**

**Claim:** For claim, you should be able to address the following:

- Evidence from your writing of a written claim that is clear and easily understood by the reader.
- Evidence from your writing of growth of understanding of your claim.
- Evidence from your writing that you refer back to your claim at the end of your historical argument.
- Evidence from your writing that you can prove that your claim is superior to your counterclaim.

**Historical Evidence:** For historical evidence, you should be able to address the following:

- Evidence from your writing of the use of sourced historical evidence in your argument. This is used to back up both your claim and your counterclaim.
- Evidence from your writing of accurate historical evidence to back up both your claim and your counterclaim.
- Evidence from your writing of the use of multiple pieces of evidence in your argument.
- Evidence from your writing of the use of multiple pieces of evidence for both your claim and your counterclaim in your argument.
- Evidence from your writing of the use of being able to contextualize (to put yourself in the time period we've studied) in your argument. (Note: this one is one we'll be working on in the later Edmodo assignments)

**Counterclaim:** For counterclaim, you should be able to address the following:

- Evidence from your writing of the development of a counterclaim in your historical argument over time.
- Evidence from your writing that your counterclaim is clear and easily understood by the reader.
- Evidence from your writing of using supporting details to further develop your counterclaim. (Note: I'm looking for true evidence of a counterclaim. At some point, you have written little on a counterclaim. How has your counterclaim changed over the course of the year?)

- Evidence from your writing of the use of transitional phrases to indicate that a counterclaim is evident in your argument. (Example: On the other hand, or some people might believe)
- Evidence from your writing of the use of accurate historical evidence to back up your counterclaim.

**Equality and Opportunity:** For equality and opportunity, you should be able to address the following:

- Evidence from your writing of understanding of these two terms
- An explanation of your understanding of these terms over the course of the school year
- Evidence from your writing of how your definition of these terms has changed over the course of the school year
- Note: You must use your Edmodo assignment from November 16, 2016, as one of your pieces of evidence here. It will help you greatly in what you're trying to say.

**Feedback:** For feedback, you should be able to address the following:

- Show evidence from your writing of the use of feedback used to improve your writing from a discussion group member. Your feedback could be from multiple members.
- Show evidence from your writing of the use of feedback received from me to improve your writing.

- Show evidence from your writing that indicates that you improved your historical argument over time using prior feedback.

**Questions:** You must also answer the following questions:

1. How well do you understand the concept of claim at this time than at the beginning of the year? Use evidence from your writing to back this up.
  2. How well do you understand the concept of the use of historical evidence at this time than at the beginning of the year? Use evidence from your writing to back this up.
  3. How well do you understand the concept of counterclaim at this time than at the beginning of the year? Use evidence from your writing to back this up.
  4. How well do you understand the terms of equality and opportunity, and has your definition of these terms changed over the school year? Use evidence from your writing to back this up.
  5. Did the feedback that you received on your writing help you to improve your historical argument? Provide evidence from your writing.
  6. Overall, how well do you feel that the Edmodo assignments helped you to write in a history class?
  7. What would you want to see improve in the Edmodo assignments to improve your writing?
- Note: All questions must be answered in complete sentences to get the full points for this section.



### **Timeline:**

March 6: A listing of a selection of writings that you will use to address claim, historical evidence, counterclaim, and equality and opportunity. I just need a list here. (5-point assignment)

- Note: From March 24 onward, you'll submit these assignments online on Edmodo. Each assignment online is due by 7:45 AM on the assigned due date.

March 24: Completion of the claim section of the portfolio (5 points)

March 31: Completion of the historical evidence section of the portfolio (5 points)

April 7: Completion of the counterclaim section of the portfolio (5 points)

April 14: Completion of the equality and opportunity section of the portfolio (5 points)

April 21: Completion of the feedback section of the portfolio (5 points)

May 5: Completion of the entire portfolio due (150 points)

### **Point Breakdown of Portfolio:**

- Note: To see what I'm looking for on each area, look in the "What to Include" section of this document.
- Claim – 25 points
- Historical evidence – 30 points
- Counterclaim – 25 points
- Equality and opportunity – 25 points
- Feedback – 25 points
- Questions answered – 20 points
- Total = 150 points

**Late Penalty:** A 10% penalty will be applied for every day that the final portfolio is late.

After five school days, I will no longer accept the Edmodo portfolio for any credit. **The**

**final date to receive any credit for the Edmodo portfolio will be Friday, May 12.**

I have received and understand what is expected of me with the Edmodo Portfolio:

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_